VOLUME 15 NUMBER 5, MARCH/APRIL 2012 $5.50

Outlining Sanity
GILBERT MAGAZINE

Vampires, Chesterton, and the Romantic poets

Sean P. Dailey interviews Tim Powers, page 10

Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon. —G.K. CHESTERTON "THE RED ANGEL"

Come enjoy a great vacation and a fabulous Chesterton event.

August 2-4, 2012

Reno Nev.

Break the Conventions Keep the Commandments

Dale Ahlquist, *President of the American Chesterton Society*

Joseph Pearce, *prolific author*

Mark Shea, *author and legendary blogger*

Kevin O'Brien, *actor*

Lila Rose, *President of Live Action*

Jason Jones, *Producer of Bella*

Ralph Wood, *Professor at Baylor University*

Julian Ahlquist, *Philosophy teacher at Chesterton Academy*

Laurence Rohrer, *Professor at Lincoln University*

Plus

The world premiere of the movie "Manalive"

With a special talk by the director, Joey Odendahl

And

A musical performance by composer Eric Genuis

THE RENO AREA IS A GREAT VACATION SPOT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

Beautiful Lake Tahoe, Virginia City — True Old West Town, Mountains, Monasteries, Rafting, Hiking, Sierra Safari Zoo Exploratorium

Discounted room rates are available for conference attendees who stay at the Silver Legacy Hotel. Call (800) 687-8733 and mention group code **ACS812** to reserve your rooms today at the discounted rate.

Register for the conference online at ***chesterton.org*** or call **800-343-2425**

THE AMERICAN CHESTERTON SOCIETY

This Will Be The Best Conference Ever!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 15 Number 5, March/April 2012

Cover and page 10 photo credit: Serena Powers

PUBLISHER: Dale Ahlquist, President, ACS **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Sean P. Dailey **ART DIRECTOR:** Ted Schluenderfritz **LITERARY EDITOR:** Therese Warmus **COPY EDITOR:** Susan Meister

SENIOR WRITER: Art Livingston **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:** Richard Aleman, David Beresford, James G. Bruen Jr., Nancy Carpentier Brown, Joe Campbell, John C. Chalberg, Christopher Chan, David Paul Deavel, David W. Fagerberg, Kyro Lantsberger, Art Livingston, Robert Moore-Jumonville, James V. Schall SJ **"NEWS WITH VIEWS" EDITORS:** Nathan Allen, Mark Pilon, Larry Pavlicek, Joseph Grabowsk, Leo Schwartz **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** (See Coupon Page 4) Credit Card Orders: call 1-800-343-2425 or fax 1-270-325-3091 **LETTERS AND ARTICLES:** *Gilbert Magazine*, American Chesterton Society, 4117 Pebblebrook Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55437 editor@gilbertmagazine.com www.gilbertmagazine.com Letters to the editor may be edited for length or clarity.

GILBERT MAGAZINE is published every six weeks by The American Chesterton Society, a non-profit corporation established under Paragraph 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Tax Code. Donations to the American Chesterton Society are tax-deductible in the United States. Your contributions help support the publication of *Gilbert Magazine*. Please send your donations to: The American Chesterton Society, 4117 Pebblebrook Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55437. The views expressed by *Gilbert Magazine* contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher, the editors, or the American Chesterton Society.

TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

by Sean P. Dailey

Registration for the 2012 Chesterton Conference is open, and I urge everyone to make reservations early. Information on the August 4–6 conference, in Reno, Nevada, is already on the Web page. Go to www.chesterton.org, click on "store," then click on "31st Annual Chesterton Conference." That page also has a link for reserving a room—at the special conference rate—at the Silver Legacy Hotel and Casino. Keep checking the Web page of the American Chesterton Society for news and updates.

We will post additional information as it becomes available. ACS president Dale Ahlquist writes, "This is the best conference we've ever had," which is saying a lot. Themed "Break the Conventions. Keep the Commandments," from a pivotal line in Chesterton's novel *Manalive*, the conference will be the site of the world premier of the film adaption, *Manalive*, starring Mark Shea, Kevin O'Brien, and Kaiser Johnson. Director Joey Odendahl will speak, as will Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Mark Shea, and Kevin O'Brien. We will also have Jason Jones, the producer of the movie *Bella*. Eric Genuis, who wrote and performed the score for the EWTN adaptation of *The Honor of Israel Gow*, will attend and perform. Other speakers include Ralph Wood, Cameron Moore, Lawrence Rohrer, Julian Ahlquist, and pro-life activist Lila Rose!

Tomasz Chepaitis writes from the old town of Vilnius, Lithuania, that within Vilnius itself is the Uzhupis Republic, which declared independence in 1998, "influenced, of course, by *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* among other things." Mr. Chepaitis is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Uzhupis Republic.

Reader Dan Martin writes, "Here is an oddity that Chesterton fans might enjoy. I wasn't sure where to send it, and I hope you don't find it an imposition." Mr. Martin sent us a link to a story on the Web site gizmodo.com, which reported, "On a cold, dark night on the mean streets of the UK, an undercover police officer was radioed and informed that a potential suspect was close by. Keen to do the right thing, he set off in hot pursuit. Twenty fraught minutes later, he learned he'd been chasing...himself."

Blame this humorous little incident on the security cameras that have become ubiquitous in cities in what used to be called Christendom. The security camera operator reported to police that someone was "acting suspiciously." Unfortunately, "the officer who decided to follow up on the report was actually the shadowy figure in question," and he reported to the operator that he was hot on the heels of the elusive suspect, "until the police officer's boss turned up in the CCTV control room and recognized him."

Chestertonian, writer, and blogger Dawn Eden has a new book out, *My Peace I Give to You: Healing Sexual Wounds with the Help of the Saints*. Dawn, who was interviewed by Dale Ahlquist in the July/August, 2004, issue of *GM*, is a member of a very special group: those whose decision to join the Catholic Church was influenced by Chesterton. *My Peace I Give to You* deals with childhood sexual abuse and is available from Ave Maria Press (avemariapress.com/product/1-59471-290-5/My-Peace-I-Give-You). Dawn talks extensively about the book in an April 9 interview in the *National Catholic Register* (www.ncregister.com).

Speaking of books. Fr. Bob Wild writes that his new book, *The Tumbler of God, Chesterton as Mystic*, from Justin Press in Ottawa, Canada, is approaching publication. Watch for a review of it in an upcoming issue.

The Revolution continues: there is a problem with your bookshelf. What, you may ask? Well, it does not yet contain a copy of the newest release from ACS Books, *The Hound of Distributism*. Containing essays by Dale Ahlquist, Richard Aleman, Joseph Pearce, Phillip Blond, the Hon. Dr. Race Mathews, and many more, *The Hound of Distributism* is probably the most comprehensive treatment of Distributism to date. It is available for $13.95 at www.chesterton.org and can also be purchased—on Kindle!—from Amazon.com.

100 YEARS AGO

Godfrey Isaacs bought 100,000 shares of the American Marconi Company, of which he was a director, and that was half-owned by The Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. of London, which had just scored a large government contract to erect communication towers throughout the British Empire. Godfrey then sold 50,000 shares to his brother Harry, and 10,000 shares to his brother Rufus, who happened to be the Attorney General. Rufus then sold 1,000 shares to David Lloyd George, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and 1,000 to the Chief Whip of the ruling Liberal Party. Their investments quadrupled in value a few days later, when the shares were sold publicly for the first time. A classic case of insider trading that involved government officials—for this they were not punished, however. Instead the man who exposed them was brought to trial for criminal libel, although he never said anything that was not true. It was Cecil Chesterton. But the episode may have had a more profound and long-term effect on his brother. The Marconi scandal not only confirmed everything that G.K. Chesterton had said about the evils of big government and big business, but it turned him into a tireless champion for justice for the rest of his life, and he would suffer for it as well.

LUNACY & LETTERS

from Gilbert Magazine Readers

A necessary clarification about your editorial, "Good Guys and Bad Guys" which appeared in the January/February, 2012 issue of *Gilbert Magazine*:

To consider the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Tea Party movement as being both sides of the same coin, so to speak, and to suggest that they "stop shooting at each other and recognize their common enemy" is at best misleading and at worst fallacious.

Let us leave aside the actual members of both groups, because most movements attract people we wish would go elsewhere. The important difference is in the basic philosophy of each group. The Tea Party is a grassroots movement of citizens who feel the they are taxed enough already, and want their voice to be heard.

On the other hand, the Occupy Wall Street movement is backed by followers of the Saul Alinsky school of control. They act aggressively just to make themselves appear as "victims." Their hope is to effect basic changes in our governmental system, and once the system is compromised then there can be a totalitarian takeover. This is their goal whether one wants to admit it or not.

The Tea Party and The Occupy Wall Street movements have "no common enemy." They are in effect each other's enemy, as they must be. Care must be taken as to whom you allow into your circle of friends.

Thank you for your attention.

Clara Sarrocco
Glendale, New York

* * *

Sean P. Dailey ("Good Guys and Bad Guys," *GM* Jan./Feb. 2012) says that the Tea Party has been silent about abortion. My wife and I have attended Tea Party street rallies in Sierra Vista, Arizona. I carried and paraded a sign, "Abortion is NOT negotiable!" I also displayed this sign when we prayed in front of a Planned Parenthood facility in Tucson. When I protested on the street where the abortionist lived, I was arrested and convicted of residential picketing. I am a Tea Partier, a pro-lifer, and (yes) a criminal.

Joel Fago
Hereford, Arizona

* * *

After I read the editorial in the latest issue of *Gilbert Magazine* ("Good Guys and Bad Guys," *GM* Jan./Feb. 2012), I immediately turned to the front cover to see if it was a special "April Fool's" issue. That not being the case, I checked to see if the editorial had been written by former Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Alas, that was not the case either.

To propose that the OWS "movement" and the Tea Party movement are similar or may be fighting the "same fight" is ridiculous. You rightly note the many acts of violence, sexual assault, etc. at OWS, but then claim that there have been "relatively few incidents of violence" at Tea Party events. In fact, I have seen NO violent events at Tea Party functions. Can you document even ONE case of violence? The events I have attended have been marked by peaceful demonstrations, with attendees bringing their children & grandchildren, with no ill results.

You "lament" that the Tea Party movement does not say anything about abortion, but the "TEA" in Tea Party stands for "Taxed Enough Already." Abortion is, indeed, probably the most serious violation of moral law we face today, but it is wrong to expect every movement to take up this fight. OWS and the Tea Party are NOT natural allies. If you can't distinguish between OWS and the Tea Party, I fear you are wearing very dark glasses.

Michael A. Moroz
Terre Haute, Indiana

* * *

Sean Dailey's "Good Guys and Bad Guys" editorial has stunned me. We have been casual Tea Party participants since its inception. We utilize our free speech to try to get our government to FOLLOW the U.S. Constitution! I am stunned by Dailey's comparing us in any way with OWS. Using the abortion comparison to show similar goals is outrageous.

We are staunchly pro-life, but that's not the core of the Tea Party movement. The Tea Party protests are about the survival of our very country. No free speech and adherence to our Constitution and it won't just be the unborn who will be destroyed (as horrific as that is), but those who protest against abortion, too.

OWS is against capitalism, period. They are funded by George Soros, Marxists, Anarchists, and just plain rich kids who want to protest instead of getting a real job. Just today, the OWS poured feces and urine—see http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/03/21/nypd-says-ows-dumped-feces-urine-in-atm-vestibule-and-down-stairs/.

Maybe Dailey just wanted to be a little "edgy" with his editorial, but I'm not going to pay a premium fee for reading edgy. Too bad, Mr. Ahlquist.

Janet Reilly
Stratford, Connecticut

* * *

I suggest everyone wanting an honest economic "system" should press hard for the adoption everywhere of the following law or a very proximate refinement of it: No one not actually "doing the providing" of food, clothing or shelter may sell goods or services to

anyone not "doing the providing" of food, clothing, or shelter, except for goods and services needed by clergy or the legal and medical professions. A "system" based on that law need not itself be positively very systematic.

Vincent Colin Burke
Port au Port, Newfoundland, Canada

* * *

I would like to highly recommend to all the readers of your magazine and to Chestertonians everywhere a movie called *The Human Comedy*. It is an older film made and set during the time of the Second World War and stars a very young Mickey Rooney (one of his best performances, I think). If ever G.K. Chesterton was to make a film, surely it would have been something like this one. *The Human Comedy* is a film about nothing in particular, but rather about everything—the comedy of life. It has the wonders and mystery of a small town, a struggling but loving family, faith, war, death, laughter, and everlasting life. Although an older film, it is timeless (I myself am only twenty-four, but the lessons are ageless). There are very valuable themes to learn and much to savor about the common, honest, holy lives depicted in this classic. Enjoy.

Robert Klatter
Geneva, Illinois

CHESTERTON FOR TODAY

✦ Before men analyze the uses of the unconscious mind, it may, perhaps, be well for them to discover the use of the mind. (*Century Magazine*, May 1923)

✦ If there is no real responsibility for anything, why should we be responsible for either justice or mercy towards murderers? (*Illustrated London News*, June 23, 1928)

✦ Political economy means that everybody except politicians must be economical. (*Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, Dec. 25, 1926)

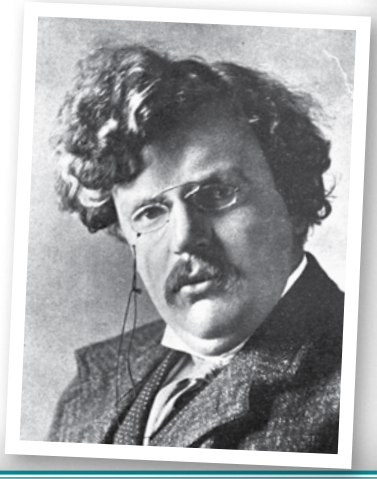
✦ Anybody who has been in America can testify to the reality of the strain which a rigid centralization will impose on whole districts sometimes as large as nations, and nearly as different as nations. There is at this moment a severe strain between the Puritanism of the Middle West and the Paganism of the New York social life. I am not sure that it is not more truly spiritual a schism than the old schism between the North of Lincoln and the South of Lee. (*Illustrated London News*, July 28, 1928)

✦ The worst of using strong language is that it produces weak language. (*Illustrated London News*, Aug. 28, 1926)

✦ There is nothing more consciously dreary than the deliberate pursuit of pleasure. (*The Speaker*, May 26, 1900)

✦ It is a bad sign for a nation when the worst things are the best. (*Illustrated London News*, Feb. 24, 1912)

✦ The path of the immediate past is not a progress to be made better; it is a mistake to be unmade. ("Starting Afresh," *Is it a New World?*)



EDITORIAL

Resist the Tyrant

It is possible to draw a direct line from President Obama's execution of an American citizen last fall to his attempt to trample the First Amendment rights of Catholics now.

In the last week of September, the news broke that the United States had executed an American citizen—without arresting him, without an indictment, without a trial, and without a conviction. Then, in early October, Reuters moved a story with the unsettling headline, "Secret panel can put Americans on 'kill list.'" Far from denying this, the Obama administration defends it. No less than U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder upheld the Obama Administration's new power to secretly target U.S. citizens for execution by the CIA. In a speech at Northwestern University in March, Holder unveiled a brand new understanding of what due process is: "'Due process' and 'judicial process' are not one and the same, particularly when it comes to national security," he said. "The Constitution guarantees due process, not judicial process."

What can Holder possibly mean by that? Defense Secretary Leon Panetta provides an answer: "[The] President of the United States obviously reviews these cases, reviews the legal justification, and in the end says, go or no go."

So the President of the United States, with no judicial or congressional oversight, is now the sole judge, jury, and executioner of anyone that his administration decides is a terrorist threat. And here's the fun part: it's all done in secret. You won't know that you're being investigated, or have been targeted for secret execution, until the Tomahawk missile lands on your noggin.

As if all this isn't disturbing enough, on the last day of 2011, President Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012. The NDAA was largely legislation for funding the military, national security programs, health care costs in the Department of Defense, and so on.

However, there is more in the act than just routine Defense spending. Sections 1021 and 1022 provide, respectively, for the arrest and indefinite detention, without trial or even charges, of anyone suspected of being involved with terrorism, and for that detention to be in U.S. military custody. Originally, Section 1021 exempted American citizens from indefinite detention. However, "The Administration asked us to remove the language which says that U.S. citizens and lawful residents would not be subject to this section," said U.S. Senator Carl Levin.

At least the NDAA does not require that American citizens be held in military custody, though the act allows it as an option, in direct violation of the Constitution and federal statutes, especially the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878.

All of which brings us to the infamous HHS Mandate. As everyone knows by now, in January, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius published federal regulations that require almost every employer to provide coverage for contraception and sterilization in their employee health plans. A conscience exemption for employers who object on religious grounds is so narrow as to be irrelevant. This means that Catholic universities and colleges, Catholic hospitals, and even Catholic dioceses will have to start providing contraception and sterilization coverage to employees starting in August of 2013.

And not just them. Any Catholic employer—a factory owner, a shop owner, or whatever, will have to include contraception and sterilization coverage as part of his employee health plan. Should the American Chesterton Society grow large enough to offer a health care plan to its employees, it too would have to comply with the HHS Mandate. The Obama administration has offered fake "compromises" hoping to mollify (with some success) liberal Catholics who were at first against the mandate, but these are just shell games: all employers, regardless of religious or other objections, will have to pay for their employees' contraceptives and sterilizations.

What does the HHS Mandate have to do with national security? A president who can give himself the power to, unilaterally and in secret, convict and execute American citizens, or indefinitely detain them, can also tell Catholics that their religious teachings do not matter, and in fact are subject to the whims of Caesar. Tyrants go after easy targets first—few Americans batted so much as an eyelid at Obama's judicial murder in September of U.S.-born anti-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki—before homing in on the harder targets.

We have to give President Obama credit for one thing. With the help of Judas Catholic allies like Sebelius and Representative Nancy Pelosi, he has managed to unite the American bishops—something not even Pope Benedict has been able to do—and a growing number of rank-and-file Catholics against him. Considering that a majority of Catholics voted for Obama in 2008, this is progress. But before Republicans get too smug, they should consider this: the groundwork for President Obama's ability to trample cherished American liberties was laid during the Bush administration, especially with the Patriot Act, which passed with enthusiastic support from Republicans.

We at *Gilbert Magazine* urge all our readers, Left and Right, to to do the right thing: resist the tyrant. Pray, march, and do whatever else you can to force President Obama to repeal the HHS Mandate. Because if he can do this to the Catholic Church, he can do it to anybody, and you may be next.

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

STRAWS IN THE WIND

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton

The Apostles of Unreason

by G.K. Chesterton

I see that Mr. William Archer has been calling me the Apostle of Unreason. It seems to me a specially interesting example of how Rationalism undermines the reasoning power. Mr. Archer is an able man and a lover of truth, and I am certain that nothing but Rationalism could have made him so irrational as that. For the plain and palpable modern fact is exactly the other way. There really *are* some writers, very modern and fashionable writers at that, who *are* Apostles of Unreason; and say they are. M. [Henri] Bergson is an Apostle of Unreason. He really seems to hold that we may find out what we want by trying to get it—without knowing what it is. The late Professor William James, stimulating and sympathetic as he was, might not unfairly be called an Apostle of Unreason. Mr. Bernard Shaw has often been a serious and sincere Apostle of Unreason. He has maintained that all logic leads to killing oneself; and, of the two, it is better to kill logic. Nietzsche was something like an Apostle of Unreason: he said, "We must have chaos within, that we may give birth to a dancing star." The Pragmatists are Apostles of Unreason.

Nearly all the Modernists who were condemned in the Pope's Encyclical [*Pascendi Gregis* from Pope Pius X in 1907, which attacked the Modernists for such views as gnosticism, the contempt for dogma, and the belief in an immanence similar to pantheism—Ed.] were condemned for being Pragmatists and Apostles of Unreason. Anyone who will read the Encyclical will see that I state the essential fact. Oscar Wilde set the fashion of being an Apostle of Unreason when he said that brute reason was hitting below the intellect. Dr. [Georg] Brandes, the distinguished Jew and sceptic, helped to set the fashion of being an Apostle of Unreason when he said, I think, "Who knows that two and two do not make five in the planet Jupiter?" To which I answer, "I do." The question seems to me quite as senseless as saying, "Who knows that 'yes' is not the same as 'no' in the State of Maine?" I have never been to the State of Maine, thank God; but I know that "yes" is not the same as "no" anywhere. Mr. John Davidson, that unfortunate man of genius, took up the trade of Apostle of Unreason and praiser of pure force and will; and a philosophic work recently published by a French Freethinker warns its readers against reason as something that clogs and chains the sacred changes of Evolution. In short, we may really say that nearly all the people who consider themselves specially progressive, advanced, up-to-date, modernist, or futurist, are avowedly Apostles of Unreason. Practically, it comes to this, that the people who are now opposed to reason are practically all the people who are also opposed to religion.

Dr. [Georg] Brandes, helped to set the fashion of being an Apostle of Unreason when he said, I think, "Who knows that two and two do not make five in the planet Jupiter?" To which I answer, "I do."

But to say that I am opposed to reason is simply not true. I ask no better description of the Pragmatist position which denies the authority of reason than that given by Mr. Bentley's detective in *Trent's Last Case*—that it is "bad Christianity and also infernal nonsense." I think the modern attempt to get rid of reasoning altogether is very like some of the attempts to get rid of fighting altogether: I think it is unmanly and unworthy of a man. Decadents may like living in a dream which they can alter at any moment to suit themselves, in which they can create causes without creating consequences, in which they can pervert the future or unmake the past. But I think a decent working man of any class, whether he is working at cube roots or cabbage roots, ought to be glad that, as he sows, so shall he surely reap. As these are my views about reason and unreason, and as I have often defended them against Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. H. G. Wells, and others, it becomes a really interesting question to ask how so intelligent a man as Mr. Archer has come to consider me in so opposite a light, and where he got his notion that I am an Apostle of Unreason.

Well, I pass over what I cannot help calling the rather cheap part of the argument, which seems to consist in chaffing me with the little-known and carefully concealed fact that I cannot work miracles. Nevertheless, as Mr. Archer gloomily notes, I said at Cambridge that I thought it probable that some other people could. Well, I cannot work miracles; and I seem to remember somebody who (as I believe) could work miracles, but who was taunted in the hour of death with not working them, and taunted in vain. So that in pure reason, even the non-performance of miracles would not prove an impetus to perform them. Anyhow, I cannot (so far as I know, for agnosticism is too easily forgotten nowadays) work miracles. I cannot, as Mr. Archer, that demoniac detective, has discovered,

move the Albert Hall from London to Paris; and levitation in my own case would probably be about as difficult as in the case of the parallel structure of the Albert Hall. This is true; and it affects the question of whether miracles can happen about as much as the fact that I cannot tame lions affects the question of whether they have ever been tamed; or the fact that I have never been known to fly upside down affects the question of whether it has ever been done. A miracle is, by hypothesis, a marvel. That is to say, it is a very rare and a very unexpected thing. If it could be done by anybody at any minute, it is surely as plain as a pikestaff that it could not fulfil the function, true or false, which its supporters suppose it to fulfill. It is part of Mr. Archer's argument that miracles seem ineffectual for their purpose. I can earnestly assure him that they would be much more ineffectual if I were allowed to work them. But I cannot think that Mr. Archer takes this part of his argument seriously. It is just his passion for paradox.

