But thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.

—Wisdom 11:20
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Cover design by Ted Schluenderfritz
Photo of Fr. Stanley Jaki by Julie Dailey
When Fr. Stanley L. Jaki died last spring, someone at Gilbert Magazine said, “Let’s do a Fr. Jaki commemorative issue.” This is that issue. As part of that commemoration, this issue contains a special section on Fr. Jaki, beginning on page 14, with contributions from James V. Schall, S.J., John Peterson, David Beresford, Nancy Carpentier Brown, David FAGerberg, Kyro Lantsberger, and publisher Dale Ahlquist. For Fr. Schall, Beresford, Brown, FAGerberg, and Lantsberger, these essays are their normal contribution. The articles from Peterson and Ahlquist are extras. Other offerings in this commemorative issue include an interview with Peter Floriani (page 10), who knew Fr. Jaki. This issue’s editorial (page 7) and Joe Campbell’s column (page 42) also deal with the issue of science vs. religion. Finally, G.K. Chesterton brings his considerable intellect to bear with articles on “The Sentimentalist of Science” (page 8) and “Saner Science” (page 50).

The fifth season of Dale’s EWTN series The Apostle of Common Sense premiered on September 6 and airs each Sunday at 8 p.m. Central time (9 p.m. Eastern). This season features episodes on Language, the Problem of Evil, America, Islam, War, Parenthood, the Priesthood, Modernism, and more. There will be a special episode on the Toy Theatre that you will not want to miss, a whole new batch of “Ask Mr. Chesterton” vignettes, and look for multiple appearances by that ex-seminarian Stanford Nutting. The kick-off episode was about something called Truth. And, as always, we’ll be preempted by the Pope on a regular basis.

The revolution continues I: Last summer, Joseph Pearce traveled to Chile, where he gave seven talks in four days to a combined audience of more than 2,000. He also sat for one radio interview and two newspaper interviews, one of which was to the largest selling newspaper in the country. All on the theme of “A Crusade for G.K. Chesterton.”

The revolution continues II: Congratulations to Chesterton Academy in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, on beginning its second year of classes. The independent high school, co-founded by Dale Ahlquist and supported in part by the American Chesterton Society, has doubled its student body in one year and has received national attention for its integrated, classical curriculum that combines faith and reason. For more information, visit chestertonacademy.org.

The Chesterton Society (of England) held a one-day conference in July at Oxford on the topic, “The Holiness of Chesterton.” Fr. Thomas Lutz’ write-up of the conference is on page 22. All the talks will soon be made available in print and recorded form by the British Chesterton Society. For more information, visit www.gkechesterton.org.uk.

Ellen Finan, of the Warren, Ohio, Chesterton Society, has discovered something interesting about some Dominicans who have completed their novitiate in Cincinnati, Ohio:

An August 15 Mass of Simple Profession was celebrated at St. Gertrude’s Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the Mass, Fr. Brian Mulcahy, O.P., the Vicar Provincial, received the vows of the nine brothers completing their novitiate. The nine brothers making their simple profession were: Br. Thomas More Garrett, O.P.; Br. John Devaney, O.P.; Br. Boniface Endorf, O.P.; Br. Joseph Fusserer, O.P.; Br. Benedict Joseph Freeman, O.P.; Br. Sebastian White, O.P.; Br. Gabriel Torretta, O.P.; Br. Paul Marich, O.P.; and Br. Innocent Smith, O.P.

Ellen writes: “I’m glad to see Innocent Smith made it through his novitiate year.”

At the American Chesterton Society blog, Dr. Thursday (or in the vernacular, Peter Floriani) has begun a new weekly series, a chapter-by-chapter study of Chesterton’s 1910 book, What’s Wrong With the World. This promises to be every bit as engaging and lively as his weekly study of Orthodoxy, completed last spring (and which can be found, neatly indexed, at (americanchestertonsociety.blogspot.com/2008/09/index-to-thursdays-of-orthodoxy.html). “The first item on our agenda is to consider the title,” Dr. T wrote in his first post, before providing lengthy quotes from Chesterton and lengthy commentary from himself. Oh, and I should add that next year’s conference will celebrate the 100th anniversary of that important book.

Speaking of the Chesterton conference, CDs of talks of the 2009 conference should be available soon. Keep checking the American Chesterton Society Web page for details.

Parting Trifle: Gilbert Magazine contributing editor (and patient copy editor) Mike Foster spoke on “J.R.R. Tolkien in the Twenty-First Century” at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee on September 14, and at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha on September 15. He noted Chesterton’s influence on Tolkien, especially in the poetry of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings.
Dear GM Readers,

U.S. Presidents through the years have, on occasion, addressed America’s children on their first day of the new school year. President Barack Obama has decided to do so this year as well. That wasn’t so much a problem as were the “suggested student assignments” handed down through the U.S. Department of Education. One assignment: students should “write letters to themselves about what they can do to help the President.” Another: discuss “what the President wants us to do.”

Swift outrage from parents who felt the President was not only interfering with their children’s education, but also attempting to indoctrinate them, caused the president’s minions to quickly pull the assignments and replace them with some banal suggestions about short and long-term goals and the teachers collecting them and holding the kids responsible for them (hmmm!). Nonetheless, the initial assignments were revealing.

Without addressing what was revealing about them, however, I would like to suggest an assignment for the readers of Gilbert Magazine, to wit, that you write letters to yourselves about what you can do to help the American Chesterton Society.

Now more than ever, the American Chesterton Society is in need of your help, because in more ways than one can count, our culture is under attack by a world that has lost its sanity and common sense. The culture of death is at war with the family, God and religion have been all but banished from public life, mindless faddism and moral relativism dictate truth (i.e., that there is no truth), materialism runs rampant, big business and big government are running amok, beauty in the arts is seen as passé, our culture is at war and our schools are in a crisis of decay. The list of what’s wrong with the world goes on, but I’ll spare you. The point is this: our society is being subjected to a form of attack that is more clear and present than terrorism, because it goes to the core of our culture and changes the very essence of who we are. It is a cultural attack that must not only be confronted, but countered and rolled back.

But in order to roll back what’s wrong with the world, we need to know what’s right with the world, else how would we know what to restore? For that the world needs the complete thinking and worldview of G.K. Chesterton. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the publication of Chesterton’s critically important book, What’s Wrong with the World, the American Chesterton Society is stepping up and intensifying its efforts to promote a better future. Through an increasing variety of media, we are reaching and educating a wider spectrum of the public than ever before.

In addition to our national conferences, we are sponsoring and assisting local societies with their own conferences. The number of lectures and seminars continues to grow. The demand for our assistance with research and scholarship is becoming difficult to supply. We are granting scholarships to college and university students and have even assisted in the

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**Chesterton for Today**

- The mark of our time is the growth of publicity and the decline of public spirit. (G.K’s Weekly, Sept. 17, 1927)
- Torture is not a relic of barbarism at all. In actuality it is simply a relic of sin; but in comparative history it may well be called a relic of civilization. ("The Travelers in State," Tremendous Trifles)
- Out of luxury and waste and weariness, the fever they call Progress came into the world. (New Witness, June 18, 1914)
- The world will very soon be divided, unless I am mistaken, into those who still go on explaining our success, and those, somewhat more intelligent, who are trying to explain our failure. (Speech to the Anglo-Catholic Congress, June 29, 1920)
- What we call popular education could much more correctly be called unpopular education. (Illustrated London News, Oct. 30, 1915)
- Extravagant enthusiasm for education is the very vivid and obvious mark of the uneducated. (Sign, August, 1935)
- Rationalism is a disease of the towns, like the housing problem. (Daily News, March 14, 1933)
- I think difficulties do arise from the doctrines; but much more from the trick of ignoring the doctrines. (New York American, Jan. 9, 1932)
opening of a new high school, Chesterton Academy. While all that has been going on, the popular television series, G.K. Chesterton: The Apostle of Common Sense, has been going into its sixth season, and has spawned two spin-offs! Did I mention Gilbert Magazine? Books? Radio? Plays? A feature-length Father Brown episode on DVD? And coming this year a full-length movie based on Chesterton’s novel, Manalive, will be showing in theaters!

Needless to say, the American Chesterton Society is not just a literary society; it’s a force leading a battle for the restoration of our culture. The cause is urgent, but there is hope; it’s not guaranteed, but it’s a battle we can win (The two sins against hope are presumption and despair).

So what’s the bottom line? Quite simply, we need your help. None of the things we do come cheap. As our activities increase—and become increasingly important—the need for financial support increases as well. Please join us in this vital effort to restore common sense and sanity to an insane world that so desperately needs it. Consider giving generously to the American Chesterton Society.

Ted Olsen, Vice President, American Chesterton Society

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**OUR MR. CHESTERTON**

*The Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 1921, reported the following:

Mr. G.K. Chesterton was the guest of honor at a Monday Evening Authors Club dinner. Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins, who was in the chair, said that Mr. Chesterton could be accused of paradox only when the word was used in its classical sense, which was that, although paradox was contrary to common opinion, it was according to exact knowledge. When Mr. Chesterton rose to reply, he at once began to play with Sir Anthony’s definition. He said that among other things he was in grave doubt as to whether he was in any sense an author: he was, he knew, a journalist and a certain flippancy into which he occasionally fell was chiefly due to that fact. The journalist had to try to be amusing, the author did not have to be amusing (Laughter). It was more modest to try to be amusing than to assume that you were interesting. The difficulty with Mr. Chesterton, both in England and in America, is that his audiences never quite know whether he is laughing with them, or at them, or at himself.

Denis Cullinan
New York, New York
Old Friends and Old Misunderstandings

On February 20, 1926, G.K. Chesterton wrote in his newspaper, G.K.’s Weekly, “Science and religion have been reconciled so often that it would seem that they must be rather quarrelsome people to require to be reconciled again.”

Why is this so? There must be a reason. Either science and religion are temperamentally unsuited to each other and need constant reconciliation, or some other factor is at work. For the record, there is no fundamental disagreement between science and religion, nor is such a disagreement even possible. Science examines the material universe to understand how it works. Religion examines our place in creation, why we are here, what our purpose is, and what actions are consistent with that purpose. There have been great scientists, whether religious or atheist, who find no contradiction; there is a large body of religious writing that dispels the idea of a contradiction. Yet the myth of science verses religion persists.

Objectively, either there is a God or there is not. If there is a God and he is the Judeo-Christian God, then his revelation cannot contradict his creation. Hence no contradiction is possible. That is, if there really is a God (and there is), then there never will be a time when someone looks through a microscope or telescope and discovers that there is no God, or that God contradicts himself.

What if there is no God? Then, in this case, the genius that is the human intellect has given us a mythology (religion) consistent with how we see our place in the world. This same human intellect has also given us a methodology for discovering facts about the world (science). Again, science and religion cannot be at odds, for in this case the origins of science and religious mythology are to be found in the human world view and modified over human history. Again, the human articulation of individual facts of nature could not contradict the human perception of reality.

Subjectively from a human standpoint, thoughtful people realize that our religious grasp on reality is tenuous. We are humbled in our feeble and incomplete attempt to comprehend existence, evil, sin, regeneration, forgiveness, redemption, and creation. Thoughtful people also realize that our scientific understanding is tenuous, we are humbled in our feeble and incomplete attempt to comprehend how a cell divides, how genes interact with the environment, what electricity is. Where is the room for pride here? When the saint and the scientist both know how prone they are to error, where is the room for contradiction?

So we are left with a discord that is not logically necessary, and is indeed irrational. What else can we conclude but that when we look at the so-called argument between science and religion, it becomes clear that there are vested interests in keeping this discord alive. If the so-called “religious” side often assumes malice on the part of scientists, there is often good reason. The so-called “scientific” side is characterized by an arrogance that assumes stupidity on the part of believers, while refusing to acknowledge the errors that result in elevating science beyond its competence.

In the last century, many scientists confidently told the world with all the assurance of their learning that: nuclear energy is safe, nuclear energy is dangerous; chemical pesticides are safe, chemical pesticides must be banned; antibiotics have conquered bacteria, bacteria has conquered antibiotics; our environment produces our personality, our personality is genetically determined; we are entering an new ice age, a period of global warming, a time of climate change (which, by the way, is an untestable hypothesis, indistinguishable from its alternative—that we are entering a period of climatic stability); alligators are dinosaurs, reptiles, birds; cave men were short, tall, white, black, hairy, hairless, good swimmers, tree climbers, grassland dwellers, slow, fast, good hunters, bad hunters, herbivores, omnivores, carnivores, had rotten teeth, had no cavities and strong teeth, disease-ridden, disease-free; were polygamous, polyandrous, a matriarchy, a patriarchy, licentious, monogamous; evolved from Neanderthals, lived after Neanderthals, lived with Neanderthals.

As if this spotty record weren’t enough, some scientists insist science shows that a guilty conscience does not exist, but being forgiven for our sins is superstition.

Among believers, there indeed have been superstitious folk who believe, among other things, that wearing a talisman will prevent disease; and soothsayers have foolishly predicted the end of the world as we know it if we do not change our ways and repent—whereas scientists know that the world as we know it will end if we do not change our ways and recycle.

Ancient superstitions used to say that by killing our children we could propitiate the gods and bring economic stability; some scientists now explain that this is foolish and that economic stability can only be assured if we abort our children.

So you see, the so-called discord between science and religion is actually a very old phenomenon, that of one set of people trying to impose their will upon another set, something religious people know of as the problem of evil.

And the problem of evil, despite such scientific feats as travelling in outer space, advanced calculus, or Bayesian statistics, still requires a religious answer.
The Sentimentalist Of Science

We have most of us realized that the world is growing wildly irrational. But not all of us have noticed that it is made more and more irrational by those who call themselves rationalists. An outstanding and even startling example of this must be Mr. Clarence Darrow, well known in America for his claim to be considered a rational creature, but best known to us, perhaps, for his defense at Dayton of his right to be descended from a monkey. There is nothing unreasonable in the latter claim. But the mere fact of descent from a monkey does not in itself increase the faculty of reason in a man. And in some men, including Mr. Darrow, this organ seems to have remained rather rudimentary.

I have just read a rather curious article largely devoted to the praise of Mr. Darrow as he appeared when he was advocate for two very loathsome millionaires who chose to be murderers, Leopold and Loeb. It says that “the case is one of extraordinary scientific and legal value.” Quite right. Every case is of value that establishes clearly and legally that a monkey does not in itself increase the faculty of reason in a man. And in some men, including Mr. Darrow, this organ seems to have remained rather rudimentary.

