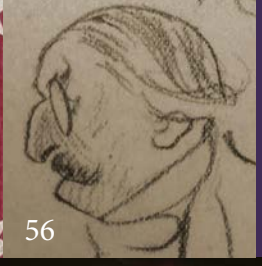

GILBERT

In the round of our rational and mournful year one festival remains out of all those ancient gaieties that once covered the whole earth. Christmas remains to remind us of those ages, whether Pagan or Christian, when the many acted poetry instead of the few writing it. —G.K. CHESTERTON

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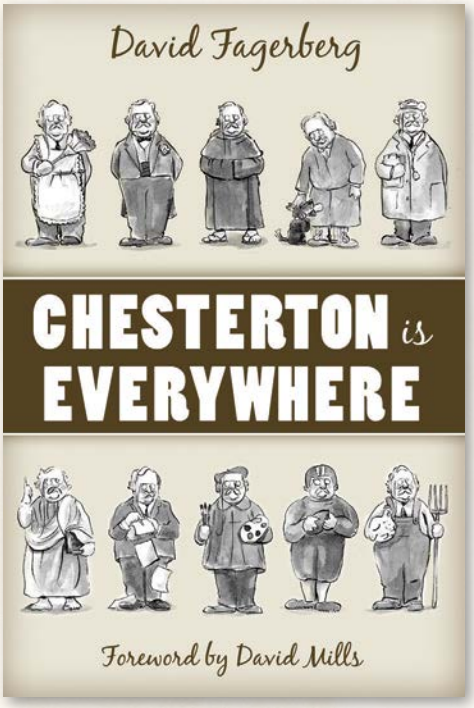

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David W. Fagerberg is associate professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, and editor of its publication *Assembly.* He contributes regularly to *Gilbert* magazine. Dr. Fagerberg received his S.T.M. in linguistic philosophy from Yale Divinity School, his M.A. and M. Phil from Yale University, and his Ph.D. in liturgical theology from Yale University.

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TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

by Sean P. Dailey

Dale Ahlquist wrote us, on November 12:

> Dear Chesterton Friends,
> In case you have not heard, Aidan Mackey's wife, Dorene, passed away today. They had been married for sixty-nine years. She died in Australia, where she was being cared for by one of Aidan's seven daughters. She'd been slipping into the fog of Alzheimer's for the past three years, and spent part of the year in Australia, just to give Aidan some relief from providing full time care. She was about to return about two months ago, when she broke her hip. Shortly after that she had a heart attack. It was certainly not an easy end. But what a life.

Please remember Dorene in your prayers, and Aidan too. The gap in his life after having been with her for longer than many of us have been alive will be unimaginable.

The digital downloads portion of the American Chesterton Society is up and running. What can you get there? For starters, forty-eight back issues, at $3.99 each, are available—with more being added all the time. All the issues from volumes twelve through thirteen can be downloaded to your iPad or Kindle, for $24.99 per volume. Finally, at a mere $1.99 each, are lectures from many past Chesterton conferences: 117 conference lectures in all, on topics ranging from Blaise Pascal to Alfred Hitchcock to "Chesterton and Aliens." And everything else. Go to the American Chesterton Society webpage, drag your curser to "Shop," and click on "Digital Downloads" in the dropdown menu.

Also on the ACS webpage, nineteen books "under $10," including *What's Wrong with the World*, *Twelve Types*, *The Poet and the Lunatics*, two books by Hilaire Belloc, *Subsidiarity* by Peter Floriani, and the collection of essays, *Tremendous Trifles*, which includes G.K. Chesterton's short story, "The Shop of Ghosts," which is in this issue on page 20.

100 YEARS AGO

G.K. Chesterton fell ill with a combination of mysterious symptoms that eventually took him into a coma and nearly took his life. What was first described as a heart condition and later as "a sort of gout all over" and even by some as a nervous breakdown, has never been satisfactorily explained. When the doctor paid his first visit, he arrived and found him collapsed on the bed, which had broken under his weight, leaving his head lower than his hips. "You must be horribly uncomfortable," said the doctor. "Why, now you mention it," answered Chesterton, "I suppose I am."

The last words the doctor heard before Chesterton sank into a coma were "I wonder if this bally ship will ever get to shore."

More shameless promotion: Season VII of *The Apostle of Common Sense* is now on DVD, and can be purchased at the ACS webpage at http://www.chesterton.org/shop/ewtn-apostle-of-common-sense-season-7.

Chesterton in the news: *Crisis* published a comprehensive analysis of Chesterton's seminal novel, *The Flying Inn*, on December 9, called "Chesterton's Islamic England." William Kilpatrick writes, that while *The Flying Inn,*" when published, "anticipated the Islamization of England, it seemed so far out of the realm of possibility that it was difficult to take it as anything but a flight of fancy." However, "Roughly one hundred years later, Chesterton's scenario no longer seems improbable."

Read the full essay at http://www.crisismagazine.com/2014/chestertons-islamic-england.

Parting Trifle: *Gilbert* welcomes submissions from our readers. However, due to the lack of staff to manually type submissions into a digital storage system, we ask that the submissions be e-mailed to us, rather than sent though the mail. Please e-mail submissions either to editor@gilbertmagazine.com or to info@chesterton.org. Thank you.

Emma Wilson of Birmingham, England, with the world's best travelled *Gilbert* ("It's been to Birmingham, Dubai, Sydney (by accident), Queenstown, Auckland, Melbourne, Dubai and Birmingham again. I figure this is about 12,000 miles.")

EDITORIAL

Net Neutrality

We are not fans of President Obama, but if there is anyone in Washington who may be an even worse politician, it's U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz.

The week following the November elections, the two were in a flap over something called net neutrality. If you have not been paying attention to this issue, you should be, because while "net neutrality" as a term sounds dull, it is hugely important to how people spend their time online. If it's done away with, the Internet as we know it will no longer exist.

Net neutrality erupted in the news when Sen. Cruz tweeted, on November 10, "'Net Neutrality' is Obamacare for the Internet; the Internet should not operate at the speed of government."

Sen. Cruz was reacting to President Obama calling for the Internet to be reclassified as a public utility. That itself is not a bad idea, but President Obama is himself being more than a little disingenuous here. More on that below. Also, just as important, Sen. Cruz was not speaking on his own behalf. He is one of fifteen members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to have received campaign cash from Comcast, which gives to politicians from both parties—Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois also has benefited from Comcast's largesse. However, that Sen. Cruz would say something this outrageous is staggering.

For the benefit of Sen. Cruz, net neutrality is the principle that all data on the Internet has to be treated equally, no matter who created it. Net neutrality is not law, but the Internet has generally been run this way since the beginning.

Here's what we mean: imagine Cyberspace as a vast city. Businesses and stores in the city are websites. Streets are the Internet—they connect stores to each other and to consumers. But then one particularly big business, a big box store, decides it doesn't want people buying products from competing businesses. It wants you to buy only its bundled goods and services. So it uses its influence to gain an unfair advantage over the competition. The government can't force stores to close, but it can erect barricades or tear up the streets around them in construction projects. Or it can build a new freeway or railroad to the favored store, cutting off traffic to the smaller stores, forcing them out of business and forcing their customers to patronize only the big box store.

Or it can simply not fix potholes in select neighborhoods. That's essentially what the big Internet service providers like AT&T and Comcast are doing now: intentionally not improving the Internet's infrastructure. They argue that net neutrality blocks their ability to make improvements, and that transmitting more data costs providers more money than transmitting less data, therefore not all content should be treated equally.

However, even with net neutrality, telecom giants offer a variety of bandwidth packages that consumers can choose from to suit their needs. But the larger picture is this: if net neutrality is abandoned, the telecom giants will be able to manipulate their bandwidth to extort fees from websites (like Google and Amazon), hanging over their heads the threat of slowing access to those sites, or blocking them altogether, thanks to rule revisions now being considered by the Federal Communications Commission. It is the perfect integration of Big Business and Big Government.

Lest readers think that a telecom giant would never do that, well, they already have.

Last year, during contract negotiations with Netflix, Comcast demanded that Netflix pay millions more dollars to Comcast. When Netflix balked, Comcast suppressed Netflix's signal, preventing Comcast customers from streaming Netflix movies, until Netflix buckled. Netflix is responsible for about 30 percent of all Internet traffic, yet it was brought to its knees by Comcast. Net neutrality is what protects websites and, ultimately, their customers, from this kind of blackmail by Internet service providers. Thanks to net neutrality, whether an Internet user wants to stream movies on Netflix, or Amazon Prime, or Google, or whomever, he or she is free to choose without interference from Comcast or Cox or AT&T U-verse.

How close is the relationship between the telecom industry and Big Government? Not only is the telecom industry second only to the military industrial complex in the money it spends on lobbying, the current chairman of the FCC, Tom Wheeler, was the telecom industry's Washington lobbyist before President Obama named him FCC chairman in 2013.

Do you get the feeling that neither Sen. Cruz nor President Obama care much for their respective bases?

Reclassifying the Internet as a public utility is actually a good idea. Internet service in the United States is both more expensive and slower than almost all other developed countries. Treating it as a public utility would effectively block telecom giants from hijacking it. But given Obama's choice for FCC chairman, we doubt his sincerity.

Preserving net neutrality is not "Obamacare for the Internet," but ending net neutrality would be. Just as Obamacare is a marriage of Big Government and Big Insurance, gutting net neutrality would seal the marriage between Big Government and Big Telecom,

The Internet as it is currently construed is possible only because of net neutrality. It is, to quote HBO host John Oliver, "why the Internet is a weirdly level playing field" and is what makes, say, chesterton.org every bit as accessible as YouTube or Facebook. Don't let Hudge and Gudge end net neutrality.

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

LUNACY & LETTERS

from Gilbert *Readers*

I am writing concerning Dale Ahlquist's review of my book, *The Mississippi Flows Into the Tiber* (*G* Sept./Oct. 2014). I am very grateful to Dale for the overwhelmingly positive things he has to say about the book, but there is one very disturbing issue that I feel bound to take up. This relates to the last paragraph of the review in which he states, "the publisher, E. Michael Jones, allows a bit of his own agenda and personal quarrels to mar a few of the entries of living converts, including his own entry."

This is a very serious slur against both Dr. Jones and myself. In relation to Dr. Jones, Dale Ahlquist levels a charge against him and his "agenda" which has no basis in fact. In reality, I am solely responsible for every word in the book. Dr. Jones did not edit the book in any way. In fact, he agreed to publish the book sight unseen, presumably because he liked the previous book of mine on the subject of converts. So, he did not impose any agenda on me or on the book.

In relation to myself, Dale Ahlquist's totally gratuitous and tendentious accusation impugns my integrity as a writer. I come across as looking like a sycophantic pawn in another's supposed game, who wrote a flattering entry on Dr. Jones simply to get him to publish the book. This is totally false and needs to be retracted publicly.

John Beaumont
Leeds, England

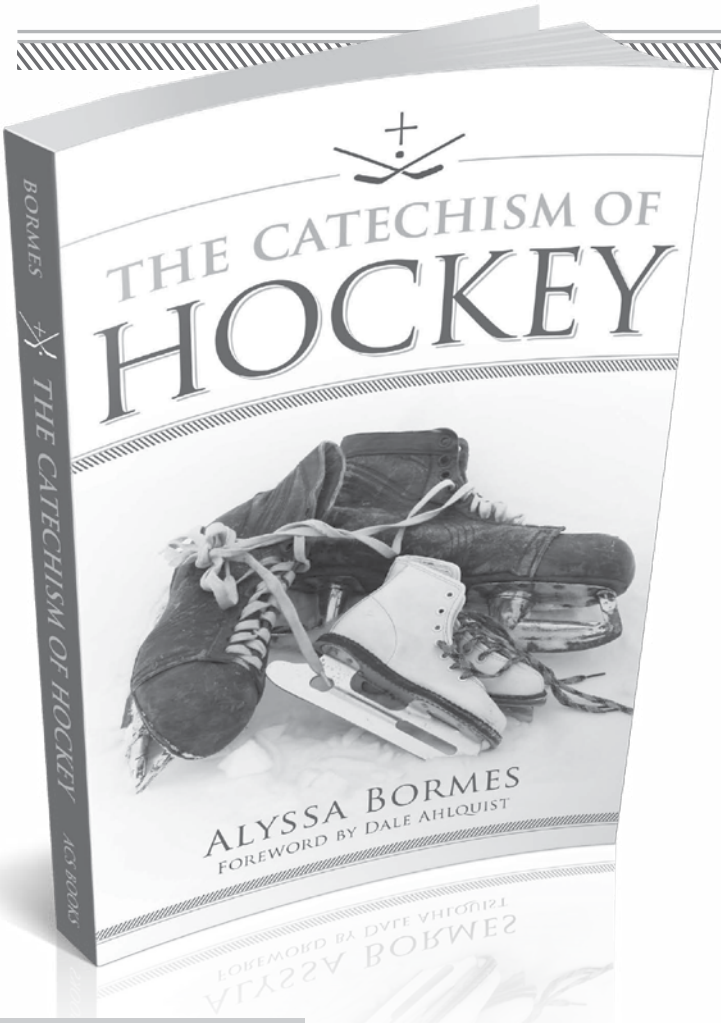
Dale Ahlquist responds: The criticism was not meant to be an accusation, but I suppose all criticism sounds like an accusation. The honest observation that I made on what I perceived to be a minor flaw in a very good book was not uniquely mine. Others have made the same observation. But I am thankful that the author has corrected it. I am deeply sorry to have offended Mr. Beaumont, whom I respect and admire, and whom I certainly regard as a man of integrity. I am equally grateful for the courageous work of Dr. Jones. The larger point of my review, I hope, will not be lost on the reader or on Mr. Beaumont or on Dr. Jones: that I highly recommend this important and worthwhile book to everyone.

✦ ✦ ✦

On the last page of *Gilbert* I have noticed, "...the love of family, and having babies, lots of them." This reminds me of the "high birthrate" politic in Germany during the wars-period in order to provide millions of men to military and industrial purposes and demands. Having lots of children means finally and effectively breeding men like animals. In countries where only a few men are living, every man is important. In crowded countries, nobody is important; men are working slaves, merchandise on the employment market. This recalls G.K. Chesterton's vision of the Servile State. "Pro-life" does not mean having many babies, but preventing suicide, showing people that life is worth living.

The Catholic Church in Germany did join the high birthrate politic and collaborated with Prussians and National Socialists and was well paid, an evil epoch.

T.M. Trippe
Scheidegg, Bavaria, Germany



Why does hockey have so many rules? Do we still need to have penalty boxes? Can't we get rid of offside? And why is practice so important? What's the big deal with the Commissioner? And coaches? And referees? Why can't they just let us play?

Anyone involved in hockey – players, parents, fans – would never take any of these questions seriously. Without the rules, there would be no hockey. And without the drills there would be no thrills.

And yet Catholics ask similar questions about the Church all the time. Why does the Church have so many rules? Why do we have to go to confession? Why do we need priests? And what's the big deal with the Pope? Why does the faith have to be so difficult? Can't we just play?

If you have ever needed help explaining the faith to your children, your friends and family, or even your foes, this is your new playbook. *The Catechism of Hockey* is one of the most unlikely, but effective Catholic resources for the New Evangelization.

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1996 Hobey Baker Award Winner

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

STRAWS IN THE WIND

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton

The Survival of Christmas

By G.K. Chesterton

It is our modern habit to put the general advantages of the race above the private pleasures of the individual. We hold that the health of the community is more important than the happiness of the citizen. Consistently our teachers drill us into better habits, having each the same standard in view. Inevitably must the barbarous, superstitious and selfish instincts be driven from our natures; inevitably must their places be supplied by culture, knowledge and sacrifice. Thus may we rise from our own base beginnings to thrust our influence among the stars, if not beyond them. In the scheme of things, in the movement towards our goal, it is certain that much we have previously respected and ever revered must in time become outdated and obsolete. Milestones will be left behind by the advancing, progressive race and, in time, forgotten. One such milestone is obviously the festival of Christmas.

From every modern angle (save one) Christmas cannot be fitted into the new setting. Modern thinkers, in fact, are moving farther and farther away from it, and, if we follow our teachers (and they assume that we shall), we must eventually find ourselves in a state in which Christmas has become but a dim memory. The idea of Christmas is the idea of a feast and the idea of a feast is the success of a fast. But feasting is in itself indefensible. Planned as our lives now are on some vague sort of athletic training, it has been proved beyond dispute that feasting is bad for us. The idea of over-eating is repugnant to our present standards. The idea of Christmas Puddings, for instance, great, heavy mixtures of indigestible elements, positively makes Dr. Saleeby shudder. But pudding only plays a part in the glutton's feast. There is also the super-use (as the Americans say) of what is called Alcohol on the occasion of Christmas, the increased consumption of tobacco and the sacrifice of the turkey that the feast demands.

There is probably only one mediaeval thing, still religious in root but popular in practice, that carries down to the English by unbroken custom from generation to generation, the unmistakable colour and consciousness of that lost Christian society. That thing we call Christmas.

(New Witness, Dec. 9, 1915)

Of all these the turkey is probably the worst feature. In an age when higher thought turns readily towards the Vegetarian ideal this general sinking in a veritable sea of turkeys is a most serious matter. Not only is it bad for us to eat the carcases of the fattened birds, but is is bad for the turkeys so to be eaten. To stuff them with too much food just before Christmas, that they may weigh heavily when the festival arrives, is taking liberties with inoffensive, if rather stupid, animals. The turkey is thus not free to live his own life, to express himself in his own way. In fine, no consideration is shown for the feelings of the bird; and the bird's feelings are rather more important than the man's. As to that which is called alcohol on account of the difficulty that learned persons find in pronouncing such hard words as "Wine" or "Beer," research has made it clear that it is a poison that serves to paralyse portions of the human system. The thing can be shown, has been shown, in remarkable diagrams. Moreover, the action of nicotine is entirely in the same direction only (unfortunately) less potent in its effect.

There is in the case of Christmas, again, the trouble over Father Christmas. Father Christmas is against the best interests of modern thought. He stands between children and reality, preventing their minds from gaining a grip on essentials. The spirit of the age is all against fairy tales and in favour of scientific facts. To go contrary to fact is to be false to one's trust. If, therefore, and in spite of the evidence, we succeed in persuading children that an elderly gentleman in a red dressing gown comes down the chimney with a vast sack full of toys, in order to drop a number of them into a hanging stocking, we have let down our age. We should rather recognise the red figure as a Bolshevik survival, a sign of the anarchy of thought that filled the world before scientific thought got busy and began to assert itself by banishing the bogeys. As a mark of the times, the American teachers have already got to work to abolish fairy tales and doubtless it will not be long before they abolish supernatural figures as well. In point of fact, it is not very easy to say where. Santa Claus ends and where the Child of Bethlehem begins. Logic seems to suggest that when you cast out the one, you must proceed to cast out the other. The children would then indeed be free.

But, of course, the religious meaning

of Christmas is entirely obnoxious to modern thought. The Buddhist point of view, the Buddhist outlook (if he has one), the thoughtful person of to-day can see, but not the Christian. It is not altogether by accident that we find the religious aspect of Christmas mentioned here in the last place. The modern also puts it so. It is quite evident, then, that intelligence to-day, for one reason and another, has moved right away from Christmas. The Christmas spirit of peace and plenty, generosity and foolery, the recollection of customs and traditions makes no contact with the modern mind. Imagine the editorial board of the *Realist*, for example, hanging up their stockings or dancing round a Christmas Tree, or singing carols even on Marie Stopes' birthday. How is it then that Christmas, with all its attractions or crimes, remains with us and refuses to go the way the moderns would send it?

The answer, or rather a part of it, is that Christmas is good business. Christmas does not suit our professors and teachers, but it does suit our business men down to the ground. Saleeby may wail when we over-eat and over-drink, but the people who sell these things want us all to feast. The giving of presents may be a barbarous survival, but those who sell the presents would have us believe, through their advertisers, that it is the duty of each person to give everybody a present. The truth is that modern thought and Big Business usually go together, but when they clash, modern thought retires from the field and Big Business has it all its own way. It is many years since Bernard Shaw said that Christmas was a conspiracy kept up by the shop-keepers. He was wrong then and he would be wrong to-day, yet not so wrong to-day as he was then. For the fact is that very few of us are Moderns and fewer still successful men of business. And for such of us as have survived both evils it is still possible to enjoy a Happy Christmas.

(From *G.K.'s Weekly*, December 21, 1929)

Chesterton for Today

✦ It is a great pity that film and radio and other modern inventions have lessened the opportunities of the public to meet politicians face to face and tear them to pieces. (*Buffalo Evening News*, July 14, 1926)

✦ Give me the common human jolly healthy fool and let him govern me. I would rather be governed by nine million people mostly fools than by nine people mostly mono-maniacs. (*Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 21, 1907)

✦ The chief difference between rich and poor is that the poor are untaught and the rich are unteachable. (*New Witness*, July 23, 1920)

✦ The healthiest institutions do not eliminate human sin. But surely there are no such things as healthy institutions, as distinct from unhealthy ones. There is such a thing as using sex and property in a sane and fruitful way, instead of a feverish and fruitless way. A peasant produces and protects something real; as marriage produces and protects children. (*The Observer*, Nov. 30, 1919)

✦ The notion of regarding divorce as a natural and frequent cure for the normal sorrows of sex came to us chiefly from the millionaire class in America; the coarsest, the most trivial, the most thin-souled, and the most brazenly cruel class that has existed for many centuries. (*Daily News,* March 12, 1910)

✦ Modern hostility is a base thing, and arises, not out of a generous difference, but out of a sort of bitter and sneering similarity. It is because we are all copying each other that we are all cursing each other. (*Illustrated London News*, May 9, 1908)

✦ The whole destiny of mankind cannot be settled by the United States, any more than the whole destiny of the United States could be settled by South Carolina. (*Illustrated London News*, Oct. 28, 1916)

✦ Religion is a battle; and to have your thinking unfinished is to be fighting unprepared. If there is an enemy in the field, he will not wait until we find truth, he will already be leading us into error. (*Columbia*, October, 1926)

Timely Essays on Chesterton's Timeless Paradoxes

On Denying Christmas

James V. Schall S.J.

In his excellent new book *Redeeming Economics*, John Mueller cites G.K. Chesterton any number of times, particularly on the family. One cited passage that struck me, from the *Heretics* chapter, "Christmas and the Aesthetes," was this: "Take away the supernatural and what remains is the unnatural." Chesterton had broached this theme many times before. A clear paradox is found in it. We would expect the line to read: "Take away the supernatural and what remains is the natural." But the passage does not read that way.

We do say, after all, that the supernatural is built on the natural. If we do not know what is natural, we will probably not get the point of what is supernatural either. We are thus struck by the last thing we might expect; namely, that the only way to preserve the natural is to embrace the supernatural. If we have lived in the supernatural, however, when we reject it, we find not the natural but the unnatural. We build a culture on what is anti-supernatural by establishing the unnatural as our norm of life.

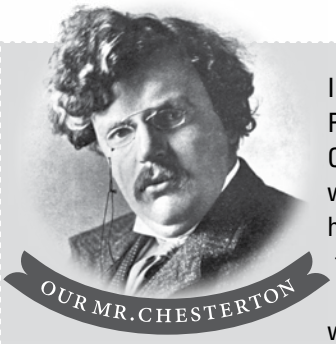
Chesterton is speaking from experience. Logic works both ways. There is even a diabolic logic. Christ himself told us that if the devil was divided against himself, he could not stand. Men found that when they were once Christian, only later to reject the faith, their new theories did not work "naturally." They did not go back to nature. They embraced its opposite, the unnatural. It is the deliberate and systematic rejection of basic tenets of reason and Christianity in order, so to speak, to affirm one's freedom from them. This freedom cannot admit any truth to Christianity, which itself defiantly affirms the natural order of things. The opposition is left with one choice, the specific denial of Christian teachings, particularly those that are based on reason. This is why the major opposition to Christianity today does not arise from issues of faith, but from issues of reason.

The chapter on Christmas in *Heretics,* in fact, mentions the word *Christmas* only twice. The first is: "Christmas remains to remind us of those ages, whether Pagan or Christian, when the many acted poetry instead of the few writing it." This essay is an analysis of Comte's notion of the religion of humanity as well as other philosophies that deny transcendence. Hence, they lack the notion of rite and celebration, hence Christmas. It is a point Plato also saw. Chesterton is most amusing:

> Ritual is really much older than thought; it is much simpler and much wilder than thought. A feeling touching the nature of things does not only make men feel that there are certain proper things to say; it makes them feel that there are certain proper things to do. The most agreeable of these consist in dancing, building temples, and shouting very loud; the less agreeable of wearing green carnations and burning other philosophers alive.

The rites of Christians at Christmas are a mixture of pagan, Jewish, Roman, Germanic, and other traditions, but all woven into the essential point of the Incarnation.

The religion of humanity that replaces Christianity has its own unexpected logic. Chesterton put it this way: "And it is surely



In his memoir, *Thinking It Over,* Hesketh Pearson recalled that when talking to G.K. Chesterton, "one had the impression that he was thinking ahead of the conversation, and his frequent smile would sometimes come at the wrong moment, as though his mind were round the corner enjoying a joke that yours would appreciate when it got there too. Yet he must have seen enough in a quick-glancing way, because when I met him again after a longish period and mentioned my name, he said at once:

> 'I remember you well. In fact, you appear in one of my Father Brown stories.'
> As I had only spoken to him twice for a few minutes about eight years ago, I assumed he was pulling my leg and laughed. But he was quite serious:
> 'No, I assure you that I described you in a Father Brown story.'
> 'Which story?'
> 'Ah! It is a detective story and the least you can do is to detect yourself.'
> 'But why did you describe me?'
> 'Because you were the sort of person I wished to describe.'"

Amazingly, Pearson never got around to re-reading the first two volumes of Father Brown stories to find himself.

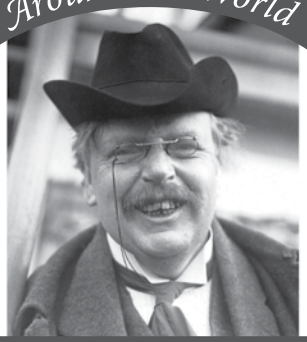
unreasonable to attack the doctrine of the Trinity as a piece of bewildering mysticism, and then to ask men to worship a being who is ninety million persons in one God, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." Since today there are some seven billion people that constitute humanity, the statistics make the premises of making humanity a god even more graphically absurd.

The second mention of the word *Christmas* is as follows: "But there is something about these people (Yeats and George Moore), a haunting and alarming something that it is just possible that they do not keep Christmas." What did Chesterton mean by the phrase "keeping Christmas"?

"It is painful to regard human nature in such a light," he writes, "but it seems somehow possible that Mr. George Moore does not wave his spoon and shout when the pudding is set alight. It is even possible that Mr. W.B. Yeats never pulled crackers. If so, where is the sense of all their dreams of festive tradition?" Somehow the recognition that there is something worth celebrating must come before writing about it. If we do not experience the joy in our lives, we will only be dry intellectuals who really see little but themselves. "Whenever you have belief you will have hilarity, whenever you have hilarity, you will have some dangers."