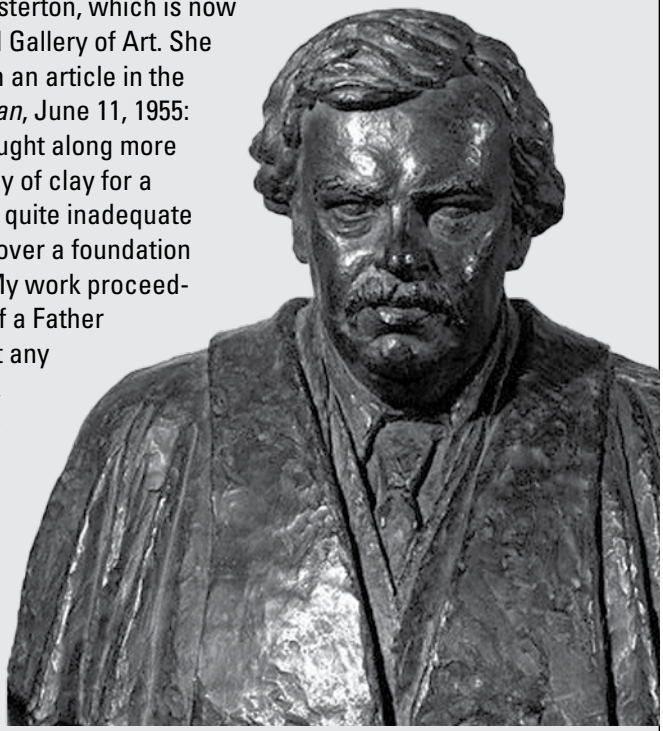
Speaking as the Apostle of Reason, I now remark that Mr. Archer's difficulty resides in a definable fallacy: the confusion between the comprehension of the deduction and the comprehensiveness of the data. If he is arguing from a Monist first principle, that it is inconceivable to suppose that a Supreme intelligence could change its mind, or blasphemous to suppose that it would wish to, then his argument is quite fair; he is not bound to give up his simple faith for the sake of fragmentary manifestations which must, even for their own purpose, be few and far between. But if he is arguing from the evidence or absence of evidence, I must say frankly that I do not think he knows the evidence. I do not speak in arrogance; I did not know it myself from the ordinary good education given to an intelligent Englishman or Scotchman; I did not know it until close on middle age, when other moral problems turned my studies in that direction.

History is horribly, badly taught in England and Scotland; for the very natural reason that some thousand years of it has to be made out as much sillier than it was. I have only space to allude to one case; the case of witchcraft. I think a candid inquirer will come to the conclusion that some witches were really in league with invisible powers of evil, if he believes the documents—and most certainly if he believes the witches. I take the case of witchcraft for three reasons of very varying value. One is that I do not think justice has ever been done either to the truth or falsehood of that fine play, *The Witch*, [a 1910 play by H. Wiers-Jenssen, about the Salem witch trials in which a young girl is maliciously accused of being a witch and executed—Ed.]. Second, and more important, because in this case one cannot be accused of mere optimistic make-believe. Nobody *wants* to think that their fellow-creatures had fallen under the influence of fiends. If any fairly good-natured person thinks so, it must be because he has honestly tried to face realities. I cannot say, of course, that if Mr. Archer had been told the whole truth he would have drawn the same deductions as I do. But I can say, with considerable confidence, that his pastors and masters did not tell him the whole truth; I can say it on the principle that inspires the cheerful Cockney sentiment of "Same here!" The plain truth is that lies have been told and have got to be untold. And the last and most important reason for mentioning witches is this: that nobody can begin to understand the theoretic defense of the miraculous who does not understand the idea of a positive fight against positive evil. We should be right in thinking it silly for the good angels to interfere, if none of us believed in bad angels. A miracle, if you like, proclaims martial law in the universe. But it is not unreasonable; for it may be the only way of reconciling reason with liberty.

(from *Illustrated London News*, March 21, 1914)

Our Mr. Chesterton

Maria Petrie was a sculptress (and was also the daughter-in-law of Francis and Emeline Steinthal, who hosted Chesterton when he first met Fr. John O'Connor). In 1932, she was commissioned to sculpt a bust of Chesterton, which is now in London's National Gallery of Art. She recalled the event in an article in the *Manchester Guardian*, June 11, 1955: "Although I had brought along more than the usual supply of clay for a large bust, I found it quite inadequate and had to build up over a foundation of five flowerpots. My work proceeded to the dictation of a Father Brown story without any pause for reflection, for Gilbert wrote exactly as he talked, ideas pouring forth in well-finished sentences like liquid metal in a mould and no revision was needed."



G.K. Chesterton by Maria Petrie

SCHALL ON CHESTERTON

Timely Essays on Chesterton's Timeless Paradoxes

To Comprehend Nothing is to Pardon Nothing

by James V. Schall, S.J.

G.K. Chesterton's essay "In Defence of Detective Stories" from *The Defendant* is well-known. I often cite the notion—one that I am certain is from Chesterton—that we should be committing murders every day, but by writing detective stories. The knowledge of how evil works is itself essential to the healthy mind.

In *A Miscellany of Men*, Chesterton has another essay in the same category entitled "The Divine Detective." Now we might wonder just what an all-knowing God needs to be detecting. The implication is that God has put Himself in something of a bind by the general structure of creation He put into existence.

The essay begins, "Every person of sound education enjoys detective stories, and there are even several points on which they have a hearty superiority to most modern books." No one, of course, wants to be thought lacking in "sound education," even though some think detective stories are a waste of time.

Chesterton amusingly explains the difference between a detective story and a "modern philosophic" story in this way: A detective story has a dead man around whom six living men stand wondering how it happened. A "modern philosophic" story, on the other hand, has six dead men discussing how "any man can possibly be alive."

The private detective has only to catch the criminal; he does not have to deal with him once caught. That is the messy job of the state. In this context, writes Chesterton, "The Christian Church can best be defined as an enormous private detective, correcting that official detective—the State." This is the initial clue to the title, to why we might also need a "divine detective."

The Church can be faulted sometimes for imitating the State. "The real difference between the Church and the State is huge and plain. The State, in all lands and ages, has created a machinery of punishment, more bloody and brutal in some places than in others, but bloody and brutal everywhere."

By contrast, the Church is the only institution that has created "a machinery of pardon." The Church invented a system to pursue crimes not in order to punish the evildoer but to forgive him. The Church is mindful of the line in Francis Thompson's famous poem about our fleeing the Lord "down the nights and down the days."

To make his point, Chesterton cites a play in which there is a "divine figure" who encounters a group of "squalid

In Praise of Phrases

"Half our speech consists of similes that remind us of no similarity; pictorial phrases that call up no picture; of historical allusions the origin of which we have forgotten." —G.K. Chesterton

"Dark Horse." Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881)

Today we find most of our dark horses in politics, but the phrase originally applied to horseracing.

Although Disraeli is primarily remembered as a British statesman during the Victorian era (he was twice Prime Minister), he also had something of a career as a novelist. It was in his second novel, *The Young Duke* (1831), that the reading public first found the phrase "a dark horse," in the sense of an entry into a race of a horse that is unheralded and whose victory will come as a surprise. In Chapter 5, "Ruined Hopes," we read:

> There were more than ninety horses, and yet the start was fair. But the result? Pardon me! The fatal remembrance overpowers my pen. The first favourite was never heard of, the second favourite was never seen after the distance post, all the ten-to-oners were in the rear, and a dark horse, which had never been thought of, rushed past the grandstand in sweeping triumph. The spectators were almost too surprised to cheer.

Disraeli might just as well have made the horse white, grey, or chestnut, though it must be conceded that "dark" might have been intended to suggest mystery.

There is also the interesting tale of an unscrupulous owner of a thoroughbred black stallion who traveled about the state of Tennessee riding the horse as though it were an inferior breed. He would then contrive to challenge the locals to beat him in a race. The story has all the earmarks of a yarn spun after the fact to provide a plausible explanation for the phrase "dark horse."

characters." This "savior" seeks to save these unattractive gentlemen by "telling them how good they already are."

The trouble with such a play is that "it is not a detective story." If the persons involved are basically good, why call it a detective plot? "There is in it none of this great Christian idea of tearing their evil out of men; it lacks the realism of the saints."

If the plotters did something wrong, this is what needs to be discovered. Restoration of order involves the truth of what happened. "Things must be faced, even in order to be forgiven."

In a second play the redeemer is a detective but not divine. He does not want to "know and pardon." This man is more like a "divine dupe, who does not pardon at all, because he does not see anything that is going on."

Here Chesterton cites two famous French phrases. The first, *tout comprendre est tout pardonner*—to understand everything is to forgive everything—is a principle of rather dubious status. But Chesterton is quite sure of the second: *rien comprendre est rien pardonner*—To understand nothing is to pardon nothing. Pardon involves knowing precisely that which needs forgiving.

In explanation Chesterton adds, "There is nothing very heroic in loving after you have been deceived. The heroic business is to love after you have been undeceived." That is a profound sentiment.

In yet another play, this time an American one, we have a divine character that changes "the destinies of a whole group of persons." Evidently in this latter play, the Christ-figure "insists on really knowing all the souls that he loves; he declines to conquer by a kind of supernatural stupidity. He pardons evil but he will not ignore it." That is, what is evil is really evil, not an illusion. Moreover, it has a source and a cause that is not simply knowledge.

Christ came not for the just but for sinners. Christ tries to save "disreputable people." The hero and heroine of this latter novel were a vicar and his "fashionable" wife. "It would have been no good to tell these people they have some good in them—for that is what they were telling themselves all day long." What an amusing sentence!

The point is that they needed to be reminded not of what is good in them but of what is bad in them. The things we try to forget or to pass over most need attending. Here Chesterton recalled his controversy with Blatchford, of whom Chesterton said that whenever Blatchford used the word "sinner" he meant someone who was poor. Get rid of poverty and you will get rid of sin, he believed.

We do not have detective stories about poor people, Chesterton concludes. "The poor have crimes, but the poor have no secrets." Rather, the proud have "secrets." And it is for this reason that they need to be "detected before they are forgiven." The true "divine detective," in other words, cannot forgive what He knows but which we do not acknowledge. For the divine detective to forgive without our knowing would be to reduce us to mere automata and to forbid us to restore order in our souls and in our society by own acts.

That is the only way we can remain human. We should not be surprised if the divine detective who knows this pursues us "down the nights and down the days." "To comprehend nothing is to pardon nothing." In the end, the one who needs to comprehend this is not God but the sinner. The Church pursues the sinner not to condemn him but to forgive him. Beyond this it cannot go. Man remains free both in his sin and in its punishment or in its forgiveness.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM

- It is a principle of all truly scientific Higher Criticism that any text you do not happen to like is a later monkish interpolation. (*Illustrated London News*, March 5, 1927)
- If I could put the head of a folk-lore professor on the end of a stick, in the French Revolutionary manner, it might serve very excellently as a heavy wooden club for beating in the heads of other and less hardened folk-lore professors. ("Monsters and the Middle Ages," *The Common Man*)
- Popular legend sticks to the point, if it does not stick to the facts. (*The Listener*, Oct. 17, 1924)
- Take a whole Gospel and read it steadily and honestly and straight through at a sitting, and you will certainly have an impression, whether of a myth or of a man. It is that the exorcist towers above the poet and even the prophet; that the story between Cana and Calvary is one long war with demons. He understood better than a hundred poets the beauty of the flowers of the battlefield; but he came out to battle. And if most of his words mean anything they do mean that there is at our very feet, like a chasm concealed among the flowers, an unfathomable evil. ("The Battle with the Dragon," *The New Jerusalem*)
- Theologians and philosophers debate about the inspiration of scripture; but perhaps the most philosophical argument, for certain scriptural sayings being inspired, is simply that they sound like it. ("Concerning a Strange City," *The Common Man*)
- I think it might really be worthwhile to watch these old stories for things that are true, and not only for things that are not true. (*Illustrated London News*, March 14, 1914)
- I have always had my suspicions that the Higher Criticism was a good deal above itself, and that most of its reputation in scholarship was due to the rich and vast field of the things it hadn't found out. I have no high opinion of the logical methods by which men prove that Jericho could not have been utterly destroyed, because there is none of it left. I am not enraptured with the reasoning which says that Elijah could not have taken a chariot up to heaven, because there is no trace of it on earth. (*Illustrated London News*, Sept. 5, 1914)
- They prove that Mithras and Jesus were very much alike, especially Mithras. (*Illustrated London News*, Sept. 5, 1914)

An Interview with Tim Powers

by Sean P. Dailey

GM *Hide Me Among the Graves* is your first new novel in five or six years. As I understand, it's a sequel to *The Stress of Her Regard*.

TP Yes. It's like fifty years after the events of that book, and the main connection is that it takes place in the same world. Two characters from *The Stress of Her Regard* show up in it—Polidori, and Trelawny, who is now very old.

GM Tell me a little about Trelawny, who is a historical figure.

TP Trelewny was a vagabond, a romantic piratical figure. His autobiography is really dramatic but was largely fictional.

GM Vampirism, of some form or another, is a common theme in your books, as it was in *The Stress of Her Regard* and in the new book. Could you tell us about that?

TP I suppose it is a common theme. I guess it just strikes me as an enduringly scary idea in that they're not really simply going to suck your blood, but that they put your soul in peril. There is a good deal more to the whole idea of vampires than simply that they suck your blood. They're not the equivalent of leeches—their spiritual peril outweighs the plain old physical peril.

GM At the same time, a lot of your heroes are heavy drinkers.

TP Fighting vampires is a traumatic endeavor, and it's always struck me that there's something spiritually potent about alcohol in every mythology, and certainly in Christianity it is a core element.

GM And your vampires, especially in *The Stress of Her Regard*, can be especially alluring.

TP Yes, there always has to be something perversely attractive about them. People who get hassled by vampires are not simply fleeing or putting garlic around windows. There is always a backhanded temptation to take the garlic down and open the windows. There is a kind of susceptibility to vampires. And though vampires don't want to have sex with you, they light up that same circuitry in the head.

GM Another of your recurring themes, particularly in *The Anubis Gates* and in *Last Call*, is body switching. What is the attraction there?

TP I have always thought that there is something scary about the idea that somebody can not just climb over the wall or break into your house, but can actually pop you right out of your own body and take it for themselves and leave you as, I don't know what, as some sort of wraith wandering about the yard.

GM And *Last Call* also had the element of tarot cards, which was pretty cool.

TP It struck me, with *Last Call*, struck me forcibly, that modern playing cards are derived from tarot cards and there is a remote connection. Tarot cards have always struck me as scary and dangerous, along lines of Ouija boards.

GM Yes. The last time we spoke, you told me about the woman you had met who regretted that she'd ever played with tarot cards.

TP Yes, that was her "moveable window," as she put it, that she could use to look in on any situation that she was curious about. She told me that one rainy night she had laid out her 'window' and got a vivid impression that something on the other side blundered past and looked in on her. She knocked them on the ground, she said, but she feared it would recognize her if it saw her again.

Anyway, I had the idea that tarot cards have been a fortune-telling thing for quite a while. Playing cards, too. There are a lot of poker clubs in Los Angeles. Poker turned out to be a research element that I kept an interest in, even after the research was done.

GM The plot device in *Last Call* about the smoke swirling around the poker players, and whether the drinks looked strange and might portend, where did that come from?

TP I made that up. I wanted the effect to be as if the table were spinning, what centrifugal force would do, with the smoke rising toward the middle.

GM You are credited with inventing (along with your friend James Blaylock) the genre of "steampunk" fiction, or "secret history" fiction. What got you into that?

TP My interest in history is not from college. I was a literature major in college. But there was this one writing project, where an editor back in about 1976 told me and a couple of other writers that a British publisher was interested in a series of ten novels about King Arthur being reincarnated through history, you know, being reincarnated to help fight Nazis or something. The series was never published. It was canceled. But before that we three had written one or two novels apiece in that [sort of] framework.

In doing that I discovered that a historical setting is really valuable as a useful way to write fantasy. It gets around a lot of problems that fantasy has, especially setting a story in a completely imaginary land, which can be a big strain on the reader's credulity. So in writing for that aborted series, I discovered that history and fantasy mix very effectively, so even though the series was canceled I kept on doing that.

GM Interesting! Is that where *The Drawing of the Dark* came from?

TP I think that was assembled from a couple of other stories I wrote for the King Arthur series, and another one was *The Anubis Gates*. That was far back in its inception, yeah, though I did break that up finally and rearrange it.

GM The poet William Ashbless is a figure in *The Anubis Gates*. Can you tell us about his background?

TP My friend James Blaylock and I were clowning around. The poetry that was usually published in the campus newspaper was pretty terrible, and so we undertook to write pretentious, meaningless poetry to submit to the paper, and we needed a name for the poet and I figured he needed a two-word name, like Wordsworth or Longfellow, and we came up with "ash" and "bless." When we started writing novels, any time we needed a crazy poet we used the name William Ashbless. Blaylock used the name in a book at the same time I used it in *The Anubis Gates*, and we both sent it to the same editor. The editor said, "Do you guys know each other?" We said we did, and she said to go ahead and build on the Ashbless idea.

GM In *The Anubis Gates*, you managed to combine Egyptian mythology with the Romantic poets.

TP Egyptian mythology was handy. What I do is, if I find some mythology is indicated, I read up on it heavily and try to figure how it would best function in my plot. I cook up a version of it and thus my version is "what really was." At that time, I had this idea that Gypsies came from Egypt. They did not, but that's what I seized on for the Egyptian mythology I use in the book.

GM Is this how you came up with the plot for *Declare*?

TP Yeah, since so much of that book took place in Arabian desert, I checked out Bedouin folklore, mythology, and *1001 Arabian Nights*. I read the Sir Richard Burton translation and luckily he provided extensive footnotes. I took his descriptions of the mythology and mixed it with Bedouin superstitions and folklore and synthesized it into what I could claim was the real story behind the Djinn and the whole mythology.

GM I liked how you combined Arabian mythology with the Cold War.

TP It was Kim Philby, obviously, who was a pretty crucial figure in the cold war espionage story, and his father was a Lawrence of Arabia-like figure in the Middle East. Philby was influenced by his father. He was living in Beirut and it just overlapped kind of conspicuously, and at one time Philby was the head of station for the British in Turkey. The connection was hard to miss.

GM *Declare* is your most overtly Catholic novel.

TP In that novel Catholicism is overtly the true story, baptism really does have an effect. When the heroine is in the Lubyanka prison, her prayer has a tangible effect. And again, that was largely indicated by the research. Philby had a sort of fearful, cautious attitude toward Catholicism, and his father had gone to the trouble to make sure Philby would never be baptized. Research pointed toward Catholicism being a necessary element of the book. I am guided by the research. I do the research to find the bones of the story.

When I do my research I adopt an attitude of a paranoid schizophrenic perspective in that nothing is a coincidence, and I ask, "What are these people really up to?" Philby, for instance, miraculously survived in a car hit by an artillery shell. Everyone else was blown to pieces but he was not hurt at all. But he was wearing a weird fox fur jacket. Later in life he had a pet fox that drank whiskey and smoked a pipe, and when the fox finally died Philby was grief-struck, whereas he had not been a few years earlier when his father died. So I thought, it looks to me like the father was reincarnated in the fox, and there is something going on with foxes here. I thought, well, you know it certainly looks like something significant.

GM Is that why so much time passes between each of your novels? The research?

TP Yes, that and laziness (laughter). Yeah, how I work is, I don't arrive with a story in mind and then do the research. I don't research a story. I read very widely looking for pieces for an

eventual story, like Cold War espionage in the '50s and '60s, and I read everything I can get my hands on looking for clues. And if I get sidetracked, I read *that*, looking for clues. A lot of the reading I do turns out not to apply, but yeah, it does take a while to get a broad acquaintance with an area I want to write in, and once I have the clues, I figure out what sort of book these would all be a part of. So very largely, the plots are dictated by the research I find.

GM And then what happens?

TP Basically, filling in the blanks. When I am looking for evident connections and motivations I am always thinking in supernatural terms. I grew up reading this stuff so I can't think of plots that don't involve some sci-fi/fantasy element.

GM Let's talk about G.K. Chesterton for a bit. You are a fan and indeed, he pops up from time to time in your novels. What attracts you to him?

TP First, Chesterton is one of those writers who you almost don't care what he happens to be writing about, he's just so fun to listen to, like Wodehouse. Their style is just so entertaining that the subject at hand is almost secondary. But specifically *Orthodoxy* and *The Everlasting Man*—I am perpetually rereading those two books. I've got copies of them all jammed with boarding passes and phone numbers because I take them with me on airplanes. I think I know "Lepanto" by heart.

Chesterton is one of those writers like C.S. Lewis (who was very influenced by Chesterton) who are absolutely convincing. I think it would be difficult for someone to read a Chesterton book and come out disagreeing with him.

GM And *The Everlasting Man* is, of course, the book that inspired Lewis to abandon atheism.

TP *The Everlasting Man* just strikes me as devastatingly convincing. I think you'd have approach it with a whole lot of ironclad defenses to avoid being persuaded.

GM What else by Chesterton do you like?

TP His book on conversion, *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, that is a very valuable text. I again find it very convincing, and his biographies on Aquinas and St. Francis. I am always impressed by, at very beginning of the St. Francis book, where he says you need to understand the world that Francis was born into, that it was coming out of the recuperative period of the Dark Ages, in which Europe was recovering after paganism. And his description of paganism and of how it, with no real blame, came to a dead end, had gone as far as it could go, and was left in such a state that Christianity, when it arrived, was recognizable as the solution to the quandary that the people of that time found themselves in. It was really convincing. I wish I could memorize it. He is a tremendous writer; I am glad he wrote so much. And his poetry is terrific.

GM What did you read growing up?

TP I started with the Hardy Boys. I read Albert Payson Terhune, who wrote books about dogs. They're great books, actually, but then when I was eleven my mother got me a Robert Heinlein book, *Red Planet*, and that just polarized me, and from then through high school all I read was science fiction and fantasy. Somehow that period imprinted me for life.