If once we begin to quibble and quarrel about what words ought to mean, we shall find ourselves in a mere world of words, most wearisome to those who are concerned with thoughts. (“The Hound of Heaven,” The Common Man)

If you can make a statue of a thing you can make a statuette of it. Anything, however huge, that can be conceived of as complete, can be conceived of as small. (“The Ethics of Elfland,” Orthodoxy)

If every genius is adequately paid, it will mean that someone has judged and limited genius. (“On Books,” A Chesterton Bibliography)

If man does not reform a thing Nature will deform it. He must always be altering the thing even in order to keep it the same. (Daily News, Aug. 24, 1907)

If you look at a thing nine hundred and ninety-nine times, you are perfectly safe; if you look at it the thousandth time, you are in frightful danger of seeing it for the first time. (“Introductory Remarks,” The Napoleon of Notting Hill)
punish them although we cannot blame them, why cannot we punish them in one way as much as another; or in any way we think effective? If they can be imprisoned although they are innocent, why cannot they be executed although they are innocent? His position is nonsensical enough on the face of it; it would become more nonsensical the further it went. As a matter of fact, we could say about killing Loeb exactly what he says about killing Franks. We have only to hang Loeb; and then say that far back in our own dark ancestry it was decided by destiny that we should gain great satisfaction by hanging horrible little diabolist Jews. The argument, if logically accepted, takes away the moral character of all actions, including our own actions; including even our own future actions. But it has an even more immediate and practical logic. Determinists like Mr. Darrow always imagine, in their muddle-headed way, that retributive punishment must be ferocious punishment and merely preventative punishment must be merely mild or moderate punishment. That thought would alone prove that they cannot think.

As a matter of fact, the argument is the other way. If we give a forger the punishment he deserves, very few of us would say that a forger deserves to be burned alive. It would be very much easier to maintain that burning forgers alive would in fact discourage forgery. If punishment is only for the practical protection of society, there is no limit to the cruelty which might conceivably protect society. But there is decidedly a limit, for most decent people, to the cruelty which they would consider as no more than a man’s deserts. But all these are only a rich crop of unreasonable inferences from the first act of unreason. And that is supposing that heredity and destiny are in some special way arguments against Capital Punishment. Why more against Capital Punishment than against any punishment—or, for that matter, any praise or any praiseworthy attempt to avert punishment? It is just as senseless to praise Mr. Darrow as to blame Mr. Loeb, if neither of them has anything to do with what they are.

If all this is a specimen of the lucidity of Mr. Darrow, he must indeed have been a worthy antagonist of Mr. Bryan. I should like to have heard those two great torrents of mental confusion meet in the market-place of Dayton; the one claiming what no theologian of authority ever claimed for Genesis, and the other what no biologist of authority would now claim for Darwin. This does not mean that there is no truth in Darwin, let alone Genesis; it only means that there was nothing in either speaker to make him an authority on either subject. Perhaps there is not much to be said for the conclusions of Dayton, Tennessee, as they affect the present position of science and philosophy. Much has been urged against the unfortunate Puritan farmers who decided on behalf of Bryan and Bible. But let it be remembered in extenuation that they had to hear Mr. Clarence Darrow on the other side. Perhaps he recited some poetry. (G.K.’s Weekly, January 21, 1928)

THE BALLAD OF GILBERT

Ballade of Capital

The Earth is full of mud and meat,
And malt and salt and sand and spice,
And ships and shells and sugar-beet,
And bread at the imperial price,
And glass and brass and rum and rice,
And oak and tale and turtle-fat,
And fire and snow and sea and ice,
And lots of little things like that.

And all those funny things we meet—
Are capital; and should suffice
(You say) to do us quite a treat—
As if you and I have each a slice—
...But one whose clothes could scarce entice
Held recently a ragged hat
In which you put the best advice
And lots of little things like that.

I own the scheme is very neat,
I do not think it very nice
That we should own the blooming street
With all the people poor as mice.
I have old views: that loaded dice
Are “wrong,” and even tit-for-tat
“Heathen,” that virtue is not vice—
And lots of little things like that.

Envoi

Prince, Pharaoh trounced them in a trice
The poor that groaned at him; whereat
God sent him flies and frogs and lice
And lots of little things like that.
An Interview with Peter J. Floriani

by Dale Ahlquist

Peter Floriani, PhD, is a computer scientist who was one of the founding directors of the American Chesterton Society. He and Dale Ahlquist created the Annotated Lepanto, and he is presently working on The Annotated Everlasting Man.

GM Let’s get started!
PJF All right. Where should I sit?
GM On the ceiling, of course. Good.

PJF My parents. My father won the Bronze Star in Europe during World War II. He came back wanting to do something to keep such evil from reoccurring. He knew that since the problem came from evil ideas, it would require good ideas to displace them and fill the void. So he started “The White Star Library”—raised against the Red Star of Communism—which later became the “Catholic Shop.” He included any number of good books, not merely Catholic ones, G.K. Chesterton among them. One day a young woman came in his store to buy a book...and she found something more than books there to love.

GM Your mother met your father in his bookstore?
PJF Yes—and in a town called Reading...[Dale is amazed and cannot speak; so much about the lunacy of Dr. T. is now explained.]
PJF ...though we say RED-ding, not REED-ing. I live three blocks from the railroad.

GM Did she like Chesterton?
PJF Oh yes. I have two books he gave her for her birthday, The Colored Lands and Tremendous Trifles, inscribed with his devotion.

GM So you grew up knowing Chesterton?
PJF We lived above the store. One of my earliest memories was being in the “Book Room” of the shop, and my father reciting those most famous lines:

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred...

I had no idea what they meant then, but a strange thrill still runs through me as I say them now. They are some of the most ancient memory I possess.

GM You read Chesterton during school?
PJF I recall reading the Father Brown stories at some point. But it was not until I was doing my master’s degree that I began serious explorations—brought on by a curiosity to know the rest of that poem. I asked my father and he gave me his copy of Return To Tradition, which contains “Lepanto” and a number of excerpts from his other writing. And soon I had read everything by GKC in the house—an appetite that continues unabated to this day.

GM You said you have your master’s degree.
PJF And a doctorate also, in computer science.

GM Ah. And that means you would sooner or later try to do something technical with Chesterton.
PJF Well...it was all John Peterson’s fault.

GM [Shock]
PJF Or Aidan Mackey’s...[Shock]
PJF ...but I seem to recall it was brought on by the Midwest Chesterton News asking whether anyone could find “THE QUO TE.”

GM What quote is that?
PJF The famous one that goes something like this: “When a man stops believing in God, he doesn’t begin to believe in nothing. He begins to believe in anything.”

GM Ah, yes, that quote. So what did you do?
PJF I had no scanner, so I typed in Heretics.

GM [More shock]
PJF Oh yes. I had made a kind of guess, and felt it might be there.

Fr. Jaki and Peter Floriani
GM Was it?
P.JF No. Later I bought a scanner, and for two years I scanned all the Chesterton books I owned.

GM While you were working?
P.JF No, I was a PhD and unemployed so, of course, I worked on something important.

GM You didn’t use your doctorate?
P.JF I did—except instead of finding cures for cancer, I found more useful things, like how many semicolons he used in the average Illustrated London News essay.

GM Huh?
P.JF 14.2.

GM Okay [Rolls his eyes]. So you wrote your own software too?
P.JF Yes. AMBER is the name I use for both the collection of the electronic versions of Chesterton’s books and its associated software.

GM Why “amber”?
P.JF Because of a line in Chesterton’s 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.

GM Did you use your doctoral research in doing any of this?
P.JF Oddly enough, yes. I implemented what the Cat In The Hat called “Calculus Eliminatus”—finding something by finding out where it isn’t—this helped the biologists with their problem of finding certain kind patterns in DNA sequences. I used some of the same tricks in AMBER.

GM Whose DNA? Yours? [He moves his chair a little further away.]
P.JF No, bacteria—but we call them prokaryotes, because it sounds lots more cool.

GM What happened when you apply this trick to Chesterton?
P.JF I found out the longest repeated phrase in The Everlasting Man.

GM What is it?
P.JF Rather a shock, and most uncanny. It’s where GKC quotes our Lord:

> “Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.”

Truly He is the Everlasting Man.

GM Amen. That brings up an interesting point. As a scientist, what are some specific insights you’ve gotten from Chesterton?
P.JF I could cite any number of quotes with chapter and verse—I’ll give you a couple for a sidebar if you want—but there is one which is very dear to me:

> “The rebuilding of this bridge between science and human nature is one of the greatest needs of mankind.”

GM Why is it dear?
P.JF Because I first read it in a book by someone other than Chesterton—a book called Chesterton: A Seer of Science by S.L. Jaki.

GM Had you previously been familiar with the writings of Father Stanley L. Jaki?
P.JF Yes, at that point (if I recall correctly) I had read his Science and Creation. (Both of these ought to be on the bookshelf of every scientist and every Catholic—that is, when it isn’t in his hands as he is reading it. Note, I got both of them at my father’s store, too.)

GM You first met Fr. Jaki at a Chesterton conference?
P.JF Actually, no—I met him for the first time at Seton Hall, after my mother died in 2002, en passant as the pawns say, when I was visiting Father Ian Boyd about a Chestertonian matter. I was so excited I don’t know if I actually formed coherent sentences. But yes, I met Fr. Jaki in an identifiable and meaningful way at the conference in 2004—just weeks after my father died.

GM What happened next?
P.JF I told him about my work on Chesterton, and revealed that I had scanned a few of his books.

GM Were you scolded for violating the copyrights?
P.JF No—because I owned the books. I was not publishing the electronic forms or making them available! If I wanted to spend such insane amounts of my time doing it, with fifty or a hundred footnotes per chapter, in four or five languages, what difference did it make? Of course, like someone else I know, he began calling or e-mailing me to find the book and page in which he refers to iridium or Vega.

GM So he also benefited from AMBER?
P.JF Yes, both the Chesterton and the Jaki parts of the collection.

GM You had an opportunity to spend some extended time with this great thinker during his last few years. You obviously talked some Chesterton? And what else?
P.JF We talked about his books—the ones that were out of print which he hoped to have reprinted.

GM And computers?
P.JF No—perhaps I should say not as much as I wished we might have talked. His book Brain, Mind and Computers came out in 1969, and he wrote a third preface to it in 1989—it contains one or two hopelessly outdated bits (that’s a pun, in case you didn’t notice) but they are far outweighed by the huge valuable hunks of timeless truth—in particular that book revealed amazing details of Charles Babbage, the First Computer Scientist. Here’s just one sentence:

> By studying its structure and mode of operation, one could form, as Babbage emphasized, “a faint estimate of the magnitude of that lowest step in the chain of reasoning, which leads us to Nature’s God.”

GM Wow—you mean Babbage believed?
P.JF Sure, don’t you recall this:

> The Eastern says fate governs everything and he sits and looks pretty; we believe in Free-will and Predestination and we invent Babbage’s Calculating Machine.

GM Who said that?
P.JF A little known English author, G.K. Chesterton—so reported Maisie
Ward in her biography (Gilbert Keith Chesterton).

GM And during this time you read more and more of Father Jaki’s writings as well? What are some of the highlights?

PJF Dale, that’s as hard for me to answer as it would be for you to answer this question about Chesterton. He wrote more than fifty books and about the same number of pamphlets, and an uncounted number of journal articles. I have a nearly complete collection of the books and pamphlets—there are still some yet to be printed which he had completed before he died in April. He has massive books like Science and Creation which is nearly a parallel work to Chesterton’s The Everlasting Man.

He has at least eight collections of essays, including some lectures such as the ones he gave at our conferences. He has several on Newman, two on the Papacy, three translations of important books by others, and texts which almost defy categorization, such as God and The Sun at Fatima, or The Theology of Priestly Celibacy, or The Sector of Science. Unlike Chesterton, he did not write fiction, but he wrote some amazing meditations on prayers. And of course a little book of four chapters on Chesterton, which every Chestertonian ought to read.

GM In a word, prolific.

PJF Dale, it is most uncanny to speak of these two men together—my bookshelves groan under their weight.

GM You link Jaki’s Science and Creation to GKC’s The Everlasting Man. Why?

PJF That book looms large for me since it was one of the first of his books I read—but also because of what I learned there. It’s not just the first six chapters, which show how every ancient civilization failed to begin real science because of their pagan infatuation with the “Great Year,” nor the most amazing seventh chapter which explores science and the Jews. No, it was the great tenth chapter, “The Sighting of New Horizons,” where I first read of the work of Pierre Duhem.
Chesterton’s Hagiographer?
Maisie Ward (1889–1975)

by Dale Ahlquist

Her father was Wilfrid Ward, who was known as the biographer of John Henry Cardinal Newman. She would be known as the biographer of G.K. Chesterton.

When she was a baby, the Wards’ neighbor, Alfred Lord Tennyson, held her in his arms and said she looked just like Henry VIII. Perhaps, it has been suggested, it was because she would become a “Defender of the Faith.”

As a street evangelist for the Catholic Evidence Guild, she defended her faith in a most public forum. It was a forum that attracted a young Catholic convert who was a law student visiting England. Although eight years her junior, he fell in love with her and proposed. She waited until he got back to Australia before accepting the proposal—by telegram. He returned to England and married Mary Josephine Ward, better known as Maisie.

In 1927, Frank and Maisie founded a Catholic Publishing company, Sheed and Ward. The “Ward” in the company’s name was supposed to have been her brother Leo, but he went off and became a priest, and so she was the other half of the partnership, even though her name was now technically Sheed. Among the many authors they would publish were Hilaire Belloc, Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, C.G. Martindale, Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and G.K. Chesterton.

In 1933, Frank and Maisie came to New York to set up an American office for Sheed and Ward. It was during this time that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin began to publish The Catholic Worker. Dorothy said that Frank and Maisie “were our first friends and over the years our most faithful ones.” In addition to her publishing and writing duties, Maisie devoted great effort to providing housing for the poor both in England and America. When she died, her friend Dorothy Day kept a long vigil beside her coffin.

The Wards maintained offices on both sides of the Atlantic until World War II, when their London office was totally destroyed by German bombers. Thus their transatlantic life came to an end and they settled in America.

She and her family had been long time friends of the Chestertons, and when Gilbert died, Frances Chesterton and Dorothy Collins asked Maisie to write Chesterton’s official biography. It was a monumental task and she worked on it for more than five years. There may have come a moment of despair when Maisie did not think she would finish it, but she was inspired to bring it to completion by the publication of The Chestertons by the widow of Chesterton’s brother Cecil. Ada Chesterton’s book was not merely unflattering toward her sister-in-law Frances, it was shockingly vicious. It prompted Maisie not only to finish her biography, but to write an addendum specifically addressing the bizarre charges in Ada’s book.

The critics have been unkind to the Maisie Ward’s Gilbert Keith Chesterton, but the reading public has not. The book has been through several editions, far outselling the other thirty books she wrote. It is still in print. Its popularity even led to a sort of sequel: Return to Chesterton. Most Chestertonians consider Maisie’s book to be the definitive biography of their man. It is an engaging compilation of personal accounts and letters, and both published and unpublished excerpts from Chesterton’s own writing. In terms of analysis it reveals Maisie Ward as a literary force in her own right. She is able to reflect on Chesterton’s profound effect on the audience for whom he wrote. But the standard dismissal from the critics is that the book is “hagiography.” The obvious rebuttal to this jibe is that we don’t know that it is hagiography until Chesterton has been canonized. What the critics are saying so artlessly is that Maisie Ward admires her subject too much. This does not amount to much criticism. What is it about Chesterton that makes his admirers admire him and his critics dislike him? His admirers include the people who have taken the trouble to read and study him. His detractors generally include those who haven’t bothered. All Chesterton’s biographers—even Ada Chesterton, who personally didn’t like the woman Gilbert married—have been admirers of their subject, often to the point where reading and knowing Chesterton completely changed their lives. He seems to have that effect on people who study him with any depth. The critics who have maintained their distance have also managed to maintain their shallowness.