So we deny Christmas at our peril. When we think it out of existence, with all its relation to reason, we end up in the unnatural and call it good. Chesterton points to the difficulty of finding what parts of a religion are good and what parts are evil. "A man who has faith must be prepared not only to be a martyr, but also to be a fool." The same principle, I think, is also true of the man who lacks faith. It is not only paradoxical but foolish to look coldly at one's newly found philosophy only to find that there can be no joy in it, but first no truth in it. To escape the supernatural by embracing the unnatural is perhaps the most foolish of all human intellectual aberrations, a foolishness that, alas, besets our time. When Paul told the Corinthians that the Greek philosophers would think them "foolish", little did he realize that the modern successors to the Greeks would come to call what the Greeks held in reason to be itself "foolish."

Around the World with CHESTERTON



Poland

✦ Most Englishmen know nothing about Poland. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, July 9, 1927)

✦ Poland is the central pillar of Europe. (*Illustrated London News*, Aug. 12, 1916)

✦ I judged the Poles by their enemies. And I found it was an almost unfailing truth that their enemies were the enemies of magnanimity and manhood. If a man loved slavery, if he loved usury, if he loved terrorism and all the trampled mire of materialistic politics, I have always found that he added to these affections the passion of a hatred of Poland. (Introduction to *Letters on Polish Affairs*)

✦ It is an unfortunate heritage of our past policy that we were always taught to disparage Poland in the interests of Prussia. (*New Witness,* Sept. 3, 1920)

✦ There is one people, among all the peoples of Eastern Europe, upon whom Western Europe can really rely. The others have their virtues, like the Russians; they have their rights, like the Chinese; they have their particular claims and grievances, like a hundred other human groups in this bewildering world. But they are not, and perhaps never will be, a power to be permanently counted on for the protection of the old culture of Christendom, against this particular danger with which we are deafened day and night; the danger of Bolshevism. If Bolshevism really is such a danger, if it really is any sort of danger, then there is no doubt at all about what is the real protection against that danger. It is Poland; and the time may come when the protector must be protected. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, June 18, 1927)

✦ The same sort of brutal pedantry is moving both from the east and the west to crush that living creature of liberty as between the two jaws of a crocodile. But unless we are much mistaken, it cannot be so easily crushed now any more than it could be crushed before. Three mighty empires joined to break it; and today these three empires have all been broken.... Poland has survived Prussia; it has perhaps survived Russia; it will certainly survive the town intrigue that now calls itself Russia. (*New Witness,* July 9, 1920)

✦ The virtues that thrive with Poland are pushing their way to the surface—the virtues of the peasant and the patriot. By all the instincts of historical imagination we know when those virtues are set free, and a fresh hope has come into the world. (Introduction to *Letters on Polish Affairs*)

✦ They have almost created a cry of No Poland as a new version of No Popery. The two cries in substance mean much the same. I do not mean, of course, that a man may not happen to have a particular reason for hating particular Poles, or even particular actions of the Polish nation. Poland has its faults, like other Christian nations; it has its enemies, like other Christian nations; though a nation's enemies often hate it for its virtues more than its faults. But the ultimate pressure, the prompting, the force that uses all these faults and quarrels against the national life of Poland, is simply the widespread human hatred of the Catholic Faith. (*America*, June 25, 1927)

Chesterton Set to Music

Riddles and Creeds
Nicole Ensing Band
Produced by Ross McKitrick
Chanter Records CR201402

Mikkel Petterson: ***8 Songs by Chesterton***
Benjamin Britten: ***Rejoice in the Lamb***
Fredericksborg Slotskirkes Kantori
(The Choir of the Church of Fredericksborg Castle, Denmark)
Mikkel Petterson, Sven-Ingvart Mikkelsen
Iceberg Records CD 750

Reviewed by Dale Ahlquist

I could not believe what I was hearing.

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

The words were from G.K. Chesterton's poem, "The Child of the Snows." It was being sung in a pop arrangement with piano and guitar and bass and drums: Chesterton's rhymes ringing out a century after they were penned, in music he could never have dreamed of. The singer was Nicole Ensing. The CD had just arrived from Canada. It is called *Riddles and Creeds*. All the songs are Chesterton poems.

But then a few days later another CD arrived. It was from Denmark. It was choral music composed and directed by Mikkel Pettersen. The songs were Chesterton poems.

It seems too coincidental even to be a coincidence: two albums released at the same time from two different continents featuring songs based on poems by Chesterton. And they could not have been more different, even though they were drawing from the exact same inspiration, the exact same inspirer.

Nicole Ensing's arrangements are simple with very catchy tunes. She has a beautiful untrained voice which, with the style of her music, evokes a mixture of Loreena McKennit, Laura Veirs, and even Florence and the Machine.

In a few places, she has rewritten some of the original poetry with effective results. Whereas Chesterton's "The Convert" ends with these almost sacred lines:

> The sages have a hundred maps to give
> That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,
> They rattle reason out through many a sieve
> That stores the dust and lets the gold go free:
> And all these things are less than dust to me
> Because my name is Lazarus and I live.

Nicole has rendered them:

> Rattle out reason, it's worthless to me
> Gathering sand while the gold goes free
> All these things to me are dust
> Because my name is Lazarus

But in general, she makes the music fit the words, rather than the other way around. And while the music is mostly soft and lyrical, the song "The Aristocrat" has a harder, more rock beat to it, but it works perfectly. The least successful song is "The Rolling English Road" where the music simply does not match the whimsicality of the lyrics. However, the music could not be more fitting for "By the Babe Unborn" which has a sweet nursery feel to it, and ends on a hopeful up-note, as if to ask the question: "Will you let me be born?" The best song, in my opinion, is "The Great Minimum." It captures Chesterton's passion for life, his gratefulness for the gift of existence, his gift of wonder—especially the way Nicole sings it.

Mikkel Pettersen's choral arrangements are more sophisticated, but are no less listenable and no less tuneful: a combination at times of Carl Orff and Gilbert

and Sullivan. Indeed, Pettersen had the idea of re-creating some of the music hall style of Chesterton's own day (and which Chesterton enjoyed as a young man). The music is both rousing and reverent, helped along by a talented ten-voice choir and orchestral ensemble under Pettersen's own direction. His harmonies and orchestration are witty, pleasant, and profound. Unfortunately, the lyrics are not always clearly heard, but the music was delightful. Once again, I was happily shocked to be listening to Chesterton in another musical setting he would not have imagined.

The surprising selection includes the satirical "Songs of Education" (History and Geography), the even more satirical "Song against Grocers", the jolly song of Quoodle the Dog (under the title "No Noses"), the lovely and poignant "Gold Leaves," the thoughtful duet "Ecclesiastes," and "To E.C. Bentley" (the dedicatory poem in *The Man Who Was Thursday*). This last piece was the most dramatic, and yet has a longing for the innocence of "when we were boys together."

There is only one poem common to both albums: "The Holy of Holies" (though it is called "Little Infinity" on *Riddles and Creeds*, which is the title of a different Chesterton poem). Two totally different songs, different styles of music, with the same words, and both are acts of worship. And that is what the albums have in common besides Chesterton. They have God in common.

The second half of Petterson's album is the nine-song cycle, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, by Benjamin Britten.

Riddles and Creeds

An Interview with Nicole Ensing

by Dale Ahlquist

G Okay, how did this happen: an album of songs based on poems by G.K. Chesterton?

NE Ross McKitrick and I met over coffee to discuss the possibility of a recording project. He knew that my strengths lie in writing music rather than lyrics, and so he handed me a sheaf of Chesterton's poems and said they might work well set to music. They caught my fancy immediately and the songs just started to write themselves. We very quickly had an album's worth.

G This is your first album?

NE This is my first solo album but I've recorded for a number of other projects as well, most recently for Chanter Records as a member of the Celtic band The Wild Oats.

G What music has been most influential in your development as a singer/songwriter?

NE The biggest influence has to be pop music, but I would say that jazz has been creeping in there over the years. I can remember improvising Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies" as a teenager, and more recently I've been enjoying the work of Canadian jazz musicians Mike Janzen and Jason Raso. But, if I took you on a journey through time, you'd hear music by Cyndi Lauper, Amy Grant, Sarah McLachlan, Sting, Coldplay, The Beatles, and Five for Fighting.

G What has been the response from those who have heard the music?

NE It has been overwhelmingly positive. Each poem has its own mood so the musical styles vary quite a bit, and we were careful to let the lyrics lead the music rather than forcing them into one style or genre. Chesterton's poems evoked great feeling in me, which I try to share with the audience. People respond well to that. The great thing about our band is that we have such diverse musical backgrounds and that shows up on the album. There's a variety of influences that appeal to so many different

tastes—folk, jazz, rock, and pop all in one melting pot.

G Do they know that they are listening to Chesterton? Do they care?

NE I make a point of telling people at each performance that the lyrics are from Chesterton and giving them some pointers to the meaning. We've been pleasantly surprised how many people are already Chesterton fans and of course they are very excited about the songs. But there's a much larger audience for whom Chesterton is new, and it's a privilege that I get to introduce these great poems to them.

G Do you have a favorite song on the album?

NE It's so hard to choose, but I think "The Great Minimum" is one of the best songs on the album.

G Ah, me, too. A strong song. And well done.

NE And oddly enough it was the most troublesome one to write. It almost didn't make it onto the album, but Ross insisted something was there and asked me to keep trying, which is good because what emerged in the end is extremely powerful. The song I go back to again and again is "The Mystery." The chorus is haunting and poignant.

(L to R: Joel Sypkis, Nicole Ensing, Sam Fitzpatrick, Brian Bork).

G Any more Chesterton poems that you would like to make into songs?

NE There are a few that didn't make it onto the album, and perhaps with a bit of focus they could see the light of day. "Eternities" is one of those that just seemed to elude me, as did "The Donkey."

G The Donkey will have its day. Or, as Chesterton said, his hour.

Chesterton in the Choir Loft

An Interview with Mikkel Petterson

by Dale Ahlquist

G How did you first discover the writings of Chesterton? Did you start with his poetry?

MP The name G.K. Chesterton has always been familiar to me, from spines of books in the school library and at home. I first started reading him about four years ago after seeing his name mentioned a dozen times by C.S. Lewis and also, perhaps surprisingly, by various writers connected to *Tidehverv* ("Turn of the Tide"), a Danish theological movement inspired by Protestant thinkers Luther, Barth, and Kierkegaard.

My first read was *The Man Who Was Thursday*, and after that I went on to read his autobiography, the biographies on St. Thomas and St. Francis, *Orthodoxy*, and of course some Father Brown.

Meanwhile, the idea of a musical treatment of his poems had come up, and through the reading of his prose I think I acquired the key to the understanding of his poetry.

G What struck you about his poetry that gave you the idea to make choral arrangements?

MP First of all, most of the poems have a fixed meter, which makes it easy to set them to music. They are often strophic, which means that you don't have to invent new musical solutions all the time, but you can use repetitions. Often, this is good for both singers and listeners, since you cannot cope with hearing new material all the time. Chesterton certainly was not a modernist poet, and his mission is not to depict some fractured world where language falls short of describing reality. He writes about a world that, however strange it may appear at times, still makes sense; I would like the music, which has its twists and turns, but is classical at heart, to reflect that.

And then the poems were just really funny; some of them quite universal, others more whimsical, like the "Songs of Education" that are almost like poems you would write for a dinner party with some good friends. The one that got me started was actually the prologue to *The Man Who Was Thursday*, which is a poem written to Chesterton's friend and fellow writer Edmund Clerihew Bentley. It has a purity and a youthful longing for "old" virtues that seemed out of fashion even at Chesterton's time, and perhaps even more today, as well as it being a beautiful depiction of boyhood and of more mature friendship. I found that the words and the message struck a chord in me, and it had a musicality to it that made it quite easy to start setting it to music.

After trying my hand at some more

of his poems (which I found on the internet—alas, not on a pilgrimage to picturesque antiquarians in Southern England), I had the idea of having the church choir that I conduct at Sunday services sing it in concert. Although eccentric, the poems express something universal and, in many ways, down-to-earth for which choral music is a good means of expression.

G What did the singers and the other musicians think of poems? Had any of them ever heard of Chesterton?

MP: No, apart from the odd person who had watched a Father Brown episode some time in the 80s, people were not aware of his existence. But poems like "The Song Against Grocers" and "Quoodle's Song" from *The Flying Inn* (which I have dubbed "No Noses") caught on immediately. As mentioned before, when you have read some of Chesterton's serious work, you tend to interpret his more whimsical stuff in the light of this. For instance, there is a passage in *Orthodoxy* about the concept of patriotism, and how you have to care about something, for instance about your country, in order to want to change it. This is the background on which, I think, you should read his poems "Songs of Education" ("History" and "Geography"); Chesterton is not dismissing patriotic feelings as such, but he is attacking the abuse, from politicians and the like, of those feelings, in order for them to get away with dubious things.

From time to time, I have had some explaining to do about what all this has to do with Christianity, and what the different texts have to do with each other. Not always being able to come up with something satisfactory, the advice has often been: "Read some Chesterton yourself."

G But I hoped they liked the music?

MP The singers and players have been very kind and very enthusiastic and committed to the project, which has made work on it a true pleasure.

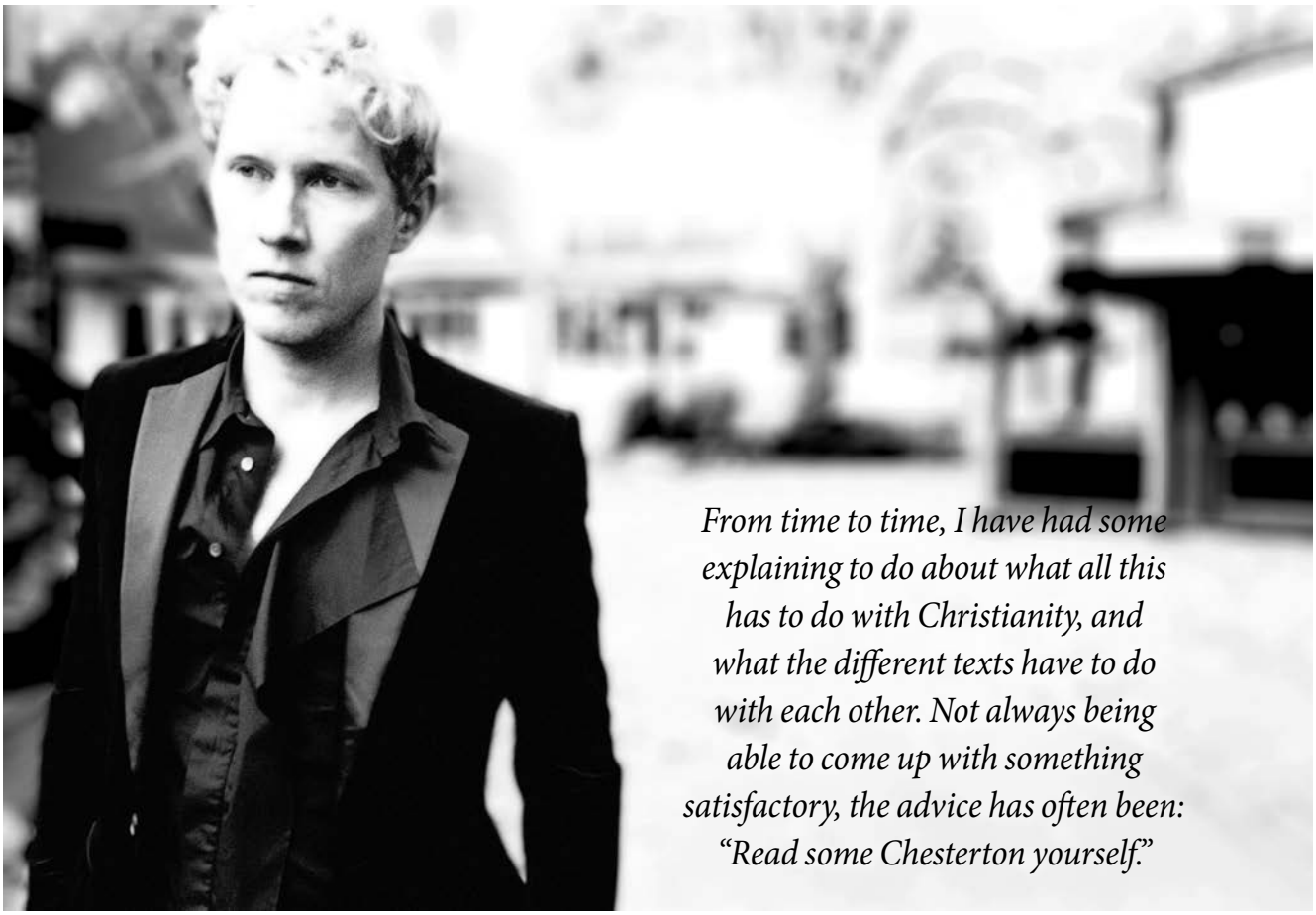
G There is something both serious and whimsical to the songs, just like there is to Chesterton's writing. Have you had any noticeable audience reactions to this unexpected combination?

MP Some listeners have appreciated the variety and the contrast. I think the light and funny elements have generally been noticed the most. This is perhaps due to the fact that we in the Nordic countries are used to a slightly dark and melancholic tone, both in our Protestant church music and in contemporary serious music. Many people are taken aback by new music not sounding sinister.

G Are there other Chesterton poems you have considered for the choir or that are waiting in the wings to be performed?

MP We have already sung "The Only Man I Regularly Read"—Hilaire Belloc's tribute to his friend—as an encore, and work on "Americanisation" (with all due respect to the ACS and all, this is a very funny poem!) and "An Answer To Frances Cornford" have also begun.

Furthermore, we are happy to announce that another local choir has already taken the songs on their repertoire, giving it a concert performance in Copenhagen in January 2015. I will be there!



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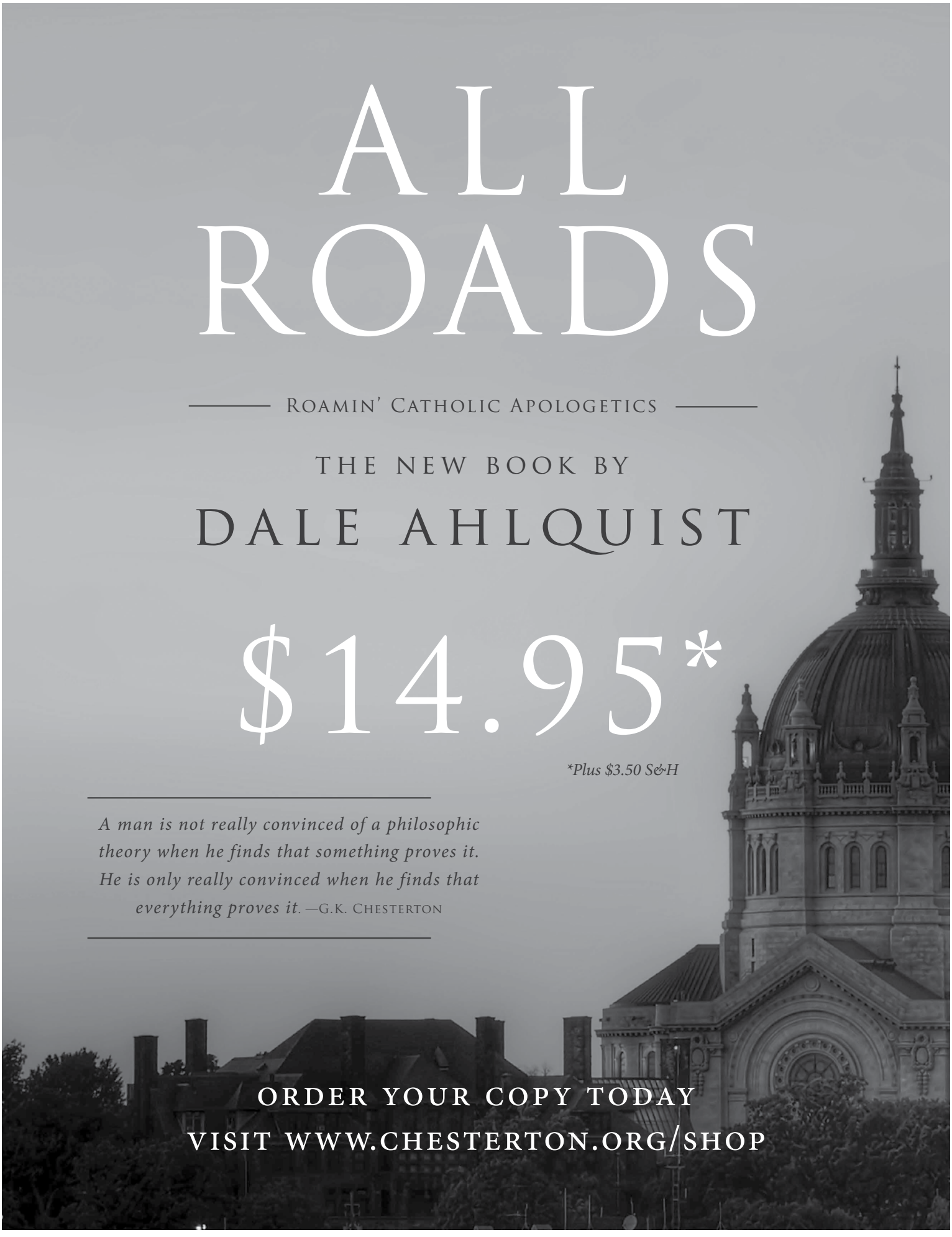
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MISCELLANY OF MEN

A Frances Ancestor

Samuel Laman Blanchard (1804–1845)

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

Samuel Laman Blanchard was born on May 15, 1804, in Great Yarmouth, England, the son of Samuel Blanchard, a glazier and painter—who was also Frances Chesterton's great-grandfather. Samuel loved literature and began submitting writing at an early age. He was published in a paper called *Drama* by the time he was a teen.

Samuel was offered a scholarship by a university; he was the brightest boy and best in Latin at his school. However, his family did not believe they would be able to supply him with the living expenses he would need, so they turned the scholarship down. It was one of the great regrets of Blanchard's life. He worshipped Shakespeare, Byron, and Leigh Hunt, with whom he would later become acquainted.

He joined a traveling theater company for a short time, and then became a proofreader for a periodical called *Monthly Magazine*. When the young man, now going by the name Laman Blanchard, began writing for *Duncombe's Journal*, he met another youth of about his same age and interests, Douglas Jerrold. Both men were passionate about literature. They became fast friends.

Blanchard's friendship with Jerrold was the most important of his life, but Blanchard was well acquainted with many of the well-known literary men of his time. Blanchard and Jerrold were both poets, dramatists and essayists. They loved to discuss politics as well as literature. (G.K. Chesterton mentions one of Jerrold's creations, Mrs. Caudle, which was a story line of Jerrold's that appeared regularly in *Punch* magazine. Some said the caustic character of Mrs. Caudle was based on Laman Blanchard's wife, Anne.)

Blanchard was described at the time as being handsome, cheerful, and as having great personal charm. He had a childlike readiness to find wonder in everything. He was a lively conversationalist with a perpetual smile.

Blanchard married Anne Gates in 1823 at the age of twenty, and after extolling the virtues of marriage, encouraged his friend Jerrold to marry. Jerrold followed suit and married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Ann, in 1824.

Blanchard had a talent for writing poetry. His first book of poetry was dedicated to Charles Lamb, who wrote to tell him his sonnets were treasures. The book was called *Lyric Offerings*. Robert Browning also wrote Blanchard a fan letter and, in addition to adoring his poetry, invited Blanchard to come visit him at his home. Blanchard was only twenty-four and a rising literary star. But he needed to earn a living, so he worked as a journalist. (Chesterton never mentions his name.)

Laman and Anne had four children, three sons and a daughter. Sidney Laman Blanchard, the eldest, would become a writer; Lavinia Lillie would marry Jerrold's eldest son, William Blanchard.

A third man made the duo into a trio: William Makepeace Thackeray. Chesterton wrote a new introduction to Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* in 1911. Chesterton commented that Dickens or Jerrold or "many others" might have come up with an idea for a *Book of Snobs* but only Thackeray could have added 'the great sub-title' 'By One of Themselves.' And in 1903, when Chesterton's biography of Robert Browning was published, Thackeray's daughter, Lady Anne Ritchie, wrote to Chesterton saying she was much interested in his book, which brought Browning back to her mind so vividly. Chesterton would also contrast Dickens with Thackeray in his writings.

In 1836 all three men became involved with a political paper, the *Constitutional and Public Ledger*: Blanchard was appointed editor; Thackeray, the paper's Paris correspondent; and Jerrold the theater critic.

The same year, the three met Charles Dickens. Dickens was recruiting writers for a monthly magazine called *Bentley's Miscellany.*. Dickens was the magazine's first editor. He failed to recruit Jerrold to write for the *Miscellany*, but gained a friend instead.

When Jerrold was recruited to write for the magazine called *Punch*, he in turn recruited Blanchard.

In February 1844, Anne Blanchard became ill with an attack of paralysis, which deteriorated into a wasting disease that slowly took her life. Laman cared for her tenderly and watched her get sicker and sicker, and suffer more and more pain. He could hardly stand it. He became more and more depressed as her illness progressed. She died in December of 1844. Laman's brother-in-law, James Keymer—Frances's grandfather—was devoted to him and tried in all ways to comfort his brother-in-law during this time. Keymer sat up with him nights when Laman's depression threatened to get the better of him.

On February 15, 1845, Laman, still despondent over Anne's death, was left alone for five minutes after telling his nurse he was frightened that he may harm himself. She ran for help, but he committed suicide while she was out of sight, by cutting his throat with a razor knife. He and Jerrold had been friends for twenty years, and Jerrold deeply mourned him. Laman was forty-one years old.

Laman's sister, Mary Margaret Blanchard, was married to James Keymer. Mary and James Keymer were the parents of Blanche Keymer, who became Blanche Blogg, Frances Chesterton's mother. So Samuel Laman Blanchard was Frances's great uncle.

"It was impossible to know and not to love him," was written of Blanchard when he died. "He was thoroughly honest, true and genuine; ever ready to confer a kindness, and of a grateful disposition."

Three Different Ways to Look at Life—and Death—in Oregon

by Dale Ahlquist

We are not divided now into those who know and those who do not know. We are divided now into those who care and those who do not care. —*New Witness*, Dec. 20, 1918

On a recent visit to Salem, Oregon, I visited three places of peace: a cemetery, a monastery, and the streets of the capital city, whose name means peace.

City View Cemetery is the final resting place of Larry Norman, the Jesus Rock singer who was married to my sister, and many years ago was the one who told me to read G.K. Chesterton. For the rest of that story, read my new book, *All Roads*. Larry wanted to be buried on a hillside, under a tree, overlooking a river. He basically got his wish. The cemetery has a slope to it, a big tree is about ten yards away, and its branches stretch just far enough to go over the grave, and a river valley edges around the cemetery. He also designed his own tombstone. It is the shape of a cross, and it says "Evangelist without portfolio" under his name. At the base of the cross are the words "Bloodstained Israelite." Larry has a mailbox next to his grave. That's not something you see everyday. It is filled with CDs of his music, to be given away to any visitor.

Larry loved Jesus and loved to tell others about Jesus, both through his songs and his personal witness. For the last few years of his life, he prepared for the end as his body slowly fell apart. Blind in one eye, deaf in one ear, one leg ready to fall off, a brain injury, heart disease, and his distinctive long hair completely shorn, he died with his brother and sister-in-law on either side of his bed, holding his hands. The last thing he talked about was smelling flowers. There were no flowers in the room. Almost immediately after he died, his sister-in-law's sister called from Norway, half a world away, and said she'd just had a dream that Larry was walking through a field of flowers with them, holding their hands, when suddenly he broke free, turning and waving just as he ran over a hill. I hope he is with Jesus now.