GM Do you prefer writing novels or short stories?

TP I prefer novels to short stories. I like the scope and elbow room to expand in a novel. You can certainly develop a much more intricate plot in a novel. Short stories are kind of a stunt, as if at dinner someone said you couldn't do something so you roll up your sleeves and do it and sit back down and everyone applauds and you finish your dinner. But a novel you live for several years.

GM To return to how you use alcohol in your books: in *The Drawing of the Dark*, the "Dark" is a beer that saves Western civilization. Were you thinking about the Eucharist with that?

TP No, I was not thinking of the Eucharist specifically. I think I did say in that book somewhere that there was an old painting in which the wine at the Last Supper appeared to be white wine, with the implication that it might have been beer. It may be bit irreverent but I was not overtly thinking of that connection. But always beer and wine, or whatever it might be, it is always a significant element in every set of supernatural beliefs, I think.

GM One thing I find interesting is that the Promised Land is right on the path between the two great beer-producing civilizations of the ancient world, Egypt and Mesopotamia, yet to my knowledge there is no mention of beer in the Bible.

TP That's true! There's no beer in the Bible! That's interesting. They had it in Egypt—maybe the Hebrews didn't make beer, but then they seem to have been insulated in a number of ways from the rest of the world.

GM Have you ever studied sword fighting? In your books, especially in *The Drawing of the Dark*, your descriptions of sword fighting are very vivid.

TP In college I took a lot of fencing courses, using the foil, the épée, and the saber, and my wife and I took fencing classes for sixteen years, so yeah, it's an element I like, on occasion, to put into a book.

GM Can you tell us anything of what you are working on now?

TP Looks like it will be a novel set in the present day or at least in the twentieth century, and it involves Los Angeles. I might just leave it at that, since the research is still uncongealed as yet.

ROLLING ROAD

The Mirage

by Dale Ahlquist

It is surprising to discover that there are normal people who live normal lives in Las Vegas. The qualification on the word normal is that they live in suburban subdivisions and shop at chain stores. The city is ten times the size it was thirty years ago. It is a carefully planned sprawl. Very clean and neat. It would look like most other cities if you simply removed "The Strip" and "The Downtown," which are unique to Vegas and unique to planet Earth.

It is a city that has been built on two small cubes, a deck of cards, and a machine that is similar to a cash machine, the difference being that you put money in and someone else takes the money out.

I used to go to Vegas on a semi-regular basis. This was in another life. I'm not talking about reincarnation; I'm talking about the person I was before I became the man I am now. I had a different job, a different faith, a different bank account. I found my way out of all those things.

I recently returned to Vegas to give a talk about my favorite writer. It was a surreal experience, being in the town for less than twenty-four hours, being there on business—my business and not Vegas' business—and yet staying on the Strip in the midst of a world that is now quite foreign to me.

The town continues to transform. Bigger bigness seems to be the operative theme. Each new casino hotel that rises from the desert floor must outdo the previous one. Piña colada volcanoes are passé. Gone are the Sands, the Dunes, the Stardust. Now the themes of the great facades simply ape real places from elsewhere: New York, Paris, Venice, Monte Carlo, Egypt, Mandalay Bay, Camelot (a real place from England's collective memory). The most well-named casino is The Mirage, a vision that seems so real to those suffering in the desert, but is so false. The least well-named is Treasure Island. Forget about it. Nothing buried there.

All of the casinos glitter brightly in the desert night. From a distance the city looks like sparkling jewels tossed across a black velvet blanket. In the daylight, the landscape around the city looks like the surface of Mars, and is equally uninhabitable.

The other violent contrast is the silence of the desert against the noise of Vegas. Everything about Vegas is extreme, but I think the most extreme thing is the noise. Every place is loud. Though everything aims for elegance, noise defeats the elegance at every turn.

One form of noise, of course, is the shows. You can still find crooners, but really, why bother? You can find washed up rock bands, which is even more of a mystery. The biggest shows are magic shows. There are the classic acts, and then there are the avant-garde—a perfect word indicating that they are trying to be out in front, but still protecting the secret—or even the guerrilla magic shows that have a raw edge to them. There are the magicians whose shtick is to reveal how the trick is done. But the point is that millions have fallen for the illusion which is Vegas itself.

Did I mention that the word "casino" means confusion?

And yet. And yet. You can make yourself miserable in Vegas, which is what most people do who come there. But you can also have fun in Vegas if you know how to control yourself. The entertainment is spectacular even if it is over the top. And the people-watching is more fun than anything you can pay for. And, if you can afford it (which most people can't), you can enjoy what G.K. Chesterton calls "the vanity of guessing," which is how he defines gambling.

It is a holiday for those of us who can visit and leave—but it must be a great chore for those who have to stay and maintain such a high level of energy and excitement non-stop. The place invites crime and despair. So do most other cities, but Vegas is an exaggeration. Chesterton says that all cities are built on a volcano.

There are some who long for what Vegas used to be, who get nostalgic for the smaller, more intimate setting and a level of confusion that seems manageable. There is such a place. It is Reno. Skip Vegas if you must, but you really should visit Reno. This coming August, as a matter of fact. There is going to be a Chesterton conference there, August 2–4. I'll be there. I hope you will be there, too. We're going to have a lot of fun.

THE CHESTERTON READING ROOM

The grand opening of the Chesterton Reading Room at St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver took place one year ago on March 23, 2011. On hand to dedicate the room was Bishop James Conley. G.K. Chesterton (Chuck Chalberg) also showed up.

The Denver Chesterton Society has created one of the most beautiful, permanent Chesterton sites in the United States. A true labor of love, thanks to the persistence of Sue Scofield, founding president of the Denver Chesterton Society, and a generous donation from member Chris Rees, who made

continued...

Photos by Terry Rees

the room a memorial for his parents. The project manager was Mark Tarrant, who not only designed the room, but built the glass bookcases and arranged to have the doors etched with portraits of Gilbert and Frances Chesterton and Chesterton quotations. The conference table was hand-built by local artisan Karsten Balsley. The room houses an extensive and growing collection of Chesterton's writings, along with DVDs of the "The Apostle of Common Sense" to be enjoyed on the large television screen. The Denver Chesterton Society holds its monthly meetings in the room, and the rest of the time it is thoroughly enjoyed by the seminarians.

The American Chesterton Society offers its thanks and congratulations to the Denver Chesterton Society on the one year anniversary of the Chesterton Reading Room.

Chris Rees with Denver City Auditor Dennis Gallagher

His Excellency James Conley, Auxiliary Bishop of Denver

Maureen Rees with Dale Ahlquist

G.K. Chesterton had something to say, too.

A delightful reception was held in the seminary library.

Sue Scofield, President of the Denver Chesterton Society

TALES OF THE SHORT BOW

Fairy Stones

by James G. Bruen Jr.

Daddy, tell me again where fairy stones came from," said Melissa Melbourne as her father tucked her into bed in the log cabin he had rented in Fairy Stone State Park in south-central Virginia near the border with North Carolina.

"You're not tired of that story?" laughed her father, Al, as he kissed the nine-year-old on her forehead. "Long, long before the rule of the great Indian Chief Powhatan, who reigned when the English first came to Jamestown, fairies were dancing around a spring, playing with naiads and wood nymphs in this very forest, when an elven messenger arrived from far, far away with news of Christ's crucifixion," he recounted. "The forest fairies wept many tears. As their tears fell to the ground, they crystallized, forming beautiful tiny crosses."

"Oh, Daddy! It's true, isn't it? Isn't it?" asked Melissa. "The fairy stones are so beautiful."

"Well," he said, "Powhatan was a great Indian chief, and the English did come to Jamestown."

"I know that, Daddy. They told me that in school. The fairies are real, too, aren't they, Daddy?"

"Did they teach you about them in school, too, Melissa?" he laughed.

"No, Daddy," she replied firmly, "but they don't teach me everything in school. They don't teach me Jesus is real either, but I know he is."

"Melissa, honey, when you grow up you'll realize better what's real and what's not, then we'll talk more." Al Melbourne kissed his daughter on the cheek before turning out the light and closing the door to her bedroom.

His wife, Melanie Manheim, was reading in bed when Al arrived in their bedroom. She looked up and asked, "Safely tucked in?"

"Safely tucked in," he confirmed as he picked up a small paper bag from a nightstand. He emptied its contents onto the bed. Out poured a dozen small stones, most "x" shaped like a St. Andrew's cross, but one was a "t" shaped Roman cross and another was a square Maltese cross. "Wear a fairy stone, and you're protected against witchcraft, sickness, accidents, and disaster, folks say," he murmured.

Melanie put down her book. "Quaint story, isn't it?"

"Melissa thinks it's real," he said.

"She'll grow up," observed Melanie. "Reread what the park brochure says about the fairy stones, Al. They're staurolite – a mixture of silica, iron, and aluminum that, when put under great heat and pressure, crystallizes at sixty or ninety degree angles, like crosses. Fairy stones are rare, Al, but I'm sorry to break the news to you: fairies didn't make them. I collected that bag of fairy stones as curiosities for the people I'm meeting with tomorrow in D.C. I thought a small gift might help me land the account."

"Do you really have to go to that meeting, Mel?" Al asked. "It's the first vacation for the three of us together in four years. Couldn't someone else cover the meeting for you?"

"Al, cut it," snapped Melanie Manheim. "I shouldn't have let you talk me out of driving to D.C. today and renting a hotel room so I could be at my best tomorrow. Now I'll have to leave in the morning by seven at the latest. It's a six-hour drive to D.C. My presentation shouldn't last more than two, maybe three, hours. Then six hours back. I'll need time to eat, too, so you'll probably both be in bed by the time I get back. Maybe I should just spend the night in D.C. Now, let me get some sleep." She pulled a blanket over herself and turned towards the wall.

Al put the fairy stones back in the bag, replaced it on the nightstand, turned off the light, and dressed in the dark for bed.

The aroma of fresh brewed coffee spread through the rustic cabin at six-thirty the next morning. Al Melbourne poured himself a mug. Sipping the coffee, he stood at a window, admiring wildfowl on the large lake outside.

"Daddy! Daddy!" exclaimed Melissa, bursting from her bedroom and still dressed in her pajamas. "They're real! They're real! I saw them!"

Al turned to greet his daughter.

"The fairies were here last night! They were here!" announced Melissa.

Al smiled at her. "Sure they were, my little darling daughter."

"No, Daddy, I mean it: they were really here—about ten of them!"

"Did they dance for you?" he laughed.

"No, Daddy. They were carrying fairy stones out of your bedroom," she said, "so I asked them what they were doing. The one that was leading them seemed surprised I could see them and was talking to them but he stopped and answered me."

"Oh he did, did he?" laughed Al. "And what did he say, young lady?"

"He told me they don't like it when people who don't believe in fairies and fairy crosses take the stones for trinkets," she said. "So they were taking them back."

"Is that all he said?"

"No," replied Melissa. "The fairy told me they left one stone behind. He said they hope you and mom find the cross."

Al Melbourne said nothing. He turned back to the window, sipped his coffee, and gazed at the lake.

"Pour some coffee into a travel mug for me, Al," called Melanie from the bedroom. Al did as instructed. Melanie soon emerged, fully dressed for departure, though she wasn't carrying the paper bag. "Thanks, Al," she said, grabbing the travel mug as she headed for

the cabin door.

"Don't forget the fairy stones, Mel," said Al.

"I couldn't find the bag this morning," she said, stopping and turning toward him. "Where did you put it last night? I only found one stone on the nightstand; that's useless for me." She reached into a pocket and then gave a single "t" shaped fairy stone to Melissa, saying, "Here, you can have it." Within moments, Melanie was in her car on her way to Washington.

Al Melbourne retrieved the fairy stone from his daughter. Gazing again at the lake, he repeatedly turned the stone over and over in his hand. "Melissa," he said eventually, "tell me again what the fairy said."

Two Poets

by Kelsey McIntyre

One dewy morning, in search of the sort of poetic inspiration that can come only from contemplating the glories of nature, Mr. Witherwill went for a stroll in the forest. His friend and fellow poet, Mr. Fitzjames, accompanied him, but for the first quarter of an hour the two ambled through the sun-dappled trees in silence.

As they reached a part of the forest shaded by a roof of intertwining pine boughs, Mr. Witherwill sighed at last, "Oh, the joy that fills my soul at the smell of fresh pine! How sweet, how very sweet, are the sensations it conjures up within me!"

Mr. Fitzjames poked at a clump of violets with his walking stick and glanced sideways at his friend. "My goodness—and what thoughts do these sensations inspire?"

"Thoughts too deep for words," Witherwill whispered. "When I smell the rich perfume with which these trees have anointed themselves I recollect the purity and innocence of childhood, that blissful time of life when we had not yet lost our unity with nature."

"Hmm," Fitzjames said, after a pause. "Oddly enough, I was thinking of childhood and the smell of pine as well. My mother used to make pine-scented soap, and she would always use it to scrub my hands after I had been out picking raspberries. The smell would linger on my skin until dinnertime, and after dinner I would get a raspberry tart. So I suppose I was really thinking of raspberry tarts."

"Raspberry tarts?" Witherwill repeated, wrinkling his nose. "My dear Fitzjames, I am at a loss as to how you became a poet, with sensibilities like yours. Aren't you ashamed of uttering such nonsense in the midst of this sublime wilderness? It is an insult to the forest!"

"The forest produces raspberries, and I enjoy raspberries all the more when they have been turned into tarts, so I don't see how it could be an insult," Fitzjames argued, pausing to untangle himself from a bramble that had caught the hem of his coat. Witherwill stopped as well and watched him with raised eyebrows.

"Caught by a bramble," he murmured, beginning to smirk. "Fitzjames, I hope you realize that *I* wasn't caught by a bramble."

"What?" Fitzjames freed himself and gave his colleague a puzzled glance. "That's all very well, Witherwill, but I hope *you* realize that I was walking on the side of the path bordered by brambles, while your side only had grass and buttercups."

"It is a symptom of something much larger," Witherwill cried. "You see, it is impossible that *I* should come to any harm whilst in this forest—or, in fact, on any terrain, tranquil or wild, composed by nature's sublime hand—because I have long devoted myself, with reverence and awe, to worshiping the unblemished glory of the natural world, which is superior in holiness to anything tainted by mankind. I have striven to make myself one with the eternal serenity of the wilderness, and in sincerely desiring to love and emulate all the creatures who dwell here in this blessed place, I know that I have secured myself their care and protection in return. You, on the other hand, spend your time daydreaming about sweets, and therefore risk the wrath of whatever menacing forces roam these woods."

His speech had hardly died away when a nearby bush rustled violently. Both poets froze and stared at the waving branches.

"Hello?" Fitzjames said, gripping the top of his walking stick.

"Speak, I implore you, be you man or beast!" Witherwill demanded.

A sleek gray wolf emerged and straightened up on its hind legs. It smiled at the flabbergasted friends and seemed to hesitate just short of a bow, settling instead on a courteous nod of its bristled head.

"I have been waiting for an opportunity to introduce myself into your conversation from the moment I heard your approach," it said, laying a paw over its chest. "Sir, your kind words are such a compliment to me and the forest that I feel I have to thank you personally."

Fitzjames frowned, but Witherwill flushed with excitement and shook the wolf's free paw. "This is a dream, an honor—I can scarcely express the gratification you have given me," he gushed. "I realize that, though you are traditionally a predatory animal, you would never hurt one who has so accustomed himself to being fully in sympathy with your desires and feelings."

"Quite true," the wolf said, widening its black eyes earnestly. "I see your honorable friend has backed away from me—he is clearly not as enlightened as you are."

"No, clearly not." Witherwill turned to glare at Fitzjames.

At that moment the wolf leaped

forward and, in two chomps, had Witherwill's head and shoulders halfway down its throat. It swallowed forcefully, a concentrated expression on its face, and the struggling Witherwill slid deeper into its mouth so that only his legs remained kicking in the spring air.

Before the catastrophe had lasted more than a few seconds, however, Fitzjames lunged and jabbed his walking stick so hard into the wolf's stomach that it gagged, sending Witherwill tumbling back out onto the path. Stunned, both the wolf and its prey (who was now smeared with saliva down to his waist) tried to regain their breath.

"Careful, sir," Fitzjames said, rubbing the tip of his stick to make sure it hadn't chipped. "The last thing my companion would want is for you to choke to death on a mouthful like that. He is *so* fond of animals."

ALL IS GRIST

Timely Essays on Chesterton's Timeless Paradoxes

What to Wear

by Joe Campbell

The structure seemed intact, but not the occupants. Everywhere I looked, I saw body parts: torsos with heads lopped off above the neck, arms lopped off above the elbows, legs lopped off above the knees; severed heads staring vacantly; detached legs standing grotesquely erect, some chopped off above the knees, others below; disconnected hands sliced off, it appeared, in mid-wave.

I averted my eyes, as I always do when I wander absentmindedly into the women's wear department.

Chastened, I began searching for one of the sales staff. This was difficult to do with my eyes averted.

"I'm looking for the men's wear department," I explained to what seemed the most stylishly dressed woman on the floor.

A less stylishly dressed woman intervened.

"Do you often speak to mannequins?" she asked.

I don't enjoy shopping for clothes. For one thing, I'm difficult to fit. You would be, too, if you were five-foot seven and shrinking. For another thing, I get attached to my clothes and the thought of replacing them distresses me. I also have no sense of fashion.

I have an acute sense of function, however. When double-breasted suits dominated the 1930s, I assumed that it was because men were normally double breasted. When single-breasted suits appeared in the 1940s, I put it down to amputations due to war injuries.

During World War II, suits generally consisted of less fabric than previously as vests and pocket flaps disappeared and trousers lost their multiple pleats and cuffs. Obviously, the garment manufacturers produced tighter fits because wartime rationing produced thinner men. After the war, men gained weight and suits got roomier.

But not everyone adhered to wartime rationing, and some bulged unpatriotically. The clothing industry responded with zoot suits, which included long, baggy coats with wide shoulders and ballooning trousers that narrowed sharply at the ankles. In silhouette, zoot suiters looked like inverted isosceles triangles.

When stove-pipe pants appeared in the 1960s, I realized that they were for motorists whose legs had atrophied because they no longer walked. But if excessive driving was disabling, so was excessive walking and running prompted by a government-subsidized fitness craze. Clothiers rose to the challenge and introduced bell-bottom trousers for pedestrians with chronically swollen ankles.

By the 1970s, men had adopted the "peacock" style of dressing. This was a form of protective coloration. Men flaunted psychedelic colors so that motorists on psychedelic drugs could see them in time to hit the brakes.

Although suits are still common, I've noticed a troubling trend toward more casual dress. I say troubling because it indicates that many men no longer have the stamina to wear a business suit every day. This, despite a more than one-third reduction in fabric weight over the last hundred years. Public health officials should take heed.

Even more troubling are the incredibly low-crotched trousers that adolescents began wearing around the turn of the century. Clearly, these pants were designed to cope with gross genital deformities. The wearers need immediate medical (surgical?) help.

I've never been attracted to leisure suits. They look too much like pajamas. I wore blue jeans when they were work clothes. I stopped wearing them when they turned into uniforms. I haven't worn gray flannel suits, I'm happy to report. They turned into uniforms, too. While working my way through university, I briefly wore a second-hand tuxedo. The hotel orchestra I played in required it. I had to hide both feet behind my music stand when the leader insisted that tuxedos clash with running shoes.

The ultra formal full dress suit—top hat, white tie and tails—is my favorite. It's the most elegant suit I've

never worn. Whenever I see one, I overdose on adjectives like dashing, dapper, debonair, and suave. The full dress suit is work wear for chimney sweeps, magicians and classic dancers like Fred Astaire. I suspect Fred made it his signature suit because in the Hollywood musicals that featured him, it looked the same in black and white and technicolor.

I've never swept chimneys, but I've done a little magic and I'd love to be able to tap dance. If wearing a full dress suit would enable me to pull rabbits out of my top hat and trip the light fantastic in my patent leather shoes, I'd gladly sweep a chimney or two.

Because I dislike shopping for clothes, my suits wear out before I replace them. But not always. In my closet hangs a beloved jacket—the matching trousers no longer exist—that is more than a third of a century old. It's a check—blue, orange, brown and tan—with leather buttons and V-shaped leather strips above both breasts and on the pocket flaps.

I used to wear it every chance I got. When I continued wearing it after styles changed, strangers stopped me in the street to ask if I was playing hooky from a parade or taking part in an historical re-enactment. If I visited a museum, they thought I was an exhibit. If I attended a play, they wondered if I was in the cast. I refused to retire the jacket—it wore like a pig's nose—until one day an elderly woman approached me while I was sitting at a bus stop. As it was hot, I had removed my cap, and when I set it on the bench beside me, she dropped in her spare change.

I monitor the fashions. I can't wait until it's again safe to wear my jacket in public. In the meantime, it motivates me to keep fit. As it's a tight fitting, narrow cut, I exercise daily and watch my diet so that I can still get into it. Whenever I try it on, I feel poised and confident. I even feel confident enough to walk into the women's wear department without making a fool of myself.

What's the Big Deal?

by Peter D. Beaulieu

With Chestertonian reflection, my mind drifts back to my hurried walk alongside Dale Ahlquist on the Seattle University campus—from the dining hall back to Piggott Hall, site of the festivities of the 2009 Annual Chesterton Conference.

Dale asked me to explain my cryptic remark on the "Chesterton relevance" of my T-shirt depicting the aircraft carrier USS Hornet and the west Pacific 1969 recoveries of the Apollo XI astronauts, the first to land on the moon. Dale eagerly soaked up my overly-long narrative, and was "amazed." Earlier in the summer I had been part of the fortieth anniversary celebration of the Apollo XI recovery, on board the Hornet (now a museum ship) at Alameda, California. Here is what I recalled to Dale from those heady days in 1969, complete with relevant Chesterton citations.

The simple connection between Chesterton and the Apollo lunar landing program is that—with the wide open eyes of a child—G.K. Chesterton saw the universe as small, rather than big. And (I have read somewhere...) that from their vantage point in space, the new vista the astronauts valued most of all was not the stars, but rather earthrise over the lunar surface—our gem-like blue planet earth above, below, and within the larger view of billions of other stars. (Cosmologists tabulate a mere 10 billion galaxies of 10 billion stars each.)