Maisie Ward was drawn to Chesterton for many reasons. He was, first of all, a friend. But he was also a kindred spirit. She liked the things Chesterton liked, particularly Browning, Shakespeare, detective fiction, social justice, and the Catholic faith. And besides that, she was hilariously absent-minded.

And the fact is, she did something that is almost impossible. She managed to fit G.K. Chesterton comfortably between the covers of a book. Reading her biography of him is like spending time with the man. She brings him to life. Ann Petta of happy memory once said to me that while she loved Chesterton’s writings, Maisie’s book gave her reason to love Chesterton himself.

Hagiography? We’ll see.

Maisie Ward
What Chesterton “Becomes”

by James V. Schall, S.J.

Stanley Jaki’s essay “G.K.C. as R.C.” reflects a book edited by J.P. DeFonseca with the title, G.K.C. as M.C., a collection of G.K. Chesterton books. Father Jaki’s own essay is a rather combative analysis of several books and essays on Chesterton that endeavored to minimize or deflect the sincerity, content, or importance of Chesterton’s 1922 conversion to Roman Catholicism. What Jaki does is show that such failures to understand or accept as sincere and intelligible Chesterton’s conversion are rooted in the background theories of the critic, not in any evidence of Chesterton’s life itself. The critics have a motive for avoiding the central issue: that it was Roman Catholicism that Chesterton chose to adhere because it did provide the key that unlocked the door to what it is all about.

Jaki could never suffer fools gladly and did not think it was his mission in life to do so. He is more in the tradition of Hilaire Belloc who dealt quite bluntly with those who “dared attack my Chesterton.” Chesterton himself rather charmed critics of his motives or ideas with a lightsome hand, but one that always carried with it a clear statement of and argument about the truth of things. This double content is why to read Chesterton is always both a delight and a wrenching of one’s soul.

No doubt it is, on the surface at least, easy to avoid the truth if it appears gloomy and we think our own ideas hide no self-doubt. When critics said of Chesterton that he could not be intellectually “serious” because he was so “funny,” he pointed out that the opposite of funny is not serious. The opposite of funny is “not funny.” No conceivable reason exists why the truth cannot be likewise amusing and exhilarating. It is Christianity, nothing else, that the great poet described in the term, “Divine Comedy.” He had a reason, a reason that Chesterton understood quite well and practiced in everything he wrote.

At the beginning of his essay, Father Jaki remarked that the famous paradoxes of Chesterton were designed “to awaken the mind.” There is something already amusing in a paradox, in seeing how one thing implies another, the essence of laughter. This is why Aristotle said wit was a sign of intelligence. That Chesterton did this awakening in a manner few others have ever matched goes without saying. He does awaken minds.

Not a few quickly recognized throughout the years that Chesterton was doubly dangerous, for being so clear about what was true and for stating is in such an amusing manner. His books are generally kept away from students of philosophy and religion, lest they “corrupt the youth,” to cite a famous phrase. Still, as the Author of Christianity said in the book that depicts His life, we find many who choose not to open their minds to the truth that makes them free. Some do seem to prefer darkness to light. The mystery of iniquity unavoidably lurks in the shadows of the good. We learn this lesson at least as early as our first reading of the book of Genesis and as late as our last reading of the Confessions of Augustine.

Both Chesterton and Christ, in retrospect, address themselves to the human mind as well as to the human heart. They found, perhaps surprisingly to many, that they were, not infrequently, hated for it. Christ subsequently suffered death on the Cross. Chesterton suffered the death dealt to great minds who state the truth, the death of being ignored in their argument while being praised in their style. This refusal to admit that Chesterton meant what he knew and believed is the main concern of Father Jaki in this essay.

One of the most memorable passages in Chesterton, who was a man often accused of innocence and optimism, is his walk with Father O’Connor in which the question of evil and the influence of Satan were quietly discussed. In the meantime, students of Cambridge had no idea of the profundity of the knowledge of the Church on the reality of evil’s influence.

Jaki is continually struck by the disbelief or incomprehension of non-Catholics, and sometimes even Catholics, that surrounds the practice of confession. They cannot imagine that Chesterton was not naïve when he repeated, as he often did, that the main reason he became a Catholic was to rid himself of his sins. Either, they surmised, he had no sins or he was unsophisticated.

That Chesterton may have indeed sinned seems overly dramatic, except when critics want to apply some Freudian theory to Chesterton’s claims. Chesterton himself had examined such theories and found them wanting. They did not explain what needed to be explained, namely, how to be rid of one’s sins. There was only one organization that even claimed the power to do this. That was the Church. Jaki has great fun with one critic’s ignorant remark that two priests heard
Chesterton's first confession in the very unlovely church by the railroad hotel in Beaconsfield.

In the cases of C.S. Lewis and Chesterton, a veritable library of speculation has been written about why one did not become a Roman Catholic and the other did. The initial strand of Jaki’s treatment has to do with the period from about 1910 until 1922, when Chesterton clearly had leanings towards the faith but was hesitant for a number of understandable reasons to take the step. Some had to do with his wife and mother, others with his general busyness and disorganization, others with the time it takes often to meet the right people, arrive at the right moment, and make the final decision. It is not unlike reading Augustine’s slow process of conversion that he describes for us in the Confessions.

The book that most annoyed Jaki was Alzina Dale’s The Outline of Sanity: A Biography of G.K. Chesterton. “Most revealingly, Dale claims that in 1914 only those dogmas mattered to Chesterton that Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics had in common,” Jaki writes.

Wries Dale, “The differences that he cared about lay primarily in the matters of daily discipline and habits.”

Replies Jaki, in Catholic Essays:

This extraordinary appraisal of Chesterton’s state of mind and of the respective nature of Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic dogmas is cannily left by Dale in its stupefying, primitive vagueness. Finally, she deplores the fact that from that time on Roman Catholic literary and social leaders began to count Chesterton a one of their own.

Jaki obviously was most concerned when Chesterton’s real interest was made out to be something that was not distinctively Roman Catholic.

Father Jaki goes on, in issue after issue, to show that in fact Chesterton did know what Catholic teaching was in its uniqueness and intelligence. He also noted that Chesterton’s major books about his conversion, The Catholic Church and Conversion, The Thing, and The Well and the Shallows have been ignored or played down.

Jaki also shows that the three intellectual books that Chesterton wrote after his conversion, St Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis, and The Everlasting Man do show the depths of Chesterton’s understanding of Catholicism and the arguments that support it.

Jaki ends his essay emphasizing the “perennial vigor of the Roman Catholic Church.” This vigor was what Chesterton often remarked on. Why did it keep coming back when it should have, like other institutions of man, disappeared long ago? The answer was, he finally realized, that while it was composed of souls like Pius X or Pius XI, good men but fairly ordinary, still there was something more than ordinary about that office originally founded on Peter. It was this fact, in Jaki’s mind, the strange resurgence of the Church built on Peter that “Chesterton wanted to drive home with his paradoxes and awaken his readers’ minds.” The famous gates of Hell, were, it seems, not prevailing against it. In the end, the Church was saving for us those things that, ultimately, would delight us, starting with our very minds.

Seer of Scientism

by John Peterson

Father Stanley L. Jaki was uniquely qualified to address the problem of scientism. He held advanced degrees in both science and philosophy, and this included PhDs in physics and theology and post-doctoral research in the philosophy of science.

But what is scientism?

In “Antagonist of Scientism,” the second chapter of his groundbreaking Seer of Science, Father Jaki defined this heresy as the doctrine that science has “supreme competency in all fields,” a centuries-old belief that was not formally defined until the nineteenth century. It was, as Jaki describes it, a form of “intellectual imperialism” that was “the chief characteristic of the times in which Chesterton grew up.”

According to Jaki, there were and are five major varieties of scientism. First is the very unscientific disregard for logic that so characterizes “popular science.” It is this disregard that Jaki claims is “the very essence of scientism: science degraded to the level of quackery.”

A second manifestation of scientism, says Jaki, is the domain of legitimate scientists “who comment on patently non-scientific subjects such as man’s immortality—a purely philosophical matter.” As Jaki points out, the empiricism of Francis Bacon, which has controlled the physical sciences since the seventeenth century, was focused on material events and causes. It did not allow for soul, grace, morality, the miraculous, the sacred, or the spiritual. In fact, as Jaki says, it could not allow for these things because Bacon’s empiricism was by definition limited to what can be observed, measured, and quantified.

The essence of this fallacy is a refusal to accept that empirical or experimental science is limited to the work of discovering and applying truths about the material world. In Jaki’s view, empiricism is a wonderful thing until the empirical view is imposed on religion and morality, where measurement and quantification are generally beside the point.

The dominance of materialist thinking owes its popular acceptance to what Jaki calls “institutionalized materialism.” It is force-fed in the schools, from the atheistic commentators of Darwin’s day, like Herbert Spence and Thomas Huxley, to the atheistic commentators of the current moment, like Richard Dawkins and Steven Jay Gould. Their
In the chapter, “Critic of Evolutionism” from Fr. Stanley L. Jaki’s 1986 book, Chesterton: A Seer of Science, Fr. Jaki explains G.K. Chesterton’s main objection to evolutionism as a sloppy philosophy that uses analogies drawn from biological theory as the basis for its business, social, and political ideology. The folly is easy to see when it comes to evolutionary support for the myth of progress, which Chesterton called the belief in Mondayism. It is more difficult to see through the errors of mis-applying natural selection. There are few ideas more widely discussed, and more widely misunderstood. We know, as well as we know anything scientific, that natural selection can and does account for the variety of species we see around us, why they do what they do, and are what they are. In this, good Chestertonian that I am, I am following Chesterton’s logic. And, if I read Jaki right, I think he agrees with me.

As Fr Jaki explains, the error creeps in over personifying natural selection as a kind of benign natural deity. For example, consider the statement, “Natural selection ensures the survival of a species.” While biologically true, this statement lends itself to overemphasis when taken out of the context of biology. This tendency can be seen if we substitute some other biological process in our original statement: “digestion ensures the survival of a species.” While biologically true, but no sane person would base an ideology on the digestive process; the biological limit is obvious. So it should be with natural selection, but is not.

Why is this so? Natural selection is just a process by which species are maintained, go extinct, or come into being. Let us define our terms. Natural selection is persistence from one generation to the next of the genetic stock of any individual that is able to survive and reproduce. A collection of these potentially reproducing individuals make up a population. Populations track the changes in a habitat or environment over time, and members of a population descend only from those...
With natural selection as the premise, we are right to reject evolutionism. No species can evolve closer to its habitat as it is now. In the past, every species was as closely evolved to its habitat as it is now. No species can evolve closer to its environment than it is, or was in the past, or will be in the future. Stated differently, every species is a link, and clearly not a missing link. The only links that are missing are the intermediate forms, and—what Chesterton and Jaki both point out—no blending of distinctions. Paraphrasing Chesterton, for a species to survive, nature, like art, requires that lines be drawn between one thing and another. With natural selection as the premise, these statements are all true:

- Every species is at the end of its evolution in the present.
- Every species is at a transitional stage compared to the future.
- In the past, every species was as closely evolved to its habitat as it is now.
- No species can evolve closer to its environment than it is, or was in the past, or will be in the future.

Every argument, no matter how logical or reasonable or heartfelt, can make up for being wrong about the failure of DDT to kill insect pests, the failure of antibiotics, and what will soon be the disastrous failure of genetically modified crops. And no argument, no matter how logical or reasonable or heartfelt, will make up for the demise of our Western culture now that the traditional family is no longer supported in law.

Natural selection explains these things as a proximate material cause. For example, natural selection cannot tell us if we have a free will, for that is not a materialist question and is outside of the competence of biology. What natural selection can tell us is that belief in free will is beneficial for the survival of human beings. If things go wrong (and in life, they do), people who believe in free will have the ability to decide to turn their lives around, pick themselves up, start anew and rebuild. Fatalists, behaviorists, determinists, and assorted logicians who do not believe in free will cannot turn their lives around and start anew—they self destruct and despair. For biology, it is a meaningless to ask if there actually is free will or not; the survival benefit accrues from behavior arising from belief in free will.

Another example: The belief that one has the duty to be a faithful husband or wife and raise one’s children, including the religious underpinnings of that belief, is adaptive from a biological standpoint. Such people will produce children who in turn do the same. Anyone who lacks this belief, whether due to an erosion of religious custom, social norms, or whatever reason, is not genetically represented in the next generation. It does not matter how fulfilled they are personally, how fit they are, how fast they rock-climb, how many houses they own, how good they are at acting, singing, dancing, or making money. If they do not produce descendents within a faithful family and instil these principles in their descendents, their lineages die out.

Biologically, neither intelligence nor scientific truth is sufficient for survival. Natural selection predicts that an illiterate people who love its children will survive; whereas a technologically enlightened culture that does not know that a mother must teach her daughters how to make cookies, that a father must go fishing with his kids, that aunts and uncles and friends must help teach the domestic skills of friendship, home and hearth—in short, that a culture that forgets these things is doomed to extinction. No knowledge or truth will help a society survive once it forgets what a marriage is, what a family is.

Ironically, natural selection is a fickle god, favoring religious fundamentalists who deny it but get family life right, and punishing brilliant, scientifically astute pro-choice libertines who ignore their family duties in the pursuit of self-fulfillment.

And that is a very Chestertonian paradox.
Peanuts character Lucy is giving writing advice to Snoopy sitting at a typewriter. “You should write about something pleasant,” she says. “You know, something that will make everyone happy.”

Heresy is not a happy topic, but in the hands of Father Stanley Jaki, it was positively humorous. At the 2005 Chesterton conference, Father Jaki gave a talk on Heretics, the G.K. Chesterton book we were celebrating that anniversary year.

Father Jaki’s talk was interesting, insightful and amusing. Jaki quipped that the New York Times was an “infallible daily dogmatic organ of secularism.” He also remarked to great laughter that the Chesterton’s book Heretics was “Nineteen-chapters, all equivalent to a most delightful fruitcake,” after which he said the book, “could easily cause indigestion if taken in at one sitting,” presumably, and possibly quite originally, comparing Chesterton’s work to fruitcake-eating.

One notable insight Jaki brings is that although heresy is usually a word reserved for religion, Chesterton most often was fighting a sort of worldview heresy. Jaki described those old heresies Chesterton had to fight back in the early twentieth century, and compared them with the new heresies of this century.

Fr. Jaki said that the most universally valid point in Heretics remains valid today. It is that there are first principles, or what Jaki calls fundamentals, representing the ultimate or rock bottom. To argue anything is to start from first principles, but today’s debaters and philosophers want to leave even the rock bottom up to individual opinion. Chesterton argued that rock bottom was rock bottom.

Heretics, Jaki told his listeners, took various literary men of the times and discussed not their books, but the actual doctrine that they each taught. But before taking apart these men and their ideals, Chesterton laid out his fundamentals so the reader could compare. A person’s view of the universe, Chesterton argued, was just as important when arguing religion as it was when renting a room.

Fr. Jaki then makes the remarkable observation that the men Chesterton chose to dismember have (mostly) long been forgotten. But because his work is so universally true and will probably never go out of print, Chesterton has effectively memorialized the very forgettable men he picks apart as heretics.