Even quieter than the cemetery is the inside of a monastery chapel, and the presence there is a living one. About twenty miles outside of Salem, in the serene countryside around the town of Amity (whose name means friendship), is the Brigittine Monastery. And there I met an old friend. I first came here twenty years ago, before I was Catholic. I was still in what Chesterton calls the third stage of conversion: running away from the Church. I thought I could hide out in a monastery. It was here where I encountered Fr. David Janes, who looked me in the eye and asked, "Why haven't you converted yet?" (For the rest of the story, read my new book *All Roads*.) I had a wonderful reunion with this humble priest who has followed my career ever

Larry Norman's grave. City View Cemetery, Salem, Oregon

Our Lady of Consolation at the Brigittine monastery, Amity, Oregon

since that day we first met. He is a secular priest, and has served the monks, none of whom are priests, for many years. The Brigittine monks are men as serene as the countryside. They range in age from the mid-twenties to the mid-eighties. They just got two new novices, both of them converts. To support themselves, they make fudge and truffles. In their literature, they say that one of the requirements to join the order is to have a sense of humor. Their peace is joyful. And this is where they will all die, living out their days praying for the world and giving it chocolate.

Back in Salem, I strolled around the downtown, in the shadow of the capitol, on a lovely sunny day filled with autumn colors, and I conducted some man-on-the-street interviews that consisted of one question: "What do you think of the assisted suicide law in Oregon?" This was in the wake of a twenty-nine-year-old woman with brain cancer having made a very public announcement that she was going to take advantage of this unique law and have someone help her die on November 1, a promise that she kept. Here are the answers:

"I don't care one way or the other."

"I don't know anything about it."

"I guess it's an okay option."

"I would say it's all right, as long as it's legal."

A couple with two small children looked me in the eye and said, "I agree with it."

And then there was this one: "I think it's a good thing. Within reason."

"It shouldn't be gone into lightly, of course."

"I wouldn't do it myself."

Finally, I asked a homeless man. He responded: "If you want to kill yourself, no one can stop you. But if you have someone help you, that's murder."

Only the last answer made *some* sense. But no one seemed to consider why suicide, much less assisted suicide, is simply wrong. Chesterton, of course, had some unambiguous words about why killing oneself was not a good thing.

> Not only is suicide a sin, it is the sin. It is the ultimate and absolute evil, the refusal to take an interest in existence; the refusal to take the oath of loyalty to life. The man who kills a man, kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned he wipes out the world. His act is worse (symbolically considered) than any rape or dynamite outrage. For it destroys all buildings: it insults all women. The thief is satisfied with diamonds; but the suicide is not: that is his crime. He cannot be bribed, even by the blazing stones of the Celestial City. The thief compliments the things he steals, if not the owner of them. But the suicide insults everything on earth by not stealing it. He defiles every flower by refusing to live for its sake. There is not a tiny creature in the cosmos at whom his death is not a sneer. When a man hangs himself on a tree, the leaves might fall off in anger and the birds fly away in fury: for each has received a personal affront. Of course there may be pathetic emotional excuses for the act. There often are for rape, and there almost always are for dynamite.... There is a meaning in burying the suicide apart...

But wait, there's more. In the same passage from *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton goes on to respond to the flippant comment that a suicide is the same as a martyr:

> Obviously a suicide is the opposite of a martyr. A martyr is a man who cares so much for something outside him, that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him, that he wants to see the last of everything. One wants something to begin: the other wants everything to end. In other words, the martyr is noble, exactly because (however he renounces the world or execrates all humanity) he confesses this ultimate link with life; he sets his heart outside himself: he dies that something may live. The suicide is ignoble because he has not this link with being: he is a mere destroyer; spiritually, he destroys the universe.

What prompted this outburst from Chesterton? It was because the worldly idea that suicide should be cheap and easy was distasteful to him. The Church's apparently harsh teaching about suicide actually helped confirm that the Church was right. It was the unpopular idea that drew him closer to Christianity. But the fair citizens of Salem did not want to think about it too closely. They seemed to regard life—and death—as a nuisance.

The Curious Case of Thomas Wolfe

by Art Livingston

We have begun a series of articles making suggestions to add to a reading list of authors who belong in the active teaching canon, but who never seem to be part of required schooling. Here is one example.

What if we found a writer with work filled with consummate beauty, it largely consisting of one vast saga creating the mythos for his culture? If we felt shy of comparing such an accomplishment with Homer and Dante, his work should be regarded alongside *Njal's Saga,* and the *Nibelungenlied.*

America produced such a writer, perhaps two. After decades of neglect, professors have included Herman Melville since 1930. The other one is Thomas Wolfe, whose treatment by the established literati is beneath contempt. When I first encountered the critical conspiracy against the bard of Ashville, I was at first shocked. (Literary criticism is often much akin to Joe Sobran's political concept of the hive: first a leading critic pronounces, and then all the little bees act as they are wired to perform. This is conspiracy, no matter how unconscious most of the conspirators are.)

But I was a lad of sixteen summers. "Can't they read?" I asked innocently. "Don't they realize what Wolfe is doing!" Comments became more assertive and less interrogative as time passed. In short, I came to the conclusion that we are dealing here a larger issue than critical arbiters merely being tin-eared. Because of this firsthand experience, I never trusted academia even before I first entered an institution of higher learning; and I have found no good reason to change my opinion even after wrangling four degrees from them.

But to this day, I use as my test question when discussing literature with people, "What do you think of Wolfe?" We are often told that no one reads Wolfe any more (that is part of the negativity). The four large and two short volumes of the saga have all remained in print at both Scribners' and Harpers, hardly charitable institutions. One could almost devise a corollary of Parkinson's Law: knowledge of Wolfe's writing exists in inverse proportion to one's proximity to colleges. Let me provide a paragraph of Wolfe for consideration and close my case:

> Each of us is all the sums he has not counted: subtract us into nakedness and night again, and you shall see begin in Crete four thousand years ago the love that ended yesterday in Texas. The seed of our destruction will blossom in the desert, the alexin of our cure grows by a mountain rock, and our lives are haunted by a Georgia slattern, because a London cut-purse went unhung. Each moment is the fruit of forty thousand years. The minute-winning days, like flies, buzz home to death, and every moment is a window on all time.

Just as one review, if it did not kill Keats, at least kept him from official acceptance for years, one review in particular began the damage to Wolfe's reputation. Bernard de Voto attempted what might politely be called a misleading piece, "Genius Is Not Enough," written for *Saturday Review of Literature.* Wolfe was being honest about himself in *The Story of a Novel,* an account of the problems involved with the publication that surrounded *Of Time and the River.* Here are a few phrases of de Voto: Wolfe's material is "placental." The symbolism of waters is "obviously of importance to him." But not to the cognoscenti, apparently. *Look Homeward, Angel* was "the routine first novel of the period." Whatever else it is, Wolfe's first book was hardly "routine." The article still seems today not only harsh, but brutal and boorish.

De Voto held one ace and it has since been a constant charge--that Wolfe's writing is formless and requires editors to piece it together; but Wolfe's complaint in his account is that his work was improperly edited, and that is undeniably true for those who have actually read Wolfe. Maxwell Perkins is probably the most respected editor in American letters, and he was Wolfe's. Hemingway and Fitzgerald shaped their prose, honed it, and Perkins did know talent when he saw it and brought it to Scribners'. But he broke the back of Wolfe's first book by removing the initial story of the father, although a good argument could be made that this prequel (as important to Wolfe as *The Hobbit* to Tolkien) should be published separately. Together, the whole book creates a vast

Thomas Wolfe

tale of the American family from the end of the War Between the States to the 1920s, a rich epoch turned into fable. The book Wolfe presented to Perkins as *O Lost* was published in 2000 and has supplanted *Look Homeward, Angel,* the cut-rate version published in 1929. Except for the crossing of t and dotting of i, Perkins suggested nothing but what one expects from a professional editor, and Wolfe is invariably right about any changes. De Voto and others have left generations with a clear impression that Wolfe depended on Perkins.

His editor betrayed Wolfe when he published *Of Time and the River.* Both knew it was not ready and needed some shaping. Wolfe's one bad habit was, when transitional paragraphs were necessary, to go home and add 10,000 new words; but Perkins never helped. Wolfe published a 912-page book in which, for instance, we are told the protagonist never sees someone again but does see him about a hundred pages later. Did Perkins even pay attention? This was not Wolfe's fault. He protested in print and broke with Perkins. This incident is the *prima facie* case for maintaining that Wolfe does not deserve our consideration. And those following the leader have kept him from the curriculum ever since.

Quickly, here is the real reason. If you hang around Wolfe long enough, he will insult you. His deepest subject is our longing for heaven, but he was only thirty-eight when he died, and had not overcome the sanctimony of the religion presented him in childhood. Put these together and the world of experience will seem endlessly hypocritical; and Wolfe will freely comment on his experience. He even once attacked readers of G.K. Chesterton. I am, of course, brought up short by this; but look closer. In America, in 1920, in the academic world Wolfe knew well as a Harvard M.A., Chesterton was trendy then for a certain kind of literary phony. That is what he attacks and what in reality may have kept him from real acquaintance with Chesterton's work. The title of an old country song springs to mind; "I Overlooked an Orchid While Searching for a Rose." The orchids and the roses are all in Wolfe's prose-poetry. His critics do not recognize flowers.

The Shop of Ghosts

by G.K. Chesterton

Nearly all the best and most precious things in the universe you can get for a halfpenny. I make an exception, of course, of the sun, the moon, the earth, people, stars, thunderstorms, and such trifles. You can get them for nothing. Also I make an exception of another thing, which I am not allowed to mention in this paper, and of which the lowest price is a penny halfpenny. But the general principle will be at once apparent. In the street behind me, for instance, you can now get a ride on an electric tram for a halfpenny. To be on an electric tram is to be on a flying castle in a fairy tale. You can get quite a large number of brightly coloured sweets for a halfpenny. Also you can get the chance of reading this article for a halfpenny; along, of course, with other and irrelevant matter.

But if you want to see what a vast and bewildering array of valuable things you can get at a halfpenny each you should do as I was doing last night. I was gluing my nose against the glass of a very small and dimly lit toy shop in one of the greyest and leanest of the streets of Battersea. But dim as was that square of light, it was filled (as a child once said to me) with all the colours God ever made. Those toys of the poor were like the children who buy them; they were all dirty; but they were all bright. For my part, I think brightness more important than cleanliness; since the first is of the soul, and the second of the body. You must excuse me; I am a democrat; I know I am out of fashion in the modern world.

As I looked at that palace of pigmy wonders, at small green omnibuses, at small blue elephants, at small black dolls, and small red Noah's arks, I must have fallen into some sort of unnatural trance. That lit shop-window became like the brilliantly lit stage when one is watching some highly coloured comedy. I forgot the grey houses and the grimy people behind me as one forgets the dark galleries and the dim crowds at a theatre. It seemed as if the little objects behind the glass were small, not because they were toys, but because they were objects far away. The green omnibus was really a green omnibus, a green Bayswater omnibus, passing across some huge desert on its ordinary way to Bayswater. The blue elephant was no longer blue with paint; he was blue with distance. The black doll was really a negro relieved against passionate tropic foliage in the land where every weed is flaming and only man is black. The red Noah's ark was really the enormous ship of earthly salvation riding on the rain-swollen sea, red in the first morning of hope.

Every one, I suppose, knows such stunning instants of

abstraction, such brilliant blanks in the mind. In such moments one can see the face of one's own best friend as an unmeaning pattern of spectacles or moustaches. They are commonly marked by the two signs of the slowness of their growth and the suddenness of their termination. The return to real thinking is often as abrupt as bumping into a man. Very often indeed (in my case) it is bumping into a man. But in any case the awakening is always emphatic and, generally speaking, it is always complete. Now, in this case, I did come back with a shock of sanity to the consciousness that I was, after all, only staring into a dingy little toy-shop; but in some strange way the mental cure did not seem to be final. There was still in my mind an unmanageable something that told me that I had strayed into some odd atmosphere, or that I had already done some odd thing. I felt as if I had worked a miracle or committed a sin. It was as if I had at any rate, stepped across some border in the soul.

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

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

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

"I never have," said the old man, blinking and blowing his nose; "I've always given presents. I'm too old to stop."

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

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

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

"I am dying," he said.

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

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

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

A silence fell suddenly between us which I somehow expected to be unbroken. But it had not fallen for more than a few seconds when, in the utter stillness, I distinctly heard a very rapid step coming nearer and nearer along the street. The next moment a figure flung itself into the shop and stood framed in the doorway. He wore a large white hat tilted back as if in impatience; he had tight black old-fashioned pantaloons, a gaudy old-fashioned stock and waistcoat, and an old fantastic coat. He had large, wide-open, luminous eyes like those of an arresting actor; he had a pale, nervous face, and a fringe of beard. He took in the shop and the old man in a look that seemed literally a flash and uttered the exclamation of a man utterly staggered.

"Good lord!" he cried out; "it can't be you! It isn't you! I came to ask where your grave was."

"I'm not dead yet, Mr. Dickens," said the old gentleman, with a feeble smile; "but I'm dying," he hastened to add reassuringly.

"But, dash it all, you were dying in my time," said Mr. Charles Dickens with animation; "and you don't look a day older."

"I've felt like this for a long time," said Father Christmas.

Mr. Dickens turned his back and put his head out of the door into the darkness.

"Dick," he roared at the top of his voice; "he's still alive."

Another shadow darkened the doorway, and a much larger and more full-blooded gentleman in an enormous periwig came in, fanning his flushed face with a military hat of the cut of Queen Anne. He carried his head well back like a soldier, and his hot face had even a look of arrogance, which was suddenly contradicted by his eyes, which were literally as humble as a dog's. His sword made a great clatter, as if the shop were too small for it.

"Indeed," said Sir Richard Steele, "'tis a most prodigious matter, for the man was dying when I wrote about Sir Roger de Coverley and his Christmas Day."

My senses were growing dimmer and the room darker. It seemed to be filled with newcomers.

"It hath ever been understood," said a burly man, who carried his head humorously and obstinately a little on one side (I think he was Ben Jonson) "It hath ever been understood, consule Jacobo, under our King James and her late Majesty, that such good and hearty customs were fallen sick, and like to pass from the world. This grey beard most surely was no lustier when I knew him than now."

And I also thought I heard a green-clad man, like Robin Hood, say in some mixed Norman French, "But I saw the man dying."

"I have felt like this a long time," said Father Christmas, in his feeble way again.

Mr. Charles Dickens suddenly leant across to him.

"Since when?" he asked. "Since you were born?"

"Yes," said the old man, and sank shaking into a chair. "I have been always dying."

Mr. Dickens took off his hat with a flourish like a man calling a mob to rise.

"I understand it now," he cried, "you will never die."

(From *Daily News*, July 22, 1906)

Room at the Inn

James G. Bruen Jr.

Curled up on the sidewalk and huddled close against the cold stone of the rectory building, his knees up to his chest and his head tucked into his arm, he reeked of alcohol. He was coatless, asleep, and unaware that night had fallen and the temperature had dropped.

Jack and Joan Scott shivered as they walked the long city block from the Gallery Place subway entrance to St. Patrick's in the City. With one gloved hand Joan clasped her husband's as they passed the stairway to the archdiocesan Catholic Charities offices; in the other she held a closed umbrella while also clenching the furred collar of her coat together against the chill. The young couple did not notice the solitary figure on the concrete as they hurried by him before turning in front of the rectory and climbing the stairs for the early evening celebration of the Midnight Mass for Christmas.

A rush of worshipers had preceded the Scotts to the church's entrance on Tenth Street, and a trickle followed them. Organ music wafted from the Gothic church despite the doors closed against the cold. A sudden wind came up and pelted the man on the sidewalk with drops of frigid rain.

The church was packed. Joan poked Jack and pointed out a prominent politician in one of the front rows. The sound of the pipe organ filled the church. Many in the pews turned towards the rear to get a glimpse of the choir in the loft.

A large crèche sat before the altar with the entire area decorated with evergreen trees with red bows and small white lights. A lengthy procession from the back of the church began the Mass. Incense rose to the ceiling. Three priests, two deacons, and several men in cassocks and surplices maneuvered about the altar during the Mass, supplemented by lay readers, a cantor, and two Eucharistic ministers. The congregation participated loudly but reverently at the appropriate points and gave generously at the offertory.

When the bells rang as the priest elevated the host at the consecration, every eye inside St. Patrick's was on the host. The man outside on the sidewalk awoke and tried to rise onto his hands and knees but he instead collapsed onto the sidewalk and passed out again.

At the end of the Mass, the pastor invited everyone to a wine, eggnog, and hors d'oeuvres reception at the hotel, which took up an entire block catty-corner across the street from the rectory, courtesy of the hotel. "What a wonderful idea," Joan commented to Jack, and they were among the churchgoers who accepted the invitation.

In less than an hour, the reception had petered out. Joan and Jack were among the last to depart. Because of the chilling rain, they did not retrace their earlier route to Gallery Place. They instead dashed under cover of their umbrella from the hotel and entered the subway system at the nearer Metro Center stop. "Such a nice evening," smiled Joan as they rode the escalator down to the subway platform.

A battered car drove slowly along G Street. It pulled up to the curb alongside the rectory. A shabbily dressed elderly woman got out from the passenger side. Unprotected from the rain and oblivious to it, she knelt on the wet concrete and raised the drunken man's sodden head, cradling it in the bend of her arm, and stroking his matted hair. "My dear Jesus," she said softly. "I'm so happy to find you this Christmas." She turned and gestured to the driver of the car, who lowered a window. "Come help me," she said. "We have room for him."

Follow the Star

Kelsey McIntyre

Kate and Axel had been friends since sixth grade. True, they were only eighth graders now, but Kate knew they had something special. After all, Axel was spending Christmas Eve at her house. Why would a boy agree to do that, unless he thought your friendship was something special? His dad worked nights, even on Christmas Eve, and his mom lived in another state, so maybe that was part of the reason why. No one would be home at Axel's house tonight. But Kate liked to think that he had accepted her invitation mainly because of how special she was to him.

Kate's aunts and uncles ruffled Axel's coal black hair and tried to slip gumdrops into his ghostly white hands. They wanted him to sing "Joy to the World" with the rest of the family while grandpa played the piano. They took no notice of his frayed jeans and Joker T-shirt.

Kate couldn't stop smiling. Joy to the world! Joy everywhere!

Across the room, Axel smirked back. He jerked his head toward the door. *When can we get out of here?*

"We still have Midnight Mass," Kate mouthed. It was ten-thirty, and in an hour the family would pile into cold vehicles and drive to St. Joseph's. Kate went to Midnight Mass every year—she loved the candles and the Christmas trees, and most of all the nativity scene, all lit up. So they had to be back in an hour.

But, on the other hand, they had an hour.

She and Axel took Styrofoam cups of apple cider and slipped out. The night was bitterly cold, as cold as it could be without snowing, but at least there was moonlight. Kate didn't like sneaking around in the dark. She didn't much like sneaking around at all, but best friends have to make compromises, and Axel liked only activities that toyed with breaking the rules.

He led the way to the undeveloped property at the edge of their neighborhood and climbed the mound of dirt that had been there since August. Kate climbed

after him, careful not to slosh her cider. The mound crumbled in places, but there was a hollow near the top where they liked to sit that had been packed solid.

"It's so beautiful out," Kate said, pulling off her mittens so she could feel the warmth of her cup.

"You mean the dead grass? Yeah, that's great. Hey, here's a rusty nail, too!"

Kate giggled. Axel was getting braces in the spring, but she thought his largish front teeth and crooked incisors added to his sarcastic delivery.

She sat on the ground, knees drawn up to her chest, and blew on her cider so that her frosty breath mingled with the steam. After kicking the rusty nail into the street, Axel came and sat cross-legged next to her.

"Look at all the stars, though," he said, pointing with one of his gangly fingers.

Far above them, the dark sky glittered with stars that not even the waxing moon could outshine. Kate could trace the Milky Way. She could have picked out constellations, if she had known any.

"That's cool," Axel said.

"Yeah," Kate murmured. His coat smelled like cigarette smoke—everything that came from his house smelled like cigarette smoke—but she breathed the air deeply anyway. *Joy to the world.* This night, with Christmas, with the stars, with Axel, felt different from other nights. It felt magical.

And that was when, gazing at the sky, she found a dark red star, closer to the horizon, that was bigger than any of the others. It shimmered. It was the color you see when you close your eyes after staring at a light bulb, and looking at it made Kate dizzy.

"Whoa," she said, and this time she pointed. "That one's weird."

"Where?"

"That one, right—" She broke off, straining to listen. She thought she had heard a low, rumbling laugh. Almost like a growl.

"What's wrong?" Axel said.

Before Kate could tear her eyes from the sky to look at him, another voice spoke. "Kate, Kate, Kate," it said. "Kate, Kate, Kate, it's almost Christmas. You should live a little." The voice was so deep that Kate could feel its vibrations in her chest, but it wasn't loud. It might have been a whisper in her ear, except that it seemed to emanate from the pulsing star.

"Did you hear a voice?" she said faintly.

"No," Axel said.

"I know you, Kate," the voice rumbled. "You worry that you're boring your friend, don't you? It's almost Christmas. You should do something fun, for once."

Kate stood up, dropping her half-filled cup so that the cider soaked into the dirt. "You don't hear anything?"

"Huh-uh." Axel stood as well and kicked the Styrofoam cup toward the street to join the nail.

What's going on? Kate thought, directing the words toward the star creature. Immediately, the voice replied, "Live a little, Kate. He's bored. Show him that you can have a good time."

"I—I *can* have a good time," she said aloud.

"Good to know," Axel said, from somewhere to her right. "You wanna sit down, then? Or should we keep moving?"

Kate shook her head, eyes locked on the star. *Maybe I am boring, but what am I supposed to do?* she asked in her head.

"Hide from your family," the voice said. "Go to your friend's house, where it's dark. You can have fun there."

"What?" she said. She wished she could remember the carol her family had been singing just before she and Axel left; it had been bright and uplifting. Now, the whole world seemed windswept and cold and black.

"Go down by the railroad tracks," the voice growled.

Kate wasn't allowed to walk in that part of town, because it could be dangerous. But she found herself echoing, "Down by the railroad tracks?"

Axel picked up a dirt clod and threw it at someone's mailbox. "Sure, sounds fun."

"Better yet," the voice continued, "head downtown."

"Downtown?" Kate said.

"What would *you* do downtown this late at night?" Axel said, moving so that she could see him out of the corner of her eye. He held a second dirt clod. "Hey, are you still hearing voices?"

The red star shimmered. "Say 'no,'" the voice commanded.

"No," Kate said.

"Say 'Let's go downtown and crash a real Christmas party.'" Before she could say anything, the star added, "You don't have to ask permission from your parents. That would be boring. Just follow me. I will show you the way."

Kate wanted to cry, but Axel was right there. He would see her. He would know that she wasn't so cool after all, that she was a goodie-goodie who got straight As and listened to her parents' advice. If she acted like that around him, he would stop hanging out with her.

The cold air stung her eyes and nostrils, but she bit her lip and said, "Let's go downtown and crash a real Christmas party." She pulled her eyes from the star at last and smiled at Axel. If she was going to do this, she would have to make it seem natural. "We could stop at Taco Bell, maybe dump tinsel into some people's backyards."

He laughed. "Are you serious? That's awesome."

Kate nodded. She picked up a clump of dirt and chucked it as far as she could. "Let's go. That would be way more fun than sitting around here."

"Yeah, maybe sometime. But we don't have time to go all the way downtown tonight."

The star seemed brighter than before, the street ahead tinged with its muddy red glow. "Why not?" Kate said. "I think we could."

"You have to be back in time for Mass," Axel said.

Kate blinked. She noticed her hand was coated in dust, and brushed it off. "Not necessarily."

Axel laughed again. "Come on, Kate, it's Christmas."

He's not kidding, Kate realized. *He's not even being sarcastic.* "But…you don't—I mean, wouldn't you—" She involuntarily glanced at the star. It pulsed, but it was silent.

Axel looked too, and this time he saw it. "I don't know what that thing is," he said, "but it's not a star. Come on, let's get out of here. Your parents'll be wondering where you are."

He took her hand and led the way down the dirt pile toward her house. Once, Kate wanted to turn around—once, she thought she heard a growl—but Axel knew his way around in the dark and didn't pause. They walked without looking any more at the sky, heading toward the laughter of her aunts and uncles, toward her grandpa's piano tunes, toward St. Joseph's and the nativity scene, all lit up.

A Modern Story

by John Kasaian

It had been raining steadily and at 11 a.m. there was no sign of it letting up. The sound of the rain pelting the slate roof of the old church echoed even into the confessional where Father Joe waited for some sinner to brave the rain. At last the door opened and closed and a small light signaled a hopeful soul kneeling in wait.

The screen slid open and a dull amber light illuminated the confessional just enough so that he could make out *The Act of Contrition* taped to the wall (to avoid embarrassing lapses of the penitents' memory, he figured). Without waiting for the priest, he began:

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was two years ago."

"Welcome! What is it that you'd like to confess?"

"I haven't been to Mass since I lost my brother, because I've been so angry," a young man confessed.

"You were angry with your brother?"

"No, Father. I loved my brother very much."

"You know the souls of the deceased depend on us to offer our prayers on their behalf."

"Yes, Father, but I was—I am—too angry for that. I didn't think God would want to hear my prayers—from someone as angry as I." The man's voice broke.

"Are you angry with God for taking your brother?" Father Joe asked.

"No." The voice spoke with difficulty. "God didn't take my brother. I could understand that, but my brother was murdered. Pre-meditated, the police would say, if they had the guts to say it. No, Father, I'm angry with the woman who murdered my brother."

Father Joe leaned back in his chair. "I am so sorry. A brother's murder would be a blow to anyone."

"Father, I hate that woman."

"You need to pray for God's grace so that you can forgive. You need to be open to that grace."

"How can I be open to God's grace when she speaks publicly about how destroying my brother was the best thing she'd done in her life? She says she's *fulfilled* only because she killed my brother."

"Was she his wife? Or girlfriend? Was your brother trying to harm her? Could it have been self-defense?" Father Joe asked.

"Harm her? No. My brother was a very gentle person. A terrific big brother, the best any kid could ask for, but for her to live, she says, my brother had to die. That is what she tells the public, *and the public believes her.* The world is going to remember my brother as some kind of monster, *but she's the monster*. She killed him and brags about it."

"How does she brag about it? Why would anyone listen to her?" Father Joe inquired.

"She gives talks, at churches and libraries and conferences and colleges and places. People come to hear her. She even has a restraining order from a judge to keep me from showing up because she's afraid of me. *She's afraid of me*! I'm not a murderer, Father, but I hate her."

"She's publicly admitted to killing your brother?"

"Yes, Father, her recounting the killing, *butchering*, of my brother is part of the program she presents."

"What have the police done? Murder and mayhem are serious crimes."

"They issued a restraining order against me, like I said."

"Yes, of course they did," the tired priest finally guessed.

"Because she *was* your brother."

The King of Hearts

by Grettelyn Nypaver

On Saint Stephen's day, the witch Baba Yaga decided that she wanted to learn how to freeze hearts. She had heard of such things being done in the far north, so she knew it was possible. Baba Yaga didn't like the far north. It was so cold and windy and snowy, and there were few people to torture there.