In *The Everlasting Man* Chesterton builds on his earlier lines about discovering England from his outward bound and then turned-around yacht:

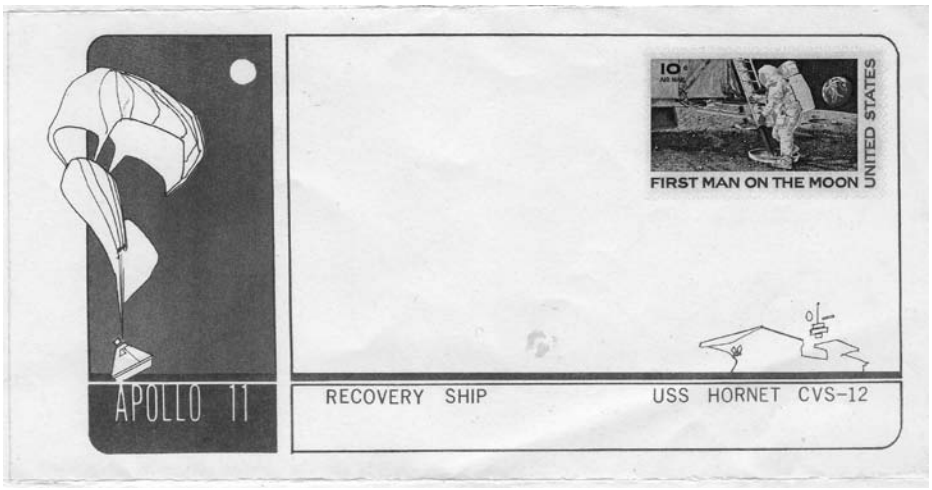
> "Far away in some strange constellation in skies infinitely remote, there is a small star, which astronomers may some day discover...I shall try to see even this earth from the outside...by some imaginative effort to conceive its remote position for the dehumanized spectator."

And in *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton writes:

> The size of this scientific universe gave one no novelty, no relief. The cosmos went on for ever, but not in its wildest constellation could there be anything really interesting; anything for instance, such as forgiveness or free will...But I was frightfully fond of the universe and wanted to address it by a diminutive, I often did so; and it never seemed to mind.

I discovered this tiny volume by Chesterton in the summer of 1968 when I reported to the Hornet in Long Beach, and even had it with me aboard the recovery ship Hornet on Apollo XI recovery day, July 24, 1969.

Also on board on that historic day was President Nixon, who



commented to the three astronauts that the world was infinitely bigger now that the moon was accessible to humans, but (he added) that the people on Earth had never felt closer together (as paraphrased in Bob Fish, *Hornet Plus Three: The Story of the Apollo XI Recovery*). And then, a few days earlier, there was the big-versus-little remark transmitted back to planet earth by Neil Armstrong as he took the first human step on the lunar surface: "That's one small step for man, one giant step for mankind."

One memento left on the lunar surface was a disk that included a message from Pope Paul VI from verses four through seven of Psalm 8. This one-and-a-half-inch silicon disk also bore other statements, all reduced in size 200 times, by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, and words of good will from leaders of seventy-two different countries. Other mementos were the American flag, a plaque reading "We came in Peace," together with medals and shoulder patches in memory of the Soviets Yuri Gagarin and Vladimir Komarov, and Americans Virgil Grissom, Roger Chaffee and Edward White, five men who had died in the lunar space programs.

The commanding officer of the Hornet, Capt. Carl Seiberlich (later advanced to rear admiral), was a devout Catholic until his death in 2006. On an outgoing mail plane from the Hornet he sent to Pope Paul VI a limited edition philatelic envelope, for the incomparable Vatican stamp collection. To which a few weeks later there came this response from the Vatican: "The Secretariat of State is graciously directed by the Holy Father to acknowledge receipt of the special philatelic envelope from the captain and crew of the USS Hornet... and in expressing His sincere appreciation of the loyal filial devotion which prompted this gesture, has the honour to convey, in pledge of abundant divine graces, the paternal Apostolic Benediction of His Holiness."

The coherence of science and faith...In this new century, Chesterton too would have us understand that the universe is more graced than it is big or possibly small.

Digging a Ditch

by Walt Sarafin

"The chief object of education is not to learn things; nay, the chief object of education is to unlearn things."

—G.K. CHESTERTON, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

The public school system I attended was recently in the news. It was cited, along with a number of other city schools, for being one of the worst in the state. This came as no surprise to me. They said the deficiency dated back thirty years. I can testify that it dates back a lot farther than that.

When I was an elementary school student in third grade, my teacher was very old. In fact, all my elementary school teachers were very old. But, my third grade teacher, Mrs. Noble, was balding and beginning to show signs of dementia. I could not have recognized or described it at the time but looking back on it now, I can see it and I know that other adults saw it at that time, too.

But what I remember most was that she had a somewhat high pitched, craggy voice. I remember that because to this day, I can still hear her telling me, "You'd better straighten up or you're going to end up digging a ditch!" According to Mrs. Noble, digging a ditch was the worst thing one could aspire to in life. Apparently she was regressing to her own younger day when ditches were dug by hand. It's that dementia thing I mentioned.

I think we were diagramming sentences at the time. It's a safe bet, because we did a lot of that. In fact we did it year after year. Looking back now, I realize that the teachers didn't know much of anything else. Certainly they didn't know any science. And math was the most basic operations of addition and subtraction. So they taught what they always taught, diagramming sentences, and they taught it year after year. I think that they forgot that they had already taught it. It's that dementia thing

again. Eventually I got bored and this led to the admonition that is now seared into my brain forever.

It's been a few decades since that warning about "digging a ditch," and I've been thinking about it. Had I been able to formulate a reply at the time, I might have written an essay. And it might have gone something like this:

Digging a Ditch

When I grow up, I am going to be a ditch digger. I know this because my teacher told me so and she is never wrong. So, I figured, hey, if I am going to be a ditch digger, I had better learn all there is to know about digging ditches.

Before any great building is begun, a ditch first has to be dug. This is true of everything from the Empire State Building to the Great Pyramids in Egypt. It is also true of other structures, too, everything from the Hoover Dam to the Golden Gate Bridge. And not just great structures either, but everything from the houses we all live in to the Panama Canal, which come to think of it, is nothing but one big ditch.

Usually ditches are dug to get to the bedrock for a good foundation or to put in water and sewer lines. But the ancient Egyptians dug ditches at the base of the Great Pyramids to fill them with water so that they could get the foundation level. It seems like a lot of work, but it looks like they got it right. I wonder what my teacher would have done.

Although ditch digging is a lot of work, there was one thing that they never did before they built any building, great or small. They never stopped to first diagram a sentence. The End.

Recently, the township where I live put in a sewer system. They dug miles of ditches. I was unemployed at the time and used to walk my dog along a wooded trail and worry about what I was going to do. The trail came to a high point that overlooked one of the ditch digging crews that were putting in the sewers. I would stop and watch them work. I thought that they didn't seem to recognize the seriousness of their plight. I also noticed that they were really very skilled. They used a high tech laser device to get the slope of the sewer line just right. And the guy operating the backhoe was so skilled that I thought he could use the arm and bucket to open a can of beer. And that only reminded me of what I wanted to be doing since I lost my job. But I digress. It had cost me a couple of thousand dollars to pay for my share of the project. Luckily my wife was still working at the time and we had some savings left. We just made it, but it seemed like money down the drain.

Eventually I got a job. Then I had to hire a contractor to dig a ditch in my back yard and connect my home to the new city sewer system because I could not dig that ditch myself. Apparently the contractor, who is a high school dropout and owns his own ditch digging company, never had a teacher who warned him of the evils of "digging a ditch." My teacher would have been proud to know that I was too smart to dig my own ditch. So, I took out a loan to pay this lowly ditch digger to dig me my own personal ditch in the back yard.

Eventually I'll pay off the loan and build my savings again. I just wish diagramming sentences could help make it happen.

VARIED TYPES

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

Roadside Conversion

by Victoria Darkey

Gingerly driving across the overpass, I could see the interstate below. The sight that met my eyes was something that looked like the aftermath of an alien invasion.

Cars and semi-tractor trailers were overturned and strewn about like Matchbox cars in a sand box. Traffic was in a state of chaos as emergency vehicles struggled to get through the fray. The cause of this mayhem was indeed from the sky, but the source was a little closer to home than a far off galaxy. An early spring ice storm had coated the road with a half-inch of ice in the space of an about an hour, catching road crews and travelers by surprise. I realized that finding an alternate route home from the meeting of the Chesterton Society of Warren, Ohio, would be my plight this evening as I slowly drove past the highway entrance ramp. The usual one-hour drive had turned into a three-hour odyssey of inching over black ice past other vehicles that had met their demise just seconds before. Aside from invoking my guardian angel numerous times, and phoning home to keep my family informed as to my progress, I had ample opportunity for prayer and reflection.

Two years earlier, while attempting to read *Orthodoxy*, I'd realized a desire for dialogue with other people interested in G.K. Chesterton. I had already subscribed to *Gilbert Magazine* and seen some episodes of *The Apostle of Common Sense* on EWTN, so, although I was not aware of any Chesterton-minded people in my immediate circle of friends, I knew that they existed somewhere. I just needed to find out where. I checked the American Chesterton Society Web site and found that although there were not any listings for Chesterton societies anywhere in Pennsylvania, the Warren Ohio Chesterton Society was about an hour away from my town in western Pennsylvania. I then happily commuted once a month to join with this merry band of Ohio Chestertonians, until the inconvenience of this particular night forced me to consider what I must do in order to enjoy the adventure of a Chesterton Society in my hometown. Months before, Dale Ahlquist had suggested that I start a Chesterton Society chapter in the Pittsburgh area. I had quickly dismissed the idea for a number of reasons, none of which seemed the least bit valid as I made that treacherous drive to get home that night. I was reminded of a passage in Chesterton's essay "The Artistic Side" published in *The Coloured Lands*. In it he says, "I still hold, every bit as firmly as when I wrote *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, that the suburbs ought to be either glorified by romance and religion or else destroyed by fire from heaven, or even firebrands from the earth. I still hold that it is the main earthly business of a human being to make his home, and the immediate surroundings of his home, as symbolic and significant to his own imagination as he can; whether the home be in Notting Hill or Nicaragua, in Palestine or in Pittsburgh."

Amid the glistening ice that night while pleading with God for a safe return home, I realized that my connection to a local group of people interested in Chesterton was a journey that started by a desire to move beyond the comfort of "the quotesphere," conferences, magazines, and TV shows. The first stop along the road had been in discovering the warmth and welcome of an established group outside of my local community. The next step was to embrace the adventure of establishing a Chesterton Society in my hometown. It would be a way to bring the wisdom and wit of Chesterton to the place where I live; a way "to [glorify] the suburbs by romance and religion," and I hoped it could be one way to accomplish what Chesterton held "is the main earthly business of a human being."

Within a few days of arriving safely at home, I picked a meeting date, lined up a place to meet at a local pub, and sent email invitations to a few people I thought might be interested. I also made up some simple fliers and placed an announcement in our diocesan newspaper. On a Thursday evening in May, safe from any threat of ice storms, The Western Pennsylvania Chesterton Society was born. Great books, many lively discussions, the discovery of friendships, and the wonder of fine port have followed.

It took some inky, slick roads for me to see the light and finally give God (and G.K.C. and Dale) my "yes." I am grateful I did. If there is a local Chesterton society meeting in your hometown, I hope you are enjoying the company of those gathered there. If you are the leader of a local society, I invite you to send me the stories of your beginnings, your struggles, your triumphs, and anything else you want to want to get off your chest. (Send by email to chestertonwpa@zoominternet.net.) If there isn't a local Chesterton society near you, I hope that you will start one without needing an ice-encrusted roadside conversion. Whatever it takes to get you to start a local Chesterton society, an amazing adventure awaits you.

NEW FROM ACS BOOKS

The Return of Father Brown

RETAIL PRICE: **$13.95**

44 New Mystery Stories Featuring G.K. Chesterton's Incomparable Priest-Detective

BY JOHN PETERSON

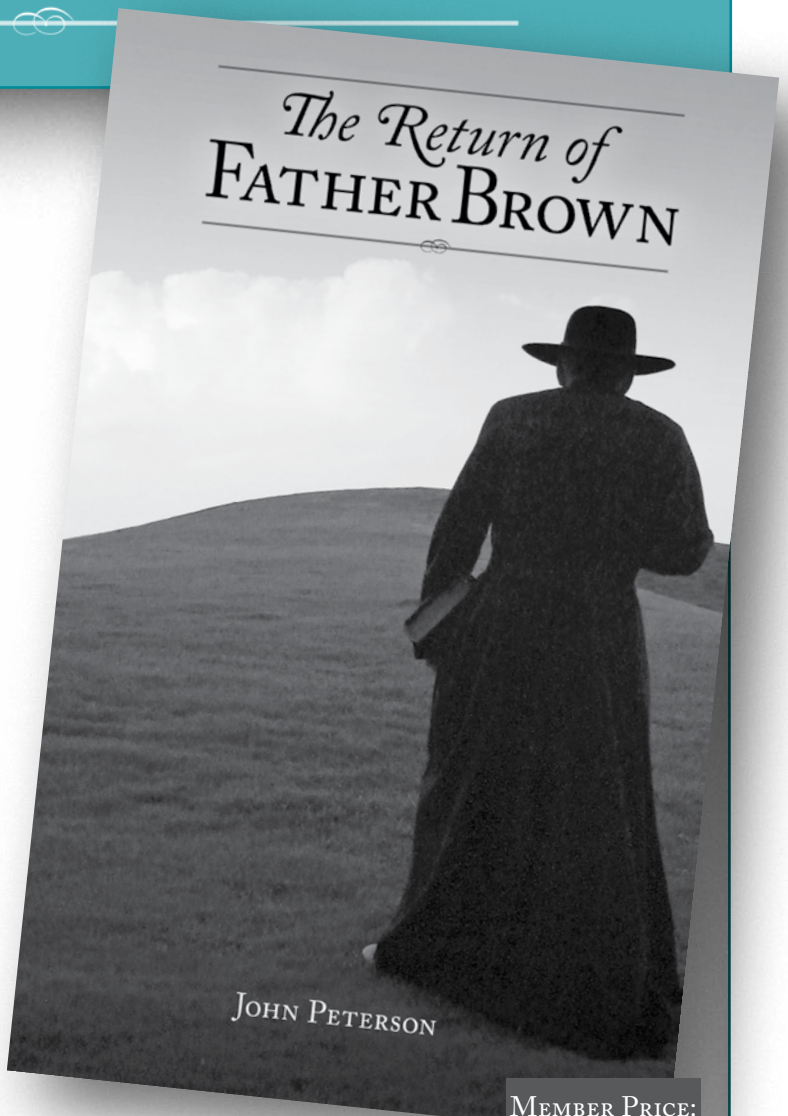
"A jewel, a treasure, a thing to be enjoyed again and again."

—G.J. MEYER, award-winning author of *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918* and *The Tudors*

"John himself would have made an amusing detective. He has the rigorous logic, the uncanny intuition, the edgy humor, the strange compassion under the gruff exterior, and he has the theology right."

—from the Foreword by DALE AHLQUIST, President of the American Chesterton Society

The Return of Father Brown is available at the American Chesterton Society Web site or by mail.



MEMBER PRICE: **$11.15**

THE AMERICAN CHESTERTON SOCIETY

4117 Pebblebrook Circle,
Minneapolis, MN 55437
(952) 831-3096
info@chesterton.org www.chesterton.org

THE FLYING INN

Home Rule at Home

Plumbing

by David Beresford

"All the things that happened in the house, or were in any sense done on the premises, linger in my imagination like a legend." — *AUTOBIOGRAPHY G. K. CHESTERTON*

Silence can be a scary thing. For example:

It was the holidays, and we were having company come to stay with us, and so were in a hurry to get the house in order. Theresa and the girls were trying to get some baking done, and I was hoping to get firewood cut for the week. My children were home from college so there was lots of help, and everyone pitched in cheerfully.

As the work progressed, the bathtub tap suddenly began to leak hot water in a steady stream, a broken washer. To fix this I was going to have to shut off the water main and dismantle the tap, and then drive into town to get the right size replacement washer, a two-hour job during which the household would be without water. Instead, I decided to install a shut-off tap in the basement—fifteen minutes tops—so that the water could be turned back on while I was in town.

I got my plumbing tools and my two sons came in from the woodshed to help me in the basement. I turned off the water main, and my wife Theresa and my daughters opened the taps so the system could drain. The pipe was near the ceiling. I had my oldest son, Patrick, hold a flashlight for me, and I used pails to catch the draining water. Hugh emptied these outside. When the water had all drained away, I cleaned the ends of the copper pipe, put flux on the new tap and pipe, and set the tap in place. I put some bent pieces of sheet metal behind the pipe where I was going to solder to shield the wooden floor joists from catching fire.

I then tried to light the torch, a brass nozzle screwed onto a propane tank about the size of a thermos. For some reason, the torch did not want to light. I went through about a dozen matches before I got a flame to stick. I then discovered that propane was leaking from the place where the brass attached to the tank. As I held the torch, a blue and orange flame leapt from the business end to the leak and played over the top of my left hand.

"Throw it into the pail of water...Oh, yeah," Patrick said as we looked at the empty pail. "Put it on the floor and let it burn itself out," said Hugh.

"No, it will just get hot and explode," I responded, as I tossed the torch back and forth from one hand to the other, trying to keep the heat of the flame away from the propane tank itself.

I was in a pickle, and decided to toss the torch outside, and so I headed upstairs to the kitchen to go out the back door waving the torch back and forth, changing hands as they became hot.

Upstairs, my wife and daughters were chatting, mixing dough, and doing whatever it is women do when they cook as we were fixing the plumbing in the basement.

"Your father seems to be having a good time from the sound of it," said my wife Theresa. "Listen:"

"Hugh, hand me the wrench, the blue channellock, #*! #*! #*! Ouch! Hand me the bucket, quick, #*! Patrick, shine the light here—where I am working—not the wall, #*! Stop jiggling the light, here, hold this, #*! #*! No! Up a bit, #*! Try and not shine it at my eyes!"

"It's nice for your father that he has this time with his sons, teaching them how to do plumbing repairs," said Theresa. "They seem to be enjoying themselves."

"#*! Hand me another match—#*! Another one—#*! Give me another—#*! Got it, finally."

"Uh, oh!" said Theresa. "Listen!"

Silence.

"It's quiet. Your dad's quiet, something bad is happening."

Theresa told me afterwards that she and the girls got worried when the genial chit-chat stopped. The next thing they heard was me running up the basement stairs, and they watched as I carried what looked like a handful of fire through the kitchen and raced out the back door.

I threw the torch onto the snow-covered yard and the top popped off like a cork. The torch burst into a fireball about four feet wide then quickly died down to a small flickering flame.

Coming back indoors, I said, "The water is going to be off a little longer than I thought, I'm afraid. I have to go into town and get a new propane torch. I'll pick up a bunch of different washers. Need me to get anything else while I'm there?"

My wife and daughters all looked at me open mouthed. My shirt sleeve was charred a bit, and the hair was burnt off my forearms. "Good thing the laundry was out of the way of the stairs; it was touch-and-go there. I was a bit worried that the back door might have been latched. Anyway, it worked out okay. Pity about that old torch, though: it was my dad's."

Silence can be a scary thing.

Garden Distributist

Now that spring has arrived, gardening can begin in earnest. Wish you had a compost pile but don't have space? Bury compostables approximately six inches down, a shovel-section at a time. In less than a month earthworms and other subterranean animals will have broken down the materials and these will be indistinguishable from the surrounding humus.

THE FLYING STARS

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

Programming Children

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

pro·gram
1. a plan of action to accomplish a specified end: a school lunch program.

Why should the word "programming" occur next to the word "children" and in what case does this happen?

This could be an essay question on a test, it sounds so authentic. But let's consider, first, what a parent attempts to do in raising a child.

This is an excellent exercise to think about when your children are very small. It's a sort of Stephen Covey (*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*) "begin with the end in mind" exercise.

What do you hope to accomplish with your children? Is it entrance to Harvard? The highest ACT score in the history of test taking? A concert pianist? Starring role in the Nutcracker? Marrying rich? President of the United States?

You have dreams for your children, what are they? And then don't just think about it; write the dreams down. In twenty years, who do you hope these people will be? What kind of character traits would you wish they had? What kinds of skills do you want them to have perfected?

If you are like most parents, you quickly come to realize in an exercise like this that we cannot choose our children's talents, aptitudes, or gifts. God gives those freely at the moment of conception. We aren't realistically capable of hoping for a brain surgeon or a Count Basie in the house. If our child has a talent, we nurture it and encourage it to grow—if we find out what it is while they're with us. Some talents and gifts are hidden from us, and it takes us quite some time to discover that a child happens to be good at listening, or empathizing, or contemplating.

So if we can't expect our children to accomplish "anything,"—and we can't, because every person has a unique set of gifts—then what *can* we expect? What can they actually, universally be trained to achieve? Make a list and put it on your refrigerator. I believe that I once told you in this column about the list on my 'frig. Things like obedience to parents, respect legitimate authority, keep the faith, treat others with compassion, prepare for possible martyrdom, and so on. You will have your own list. Ultimately these things are what make a good child. The problem is, society doesn't know how to define "good." But I'm guessing most parents know. These are whatever things make a person the kind of human being your family wants to send out into the world.

Now we look at our list and ask: Is this something my school can accomplish?

Schools notoriously provide programs for children. There are sports programs, arts programs, and school lunch programs. There are character education programs, sex education programs, and drug and alcohol awareness programs. There are before-and after-school programs, critical and creative thinking programs.

Schools also have a very calculated way of getting parents involved in these programs. But a parent needs to ask himself, is being involved in this program going to help me toward my goal of raising a child with my refrigerator list? Are helping with school lunches, for example, or keeping score at basketball, or sitting and watching a soccer game going to accomplish my goal of raising a good child? Are we really involved when we do these things?

But before we even ask ourselves if these programs are good, because for the most part, they are, we should be asking ourselves: Should our children be programmed?

If a program is defined as a "plan of action to accomplish a specified end" as above, then we parents should ask ourselves what "end" do schools hope to get out of our children? I'm going to leave you to ponder that answer.

The illusion of most schools is that parental involvement in a program is good, that programs are good, that busy-ness is good, that sports are good, that the arts are good, but these same schools cannot define a good child, nor do they have that on the refrigerator in the staff lounge. If the program doesn't have a specified goal in mind, is it really a program?

Parents truly do use programs with their children when they have a goal in mind. We tend to make our decisions based on our ultimate ideal of a "good" child. When parents can define a "good child," the program will most likely be quite effective. Especially if we use love and logic (I recommend the Foster Cline, M.D. Book, *Parenting with Love and Logic*), logical consequences (I recommend Dreikurs and Grey), and have a basic knowledge of the normal stages of development (I recommend the Louise Bates Ames and Frances Ilg series) so a determination can be made if the behavior is developmental or disobedient. But our programs include a goal, and most importantly, they include love.