What heresies would Chesterton fight today? What is different in our world from one hundred years ago? The pseudo-divide of religion from science creates debate that wages ever on in our world. The religion of Science today has an even larger number of converts than in Chesterton’s time. Sometimes it is disguised as environmentalism, or it manifests itself in the worship of technology, or belief in the salvation of math. And it seems that people today would rather wear an infinity symbol around their necks than a cross. Math provides more meaning to them than Jesus.

As in Chesterton’s time, the media today are dogmatically secularist in their preaching, although today’s talking heads seem more even more involved in telling people what to believe than in neutrally reporting the facts.

And, as in Chesterton’s time, breaking the rules is viewed as more exciting than keeping them, although it is the opposite course that is true. It is funny how fashionable and modern people think they are when they rebel against the norm—when they are really quite predictable. The English teacher who describes herself as a feminist, or the teenage “goth” boy who revels in nihilism: neither is half so daring as they think they are. Each is actually as predictable and tame as, well, a fruitcake.

While Chesterton and his wife Frances kept dogs as pets, I do not think the pet heresy as we see it today—dog spas, doggie Advent Calendars, dog clothing fashions, and dog hotels—was a factor in early twentieth-century England. Couples now chose to have dogs instead of children, carting them around in doggie baby buggies and front-pack carriers and letting their dogs chose the color of their water bowls. People have certainly always loved their pets, but today some pets are treated like babies—or better.

This generation has had a deteriorating belief in the will. People today believe choices are made by determining what makes one happy or what makes one feel good. Saying no to one’s self is repressive, judgmental, and produces guilt. Free will is a belief of the past, taught to us by overbearing, ruler-carrying nuns.

Chesterton early on warned against the consequences of birth control; the abortion problem wasn’t quite as large as it is now. Birth control in Chesterton’s time was touted as the cure for abortions. We see how well that worked. Today’s children are taught that abortion is a simple medical procedure, no more harmful than going to the dentist.

The heresy of Sunday is a modern heresy. In Chesterton’s day, Sunday was a day of rest, a day for church, family, and friends. Today Sunday is for shopping. It’s a catch-up day from working away from home. Public schools are now open on Sunday to have a “Reading Event” for parents and children so that parents don’t have to bother with reading to their children at home in the living room on their own laps.

Like Fr. Jaki, Chesterton remained a fundamentalist, believing dogmatically in first principles and the rock bottom. Jaki’s exploration of Chesterton’s work reminds us that if we don’t start at the bottom, we’re heretics too.

As Snoopy contemplates Lucy’s suggestion about happy topics, he begins to type. “The cat,” he writes, as only a dog would write if a dog could write about heresy, “left the room.”
Liberal Thinking

David W. Fagerberg

I remember once being made uncomfortable about my occupation as a professor of theology. It was at a table of strangers at the reception dinner after a wedding, and the conversation began to unearth certain presuppositions that clashed with my profession. These were civic activists who bicycled to work, recycled their newspapers, cleansed their colons, grew home herb gardens and ate organic tomatoes, worked their way through the New York Times' bestsellers list on summer vacation, volunteered at the women's shelter, and walked for a cure for diabetes.

What did I look like to them? I was a professor. Strike one.

I taught instead of doing. My subject matter was theology. Strike two.

I read books by dead white European males. And my area of focus was the liturgy. Strike three.

In this world of chaos and sorrow, I didn't light a candle to dispel the darkness; I read a book about candles that pious old ladies lit in the bowels of a cathedral for which the Church had taken money from the poor to build.

It was an uncomfortable reception dinner.

To this suspicious crowd, I could have defended my hopelessly out-of-date irrelevancy by joking, as I sometimes have, that I read dead authors because I don't want to expend the time reading someone who is still alive and might any day change his mind and in his next book retract everything he has said so far. And under this principle, it is sad to note, but good fortune for me, that it is time for me to begin reading more by Fr. Stanley Jaki, although I doubt that my concerns would actually have been grounded in his case. It seems that he would not change his mind, that he has not changed his mind since he started writing, even though he wrote about all sorts of things.

The reason for this consistency of thought is revealed, I think, in a theological essay Jaki wrote entitled "Liberalism and Theology," in which he identifies liberalism as "a habit of mind, a point of view, a way of looking at things." What is that spirit? He quotes Dorothy Thompson who said "liberalism is a kind of spirit and a sort of behavior, the basis of which is an enormous respect for personality."

By that, Jaki was not villainizing the liberal person, or the liberal cause, uncritically. He was too critical a thinker to do that. He can acknowledge the liberal's capacity for justice, truthfulness, and self-command; liberals can be generous, open-minded, and enterprising. But even so, Jaki says, "It is the essence of liberalism to focus on material well-being down here on earth." Of course, liberalism will then work for justice and generosity: we want well-being here on earth. However, the result (or cause) of this is an excessive focus upon the natural, and Jaki proceeds to work out the special emphasis on the natural over the supernatural in liberal approaches to creation, sin, Jesus, the sacraments, the priesthood, and more.

"What is the common theological trait of all these manifestations of liberalism in theology? It is the upsetting of the balance between the natural and the supernatural."

At reading this, I thought of my dinner companions at the wedding reception, and concluded that ‘liberal’ was precisely the right word to define them. They were reformers who worked for a good earth, and my study of a supernatural subject seemed to them childish. Jaki had described them without ever having met them, because he had met them a hundred times in other persons before. "Hence the emphasis of liberal theologians on respect, in the guise of ecological concern, for Nature as if Nature had been created for its own sake and not for man's sake." Save the planet, but we are not sure if we have souls to save, or if they need saving.

Upset the balance of nature and super-nature, and something goes wrong, as Chesterton noted. "As a fact, men only become greedily and gloriously material about something spiritualistic. Take away the Nicene Creed and similar things, and you do some strange wrong to the sellers of sausages. Take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural." Chesterton's conversion to Catholicism in no way involved a turning away from the world, or away from science, or away from the delights of nature. His conversion did involve finding a way to shoehorn the supernatural into the liberal's stubborn mind.

When Chesterton came to that, he one time also found himself at an uncomfortable dinner. His companion at a Cambridge dinner abruptly turned to him and said, "Excuse my asking, Mr. Chesterton, of course I shall quite understand if you prefer not to answer, and I shan't think any the worse of it, you know, even if it's true. But I suppose I'm right in thinking you don't really believe in things you're defending against Blatchford?"

Chesterton informed him that he most definitely did. "Oh, you do," he said, "I beg your pardon. Thank you. That's all I wanted to know." And Chesterton concludes, "he went on eating his (probably vegetarian) meal. But I was sure that for the rest of the evening, despite his calm, he felt as if he were sitting next to a fabulous griffin."

Imagine! A theologian who was a scientist, a scientist who believed in the supernatural—Jaki was a fabulous griffin himself.
In Another Language

by Kyro R. Lantsberger

I had the opportunity to meet Fr. Stanley Jaki a few years ago. I shared a breakfast table with him and Gier Hasnes during one of the Chesterton conferences at the University of St. Thomas. We had a wonderful, wide-ranging discussion that spanned such topics as the Church in Scandinavia, Sigrid Undset, and St. Jean Vianney. It was wonderful to spend time with two individuals of such deep and varied credentials. Fr. Jaki struck me as a true priest, a man who had poured out his life in his vocations, both in Holy Orders and as an intellectual. I have traveled and lived in Eastern Europe, and the Hungarian heritage of Fr. Jaki, the sharpness of his features and bearing, lends an authority to his words, and his words were those of someone whose mind and soul had spent a lifetime bathed in prayer, study, and teaching. I am truly grateful for the brief minutes I had with these companions. I must say that the level of conversation, however, coupled with the international nature of my associates, at times made me think that they must be speaking in another language.

It is with this thought of language and communication in mind that I approach Fr. Jaki’s treatment of G.K. Chesterton as the “Interpreter of Science.” Chesterton’s academic shortfalls as judged by the British school system of his time are part of the lighthearted mystique surrounding his development as a writer and as a human being. In terms of Chesterton’s actual scientific credentials, Fr. Jaki honestly relates that this aspect of Chesterton’s transcript is the thinnest of that already meager volume. Maisie Ward, one of the definitive scholars of Chesterton, also emphasizes this point.

This outlook, however, is a mis-characterization of Chesterton. Returning in memory to Gier Hasnes, I recall part of his talk that year dealt with stereotypes and caricatures of Chesterton, although this particular aspect was not a point covered by Gier, it certainly fits with his theme. A 1965 index compiled of Chesterton’s writings, as quoted by Fr. Jaki, finds nearly an equal appearance of the terms “science and evolution” as “religion” and “Catholic Church.” Chesterton was among the first in the literary and journalistic circles of his day to criticize individuals and groups advocating eugenics. It was in this context that Chesterton accused science of providing a mere vulgar familiarity with matter and of generating wordy explanations to cover the errors of the rich. Early critics branded Chesterton unfairly as anti-science because of these positions.

Fr. Jaki wonderfully unravels the conundrum posed by Chesterton in this regard. To Jaki, Chesterton is not a scientist but a realist; he was a man of letters who could accurately capture the caricatures of science and expose their prejudices. And one who could also provide the metaphysical grounds for science to bear fruit. Chesterton’s thought begins with the real, the hard realities of the senses and the experience of life, and then moves to the world of thoughts and ideas. Fr. Jaki contrasts this against the pillars of modern philosophy, Kant and Descartes, who begin with thought and reason but never quite manage to bring their ideas down into the material world. Metaphysics is often called “The Science Before Science,” and it was in this area that Chesterton makes his finest contribution, showing the hidden dogmas and agendas behind many who attempt to misuse science. Actually, if one thinks of it, the dispassionate outlook required by the scientific method, clearing the subject of all distractions and illusions, sounds rather like the recollection required for true prayer.

G.K. Chesterton did not have credentials in physics, advanced mathematics, or any training in statistical modeling or research methodologies. However, if one chooses to see science as a tool which enables us to acquire knowledge about the world around us, and to make sense of our observations of the material world, then Chesterton certainly is a scientist, merely in another language.
“Champion of the Universe”

by Dale Ahlquist

To acknowledge the contingency of the universe is hardly a natural move. It has never been natural for fallen man to fall on his knees.

Chesterton: A Seer of Science is a comfort to those of us who, not being scientists, still manage to understand the importance of science without being sucked into a matter-anti-matter vortex. I still remember the intellectual stimulation and delight I experienced when I first read Fr. Stanley L. Jaki’s book almost twenty years ago. Here was a man with both scientific and theological credentials who spoke with a certitude rarely seen in the modern academic world, who was not intimidated by science (or “the so-called scientific establishment and its pseudo-philosophical consensus” as Jaki says), and who presented a plethora of G.K. Chesterton’s profound insights drawing from an astonishing amount of material.

Meeting Fr. Jaki, first on the phone and then in person about fifteen years later, only confirmed my initial impressions. I was bowled over both by his intelligence and the clarity with which he explained cumbersome and difficult ideas. I felt like I had earned a college degree after every conversation. He spoke at our Chesterton Conferences in St. Paul, Minnesota, three years in a row. His first talk was about this book, Chesterton: A Seer of Science.

But the more troubling reception was that the initial skirmish regarding the lecture series and the book was also the last. The book was subsequently ignored, just as Chesterton has largely been ignored by the academic world. It has remained the most effective way of dealing with him. But as Jaki points out in the final chapter of the book, Chesterton was more interested in serving the cause of the universe than of the university.

Jaki calls Chesterton a “champion of the universe.” His wonder of the world obviously led him to a wonder of its creator, but Jaki emphasizes that it began with “youthful attentiveness” to the universe and all it encompassed that propelled Chesterton “toward developing a philosophy in which the real universe played a pivotal part.”

Chesterton is a realist. Not in the moody and muddy artistic sense but in the happily mud-splattered philosophical sense. He can play in the mud because he appreciates the reality of things, the reality of the universe. Thus his scientific insight. As Jaki said in his conference talk: “Chesterton hit the nail of science on the head again and again because he loved reason and even more so reality, which is far more in its fullness than cold logic, or a mere push and pull between bodies. Reality, even non-living matter, is vibrant with the vigor of a marvel, which greatly appealed to every sinew in Chesterton’s entire make-up.”

For me, it was sublime to see the great mind of Jaki stand in admiration of the great mind of Chesterton. He points out that Chesterton’s early debates with Blatchford were dealing with merely “the low levels of materialism or atheism.” When Chesterton encountered more sophisticated thinkers like Shaw, he was forced to speak more sophisticatedly. But, says Jaki, “Chesterton became a philosopher without ceasing to be a poet. And this is what makes Chesterton’s philosophical works both most difficult as well as delightful reading. The poet always reasserts himself. In ‘The Ethics of Elfland’ there is not a single paragraph without a poetical interruption of lines of ordinary reasoning.”

As the Champion of the Universe, Chesterton disputes moral and philosophical relativism. He writes in All is Grist: “The world must be some shape, and it must be that shape and no other; and it is not self-evident that nobody can possibly hit on the right one.” (and as Jaki points out in a footnote—Chesterton elsewhere equates shapelessness with evil—even with Satan himself.)

Form is a frame. Facts are limits. The universe is, in the terms of physics, a particular event. Worse still, it is a contingent event. The ramifications of that resound as they touch everything else. It points to a Creator. It is not something that one can be neutral about. “Chesterton knew,” says Jaki, “that truth demands commitment to it.”
The English Chesterton Society Conference

July 4, 2009: The Holiness of Chesterton

by Fr. Thomas Lutz

OXFORD, England—This summer’s conference of the (English) Chesterton Society began on a Distributist note when Dr. William Oddie, chairman of the Chesterton Society, began his introductory remarks by reminding attendees, “Only those who had paid for sandwiches would be eligible to eat them.”

Even so, it was holiness, and not Distributism, that dominated the July 4 conference, held at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Oxford University.

Along with Oddie, speakers included Dr. Sheridan Gilley, member of the editorial board of the Chesterton Review and a Trustee of the Chesterton Institute of Faith and Culture; Fr. Ian Kerr, a senior research fellow in theology at St. Benet’s Hall, Oxford, and expert biographer of the soon-to-be beatified John Henry Cardinal Newman; Fr. John Saward, a fellow of Blackfriars and pastor of Saints Gregory & Augustine Church, Oxford; and Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., a member of the Cambridge University Divinity faculty.

Oddie began with “Faith, Hope, and Charity: the basic Chestertonian Virtues,” and recalled first the paper he delivered to the 2008 American Chesterton Society conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, at which he was asked what stage the cause toward G.K. Chesterton’s beatification had reached. Oddie replied, “There was no cause,” explaining that there had to be evidence of a “local cult.”

In what may go down in the annals of canonization history, one man stood up and, indicating the audience of approximately 500, said, “What the heck do they think we are?”

In a paradox that Chesterton would surely love, Oddie said that while many argue that Chesterton was indeed a saint, others say it would be

Soon after the Oxford conference, a prayer for private use only for the beatification of G.K. Chesterton was composed by a priest and layman who attended the conference and who wished to remain anonymous.

GOD OUR FATHER, You filled the life of your servant Gilbert Keith Chesterton with a sense of wonder and joy, and gave him a faith which was the foundation of his ceaseless work, a charity towards all men, particularly his opponents, and a hope which sprang from his lifelong gratitude for the gift of human life.