Freezing hearts sounded useful, though; worth going into the far north to learn. Not to mention that once Baba Yaga froze a person's heart, he or she would belong to her. That was a huge advantage. That was always the hardest thing; making people obey you. Baba Yaga liked torturing people into submission. It was one of her favorite sports. But Baba Yaga was getting old. The centuries did wear on one. She needed a less intense method of slave-making for those inevitable slow days.

Apparently, children's hearts were the easiest to freeze. That's what she'd heard, anyway. Or maybe that merchant had said critter's hearts. It was hard to tell because she had been cutting his tongue out at the time. Children.… Hm. She would have to check on that.

Baba Yaga hated children. Nothing was more troublesome than a child. They were so…unpredictable. Baba Yaga didn't like that. She could usually read people easily. But children were curious. They often didn't have the same patterns ingrained in their personalities that adults did. The only good child was a child who was spitted and seasoned and roasted slowly. That was lovely.

Baba Yaga wiped the drool from her leathery old lips. Now she was hungry for child-flesh. Well, at least she had that option, if the spell didn't work.

✦ ✦ ✦

It was such an annoying journey. So far north. So cold. And Baba Yaga didn't even particularly care for the Snow Queen. The Snow Queen was one of the

few witches whose true name Baba Yaga didn't know. It made Baba Yaga self-conscious and insecure not to know a witch's true name, and that annoyed her. It galled her even more because the Snow Queen was younger than she was. Or at least, Baba Yaga thought she was. No one really knew how old the Snow Queen was. She had simply appeared, a few centuries back, in the far north.

None of the other witches really noticed the Snow Queen at first. Nobody had ever cared much for the far north, so none of the other witches envied her the territory. When the snow started spreading, however, there was some grumbling. Witches started to wonder who this Snow Queen was. There had been some talk about sending her a delegation, but none of the southern witches wanted to travel north to do it, and the subject was dropped. Besides, the snows only drifted a few feet south every year. The Snow Queen probably didn't even know she was spreading the snow.

That was how the southern witches justified the situation. But the truth was that the Snow Queen was good at witchery; better than any witch in centuries. Some of the older witches even murmured that she reminded them of Baba Yaga when she was young. Baba Yaga didn't heed this, though. She knew that the Snow Queen was good, but as long as Baba Yaga could have the southern forests, she didn't care. The country was vast. If the Snow Queen decided it was too small to share, then Baba Yaga would have to deal with her. Until then, it paid to be on friendly terms. There were benefits to being nice to other witches. Exchanging spells, for instance.

Still, Baba Yaga had to admit that although many witches went north to learn from the Snow Queen, the mysterious monarch never left her domain to learn from anyone. It was a good strategy. If the Snow Queen ever wanted to expand her kingdom, she would know which witches knew what spells. And she would have the counter-spells. It was very smart, but Baba Yaga didn't think much about it. She had lived this long, hadn't she? She would live a little longer, even if this upstart decided to become an imperialist. If she couldn't fight, she could always hide; and Baba Yaga was not above hiding to survive.

After what felt like years of trudging through the snow, Baba Yaga finally spotted the Snow Queen's ice castle. Baba Yaga snorted. So dramatic! Why couldn't the Snow Queen have a house on chicken legs, like Baba Yaga did? It was practical and understated. There was no way the Snow Queen could move that ridiculous palace anywhere. It had five spires, at least. Baba Yaga shook her head.

Baba Yaga left her chicken-leg house and walked up the grand staircase to the huge front doors of the castle. She had taken the precaution of wearing spiked shoes, so she didn't slip on the palace's slippery ice surface. There was nothing worse than looking like a fool in front of an upstart witch. Baba Yaga reached her bony hand toward the door handle. Before she touched it, however, the door swung slowly and silently inward. Baba Yaga raised one eyebrow. More drama. What a waste of magic and energy!

"Come in, Baba Yaga," called a low voice. "I've been expecting you."

Baba Yaga almost laughed. This girl was really a trip! Shaking her gray head, Baba Yaga stepped into the hall. It was very long, and made entirely of ice. Soaring pillars supported a vaulted ceiling that was almost too high to see. Cold light illuminated the blue-green floor, casting strange upward shadows on the pillars. At the far end of the hall, the Snow Queen sat on a high throne. She was wrapped in white furs, with a little fur cap partially covering her platinum locks. Baba Yaga thought it was very stupid to design your castle to make yourself look small from the entry-way. But, to each his own.

"Hello sister," Baba Yaga croaked, employing the traditional title used among witches. "I have come—"

"To learn to freeze hearts, I know," the Snow Queen cut her off.

"Your ears stretch far, little sister," Baba Yaga said.

"I have many ways of listening," the Snow Queen responded. She stood, and the chamber seemed to shrink as her great height filled it. "Well," she said. "Shall we get started?"

Baba Yaga nodded.

It was good etiquette to share spells. No witch would refuse the favor. But it was very bad etiquette to ask for a counter-spell. Counter-spells were a sort of insurance. If you shared your spell, you were generous; if you shared your counter-spell, you were stupid.

They spent several days learning the theory of the spell. Every night, the Snow Queen would offer Baba Yaga a chamber to sleep in; but Baba Yaga always declined and went back to her little hut on chicken legs for the night. She could make it through a cold day with the Snow Queen, but Baba Yaga shuddered at the thought of a long night in that bitterly cold castle.

On the third day, the Snow Queen suggested a practical test. "Have you brought a subject you can practice on?" she asked. "I'm afraid that all my slaves' hearts are already frozen to me."

"I have a slave," Baba Yaga replied. This wasn't exactly true. She had a child whom she was fattening up for a winter feast. But she would rather sacrifice this child to her magical experiments than admit to the Snow Queen that she had come unprepared.

"Very good," the Snow Queen answered. "Bring it inside."

The child was a blessedly quiet creature. Baba Yaga had kept him in a cage for three months. He had trouble walking into the castle. The cage in Baba Yaga's hut was not tall enough for him to stand up. Baba Yaga enchanted his legs, however, so that he could at least walk into the palace without her having to support him. Such a weak little wretch! Baba Yaga hated normal people.

"He's a little old," the Snow Queen complained.

"Not too old," Baba Yaga said. "He can't be more than ten."

The Snow Queen huffed. "Twelve, at least," she said. "How old are you, boy?"

"Thirteen yesterday," he whispered.

"You see?" said the Snow Queen.

"What does it matter?" Baba Yaga asked.

"It's easier if they're younger," the Snow Queen said.

"Then this will be a good challenge," Baba Yaga said.

"Hmm," the Snow Queen shook her head. "We'll see. Put him over there, in the light. You'll be able to aim better."

Baba Yaga made the boy walk to the place that the Snow Queen indicated. Then she stood back, closed her eyes, reached out with her mind, and touched… nothing.

"What do you feel?" The Snow Queen asked.

"Nothing," Baba Yaga said. "Nothing at all."

"That's impossible," the Snow Queen scoffed. "It's sometimes difficult to find a way in, but you always feel *something* when you're looking to get into someone's heart."

Baba Yaga strained with her mind. "No," she said. "Nothing."

"Let me try," the Snow Queen pushed Baba Yaga out of the way and, closing her eyes, she stretched her mind out toward the boy's chest. But there was nothing. The Snow Queen's eyes snapped open.

"What is this?" she asked. "Have you brought me a wizard? This boy has no heart!"

Baba Yaga laughed. "He's not a wizard; just a stupid boy who's been in a cage in my house for three months now."

"Then why can't I feel his heart? It should be right here. Only a great wizard can hide his heart like that."

They both looked at the boy. He stood, still and silent, several yards away from them. His gray eyes blinked slowly.

"Boy," the Snow Queen said, striding up to him. "Are you a wizard? I charge you in the name of the magic we subscribe to, you will tell me the truth."

"I'm not a wizard," the boy said.

The Snow Queen stared into his eyes. "He's not lying," she said without turning her head away from his face.

"I don't know what's wrong with him, then," Baba Yaga said. "Maybe he's an anomaly."

"Normal people don't have anomalies like that," the Snow Queen snapped. "They need their hearts."

"Boy," Baba Yaga said, an idea suddenly coming to her. "Are you in love?"

"I don't think so…" the boy looked confused.

Baba Yaga walked cautiously toward him, reaching out her gnarled old hand toward his chest. "What are you hiding?" she murmured.

Baba Yaga's hand touched the boy's chest and she shrieked. She pulled her hand back, hissing and spitting. "What have you done to me?" she screamed. Her fingers were black and smoking.

The Snow Queen's eyes grew wide. "I've heard of this," she said. "It's a new form of protection from the south. Boy, open your shirt."

The boy undid the first few buttons of his ragged shirt. Something metal gleamed there.

"What's that?" Baba Yaga hissed.

The boy held it out. It was two bars of metal, crossing each other and joined at the point where they crossed. Upon it was an even stranger sight: a figure of a man, twisted in torment.

"What is that?" the Snow Queen squinted at the charm. Then she started back. "That's it!" she gasped. "That's the sign of the new kind of magic. It's slippery and devious! People give away their hearts to a god, and he gives them this symbol as protection."

"So he doesn't have a heart?" Baba Yaga asked.

"No, he does," the Snow Queen said. "But it's in the keeping of this god. Get him out of here! He's dangerous to me!"

"But the spell…?" Baba Yaga was in pain, but she didn't want to have come all this way for nothing.

"Come back with a better specimen," the Snow Queen answered. "Just get him out of here!"

"I don't want him!"

"Then get rid of him. Just get him out of my house!"

✦ ✦ ✦

When Ivan woke up, the first thing he saw was a crucifix on the wall opposite his bed. He felt like he could breathe for the first time in three months.

"Shhh," a gentle voice was saying. "Don't try to move. Just let me lift your head so you can drink this broth."

Ivan did as he was told. "Are you a priest?" he asked, when he could speak.

"Yes. I'm Fr. Mikhail."

"Fr. Mikhail." Ivan sighed.

"We thought you weren't going to make it," the priest said. "You were so cold when we found you! What happened?"

"Baba Yaga," Ivan muttered. "And the Snow Queen. They wanted my heart. But they couldn't get it. The master has it."

The priest smiled. "The master?" he asked.

"Christ," Ivan said. "My master."

"Ah, very good, very good. Your heart is certainly safe with him."

"Safe," Ivan mumbled. "With him."

"Yes," Fr. Mikhail answered. "Now try to rest. When you're better, we'll try to help you get back to your village."

Ivan sighed. As he closed his eyes, his hand clutched the small silver crucifix around his neck. It was warm and comforting. He fell asleep.

The Jailer of Herod

by Sean P. Dailey

The plate glass window shuddered as the wind blew thick, wet snow against it. The sun had long gone down but the street lamp outside illuminated the deserted street as tiny droplets ran down the outside of the pane. Inside, the soft glow from the Christmas tree lights painted the living room in reds, greens, blues, and yellows. Christmas music played on the stereo.

Jack's wine glass was full. He put another log on the fire. It was late. He would be groggy at work tomorrow, maybe have a headache too. But he didn't mind. Tomorrow was Christmas Eve, when little work would get done anyway. A night owl by nature, Jack had an even harder time going to bed during this time of year. Christmas was a festival of night. Falling at the tail end of December, just past the change of seasons, it reveled in darkness. The star had guided the Magi and the shepherds at night. The angels appeared to the shepherds at night. The Babe had been born at night. At night, Christmas lights glowed that much brighter.

In the fireplace, flames leapt up, licking the fresh log. The fire's warm glow mingled with the light from the Christmas tree, and Jack settled in his chair, taking it all in. He grimaced. It was going to be a good Christmas, he supposed, but it would be an expensive one. It had been a good year, mostly. His wife Emily had given birth to their first child, a daughter, in October. But they were still a young couple, and Jack had been at his job only a few years. Living from paycheck to paycheck was going to be a fact of life for a while. Fortunately they did not need to buy formula for little Ann, but she still cost a lot of money: the crib, a baby monitor, clothes, doctor visits—all the innumerable expenses couples don't think about when they decide to make a baby.

Jack sighed. Ann had just gone back to sleep, following a feeding, and mom was in bed too. Jack loved his wife and he adored his daughter, but he also savored these quiet moments alone. He had so little time alone these days, and the house was seldom this quiet. Emily could wait. Jack looked around, taking in the scenery: the light flirting with shadows; the music. The only other sounds were the snowflakes against the window pane and the crackling of the fire.

Jack took a sip of his wine. Light and shadow played. But one shadow, just on the edge of Jack's vision, seemed not so playful. He did not notice it at first. It did not dance. It grew darker, and took shape. And, barely loud enough to be heard, it hissed.

Jack started, pulled from his reverie by the discordant sound. He jerked his head to his right and perceived something darker than its surroundings. Then he saw it. Or them: two tiny gleams, each with a cold, greenish glow that made Jack shudder. He blinked and shook his head, and looked again, and the twin gleams moved toward him. Now, Jack saw, they were eyes, eyes in a face that would have made Jack scream, had his voice not caught in his throat. The lights on the Christmas tree dimmed; the fire burned low. The music had stopped. So had the wind. Maybe the snow had stopped too, but Jack dared not take his eyes from the face to find out.

It was an elf. Or not an elf. Or some diabolical mockery of everything Jack knew—or thought he knew—about elves. Its skin was green and mottled, with running sores. Its long bony fingers ended in sharp claws. Its teeth were fangs. It was clad in dirty rags that may have been red once, but the faded material appeared to be covered in crusted blood and dried slime. Around its waist was a belt from which hung a rusty set of keys. Upon its misshapen head was a cap of the same unsettling color. Its pale lips parted, and saliva rolled down its chin. Before Jack could dismiss the apparition as a figment of his tired imagination, it

spoke. The sound shook Jack fully awake. He spilled wine on his shirt.

"Hello, Jack," it said. The voice was present, but not present. Afterward, Jack could not recall if he heard it with his ears or in his mind. The voice carried, it seemed, the agonized wails of two thousand years of torment.

"Hello, Jack," it said again. It gazed at the surroundings. "Your glass of wine. Your fire. Your tree. Your sad, pitiful music. You bask in comforts."

If Jack had found any words of reply, they would have died in his throat. How did it know his name? Jack stared.

It spoke again. "You have so much, but at this time of year, you should give to those who have not. And we are hungry. Oh yes, we are hungry."

Hungry for what? Just what the hell was playing out before Jack's eyes? All his senses screamed in protest, but Jack remained dumb. It spoke again.

"We are the jailers of Herod. We are the ones who feast upon children," it said. "And we require your child. You will give her to us. Ann, she is called. You will give her to us. Tomorrow night, we will return, and you will give her to us."

Jack found his voice, but it took all his strength to reply. "Give...her...to... you?"

The creature smiled, ever so slightly: a cold, lustful grin. "Mourn not the loss of this little one, who is nothing. For rendering her, you will receive much. There is much we could give you. You will prosper. Do you not want nice things? All for the gift of the child. For our feast. I will return."

The creature was gone. The logs in the fireplace burst into flame. The Christmas lights shone with their full strength. Jack stared, his eyes and mouth wide open in stunned disbelief. Had what just transpired really happened? Jack looked toward the opening to the hallway, down which Emily and Ann slept in their bedrooms. He looked at the carpeted floor, which—yes, there was no mistaking it—bore imprints from where it had stood. Jack loved Emily. He loved Ann, but the promises the creature had made…Jack felt the tug of the promised wealth and prosperity. His law school loans were crushing them. He'd be able to give Emily everything she ever wanted; they could always have another child, maybe more—if that thing wasn't lying. Jack felt himself wavering.

✦ ✦ ✦

Jack woke in his chair, light streaming in the window. He smelled coffee brewing. Emily was up. She was looking at him, not happy.

"You slept out here all night."

"I know.

"You spilled red wine on your white shirt."

"I know. I'm sorry."

Unmoved by Jack's contrition, Emily glared, then stalked off to get the baby. The baby. The baby that the creature had demanded—this very night. For a feast. Had it been a dream? If it wasn't, what were the consequences for Ann, for him, for his soul? That thought sent Jack running to the bathroom. He emptied the contents of his stomach into the toilet.

Its skin was green and mottled, with running sores. Its long bony fingers ended in sharp claws. Its teeth were fangs.

Ann wasn't to be a guest at the feast, that much Jack was sure of. What had the thing called itself? The jailer of Herod. No, not that. It was "jailers," plural. Jack retched again.

This very night. Christmas Eve! The Vigil of the Nativity! Jack sank to the bathroom floor. How could he hand over his Ann, for such an unspeakable end? It had to have been a dream. He thought again of his student loans. The car needed new tires, and then there were the hospital bills from Ann's delivery. A voice inside him spoke, a cold and terrible voice: it had not really been a good year, had it, Jack? The bathroom faded to black; Jack swooned. Could he really sell his own infant child to be the main course at a satanic feast?

A sharp knock on the door jolted Jack from his thoughts. "You'll be late for work," Emily said.

Jack had only two things to do that day: put in a half day at the office and run errands before he came home. Emily had given him a list of stops: the grocery store, the department store, the cleaners. He performed his duties as if in a daze: complete this report; call that client; turn the ignition; buy the items on the various lists. In the grocery store Jack could have sworn he saw a mottled, green face around the corner in the frozen section. His sphincter clenched. He closed his eyes and when he opened them again, the face was gone.

A wan sun was sinking low as Jack turned into his driveway and parked the car. Emily came out to meet him, smiling, holding Ann. Emily kissed Jack and Jack kissed Ann—perhaps for the last time. In several trips he had the groceries and other things inside, and he and Emily settled in for a quiet Christmas Eve.

Jack and Emily had a light supper and relaxed. They uncorked a bottle of wine and then another. They played old Christmas cartoon DVDs on the TV, more from nostalgia than for Ann's benefit, since she was too young to pay much attention. Jack hugged Ann especially close, more than usual, Emily noticed.

"You're affectionate with her tonight," she said, smiling.

"It's her first Christmas," Jack said, smiling back. And it will be her last, he thought. She is food for the jailers of Herod.

Emily snapped a picture. "She's getting restless," she said, brushing Jack's forehead with a soft kiss. "Let me feed her and put her down."

Jack handed her over to Emily, and settled back in his chair.

Outside it was clear and cold, desolate save for Christmas lights in neighbors' yards. Jack switched off the TV. He stood, found a Christmas CD, and put it in the stereo. He gazed at the tree and the presents piled beneath it. The fire crackled merrily.

"Try not to be up too late." Jack turned, startled. He had expected something else. But it was Emily, in a winter nightgown, smiling. God, she was beautiful. As beautiful as the day they were married. As beautiful as the day they met. He loved her so much. "Try not to be up too late," she said again. "It's cozy in our bed too."

"I'll be there soon," Jack said.

It was nearly midnight. Jack put another log on the fire and emptied the wine bottle into his glass. Jack was not a coward. If he had a flaw, it was that he had no notion of his own strength, because he had never been tested. He could not conceive giving in to the jailer's demand. But he also did not know how he could possibly refuse. Jack looked out the window. Outside, the wind howled like a chorus of fallen angels mustering their forces against a long-expected counterattack. The fire dimmed. The music stopped. In the corner, a shadow took shape. It was holding something small.

"You are holding Ann," Jack said, horrified.

"She is ours," the creature said. "You must give her to us. She is our feast."

Jack hesitated. In his terror, a startling thought arose. Something the creature said... Jack barely dared a whisper: "If she is yours," he said, "then why must I give her to you?"

The creature growled. The fire in the fireplace died. Its claws grasped Ann tighter. "Our prisoner took what he wanted, but for us, you must make of her a gift," it said.

"But why would you not? Look around you. These things, your comforts, are dear. All that you need will be given to you. All that you want. We will provide it. For so small a price as this..." and it drew a bony claw across Ann's cheek, ever so gently.

A gift? How twisted was that? The baby stirred. She opened her eyes. She looked at Jack and he looked back. All the thing's promises: so alluring, but, Jack knew in his heart, so empty. He might have piles of money, and still be a ruin. But did he have the strength to resist? He looked at the creature, hating it. He hated it because he knew he would give in. He hated his wife. He hated his daughter. He hated his house and his life. And he hated himself most of all.

"Give her too us," the creature hissed. "She is ours. We are hungry."

The wind howled. Cold ash shifted in the fireplace. Jack had never felt so forsaken. He covered his ears and crouched, and moaned low, "Sh... she... she is... She is y—"

But then something unexpected happened and Jack's final word died in his throat. Ann, tiny and unafraid, giggled. Jack met her eyes and she giggled again, and Jack understood: he was not alone. He shut his eyes and cried out as a procession of visions paraded before him:

The day he met Emily, in the checkout line at a bookstore.

"Give her to us!" he heard far off.

Their first date, dinner at a hamburger joint.

"Give her to us!"

Watching as Emily's father escorted her up the aisle.

"Forget the brat! Give her to us!"

The first time he saw Ann, red and wriggling in the doctor's hands, a miracle in flesh.

"GIVE! HER! TO! US!"

Jack opened his eyes, and he saw it: its mouth open and its fangs bared, seconds away from biting into Ann's tiny neck. And Jack said, "No."

It threw back its head and shrieked, and all hell shrieked with it. Suddenly, the clock on the mantle chimed twelve. As if in reply, outside, even louder, church bells echoed up and down the street, ringing in Christmas Day. The jailer shrieked again. Jack rushed it, grabbed Ann, and fell back, huddling in terror. It shrieked again, now weak and mournful, like the last gasp of dying Carthage. Then the jailer of Herod froze. It glared at Jack, and was no more.

✦ ✦ ✦

Jack woke in his chair. Outside, snow was falling. Ann was curled up on his chest, her soft breathing keeping time with his heartbeat. Over them stood Emily, smiling. "Once again you didn't come to bed," she said, "but you found yourself a companion. Congratulations on not spilling this time."

"Merry Christmas," Jack said, not knowing what else to say. Emily bent low and kissed him, and went off to the kitchen. "It's Christmas morning!" she said. "Shall I uncork the champagne?"

"Yes!" Jack called back. Ann burrowed deeper in his neck and cooed. Jack kissed her on the top of her head, and smiled. And then he wept. He had been tested, and had won.

THE CHRISTMAS GUARDIANS

On Christmas night
When stars shone bright
And smiling, children sleeping.

'Neath sheets they burled
'Round toys they curled
But up the stairs came creeping.

A hideous beast
To seek a feast
Of children, their bones grinding.

Its skin was scales
It had three tails
And claws for children rending.

Up, up it crept
While children slept
Their dreams for treasures keeping.

A child awoke!
Could he invoke
A band of guardians, leaping?

Do Christmas toys
For girls and boys
Have magic, more than seeming?

Toy knights, a pile
Now rank and file!
With swords and armor gleaming!

March 'cross the floor
Athwart the door
And one stepped forward, shouting.

"Take heed, foul beast!
"Know this, at least!
"Your death awaits you, blinking."

"Go forth from here,
"Forget not fear
"Or slay you we shall, laughing!"

And then with fright
It saw its plight
The beast stepped back, then
tumbling

Thus defeated
The beast retreated
But swore an oath: returning

The children smiled
In slumber mild
And Christmas stars still twinkling.

—Sean P. Dailey

The Mast of Reality

by David Beresford

And a dog is an omen, and a cat is a mystery, and a pig is a mascot and a beetle is a scarab, calling up all the menagerie of the polytheism from Egypt and old India; Dog Anubis and the great green-eyed Pasht and all the holy howling Bulls of Bashan; reeling back to the bestial gods of the beginning, escaping into elephants and snakes and crocodiles, and all because you are frightened of four words: "He was made Man".

—THE ORACLE OF THE DOG, G. K. CHESTERTON

In my professional life, I study blow flies that live on dead animals.

As an entomologist, I find that studying blow flies gives me a particular perspective on the world. Much of my work involves collecting maggots from dead carcasses. In human corpses, blow flies lay eggs after death, so if we find the oldest group of maggots and can figure out how old they are, we can figure out that the person must have died at least that long ago, and likely a bit longer. Figuring out this postmortem interval requires aging the maggots. Because maggots grow longer as they get older, it becomes a problem of finding the biggest maggot. A wrinkle on this is that if the maggot matures, it wanders about six feet away from the body and burrows into the soil to form a pupae or cocoon, waits for about a week, and then hatches out as a new fly. This is where my work comes in: I am curious about how far maggots wander from dead bodies, what direction they go, and how deep into the soil they go. This is important, because if an investigator cannot find the buried pupae, then the postmortem interval estimate will be wrong, and if this is a crime victim, it becomes harder to catch the bad guys.

Lots of things can affect blow flies and maggot growth. If the victim has cocaine in his or her nostrils, the blow flies grow bigger and faster; if the victim has a wound, the blow flies eat different parts of the corpse and grow at different rates. The weather changes things, and something as simple as a nearby ant nest changes everything, because the ants will eat the blow fly eggs as they are laid by the mother flies.

The Blow Fly

To do my work I need dead animals, which act as a kind of surrogate for dead human bodies. The idea here is that what happens to the dead pig is what would probably happen to a dead person. Pigs are good, because they eat the same thing as people, have similar height, a similar amount of hair, and usually get about the same amount of exercise that most people do. I get pigs from a local farmer who raises them, and the pigs I use are those that need to be culled from the herd due to disease, usually cancer or a genetic defect.

When I get the pigs they are already dead. We put the dead pig in a wire cage to keep crows, vultures, bears, and wolves from stealing our experiment. Mine is a curious trade. I can tell you there is a bit of odor involved with this work. One time when I taught forensic entomology I mentioned to my students that some entomologists smoke a pipe to kill the smell of the rotting flesh. The next day, when I took them out to the cages of dead pigs, about half of them pulled out some fat cigars and lit them up. Cheeky young devils! What could I say?

As a pig rots, there is a point at which is swells up with gas, and then bursts like a blown inner tube. The maggots then pour out as a kind of living white artesian well. It is quite spectacular, although not everyone finds it so. There is no getting around it: it is also quite repulsive.

Pigs are expensive, so I have developed a relationship with some of my friends at my parish who are trappers. Most of the dead animals I get are coyotes, some beaver, and a few otters, raccoons, and fishers. Because these were harvested for their fur, when I get them they have no fur. Since I am looking at maggots after they have finished their wandering, the kind of carcass I use is not important as long as it is large enough to produce enough maggots. All winter, my friends deliver the coyote carcasses to me and I keep them in a pile in the field beside my house. I usually get about fifty or so coyotes. I keep twenty in a storage freezer for use during the summer, and let the others start rotting in the spring. It is my stock pile, a way to ensure I always have lots of flies and beetles around for the summer.

I have given lectures at the police academy, and one of my colleagues there specializes in burnt bodies: his work involves putting dead pigs into buildings and cars and lighting them on fire. Gruesome, but fascinating!

So, what is the point? The flies have an unlovely task to do, and they do it well, being created for the job and being created good. Yet clearly we find these creatures disgusting, and we should! Rotting flesh is very dangerous, and all of our senses warn us to avoid it. But our natural human curiosity, our thirst for knowing and exploring, takes precedence over any unpleasantness to the senses. The sirens tempted Odysseus with knowledge, and it is a good thing that he was tied to the mast of reality; and it is good that we are as well.