Love cannot be programmed. Love comes quite naturally when a baby is born, and grows as the child grows. Love is the secret ingredient to raising a good child, and no one can program that but the Creator of All Programs.

Will the programs your children are involved in help produce the kind of person you want to send out into the world? Is your involvement achieving your refrigerator goals? These are things worth pondering.

JOGGING WITH G.K.

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

More Slowly

by Robert Moore-Jumonville

A friend of mine described how a sports med clinic helped correct some element of his running—something to do with his stride or posture, I recall—that enabled him to increase his speed (lower his minutes per mile). As he narrated his tale with glee, one word bounced in my head like a ping-pong ball: "Why?" Why would anyone want to run faster, unless of course, you were competing in a race, or fleeing from rabid dogs or politicians? For most of my running "career" I've held steady at around a ten-minute mile (which I find convenient for estimating distances). I realize my pace is slower than a wildebeest in monsoon mud. I also realize running fast produces pain. In college soccer, we were expected to run two consecutive six-minute miles to make the traveling team: it hurt terribly.

At a ten-minute mile, I can pace my running—if my math is sound—at six miles per hour. That's a pretty sane speed from which to view the world and reflect on life. In fact, Wordsworth thought seven miles per hour was too fast. In an unpublished book on Lake District travel, Wordsworth pondered the tourists who asked their guide: "Is there anything worthy of notice on the road?" The Guide's first concern is to hurry his customers on their sixteen-mile excursion without stops, only letting them see what they can "through the windows of a close Chariot, as the several vehicles are whirled along at the rate of seven miles an hour." And we struggle to keep our journey under seventy-seven miles per hour.

Wordsworth likely would have enjoyed Kosuke Koyama's book of essays titled *Three Mile an Hour God*, biblical reflections on the God "who invites us in the direction of depth rather than distance." Koyama reminds us, for instance, how slowly Israel's wilderness lesson advanced—forty years slow. "The people of God were taught the truth of bread and the word of God in the wilderness as they walked three miles an hour by the three mile an hour God."

Similarly, G.K. Chesterton insisted "the real psychology of wonder depends on some return to simplicity and even to slowness." Continuously increased novelty only adds to our boredom; "and…the notion of merely going faster and faster means to this mortal life what it means in motoring—the incapacity to see anything at all, even our own speed."

A colleague of mine just broke his ankle in three places playing intramural basketball—right before he was scheduled to deliver a paper at a national conference. Watching him limp around a college campus in his "boot" illustrated how irksome it is to slow down, how awfully inconvenient. (Though perhaps, in fact, a biological survival mechanism in us fears slowing down, since the slowest person in the group is the one who will fall prey to the lions).

Yet our culture continues to equate slowing down merely with growing old, out-of-touch, and useless. Whereas, being busy, in a hurry, exhausted by our pace, serves to feed our vanity: whispering seductively that we are important, desired, in demand—even indispensable.

In reality, hurry is a form of greed, a way of chasing the tail of our mortality. "Avarice has no dreams," proclaimed Chesterton, "only insomnia." Avarice has no time to dream. I go faster because I want more; and I want more because I am afraid to slow down; because if I do slow down, I will have to face myself, my limits, my God. When we actually slow down, haunting questions of particularity surface: Is "this" enough (this day, this job, this body, this life, this person I live with)? Am I enough? Is God enough? As in the wilderness, going slow requires trust.

Thus hurry becomes a way of denying our finitude, our creatureliness, and our continual dependence on God. "We are all beggars," asserts Johannes Metz in *Poverty of Spirit*. "We are all members of a species that is not sufficient unto itself. We are all creatures plagued by unending doubts and restless, unsatisfied hearts. Of all creatures, we are the poorest and the most incomplete."

But deep within us we do sense that slowing down can mean more, not less. Fast food often is neither fast nor food. Faster driving, on the person's bumper in front of us, does not produce any good in us. Talking faster, cramming more into a conversation with a friend, often leaves us feeling tired and not any more understood. Wayne Muller suggests that some of the best things in life can only be grown in time (slowly)—as in meals cooked with the family, making love, art, prayer and worship, long walks through the woods, or running.

Chesterton wrote, "Every true English road exists in order to lead one into a dance." But we can only enter this dance with a clear head by slowing down. Then we discover we live "in relationship" to the land we traverse, as a young Gilbert once described when he was out walking: "It was a burning blue day, and the warm sunshine, settling everywhere on the high hedges and the low hills brought out into a kind of heavy bloom that *humane* quality of the landscape which, as far as I know, only exists in England; that sense as if the bushes and roads were human, and had kindness like men."

ALL I SURVEY

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

Ideas, Anyone?

by David Fagerberg

I cannot lay claim to many shared attributes with G.K. Chesterton. I am thinking of his quick wit, his literary productivity, his pleasure in argument. My rejoinders are not quick or witty; I wish I could write as much as he did, and I am slow in argument. But there is one attribute that I do share with the great Gilbert, and that concerns our weight.

Maisie Ward describes him being thin as a child, who reached his adult height rather early and to that frame slowly added weight. Though he liked to take walks with Frances, "the sedentary *Daily* [News] life and the consumption of a good deal of beer did not help towards a graceful figure." There is a photo of him looking quite tall and fit at the time of their engagement in 1898, but already at the time of their marriage in 1910 he was showing the outline of things to come. I, on the other hand, remember being in grade school when I figured out that "Husky jeans" from Sears was a euphemism, along with such others as "large boned" and "waiting for his growth spurt." I wasn't chubby, I was only short for my weight.

Now standing out from the crowd can make one the target of the crowd, and I remember being teased on the school playground. Likewise, Shaw teased Chesterton by saying he "seems to be growing larger as you look at him," and by 1903 Chesterton was already known in the London world as "a fat humourist." So I speculate that both of us, as objects of unwanted attention, could have used the advocacy of The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance. (Yes, it is a real association, extending its helpful hand across the nation.) I read in the news that it has asked lawmakers concerned about bullying on playgrounds to do something to discourage "the targeting of children who are heavier or shorter than their peers," citing the statistic that one in six children are bullied, and 85 percent of those bullying cases are "children of size or with visible handicaps." I am certain that the NAAFA does not mean to suggest that being a "child of size" can be equated with having a handicap, visible though it may be, because their whole reason for existing since 1969 has been to "fight bias against adults who are overweight."

This is why they are concerned, they profess, about first lady Michelle Obama's recent campaign that emphasizes weight loss among young people. "When our first lady said we have to wipe out obesity in one generation, she essentially gave permission to everyone to condemn the children with higher body weight," said their spokeswoman. "The perpetrators feel justified in their actions, because after all, the first lady said these kids have got to go." Go where? It all sounds rather menacing. Plump children disappearing from

GKC ON GKC–9

✦ The precept "know thyself" did not fall from heaven; it fell upstairs from the other place. I decline to know myself; he is not in my set. He is an unknown benefactor of mine, who prefers to remain anonymous. ("A Plea for Hasty Journalism," *The Apostle and the Wild Ducks*)

✦ I fear I gravitate naturally toward all the easiest jobs which require no particular education, just as it is much easier to be a journalist than to be a journeyman tailor or a journeyman carpenter. (*New York American*, June 27, 1935)

✦ I believe in the judgment of all uncultured people; but it is my misfortune that I am the only quite uncultured person in England who writes articles. ("The Orthodoxy of Hamlet," *Lunacy and Letters*)

✦ I will not pass any matter on which I have pronounced opinions without saying what they are, for not saying one's own opinions is the temptation, and therefore the treason, of my trade. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 3, 1914)

✦ I am a journalist and never believe the newspapers. (*Century Magazine*, May, 1913)

✦ It may seem absurd, but I believe I am a fair controversialist. (*Illustrated London News*, Feb. 14, 1914)

✦ I do not know Italian, though I sometimes manage, by a mixture of French and Latin, with more than Italian gesticulation, violently to impose my meaning. (*New York American*, June 30, 1934)

✦ I am not and never was a ghost. ("The Story of the Statues," *The Resurrection of Rome*)

playgrounds across the countryside.

I pause for a clarifying disclosure. I also share a concern about bullying. I am prepared to believe that it has become quite a bit harsher for this generation than it was for mine. I think parents should be sufficiently involved in their children's lives that they would know if their daughter is a "mean girl" at school, or their son a ringleader. I think America's unhealthy fascination with thin in the model magazines is an inappropriate message to our children. However…

What caught my eye in this news article is the invisible link it assumes, namely, that because we are against fat children being bullied, we must say it is okay to be fat. It seems the only way to be against one thing is to be in favor of its opposite. The modern mind seems unable to hold two ideas together simultaneously. Why cannot we be both against obesity in children, which is bad for their health, and against bullying? Why can't we be against obesity and also against bullying fat children? Chesterton complained about "people with one idea, which they have never learnt to balance and combine with all the other ideas." Such a person, he says, "is not used to ideas and one idea goes to his head, like one glass of wine to a starving man."

This invisible link becomes all the more visible when the news article adds the detail that the NAAFA is asking lawmakers to add "children of size" to the Safe Schools Improvement Act. Although this Act condemns bullying for any reason, its originating purpose is to include, for the first time, protections on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. NAAFA is hitching its argument to the same format. To be anti-bullying we must advance fat acceptance. To be anti-bullying we must advance gay acceptance. The only way to be against the hateful act of beating Matthew Shepard to death is to say nothing critical of homosexuality.

It seems we are told we cannot have two motives in our minds at once. We are not used to ideas, or to balancing them in paradox. But Chesterton thought "the Catholic Church is used to living with ideas and walks among all those very dangerous wild beasts with the poise and the lifted head of a lion-tamer." I like him for being able to hold more than one idea at a time. And were he alive, I would invite him out to dinner for a conversation about it.

Chesterton is Everywhere

FEBRUARY 7, 2012

A G.K. Chestertonian Reading of This Pontificate

Scholar Reflects on Pontiff's, Author's Good Sense and Good Humor

by Paul De Maeyer

[from an interview with Andrea Monda, professor of literature and Catholicism at the Pontifical Lateran University]

Excerpt: In different times and ways, Chesterton and Ratzinger cry out however against this madness that envelops the life of Western men and remind all that there is a possibility for joy, not for pleasure, which is always less than man and under his control, but for joy, which is always a great mystery. Joy, Chesterton wrote in the last page of his masterpiece Orthodoxy: "is the gigantic secret of Christianity." And it is also the secret of Benedict XVI who, with his timid and awkward but firm and patient smile, with the strength of an ordered, clear, honest, quiet intelligence, and with the energy of a faith lived without frills with the abandon of a child, challenges every day the temptations of men, his contemporaries, towards laziness and short cuts, towards ideologies and idolatries which are always renewed in a heart that lives in bad humor and resentment. From this point of view Benedict XVI can be described as the Pope of joy, perhaps the most recurrent word in his addresses since he was elected, because, as he said in the recent book-interview Light of the World: "All my life has been suffused by a guiding thread: Christianity gives joy, it widens the horizons." Here, in one phrase is the whole of Ratzinger and, if we think correctly, the whole of Chesterton. Faith, joy, reason. Good sense, good life, good humor. *FROM ZENIT.ORG*

FEBRUARY 8, 2012

Work to start on church revamp

by Fran Bardsley

Excerpt: The next phase of a major £5 million project to revamp one of Oxford's biggest churches is set to begin. About £300,000 has already been spent on restoration to the sanctuary of the Oxford Oratory, one of just three Roman Catholic oratories in the country...Five new rooms will be constructed, allowing an additional five priests to join the eight priests and one novice at the house. The new library will house 10,000 volumes, including the archive of Roman Catholic convert, the author G.K. Chesterton. The parish centre will include more facilities, including a kitchen and office..."It is very exciting because this is Newman's dream coming to fruition," Father Daniel Seward said. "He wanted to found an Oratory in Oxford and it didn't happen in his lifetime but we came here 100 years after his death. Coming after his beatification, it is part of his legacy being put into place."

FROM OXFORDMAIL.CO.UK

THE SIGNATURE OF MAN

Chesterton on Art

Normandy in Black and White

by G.K. Chesterton

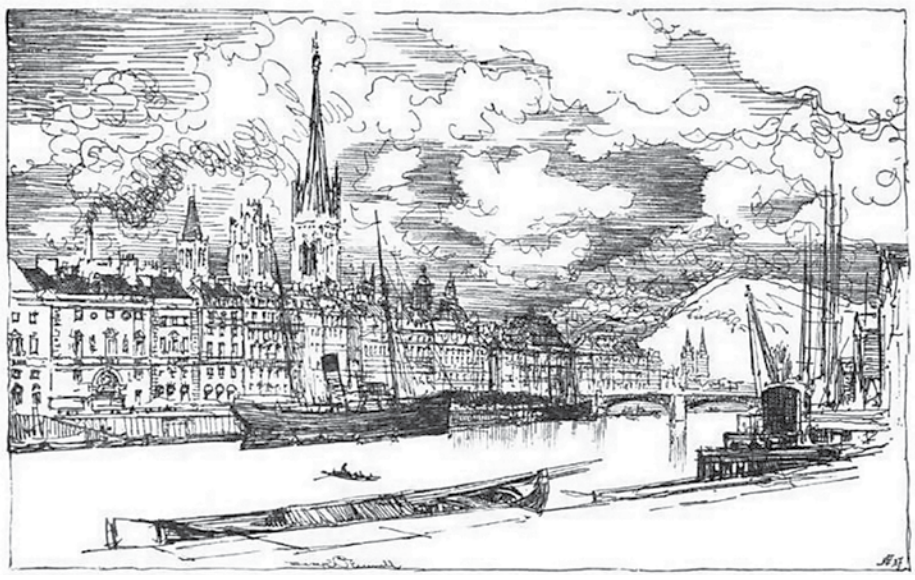
From a review of illustrations by Joseph Pennell in *Highways and Byways in Normandy* by author Percy Dearmer. This book is available online.—Ed.

Mr. Pennell's scorn of the practical is airy and triumphant. His work can hardly be considered, by the tourist, a good substitute for an album of photographs. He is one of the most brilliant of that modern school of artists in whom the desire to copy external objects is always checked by a delicate love of the materials and medium in which the work is done. If he sketches a cottage in pen-and-ink, the lines suggest the bricks; but they are not *brick* lines—they are deliberately and avowedly pen-and-ink lines; the soul of the pen is in them as the soul of the bow is in the flying arrow. If he draws a waterfall in charcoal, he may love the great mountains and the ruinous fall of the river, but he does not love them half as much as he loves that piece of charred stick in his hand—its filmy lines or black abrupt angles.

Mr. Pennell's illustrations are, of course, admirable, and they are reproduced in a manner that must have satisfied the artist himself—not the most roseate of optimists on such points of criticism. One rather singular thing about the illustrations is the large number of them that are set on the page crooked, making the spires reel as if Normandy were a land of earthquakes. *The Tower of St. Jacques*, for example, is a splendid architectural study, but it is impossible to repress the query—which Mr. Winkle applied to his horse—"What makes him go sideways?" I note this eccentricity with some trepidation, for it may be a part of the new technique. No one acquainted with Mr. Pennell's literary personality would be surprised if the matter ended in an indignant article over his name, in which he explained that artists had long abandoned the obstinate, fatuous, clumsy process of putting a picture the right way up, had realized the great atmospheric delicacy of the oblique method, and that this enlightenment, long familiar to the great aristocracy of art, might soon work its way down, through the lunatic asylums and the criminal class, to the comprehension of the literary critics.

Any one who can appreciate the technique of sketching will find inexhaustible pleasure even in those parts of Mr. Pennell's work in which his excellences are scholarly and traditional. If he blackens a tree with barred lines, the lines grip the tree tight and give it solid shape: they do not merely stripe it like a tiger-skin rug. If he throws out a line, however long and loose, it is sent flying in great curves like a lasso at a definite place and purpose: not sent stumbling through blank spaces like a lost cow in the style of the imitators of Beardsley. But the chief interest of Mr. Pennell's art is not in the more conservative portions. The basis of the artistic as of the ethical virtues is courage, and of courage there is only one certain and splendid signal—failure. And among all the designs there are none that more definitely give its character to the series than those which are not wholly successful, which aim at an original effect and miss it. Here and there a mass of hill and cloud, left too defiantly blank, does not suggest a blaze of sunshine, but merely a square of white paper: here and there a medley of strokes does not come together quickly enough to assume the features of a familiar cathedral. But these are more especially valuable, for they are the marks of the chivalrous and ambitious spirit of Mr. Pennell's art, which is everywhere making experiments, which seeks with each sketch to found a school.

(from *The Speaker,* May 12, 1900)



Joseph Pennell. *Rouen* (1900)

CHESTERTON UNIVERSITY

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

Before and After

Illustrated London News 1914-16

Volume 30 of the Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton

In his 1910 book on William Blake, G.K. Chesterton says that we all wake up on a battlefield, a reference to the spiritual warfare into which each of us is born. Five years later, Chesterton had rather more direct sensation of that experience. He had had a complete physical collapse at the end of 1914, and four months later emerged from a semi-comatose state to full consciousness to find his country in the midst of World War I. The interesting thing about this volume of *Illustrated London News* essays is that we see Chesterton both before and after his God-imposed leave of absence from writing. He wakes up fighting, but the landscape of the whole world has changed.

In his first essay upon returning he announces that he does not want to write about the war; he wants to write about everything else. But for the next three and a half years, with increasing and narrowing specificity, most of his columns will be about the war. The columns in the early part of the war, in 1915 and 1916, are by far the most interesting because Chesterton defines what World War I is about.

Germany is the modern world and the culmination of four centuries of deteriorating philosophy, a steady descent from Catholic Europe. It is the product of the "German professors" but also of leaders who have embraced a theory of racial superiority. Chesterton makes the distinction between Germany and Prussia, and while the distinction is lost on some, this new enemy is actually a very old enemy. It is the ancient dragon. "The dragon is a dragon," says Chesterton, known by its "tyranny and treachery and a thirst for the things of death." It is the enemy of Christendom.

Now, before you start accusing Chesterton of low insults and inflamed rhetoric, it would be useful to step back and consider all the characteristics he identifies in the dragon. If you read these columns and ignore the references to Germany and insert instead "the modern world," you will see quite clearly that we are still doing battle with the dragon.

Your notes would look something like this:

Unmanly militarism

Excuses for the powerful and routine for the poor

Long words of explanation and short cuts in conduct

Care of the self and carelessness of the soul

Worse than destructive—uncreative and anti-creative

Proud, especially proud of being modern

Abnormal sensitivity and active sulks

Claims of inevitability

Reliance on the mechanized

License without freedom

Freedom without responsibility

Moral anarchy

Fragmentary ideas

Free thought

Nietzsche

Anti-Christian

Obsessed with hygiene and efficiency

Uniformity over a large space rather than variety in a small space

Unmoral lecturing in the higher morality

Laborious books on ethics and economics

Mirthless cynicism

Sham science and shifty diplomacy

False universality

Wild ideas and weak art

Pedantry, perversion, and a cult of panic

Chesterton says, "Their deity is a cliché not a creed."

But the problem is that nobody is willing to stand up and oppose them for what they are. Instead of doing battle with them, our own leaders attempt to mollify them, with "the utterly meaningless moderation of men who lose their own dogmas but cannot find any other." They have lost their dogmas because they have lost their first principles, and so "cast about trying to draw the line somewhere and draw it everywhere but in the right place."

Chesterton is not only doing war with the dragon, but with the pacifists who are unwilling to fight the dragon.

Chesterton maintains that a religious war is better than a racial war. We are fighting a religion of irreligion. It is about protecting dignity—our own and even that of the enemy. It is about saving souls—even the souls of the enemy.

"If our cause is wrong," says Chesterton, "it is wrong because of the vanities, self-deceptions, and jealousies of civilised human beings." But it will not be wrong because of the wrong theory of man and of the souls of men. Which is why he warns: "We must greatly purify ourselves even to be worthy of this war."

A Solution for Our Social and Economic Crisis

ACS Books, a division of the American Chesterton Society, announced today the release of its groundbreaking book on Distributism, the thought-provoking idea that what is good for politics and business is not always good for society, but what is good for the family makes good politics and good business.

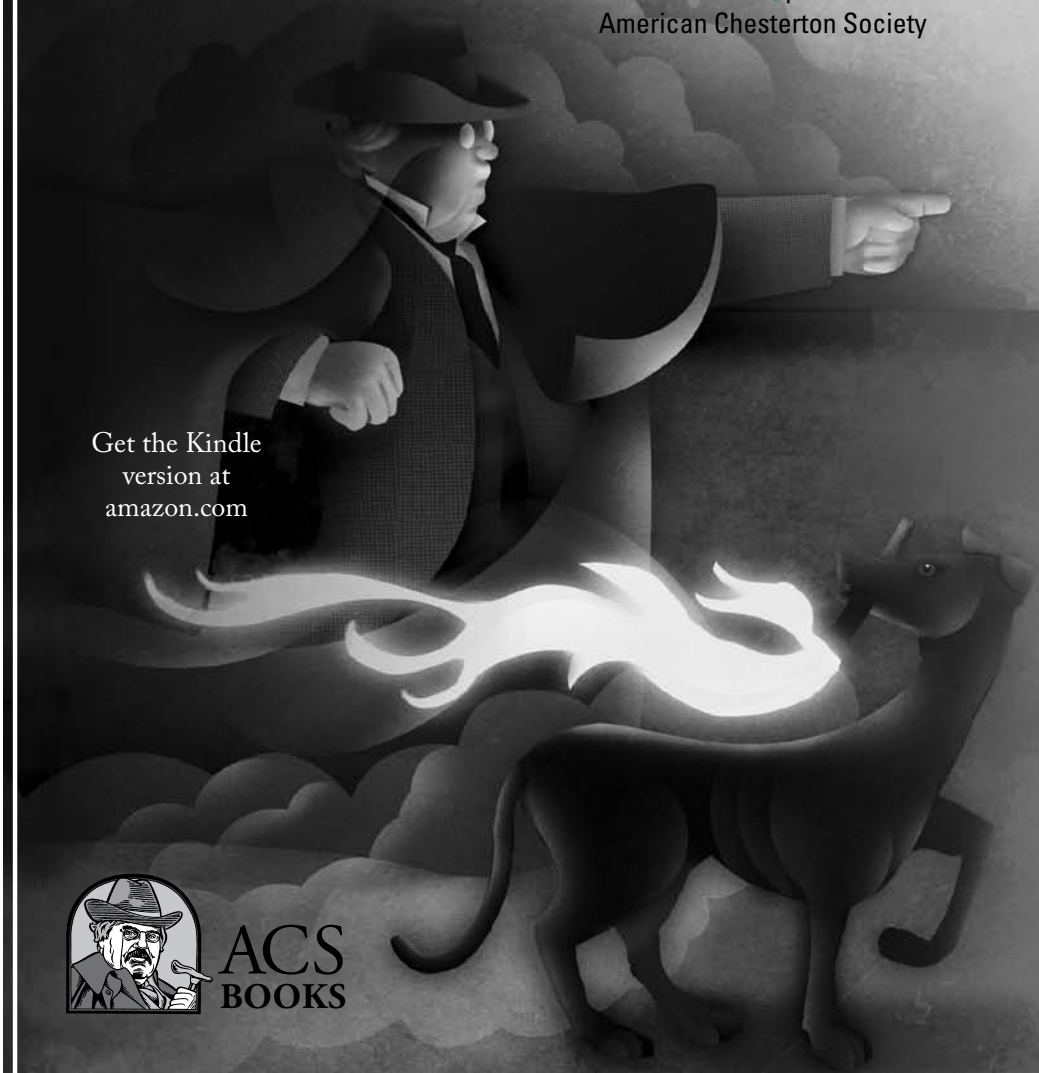
Distributism is a political economy championing the sustainability of de-centralized, local economies with the aim of ensuring the widest ownership of the means of production. In a world obsessed with growth and globalization, Distributism is a solution to our present socio-economic malaise.