May his innocence and his laughter, his constancy in fighting for the Christian faith in a world losing belief, his lifelong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and his love for all men, particularly for the poor, bring cheerfulness to those in despair, conviction and warmth to lukewarm believers, and the knowledge of God to those without faith. We beg you to grant us the favours we ask through his intercession (and especially for………), so that his holiness may be recognized by all and the Church may proclaim him Blessed. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Attendees at the July 4 Chesterton Conference in Oxford, England, listen to Fr. John Saward
was dry during Prohibition. Frances became quite ill during her visit. Gilbert canceled several of his engagements and summoned the local Catholic priest to her bedside. Frances, lying in bed, sees a perfectly gigantic priest....swarthy as a Spaniard, enter her room. The priest greeted her boisterously: “I was told ye were ill: but I didn’t know how ill. I’ve brought the Holy Oils.”

“Then take them away again. I don’t want them just yet,” Frances said. However she consented to a drink of bootleg whiskey and a blessing. After administering the whiskey (which, the priest assured her, was quality stuff), the priest intoned, “Benedicat te Omnipotens Deus, etc. etc.” he said, followed by huge laughter from both of them.

“Mirth or humor is the antidote to the sin of spiritual pride in the soul of man,” Kerr said. “Chesterton firmly believed in the divinity of laughter.”

Kerr concluded by telling the Oswego biscuit story, in which a cold, snow-covered Chesterton once arrived at a vicarage for a winter lecture and was offered an Oswego biscuit by the priest. Chesterton heartily laughed, turned about face, and entered the public house across the street for a warm satisfying meal and drink.

The last two speakers were Fr. Saward and Fr. Nichols. Saward was counterproductive to name him one. The object of the Oxford conference was to entertain the possibility of Chesterton’s cause—Catholic lingo for, “Did this man live virtues to a heroic degree, and can we persuade the Church to at least look into it a bit?”

Gilley recalled the Church’s practice of creating patron saints for all sorts of professions, even tanners; and suggested the future possibility of declaring Chesterton a patron saint of journalists. Chesterton often said that he was a “jolly journalist” and had a strong affection for his fellow journalists. “It is a remarkable thing,” stated Gilley, “that G.K. Chesterton is still widely quoted today by the same journalists who honor his memory.”

Father Ian Kerr, speaking next, recalled Chesterton writing that “Humor is undignified, that’s why it is so good for the soul.” He reminded his audience; “Mirth or humor is the antidote to the sin of spiritual pride in the soul of man.” A good joke or humorous story about oneself can help erase embedded pride in any man. Chesterton, more than most, recognized this and wielded his colossal humor to disarm the proud and faulty arguments of his the most gifted opponents. “Chesterton firmly believed in the divinity of laughter.” Kerr said.

He told the delightfully humorous true story of Gilbert and Frances Chesterton’s visit to Chattanooga, Tennessee, which is Puritan and

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addressed Chesterton’s deep spiritual childhood and “this childlikeness in Chesterton’s soul as the first indication of his sanctity.”

“Chesterton,” Fr. Saward said, “lived with a childlike awe and wonder of God’s creation and his profound gratitude for the gift of life and sheer existence,” were ever evident in his writings. Fr. Saward sees Chesterton as a “true apostle of the Gospel of Life,” by his heroic witness against the social acceptance of suicide as a corruption of the social order and the human soul. Fr. Saward noted the timeliness of this Chestertonian warning, pointing toward the present drive toward state-sponsored assisted-suicide in the United Kingdom and many other Western democracies.

In final lecture, Fr. Aidan Nichols noted that it was beyond his ability to compress Chesterton’s orthodox theology into one short lecture, though he gives full treatment of this topic in his most recent book, Chesterton: the Theologian. Nevertheless, Fr. Nichols summarized several of Chesterton’s theological points of view, most notably the reasons for his conversion to Catholicism and his post conversion-conversion. Nichols defined a Doctor of the Church as, “a teacher of the faith par excellence.” Chesterton described the Church as “much bigger on the inside than on the outside...the world inside out, and the greatest truth the world as ever conceived.”

Nichols explained the term, penned by Chesterton, of the “fossilization of Protestantism.” The post-Reformation churches are the shell of the Catholic Church—frozen in time. Fr. Nichols concluded by stating that if G.K. Chesterton is ever declared a Doctor of the Church, he will certainly be known as a “controversialist doctor, similar to the likes of St. Cyril of Alexandria.” Chesterton is indeed a Doctor of Orthodoxy, par excellence.
The Explorer

by John Peterson

The alien had no name in the Earthly sense, nor any need for one. He was what we would call an explorer by profession, and his task was to seek out and find stores of the most precious commodity in the universe—water. That was why, when he first caught sight of planet Earth, he thought his perceptual sensors might be deceiving him. Here were quantities of water beyond explosion without harm to himself or could imagine. or, perhaps, it would be better to colonize the place. Those decisions were not his to make.

He was not surprised to learn that the planet teemed with biological life, and judging by the artificial light showing on its dark side, there surely was intelligent life there as well; but he did not see that as a threat. He thought it unlikely that this race would have the means to detect his space craft, let alone destroy it. He could fly directly through the heart of a small nuclear anomaly in the unlikely event that the alien's ship were to be destroyed by weaponry powerful enough for that purpose, a sub-space warning message would be sent automatically to his home base. To date, no explorer craft had ever been destroyed, and no such message had ever been sent.

For his initial surveillance, the alien used equipment in the spacecraft to read and manipulate what Earthlings would call DNA to change himself into a bird—a hover hawk. After some hours of flying and surveying the countryside below, he decided to settle in a small town near Minneapolis. He returned to his craft and changed himself into a human being, a young man of pleasant though rather ordinary appearance. After having procured a collection of suitable clothing and currency during midnight visits to a retail store and a bank, he settled in at a home whose owners were taking an extended vacation. The house was not far from a public library.

After several weeks, and when he was close to wrapping up his information-gathering duties, he was approached by a woman whose home he walked past daily in his trips to and from the library.

“Mr. Allen!” she cried. Her name, he had learned, was Kate Hansen.

“Please call me Albert,” he replied, having noted the first-name style of address popular among the Earthlings of this place.

“Well, Albert, where are you off to on this Thanksgiving afternoon?”

“More research at the library,” he said. On the occasion of their first exchange of pleasantries, he had discovered to his surprise that he did not speak the woman’s language perfectly. She had asked him what his home country was and because he wanted to name a place whose accent she would be unlikely to be familiar with, he picked Ukraine.

Kate was staring at him. “But Albert,” she said, “you must know the library isn’t open on Thanksgiving. Here,” she said, taking his arm and steering him toward the house. “You’re having Thanksgiving with us.”

After Grandpa had said grace, the Hansen family began enjoying their feast in earnest. The alien, who until now had been eating perfunctory meals at a restaurant simply to nourish his human body, was surprised at how good this dinner was. He was very nearly overwhelmed by the sheer number of the inviting and delicious foods and the variety of flavors and aromas that somehow blended together perfectly.

“What did you do for a living in the Ukraine, Albert?” Grandpa asked.

“I was an astronomer,” the alien replied.

“Oh, cool!” Tommy said. “Did you get to look at the stars and planets with a big telescope?”

“Well, no, Tommy,” the alien replied. “In my studies we used radio telescopes.”

“We read about radio telescopes in science class,” Jenny said.

At the library, the alien had quickly learned that the earth was technologically primitive by any standard, and his own people would have nothing to hinder them from exterminating the population and taking this planet’s water. Then he read something that surprised him. His education had taught him that intelligent races were always organized in one of two possible ways. There were societies structured as hives and there were societies composed of individuals. The people of his own home planet were of the individualist breed. The peoples of Earth, he discovered, were organized in a third way—a sort of compromise between hives and individualists. They were organized into units called “families,” and it was clear that the Hansens were a typical instance of a family.

The alien’s attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of Kate’s younger sister Edith rising and banging on the table with a spoon. “Let me propose a toast,” she said, raising her wine glass. “Welcome to America, Albert. We are delighted to call you our neighbor and friend.”

The alien had been so enchanted by the Earth’s pure and abundant drinking water, he had never been interested in sampling the brewed or fermented versions of liquid that this planet had to offer. Now he drank deeply from his wine glass—and the Hansens forgave him for drinking to himself, assuming he was following a Ukrainian custom. For his part, the alien was finding his first taste of wine overwhelming in delicious complexity. It gladdened his Earthly heart. He stole a glance at Edith. He found he was attracted to her, in an Earthly way. Also, she was unattached, or to put it in this family’s way of speaking, she was neither married nor engaged.

After dinner, Kate showed the alien around the Hansen home. It was
an interesting tour, but he was puzzled by the amount of food on display in the kitchen.

“Excuse me if the question is impertinent, Kate,” he said, “but you seem to have prepared three times the amount of food that your family could possibly eat at one sitting.”

“Oh, you are right,” she replied. “We’ll be taking this extra food to the homeless shelter. My sisters and I will play waitress.”

“I see,” the alien said.

“Tommy!” Kate said in a stern voice. “Stop teasing your sister. And I mean note!”

“Come with me, Uncle Albert,” Bessie said, holding out her tiny hand. The alien took hold of it gently and allowed himself to be led to the stairway. Up on the second floor, he was shown into Bessie’s bedroom. It was full of treasures.

“This is my baby, Babsy,” she said, holding up a large doll complete with rattle and baby bottle.

“Tommy!” she said. “He taught me how to think about the moves.”

Later the alien overheard Tommy talking to his Aunt Edith about the game.

“He taught you some better moves, then?”

“No,” Tommy said. “He taught me ever to have a family of their own.

**Sweethearting**

by James G. Bruen Jr.

“Did it, Ma!” exclaimed Todd Doane as he burst from the small office into the common area of Ma D’s Grocery Store. “I told you I’d figure it out!”

Jeannette Doane, “Ma D” to one and all, was at a cash register, doing checkouts. “Excuse me for a moment, Mrs. Michaels,” she said, interrupting her conversation with a customer. “Did what, dear?” she asked, turning from the items she was scanning.

“I know who’s been ripping us off,” he continued. “It’s…”

“No now,” she said softly. “I’ll join you in the office in a few minutes.”

Ma D resumed scanning. “Have a nice weekend, Mrs. Michaels,” she said as she finished and the customer left. “See you next week.” Then she motioned for Alexa Peabody, a high school sophomore who worked at the family-owned grocery after school, to take over as cashier. Ma D removed her bib apron, then joined her son Todd in the office.

“I was right, Ma!” chortled Todd. “With my modernization of our operations, it was easy to find out who was stealing. Those cameras I talked the StopLoss company into installing on a trial basis? Well, they focused on the three cash registers, and the theft is on the video, clear as day for anyone to see.”

“A robber stuck us up, and I never noticed him but you got him on film, Todd?” laughed Ma D. “When you got your MBA and asked me to put you in charge of training and security, I didn’t know what to expect, but I didn’t expect you’d film invisible robbers!”

“Sweethearting, mom, not armed robbery,” Todd replied. “It’s Alexa.”

“Alexa is a sweetheart, Todd,” smiled Ma D. “And so are all of those young men and women who come over after school to visit her.”

“That’s the problem, mom,” he said. “They’re sweethearting.”

“Alexa is a sweetheart, Todd.”

“Sweethearting?”

“Alexa blocked the bar code or slips an item behind the scanner, or she passes two items while swiping one, then her friends make off with the goods without paying,” he explained.

“The camera caught her.”

“How much time did you spend reviewing video looking for this?” she asked. “You could have been helping out in the store instead.”

“No time at all, Ma. This security system’s got algorithms embedded in it—

“Algorithms?”

“…mathematical formulas. A computer uses them to look for movements it thinks are unusual, and—

“A machine thinks?” murmured Ma D.

“…whenever it identifies an anomaly at the cash register, an alert pops up on my screen, and I can look at the footage.”

Todd Doane picked up a remote, clicked it a couple of times, and an image appeared on a video monitor. He and his mother watched as a young man put several items on a conveyor.

“That’s Jimmy Lanier,” observed Ma D. “Nice boy. He took Alexa to the movies last Saturday night, you know.”

Alexa stared at Jimmy as she checked out his purchases.

“There,” exclaimed Todd as he paused the video, then restarted it in slow motion. Never taking her eyes
off Jimmy, Alexa dragged a candy bar behind the scanner before dropping it in a plastic bag.

“Is that it?” asked Ma D.

“There’s more, Ma.”

Soon, there was Alexa on the screen again, talking excitedly on her cell-phone as a middle-aged woman hurried to stack groceries on the moving belt as rapidly as space became available when Alexa swiped items across the scanner. The activity was so frenetic that, if Todd had not slowed the video, Ma D would not have noticed Alexa double up on a purchase, dragging two frozen pizzas over the scanner while swiping only one bar code. “We do have a problem,” observed Ma D.

“I can show you several more places where she sweethearted,” Todd said.

“That’s not necessary, Tod,” Ma D replied. “I’ve seen enough.”

“I called Chief Jacobs,” said Todd. “He wants to send a cop over to view the video before they’ll arrest her.”

“You called the police?” she said.

“I’d have called Alexa’s parents if anything was wrong,” she added softly.

“They’d take care of it.”

“Mom, that’s the old way,” berated Todd. “If I’m ever going to grow the business and add more stores, you’ve got to acknowledge that business is business, mom. No more sentimentality: let the law prosecute. The kids probably think this store is an easy target now. Prosecution will discourage others from trying the same thing. It’ll deter shoplifters, too. And it lets the community know we won’t be pushed around.”

“The community already knows me, Tod,” said Ma D gently. “And it knows I wouldn’t prosecute Alexa. Heaven forbid, Tod. She might even be convicted! That would never do, would it? How would I face her parents? Why would they ever come into my store again? Why would their friends come here?”

“Might even be convicted? That’s the whole point!” exclaimed Todd. “How else do we make an example of her?”

“It could ruin her life, Tod,” replied Ma D. “Besides, why would I want to convict an innocent child?”

“She’s no innocent, Ma. Just look at those videos. She’s a thief.”

“Tod, you can’t learn everything in school, not even in business school. Sometimes you have to know what’s in people, not just what’s in books and classrooms and computers and formulas. Alexa is no thief.”

“Look at those videos again, Ma,” said Todd. “Take off your rose-tinted glasses and enter the real world. People steal. Even ‘nice’ people. Protect your investment in this business. There’s no question: she’s a thief.”

“Tod, when that nice young fellow, Jimmy Lanier, noticed he’d received more change than he’d expected, he came back and insisted on paying for that candy bar. Alexa got so flustered that she came to me for instructions on what to do. Is that on your video? When I told her to scan the bar code from another candy bar, put the money in the register, and return the second bar to the display rack, she laughed, maybe from relief, but more likely because the solution was simple but she hadn’t thought of it herself in her embarrassment. She’s no thief.”

“But the two pizzas? I bet that customer didn’t return the ‘freebie.’”

“No, the second pizza wasn’t paid for, as far as I know,” said Ma D. “But take another look at that video, Tod. Alexa’s so distracted by her cell phone that she probably never realized she’d bagged two pizzas but only charged for one. Sloppy, yes; dishonest, no.”

“So you’ll let her go quietly, for negligence?” inquired Todd. “That’ll send a message too. Not as strong a message as prosecuting her, but people will take notice.”