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

Quilts

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

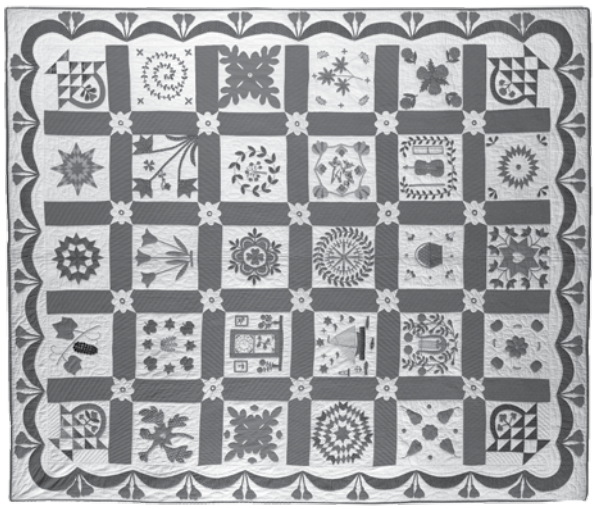
My grandmother was a true homemaker. We lived on the same block with her when we grew up, so we were over at her house almost every day. You could walk all the way around by going down to the end of the block and turning left, and walk another half block to her house, or you could sneak though the woods at the back of our house, behind the neighbor's garage, and get to her back yard pretty quickly. Our mom didn't want us trespassing, so we tried to keep the back way for emergencies. And "the woods" meant there were about five trees back there.

Grandma was always sewing, knitting, canning, cooking or crocheting something. Her footstool by her rocking chair was about seven big empty coffee cans put together in a flower pattern with a covering sewn over them. You could still bang on them and make a nice drumming sound, so it was a great drum set, too.

When we grew old enough for a big bed, Grandma sewed us our own quilts. These she made from scraps of fabric: everything from pieces of Grandpa's hand-sewn boxers to the dress you wore for Easter last year. We recognized the fabric (except for the underwear) and it felt homey.

When I'd go over to Grandma's house, she loved to play cards and games. So we'd sit at the kitchen table, she'd ply me with homemade cookies, and we'd play rummy till the first person got to five hundred.

Sometimes Grandma would have me come over and she'd trace my hands or my feet. I wasn't supposed to know it, but if it was hands, I was pretty sure my Christmas present was going to be mittens. If feet, I could expect slippers. Grandma would sit and knit and ask me how I was, and show me how to sew a button on, or how to keep count of the stitches in a row of knitting. When she worked on a quilt, she did it in a way that didn't involve a big quilting frame. She would use her little embroidery frame and just take a huge needle threaded with yarn, and she'd knot yarn in the center of each quilted square. I knew that when I grew up, I wanted to sew, and cook, and knit and quilt like my grandmother.



So when my first daughter was born, I wanted to sew her a quilt. I figured I had about three years to get the quilt done before she was in her big bed, and so whenever I made clothes or blankets or super-hero capes, I'd save the scraps for her quilt. I sewed on the quilt whenever I had a chance, and after about twelve years, I finally had the top surface done. Then I bought fabric for the bottom and the edges, and some matching yarn for the quilting of it, and it has sat unfinished in my closet ever since. This child is now twenty-three years old.

I look at that unfinished quilt in my closet and sigh. In some ways it makes me sad that I was too busy to finish it. I'm not as much like my grandmother as I wish. I do sew, cook, bake, and crochet. I never have caught on to knitting, and I don't have the right equipment for canning. But I have a second freezer where everything I put up goes. After Halloween, I cut up the pumpkins, boil them till they're soft, blend the meat until it's smooth, and freeze it. Over the winter, I make pies, cupcakes, and bread out of it, and it's definitely comfort food. I look down upon people who start with canned pumpkin and then claim to have made a homemade pumpkin pie. I start with a pumpkin, and I'm proud of it.

Sometimes when I look at the unfinished quilt, I'm glad I at least have most of it done. It will be easy some day to set up the sewing machine, put the batting in place and the back side, get out my embroidery frame and yarn and quilt the top to the bottom. Maybe I'll have it finished in time for my first grandchild. But I do wonder if we will even remember where all these quilt squares came from. This grey piece was from her favorite outfit, which she called "The Greys" and wore practically daily till she outgrew it. That striped piece is from the super-hero capes I sewed them the summer when the girls decided they had to have capes. This blue is a scrap from pajamas I sewed when she was about five. Oh, there are some good times sewn into that quilt.

In my linen closet, at the very back, is a small brown miniature quilt. It matches the one that used to cover my childhood bed, and Grandma made it for my doll's bed, so we would match. I love to go in the closet and put my nose deep into that little quilt, and conjure up all the good memories of childhood, quilts, and my wonderful grandmother. I like to think that I, like her, am a true homemaker. And someday soon, I *will* finish that quilt.

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

Same New

Illustrated London News 1932-34 • Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton, Volume 36

The penultimate volume in the complete run of G.K. Chesterton's weekly columns for the *Illustrated London News* shows Chesterton already looking back at his career as a prolific journalist and revisiting the same issues of his early literary life and reaffirming his conclusions.

The artist who began his trade writing about art is now writing about art again: "There is nothing more dangerous than talking about Art when you are not an artist; except perhaps when you are." Art, both in form and content, was beginning to grow obscure in his youth; now it is a vast fog of nonsense. Writing, on the other hand, was going from complex to simple, or rather subtle to banal. Now it is the screaming headlines of journalism and the sky signs of advertisement. Poetry, which was fleeing in free verse, is now largely gone, and Chesterton, who says that "art is manual labour," wonders if the practical problem of free verse was liberality or laxity.

In the meantime, tradition, which was "the democracy of the dead," is now "the teeming vitality of the dead." With the breakup of the modern world, one of those traditions will "stand out stark and strong as it did before the beginning of history": the family. He warns about what is going to happen when we find ourselves living in a society that has lost its balance, "in which what was abnormal may have become normal; nay, in which the bad may become good and the good abnormal." Chesterton, the great defender of Christendom, says that there is only one thing for Christians to do if their society is no longer Christian: "Launch a crusade to convert or conquer it."

But the world of the early 1930s is busy fighting off the newest threats without the benefit of knowing exactly what it is defending. And even the new threats are not new. Chesterton had warned about the Prussians; now he is using the same language to warn about the Nazis. He had warned about Marxism as a theory; now he is warning about Russian communism as a reality:

> If anything is new, it is not the ideas which are supposed to belong only to this generation. It is the riots, massacres, wars, military proclamations, and wholesale executions, which were always supposed to belong especially to the past barbaric and superstitious generations. I knew all about the Communist theory of Karl Marx before I was twenty-five [1899.] What I did not know was that the Communist theory would ever make ferocious use of the Russian Secret Police, or would shoot down workmen by the score for going on strike. I had heard all about Nietzsche and the master Mind and the reaction against democracy when I was a young art student. [1892-1895.] What I did not dream of was that a mob of Master Minds would ever be able to silence the Centrum by force and drive the Jews out of Germany. If bludgeons, bloody sabres, streets swept by artillery or rebels hanged or shot for differences of opinion—if these are new things, then I willingly agree that the situation is entirely new. But I do not see anything particularly new about the notion of a Communist State; and still less about the notion of a Dictator.

There is another lurking philosophy that is not new to Chesterton, something he saw in his youth, something he repeated in *The Man Who Was Thursday* about the philosophers who hate life itself, something that is still an utter mystery to him in 1934: "The idea that life is not liveable, that joy is not enjoyable, remains as utterly unmeaning to me at my present age as it did when I was sixteen years old."

Chesterton's writing remains as strong as ever, just as his confidence in the the truth. But as an older man, he employs a slight change in style. He has moved somewhat away from the clearly cut epigram that leaves no doubt to the rhetorical question that entreats us and encourages us not only to think for ourselves, but also to think well. It is a good exercise to be questioned by G.K. Chesterton.

> What I want to know is why those who are now boys, as I was then a boy, are so strangely and stubbornly twisted towards making a case against life? We also were morbid, because we were boys; we also were maniacs, because we were boys; we were quite capable of killing ourselves, because of the positive beauty of a particular woman; we also were quite capable of killing somebody else, because of the positive justice of a particular revolution. But it was always because of the positive goodness of a particular good thing. Why is it that so many people only want to make a case for the negative badness, not only of a bad thing, but of all things as being bad? The present generation has had more pleasure and enjoyment than any previous generation. Is that the right way of stating the riddle? Or is that the answer?

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

On Generations

by David W. Fagerberg

This is a reflection on the passage of time. It has not been stirred by any particular crisis in my life (no loved one has recently died, and I have not rolled the odometer of age past a symbolic decade), but a calm state is a better time for reflection than a crisis state.

I teach in an academic setting, which accounts for my perspective. What people mean by "generations" is the distance between an end point and another start point, and we have faster generations on campus than other settings do, ones that last four years between the departure of seniors and the arrival of freshman. As biologists use fruit flies for genetic studies because of their rapid lifespan, I can use undergraduates for generational observations because of their rapid succession. They tell me they don't like old Catholic music, and by that they mean "Kumbaya," "On Eagles Wings," and "Earthen Vessels." Then they tell me about new Catholic music and name songs with which I am totally unfamiliar. But that's all right. I know that the new names will soon sound to the next generation like the old names sound now.

This happens not only to undergraduates, but to my peers, as well. I saw a promo for a new historical study the other day that said, "Some scholars now question this conventional interpretation." Precisely. Questioning conventional interpretations is what we do in an effort to stay open-minded, but it did strike me as amusing that this means that history books are never settled. I would feel more embarrassed assigning to my class a book by a historian of theology from 1942 than I would feel assigning a book by a systematic theologian from 1942. Dogmatic books have a stability that historical books lack, which is odd. One would think that because it's history, it's over, finished, fixed, but there are always new scholars questioning the conventional interpretation, and things go out of date faster in history than in any other field.

I was beginning to feel embarrassed the other day that I am inadequately informed about postmodernism, and then I read that we are already entering post-postmodernism, and I was strangely soothed. I have therefore decided to lag strategically behind so that I am actually lapped by other runners on the track, until in a few years' time I am in the lead again. (The only people I feel bad about falling behind are the saints, who are running toward a true finish line.)

G.K. Chesterton thought the Catholic voice was particularly good at this preservation of memory. He saw society as having a memory no longer than my four-year academic generations, or perhaps those of fruit flies.

God has played an interesting trick on the human race by building in an amnesia factor called "generations." We forget. There was a film out a while ago called *Memento,* about a man with short-term memory loss. His recollections erased every so often, and so he would tattoo information onto his body so his present self could communicate to his future self. The situation of that man is the situation of mankind, and education is that tattoo parlor. A new generation without memory has just arrived, so it must be told what it should love, or what it should hate, which is why the storytelling by parents to their children is so important. That is also why the battle for the position of chief storyteller in society is so important, and why the Church has an interest in being a voice in the public square.

G.K. Chesterton thought the Catholic voice was particularly good at this preservation of memory. He saw society as having a memory no longer than my four-year academic generations, or perhaps those of fruit flies. The wise man of Ecclesiastes is vindicated: there is nothing new under the sun. In Chesterton's words, "Perhaps there is really no such thing as a Revolution recorded in history. What happened was always a Counter-Revolution. Men were always rebelling against the last rebels; or even repenting of the last rebellion." He offers a retro serial succession to prove his point. "The Modern Girl with the lipstick and the cocktail is as much a rebel against the Woman's Rights Woman of the 1880s, with her stiff stick-up collars and strict teetotalism, as the latter was a rebel against the Early Victorian lady of the languid waltz tunes and the album full of quotations from Byron; or as the last, again, was a rebel against a Puritan mother to whom the waltz was a wild orgy and Byron the Bolshevist of his age."

If someone could live through even one full cycle of rebellion, he would react with more calm. He would discover that ancient truth "has one by one outdistanced all the runners who prided themselves on their youth or their advanced positions. If a man could have learned it by a process of elimination, merely by living through the last three hundred years, he would learn the same lesson even more clearly by living through the next three hundred years." (Chesterton's next sentence can be taken to refer either to historical jags or to certain individuals among us: "By that time it will be more apparent than ever that these jerks of novelty do not create either a progress or an equilibrium.")

"If every human being lived a thousand years, every human being would end up either in utter pessimistic scepticism or in the Catholic creed." From my vantage point, I think Chesterton overestimated by 950 years in his calculation.

VARIED TYPES

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

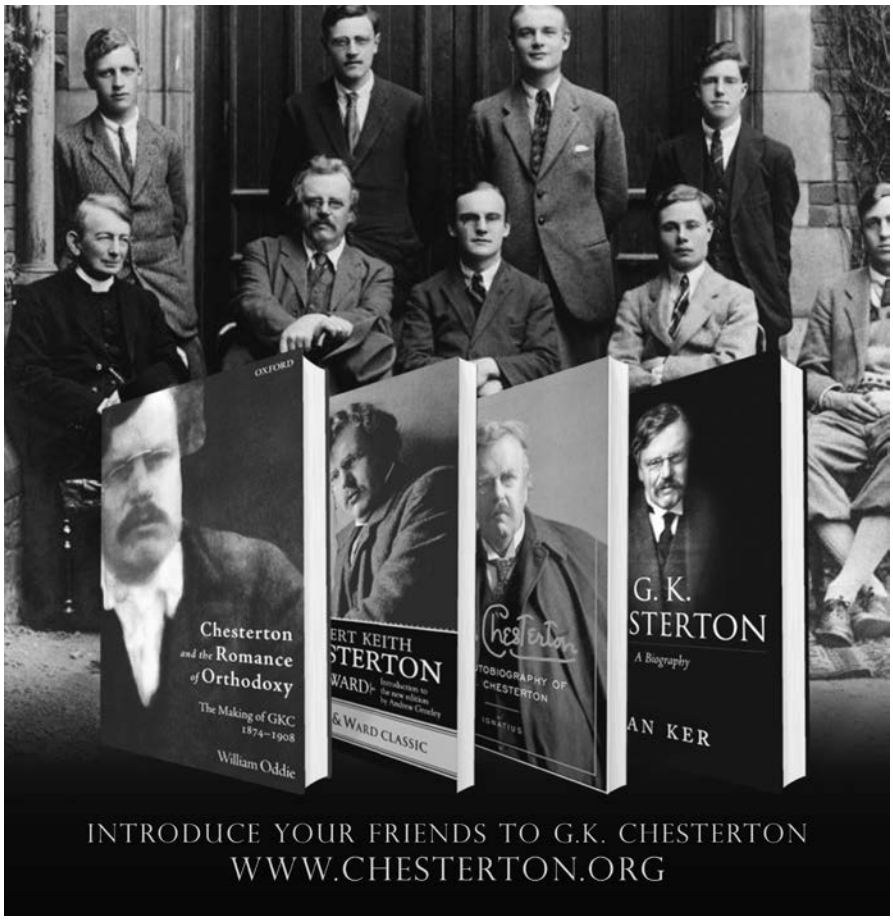
Good Things

By Victoria Darkey

Imagine you're part of a Local Chesterton Society. Your group has a red pushpin in the local societies map on the American Chesterton Society webpage. You regularly meet with a group of fellow Chestertonians to read some G.K. Chesterton and to enjoy the good-hearted discussion and conviviality that follow. If your local Chesterton society is like most, sooner or later you will ask, "What do we read next?" I'd like to make some reading suggestions and provide you with some resources for inspiration in choosing what to read if you find yourself faced with that question.

Cover the basics. It may seem like a contradiction that a local society dedicated to reading the works of one of the most prolific writers in the English language ever wonders what to read. That's why, when faced with this or any contradictory dilemma, I'd suggest you say a little prayer to the Holy Spirit, asking for guidance. Then, start by checking your group's bibliography of "Chesterton We've Read" against the "New Chesterton Reading Plan". (You can find this reading plan on the American Chesterton Society (ACS) home page, linked under the heading "An Introduction to Chesterton", and printed at the end if this article.) This is a list of "Top Hits" that are worth digesting before delving into the "deep tracks."

Use the web. Another suggestion is to browse through Martin Ward's "G.K. Chesterton's Works on the Web". This is a digital library of books, essays, and poetry by Chesterton. Typing "G.K. Chesterton's Works on the Web" into your search engine will give you a link to the page. Then you can literally page through hundreds of pages of Chesterton's writing, and find the material that you need.



***Gilbert*.** Another source of inspiration is your *Gilbert* magazine. Each issue includes Chesterton's writings, some of them unpublished since Chesterton's lifetime. These make excellent essays for local group discussion.

Chesterton's friends. Since one purpose of a Chesterton Society is to cultivate a better understanding of G.K. Chesterton, some groups occasionally read the work of writers who give insight into Gilbert and France Chesterton in their historical and philosophical context. These would include some of Chesterton's contemporaries, like Belloc, McNabb, Benson, Pope Leo XIII, and Maisie Ward, along with modern-day biographers and commentators like Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Fr. Robert Wild, Dr.William Oddie, Fr. Ian Ker, or Nancy Carpentier-Brown.

Browse the bookstore. The ACS web store is an excellent resource. Don't forget that local Chesterton Societies affiliated with the ACS receive a 35 percent discount for purchases of five more (mixed titles or specific titles) of any title carried in the ACS website bookstore. Simply collect the funds at your monthly meeting and place your group order by calling the ACS.

Consult and copy. Use the roster of local societies listed on the ACS webpage. Click the links to blog sites and Facebook pages for other local Chesterton Societies. Finding out what other groups are reading may provide some ideas.

In conclusion, I'd like to note that re-reading any of the classic works of G.K. Chesterton is a completely legitimate and sometimes necessary endeavor. It has been pointed out that the repeat reading of books like *Orthodoxy* is often like reading a book you've never read before, that is, until you find a familiar line or passage and it feels like you've just rediscovered an old friend. No matter what Chesterton you decide to read, good things will follow.

Update on the Chesterton Digital Library

by the Chesterton Digital Library Committee

The Chesterton Digital Library is gradually becoming a reality. Over the past twenty years, the American Chesterton Society and others have been documenting, collecting and digitizing G.K. Chesterton's works. We are now on the verge of making this vast collection available to the public.

This effort started in the early 1990s when personal computers were becoming ubiquitous and everything was beginning to be digitized. Peter Floriani, Ph.D., began converting Chesterton's books into a digital format, and electronically coding them for future searches. He made great progress and called the collection AMBER. The word amber comes from the Greek word for electricity. As Chesterton wrote in *The Common Man*:

> We have to go on using the Greek name of amber as the only name of electricity because we have no notion what is the real name or nature of electricity.

For many years, the AMBER collection existed only on the computers of a few individuals. It was also limited in scope since it included only several hundred of Chesterton's more well-known works: books, short stories, poems, and essays.

Meanwhile, Geir Hasnes, a Norwegian scholar, was meticulously compiling a bibliography of all Chesterton's works—including the thousands of essays that Chesterton wrote for periodicals in England, the United States, and other countries around the world. Hasnes continues to work on this whenever he has time.

On another front, Dale Ahlquist, President of the American Chesterton Society, was in contact with people around the globe, who would send him newly discovered essays, articles, and other works by and about Chesterton. Whenever he was giving a talk, Ahlquist would say that Chesterton had written about 3,000 essays, because that was how many he knew of then. Today, he has increased the number to about 4,000, and still more are being discovered and collected each year.

Floriani's early efforts to convert Chesterton's works into a digital format has been resumed by volunteers—local college students, ACS summer interns, and other ACS members and Chesterton fans—laboriously typing them one work at a time. Because some of Chesterton's more popular works were already in AMBER, and some works are now in the public domain and can be found on sites such as Project Gutenberg, the current AMBER work has concentrated on Chesterton's more obscure essays and other articles. Many of these smaller works are just as valuable, just as readable, and just as important as his more well-known works.

The American Chesterton Society wanted this collection to be more widely available for researchers, students, or anyone looking for what Chesterton had to say on any subject. The collection needed a broader vision and a permanent home as well as the means for the public to search it—or it couldn't provide a service to the world. Project Gutenberg is a valuable resource, but not cohesive. Searching it for subjects or keywords within multiple documents is not possible.

In early 2013, John Holland, a recently-retired man from Minneapolis, heard Ahlquist give a talk at his home parish, and he immediately knew he wanted to help the American Chesterton Society in some capacity. He volunteered to be the project manager and began to plan for completing the AMBER collection and search project.

Hasnes graciously shared his emerging bibliography with the ACS, which allowed Holland to create a spreadsheet of Chesterton's works, based on the efforts of Floriani, Ahlquist and Hasnes. The spreadsheet is essentially a conversion of the bibliography into list form, and it will guide the team as they assemble digital copies of all the works they hope to include.

Holland also assembled a small working committee to help him organize and structure the digital library. This advisory panel has a library scientist, a graduate student programmer/engineer, and an expert Chestertonian, autho,r and social media person. The widely dispersed group meets monthly online to discuss the various issues involved in creating a digital online library.

One of the committee's first tasks was to rename the project to something that would provide a more clear indication of its purpose and content, so in early 2014 the AMBER project officially became the Chesterton Digital Library. The committee has also discussed creating a searchable database—searchable by topic, genre, key words, and other parameters. Another issue involves where to house the database and search portal on a web site. Ideally this will result in partnering with a Catholic university or college.

We are getting closer to the day we have copies of everything that Chesterton wrote—which coincidently will also be required to support his cause for sainthood—and can make them all widely accessible via the internet.

The intent of this article is to inform you, the members of the American Chesterton Society, of the progress the organization is making toward the opening of the Chesterton Digital Library. Right now the work is being done on a volunteer basis, but it will soon require funding for software, server access, web site hosting, and potential consulting fees. In future articles we will be offering volunteer opportunities to help with this exciting and much-needed effort—so stay tuned!

ALL IS GRIST

Ode to Gratitude

by Joe Campbell

This year, I received one of the best birthday presents ever. A granddaughter sent me a quotation from G.K. Chesterton.

It said, in part, "The test of all happiness is gratitude.... Children are grateful when Santa Claus puts in their stockings gifts of toys or sweets. Could I not be grateful to Santa Claus when he put in my stockings the gift of two miraculous legs? We thank people for the birthday present of cigars and slippers. Can I thank no one for the birthday present of birth?"

The quotation brightened an already bright day. It also sharpened a somewhat dull mind. It made me realize that, although I've often thanked God for my birth, I've never thanked him for my legs. Oh, when I slipped on ice or stumbled on stairs, I thanked him for saving them. I never thanked him for having them.

All these years, I'm embarrassed to say, I've taken my legs for granted and never thought to thank the grantor. I'm especially embarrassed because I use my legs, both of them, more than most other people I know use theirs. As I don't drive, getting to and from work on foot for nearly forty years was equivalent to walking around the world twice. What's more, in retirement I continue to depend largely on my legs to get around, though not, I should hasten to add, around the world.

I'm also embarrassed because the Chesterton quotation is not new to me. I first read it, if I remember correctly, while going to university, also on foot. Although it amused and impressed me, I didn't think to apply it to the gift of my own miraculous legs. I can't explain my lengthy ingratitude. I can only resolve to make amends for it.

It's not just mobility that I'm thankful for. It's also the perks of walking on two legs rather than riding on four wheels. I'm thinking of the fragrance of spring flowers and new-mown grass, the music of birds singing and children playing, the warm sun, cool winds, fresh rain, tingling frost, and crunching snow, not to mention encounters with others walking or working outside.

When the weather fails me, walking is the ideal activity for thinking through problems (domestic or otherwise) or, if I'm problem-free, for creating an alternate universe of daydreams and fantasies.

Distracted walking is safer than distracted driving. Although I've sometimes walked without due care and attention, I've never been charged for it. The same goes for walking while impaired. I've had my share of single pedestrian accidents, bumping into a tree or a fence, or tripping on uneven concrete, but none proved injurious. My rare collisions with other pedestrians have been similarly uneventful, and I've yet to witness a single case of sidewalk rage.

Although I don't enjoy meeting walkers glued to digital music players or transfixed by mobile phones, I suspect these media addicts harm themselves more than they do me. I guess my chief concern while walking is unruly drivers and dogs. I've managed to avoid both, so far.

Of course, I don't go to extremes. Although I often walk while tired, I refuse to walk in my sleep. I admit, however, that in my sleep I often dream about walking.

They say that walking contributes to health, fitness, and an extended life span. I'm inclined to agree. At five foot six and shrinking, I don't have long legs. Nevertheless, as an octogenarian, I already have longevity.

For anyone who is unilingually metric, I should explain that I don't have five feet. Because I'm grateful for two miraculous legs, it doesn't follow that I would welcome three more. I'm not greedy. Besides, they might add to my carbon footprint, which activists with carbon wheel prints continually harass me about.

If legs are a miracle, walking is a paradox. To get from one place to another without falling, we fall forward between strides. What saves the paradox from becoming a contradiction is that we usually don't fall down.

Standing on two legs is as intriguing as walking on them. I don't know how we do it. The most sophisticated bar stool can't stand on two legs. The least sophisticated bar fly does it without thinking. I know that it has to do with balance. I'm not sure I know what balance has to do with.

Seeing a passel of people each standing on two legs is as fascinating as seeing a flock of flamingos each standing on one. As beneficiaries of such amazing architecture, I can't imagine our not being grateful to the architect.

BALLAD OF GILBERT

A Babe Was Born

by G.K. Chesterton

A babe was born in Bethlehem
—A thousand such are born:
But with its starlike halo broke
The dark world's golden morn.
O selfish rulers of the home,
Mothers and sire we see,
The child may come again on earth
—Say, know ye which is he?

A craftsman toiled in Nazareth
—A thousand such have toiled;
But from his strokes the world church rose,
Earth's giant sins assoiled.
Ho, graspers, owners, taskmasters,
The scourge yet in your hands,
He that has worked my work again
—Say, know ye where he stands?

A captive died on Calvary
—A thousand such have died:
But his lost cry redeemed the world,
The voice of one that cried.
You, judges, princes, governors,
Whose myriads bow the knee,
The sword is yours, the blood is yours
—Say, know ye which was he?

The Four Vocations

by Catherine Simmerer

Once upon a time, not very long ago, in war-torn England, there lived a family of two boys and two girls, whose father had left them and whose mother could not care sufficiently for them. The eldest son worked hard to lead the family, with mixed success; the eldest daughter turned and embraced modernism, with all its pomp and works; the youngest son hated his family, indulged in gluttony, but finally returned to the truth; the youngest daughter, far-seeing and thoughtful, walked the straight and narrow path without a qualm, indicating peace and stability to her older siblings when they would care to look.

We all know the story well, but is it C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, or Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*?

I was struck by the similarity as I listened to Jeremy Irons narrate Waugh's masterpiece. Audibly revisiting Brideshead brought the characters to life in a new light. The Austenian Lady Marchmain, the Dickensian Mr. Smallweed ('Scuse me, Samgrass. Or was it Wormtongue?), the Dantesque Charles Ryder spun and shifted in a kaleidoscope of characters, with the four Flytes standing dead center. Who were they? What were they? Did Waugh intend them to represent something in particular? The obvious symbolic foursomes of the Evangelists and the temperaments I could discard immediately. The Four Loves? Trying to force the symbolism weighed it down, but perhaps I was on the right track. With one quick leap from loves to lions, the Flytes came face to face with the Pevensies.

Peter Pevensie, solemn and stern, saw his responsibility and sobriety reflected in "Bridey" Flyte, a little worse for the wear, perhaps, but painfully conscious of the nobility and dignity expected of him and of his family.

Susan Pevensie eyed Julia Flyte with distrust, and perhaps with disbelief. Is this what she was to become, she, Queen of Narnia, a fast, flirtatious Bright Young Thing turned agnostic adulteress?