The Hound of Distributism is a collection of essays written by leading Distributist authors from around the world. Given our present social and economic crisis, this timely and rich volume challenges the sterility of our present by recovering the value of the socio-economic theory of Distributism.

The Hound of Distributism

Member Price: **$11.00**

Retail Price: $13.95



Get the Kindle version at amazon.com

Contributing Authors Include

RICHARD ALEMAN, president of The Society for Distributism and managing editor of *The Distributist Review*

DALE AHLQUIST, president of the American Chesterton Society

JOSEPH PEARCE, acclaimed biographer and editor-in-chief of *St. Austin Review*

PHILLIP BLOND, leading English political thinker and director of the British think- tank ResPublica

DR. WILLIAM E. FAHEY, president of Thomas More College

HON. DR. RACE MATHEWS, former Australian MP and cabinet minister

PHILIPPE MAXENCE, editor-in-chief of *L'Homme Nouveau*, the French Catholic newspaper

JOHN MÉDAILLE, author of the bestseller, *Toward a Truly Free Market*

THOMAS STORCK, celebrated author serving on the editorial board for *The Chesterton Review*

Order online at
www.chesterton.org

or mail to:
4117 Pebblebrook Circle
Minneapolis, MN 55437

Or call TOLL FREE 800-343-2425

ACS BOOKS

THE DETECTION CLUB

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

Death in the District

by James G. Bruen, Jr.

After dinner one Wednesday evening, Father Paul Petersen drifted into the living room of Matt Hart's Capitol Hill townhouse, where Hart, a Catholic University law professor, poured brandy and the two retired to stuffed armchairs for conversation.

"This infuriates me, Paul," said Matt, picking up a folded newspaper from an end table. He waved the paper towards Fr. Petersen.

"The *Washington Post* infuriates many people," noted the priest. "Folks used to call it 'Pravda on the Potomac,' but that humor is now lost on those who don't even know what *Pravda* was."

"I meant this article," said the professor, pointing at the paper.

"A sixteen-year-old black boy was shot five times in the head at close range in broad daylight, right in front of his own home on a Northeast Boundary street," he continued. "Right on the line with PG County. Not far from Catholic U. Nobody in the tightly packed neighborhood heard anything. Nothing. Nobody saw anything either. Nothing. That's unbelievable! Who are they kidding? The police are upset. They are getting no help; they have no suspects and no leads, only a corpse and some shell casings. They were burying the boy this morning from one of the black churches here in Northwest."

"Some people in black neighborhoods are wary of the police; others think the police are out of touch," observed the priest, sniffing his brandy. "And many fear ostracism if they're seen as snitches, or even gang retribution if they cooperate with the police."

The Washington Post infuriates many people," noted the priest. "Folks used to call it 'Pravda on the Potomac,' but that humor is now lost on those who don't even know what Pravda was.

"It's still a shame the police aren't getting cooperation from the community," said Hart. He peered into his brandy. "That boy was murdered—a cold-blooded execution. How can we claim to be a civilized society if we don't punish murderers?"

"The murderer will be punished," declared the priest.

"I know," said the professor, "—in the hereafter, right? But I'm talking about here and now."

"So am I," said the priest, sipping his brandy.

"I suppose you already know who did it?" scoffed Matt Hart. "This is too obscure for even you to solve, Father Paul!"

"May I have overnight to consider?" asked the priest. "I think I'll be able to reveal to you in the morning who killed the young man."

"Do you have a squad of urchins like the Baker Street Irregulars who'll spend the night ferreting out his identity?" said Hart, gently mocking his friend.

"No," smiled Fr. Petersen. "I shall merely go to bed and sleep soundly. Join me tomorrow morning for Mass at eight and coffee in the rectory afterwards to learn who killed that young man."

"Eight a.m.?" laughed Hart. "Paul, you've proved my point: Nobody would get up that early in a civilized society!"

He replenished their brandies, and the conversation veered in another direction.

After Mass the next morning, Hart joined Fr. Paul Petersen in the sacristy of St. Patrick's in the City as the priest removed his vestments. They left through the sacristy door

and were soon seated at the kitchen table in the rear of the parish rectory, sipping freshly brewed coffee.

"I'd like to steal your housekeeper," laughed Matt Hart. "She makes the best coffee in the District."

Father Petersen smiled at the familiar repartee. "Over my dead body," he rejoined dutifully.

"Did you sleep well?" asked Matt.

"Very well, thank you," replied Fr. Petersen.

"Well, then, O great priest-detective, who killed that boy?" challenged Hart.

"I don't know," said the priest.

"So much for that," proclaimed Hart. He drank from his mug, then reached for the newspaper on the corner of the table. "Are you through with this?"

"I didn't have an opportunity to look at the newspaper before Mass, Matt."

"Mind if I take a look at it?"

"Please do," replied the priest. "Try the Metro Section."

Puzzled, Matt pulled the section that features local news from the *Post*.

"Just the usual, Paul," he noted as he skimmed the section's first page. "Teacher unrest; subway cost overruns; another boy murdered; traffic woes; corruption on the council."

"Tell me about the murder," instructed the priest, topping off his coffee.

"A fourteen-year-old black kid this time," said the professor. He held his coffee mug out to Fr. Petersen so he could refill it too. "He was hit by bullets sprayed from a slow moving stolen van."

"Where was he killed?"

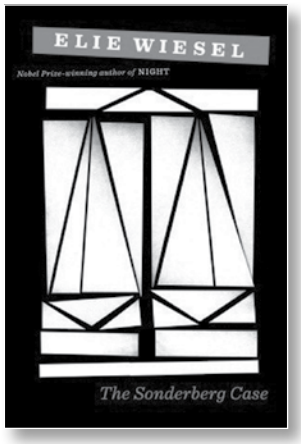
Matt Hart took another look at the newspaper. "He was on the steps to a church," he said, "leaving the funeral of the other boy who was murdered. No one else was injured."

"And thus was the murderer punished," declared the priest. "The community knew who had killed the other boy, Matt; and so did his gang, which exacted retribution for his killing. The police can now close one case and open another."

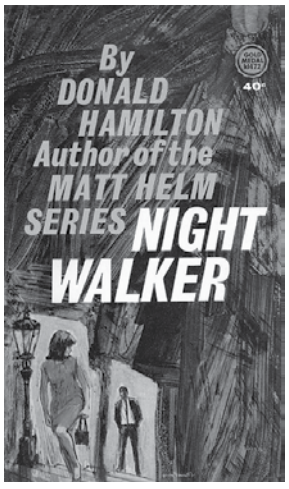
Chesterton's Bloodthirsty Heirs

"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



Elie Wiesel. *The Sonderberg Case* (2008). A man accused of murdering his uncle pleads, "Guilty and not guilty." The trial of Werner Sonderberg follows a trip to the Adirondacks from which he returned, but his uncle remained behind as a dead body in the woods. Yedidyah, a newspaper drama critic drafted to fill in on the crime beat and cover the case, faces another mystery. He has learned that he is an adopted Holocaust survivor. The happy memories of a close family may be as false as a man acknowledging and denying guilt for a crime. To discover his real past Yedidyah returns to Poland and in desperation is hypnotized to release suppressed memories. At the same time his identity as part of the world of the stage and his actress wife is threatened by his success as a crime reporter. Finally after the trial ends Yedidyah can ask Werner Sonderberg for the truth behind the young German's strange plea. Wiesel is a Romanian Holocaust survivor whose parents and a sister died in the camps. His memoir, *Night,* has become one of the classic accounts of those horrors. In 1986 he received the Nobel Peace Prize as a "messenger to mankind" for his teachings about the Holocaust and actions fighting more recent atrocities. All of which fits him to explore what truly gives us identity. Is it repressed early memories or the love and conflicts of the family of remembered childhood and adulthood? And in the murder case itself, what is one's responsibility to a family member who has claims to both love and hatred?



Donald Hamilton. *Night Walker* (1954). Waking in a hospital with a face covered in bandages is bad enough. But when everyone refers to you by the name of a suspected Communist spy, how can matters get worse? Add a "wife" who is a self-made widow, a shady doctor, and the dead man's feisty redheaded girlfriend, mixed with personal loathing as a possible coward who evaded military service, and a pulp thriller is born. As in any mystery of identity, the hero must wonder who are friends and who enemies, and ask if characters are who they claim to be or something dangerously different. Unlike some such tales the hero knows his own identity but is sufficiently isolated that no one is trying to find him. Growing affection for an apparent murderess, a potential rival seeming too ineffectual to be true, and the curiosity of the dead man's supposed love interest are overshadowed when it appears the "deceased" has shot a flashlight out of the hero's hand. Donald Hamilton was a Swedish immigrant who published thirty-eight novels in a career spanning nearly half a century. He is best known for the Matt Helm spy novels, well regarded by other mystery writers, adapted into the perhaps less esteemed Dean Martin movies. His Westerns *The Big Country* and *The Violent Men* were also adapted into films.

The Father Brown Casebook

by Steve Miller

The Wrong Shape

Father Brown investigates the apparent suicide of a poet who loves oriental decadence, Leonard Quinton.

The Mystery. What makes Father Brown doubt a paper, that he considers to be the wrong shape, is a suicide note?

Subplot. What role does a visiting Hindu mystic play in the drama?

Other Characters. Flambeau, Father Brown's friend who knew Quinton in the poet's wild student days in Paris; Dr. James Erskine Harris, Quinton's physician who doubts all non-material things; Mrs. Quinton, the poet's overworked wife who objects to her husband's use of opium and even more to the Hindu house guest; Mr. Atkinson, the poet's brother-in-law with a constant need for money; the Hindu hermit who wants nothing but may have murdered by hypnosis; and several policeman in wet waterproofs.

Location. Quinton's peculiar house north of London.

Publishing History. "The Wrong Shape" was first published in *Storyteller* in January, 1911. Although the fifth Father Brown tale to be in print, it was treated as the seventh story when collected in *The Innocence of Father Brown* in 1911.

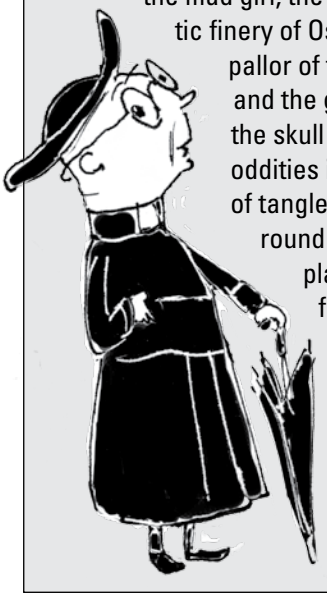
Notable Allusions. (1) The story combines Chesterton's distaste for decadence and orientalism. Quinton composes poems of Eastern splendor and barbarism which seem lurid and ultimately false. He is a genius but a dissipated one who smokes opium and creates a room with a flamboyant effect of oriental fantasy. It is an artificial world that invites distrust. (2) The Hindu hermit embodies all that Chesterton found wrong with Eastern mysticism. When the holy man says he wants nothing, Father Brown interprets the phrase as Asiatic obscurantism, self-sufficiency to the point of being his own cosmos, and finally a lust for annihilation. Possibly Indians have observations just as charming and accurate about Catholicism. (3) Dr. Harris reminds one of the sinister scientists in the story from *The Paradoxes of Mr. Pond*, "When Doctors Agree," and the Gabriel Gale tale, "Shadow of the Shark." Although superficially jovial, Harris' darker side emerges. Since Chesterton knew a few atheists, did he see them as amoral creatures capable of anything? It is interesting to speculate who the model for Harris might be. (4) Martin Gardiner (a possible atheist-materialist) in *The Annotated Innocence of Father Brown* is highly critical of the story. He finds the written confession delivered at the end to be unconvincing at least without speculation and surmise outside the information in the story. He points out that under the circumstances it is highly uncertain if the criminal was ever brought to justice. (5) Father Brown calls Flambeau his only friend in the world. Like Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, they can commune in silence with each other. For a priest who seems so much a part of the world it is an intriguing observation.

The Opening. "Certain of the great roads going north out of London continue far into the country a sort of attenuated and interrupted spectre of a street, with great gaps in the building, but preserving the line. Here will be a group of shops, followed by a fenced field or paddock, and then a famous public-house, and then perhaps a market garden or a nursery garden, and then one large private house, and then another field and another inn, and so on. If anyone walks along one of these roads he will pass a house which will probably catch his eye, though he may not be able to explain its attraction. It is a long, low house, running parallel with the road, painted mostly white and pale green, with a veranda and sun-blinds, and porches capped with those quaint sort of cupolas like wooden umbrellas that one sees in some old-fashioned houses. In fact, it is an old-fashioned house, very English and very suburban in the good old wealthy Clapham sense. And yet the house has a look of having been built chiefly for the hot weather. Looking at its white paint and sun-blinds one thinks vaguely of pugarees and even of palm trees. I cannot trace the feeling to its root; perhaps the place was built by an Anglo-Indian."

Whodunnit Theology

Father Brown on Crime and art:

"A crime is like any other work of art. Don't look surprised; crimes are by no means the only works of art that come from an infernal workshop. But every work of art, divine or diabolic, has one indispensable mark—I mean, that the centre of it is simple, however much the fulfillment may be complicated. Thus, in Hamlet, let us say, the grotesqueness of the grave-digger, the flowers of the mad girl, the fantastic finery of Osric, the pallor of the ghost and the grin of the skull are all oddities in a sort of tangled wreath round one plain tragic figure of a man in black."



Changing Times, Solving Crimes

By Chris Chan

George Gently has often been compared to the marvelous *Foyle's War* as a twentieth-century historical mystery series. Both shows are set in the past, *Foyle's War* during World War II and *George Gently* during the 1960s. Both center around an intelligent, quiet, strongly principled policeman who loves fly fishing and strives to be a force for honor and decency in an increasingly chaotic world. Of the two, *Foyle's War* is by far the superior show, but *George Gently* is also worth a look for fans of British mystery series.

The titular character is played magnificently by Martin Shaw, who combines solid integrity with investigative zeal. As the series opens, Gently's wife is brutally murdered as payback for his refusal to look the other way to the corruption and outright malfeasance within the police force. Spurred by his personal tragedy, Gently abandons his plans to retire and instead moves to the North Country in order to make a difference for the better there.

George Gently played by Martin Shaw

His reluctant subordinate, John Bacchus (Lee Ingleby) is clearly from a different generation. Bacchus is as willing to be flexible with the rules as Gently is determined to be rigid. Indeed, Bacchus shows a willingness to deal with morally gray situations in a way that could potentially rocket him to a big promotion in the police force. Perhaps out of paternal concern, or possibly out of a desire to prevent the making of a monster, Gently yanks Bacchus off the career ladder and compels the disgruntled younger man to train as his reluctant assistant, strictly adhering to Gently's incorruptible moral code. Bacchus gradually comes to respect Gently, but he remains happily willing to leave the straight and narrow path when it stands to benefit him.

The three episodes of the first series are "Gently Go Man," "The Burning Man," and "Bomber's Moon." In the premiere, "Gently Go Man," a motorcycle gang of youths is rocked by a couple of brutal murders, and a career criminal who has long been at odds with Gently arrives in town to wreak havoc on those who cross him. "Burning Man" centers around a badly charred corpse whose unusual stomach contents hold the key to determining his identity. As the investigation proceeds, it becomes clear that the murder is connected to international espionage and domestic terrorism, and Gently continues to be the voice of decency in a deeply corrupted law enforcement system. Finally, "Bomber's Moon" centers around a former German World War II prisoner of war who returns to the English town where he was held during internment. Now a wealthy businessman with an arrogant son, the former POW attempts to charm the townspeople, but his failure to please all of the people all of the time leads to his murder.

George Gently could have veered into mediocrity thanks to some convolutions in the script and the absence of in-depth analysis of the changing times, but instead the series achieves a level of excellence on several fronts, mostly because of Shaw's first-rate performance, which is never flashy but always compelling. There is a critical trope that wholly decent, morally resolute characters are boring. This is malarkey. Shaw's understated intensity is compelling to watch because clinging to his moral principles and demanding that the police department be free of corruption continually puts him at risk personally and professionally, but he never wavers. The right thing and the easy thing are rarely the same thing. Understanding why Gently takes the moral stands he does makes him more intriguing and more likeable a character than the corrupt policemen who are out for their own professional and financial advancement.

Simultaneously, Bacchus's personal development gives credence to the old expression, "The young people think that the old people are fools, but the old people *know* the young people are fools." Throughout the series, Bacchus tries to cut corners in the belief that the ends justify the means and that he knows better than the stodgy old Gently, yet when his moral flexibility blows up in his face, and his career is unexpectedly and seriously threatened, it is up to Gently to save him.

I would have liked to have seen more subtle depictions of life in mid-1960s England, since part of producing a historical drama is illustrating how the past differed from the present without being too blatant about the variances. The series is often brutal but rarely funny, which is a shame because Shaw can be uproariously hilarious when he tries to be, such as in one scene where Gently inadvertently causes Bacchus severe embarrassment in a hotel lobby, enforced by some fantastic facial acting on Ingleby's part. *George Gently* is far from my favorite crime series, but I'm very glad that it was made.

A Risk-taking God

Chesterton: The Nightmare Goodness of God
by Ralph C. Wood
Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011
342 pages; $34.95

Reviewed by Chuck Chalberg

Nightmare goodness? What we have here, it appears, is a Chestertonian scholar one-upping G.K. Chesterton himself in the paradox department—or at least in the oxymoron department. If so, Chesterton would no doubt approve. After all, he was known to make a point or two by way of pointing toward something paradoxical. Therefore what could possibly be wrong with a Chestertonian scholar turning to paradox to make a point about Chesterton? Nothing at all. Precisely nothing at all.

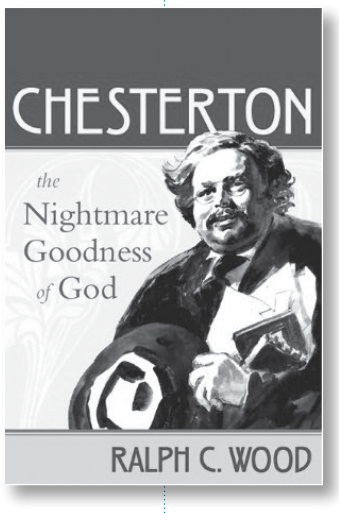
A student of Flannery O'Connor and the American South, Ralph Wood might be hesitant to call himself also a scholar of Chesterton. But he shouldn't be. With this book, Professor Wood of Baylor University has produced not just a piece of sound scholarship that can best be described by that old-fashioned word learned, but a book that explains and defends Chesterton, even as its author occasionally disagrees with him.

Less a biographer of Chesterton than a student of some (but far from all) of the most important works in the Chesterton canon, Wood is nonetheless out to make a major biographical point by way of literary analysis and the resort to paradox. And while he's at it, Wood is out to make a serious theological point as well.

Chesterton, of course, was also a biographer (of sorts) and a theologian (of sorts). But in this book it is Chesterton the novelist and Chesterton the poet with whom Wood is most concerned. The reason for this is that Wood's real concern in these pages is with something at once lighter and deeper about Chesterton himself.

No matter the genre, no matter the occasion, and no matter the company, Chesterton was a man of irrepressible, undeniable humor. This, of course, is not news. His humor was there when it was expected—and unexpected. When it wasn't out in the open, it was bubbling just beneath the surface. But it was never hidden.

In this respect, G.K. Chesterton was not at all Christ-like. After all, as Chesterton himself has pointed out, Christ did hide something from us when he walked upon this earth, and that something was his mirth. Not so Chesterton. In this respect, Chesterton was almost deliberately un-Christ-like. Chesterton, to be sure, was prayerful. But if he was sometimes prayerful, he was always playful, and openly playful at that.



Nonetheless, there was another Chesterton, a darker Chesterton, a more complex Chesterton. This is the Chesterton whom Ralph Wood seeks to unearth and explain and, at times, take issue with. Professor Wood is not the first scholar of Chesterton to point to this Chesterton. But the contribution that he makes with this book is nonetheless real and consequential—and profound.

Perhaps only someone of Wood's interests, sympathies, and scholarly training could accomplish what has been accomplished in this book. He gives us the larger Chesterton while dwelling only on some of Chesterton. Specifically (and brilliantly) considered in these pages are *Orthodoxy*, *Christendom in Dublin*, *Lepanto*, *The New Jerusalem*, *The Flying Inn*, *The Ball and the Cross*, *The Ballad of the White Horse*, and *The Man Who Was Thursday*. An impressive sample, to be sure, but still only a sample.

The result is a portrait that is at once compelling and yet incomplete. It is compelling from the standpoint of philosophy, psychology, and theology. And yet it stops short of being the complete Chesterton. What we have in these pages is the deeply Christian Chesterton, but not the overtly Catholic Chesterton.

Nonetheless, Professor Wood gives us much to think about and much to be hopeful about, not to mention so much to admire—about both the author and his subject. Wood's starting point is that Chesterton's deepest affirmations about God and man and the world were made in the face of "nightmarish unbelief," otherwise defined as a "fear" that this universe is "devoid of divinity," that it is nothing more than a "well-populated Hell unrecognized as such."

Chesterton himself experienced not just nightmarish unbelief, but "night haunted terrors"—until he came to realize that this world is only a temporary nightmare, a nightmare from which we will one day be awakened. Then and only then did Chesterton also come to realize that "there is nothing so delightful as a nightmare—when you know it is a nightmare."