“No, Tod,” insisted Ma D. “I won’t fire Alexa. She just needs better training and instruction. That’s the problem we have. And we both know who’s in charge of training, don’t we? You’d probably do better on that if you weren’t so focused on security and sending messages.”

Todd Doane clicked the remote; the monitor went dark.

“And, son, call Chief Jacobs again, please. Tell him there’s no need for him to send an officer to the store unless he wants to purchase some groceries.”

“Yes, mom.” 😊
Funderburke: A Book Proposal

by Chris Chan

I've wanted to be a novelist since I was little. I enjoyed reading so much that I felt a deep desire to write books of my own. As a child, I determined that when I grew up I would write solely for children by providing my peers with quality reading material. This stemmed from my deep disapproval of many of the books that were recommended for young people, since I found so many entries on library reading lists to be a) depressing, b) boring, c) patronizing, or d) all of the above.

My career goals shifted a bit over the years, but I started writing in high school, and since then I have built a substantial collection of mostly unpublished work.

I have a number of writing projects that I really want to work on, including revising some previously written novels, some historical plays, and a doctoral dissertation. There is one project, however, that seems to be mattering more and more to me: a novel I'll call Funderburke: A Cautionary Tale. One of the lessons that G. K. Chesterton has taught me is that really good books need more than literary talent behind them. They need to have an important message as well, one that readers really need to see.

Spend a few minutes in any issue of Gilbert Magazine or on any Chestertonian blog, and one social problem tends to stand out above all others: the myriad attacks on the family. These come from the government, from self-styled elites, from the manufacturers of culture, and countless other sources. There have been plenty of works that have bemoaned the demise of family values, but a couple of years ago a new approach to dealing with this problem came to me.

Growing up, I saw the devastating effects of divorce on many of my classmates. Formerly outgoing friends became withdrawn and depressed in the wake of their parents' separation. Many of my peers internalized their anger over the helplessness and betrayal they felt, and turned to all sorts of destructive activities as a consequence. Thank God I never went through anything like that myself. Even so, while growing up I came across many different books and television specials that were supposed to teach children how to deal with their parents' divorce. These depicted kids initially saddened and hurt by their parents splitting up, but by the end of the book, the child always accepted the situation, declaring that her (it was usually a girl) parents were happier apart, and she was happy they were happy.

Now, I could accept a fantasy about time travel or talking animals, but this was too much. The animated specials and picture books lied. In these divorce stories, the parents always looked out for the kids' welfare, and the split was always for vague reasons of incompatibility. Nowhere did they tell kids how to deal with a mother who wanted nothing more to do with her children, or a father with a couple of pregnant girlfriends, or the constant emotional barrages of warring parents trying to turn a child against an ex-spouse. Furthermore, they set an unreasonable standard for kids. I never knew a single child of divorce who ever accepted such a sunny view of marital dissolution. The moral was always the same: if you're a child of divorce, you should shut up, suck it up, and be glad that your parents were having fun with other partners.

Funderburke would denounce this view for the massive stinking pile of elephant manure it is. Funderburke would ideally be for the divorce industry what Uncle Tom's Cabin was for slavery. The central character is Isaiah Funderburke, an angry twenty-something who has devoted himself to the cause of children's rights. A child of divorce himself, Funderburke is traumatized by the anger, neglect, emotional blackmail, manipulation, and betrayal that his parents and their lawyers inflict upon him during their divorce. Funderburke grows up a pawn in the continual war between his feuding parents, and as an adult, he spends every waking hour acting as an advocate for children caught in the crossfire of divorces, looking out for their interests and playing merry hell with the divorce courts.

Funderburke, in cases where kids are involved, divorce lawyers and divorce court judges are glorified child abusers. For Funderburke, children of divorce shouldn't smilingly accept the situation. They should get mad as hell and not take it anymore. Along the way, Funderburke slowly moves out of his emotional isolation by building connections with his young clients and an assortment of allies.

But what, you may ask, do I hope to achieve by such a book? The answer is simple. I hope to change the culture. Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House purportedly started a social revolution by portraying a woman who abandoned her husband and children. Funderburke will ideally provoke a similar firestorm by depicting a group of children who lash out at their parents' abandonment of them. Funderburke will incorporate many true tragedies and absurdities of the divorce industry into its plot, and hopefully will revolutionize the mainstream view of children and their role in contemporary culture.
On Treadmills

by Robert Moore-Jumonville

Technology is an unmitigated evil—always a temptation to take the easy way out, always a path toward destruction—and G.K. Chesterton would agree, right? “When we say this is the age of the machine,” he mused, “that our present peace, progress and universal happiness are due to our all being servants of the machine, we sometimes tend to overlook the quiet and even bashful presence of the machine gun.” In *The Ball and Cross*, what symbolizes modern machinery at the end of the book is the asylum, with its “cold miracles of modern gunnery.”

I’m at a Marriott Hotel west of Chicago, near where a collection of Chesterton correspondence is housed. I am hoping they don’t sport machine guns on the roof as part of their modern technological “comfort machine guns on the roof as part of the asylum, with its “cold miracles of modern gunnery.”

A fine American epic might be written about the battle in the big hotel, with its multitudinous cells for its swarming bees. It might describe the exciting battle for the elevators; the war of the nameless and numberless guests, known only by their numbers. It might describe the deathless deeds of 65991, whose name, or rather number, will resound forever in history.

Of course, in light of the battle of the lamps in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, Chesterton’s satire is obvious. Who would not want to defend Notting Hill with its quaint shops and shopkeepers? But who, on the other hand, would care an ounce about defending Marriott room number 417 in the west Chicago suburbs somewhere off Interstate 88 between I-294 and I-355? A healthy optimism might dare to declare, “My cosmos, right or wrong,” but to fight for machines seems rather addled. I understand we are talking about a matter of degree. I might fight for a decent commuter train to Chicago, certainly for a good bicycle, but only to the degree that they would help foster in me and others a deeper humanity.

At some point, technology does seem to make us less human, doesn’t it—relegating people to mere numbers? Never mind that half the time technology is okay if it’s used properly, right?” As I was having this internal monologue, I recalled Chesterton’s opinion of large, impersonal American hotels:

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Rather, Chesterton warns that it is not that Chesterton is arguing for no technology, no toasters and no trams. Rather:

Unless the Socialists are frankly ready for a fall in standard violins, telescopes and electric lights, they must somehow create a moral demand on the individual that he shall keep up his present concentration on these things. It was only by men being in some degree specialist that there ever were any telescopes...

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Rather, Chesterton warns that the world should feel “the danger of machinery deadening creation, and the value of what it deadens.” He sanely proposes “admitting them for particular purposes, but keeping watch on them in particular ways.” Vigilance, then—that key New Testament virtue—ought to serve as the guardian of all our use of technology. How difficult it is, however, while plodding on a hotel treadmill to muster anything at all like vigilance.

―G.K. Chesterton

"Do not look at the faces in the illustrated papers. Look at the faces in the street." —G.K. CHESTERTON
The Crime of Sheriff Dirks

by John Peterson

One sunny morning in May, a man of very ordinary appearance known as Tiger Coffman paid a call at a dingy office building in the more downscale end of the county’s commercial-industrial park. As was his frequent habit, he was visiting the place of business of his friend and associate Marty Devine. When the door had been locked and Devine had taken certain other precautionary measures, Tiger was pleased to produce two diamond necklaces for his friend’s study and evaluation. After squinting at them for some minutes through a jeweler’s loupe, Devine pronounced the items “pretty good stuff” and fairly easy to fence.

“I’ll shop them around and let you know,” he said. Tiger nodded his approval. “By the way,” Devine asked, “did you see the ad in the the Daily Sentinel?”

“What ad?” Tiger said with a negative shake of the head.

“You should read it. Look, I’ve got it right here.”

The headline shouted, “$400 For Information!” Tiger sat down to study the advertisement, which continued in smaller type:

The man waiting for the shuttle across the street from A&J Jewelers and who boarded the bus at 10:45 a.m. Monday morning may have been witness to a crime. If you are this man and can supply a useful description of the criminal, A&J Jewelers will pay you $400 in cash, with no further questions asked. Call 955–3132.

“I’ll tell you this,” Tiger said. “There wasn’t anyone waiting for that shuttle. This jeweler guy must have been seeing things.”

“Maybe he saw you and didn’t know you were the guilty party,” Devine suggested. “You have to admit, not many smash-and-grab artists use a bus for a getaway car.”

“Could be you’re right,” Tiger said. “I was just walking down the street when I spotted the necklaces in the window. With no one in sight and the bus coming up the street, I couldn’t resist. That jeweler, old Reilly, is so slow on his feet I figured he’d never get in position to see anything useful.”

Devine stowed the necklaces in a drawer, which he then locked. “So,” he said, facing Tiger again, “suppose old Reilly is just fast enough to get a glimpse of somebody boarding a bus,” Devine said, “and he thinks, hey, there’s a witness.”

“Let me use your phone, Marty.”

A few days later, Sheriff Dirks dropped in on his friend Father Brown, whom he found in the parlor of St. Dominic’s parish rectory reading a worn and leathery book.

“Do you have time for a cup of coffee this morning?” the priest asked.

“I thought you’d never ask,” Dirks said. Father Brown nodded his head in the direction of a tea table that Mrs. James, the housekeeper, had set up with coffee mugs, teacups, and two donuts. The sheriff helped himself to a cup of the coffee and a sugar-covered donut.

“To what do I owe the pleasure of your company this morning, Sheriff?” Father Brown asked, hoping for news of a puzzling crime. Now in his nineties, the old priest was no longer capable of pursuing criminals, but he had proved himself a wizard at finding answers hiding in what to Dirks seemed a meaningless jumble of evidence and testimony.

“There’s not much going on at the moment,” the sheriff said. “There’s the usual aggravation of traffic violations. Oh, and a smash and grab, but that isn’t something you would find interesting. There’s no mystery in it, and I know you love mysteries as much as I dislike them.”

“Tell me what was smashed and what was grabbed,” the priest said.

Dirks was proud of having cracked a difficult case without the priest’s help, and so he was delighted to explain how he had achieved this triumph.

“It happened at A&J Jewelers on Main Street not far from here,” he said. “Last Monday a guy we know as Tiger Coffman smashed the front display window and grabbed two diamond necklaces. Old Art Reilly was in back—he’s the owner—and he’s not so fast on his feet any more. But still, he hobbled up to the front of the store just in time to see the thief hop on the shuttle.

The headline shouted, “$400 For Information!”

It is true, and it is not at all unnatural, that England does not know much about the Church of Rome. But England does not know much about the Church of England. Not even as much as I do. You would be astonished at how little the average public grasps about the Anglican controversies; lots of them don’t really know what is meant by a High Churchman or a Low Churchman, even on the particular points of practice, let alone the two theories of history and philosophy behind them. You can see this ignorance in any newspaper; in any merely popular novel or play.
bus across the street. Reilly gave us a description of sorts. He didn’t see the man’s face, but he did see enough to know the guy was of average height, average weight, brown hair, blue jeans, white tee shirt...

“In other words,” Father Brown said with a laugh, “his description might fit half the men in this county.”

“It seemed hopeless,” Dirks said. “We talked to the bus driver, but he didn’t remember the stop or the passenger. I guess driving that shuttle gets monotonous. So anyhow, Reilly was our one witness. He says the street was deserted when it happened.”

“Because the thief waited for just the right moment,” Father Brown said, “or took advantage of his luck when he saw he was alone on the street with that bus coming along.”

“Right,” Dirks said.

“With such a hopeless start,” Father Brown said, “I’m curious to know how you caught up with the thief.”

Dirks grinned as he reached for a second donut. “Advertising,” he said. Then he told Father Brown how he, a deputy, and the jeweler had set their trap. The afternoon after Reilly’s advertisement appeared in the Daily Sentinel, Tiger Coffman had approached the jewelry store for the second time that week. On this occasion, unlike his earlier visit, Tiger had an appointment and he was expected.

As Dirks described the encounter, Reilly greeted Tiger with a hearty welcome. “Ah, yes indeed,” he had said, “you are the very man who boarded that shuttle bus yesterday. You must have seen something.”

“Sure I did,” Tiger admitted. “I saw the guy who smashed your window, and if I see four hundred simoleons in real money, like the ad said, then I bet I can describe him for you.” At that point, by the sheriff’s account, he and his deputy appeared in the doorway leading to the shop’s back room. Dirks laughed as he described how disgusted and upset Tiger had been.

“The cops,” he had muttered. “I should have known you guys would stoop to a cheap trick like that. What a pack of lies! Why...why you’re a disgrace to your profession.”

Dirks had told his prisoner to shut up and listen. “Here’s the way it falls out,” he said. “You return the necklaces and pay Reilly for the broken window, and we’ll plead you down to a misdemeanor.”


“You mean that’s the end of the story? Father Brown asked.

“Basically, yes,” Dirks said. “There wasn’t nothing else to talk about, and so Tiger turned on his heel and stomped out through the door. So you see, Father, our advertising stunt worked just as we hoped it would.”

“You let this man Tiger go free?”

“I gave him a good deal,” Dirks said. “Over the years, I’ve gotten to know Tiger Coffman pretty well. He won’t run. He may be a thief, but he’s always been a man of his word.”

“Unlike you and Mr. Reilly,” Father Brown said.

“What?” Dirks asked. “What do you mean?”

“I mean I can’t help but have some sympathy for Mr. Tiger Coffman’s point of view. A man answered an advertisement in which you promised a reward for providing a useful description of a thief. Not to put too fine a point on it, but there is no better description than producing the thief himself. I do believe in all justice that you fellows have withheld from Mr. Coffman the sum of four dollars that is rightly his.”

Sheriff Dirks stared at the space between his shoes for several minutes. Father Brown refused to break the silence. Finally, the sheriff said, “I’ll tell the county commissioners that we incurred some miscellaneous expenses in cracking the case. And maybe I can talk Reilly into making a donation to the cause.”

“Have another donut,” Father Brown said, with just the faintest hint of a smile. “You mustn’t let them get stale.”

Dirks reached for one with white icing. “That would be a crime,” he said.

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**Chesterton’s Bloodthirsty Heirs**

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

**Brief Reviews of the Contemporary Mystery Scene by Steve Miller**

**Mary Roberts Rinehart. The Bat (1926).** A sinister criminal known only as the Bat robs and murders with impunity. The police sent after him reside in the morgue. Who can stop this menace to the citizens of New York? Mary Roberts Rinehart’s answer is that most underestimated and dangerous sleuth—the feisty spinster. The adventurous Miss Cornelia Van Gorder seeks new challenges. A rented mansion in a Long Island district plagued by Bat depredations is the answer. The house soon fills with a superstitious Irish maid, a beautiful niece with a secret, a gardener who may be a fugitive embezzler, a Japanese butler, a shady doctor, a shadier police detective, a bound-and-gagged intruder, and an innocent real bat crucified to a door. Shots ring out, blueprints disappear, a hidden room is found, and somewhere a stolen fortune awaits discovery. By the penultimate chapter, Miss Cornelia has disposed of all such trifles. Rinehart’s detectives are often thrust into the role by circumstances and seek only to save family, friends, and perhaps their own skins. Miss Cornelia is troubled as much by her hysterical but indispensable maid and sweet but duplicitous niece as...
the master criminal. G.K. Chesterton would understand. The book has been filmed at least three times but the first movie is the best. A classic old dark house thriller with subtitles that sometimes shout at the audience, it shows that the silent screen could be as fast-paced as any modern action thriller. The young Bob Kane watched the film with awed fascination at the aura of sinister menace and constant danger. He recast the villainous Bat as a champion of law and order who, at least in his original incarnation, could be as murderous as any evildoer. Thus the Batman was born.