Edmund Pevensie stared at Sebastian Flyte, broken and bitter; he sympathized, for he too had fallen prey to greed and gluttony, but surely this was not the end? Surely life held more promise than this?

Lucy Pevensie alone could face Cordelia Flyte with friendship. They, above all, understood. In sharing their sorrows, their losses, their pains, they achieved that higher sympathy of mutual understanding and compassion.

To suggest that Lewis wrote the Pevensies as an allegory to the Flytes, or that Waugh wrote the Flytes as a grown-up representation of the Pevensies, would be to achieve the height of naïveté and presumption. However, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was published only five years after *Brideshead Revisited* (1950 and 1945 respectively), and the atmosphere at the time, the influences of modernism and war, not to mention the positive influences of faith and Church and fellow Christian writers, may well have induced Lewis and Waugh to produce a similar cast of characters, with similar intentions.

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Peter Pevensie's obvious analogy to St. Peter as head of both his family and the Church shows Bridey in an even poorer light than that of only his siblings. Peter is what Bridey ought to be, and perhaps was, before the efforts of trying to suppress Sebastian's drinking and Julia's flirting became too paternal a job for him. A missed vocation makes for a miserable life, and whether Bridey actually missed his vocation to the priesthood as he thought, or Mrs. Muspratt merely took her sweet time in crossing his path, Waugh does not explain; perhaps he does not know.

Peter and Bridey struggle to hold the family together in the conspicuous absence of Father; having grown up too quickly for their good, they must balance brotherly camaraderie with paternal superiority. Edmund and Sebastian balk at this tyranny, perceived or real; to hold responsibility without possessing the authority necessary to carry it through, Peter and Bridey put distance between themselves and their younger brothers, causing rifts that would have been unthinkable, had Father held his place. Peter is able to look to Susan for support in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, but by *The Last Battle* that pillar too had gone, and although his statement of her absence is brief, we can only imagine how keenly Peter must have felt this desertion and betrayal. Bridey coolly points out Julia's affair, with as little hatred as tact; he seems to take it in a stride, having accepted the course of life and given up will of vocation for himself or conversion for his sister. Lucy and Cordelia console and counsel their older brothers as best they can, usually with the circumspection of one noticing a lack of wine at a marriage feast.

Susan supports Peter at first in their endeavors; Julia and Bridey leave each other severely alone. At the beginning of *Brideshead Revisited*, Julia has already found what Susan does not find until Narnia's *Last Battle*: "nylons and lipstick and invitations." As a child, I found Susan's exclusion from *The Last Battle* the hardest blow of all; how could a Queen of Narnia no longer be? But the parallel of Susan and Julia gave me hope, and in the light of Julia (who strays much further afield than just lipstick), who knows how near conversion may be for Susan? Susan and Julia may not have had religious vocations; they may have had no further vocation than proving God's mercy and the power of grace. Julia's conversion and the sacrifice of her life as a complete oblation may never have occurred had she not fallen previously so far from grace. *O felix culpa*! For God brings good out of evil, and so Aslan may well bring Susan out of the Shadowlands once again.

Sebastian and Julia are alike enough to pass for twins, while Edmund and Susan hardly exchange words between themselves. Sebastian drowns his sorrows and

his senses in defiance to his brother and in mourning his lost childhood. In the beginning, Edmund rebelled likewise, though against both brother and childhood; he did not want to have anything to do with these superstitious games of his siblings, unlike Sebastian, who loved his faith (in his moments of faith) as something at least beautiful and aesthetic. Edmund breaks the White Witch's spell long before Sebastian finds his way to the monastery, and still the drunkenness is never wholly cured. Both, however, are searchers, longing for Something Else, never satisfied with the limits of this world. Sebastian's insistent motto of "*contra mundum*" is never fulfilled until it becomes "*pro Ecclesia contra mundum*."

Lucy and Cordelia, ignored or overlooked by all, prove themselves the comfort and wisdom of all. If it is Susan and Julia's purpose to be recipients of God's redemptive mercy, Lucy and Cordelia are recipients of God's affection as good and faithful servants. They falter but never fall; in their innocence, they see life as God meant it to be seen, and they try their best to demonstrate this reality to others. Their wisdom derives from their innocence; it is in their momentary imperfections that they lose touch with truth. When Lucy follows her siblings instead of Aslan in the beginning of *Prince Caspian*, and when Cordelia gives Sebastian money even though she knows he will only drink, both actions lead to bad consequences, although both girls acted out of compassion for their fellow men.

Is the question of the Flytes and the Pevensies a vocational one? Do their similarities indicate their vocational purposes? Like Bridey, was High King Peter meant to be also a High Priest? Julia perhaps missed her vocation of marriage to Charles because of her (and his) previous indiscretions; was Susan likewise called to marriage? Would Edmund have joined a monastery as Sebastian (more or less) did? And what of Cordelia and Lucy: they had been open to whatever life might send their way, and yet neither married nor entered a convent. Did they have vocations to the single life? I might ask questions all day long without coming to a conclusion, or without remembering these are fictional characters whose lives are meant as suggestions of reality and not authentic models thereof. And yet, they pose authentic problems of reality, provoking us to deeper thought and consideration of our lives and our decisions in comparison with these lifelike models. Perhaps this was all Lewis and Waugh intended; if so, these characters have certainly fulfilled their vocations.

A Defense of Celebrating Christmas Early

by Christopher Lansdown

Most mistakes made by the human race are an attempt to fix some other mistake. Celebrating Christmas during Advent (and ordinary time, and one increasingly fears, Easter) is undoubtedly a mistake, but like most mistakes, to fix it we must find out what it is balancing. And when we ask ourselves what is being balanced, I think we will discover that on the other side of the scales from so great a holiday are several sins.

The first and most obvious reason for celebrating Christmas early is simply the extensive preparations which the secular celebration of Christmas has come to demand. That this preparation is a miserable experience scarcely needs defending. Indeed, when some months ago one of my atheist friends was complaining about all of the bother associated with Christmas, I suggested that the secular holiday should be moved to Black Friday, with the minor modification that people should buy presents for themselves instead of others. If nothing else, under this scheme people would not have to worry that their gifts will be unappreciated. It is a sufficient sign of the times that he thought this transformation unachievable, but said nothing about it being inadvisable.

Saint Nicholas, even when he is merely Santa Claus, still stands against Arianism. In the same manner that Arianism attempted to divorce the Son from the Father, modern culture tries to divorce happiness from goodness. This is not possible, and even bad Christmas songs remind us it isn't possible.

Whatever might reduce this stress, the stress still exists, and preparation would not, in itself, require the early celebration of Christmas. Women spend nine months preparing a child for birth, and do not ordinarily comfort themselves during that work by throwing the child birthday or graduation parties. When the connection between the difficulty of a job and the results of a job are well understood, it can be endured without aid. Where that connection is not apparent, unpleasant labor can still be undertaken as a penitential exercise. In the case of Christmas, however, modern culture has made it so unpleasant that nine people out of ten can't conceive of their sins being that bad. Lacking any concept of vicarious atonement, the solution, to keep a weary race pulling its plow, is to borrow the enjoyment of the holiday to get people through its preparation.

The second reason to celebrate Christmas early is our culture's slavery to the calendar. Once December 26th hits, some are simply tired of Christmas celebrations, but for many it's a yet lower idea: that one must always be up to date. It is acceptable to the chronological snobbery, by which people have flattered themselves for the last century and a half, to be in advance of the calendar but never

to be behind it, for the devil will take the hindmost. Christmas is too great to confine its celebration to a mere twenty-four hours, and the chronological snob can extend the celebration in only one direction that will keep him up to date.

The third reason is more subtle than the first two, but I think it is the most significant. Christmas, though it be no more than secular Christmas, vigorously opposes the general nihilism of our time. Even watered down, Christmas still has flavor. Saint Nicholas, even when he is merely Santa Claus, still stands against Arianism. In the same manner that Arianism attempted to divorce the Son from the Father, modern culture tries to divorce happiness from goodness. This is not possible, and even bad Christmas songs remind us it isn't possible. The most theologically suspect lyrics about Santa Claus spying on people, with unspecified and probably magical technology, connects good behavior with happiness. It is true that it often connects it in a mercenary way, but it nevertheless connects it in an unbreakable way. It is also true that the proponents of unconditional affirmation—an absurd attempt to ape the generous love of God—will complain that this is an awful message. And yet not a single one of them has made a Christmas movie in which a bully gets a present from Santa Claus as the bully finishes beating up a smaller child for his lunch money.

It is a theological point, but it is the Incarnation that makes this connection unbreakable. Arianism, which was a milder form of Gnosticism, held that spirit could not marry matter, or in more Thomistic terms, that the unconditional could not truly know the conditional. It is a recurring suspicion of the human race that the infinite can have no regard for the finite, and against all this, the Incarnation proves that omnipotence loves weakness. But God's love is a generous love. It turns weakness into strength. And that is why happiness cannot be separated from goodness: they have the same source. Gnosticism claimed that you could have happiness apart from goodness because the material world and the spiritual world had different fathers. Arianism had God adopt the material world; the Incarnation proved its true parentage. It was, after a fashion, the first paternity test. The modern world denies this paternity, since it denies God, but every winter Santa Claus declares that the goodness of children, no matter how unenlightened or materialistic, is lovable.

These three reasons, between them, compel our culture to celebrate Christmas early. Until we explain to people why they prepare, that the calendar is a good servant but a poor master, and that God loves them and not merely the idea of them, we shall have Christmas during Advent. We can take comfort that at least it's not Advent during Christmas.

Daily Ideals

✦ The best guarantee for getting a thing is to want it seriously and passionately. If we have not got an ideal commonwealth the reason is a very simple one, which seemed to have escaped many philosophers: It is because we do not want an ideal commonwealth. (*Daily News,* Aug. 1, 1902)

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

✦ If anything could possibly alter the balance of physical force it would be the spiritual ideals. (*Daily News,* Jan. 13, 1906)

✦ Most Christians fail to fulfill the Christian ideal. This bitter and bracing fact cannot be too much insisted upon in this and every other moral question. But, perhaps, it might be suggested that this failure is not so much the failure of Christians in connection with the Christian ideal as the failure of any men in connection with any ideal. That Christians are not always Christian is obvious; neither are Liberals always liberal, nor Socialists always social, nor Humanitarians always kind, nor Rationalists always rational, nor are gentlemen always gentle, nor do working men always work. If people are especially horrified at the failure of Christian practice it must be an indirect compliment to the Christian creed. (*Daily News,* Feb. 13, 1906)

✦ Human nature fights against the ideal of democracy as much as against the ideal of chastity. Human equality, like Christianity, is a high and difficult truth. (*Daily News,* Feb. 24, 1906)

✦ So long as there is constancy in ideals, there can be progress towards those ideals. The moment there is change in those ideals, the progress, already difficult, becomes impossible. If there is progress in ideals, there cannot be progress in anything else. (*Daily News,* Sept. 15, 1906)

✦ No man can possibly be too idealistic. (*Daily News,* July 27, 1907)

✦ A Socialist will say to you, "I don't want to know whether you condescend to love humanity, or whether in your own opinion you have lofty ideals; I want to know if you agree with the State taking all the means of production." (*Daily News,* June 26, 1909)

✦ A religion should not only be instinctively absorbent of whatever is consonant with its ideal; it should also be instinctively resistant to anything that is against that ideal. Men look to a faith to purge them of all native poisons, as well as to develop all native functions and pleasures. A church should have drainage as well as ventilation. It should drive bad smell out as well as let good smells in; it should not only cast out devils, but keep them out. (*Daily News,* March 19, 1910)

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

The Three Rings

James G. Bruen Jr.

The small dinner party at Matt Hart's Capitol Hill town home consisted of two lawyers—Hart and John Carr, who had been Hart's law school student years before—and Father Paul Petersen, a Catholic priest who had been the professor's friend since childhood. After dinner, over drinks, Matt Hart encouraged Carr to relate the curious circumstances surrounding missing family jewelry, saying, "I've heard this before, Paul, so I'll be quiet, but I thought maybe you might have some insight."

"My dad, Gideon, died at eighty-seven, five years ago in my childhood home on Brooksdale Road in Brighton, Massachusetts, but I don't remember brooks or a dale, only that the street was on a hill near the railroad tracks," began Carr. "It's near the Chahles, so there probably were brooks, but any dale was long gone. There was an asphalt playground at the public school on the next block. You had to climb a chain link fence to get in. A cawnah store at the foot of the hill sold baseball cards. We waited for them every spring. We played stickball in the street. Lots of good memories."

"You obviously enjoyed your childhood," said Fr. Petersen.

"All but the Catholicism," said Carr trying unsuccessfully to suppress a sneer. "Nuns, nuns, and more nuns. Fatima, Fatima, Fatima all the time. Rosary aftah rosary aftah rosary. I spent so much time on my knees I'm surprised I didn't need a knee replacement before I turned twelve. I couldn't wait to escape."

"Oh, my," said the priest.

"The old three-story wooden homes on Brooksdale are partitioned into rooms for off campus housing for BC students now," said Carr. "There's no neighborhood anymoah. My dad was one of the few holdouts. I wish I or one of my brothers or sisters could have lived there with him, but we're all spread out because of our jobs. You know how it is. He lived alone in that big house after my mom's death for three years before he died. Of course we sold it after his death. You know how it is. We packed some of his stuff, gave some to Goodwill, and tossed the rest. It's student housing now."

"They had a long life together," observed the priest.

"And a good one it was," replied Carr. "The only thing that troubled them was that most of their children had left the Church."

"Well—" began the priest.

"Anyway, here's the conundrum. I've tried this with most of the lawyers in my firm and with many othahs in the years since he died. No one has a clue what happened."

"Go on," said the priest.

"Dad died in a second floor bedroom at the front of the house overlooking Brooksdale. In the three days befoah his death he was completely bedridden and his only visitors were my sister Marie, a hospice nurse, and me. He wasn't heavily medicated, but he could hardly move. Marie and I took turns caring for him. One of us was with him whenever he wasn't sleeping, and we put a cot outside his door so we could rest when we needed to. It was exhausting. Since Mom died, Dad had worn her diamond engagement ring and her wedding band on his left pinkie. When he died they were nowhere to be found. His wedding ring was missing too."

"Do you think they were stolen?" asked Fr. Petersen. "Perhaps by the nurse or a cleaning lady?"

"Marie remembers seeing the rings on his fingers after the nurse's last visit, well after we canceled the cleaning service. Sometimes rings are removed from the dying's fingers, but he refused to surrender those, and we humored him," replied Carr.

"My sister would have no reason to take them," he continued; "they were to be hers when he died. And they weren't insured, so there's no question of her taking them and then filing a false insurance claim."

"Are you sure he had no other visitors, not even a priest?" asked the priest.

"He asked for a priest, so we called one," said Carr. "Why, do you think he took them?"

"Took them? Heavens, no. I was concerned your father may not have received the Last Rites."

"Well, Marie's sure he still had the rings after the priest left. Besides, I spoke with him after Dad died. He said he had no need of a diamond since he had found an expensive pearl."

"If this were a fictional mystery story—"

"I know," laughed Carr, "my father would have taken the rings off, put them on the sill of an open window, and they would have been knocked out the window, falling into a gutter or the bushes below, or a bird would have landed and taken them from the sill."

WHODUNNIT THEOLOGY

Father Brown on melting into a Buddhistic unity

"Good and evil go round in a wheel that is one thing and not many. Do you not realize in your heart, do you not believe behind all your beliefs, that there is but one reality and we are its shadows; and that all things are but aspects of one thing: a centre where men melt into Man and Man into God?"

"No,' said Father Brown."

"That bird would have needed to make three trips!" laughed the priest.

"I can assure you the window was closed and latched at all times so Dad wouldn't get a draft," said Carr, still laughing.

"I assume you searched the entire room?" said the priest. "Is there nothing else you can tell me?"

"As the saying goes, we searched it with a fine tooth comb—every nook and cranny. We looked especially for a mousetrap."

"A mousetrap?"

"Dad's last words were: 'The rings are in the mousetrap.' Not exactly what you'd expect from a spiritual man, is it? We couldn't find a mousetrap anywhere in his bedroom."

John Carr took a smartphone from a pocket in his sport coat. "This is a picture of my dad," he said, giving the phone to the priest, "taken a few years before his death."

"A handsome Boston Irishman," said the priest, returning the phone. "Gifted with the Irish wit, I'm sure. He looks like he aged well."

"He was quite vigahrous well into his eighties," replied Carr. "We were surprised when he fell."

"Gideon fell?" laughed Fr. Petersen.

"I don't see any humor in that," sniffed John Carr; "he fell down an entiah flight of stairs. The injuries led to his death."

"Did you put his corpse in three coffins?" continued the priest laughing uproariously.

Carr looked at him incredulously. "Is that some kind of joke?" asked John Carr. "This is surreal. The Mousetrap! I feel like I'm in an Agatha Christie play."

"You're not in a play," chortled Fr. Petersen. "This mousetrap is more of a locked room or puzzle mystery than a play."

"And an insoluble mystery, too," sighed Carr.

"All locked rooms and puzzles must seem insoluble or they wouldn't work as mystery stories," said Fr. Petersen, "but the author always has a solution in mind. That solution can be quite convoluted. It isn't often as obvious as in this case."

"Obvious?" sputtered Carr.

"Obvious," repeated the priest. "Do you have a photo of your father's bedroom on your phone, John?"

"I do," replied Carr. He located the image and gave the phone to the priest, telling him to swipe his finger from right to left across the screen to see more images of the room.

Fr. Petersen looked briefly at several photos. "I thought so," he said.

"*Muscipula Diaboli*," continued Fr. Petersen. "John, the mousetrap was your father's final attempt to get you to reach out to Jesus on the cross."

"What?"

"Look at this photo," the priest said, handing the phone back to Carr. "Do you see the crucifix on the wall above the head of your father's bed? I'm certain it's a Last Rites Crucifix—a compartment in the rear slides open. It usually contains candles, cloth, holy water, maybe oil, for use when a priest makes a sick call."

"So what?"

"Saint Augustine called the cross 'the devil's mousetrap'—the bait that caught the devil was the Lord's death. There's an altar piece, a fifteenth-century triptych, in the Cloisters in upper Manhattan that depicts St. Joseph crafting a mousetrap for the devil. John, when your father said the rings were in the mousetrap, he was telling you that you'd find them inside the compartment on the back of that crucifix. In his condition, he must have made a tremendous effort to get the crucifix down, take the rings off his fingers and put them inside it, and replace it on the wall. He probably feigned sleep, knowing that you and your sister would leave his room, thus giving him the opportunity to put the rings in the crucifix."

"I wonder if we still have that cross," said John Carr. "I'll look. Maybe it's in one of those boxes we packed. We've still got them someplace."

The Good Fight Continues

Foyle's War (2002–)
Created by Anthony Horowitz

Reviewed by Chris Chan

Many brilliant television shows in recent years star antiheroes, and series starring a thoroughly decent man are increasingly rare. There is, however, one excellent series featuring a good man in a naughty world—*Foyle's War*. This British series is officially in its eighth season (there may be some confusion because two short series were combined in America, meaning that the U.S. has only seven series, and the DVD set is titled "Set 7"), and though the world it depicts has changed, the moral issues at the heart of the show remain and are more powerful than ever.

Foyle's War is the story of Christopher Foyle (Michael Kitchen, in an outstanding, understated performance), a dedicated police officer who keeps the peace on the home front. With the help of his assistant and chauffeur, Samantha (a delightful Honeysuckle Weeks), Foyle investigates numerous war-related crimes. Two series before the present one, the war ends, and the previous series is set in the immediate postwar era. The show has been cancelled multiple times, but you can't keep a great series down, and *Foyle's War* has been revived again and again. Now, *Foyle's War* enters the Cold War as Foyle is recruited by MI5 to hunt Soviet spies.

There are three episodes in the most recent season. "The Eternity Ring" shows Foyle unwillingly recruited to identify Soviet traitors, with Sam wrongly suspected of leaking secrets connected to the nuclear bomb. "The Cage" exposes the British abuse of prisoners, as Russian defectors are murdered. Finally, "Sunflower" shows Foyle guarding a former Nazi official turned intelligence asset, as a long-hidden war crime is unearthed. Throughout the series, Samantha helps her new husband (Daniel Weyman—the role was recast from the previous series due to the earlier actor's

unavailability) as he launches his political career.

Foyle's War has always excelled as a historical drama, but this series shows a slight decline in crime detection in favor of the rather different process of spy craft. The world of espionage is very different from that of a homicide detective. Over the course of the series' run, people from all walks of life have asked Foyle to compromise his moral standards. One killer insisted he was just too important to the war effort to be arrested, in another case Foyle was prevented by the government from making an arrest because of the culprit's political connections, and in another case Foyle resigned when his superiors stonewalled his investigation, preaching the morality of expediency. Foyle has always managed to maintain an unshakeable grasp on his integrity, even when the government prefers to do what is easy or profitable, rather than what is right.

By this point, viewers do not need to doubt that Foyle will always follow his conscience and pursue the truth, but a larger question looms in the background—what would happen to England without men like Foyle? During the war, the moral lines were clearly drawn—the Allies were the good guys defending themselves from the evil Nazis. In the postwar era, the Soviet Union is clearly Britain's enemy, but the techniques the UK uses to protect itself increasingly seem morally ambiguous, even evil, as MI5 flat-out lies to its closest foreign allies, prisoners are tortured for information, innocent people are imprisoned and kept hidden so officials can save face, and a Labour Party official cheats and steals from a citizen because he believes he's acting in the "country's best interests." Throughout these three episodes, characters struggle with rationing, live in cramped, squalid housing, and often wonder "if we really won the war." The underlying implication is that if the British government continues along the path of deception and moral illiteracy, the end result is a corrupt government disturbingly similar to that of the Nazis and Communists.

The one disappointing aspect of this series is the fact that Anthony Howell has not returned as Paul Milner, Foyle's investigative assistant. However, since Milner was promoted a few episodes earlier, and is stationed far from London, where the most recent series is set, it makes sense that his character is absent, although it might have been nice if he could have made some sort of appearance or been referenced.

Though the most recent series aired on PBS in the United States in the fall of 2013, there are many good reasons for viewing the DVDs. PBS has adopted a nasty habit of cutting these episodes to fit an approximately eighty-five-minute run time. Since each unedited episode clocks in at over ninety minutes, it seems that the annoying practice of cutting several minutes from each episode will continue. Furthermore, on the DVDs, each episode is prefaced with an interesting five-minute introduction by the series' creator, Anthony Horowitz. In each introduction, Horowitz describes the actual historical events that inspired the plots of each episode, for the major events of every episode are fact-based. Additionally, in a departure from previous DVD sets, there are several lengthy behind-the-scenes documentaries about the making of each episode.

The final moments of this series leave Foyle's future in doubt, but with sufficient fan and critical support, there is a fair chance that *Foyle's War* my continue. For the sake of everybody who loves mysteries, historical dramas, and quality television, one can only hope that Foyle and Sam return for another round of investigations.

For more information, see http://www.acornmedia.com/.

The Father Brown Casebook

By Steve Miller

The God of the Gongs

Father Brown and Flambeau stroll on an Essex beach by the resort of Seawood. Falling through a hole, the priest finds a body.

The M**ystery.** Who is the murderer, and is Father Brown correct in fearing more victims?

Subplot. Is it wiser to murder in private or in a distracted crowd?

Other Characters. A man with a glass eye claiming to be the proprietor of a local hotel; his imperious black cook who may also be a prizefighter; Lord Pooley, master of Seawood, who seeks to enliven the off-season with Sicilian singers and prize fights; two ice cream men falsely accused of murder in the Sutton Mystery; an Irish policeman who provided details of the crime; three policemen killed and one wounded by an escaping assassin; the many suspects inspected by the police; and black-faced minstrels singing on the sands.

Location. A bandstand and hotel on the Seawood beach in Essex, and the town's main square where a prizefight is scheduled.

Publishing History. "The God of the Gongs" was first published in the September, 1914, issue of *Pall Mall.* In October, 1914, it appeared with eleven other Father Brown stories in *The Wisdom of Father Brown.*

Notable Allusions. (1) Father Brown finds a realm of fantasy in a dilapidated off-season resort. Jumping on a faux Japanese bandstand, he locates a body. A conversation with a glass-eyed innkeeper turns to gunfire, with Flambeau imitating a scene from *The Aeneid* by packing Father Brown on his back as Aeneas carried his father Anchises from the fall of Troy. The priest is prepared for the adventure. He bought a book on voodoo describing the eerie god of the gongs. He observes the exotic rite has been adapted

to the needs of a league of mixed-race assassins. Could Sherlock Holmes get away with this? (2) The stereotypes of the story date it to the early twentieth century rather than the early twenty-first century. Questions might be raised now about a main character named Nigger Ned with apish teeth. Flambeau's remark on encountering a black's insolent and innocent attitude that he was not surprised by lynching is hardly saved by Father Brown's characterizing such actions as a work of hell. Calling an assassin leader a man with the brains of a European and the instincts of a cannibal seems closer to the prejudices of eugenics and racial classification than to Chesterton's well-known opposition to those evils. When interracial marriage has been constitutionally protected for more than fifty years, do references to half-breeds, octoroons, and mixed bloods seem jarring when such terms might describe our grandchildren? (3) From the point of view of success in murder, does solitary assassination at an apparently deserted spot, or striking in the close confines of a crowd hopefully distracted by a compelling event, work best? Father Brown seems to favor the latter since one can never be truly alone. Do the proliferation of security cameras, spy satellites, and drones make both problematic? (4) How fair is Father Brown to Flambeau and the reader? It does not appear he told Flambeau they were looking for a sophisticated gang of killers. Should the reader have learned of the book on voodoo earlier in the story? "The God of the Gongs" seems more like a fairy tale than a mystery story.

The Opening. "It was one of those chilly and empty afternoons in early winter, when the daylight is silver rather than gold and pewter rather than silver. If it was dreary in a hundred bleak offices and yawning drawing-rooms, it was drearier still along the edges of the flat Essex coast, where the monotony was the more inhuman for being broken at very long intervals by a lamp-post that looked less civilized than a tree, or a tree that looked more ugly than a lamp-post. A light fall of snow had half-melted into a few strips, also looking leaden rather than silver, when it had been fixed again by the seal of frost; no fresh snow had fallen, but a ribbon of the old snow ran along the very margin of the coast, so as to parallel the pale ribbon of the foam.

The line of the sea looked frozen in the very vividness of its violet-blue, like the vein of a frozen finger. For miles and miles, forward and back, there was no breathing soul, save two pedestrians, walking at a brisk pace, though one had much longer legs and took much longer strides than the other."