With that insight in place, Chesterton was ready to give us the very books and poems that Wood examines. And with Chesterton serving simultaneously as pilgrim and guide, Wood sets out to take us along on his subject's intellectual journey. But

before doing so, Wood simultaneously admonishes both Chesterton's admirers and detractors by declaring that he was neither an "unassailable titan" nor a "reactionary anti-modern." In Wood's eyes, Chesterton was simultaneously something less—and more—than either. He was, like St. Francis before him, a simple troubadour. He was also a not-so-simple artist, who took full advantage of what a risk-taking God had given him.

The world, to Chesterton, was less a picture than a palette. And God, in turn, has supplied each of us a paint box. What Chesterton was able to do with his supply of paints and pens was—and remains—amazing. What Wood has done, in turn, may not be as amazing, but it is impressive nonetheless. In any case, each in his own way has helped keep hope alive, Christian hope, that is.

Wood does have his concerns. His Chesterton was too quick to blame the Protestant Reformation for the rampant individualism and rapacious capitalism of the modern era. That same Chesterton was also much too slow to see the lunacy and horrors of the Great War. But he saw so much else, whether he happened to be looking at the world around him or peering into his own soul—or pondering the "nightmarish goodness of God."

Appropriately, Wood concludes his journey with Chesterton with his take on *The Man Who Was Thursday*, which is subtitled, of course, "A Nightmare." According to Wood, the novel is a fictional rendering of Chesterton's own philosophical nightmare, of his own lengthy struggle with nihilism. By this point in his life Chesterton had rejected nihilism. Nonetheless, he remained convinced that nihilism represented the most serious challenge to modern life in general and to Christ in particular. If the universe is undirected, then life is a house of mirrors. If God is dead, then there is no transcendent measure by which anything can be called good or evil.

Is the book's Sunday God? Wood sees him as a "strange amalgam of darkness and light, of distance and nearness, of the hidden and the revealed." To Wood, Sunday's "paradoxical presence" in the novel is reminiscent of God's role in the book of Job, which is to say "altogether as discomfiting as it is assuring."

Sunday, of course, identifies himself as the "peace of God." And in the end all six characters do find peace and reconciliation in the presence of Sunday. That this is so is evidence to Wood that Chesterton looked upon redemption not primarily as an inward and solitary affair, but as something "outward and communal." This brings Ralph Wood to the "staggering paradox" behind all of Chesterton's work, namely that the people of God are able to "suffer and redeem the abominations of both moral and natural evil...because God himself has both suffered and redeemed them."

In any case, suffering is the key. To Chesterton and to Wood, suffering is essential to the nature of man. And just in case there is any doubt about this, Sunday agrees as well. Frequently in his life and writings, Chesterton places great faith in the common man and his simple faith. Gabriel Syme certainly derives inspiration from that. But in the end it isn't enough. Such faith cannot answer either the worst of the nihilists or the mildest of the skeptics. The only answer that satisfies is faith in a suffering God.

While suffering may be essential to the nature of man, Wood sees it as belonging "pre-eminently to God." Not surprisingly, a fellow by the name of Chesterton would agree. And so would a presence by the name of Sunday.

God suffers because He is a risk-taking God. He suffers because of the sinfulness and suffering of man. He suffers because this world *is* a nightmare. And yet Chesterton was still able to laugh. We can only hope that we are able to laugh as well—and to laugh with Chesterton, who was and remains, by Wood's reckoning, the "poet of nightmare." And why was Chesterton so light-hearted? Not simply because of his faith in the common man, as real as that faith was. And he certainly wasn't light-hearted because he thought that man could create a heaven on earth, as laughable as that idea is. No, he was able to laugh, truly laugh, because he had come to terms with the "darkest and deepest of all truths," namely that there was an even greater nightmare in store for suffering humanity—"the nightmare goodness of God."

Apparitions on Demand

Medjugorje Revisited: 30 Years of Visions or Religious Fraud?
Donal Foley
Nottingham, England:
Theotokos Books, 2011
458 pages; $24.95 ($11.49 e-book)

Reviewed by Richard Aleman

God occasionally allows Satan to assume the most majestic forms, such as those of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the saints…the disguise, no matter how bold, is never complete, and he always betrays himself in some particular which cannot escape an attentive and prudent observer.

During the sixteenth century, the Spanish nun Sister Magdalena of the Cross was revered as a faith-filled, living saint devoted to penance, a stigmatist believed to sustain herself strictly by consuming the Blessed Sacrament. In her youth, news of the "saint's" piety and virtue quickly spread across Europe to such an extent that, years later, her convent became the richest in all of Spain. Sr. Magdalena's prompt election to abbess reflected her renown among the novices and sisters of her convent. Dignitaries and high-ranking clergy were also awe-struck by the miraculous cures attributed to the Franciscan nun, miracles that

included extensive periods of levitation during ecstasies.

Not everyone was impressed with Sr. Magdalena, despite her fame. Sts. Ignatius of Loyola and John of Ávila, among others, found her suspect. Slowly, Sr. Magdalena unraveled. After encountering St. Francis of Assisi in a vision, Magdalena claimed to receive dispensation from the sacrament of penance. More disturbing, an impromptu exorcism revealed that the nun made a pact with the devil when only five years of age following several visits by a man she thought was Jesus, but who revealed himself later as the demon Balban. The exorcist, Rev. Don Juan of Córdoba, exposed Magdalena as a false visionary who desired fame and respect in her early childhood, and almost flawlessly mimicked God's supernatural powers thanks to the devil.

In 1981, Gospa ("Lady" in Croatian) allegedly appeared to six children in the hamlet of the Bijakovici section of Medjugorje (in the former Yugoslavia). In contrast to the brief apparitions at Fatima or Lourdes, Medjugorje apparitions and messages continue daily thirty years after "Gospa" first emerged. Surprisingly, the seers receive these visions any time and anywhere, prompting the first ever "apparitions on demand" in Church history. These so-called visions also are different for one other reason: seldom have events in Catholic history generated the polemic that is (or that isn't) Medjugorje, and few investigations of the phenomenon are written with the detail and scholarship found in the book, *Medjugorje Revisited: 30 Years of Visions or Religious Fraud?*

Author Donal Foley's thorough, well-documented investigation explodes the myth surrounding the alleged apparitions. With firsthand testimony and transcripts, Foley weaves the political and historical background necessary to place the phenomenon of Medjugorje in context, uncovering a complex web of ethnic nationalism, heresy and schism, cults of personality, and a charismatic industry desperate to claim Medjugorje as its own.

Although an official verdict came down from the Church declaring these "visions" to be not of supernatural origin, the faithful have been bombarded with a massive campaign advertising the numerous conversions, rosaries turned to gold, and other alleged "good fruits" of the "visions," even as the highest authority, Bishop Ratko Peric, disapproves the "numerous absurd messages, lies, falsehoods and disobedience associated from the beginning with the events and 'apparitions' of Medjugorje," which "refute every claim of authenticity." Due to the aforementioned, the Bishop of Mostar requested the Apostolic See's intervention and in response Pope Benedict XVI appointed a special commission under Camillo Cardinal Ruini to investigate.

Discussion about the Medjugorje phenomenon generally revolves around good fruits encountered either as a direct result of the apparitions themselves or visits to nearby St. James Church, the spot transplanted from the original site where the children first encountered "Gospa." Here, the *number* of pilgrims, conversions, and vocations are credited as proof of the authenticity of the "visions," rather than the *graces* flowing directly from God. As Foley writes, "The people who go to Medjugorje are clearly open to God's grace, otherwise they would not have gone in the first place," and as conversions or vocations are a gift from God, their quantity or quality do not supply us with sufficient evidence to determine the genuine nature of these events, and the painful lessons we've learned following the Legionaries of Christ scandal should give us pause.

In short, given the lavish and opulent lives of some of the seers, their contradictory testimony, as well as the troubling messages of religious indifference attributed to the Holy Virgin Mary, it is impossible to side with any verdict other than that reached by the Church in Mostar.

Medjugorje Revisited is perhaps the definitive tome on the "apparitions" in Medjugorje. The book is both a painstaking study of the historical events leading to the alleged appearance of the Blessed Mother and an invaluable resource to help evaluate the polemical history and veracity of the apparitions, which in the words of then-Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, consists in "separat[ing] the aspect of the true or presumed 'supernaturality' of the apparition from that of its spiritual fruits." To do so otherwise, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "wounds the respect and trust we owe our Creator and Lord. It always harbors doubt about his love, his providence, and his power."

All My Old Friends, Together At Last!

Toward the Gleam
by T.M. Doran
San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011
467 pages; $24.95 (hardcover)

Reviewed by Chris Chan

Toward the Gleam is a rousing salute to the culture of fandom, celebrating some of the major figures of twentieth-century literature and inserting them into an adventure revolving around a priceless historical manuscript, ruthless supervillains, and the hunt for a lost civilization, possibly Atlantis.

The main character in *Toward the Gleam* is John Hill, an Oxford professor specializing in philology. Although Hill is essentially a fictionalized character, he is clearly based on a famous real-life author, also an Oxford philologist, also with the first name John. John Hill is married to a woman named E.M., and has four children. If you know anything at all about the personal life of the author who inspired John Hill, then you should already know Hill's true identity.

As if a novel featuring one of my all-time favorite writers as its hero weren't enough, many of my other favorite novelists also make appearances as Hill's friends and allies. The real-life characters are referred to only by their first names. Hill's colleagues at Oxford include scholars named Owen and Charles. Readers looking in vain for Hill's buddy Clive will do well to remember that the real-life "Clive" was commonly referred to as "Jack." Hill is also profoundly influenced by a saintly woman named Edith. There are references to mystery writers Arthur and Dorothy, and another mystery writer named Agatha plays a pivotal role in the plot, acting as E.M.'s friend and supporter. Agatha also plays a role in solving an impossible locked-room mystery.

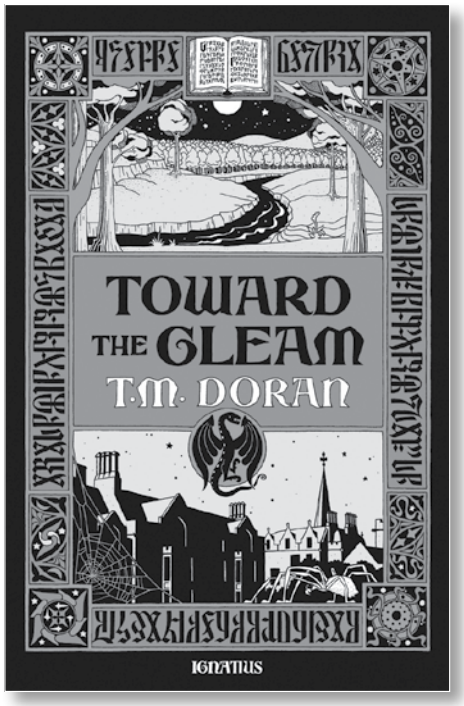
Another character who becomes one of Hill's most trusted confidantes and powerful allies is an enormous, caped journalist named Gilbert. (I have no idea who Gilbert is supposed to be. Does anyone have any ideas?) Gilbert realizes the mortal danger that Hill inadvertently has stumbled into, and rescues him from deadly peril at a pivotal moment.

(Dale Ahlquist has told me that he personally finds the characterization of Gilbert to be unbelievable. I'm not sure why. Perhaps it is because at one point Gilbert is offered chocolate and doesn't accept it.)

There are subplots involving slavers, pirates, and butt-kicking women out for revenge. Unfortunately, the subplots distract from the more interesting scenes where great minds interact and fight for a common cause, and the epilogue at the end seems to leave the ultimate point of the novel dangling in the wind a bit. I would have loved to see more scenes focusing on Hill's burgeoning interest in creative writing and his development of theories on the power of myth. Perhaps my own extreme fandom is an influence here, but if necessary I could have done without the entire "evil antiquarian wants a priceless book" storyline in favor of more passages where the characters interact, in which case the novel might just as well have been called *Chris Chan's Favorite Writers Just Sit Around And Talk*. Personally, I see no reason why that book would not be a runaway bestseller. But Doran really does a fine job with the adventure storyline he has constructed.

The plot about the evil antiquarian's search for the book is actually quite well done, culminating in a fantastic scene involving Hill and his son fighting for their lives in the face of three deadly creepy crawly creatures, who quite understandably will feature in Hill's fictional pursuits later in a rather expanded form. Hill's ultimate rescue from mortal peril is based more on pure luck than anything else (or perhaps more satisfyingly, the Hand of Providence), which kind of undercuts the themes of quiet heroism and the constant struggle for survival that permeate the book. It would also have been more satisfying to have actually seen the primary antagonist's empire of crime crumbling without his influence, and the straggling lackeys being brought to justice, but I should not complain too much, not when the book brought me as much pleasure as it did.

Ultimately, the real joy of *Toward the Gleam* for me was seeing so many of my favorite authors coming together and sporadically uniting (or at least allying with Hill) toward a common cause. Having read the memoirs and letters of the authors featured in this book, it is a tad disappointing that they do not really *sound* like their real-life inspirations (every line sounds more like Doran's authorial voice than the wit or ramblings of the actual writers), but the power of fandom is enough to blot out any disappointment regarding their presentation. The authors featured in this novel all managed to created fictional worlds that I wanted to visit, and Doran's melding of minds and adventure is also a place that I would like to explore.



FEAR OF FILM

The Allure of Paganism

The Wicker Man (1973)
Directed by Robin Hardy
Written by Anthony Shaffer
Rated R

Reviewed by Art Livingston

In George Mackay Brown's unjustly neglected novel, *Magus*, he observes:

> [Christ] was the one only central sacrifice of history...All previous rituals had been a foreshadowing of this: all subsequent rituals a re-enactment... all divine experiences come to...a circle of bread and a cup of wine on an altar.

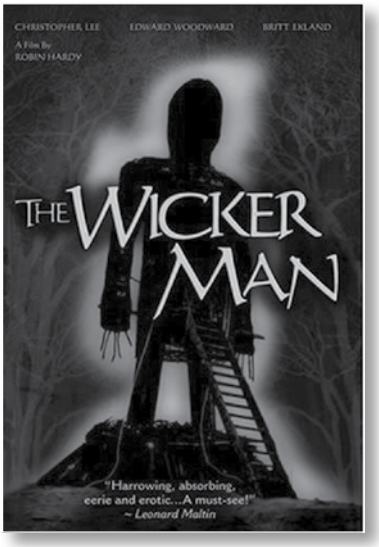
A single sentence in what is called *The Blatchford Controversies* made me many years ago a Chestertonian for life. I had previously read *The Golden Bough* and had noted the records of the various peoples who worship a dying and resurrected god. All my blurry, intellectual doubts disappeared in one instant when I read this from G.K. Chesterton: "If we are so made that a Son of God must deliver us, is it odd that Patagonians should dream of a Son of God?"

Sacrifice, death, and resurrection are vital to any religion worthy of the name. Anything else is mere philosophy, no matter how good the thought. The makers of *The Wicker Man* clearly understood the roots of religion, no matter what their personal beliefs may have been. The director of the film is primarily remembered for this work only, but the original screenplay is from the pen of Anthony Shaffer, and startling turning and twisting surprises seem appropriate coming from the man whose most famous play was *Sleuth*. The poor American remake (2006) is not recommended. Shaffer and Robin Hardy were sly and devious in the telling, so much so that it is impossible to review this movie without strong hints of spoilers. Be forewarned.

Sergeant Neil Howie (Edward Woodward), a Scottish policeman from the mainland, arrives at Summerisle in the far Western Hebrides to investigate the report of a missing girl. At first none of the inhabitants owns to knowing the child, and then others begin saying that she has been dead for some time. Howie is certain the islanders are lying but cannot understand why they behave as they do. We will find out what happened at length, but by that time the mystery is unimportant.

Equally disturbing to the young officer is the near abandon at the inn where the locals sip their pints of a Saturday night, because the bawdiness in such a setting is far more lewd than one might expect and coupled with an offhandedness truly disquieting. To those with any normal sensibilities, the serving wench is far more offensive than Doll Tearsheet. Howie is indignant and becomes more and more openly condemnatory of the residents as the picture unfolds. We learn in flashback that he is a devout Christian (a high church Anglican) and later we discover he has led a chaste life, which is actually important to the plot. His first night at the inn suggests something supernatural as the wench attempts seduction in some way from an adjoining room.

At this point twenty-two minutes have passed since the movie began. If there was no more to the story than this, and if it had headed in



the direction one normally expects from such material, Dale Ahlquist's indispensable rule of thumb would apply—this is a story of the pagans vs. the puritans, with the former much more attractive and clearly more intelligent than those musty Christians. Ah, but we have sixty-six minutes to go, and until the very end the pagans do appear the attractive ones.

We learn that the isle has become thoroughly debached. That portion of Dale's formula is literally true, except that these people have become genuinely religious pagans, and in that part of the world we are talking about Druidism. As the film progresses we get a clear idea of what real paganism means, making the policeman (who is admittedly rather straight laced) guilty of no more than a wholly proper righteous indignation. Neil Howie's behavior turns the tables on any phrase-monger who might use the contemporary cant "judgmental" to describe him. He judges well.

Christopher Lee may have had the best part of his career as Lord Summerisle, the gleeful Druid laird. In any genre film the explanation for what is going on is a bit dull and is only included to add some nuance of verisimilitude to the effort. Here, Summerisle's explanation for why we have an island of neo-pagans should be arresting to any Chestertonian. Summerisle, a mid-Victorian biologist-capitalist-atheist, developed a strain of delicious apples he made grow where no such crops should be able to grow. To build the economy he convinced the crofters that the old religion was alive and caused the apples to grow. They listened to him. Odd—many of us listen to the powerful, too. Within a generation, they all believed. As he tells Howie, "We are a religious people." Is the unconverted Scrooge really that much different from Nero? In such cases the pagans are the puritans, and vice versa.

Howie eventually learns that he is the fool of the May and...something else. We get to see what paganism really is. I have discovered that a distressing percentage of viewers actually side with the villagers during their chorus of "Sumer Is Icumin In" concluding the film, so perhaps the film was more prophetic than its makers intended. As for Howie, pray we remain as steadfast as he.

CREDO IV

✦ I believe it is possible to reverse the evil of the excessive concentration of wealth, and that any reform that does not reverse that evil will only exaggerate it, just as the collectivist would remedy the concentration of wealth by concentrating it still further. (*Illustrated London News*, May 12, 1923)

✦ I believe that all our hopes hang just now on realising that there is not a black-and-white alternative between a dead Capitalism and an advanced Communism; that there is in history much more humanity, much more variety, and much more liberty; and that we can find a third alternative course, that is at once more traditional and more free. (*Illustrated London News*, July 21, 1923)

✦ The reason I believe in authority about certain ultimate things is because authority is the only vigilant guardian of liberty which can rescue it from these successive snares of slavery. Authority alone can see the cobweb from the outside; it can say that a cobweb is a cobweb, when the poor little fly of a free-thinker is convinced that the cobweb is the cosmos. (*Illustrated London News*, Sept. 15, 1923)

✦ If there is one thing I believe in with a solid certainty, it is in discussing the abstract question before what is called the practical question. In other words, it is clearing up the matter while it is moral and before it becomes merely political. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 7, 1928)

✦ I believe in that philosophy which claimed to come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. And I think it is because of our defects and disaffections that we weary of life, and not because life itself would not always be glorious to men truly alive. (*Illustrated London News*, July 7, 1928)

✦ I believe profoundly in tradition. (*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 23, 1929)

✦ I believe material causes count for much less in history than is now supposed. I believe that moral causes count for much more than is now supposed. I believe that the supreme factor is not even the bodily framework, or the framework of environment, but the frame of mind. (*Illustrated London News*, April 16, 1932)

NEWS WITH VIEWS

Compiled by the Gilbert Magazine News-Gathering Staff

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

I ME WED

FARGO, N.D.—From the perspective of News With Views, society's increasingly insane approach to marriage is the gift that keeps on giving. Take the case of Nadine Schweigert of Fargo, North Dakota, who in March married, not another woman, not her pet, not the Eiffel Tower, but...herself. "I'm very proud of it, and I feel very good about it. I'm so glad I did it," Schweigert told the Web site, inforum.com. That's a relief. We'd hate for her to have any regrets about this impressive act of narcissism.

Schweigert tied the knot (tied herself in knots?) before a crowd of forty-five friends and family. Her 11-year-old son, channeling old-fashioned, reactionary thoughts, had initial doubts, going so far as to tell his mother, "I love you, but I'm embarrassed for you right now and I'm not coming." However, he came around in time, even getting involved in the wedding plans. The article notes that Schweigert is a divorced mother of three. We wonder if she got an annulment before marrying herself. And can the ex-husband now stop paying alimony?

Refusing to get bogged down in humility, Schweigert said, "I'm just a unique, awesome person who doesn't fit anyone's mold or ideal, and I hope you're OK with that. And if you're not, that's OK, too."

Hooray!

SURPRISE, SURPRISE!

MANCHESTER, England—Remington, the grooming products company, recently polled 2,000 British women and learned 75 percent of them believed the perfect man does not exist. Further, the closest any of their partners came to a perfect rating was 69 percent. Well, knock us down. Among the things that kept a significant other from rating higher were leaving clothes on the bedroom floor, inability to multi-task, watching too much sports, and snoring. The study also found that while men are unlikely to get anywhere near a perfect rating, they can make themselves tolerable by attending to their appearance, being clean shaven, and having a sense of humor. The study didn't address why men fail to attain perfection but looking at what happened to the only perfect man who ever lived, there's not a lot to recommend it.

INVERTED CHIVALRY

WESLEY CHAPEL, Fla.—If the women in the Remington study think they have man problems, how about the woman who went on a movie date with Michael Pratt? Midway through the movie Pratt asked to borrow her keys so he could get something out of her car. It turns out what Pratt needed was a little joy ride and he didn't bother returning to the theater. When his hapless date called to find out where he was, he laughed and said he'd stolen her car—not exactly a relationship builder. The woman reported the car stolen and it was recovered four days later in a Walmart parking lot. Pratt, who has a habit of failing to return things that don't belong to him, was recovered shortly thereafter and taken to Pasco County Jail to await trial. G.K. Chesterton once said chivalry was a reverence for weakness, and Michael Pratt seems to have this bass-ackwards.

NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED

STUDIO CITY, Calif.—To do her part to save the earth, Heather Patron reduced her carbon footprint and bought a Toyota Prius. Shortly after that, she found her side view mirrors and other plastic parts on her car had melted. The Toyota dealer claimed there was no defect in the vehicle or its materials so Patron replaced the mirrors and returned home. Reaching her carport she happened to notice the mirrors on nearby cars had also melted. She also observed a powerful beam of light reflecting from the window of a nearby condominium onto the carport. As it turned out, her equally environmentally conscious neighbor had installed energy efficient windows that reflected enough concentrated sunlight to fry Patron's car and several others. All Patron could say about the matter was, "I just don't feel like it's fair." Chesterton might have agreed but would have added the world in which we reside is not quite reasonable.