H.R.F. Keating. Rules, Regs and Rotten Eggs (2007). Contemplating an abrasive new boss and mourning the loss of two police officer sons to a terrorist attack, Detective Superintendent Harriet Martens ("The Hard Detective") tells her husband she will retire. Then a man in a fox hunter's outfit haranguing a crowd of anti-hunt protesters is seriously injured by a bomb disguised as a rotten egg. The victim is spirited away from a local hospital to a private clinic by a group of old school chums known as the Cabal. His subsequent murder before regaining consciousness leads Martens to a plot by Cabal leaders to engineer a mercenary invasion of a uranium-rich Caucasian nation.

To persuade skeptical superiors and prosecutors of the truth of her suspicions, she relies on an African clinic receptionist, the Kenyan track star who was the victim's mistress, a shrewd Bengali barrister, a society pages reporter who breaks an alibi, an illegal immigrant maid, and the victim's own turgid travel memoir. This proves sufficient to result in a chase through a massive pro-fox hunting rally in the heart of London. To defeat despair, all the Hard Detective needs is a case worth solving and wrongs worth righting.

The Peter Paul Smith Casebook by Steve Miller

The Paradise of Human Fishes

Peter Paul Smith, a Brompton official, searching for contraband, finds an underwater city.

The Mystery. What is going on in the sub-sea metropolis of Gubbina City?

The Subplot. How different is Gubbina City from Smith's own Brompton?

Other Characters. Dr. Robinson, Smith's friend who lowers him into the sea; Robinson's staff of assistants; the American underwater stranger who tells Smith about Gubbina City; Old Man Gubbins, who bought the bottom of the Atlantic dirt cheap; the 75,000 inhabitants of Gubbina City; and whoever supplies Gubbina City with air and Brompton with water.

Location. Under the sea where Gubbina City may or may not be found, and the pier near Brompton.


Notable Allusions. (1) In G.K. Chesterton's time, the Fabian Society, which included Sidney and Beatrice Webb and George Bernard Shaw, advocated a gradual nationalization of public works like water, gas, electricity, and mass transit. This was sometimes called "gas and water socialism" or, more cynically, "creeping socialism." Supporters gloated of ordinary Englishmen thinking themselves independent while receiving all necessities of life from government controlled entities. Chesterton's fable may assist some in national leadership to understand why more than a few Americans seem nervous about government takeover of health care. (2) Chesterton did not often venture into the realm of science fiction. Like his friend H.G. Wells, he seemed to realize that scientific advance may threaten human life rather than making it more livable. Chesterton perceived that dystopia could already be happening even in beautiful Brompton. (3) Chesterton used a cultivated forest of seaweed to represent the Garden of Eden. Strange fish suggest that devils as well as angels may have halos. The God-like Gubbins who supplies air to his subjects rules that the garden is no longer useful and must go. In a materialistic paradise, beauty does not count.

The Opening. "Mr. Peter Paul Smith had just put on a new suit of clothes; but he did not strike any special attitudes of vanity over it. His face was more or less masked with a sort of goggles, even larger than those which perfect the personal beauty of the American dude; but he was not going motoring. His trousers were as roomy and shapeless as plus fours; but he did not strike any such national leaders to understand why more than a few Americans seem nervous about government takeover of health care. (2) Chesterton did not often venture into the realm of science fiction. Like his friend H.G. Wells, he seemed to realize that scientific advance may threaten human life rather than making it more livable. Chesterton perceived that dystopia could already be happening even in beautiful Brompton. (3) Chesterton used a cultivated forest of seaweed to represent the Garden of Eden. Strange fish suggest that devils as well as angels may have halos. The God-like Gubbins who supplies air to his subjects rules that the garden is no longer useful and must go. In a materialistic paradise, beauty does not count.

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When Good Screenwriters Become Missing Persons

by Chris Chan

ALERT: SPOILERS

Without A Trace (2002)
Seasons One and Two DVD, $79.99

When it debuted in 2002, Without A Trace (WAT) was a highly entertaining and well-acted drama about a fictional FBI Missing Persons Unit. In its second season, the series matured into one of the best shows on television. The dynamism that propelled the early years dulled a bit in the still decent third and fourth seasons, but midway through season four, the clever plotting and subtle character development slowly and heartbreakingly collapsed. Despite occasional resurgences, by its seventh and final season WAT was an emaciated version of its former self; yet better writing could have easily nourished the failing series back to health.

An exceptional ensemble cast made the show sparkle. Jack Malone (Anthony LaPaglia) starred as the hard-and-sharp-as-nails director who couldn’t save his crumbling personal life. Samantha Spade (Poppy Montgomery), Vivian Johnson (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), Danny Taylor (Enrique Murciano), and Martin Fitzgerald (Eric Close) rounded out the cast. Every episode provided a little insight into each character’s life and mentality in different ways. By the second and third seasons, intense and intelligent story arcs created real and sympathetic characters. There was a solid sense that the writers knew everything about these characters’ pasts and psychology, and were gradually and skillfully revealing these details to the audience.

In the fourth season, however, carefully crafted character development began to unravel. A sixth detective appeared: Elena Delgado (Rosalyn Sanchez). Her presence would attract some fans and annoy others. Heavy attention on Elena meant that the rest of the supporting cast often received short shrift. This was especially sad in the case of Vivian. Jean-Baptiste was by far the show’s strongest actress, but she was frequently and cruelly shortchanged, sometimes getting as little as three or four lines an episode.

After season four, additional changes caused adroit character story lines to crumble. Plots revolving around Vivian’s ill-health and Martin’s painkiller addiction were introduced with great dramatic fanfare, played up for a half-dozen episodes, abruptly dropped, referenced once in the fifth season, and then completely abandoned. Continuity in character development disintegrated. In the final three seasons of Without A Trace, Vivian, Danny, and Martin’s characters were hardly developed at all, and their connections to the other cast members were largely severed. Relationships like the Vivian/Jack investigative partnership, the Danny/Martin rivalry-turned-best-friendship, and the Martin/Sam flirtation-turned-romance-turned-brother/sister connection made for great television. In later seasons, these characters rarely had screen time together.

Aside from disproportionate attention on Elena, only the leads received much attention in the last seasons. Montgomery’s pregnancy plot line was mishandled badly, and the on-again, off-again relationship between Jack and Sam was one-tenth-heartedly resumed in the final season, botched, then settled blandly in the finale. Worst of all, Jack Malone, who originally specialized in psychological insight, was in later seasons turned into a Jack Bauer knockoff. Where the early Jack cracked suspects by finding the chinks in their mental armor, the later Jack used guns and threats of violence to get information.

Without A Trace had plenty of rotten apples. Some episodes, like one that presented Catholic officials as sinister and surreptitious—one with a vomit-inducing speech declaring that “abortion is a Christian act,” a horribly misguided one-off attempt to play the show as a comedy involving agoraphobic lesbians—are blemishes on the series’ reputation.

Although the show could plunge to disturbing depths, it could also ascend to magnificent heights. Arguably the series’ finest moment was “Wannabe,” a second-season masterpiece about a missing boy and the hell that peer pressure and adolescent bullying can create. Other gems included cases about mysterious twins, a death penalty case, a sinister headmaster, and media ineptitude.

Truly great episodes were non-existent during the latter half of the show’s run. Pedestrian, cookie-cutter episodes proliferated, and treatment of the characters’ personal lives devolved into soap opera. The actors struggled with flat dialogue. Indeed, Without A Trace’s woes were almost entirely the writers’ fault. A missing persons case is different from a murder mystery. With a disappearance, it is crucial that the viewer care about the victims and want them to be found alive or avenged. The first few seasons created sympathetic or interesting missing persons. When they were rescued, the viewers cheered; when they were dead, the viewers cried. The final seasons’ episodes could have pulled more heartstrings with a kidnapped sofa.

The first two seasons are available on DVD, although poor sales have made the release of future seasons unlikely in the US. Thankfully, those early episodes are the reason that Without A Trace ought to be required viewing for mystery fans. 😊
**BOOK REVIEWS**

**American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile**
by Richard John Neuhaus
270 pages; $26.95 (Hardcover)

Reviewed by John C. “Chuck” Chalberg

While Fr. Richard John Neuhaus is no longer with us, his books are. One of them, *American Babylon*, has only come to us since Father Neuhaus’s death. It will likely remain with us for a good while, because Father Neuhaus deserves to be remembered, and his final book will stand as his intellectual last will and testament. But it also should be read for its essentially Chestertonian message.

In *The Resurrection of Rome*, G.K. Chesterton states the obvious and follows it with the not-so-obvious: “In one sense, what is Catholic must be international. But it is never quite normal if it is not also national.” As if he realized that too many negatives can be confusing, Chesterton added, “Catholics know in their bones that men are citizens of a city, and not merely of a cosmos.” But Catholics know something else as well. They know that the “hearth,” as well as the altar, is “sacred.”

Early on in *American Babylon*, Father Neuhaus confides that when he encounters God, “I expect to meet him as an American.” As if anticipating objections, Neuhaus quickly concedes that being an American is not the most important thing to be said about him. Nonetheless, that he is an American, “is an inescapable thing about the life I live.” Having confided and conceded, Father Neuhaus refuses to conflate or confuse—or be conflicted by the obvious fact that he was both an American and a Catholic. To say that he was both is simply to add to the Neuhaus portrait; it is certainly not to contend that the two are one and the same.

Father Neuhaus is a Catholic who happens to be an American, rather than an American who happens to be a Catholic.

Not that his status as an American is unimportant. Far from it. A Canadian by birth, he came to belong to his adopted country and his adopted country came to belong to him in ways that were very real. Such was not the case for Cold War spy Kim Philby. Earlier in the book, Father Neuhaus borrows a line from Philby to make a double point. Accused of betraying both his country and his country’s foreign agents, Philby refused to concede that he had betrayed anything or anyone: “To betray one must first belong. I never belonged.” Well, Father Neuhaus belonged.

But Neuhaus, American, was also an exile, and an exile in a way in which Moscow resident Kim Philby was surely not. If this English spy could not be exiled from a country to which he did not feel that he belonged, Father Neuhaus could and did live in exile in his adopted New York City, right in the heart of the American Babylon. His exile, of course, is every Christian’s exile as we live where we live and await the day of reunion that Father Neuhaus has now encountered.

Living and waiting. And not just idle living and mindless waiting. Not for Richard John Neuhaus, who engaged in more than his share of real living in this real world and anticipatory waiting for the next one. It was always important to Father Neuhaus that he engage the issues of the day; but it was even more important that he never forget that the City of God awaits us all. It was also important to Neuhaus that he be able to enjoy what the City of Man had to offer, so long as he always remembered that Babylon was Babylon—so long as he thanked God for beer and burgundy by not drinking too much of them—so long as

he did his reading and writing first. A Lutheran by birth, he made another choice of great consequence when he decided to become a Catholic. And once he had done that, he surely belonged to his Church in a way that he did not belong to his country. Here is where Chesterton might have entered the picture again. Father Neuhaus might have borrowed the following from Chesterton: “When we belong to the Church we belong to something outside all of us, outside all one talks about, outside the cardinals and the Pope. They belong to it, but it does not belong to them.” To clinch his point, Chesterton adds one of his specialty sentences, namely a sentence than opens with an “if,” as in “If we all fell dead, the Church would still exist in God.”

Instead, the exiled Father Neuhaus borrows only one Chesterton line for use in these notes. And why not? After all, the line is not just famous, it happens to be true. It is the line that distinguishes America from every other nation, as in “America is the”—Do I need to go on?—”only country with the soul of a church.”

To Neuhaus, the truth of the line is not simply traceable to the notion that there is an American creed to which exiles in America must adhere if they are truly to be American. In his mind, the line has a dangerous dimension to it in that it explains the long-standing tendency of many Protestant thinkers to look upon America as “their Church.” This is an error that the Lutheran Neuhaus and the Catholic Neuhaus long tried to avoid,
even as both understood the pull and the appeal.

While Father Neuhaus certainly deals with this error in his book, he spends more of his time examining another sort of error, an error committed by unreformed Lutherans (Reinhold Niebuhr most prominently among these) and unreformed skeptics (Richard Rorty most prominently among those). Their error was to distance themselves from their country. Here Rorty was by far the guiltier party. It is ironic that specialists in irony, namely Niebuhr and Rorty, would be deployed by Neuhaus in order to link them with equally error-prone thinkers who went too far in the opposite direction by way of embracing their country as “their church.”

If there is a single prime target in these pages, it is Richard Rorty. And if there is a single prime ally, it Chesterton (with a little help from Benedict XVI). In his concluding chapter, “Hope and Hopelessness,” Neuhaus makes his case for the Christian virtue of hope and against the evil of despair. In doing so, he also makes his case against determinism, which is “itself a form of despair.”

If there is another terrible alternative to hope, it is presumption. Borrowing from Chesterton (without attribution), Neuhaus goes on to note that “despair and presumption may appear to be opposites,” but they are actually the “two sides of the decision against hope.”

Father Neuhaus long ago made his decision to hope. As a pilgrim in exile, he concluded that this was the most rational of decisions. As an American in the heart of the American Babylon, he understood that life in exile was full of temptations, whether it be the temptation to attach oneself too closely to America or to the temptations that are so plentiful in America. As a human being, American and otherwise, he realized that “eternal life understood as interminable life would be more a curse than a blessing.” Now that he has passed from this life, we can only hope that his eternal life is what he hoped it would be, namely the “fulfillment anticipated by all that is good, true, and beautiful in this life.”

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**Does Harry Potter Tickle Sleeping Dragons?**

by Nancy Solon Villaluz


338 pages; $24.95 (Hardcover)

Reviewed by Nancy Carpentier Brown

When will the definitive book about Harry Potter be written? When author J.K. Rowling writes it. But since Rowling has given no indication as yet that she plans to write such a book, what’s the next best thing?

A book using an accumulation of J.K. Rowling interviews could fill that empty analysis hole, of course. What if you could magically gather every radio, TV, talk show, documentary, podcast, written interview; every school visit, bookstore visit, and book signing; every professional interviewer as well as every question answered to a sixth grader; in short, what if you had access not to Rowling herself, but to nearly everything she’s ever said in public about Harry Potter, her personal life, or her sources of inspiration?

Not many have the time and energy to find all of those podcasts and interviews, and not just listen to them, but transcribe and analyze them. But author Nancy Solon Villaluz has done just that. And now we can read the result, perhaps the most informed analysis of Rowling’s thoughts and inspiration yet published.

The first question a Christian would want to ask Rowling might be, “Is Harry Potter a Christian story?” Or, “How can you promote witchcraft to children?” Or, “If Harry Potter is a supposedly Christian, moral story, why are there spells and magic wands and wizards in it?”