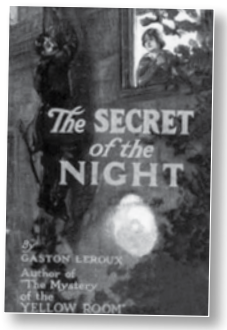
"I should enjoy nothing more than always writing detective stories, except always reading them." —G.K. CHESTERTON

Chesterton's Bloodthirsty Heirs

Brief Reviews of the Contemporary Mystery Scene by Steve Miller

Charles Warren Adams (aka Charles Felix). *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1862–3). Once upon a time there were no detective novels, and bookshelves were filled with philosophy, sermons, poetry, and other awful stuff. But in 1862 *Once A Week* magazine began an eight-part serial and changed all that. The story unfolds as an insurance investigator's report to aid his employer's efforts to renege on a life insurance policy. Any reader of *Double Indemnity* knows how hard it is to fool an insurance company. The document is a collection of letters, sworn statements, diary entries, a newspaper article, a torn scrap of paper, and his conclusions. These detail the plot of hypnotist Baron R** to claim an inheritance and collect life insurance by murdering three people. The principal victims are a pair of Corsican twins; i.e., identical twins so in sympathy that each feels the pain, and in this case the arsenic poisoning, of the other. One is a respectable Victorian lady; the other, kidnapped by gypsies as a baby, a tightrope walker, hypnotist's assistant, and later his unwilling spouse. But will even the most recalcitrant insurance executive accept this lurid tale? We never find out, but hopefully the more malleable reader is entertained. The novel was illustrated by George Du Maurier, future author of *Trilby,* about the hypnotist Svengali. The work predates Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, also involving hypnotism, by five years. So when our Christmas stockings are filled with works by James Patterson and his numerous collaborators, the last numerical saga by Janet Evanovich, or Sue Grafton's latest alphabetical entry, we know whom to thank.

Gaston LeRoux. *The Secret of the Night (Rouletabille and the Tsar)* (1913). Being a famous detective can get one killed. Tasked by the tsar with protecting General Trebassof from vengeful Nihilists, Joseph Rouletabille foils a poisoning and is nearly obliterated in a suicide bombing. The general's devoted wife, who carries the wounded officer up and down the stairs on her back, fervently believes in the detective but complicates his efforts by excessive zeal. The general's daughter may be in league with the assassins. Rouletabille fears his own rash conclusions may have led to the death of an innocent man. How is a cultured Frenchman to deal with a Russia that punishes by flogging and would kill guiltless suspects on suspicion of treason? Gaston LeRoux himself witnessed an imperial officer blow out the brains of a student for a lapse of patriotism. After a near lynching by the Nihilists, Rouletabille strikes a deal with them and the tsar in a final effort to save the general and keep his daughter from Siberia. Gaston LeRoux turned to writing after squandering a substantial inheritance. He is most famous for *The Phantom of the Opera* and the locked room classic, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room,* in which Rouletabille debuted.



Bringing Politics to the Shire

The Hobbit Party: The Vision of Freedom That Tolkien Got, and the West Forgot
by Jay Richards and Jonathan Witt
San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014
232 pages, hardcover, $21.95.

Reviewed by Chris Chan

In recent years, there have been a great deal of new studies about the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and the ideas in them, ranging from Joseph Pearce's superlative studies emphasizing the religious aspects of the author's worldview, to critiques of Tolkien's use of classical mythology. It seems unavoidable that some authors would attempt to impose a certain political perspective on Middle-earth. In the past, some authors have attempted to classify Tolkien's work as Marxist, a perspective that is easily refuted by the author's own writings. Currently, an attempt is being made to link Tolkien to general policies of small government. Jay Richards and Jonathan Witt use *The Hobbit Party* to argue that Tolkien's work is driven by a sharp criticism of government overreach. *The Hobbit Party* seeks to emphasize the political aspects of Tolkien's work, and the results are always interesting, even though some Chestertonians may find various points to argue with in the authors' analysis.

Richards and Witt make a lot of intriguing points, but some of their best work comes not when they are advancing their own arguments but when they are disproving other writers' perspectives. It doesn't hurt that many of their opponents' theses are completely ridiculous. Given the popularity of Tolkien amongst New Age fans and the absence of overt Christianity in his works, it is at least understandable that some people might assume that the *Lord of the Rings* was set in a pagan world, but Richards and Witt quote extensively from Tolkien's personal writings, emphasizing Tolkien's Catholicism and his reasons for excising religion from *The Lord of the Rings*. More ludicrous are authors cited in *The Hobbit Party* who content that Tolkien's work exhibits nothing more than moral relativism, with no distinction between "good" and "evil." After reading the comparative of analysis of Tolkien criticism, it seems like people writing about the messages in Tolkien tend to impose their own preferred worldviews and opinions upon the beloved author's work, and though Richards and Witt make some compelling arguments, one can't help getting the sense that *The Hobbit Party* may be suffering from a similar issue, where the critics see Tolkien as a reflection of their own mentalities.

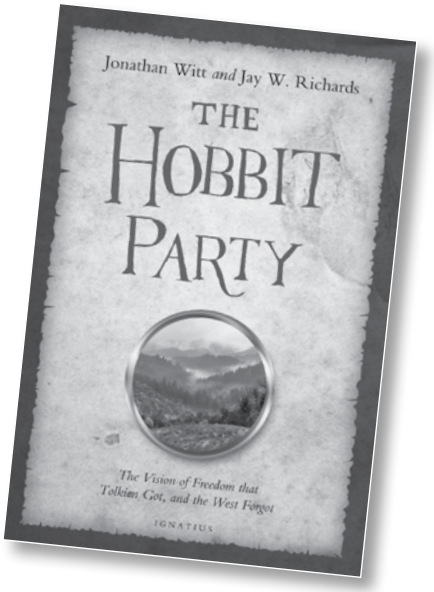
Richards and Witt spend a great deal of time attacking Distributism for being—in their opinion—unrealistic, based upon a misrepresentation of history, and ultimately self-defeating.

It should be made absolutely clear that no one should read *The Hobbit Party* without reading *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the short tale "Leaf By Niggle," all of which are summarized in the book. In any case, most of Richards and Witt's work is impossible to appreciate if the reader is not familiar with the original source material.

Perhaps the most eyebrow-raising aspect of Richards and Witt's critique of Tolkien—at least for Chesterton fans—is their blunt assertion that Tolkien's depiction of the Shire was not meant to be an endorsement of the Distributism of Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton; indeed, Richards and Witt spend a great deal of time attacking Distributism for being—in their opinion—unrealistic, based upon a misrepresentation of history, and ultimately self-defeating. Dale Ahlquist himself is mentioned and singled out for criticism, particularly his belief that people with large families ought to receive higher wages than those who do not. This review is not going to enter the debate on the pros and cons of Distributism, but it would be interesting to see critics with a more thorough understanding of Chestertonian economics read and review Richards and Witt's book, and provide a counterpoint to the arguments promoted in *The Hobbit Party*.

This is a book with passionate feeling behind it, and it is also an extensively researched and well-organized argument. At the same time, there is something particularly discomforting about using Tolkien to spearhead a political movement when the author himself disliked literature being used as allegory and was annoyed by novels that promoted a ham-fisted agenda. The authors are clearly annoyed by the abuses of bureaucracy that they have experienced in their personal lives, and they seem to take a great deal of pleasure in using Tolkien's narrative in bolster their own arguments.

The Hobbit Party has earned a place in the comparative criticism of Tolkien, but it is unlikely to be the final word on the politics and the economic worldview of the author.



Father Laughs Best

Catholic Dad
by Jake Frost
Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace, 2014
216 pages; paperback, $6.99 (also available in Kindle edition)

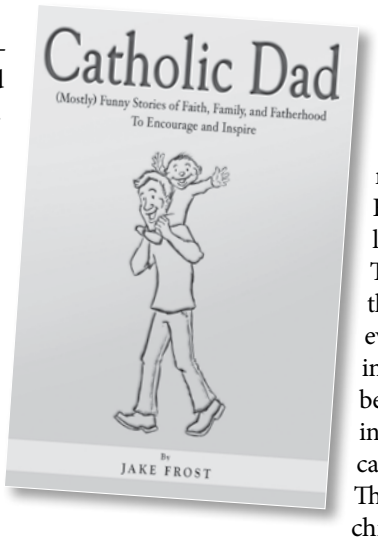
Review by David Paul Deavel

Sometimes people don't stand out at first meeting. It's no slur to say that they make no impression on you at all until you suddenly realize you're impressed. Others immediately draw themselves to your attention. Not by trying to. They just do. In this latter category is Jake Frost.

I met him six years ago at a fall social event for my wife's work. Detecting an Edenic accent, I quickly realized he was a native of northern Indiana like me. He too had landed in Minnesota because he had married a philosopher with (*mirabile dictu*!) a job. Unlike me, he was a lawyer who had decided to forsake his evil ways (or at least take time off from them) and spend his time watching his newborn daughter and writing. His big project, he said, was something he was calling "The Catholic Dad," a series of easy essays about family and faith from a perspective too often ignored, that of the father. Mommy bloggers were everywhere, and everybody knows the tradition, if not the name, of Saint Erma Bombeck. But if children are to be seen and not heard (don't I wish), fathers were doomed to be written about and not to write—at least about the family.

I went home charmed by my fellow Hoosier but annoyed. I'd been watching my kids quite a bit for six years at that point and really hadn't written much about it. Just who was this guy doing something I'd not even thought of?

As it turned out, it was impossible to resent Jake Frost for seeing writing material in the day-to-day encounters with diapers, board books, mispronounced words, and night-time walks with squalling children that I had so long considered as merely something to do for a lark, like my waiting tables at a Korean restaurant in college. Jake was kind, generous, and loved many of the same things I did: books, writing silly songs (I hope he puts his "Duns Scotus Anthem" on YouTube soon), and playing with his kids. We've spent many a morning at local parks cleaning sand out of the mouths of one-year-olds and discussing everything under the sun, but mostly telling stories.



Catholic Dad is a collection of essays, all anchored around family stories. While not every story is a howler, there are plenty that stick with the reader afterward. I can't get out of my head the image of his father's truck with its "special modifications" made according to "'the Holy Spirit Principle'—If you're going to touch something, don't just leave it like it was. Juice it up. Make it better and bolder." The truck, a "Dodge-Chevy-Ford... Frankenstein of the road," not only looked fearsome, but was equipped with an air conditioner that could create an interior sub-arctic landscape once the blower reached a metaphorical "eleven." He recounts one road trip with his parents in which his mother sat in the back and kept requesting the blower be turned higher and higher until Jack Frost was nipping not only at the toes but the very innards of his near-namesake, Jake. It was only when he turned around to see that mom was buried in a pile of yarn being slowly converted into a sweater that Jake understood what was going on.

It was impossible to resent Jake Frost for seeing writing material in the day-to-day encounters with diapers, board books, mispronounced words, and night-time walks with squalling children that I had so long considered as merely something to do for a lark.

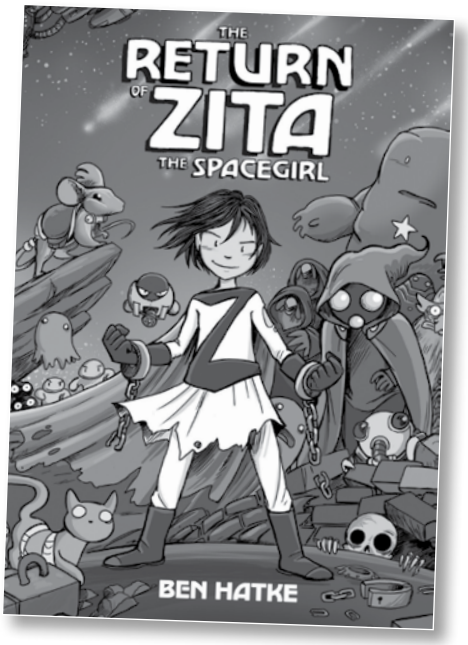
In and of itself, the story will stick with me as long as I take car trips. But what I hope remains is the lesson he takes from it: we're all in a different place even when we're a few feet away from each other. This demands a lot of adjustment. It reminds me of the line of St. Symeon the Theologian about how kindness is demanded since each person is engaged in a unique battle.

There are many other similar stories in the book. The funniest ones are, like the Frankentruck, largely from his childhood. This is due to the time that has passed since the events happened, allowing the factual matter to be adjusted and properly inflated so that the truths can be seen more clearly. The stories about his little children are less mythic and more on the cute side. But they too have their lessons which we all need to be reminded of, like the daughter who thanks God for a litany of inanimate objects and then, à la *Orthodoxy*, for the gift of being born.

The fifty-two essays don't deny family life's difficulties, dwelling often on the sleep that seems relegated to the years "B.C. (Before Children)." But Jake is determined to see life and learn from it, not whine or wish it were different. He introduces myriad quotations, many good, but sometimes in such abundance that they trip up his spritely storytelling. And each essay concludes with another quotation at the bottom of the page, not all of which seem to fit with the essay.

His own lines are usually apropos. In an essay about the life lessons of children's crafts, Frost sums things up from the get-go: "You've got to take whatever life throws at you. And if you're a parent, you probably have to wipe it up, too." Elsewhere he meditates on the mysterious strangers in our midst: "We really don't know who our children are, or what they may become." That reverent observation, combined with gratitude and humor, makes *Catholic Dad* a useful and welcome tool for building up Catholic dads—straight from a good one's mouth.

The Space Girl's Prison Riot



The Return of Zita the Spacegirl
Written and Illustrated by Ben Hatke
New York, N.Y.: First Second, 2014.
240 pages. Paperback, $12.99.

Reviewed by Chris Chan

Warning: minor spoilers. –Ed.

In the third entry to Ben Hatke's *Zita the Spacegirl* series, there is a distinct shift in tone and theme. In the first two books, a spirited and courageous little girl was transported across the galaxy to explore new worlds populated by imaginatively designed creatures. The two earlier books were largely journeys of exploration, as new worlds and imaginative adventures made for rip-roaring adventures, meant to entertain both children and the parents who read with them.

The Return of Zita the Spacegirl is different. Nearly all of the action takes place in a prison run by a mysterious evil figure, and the goal is not so much to expand the series' fictional universe as it is to bring Zita to her lowest point, so as to see her rise again and rediscover what it means to be a heroine. The previous book ended with a cliffhanger, and as the third volume opens, Zita is in jail on trumped-up charges, and the pluck and sparkle that made her so engaging are being rapidly drained from her.

While the first act of this story is uncharacteristically somber, readers should be reassured that the tone of the story brightens considerably as the plot progresses. Hatke raises a very perceptive point by pointing out that brute strength and power are not necessarily all that is needed to enslave people. In order to subjugate somebody, all that is necessary is to crush that person's spirit. Once someone's broken, it takes something special to heal that person. In Zita's case, one should never underestimate the power of a selfless act of heroism.

In terms of storyline, Return *is a jail-break tale.*

The look of this graphic novel is rather different from the two earlier entries. Given the darker themes of *Return*, the bright colors that made the first two books distinctive are largely absent from the prison scenes, and muted in much of the rest of the book. If the images are slightly bleaker, Hatke's artwork has grown more visionary, as many panels take a broader, more cinematic scope, and the use of breadth and depth becomes increasingly bold and epic.

In terms of storyline, *Return* is a jail-break tale. Many of the lovable characters who made the earlier books so engaging are largely off-stage until the climactic third of the book, although a long-absent old friend from the first book makes a very welcome return; one can only assume that the details about his own adventures will be explained in future installments. As for the new characters, the main villain of this volume is a standard purely evil bad guy, but the best new characters are Zita's cellmates, who provide some much-needed comic relief, along with a delightfully creative partnership between them as they seek mobility.

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

"Dull as ditch water." Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

Often rendered as "dull as dishwater," the original phrase was coined by Dickens in his last complete novel, Our Mutual Friend (1865) as Miss Wren reproaches her wayward son:

"He's enough to break his mother's heart, is this boy. I wish I had never brought him up. He'd be sharper than a serpent's tooth, if he wasn't as dull as ditch water. Look at him. There's a pretty object for a parent's eyes!"

G.K. Chesterton took exception to the phrase when he commented, in a 1935 BBC radio broadcast, that he had experienced...
[beg bq]

...the mere excitement of existence in places that would commonly be called as dull as ditch-water. And by the way, is ditchwater dull? Naturalists with microscopes have told me that it teems with quiet fun.

The phrase, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth (it is to have a thankless child)," is from Shakespeare's King Lear, Act I, Scene 4, in which the king has occasion to rebuke his daughter Goneril.

There are a lot of nice little touches that make the story sparkle. For example, Piper, the mischievous jack-of-all-trades who befriended Zita early in the series is back with at least one new magical device to defeat the bad guys. One brief little scene illustrates the importance of a really good costume on morale. Furthermore, there are actual skeleton keys, personal force fields, sentient rocks, and a gigantic creature called the Leviathan.

As the volume reaches its close, it seems like Zita's adventures are coming to an end, but just as it appears that Hatke is wrapping up his story as a trilogy, it is revealed, to the great relief of fans, that the excitement is just beginning. Hatke has only revealed a small fraction of his fictional universe, and readers ought to be excited to learn more.

The end of the book contains an extremely insightful and enjoyable epilogue explaining the backstory of the Zita character, along with how Hatke met his wife. It's an intriguing glimpse at how fantastical fiction can be inspired by real life.

While *Return* may be the most character-driven book in the series to date, it is probably not the best introduction to Hatke's magical universe. Newcomers are advised to read the first two books before moving on to *Return*. There's too much backstory, character details, and references to the previous books to start the series in the middle. Like many journeys, it's best to start at the beginning.

Powerful Silence

How Far is it to Bethlehem: The Plays and Poetry of Frances Chesterton
by Nancy Carpentier-Brown
Chesterton & Brown Publishing, 2012
382 pages, $19.95

Reviewed by Victoria Darkey

Sometimes the observations one person makes about another person are as much a revelation about the observer as they are about the one being observed. In his biography of William Cobbett, G.K. Chesterton describes Cobbett's wife as a "powerful silence," which could easily apply to Chesterton's own wife, Frances.

Before looking at what "powerful silence" might suggest about Frances Chesterton, there are some facets to the phrase worth considering. The words evoke a sense of a sacred presence. Contemplating the dignity of the human person, "powerful silence" could describe any unborn baby in the womb of his mother. But the words "powerful silence" are especially descriptive of Mary, the mother of Our Lord. In the biblical narrative, while her role in the incarnation and life of Jesus is undisputedly essential, she is a woman of infrequent (but significant words). When she speaks, she directs the attention to her son.

In the forward to Nancy Carpentier-Brown's book *How Far Is It to Bethlehem: The Plays and Poetry of Frances Chesterton*, Dale Ahlquist writes,"Frances Chesterton, always in the huge shadow of the famous writer who was her husband, has remained a mystery to most of us. But thanks to Nancy Brown's incredible research, here is Frances in her own words." In this collection of Frances' writing, we begin to hear the voice of the "powerful silence" in Gilbert Chesterton's life.

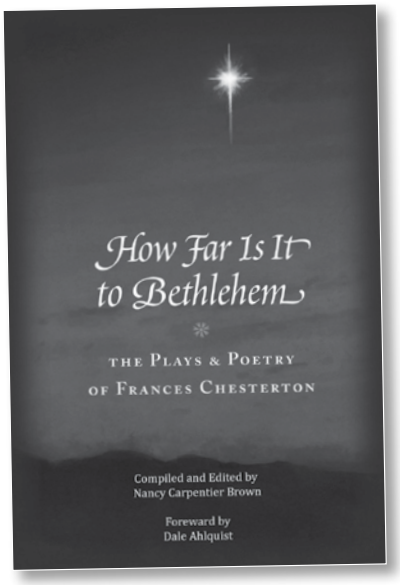
The first piece in the collection, an essay titled "The Open Road", was first published in 1900. Frances writes admiringly about Robert Louis Stevenson,

As she humbly draws back the curtain on the children, Frances un- veils her own deep understanding of childhood, and her profound devotion to the Nativity.

observing that he possessed "…that primary qualification of a teacher, the comprehension of the other point of view." She goes on to say, "In no strict sense can we say that he ever tried to teach anything; but the fact remains that his power of getting at the root of things made him…the true inspirer."

If she admired these qualities in Stevenson, it is no surprise that she loved Chesterton, to whom she was engaged at the time. As she comments on various themes in Stevenson's writing, Frances reveals her own love for children and the importance of childhood. She challenges her reader to have a sense of wonder at each present moment, while valuing a transcendent perspective. She appreciates Stevenson's openness to all of life and what he called "traveling deliberately through one's ages". It is significant to note her clarity of thought and her well-developed sensibilities. After reading this first piece of the collection, I realized that Frances brought a lot to the table when she met her future husband. I wonder if the Chesterton voice we hear in the volumes of Gilbert's writing is sometimes as much a duet as a solo. The essay leaves me hoping that somewhere there are more Frances Chesterton essays that someone could grace us with reprinting.

The next section is a collection of six plays written to be performed on Christmas Eve by the local children who enjoyed the Chestertons' friendship and hospitality. In her original preface to some



of the plays Frances wrote, "These little plays make no pretense to any historical or literary value. They merely serve as a text or background for the exercise of that ingenuity and love of pageantry and even rhetoric which is the common heritage of all children." Here, I partly disagree with Frances. Though they make no pretense, the "little plays" are far from lacking any literary or historical value. Ringing out with love for the Christ Child, they are delicately woven with references to the historical threads of traditional Christianity. As she humbly draws back the curtain on the children, Frances unveils her own deep understanding of childhood, and her profound devotion to the Nativity. These plays are suitable for any group, and since appearing in this collection of Frances Chesterton's work, some of them have been published individually and are available inexpensively on the Internet both in print and digital formats. This makes them an excellent choice for reading by grown-up children in local Chesterton Societies.

Placing the poetry selections after the essay and the plays, Brown serves up the literary equivalent of a lavish dessert, or a glass of fine port. Frances's poems sound with clarity, elegance, depth, and beauty. Her words paint vivid images of creation: of earth, sky, and sea, of colors, of cycles and seasons, of death and loss, and of love. These are the words of someone "traveling deliberately through one's ages." A Christmas theme runs throughout. Frances sees all children in the Christ Child, and sees the Christ Child in all children. When she intimately identifies with a Mother's love for the Baby in the Stable, she brings to light her great capacity for spiritual motherhood.

Some of the poems and plays are represented in fragments because, despite Nancy's tireless efforts, parts of them have yet to be found. Undoubtedly, collecting Frances's writing is a labor of love in progress. This most current compilation leaves me waiting for more with anticipation not unlike a spiritual pregnancy, a longing for a more complete revelation of a powerful silence, and asking the question, "How Far Is It to Bethlehem?"

The Father of Western Thought

Socrates: A Man for Our Times
by Paul Johnson
New York: Penguin Books, 2012
224 pages, $16 (paperback)

Reviewed by Clay Hoffman

Considered the father of philosophy, Socrates has few historical rivals of importance. He was born in Athens 2,500 years ago and the learned of every generation since then have desired to know him. Historian Paul Johnson's *Socrates: A Man For Our Times* provides an erudite and stylishly written view of this indispensable figure. Johnson succeeds at penetrating the essence of Socrates, a task made more difficult by the fact that the philosopher wrote very little.

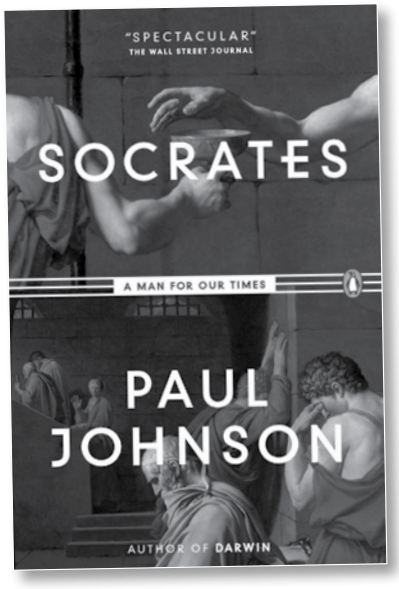
Much of what we know about him comes from his student, Plato. After Socrates' death, Plato founded in Athens a study place which he called the Academy. It was the earliest university, and his prize student was Aristotle—the third person in the trinity of thinkers who bequeathed to us much of our understanding of Western philosophy. Plato became the first academic and in the process an intellectual. Early on, his writings captured the true essence of his mentor. But when his own ideas took form, needing propagation, Plato's depictions of Socrates became less accurate.

A fierce competitive spirit defined Greece in fifth century BC, fueled in part by the Panhellenic games. Another factor was the constant threat of the Persian Empire. The Athenians defeated the invading Persians decisively at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. Ten years later, the Persians invaded again, deploying 300,000 men and 600 ships. Athens was evacuated and burned. But the combined forces of Sparta and Athens prevailed. By 479, Athens was the leading Greek power. And in 463, the era of Athenian greatness began—just seven years after Socrates' birth.

Not much is known about his early years, but one thing is certain: he was a soldier and a very good one, distinguishing himself in battle several times. He was a proud Athenian and was ready to die for her. As Johnson writes, "If ever a man was home in the place where he was born, lived, and died, it was Socrates the Athenian."

Greece in the mid-fifth-century BC was led by Pericles, arguably the greatest statesmen of antiquity. Following victory over Persia, Pericles implemented successful programs in soldiering, naval warfare, colony building, sculpture, painting, music, law, philosophy, poetry, education, and science. Pericles' ambition for Greece was only exceeded by her own achievements. It was a period of unrivaled human accomplishment.

Eventually, Athens' desire to rule the Greek world made Sparta an enemy. The Peloponnesian War—pitting the two against each other—began in 431 BC and would, once and for all, decide which would be the prevailing Greek power. Additionally, the worst plague in Athens' history occurred in 430 BC, killing thousands. These factors combined to



drive Pericles from power, and a period of Athenian malaise began.

By now, Socrates' career as a philosopher was developing. Deciding to focus his inquiries not on scientific questions but instead on the interior man, he spent countless hours walking the streets of Athens every day, encountering a wide spectrum of society. He asked all types of questions, and the answers he received formed the basis for his philosophy. Socrates' practice of asking questions to summon the wisdom within others was called dialectic. And in this process, he employed irony, which he is credited with inventing.

Nothing defined Socrates more than his monotheism. It was because of this, according to Johnson, "that he devoted his life to philosophy, which to him was about the human desire to carry out divine purposes." Socrates believed that the body and the soul were distinct. As Johnson observes, he considered "the most important occupation of a human being was to subdue his bodily instincts and train himself to respond to the teachings of the soul." Not long after Socrates' death, much of the Greek intelligentsia accepted his definition of the soul.

Another important issue to Socrates was the emerging concept of justice. He rejected retaliation, or revenge, of any kind, which in itself was an important development in the history of philosophy. He articulated this position as a new law emanating from God. His definition of justice also emphasized fairness to women and the abolishment of slavery.

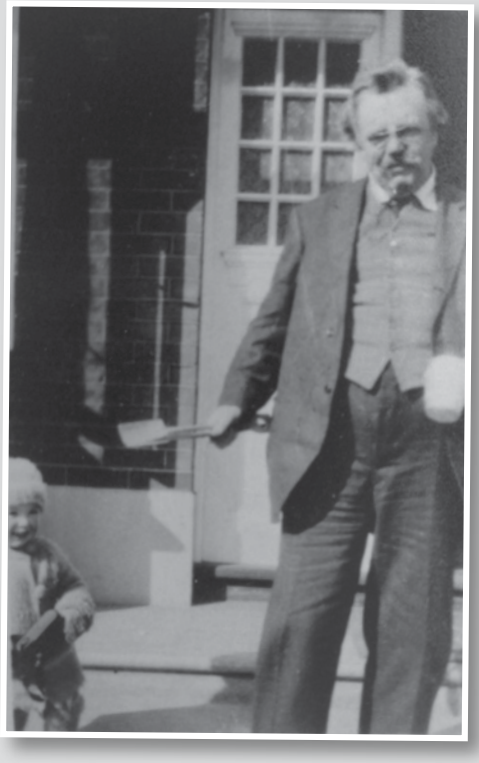
The Athens of Socrates' life was a relatively open society, making his pursuit of knowledge and truth possible. But in his later years, the city fell into a precipitous decline. As Johnson writes, "The sunlit years of the Periclean ascendancy never returned." The plague had damaged the city irrevocably and the Peloponnesian War dragged on. "Leadership fell into volatile and irresponsible hands." And it became common for radicals, aided by a flawed legal system, to impugn the reputations of good men. One of the most egregious examples involved Socrates.