PC HITS THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

DRAPER, Utah—Many Chestertonians will agree that political correctness has run amok. Now we might question whether it is right to impose this lunacy on dumb animals, which is what the Canyons School District did in vetoing Corner Canyon High School students' choice of a mascot. The students had chosen the cougar, unaware that in addition to denoting a large North American feline, the term nowadays stands for a sexually aggressive middle-aged female who attracts younger men. School principal Mary Bailey, whose demographic details remained undisclosed, said because of the modern connotation, having a cougar as mascot would be disrespectful to women. Bailey and members of the school board instead directed students to use a charging horse, which we assume will satisfy

everyone just as long as it's either a mare or a gelding.

DOES THIS MEAN IT'S OVER?

DAYTON, Ohio—When Rossie Brovent decided she wanted a scene from the *Chronicles of Narnia* tattooed on her back, who better to do it than her boyfriend and tattoo artist Ryan Fitzjerald? Unfortunately for Brovent, prior to applying any ink, her boyfriend learned she recently had cheated on him with his best friend. After plying his ladylove with cheap wine and tequila shots, Fitzjerald had her sign a consent form in which she agreed the tattoo design was "at the artist's discretion." Then, as Fitzjerald commenced work, Brovent promptly passed out. When she awoke instead of Aslan she found an image of something that one of Narnia's creatures, a bear for instance, might have left in the woods; the large swarm of flies encircling the image likely added a degree of insult to the injury. Brovent tried having Fitzjerald arrested for assault, however the consent form staved off charges. In the end it looks like Brovent won't be wearing a bikini anytime soon.

EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

DENVER—For those who haven't heard of him, Clyfford Still (1904–1980) was one of the most influential of the American post-World War II abstract expressionist artists. His work remains on display in the Still Museum in Denver. One of those works, entitled "1957-J no. 2" recently attracted the attention of visitor Carmen Tisch, although not in a way that would have pleased the artist. On viewing the work, valued at $30 million, Tisch dropped her pants and began rubbing her backside across it, causing an estimated $10,000 in damage and earning her an arrest for felony criminal mischief. She narrowly missed other charges when she narrowly missed urinating on the painting. Call it a case of an art critic who didn't know where to draw the line.

IS THAT A CANDY BAR IN YOUR POCKET OR…?

MOOSIC, Penn.—Pauline Davies, forty-five, was facing a life-altering decision when she was fired from her job at a J&J Snack Foods plant in northeastern Pennsylvania. Her decision had nothing to do with a career change but rather a gender change. To help her decide if this was the way to go Davies wore a prosthetic penis to work. Her experiment would have passed without incident had she not told her co-workers about it. In the subsequent lawsuit Davies' attorney said there wasn't any harm, as the device had remained concealed (let's hope). The attorney also alleged discrimination because, get this, a male co-worker had been allowed to wear female clothing and female prostheses but was neither fired nor disciplined. All of which is enough to make us leery of any snacks bearing the J&J brand name.

Clerihew Corner

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

The Originator

'Dear me!' exclaimed Homer,
'What a delicious aroma!
'It smells as if a town
'Was being burnt down.'

—E.C. BENTLEY

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

The Imitators —From the Denver Chesterton Society

Emperor Nero
For letting Rome burn is not my hero.
Why he played with the fiddle
Is still a riddle.

—DAN PRIZNER

The aging Charles Dickens
With youthful ways was stricken.
He could still dance a hearty jig
Holding on to his fezziwig.

—SYLVIA BARTHOLD

G.K. Chesterton
Weighed a lot and wrote a ton.
He is not yet a saint—I think this is a flub
Because the postulators don't go into a pub.

—DAN PRIZNER

The abstracts of Pablo Picasso,
I think his paintings are a fiasco,
For every one I see
They're always upside down to me.

—DAN PRIZNER

At the birth of Hilaire Belloc
His heretical doctor was in for a shock.
As soon as he pulled little Hillary out
He received a swift kick on his snout.

—SYLVIA BARTHOLD

Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke
Can cause the stock market to be
quite cranky.
The ledge uses black or red inks
Depending on what Ben thinks.

—DAN PRIZNER

Escaping the Plutonomy

by Richard Aleman

Plutocracies are societies where majority wealth is controlled by a shrinking minority. They are driven by economies powered and consumed by the wealthiest class over a mass population dependent upon their fortunes. Snatching public policy away from the hands of citizens, corporations further their interests through size, market dominance, and disproportionate political influence, enjoying an unparalleled lobby ensuring biased legislation guaranteeing, among other things, their "personhood," the legal fiction used by corporate interests to willfully neglect conscience and accountability "under the shelter of a joint name," from which, as Pius XI wrote, "the worst of injustices and frauds are penetrated." The impact of corporate control over our society has re-energized what some astute observers call plutonomy, and plutonomy is exactly what we live under today.

Life Begins at Incorporation

Corporations as we know them today rarely existed before the 19th century. Back then, corporations served public purposes and were granted legal status under specific and strict provisions. Corporations were created by the state at the behest of private interests, endued with privileges and liabilities distinct from ownership so that, should they fail, both investors and employees would be shielded from responsibility for company debts. Manufacturing, banking, construction, and other corporations were few in quantity and, in some cases, came into being with an expiration date. Over time however, incorporation became more accessible. Lax regulations allowed corporations to proliferate. As they gained footholds over our national economy—and with individual states eagerly competing to accommodate their needs regardless of corporate guidelines and despite public interests—corporations easily dodged operational review.

As Pius XI observed, "The laws passed to promote corporate business, while dividing and limiting the risk of business, have given occasion to the most sordid license." The Fourteenth Amendment, which protected the civil and political rights of its citizens and overruled previous decisions denying blacks the immunities and privileges enjoyed by the rest of the population, was arguably the first case to bestow "personhood" to corporations, entitling them to the same liberties and protecting them from any violation of rights natural to human persons.

Citing the 1st, 4th, and 14th Amendments, corporations have a long history of relentlessly pursuing certain "freedoms," including "freedom" from oversight and regulation. In 1933, J.C. Penney sued the state of Florida and claimed Fourteenth Amendment equal protection after the state imposed a differential tax favoring small business against chain stores. In 1967's See v. City of Seattle, corporations benefited from the court ruling prohibiting the fire department from entering private property without a warrant, to avoid random environmental, health, and safety checks. In 1978's First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti, the U.S. Supreme Court declared corporate persons as having the same free speech rights as natural persons, allowing them to spend unlimited sums of money toward expressing their agenda through advertisements and campaign contributions. With enormous financial resources, personhood netted corporations free speech and voting rights, as well as limitless access to Congress, unofficially granting these corporations first class citizenship while "humans" suffer the effects of their relentless, successful lobbying.

When we grant the rights of individuals to corporations like privacy and free speech rights, the influencing of political leadership and legislative redress, we may wish to ask whether the mass of citizens and corporations are truly enjoying the same impartiality guaranteed by the bestowing of equal rights. Are corporations and the rest of us judged and penalized equally, even when these "persons" pollute our air and water, perpetuate fraud against consumers, or violate the public health?

In 2004, the insurance giant AIG was charged with accounting fraud and forced to pay $126 million dollars in a settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The company avoided criminal charges. Two years later the same company "agreed to pay state and federal regulators more than $1.6 billion and change business practices to settle allegations that it engaged in securities fraud, bid-rigging, and failed to make contributions to

Bovine Blues

In centuries past
Fresh milk from a cow
Was gleefully drunk
By I, thee, and thou.

But today fed'ral agents
Will slap you in jail
If unpasteurized milk
You offer for sale.

—Sean P. Dailey

workers' compensation funds." Once again, the company dodged criminal charges.

Citigroup, along with JP Morgan Chase, coughed up more than $300 million to settle accusations the banking giant helped conceal Enron's true financial condition before collapsing. In 2003, Citigroup paid $143 million in various fines and penalties. The following year Citigroup paid $2.65 billion to settle scandals involving WorldCom stocks and bonds. In 2005, accused of manufacturing reports and concealing conflicts of interest, it settled with investors of Global Crossing for $75 million. That same year, and again in June of 2007, Citigroup was charged with providing misleading documents and faulty mutual fund practices, paying over $35 million in fines and restitution.

As The Examiner reported in December, Los Angeles became the first major U.S. city to unanimously vote against corporate personhood, calling for a constitutional amendment asserting that corporations are not entitled to the same constitutional rights as persons. Last year the U.S. Supreme Court "ruled against AT&T's claim that personal privacy rights prevent the federal government from disclosing agency records that might reveal corporate wrongdoing to the public." In January, Federal District Judge Jed S. Rakoff refused to approve a $285 million dollar settlement between the SEC and Citigroup "involving transactions in which the bank bet against mortgage-backed securities it sold to customers."

The Citigroup Memos

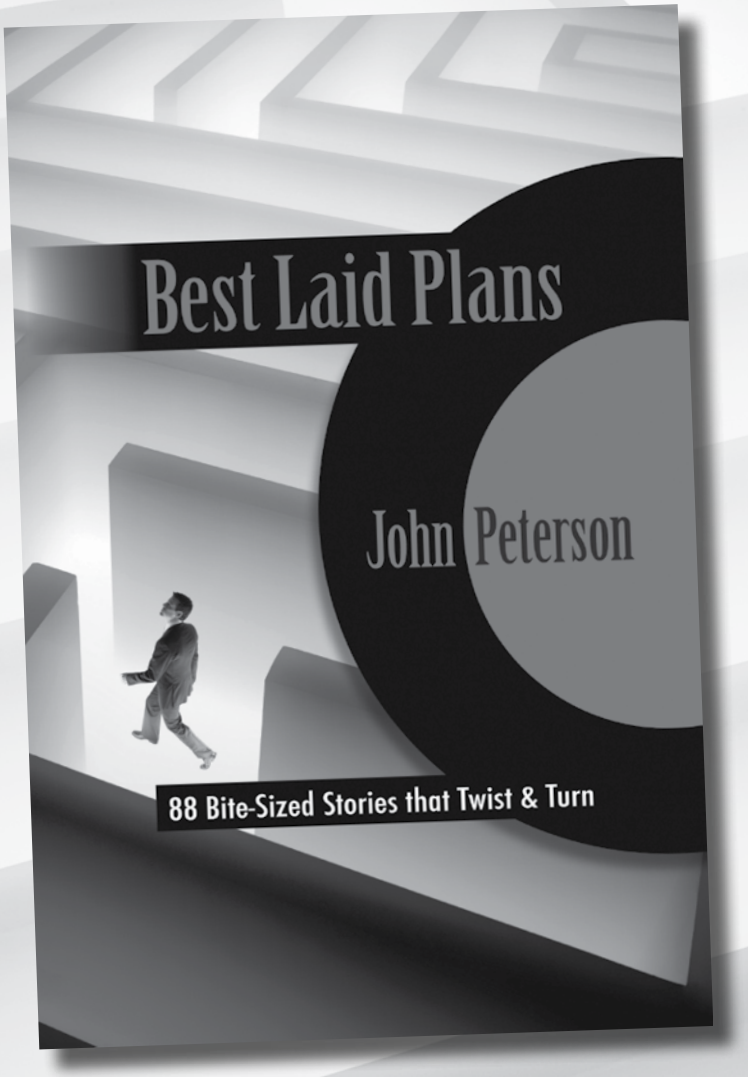
According to leaked Citigroup memos, plutonomies are "economies powered by the wealthy," from which we "will likely see even more income inequality," thanks to "capitalist-friendly governments…and globalization." Indeed, the memos go on to admit the current existence of plutonomies, ubiquitous whenever "economic growth is powered by and largely consumed by the wealthy few." The authors wax cheerfully of our inability to recuperate sane economic measures to end plutonomies without traveling back in time and changing our "fertility rates," an obvious reference to the population imbalances caused by the twin evils of contraception and abortion. The same memos, quoting Kevin Phillips' Wealth and Democracy, openly credit the rise of plutonomy with technological fascination, the role of creative finance, cooperative government, immigration and overseas conquests, the rule of law, and patented inventions.

According to the Citigroup memos the only antidote potent enough to curb the rise of plutonomies are structural regulations and ideological tax policies in favor of the mass of citizens. They credit the First and Second World Wars and the post-Depression era as the source of plutocratic decline, that is, until the 1980s emerged and corporate and income taxes relaxed, shifting the earlier "coupon-clipping, dividend-receiving rentiers," to our current "Managerial Aristocracy indulged by their shareholders."

Conservatives harp on public subsidiarity and right they are. The smaller, more decentralized government is the better. Unfortunately, they also ignore subsidiarity in the private sector. Progressives, on the other hand, stress the importance of private subsidiarity while ignoring the leviathan of our central government and, therefore, the public subsidiarity necessary to distribute competent authority into smaller units. What we need is both public and private subsidiarity to replace plutocracy and bureaucracy; a Christian course out of the plutonomy and what G.K. Chesterton once called, "this strange poetry of plutocracy [that] prevails over people against their very senses."

It would be false to suggest the corporate structure is evil or the elimination of personhood with regard to non-profit corporations like religious institutions. But we ought to reconsider the expiration of for-profit corporate personhood, encourage alternate forms of incorporation; purpose-driven models of surplus used to accomplish specific moral and social intentions rather than to primarily pay out dividends.

You are in for some surprises!



$19.95 (retail)

$15.95 (member)

88 Stories by
JOHN PETERSON
Foreword by
DALE AHLQUIST

QTY: ____ X $19.95 (or $15.95 member price) + $3.00 Shipping **TOTAL ENCLOSED:** _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

❑ VISA ❑ MC ❑ AMEX ❑ DISC # (Or include your check/MO)

_____ EXP. DATE_____ SIGNATURE_____

THE AMERICAN CHESTERTON SOCIETY

4117 Pebblebrook Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55437 • 952-831-3096 • info@chesterton.org • www.chesterton.org

CHESTERTON'S MAIL BAG

Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail

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

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What's the difference between Puritanism and Paganism?

Signed,
Mr. Mather

Dear Mr. Mather,
Puritanism made a man too individual, and had its horrible outcome in Individualism. Paganism makes a man too collective, and its extreme outcome is in Communism.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 7, 1929)

* * *

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What's the difference between rationalism and mysticism?

Signed,
Mr. Misty

Dear Mr. Misty,
There is only one difference between rationalism and mysticism—mysticism contradicts itself and knows it, and rationalism contradicts itself and doesn't know it.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 23, 1905)

* * *

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What is the difference between a criminal and a canary?

Signed,
Mr. Muggs

Dear Mr. Muggs,
Our treatment of animals at the worst restrains their wildness; our treatment of human beings makes them wild. Caging a canary, at the worst, can only tame it; caging a man may madden him.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, March 7, 1914)

* * *

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

Signed,
Mr. Matter

Dear Mr. Matter,
Christian Science is certainly based on the two ideas that there is no real flesh and no real pain. And Christianity is certainly based on the idea that the highest reality in the universe assumed flesh and endured pain.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Aug. 14, 1909)

* * *

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What's the difference between amusing oneself and being amused?

Signed,
Mr. Merry

Dear Mr. Merry,
To amuse oneself is a mark of gaiety, vitality and love of life. To be amused is a mark of melancholy, surrender and a potentiality of suicide. The former means that a man's own thoughts are attractive, artistic and satisfying; the latter means that his own thoughts are ugly, unfruitful and stale. And the happiness of a people is not to be judged by the amount of fun provided for them. For fun can be provided as food can be provided; by a few big stores or shops. The happiness of the people is to be judged by the fun that the people provide. In healthier ages any amount of fun was really provided by the people and not merely for the people. It was so in a vast multitude of songs, fairly tales and dances; but it was so even in the more ornate and official business of the drama.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Vanity Fair*, Feb., 1920)

* * *

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What's the difference between bimetallism and nudity?

Signed,
Mr. More

Dear Mr. More,
Bimetallism might be instituted without anybody taking much notice. The absence of clothes could not be instituted without everybody taking notice.

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

* * *

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
What's the difference between the old *poseur* and the new *poseur*?

Signed,
Mr. Mayor

Dear Mr. Mayor,
The old *poseur* showed his superiority to common men by having read the books they had never heard of; the new *poseur* shows it by not having read the books that they have heard of. The second, indeed, is the more arrogant of the two. The first only despises ordinary readers; the second also despises the most extraordinary writers. It must be a very comfortable feeling. But like most modern feelings that are very comfortable, it is also quite unintelligent and unreasonable.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*New York American*, Dec. 23, 1933)

LETTER TO AMERICA

G.K. Chesterton in the New York American

The New Currency

by G.K. Chesterton

The people round me are all talking about Currency; which gives me a pleasant isolation and repose, because I do not understand Currency. Nor indeed do they. They would say that I do not even understand it enough to want to talk about it. I should say that I do understand it enough to understand that I do not understand it. The little real Economics I know seems almost to contradict the very existence of Currency.

Heaven forbid that I should pretend to understand the game of Poker; it requires far greater, grander and more earnest and serious moral qualities than mine. But I did always suppose that Poker chips are worth what the Poker players agree they shall represent.

I do not understand how people can trade in the mere tokens, apart from what they represent. I do not understand people stabilizing the Chip; or going off the Chip, or being afraid that the Chip will not recover, or will only be worth half a Chip. But all that is my ignorance, and, I grieve to say, indifference.

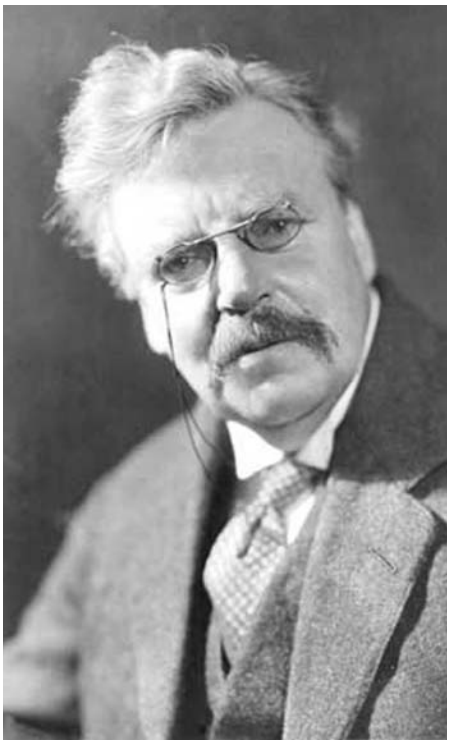
I have a feeling we shall have to get back to facts behind such tokens; though I do not generally agree with the proposals for an alternative currency common just now in my own country. They seem to me to be even more symbolic and unreal than the existing symbols. Many of them want some system of recognized credits or claims on produce, recorded in official documents; but I cannot but think that this way of possessing money on paper is only another variety of paper money.

For instance, I suppose one very simple and charming Currency can be found in the savage custom of purchasing wives by exchanging them for cattle. In benighted and barbarous communities, let us say, one wife would be worth ten cows. In more modern and complex communities, it looks as if one cow would be worth ten wives.

For a man would find that, in the very middle of a modern industrial city, cows are rather rare. Whereas, for a man living the same cultured and highly civilized modern life, wives are often quite numerous. Therefore, it would seem that a wife would become a subdivision of a cow, instead of a cow being a subdivision of a wife. A cow would be the larger coin; indeed an unusually large one; the wife would be a small coin; the lower unit or denomination.

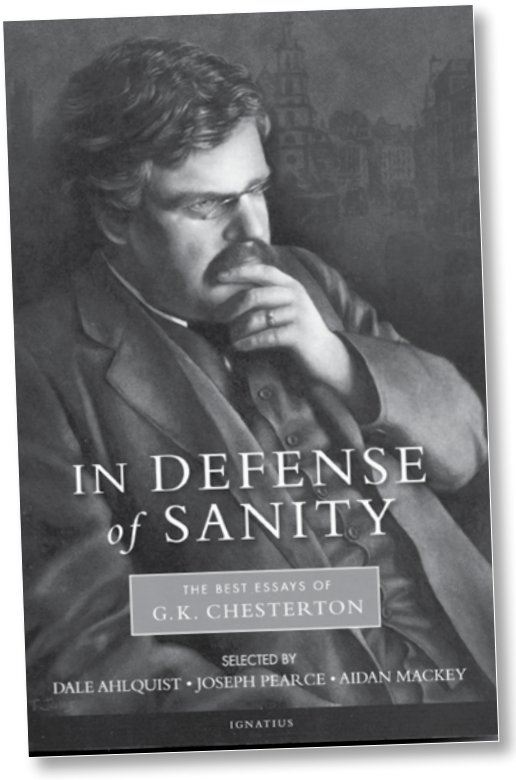
In rural districts, however, I have always favored what was called Three Acres and a Cow; but I do not favor Three Families and a Cow. On the dogmas and dusty traditions which prevent me from favoring it, I will not dwell here.

From *New York American*, February 6, 1932



Gilbert Magazine
American Chesterton Society
3050 Gap Knob Road
New Hope, KY 40052
Change Service Requested
www.gilbertmagazine.com

THERE ARE CERTAIN BOOKS BY G.K. CHESTERTON THAT ARE SIMPLY ESSENTIAL. HERE IS ANOTHER ONE FOR THE LIST.



Even the biggest Chesterton fans sometimes forget that he is first and foremost an essayist. His detective stories, his epic poems, his books on philosophy, religion, and society are all important, but they represent only a fraction of what he wrote. The problem, of course, is where do you begin reading five thousand essays? Begin here.

Three of world's most prominent Chestertonians — Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce and Aidan Mackey — have selected 67 essays for this collection, presenting the master essayist at his craft, showing his amazing grasp on any subject he touches from cheese to gargoyles to the advantages of having one leg. But also mysticism, architecture, and dreams. And the difference between stained glass windows and fireworks. And even the difference between the two sexes, and why that difference might even be considered important. And then are skeletons, Jane Austen, islands, Prohibition, and rotten apples. Every object is an object lesson. Every little truth points to a very big truth.

From Chesterton's earliest essays to his last, he was a consistent, comprehensive, and complete thinker who seems more relevant today than when he first penned these essays a century ago. You will be inspired, entertained, and informed. And astonished.

Retail Price: $19.95 Member price: $15.95

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

CITY: _____

STATE/ZIP: _____

E-MAIL : _____ PHONE: ( )_____

Qty: _____ Amount Enclosed _____

I'm paying by: ❑ Check ❑ VISA ❑ MC ❑ DISC ❑ AMEX card

Card #: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ EXP: _____

Order online at **www.chesterton.org** or mail to:
4117 Pebblebrook Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55437
952-831-3096 info@chesterton.org
Or call TOLL FREE 800-343-2425