In 399 BC, extremists prosecuted Socrates on charges of impiety. They alleged that he was guilty of worshiping false gods, employing unfamiliar religious practices, and corrupting the young. Johnson observes that the real reason for the witch hunt was not religion but politics, and that Socrates was in truth the victim of guilt by association. In the end, the great man faced his death sentence with dignity. And because of a decaying moral society, the capital of the civilized world was able to commit what Aristotle called the "crime against philosophy."

Paul Johnson's superb book is concise at 200 pages. And in true Socratic tradition, it delivers truth and knowledge.

Orthodoxy

✦ Never has there been so little discussion about the nature of men as now, when, for the first time, any one can discuss it. The old restriction meant that only the orthodox were allowed to discuss religion. Modern liberty means that nobody is allowed to discuss it. ("Introductory Remarks on the Importance of Orthodoxy," *Heretics*)



✦ In our time we find a great deal of religion in art. In former ages we found a great deal of art in religion. Religion was the orthodoxy of those days: art has become almost the only orthodoxy of these. They permitted art and literature because they glorified God. (*Daily News*, Jan. 2, 1902)

✦ In domestic policies also, the Liberal still professes to be jealous of the encroachments of orthodox and organized religion. But as a fact there is no organized religion to compare with the oppressive regimentation of organized irreligion. There are no tests that impose orthodoxy to compare with the tests that impose heresy, like the heresies of hygiene. The old doctrines of theology are not forcibly imposed on anybody. But the new theories of science are forcibly imposed on everybody. (*New Witness*, Oct. 13, 1922)

✦ It is the new orthodoxy that a man may be uncertain of everything; so long as he is not certain of anything. (*Illustrated London News*, Aug. 19, 1933)

✦ About doctrines there should be certainty and clarity; and about details there should be frank ignorance and free debate. The fashion in the more fashionable Press seems to be precisely the opposite. The great papers are fickle about big things and infallible about small things. (*New Witness*, Apr. 26, 1918)

✦ Orthodoxy never stood more for normality than in affirming that evil and not good is the usurper in the universe. (*New Witness*, May 17, 1917)

✦ Orthodoxy is the only persecuted heresy. (*Illustrated London News*, June 6, 1935)

✦ People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. ("The Flag of the World," *Orthodoxy*)

Saying Goodbye on Christmas

The Time of the Doctor (2013)
Directed by Jamie Payne
Written by Steven Moffat

Reviewed by Chris Chan

Warning: spoilers. –Ed.

Doctor Who's Christmas episodes and its revolving cast are both hallmarks of the series. Fans invariably look forward to the Christmas specials and dread seeing beloved actors leave. When Matt Smith took the iconic role of the Doctor at the end of the fourth series, he was met with apprehension, as people were unsure whether or not the young, then-unknown performer could do justice to the role. It did not take more than an episode or so before Smith won people over, which naturally led to deep anxiety over his departure three seasons later.

The Time of the Doctor comes on the heels of the brilliant *The Day of the Doctor*, which served as a love letter to the fans and a wonderful shake-up of the series' own mythology and characterizations, while remaining absolutely true to everything that had preceded it. In many ways, *The Time of the Doctor* pales in comparison to comparison to the fiftieth anniversary special, for *The Day of the Doctor* brought back new friends and brought the promise of a new world to explore, whereas *The Time of the Doctor* is more about wrapping up a few dangling questions regarding some supposed villains from an earlier season and preparing for Matt Smith's sendoff.

Perhaps one of the weakest aspects of the episode comes from its depiction of a futuristic religion, where the various denominations of Christianity have all become fighting members of a religious army. Seeing the state of the Church in the *Doctor Who* vision will raise some eyebrows, but this is science fiction, with an emphasis on the latter word. The vision of the future of religion is interesting, until one actually thinks about it for a couple of seconds and realizes that it's stupid and fails to take every aspect of spirituality and faith into account. Still, the Church of the Papal Mainframe (yes, that's what it's called) does serve to tie up some of the more intriguing plot lines of series six that were left dangling for all of series seven, although it seems likely that further series may tie up lingering questions.

Viewers expect fun and fantasy from *Doctor Who*, not theology. An earlier review of the sixth series of the show lauded the outstanding Christmas episode "A Christmas Carol," although it was criticized for ignoring all of the religious aspects of the holiday, and linking it to the solstice. It seems clear that the show handles the subjects of murderous artwork better than it does organized religion.

Still, one aspect of Christmas presented in *The Time of the Doctor* is incontrovertibly well-presented, and that is the fact that Christmas doesn't really feel like Christmas unless the people we care about are there with us to celebrate. One of the more endearing aspects of every series is watching how an ordinary person first meets the Doctor and believes him to be a madman in a box. Quickly, over the course of a few dangerous adventures, that once-ordinary person becomes the Doctor's friend, companion, and a hero. *Doctor Who* (particularly after the series reboot) has a great talent for illustrating how the ordinary pales in comparison to the extraordinary, and how friendship and self-sacrifice turn unremarkable lives into something far greater.

The plot of *The Time of the Doctor* revolves around the Doctor saving an idyllic little town from an attack by old enemies. The real heart and soul of the episode comes from a bit of the series' mythology suddenly becoming problematic. The series has allowed for changing the lead actor by explaining that the Doctor can regenerate into a new form after being mortally wounded or exhausted from old age. Decades ago, it was explained that the Doctor could regenerate thirteen times—and due to some explanations of past events and the insertion of heretofore unknown details about the Doctor's history, we now learn that the Doctor is out of regenerations. If you had lived for over a millennium, how would you choose to spend your remaining years? The Doctor believes that taking a stand for the defenseless is a life well lived, and it's a rather inspiring choice.

Of course, we know that this doesn't mean the end for the Doctor. It is important for the series to maintain continuity and to make sense, but there's no real suspense—anybody watching with deductive skills higher than gelatin knows that some *deus ex machina* will give the Doctor another chance at life. There's no spoiler there, especially with the knowledge that Peter Capaldi will be stepping into the role, and even with less than a minute of screen time, Capaldi manages to assure the audience that the venerable series will be in good hands. But the last word should be directed towards Smith, who created a joyously boisterous Doctor that all right-minded viewers would want for a friend. He'll be missed, although there's no reason to believe that he won't make a much-welcomed return somewhere along the line, possibly to give viewers an even merrier Christmas.

THE SIGNATURE OF MAN

Color and Revolution

By G.K. Chesterton

I think there is quite a philosophic reason for the revolutionary spirit being right up to a certain point and then almost automatically going wrong.... It [is] a principle which I think I perceive, for instance, in the arts; one which may be most popularly expounded by the instance of the art of painting. Suppose we had always inhabited a world which was entirely black and white; as indeed some of our earnest sociologists and statisticians seem to imagine that we do. It is quite possible that they, and similarly sober persons, would resent the first appearance of the primary colours and consider that red, blue and yellow formed a most dangerous revolutionary tricolor. They might treat all red as a conflagration, filling the world with red republicans; they might regard all blue as a bleak inundation of pessimism and old night, filling the world with blue devils; they might write libraries of denunciation of what they would consistently call the Yellow Peril. But in this the revolutionists would be right, for the colours are the clearest windows in the wall of this world.

Then comes the second stage of such a movement; when we will suppose the primary colours established, and some more subtle artist claiming that, by mixing blue and yellow, he can brighten and refresh the world with what is practically a new colour. It is quite true that many conservatives accustomed to blue and yellow might be contemptuous of the new idea of greenness; a contemptuous as the old Whigs of the Blue and Yellow review really would have been of the Wearing of the Green. But green would be a new experience and it would refresh the world; and I should be on the side of the Fenians in this case—as in others.

Then we come to the third stage, which is much more subtle and very much more disputable; but in which the artistic innovators still have a quite commendable case. It is the stage at which they claim to have new experiences too curious to be common; revelations that can hardly be denounced as a palpable democratic danger, but rather as a very impalpable aristocratic privilege. This may well be represented by the next step in the mixture of tints; the step from what used to be called secondary to what used to be called tertiary colours. The artist claims that by mixing red and green he can produce a sort of russet shade, which to many may seem a mere drab or dull brown, but which is, to a finer eye, a thing combining the richness of red and the coolness of green, in a unity as unique and new as green itself. This sort of artist generally gives himself airs; but there is something to be said for him, though he seldom says it. It is true that a combination in colour may be at once unobtrusive and exquisite; but it is precisely here, I fancy, that the innovator falls into a final error. He imagines himself an inaugurator as well as an innovator; he thinks he stands at the beginning of a long process of change; whereas, as a matter of fact, he has come to the end of it.

Let him take the next step; let him mix one exquisite mixture with another exquisite mixture, and the result will not be another and yet more exquisite mixture; it will be something like mud. It will not be all colours but no colour; a clay as hueless as some antediluvian slime out of which no life can come. Then the artist generally goes mad and waves his brush about, slinging mud at anything and anybody; insanely mixing mire with mire and painting with slime on slime; so that no man can trace in it an outline or an image. But I do not think that sort of mud-slinging is even so good as that of a gutter-snipe; or that the man who does it is sufficiently reasonable to be called a rebel. I agree with the conservative critics (including the gutter-snipe) that the artist has lost his original claim on our revolutionary sympathy, as well as losing many other things, such as his time, his humility and his sense of humour; but perhaps his most appalling loss is that he has lost his original realisation of the existence of red and green.

I have purposely used a crude and elementary example; but such a law of diminishing returns certainly does affect all imaginative innovation. It specially affects, for instance, that artistic adventure which may loosely be called the fantastic. There need be no limit, for example, to the mythical monsters produced by the process which made the centaur, that was made out of a man and a horse, or the griffin, that was made out of a lion and an eagle. But in this imaginative world, at any rate, it is true that mongrels do not breed. The offspring of the Missing Link and a mule, if happily married to the promising child of a Manx cat and a penguin, would not outrun centaur and griffin; it would be something lacking in all the interesting features of man and beast and bird. It would not be a wilder but a much tamer animal than its ancestors; it would not be another and more fantastic shape; but simply shapelessness. It would return to the dust, or rather to the mud, like the too complicated colour.

In all the tales that the soldiers tell us from the trenches there is a recurrent burden of the abomination and even atrocity of mud; mud, the oldest and perhaps the mightiest of the enemies of man. But indeed there is a deeper sense in which they and all heroes may be said to be fighting against this formless thing. Just before the war all the arts and philosophies were fading into a sort of featureless fog owing to this ceaseless multiplication of mere innovation without definition.... Many are speaking of a peace that will efface boundaries; but this war will have wholly failed if it effaces boundaries. It will only have succeeded if it restores them. If all frontiers do indeed fade, if all gates are indeed thrown open, if all divisions disappear and all elements mingle; if that is really achieved in its equality and entirety then we shall have done nothing, except complete the work of the barbarian.

The Accidental Distributist—Part II

by David Mc Ginty

When I meet someone for the first time, I characteristically ask where they live. In responding to this question, almost everyone without exception describes their home. In *What's Wrong with the World*, G.K. Chesterton shares a compelling reason as to why:

> It is the only spot on the earth where a man can alter arrangements suddenly, make an experiment or indulge in a whim. Everywhere else he goes he must accept the strict rules of the shop, inn, club, or museum that he happens to enter.

He can eat his meals on the floor in his own house if he likes. I often do it myself; it gives a curious, childish, poetic, picnic feeling. There would be considerable trouble if I tried to do it in an A.B.C. tea-shop. A man can wear a dressing gown and slippers in his house; while I am sure that this would not be permitted at the Savoy, though I never actually tested the point. If you go to a restaurant you must drink some of the wines on the wine list, all of them if you insist, but certainly some of them. But if you have a house and garden you can try to make hollyhock tea or convolvulus wine if you like. For a plain, hard-working man the home is not the one tame place in the world of adventure. It is the one wild place in the world of rules and set tasks. The home is the one place where he can put the carpet on the ceiling or the slates on the floor if he wants to. When a man spends every night staggering from bar to bar or from music hall to music hall, we say that he is living an irregular life. But he is not; he is living a highly regular life, under the dull, and often oppressive, laws of such places. Sometimes he is not allowed even to sit down in the bars; and frequently he is not allowed to sing in the music-halls. Hotels may be defined as places where you are forced to dress; and theaters may be defined as places where you are forbidden to smoke. A man can only picnic at home.

In the same conversation and with equal enthusiasm, people also describe

THE KITCHEN DISTRIBUTIST

The freezer is the kitchen distributist's best friend. Those daunted by canning can still preserve good things to bring out during winter's dark days. For example, rhubarb plants often yield more than even the most enthusiastic baker can handle. Take all good stalks, even those with very little pink, wash, and chop. Put in a heavy pot with a fair amount of sugar (at least ½ cup per 1 cup of rhubarb) and 2 tablespoons of water per cup, turn on medium low, and gently stew, stirring occasionally, while the rhubarb simmers slightly, becoming a thick sauce. Taste and correct for sweetness, and sprinkle with nutmeg or ground cardamom. When the mixture is cool, spoon into heavy plastic freezer bags, and freeze. Excellent on waffles, pancakes, crepes, and toast, it also is a lovely topper for ice cream. This taste of summer would make a lovely Christmas season gift.

A neighborhood with activity is desired because it is more relational, it offers opportunity for casual encounters with friends and neighbors.

their town, city, and neighborhood. It's the place people care about the most because that's where their home is located. We care deeply about our local neighborhood, because that's where our neighbors and friends live, it's where our kids go to school and participate in athletics. We spend leisure time at the park, lake, or river near our home, we attend Mass at our parish down the street, we are proud of our community and everything that is unique and special about where we live. Tending to one's garden and maintaining the home is not only sound practice to secure the equity in the home but it is also an investment in the vitality of the neighborhood. We don't care to drive across town so we visit the local grocery store, farmers' market, drug store and hardware store even if that means we part with a little more of our slave wage. We tend to support our local small businesses because we don't want empty storefronts and offices next to where we live. Healthy local businesses add activity and vibrancy to the neighborhood. We want human scale and we definitely don't want to be a drive-through neighborhood at rush hour, for that would simply be "bustle." We want more activity and less bustle, as Chesterton in his wisdom observes: "There would be less bustle if there were more activity, if people were simply walking about."

A neighborhood with activity is desired because it is more relational, it offers opportunity for casual encounters with friends and neighbors; the area is generally safer because there are more people walking about. During an encounter with someone new, describing where we live simply demonstrates what is most important to us and confirms that home, neighborhood, and family are the foundation of our lives. And it is where I came to understand what it means to be a Distributist.

What I find most curious in these conversations about where one lives is the undeniable absence of work. Most of us spend half our waking lives working, yet in a conversation about where we live, work is mysteriously absent. Could it really be that we do not consider work a part of living? Are we truly not living when we work? In his books *A Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language,* architect (and dare I say fellow accidental Distributist) Christopher Alexander makes a dramatic claim:

"The artificial separation of houses and work creates intolerable rifts in people's lives…this separation reinforces the idea that work is a toil, while only family life is 'living'—a schizophrenic view which creates tremendous problems for all the members of a family."

A bold proclamation for those of us who have known nothing different. In Part III I will share my story on how I implemented Distributist ideas in a publicly traded corporate office and offer some ideas for integrating our work and life more fully and holistically.

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Do not actually mention the potato,
They inculcate strongly we should
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The Imitators

Nebuchadnezzar
Took no pleasure
In hearing from his assistant
That those three guys were
flame-resistant.

General Holofernes
Went after Judith with his attorneys
For the restitution of his head
Even though he was dead.

Benedict Arnold
Thought the Revolutionary War was getting darn old
So he turned his coat red.
"Screw the U.S.," he said.

Torquemada
Said "I don't want the Pope's imprimata'
We don't want to give away our position
Because nobody expects a Spanish
Inquisition.

The party led by Donner
Is a group we do not honor
Because they had strange rituals
Regarding their victuals.

Someone said to Matthew
"Look, Jesus is pointing at you."
Matthew, setting down his cup,
Said, "If he doesn't pay his taxes, I'll have
to write him up."

(All jointly authored by Per Hansen, Julian Ahlquist, and Dale Ahlquist, while driving back to Minneapolis from the 2014 Chesterton Conference in Chicago)

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Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail

Belloc, China, and Wells

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
You are not impartial about any issues at all. You always take Hilaire Belloc's side not because he's right, but because he is your friend.

Signed,
Objective

Dear Objective,

My realisation of things is somehow supposed to be discounted by partiality; and it is quite true that I have not been prevented from recognising a fact by the danger of recognising a friend. No doubt it would be more convincing if I were to sever all private ties with anybody who performed any public service; but I have hitherto shrunk from this drastic definition of impartiality. Mr. Belloc was right, for instance, about the moment of the turning point at Verdun; but I could not bring myself to repudiate so old an acquaintance merely on that account. I cannot help it if my companions are found to be people of intelligence; and it seems a severe rule in public life that one must either differ from a man or quarrel with him.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*New Witness*, Sept. 13, 1917)

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

You always talk as if the West is better than the East, but you have never considered the beautiful culture of China, which can be summed up in the name of its great city, Peking, which means "obedient to heaven."

Signed,
Arthur Whaley

✦ ✦ ✦

Dear Mr. Whaley,

Indeed, if names meant so much as that perhaps the holiest and happiest spot on earth would be the city of San Francisco. I do not believe, however, that every individual citizen of the great California city passes his life in practicing holy poverty and preaching to the birds. Nor will I believe similar things about other human beings, even when they have the recognized superiority of being heathens.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*The* (NY) *Sun*, Oct. 6, 1918)

✦ ✦ ✦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

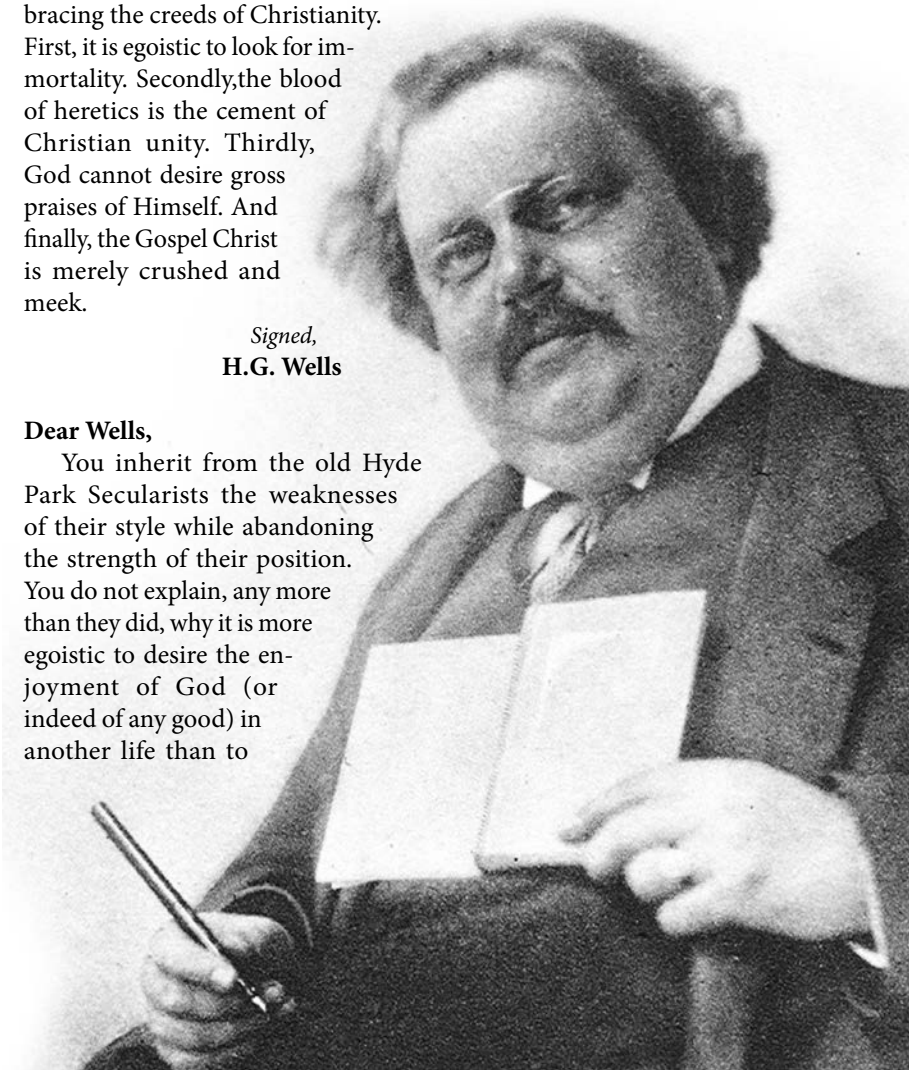
There are several problems with embracing the creeds of Christianity. First, it is egoistic to look for immortality. Secondly,the blood of heretics is the cement of Christian unity. Thirdly, God cannot desire gross praises of Himself. And finally, the Gospel Christ is merely crushed and meek.

Signed,
H.G. Wells

Dear Wells,

You inherit from the old Hyde Park Secularists the weaknesses of their style while abandoning the strength of their position. You do not explain, any more than they did, why it is more egoistic to desire the enjoyment of God (or indeed of any good) in another life than to desire it in this life. You do not add, any more than they added, that blood has poured in torrents for every secular political ideal that is worth twopence. You do not ask, any more than they asked, whether it be not of the nature of love to accept love, or whether a good woman thinks praise from her lawful lover "gross." You complain, as they complained that the Gospel Christ is merely crushed and meek, but you are forced, as they were, to forget about half the Gospel in order to say so. These, with all respect, I will call prejudices, and the dregs of prejudices; they seem subjectively justified as an escape from some semi-Calvinistic coalhole of your infancy. But I was brought up in no such devilry; and I will not spend my life in running away from a nightmare I never had.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*New Witness*, May 17, 1917)



LETTER TO AMERICA

G.K. Chesterton in the New York American

The Expert

By G.K. Chesterton

I do not like experts, or rather I love them but do not trust them. I willingly admit that the infinite and inscrutable wisdom of Providence has found a use for these little creatures. I warmly agree that, when once even these little creatures have really been harnessed to the service of man, it is his duty to treat them in the most humane and considerate fashion, and I never tortured or ill-treated an expert in my life.

But I strongly resent the vague and very general implication that the expert is to be the master and not the servant, or that we are accepting him as a king, when it would be rather truer to say that we are accepting him as a spy. There are a great many dangerous elements about the expert; one is that, while he cannot be expected to show knowledge of subjects outside his own, he may do a horrible amount of ignorance of subjects outside his own.

For there is no such thing as a really separate subject. If something is wrong with your ears it is doubtless better to go to an aorist; but if you discover that this specialist has passed his life in complete ignorance of the existence of the human nose, or in flatly denying that there is any such thing as the human mouth, you may possibly come to the conclusion that there is more the matter with his eyes than with your ears. And that is the exact position of a good many experts on art and history and similar subjects.

A critic, whom I do not class with these extreme cases, has recently been suggesting that as experts can identify a person, or even a personal character, by the scientific study of his script, they should also be able to achieve equal certainty about his style and draw as precise deductions from good writing or bad writing as they do from handwriting.

Personally, I confess I should be more inclined to think them fallible about handwriting than to think them infallible about writing. As a matter of fact, the expert cannot always be right, even about a plain signature that is in black and white, let alone about a literary style that is in purple patches or in golden prose.

I seem to remember that, when certain legal inquiries involved the evidence of experts, there were sometimes experts on both sides and sometimes the infallible experts actually differed, and sometimes they quarreled and slanged each other, and cursed and swore and yelled the roof off, just as if they were the most cultured literary critics.

And if the expert is fallible about the finite, the limited province he professes to know, I certainly am not going to admit that he is infallible about the infinite; about the imagination of man dealing with the universe of God. I would rather risk being deceived by some very perfect imitations of Virgil or Shakespeare, and the more perfect the better.

From *New York American*, March 20, 1935

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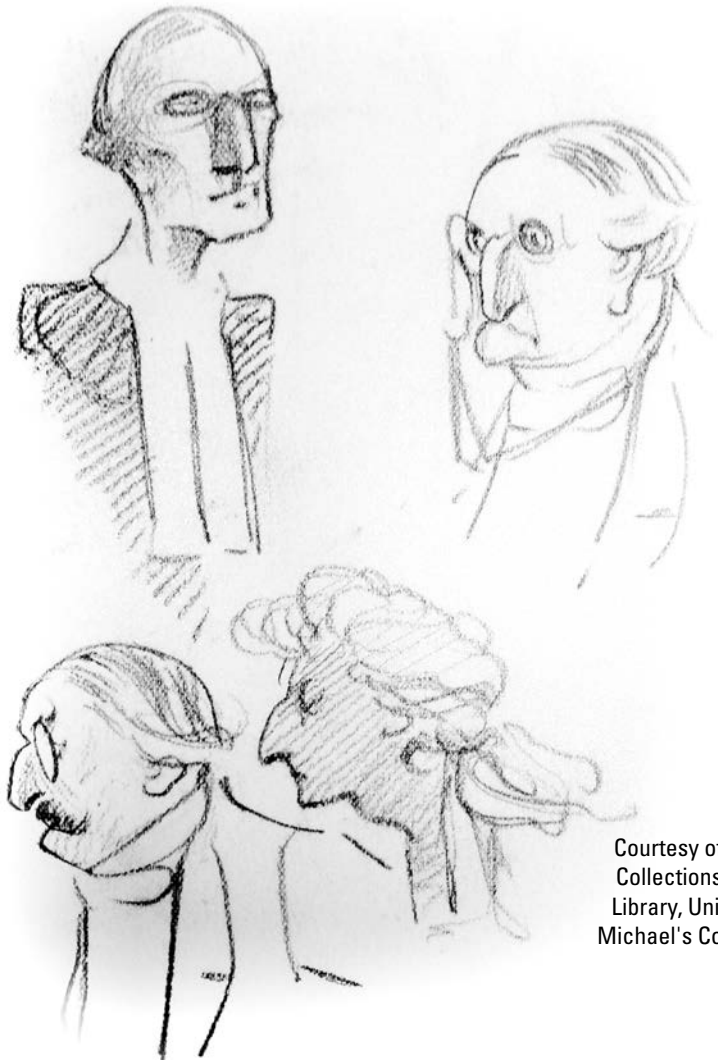

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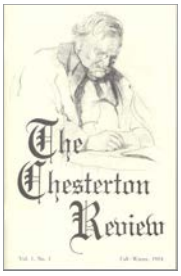

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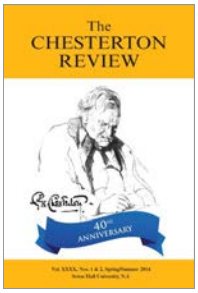

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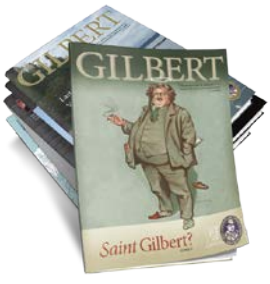

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