Rowling has already answered all of these questions, and more. If you have ever wondered what Rowling has said about her series, about her own beliefs, her influences, her style, and especially about her thoughts on Christianity, I think you’ll be pleased with Villaluz’s new book, *Does Harry Potter Tickle Sleeping Dragons?*

Using plenty of direct quotes and by taking the reader on literary a journey of discovery, Villaluz’s book offers readers a friendly, homey style. Have a cup of tea and enjoy a cozy afternoon with this work of creative non-fiction.

As I indicated above, the author has done a huge amount of research. She quotes from Rowling’s interviews and has a good grasp of the work of other authors. She quotes and compares notes between Lewis, Tolkien, and Rowling; but she also mentions G.K. Chesterton, the Bible, Aquinas, Dickens, Frost, Shakespeare, Dante, and John the Baptist. In addition, she discusses Monty Python, the Fabian Society, Andrew Lloyd Weber, and Edison.

Villaluz has compared the Scholastic (American) to the Bloomsbury (British) editions. To find clues as to what Rowling was trying to say, she read all of the books that Rowling mentions were favorites from her childhood. Villaluz has made connections between Rowling’s work and Rowling’s past, including to her confession of faith and baptism as an eleven-year-old.

Villaluz concludes Harry Potter is—definitely—Christian fiction in disguise. Villaluz’s evidence reveals Rowling as an author who did not necessarily set out to write Christian-oriented fantasy, like Lewis or Tolkien did. But then again, neither did Lewis and Tolkien intend to sent out to write allegorical or Christian fiction either. All three have similar quotes about starting out just writing a story. Rowling started a story about a boy and then her mother died. So she wrote her explorations on death and the afterlife into her work. Rowling states she didn’t set out to convert anyone. She was merely writing a story she would like to read and investigating ideas pertinent to her life.

And an alert reader might wonder, “What kind of story would Rowling have liked to read when she was a child?” and look back at the books she’s often told interviewers she loved as a young person.
Villaluz then read them all. *The Little White Horse*. E. Nesbit. *Manxmouse. The Chronicles of Narnia. The Lord of the Rings*. Jessica Mitford. *The Wind in the Willows*. Some of these books were out of print and hard to find, but Villaluz found them.

And what she discovered was that Rowling loved moral tales that didn’t preach. She loved ordinary characters that wore glasses. She loved adventure stories with religion just below the surface, where you could find it if you wanted to.

And Villaluz concludes that, like stained glass windows in the olden days that told stories to illiterate people of the time, Harry Potter tells a story to our modern day moral and religious illiterates—people who would never read a word of a book labeled “Christian fiction.”

There are many wells in Harry Potter that an analysis can dig into: alchemy, symbolism, feminism, adventure tale, hero’s journey, moral tale, and so on. Many people have grubbed at these same roots, and some have dug quite deeply into one or the other. Villaluz digs deeper into the right root—the Rowling-dug root—than anyone.

Villaluz is on the right track, and *Sleeping Dragons* is the best Harry Potter analysis I’ve read to date.

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**Off the Shelf with Mike Foster**

**So Finely Tuned A Universe: of Atoms, Stars, Quanta, and God**

by John Polkinghorne

ike Fr. Stanley Jaki, Rev. John Polkinghorne was a physicist and cleric who was not going to abandon his quest for truth just because he had turned his collar around.

“I want to take absolutely seriously the possibility of religious belief in a scientific age. I believe that science and religion are friends and not foes,” he asserts at the beginning of this essay. His last words: “The search for understanding, which is so natural to a scientist, is, in the end, a search for God.”

Published in *Commonweal* on August 16, 1996, this eight-page lecture adaptation by Polkinghorne, then president of Queens College, Cambridge, comes off the “English 111: Advanced Composition” shelf in this college English professor’s office, boxed upon my retirement.

Maybe part of Purgatory will force us to do things we chose to force others to do. In this case, that was an essay summarizing, then agreeing or disagreeing with this article. Summary was challenging enough, but the reasoned assent or dissent frazzled everyone from the hardcore rationalist students to those who believed that creation began on Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC (Julian calendar).

The curse of freedom allowed those collegians all the words they wanted, but the curse of *Gilbert Magazine* gives me 600, putting the “purge” in Purgatory.

This argument’s strength lies in Polkinghorne’s lucid writing. He states straightforwardly, “The universe did not spring into being ready made a few thousand years ago but that it has evolved over 15 billion years from its origin in the Big Bang, does not abolish Christian talk of the world as God’s creation, but it certainly modifies certain aspects of that discourse.”

His object all sublime—as economic and as extensive understanding of the world as possible—adds the Gospels and the sacraments in a “grandest unified theory.”

Polkinghorne notes “a deep-seated relationship between the reason within—in this case, mathematics, and the reason without (the rational order and the structure of the physical world). The two fit together like gloves. That is a rather significant fact about the world. Einstein once said, ‘The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.’ Why, we should ask, are our minds so perfectly shaped to understand the patterns of the deep world around us.”

Pondering factors including gravity, electromagnetism, the elements, and the sun leads him to declare, “it’s only a very special universe, a finely tuned universe, a universe in a trillion…capable of having had the amazingly fruitful history that has turned a ball of energy into a world containing human life.”

“Every atom of carbon inside your body was once inside a star,” declares Polkinghorne, echoing Joni Mitchel’s “Woodstock” observation forty years ago. “If those nuclear forces were in any way slightly different from the way they are, the stars would be incapable of the elements of which you and I are composed.”

So what? “Do you shrug your shoulders and say, ‘Well, that’s just the way it is. No need to seek an explanation’?”

“Who lit the touch paper of the Big Bang?” this much-honored physicist and Anglican priest asks. He answers, “God is as much the creator today as he was 15 billion years ago.”

God added free will.

“I believe that the Christian God, who is both loving and faithful, has given to his creation the twin gifts of independence and reliability…in the fruitful process of the universe through the interplay of between happenstance and regularity, between chance and necessity.”

Have your public library obtain this essay. Read it and decide, as a thousand students did, if you agree. I do.
Serious Comedy

The Great Canadian Comedy: From Laughter to Tears
by Joe Campbell
209 pages; $34.99 (Hardcover)

Reviewed by David Paul Deavel

About Joe Campbell’s first collection of humorist essays, Take Me Out of the Ball Game, I wrote [“Easy Reading, Heavy Work,” GM June, 2005] that “Campbell’s willingness to play the clown perhaps makes a seriousness at the heart of his writing.” This new collection takes the mask off. Significantly Campbell begins his preface with two quotations. From G.K. Chesterton in Heretics: “Funny is [not] the opposite of seriousness. Funny is the opposite of not funny, and of nothing else.” From Shaw he takes a line from The Doctor’s Dilemma: “Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.” Reader beware—this book isn’t subtitled “From Laughter to Tears” for nothing.

Of course, the froth and fizz that characterized his first collection remain. Campbell’s friend Dingwall returns, this time making his name as a magician who doesn’t do magic and a writer who doesn’t actually publish anything. And all the absurd puns are present. In “Two for the Show,” Campbell describes coming out as a “bisectional” band member—he plays trumpet and piano—at a nursing home. Although he understands why the people in the home like having animals around, he notes that he doesn’t like much interaction with them: “Just because I’m bisectional doesn’t mean I’m a petophile.”

But the two-part title essay, “The Great Canadian Comedy,” announces the seriousness of the project. Though this gentle jaunt through Canadian history begins in nonsense fashion, telling us that Eric the Red was so-named for his Scandinavian socialism, we see in the end that this isn’t just a groaner.

Trudeau, the incarnation of Eric the Red, entrenched the welfare state in a new constitution that is virtually unamendable. Although an avowed federalist, he was a closet separatist. He separated religion from politics, morality from law, courtesy from communication, and wealth from the West. The new constitution, a patriarchated BNA Act with a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, shifted power from the lawyers elected to Parliament to the lawyers appointed to the Supreme Court. Since it changed Canada into something else, it brought Canadian history to a close, at least for now.

Homer Simpson famously called Canada “America Junior.” Those who have observed the direction of American constitutional jurisprudence over the last forty years will note that Junior has been the leader, Senior the follower, in the move to close history. It should give Americans great pause to think that many American leaders also want to model health care on Canada’s system, whose distinguishing feature, in contrast to the American system’s “unequal accessibility,” is its “equal inaccessibility.”

Campbell lingers over this growing North American bureaucratic and constitutional folly in a number of essays, paying attention to its gruesome roots in abortion law. He is able to do this so well because his tone never turns to rage or hatred. Instead, he gives off an abiding sadness at a culture that exalts children’s whole generation peeks out to a close, at least for now.

The old man, however, keeps going. Whatever the kids and grandkids do, there is hope when a man like Joe Campbell keeps going, puncturing the ridiculous faux-seriousness of the age in which he has been placed. Whether he is taking on scientism, judicial fiction, nonsense-historical fiction, or the inclusive language that deprives us of “masterpieces” and “sportsmanship,” what we see beneath the mask of “Joe Campbell” the humorist is Joe Campbell the Christian man, who knows that if you didn’t laugh about this world’s folly, you’d cry. As he might say, a veil of laughter helps when going through the vale of tears.

If, as G.K. Chesterton noted, the secret of God hidden by the sadness of the Cross was divine laughter, Campbell’s strategy throughout this volume is to uncover the divine sadness at our society’s callousness toward life by using human laughter. He wants readers to laugh their way unknowingly toward the Cross. There, beneath the masks, the love of God is present.
FEAR OF FILM

Intended Audience: Take Note

*L'Argent* (1983)
Written and directed by Robert Bresson
No MPAA rating

Reviewed by Art Livingston

My opening foray into film criticism began quite by accident. In the early 70s, the Art Institute of Chicago through its school instituted a film center. The support staff included an array of writers who prepared extensive essays and notes for each screening. During this time, I had immersed myself in cinema and its history, commenced building step-by-step critical tools to aid viewers, and slowly became confident in applying my perspective. I was increasingly annoyed, however, when the staff writers prepared material on Christian filmmakers that was nearly always meaningless drivel. Those who were quite at ease discussing the latest Marxist rage of Paris were clueless (a rare, useful neologism) when talking about those who uphold Western civilization.

For the next eight years, then, I compiled notes on cineastes as varied as John Ford and Andre Tarkovsky. By 1983, I finally realized something even more appalling than the ignorance of the film center crowd. Among my acquaintances and otherwise kindred spirits, the people for whom these films were created largely did not watch them.

That modern sub-pagans could blithely misconstrue the *oeuvre* of a true Catholic mystic like Robert Bresson and that the proper audience might not be aware of his existence reflects horribly the brokenness of contemporary artistic achievement. Constant jeremiads from people who should know better become hideously aggravating—the effect is as though they would prefer to bellyache rather than find the good art still being wrought. This perhaps explains as well why Bresson was able to work only twice a decade and Carl Dreyer once. Their intended audience did not support them. Like writers such as Flannery O’Connor and Graham Greene, many of the best Christian filmmakers created radical techniques or situations to draw attention to transcendence.

Take Bresson’s last film *L’Argent*, for example. Here his style coalesces entirely and seems to dissolve into a mature statement of moral theology expressed in a story, in this case a Tolstoy short narrative used as raw material. Many of Bresson’s films rethink Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky; he has also adapted three of Bernanos’ novels (probably the best artistic cross-reference). *L’Argent*, of course, means “money,” the love of which (and all cupidity) being the root of evil. On the surface the want of it, as well as the manipulations and dealings to acquire it, seem the basis of the action.

The tale begins with a forged banknote passed off by a young upper-middle-class lout whose daddy refuses, with good reason, no doubt, to lend him money. When the shopkeeper who receives the note passes it in turn, with full knowledge of his wrongdoing, to a deliveryman, a chain reaction unleashes that spirals into imprisonment and allurement to a life of crime and a final succumbing to a temptation to extreme evil. In a bewildering series of events, the young man loses his wife and child and everything that had meaning in his life. And yet we also see that his choice of a hideous life of crime was ultimately determined by free will. None of your “society made me this way” nonsense.

The movie does not present a neat little package. Each step leads to greater evil. Yvon, our victim, is clearly offered redemptive opportunities, but does not take them. As in real life, no observer (the audience) can quite ever tell what may happen when he makes his choice; that is between Yvon and God. In one amazing scene, we may (or may not) be witnessing an act of substituted love that redeems one of his dupes. Could it have a real effect on him? The first principle of morality can easily be stated as “do good and avoid evil.” In the breach, however, life is never quite that simple.

I must mention, and even stress, that a prior understanding of Bresson’s aesthetic intent will offset what might otherwise interfere with an immediate appreciation of his work. His approach is the epitome what has been called “transcendental style,” actually a way of expressing the *via negativa* in film. He uses non-actors speaking lines without expression. Their faces reflect their voices. We have constant close-ups of seemingly trivial matters, as in a repeated showing of hands as money shuffles from person to person. Constant reminders of the quotidian often make the atmosphere claustrophobic. Not one of these techniques is arbitrary. This stuff is not arty. It is art.

Robert Bresson long ago found a way to point beyond this world by drawing attention to the minutiae of the world on film. This genius was first apparent in his 1951 masterpiece, *The Diary of a Country Priest*. I have often thought St. John of the Cross would have been the perfect subject for one of his movies; he did make a film on the trial of Joan of Arc. *L’Argent* and other Bresson films are not popcorn movies, but then *Crime and Punishment* isn’t a bedtime story either.
You Say You Want A Revolution

John Adams (2008)
Directed by Tom Hooper
HBO miniseries
DVD, $22.49

by Chris Chan

Over the next few decades, hundreds of thousands of high school students will watch the HBO miniseries John Adams instead of reading the chapters on the Revolutionary War in their U.S. history textbooks, or the masterful biography by David McCullough. Given the inferior quality of many textbooks glutting our school systems, and the superlative quality of this miniseries, that may not be as bad as you might think.

Despite the importance of the War for Independence, the natural drama in these events, and the rich opportunities for actors, only a handful of quality films have been made about this seminal moment in American history. John Adams, based on the best-selling biography by McCullough, finally gives the era the treatment it deserves.

The nation’s birth is depicted through the eyes of its title character, who was arguably one of the most influential players in the creation of the new nation, and for generations one of the least appreciated of the Founding Fathers. Intensely played by Paul Giamatti, John Adams emerges as a brilliant, stubborn, passionate man, with an indestructible moral compass and an idealistic vision for his country. Laura Linney is equally inspiring as his wife, best friend, and closest advisor Abigail. The Adams’ marriage is one of the most interesting relationships in American history, and Giamatti and Linney make the pair’s romance both dignified and compelling.

Though John and Abigail Adams naturally make up the heart and soul of

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Science In and Out of Its Realm

- The supernatural is not a matter of science; it is a matter of experience. (Daily News, March 14, 1903)
- The weakness in civilization is best expressed by saying that it cares more for science than for truth. It prides itself on its “methods” more than its results; it is satisfied with precision, discipline, good communications, rather than with the sense of reality. (“The False Photographer,” A Miscellany of Men)
- Our schools are swept nowadays with wave after wave of scientific speculation; by fad after fad and fashion after fashion. They are generally notions quite new even in the scientific world; and each one of them will probably be shown by science to be the same sort of double-edged weapon. I am quite unable to imagine why we should say in such cases that we are educating the children. I could understand it if we said we were educating the educators, by giving them a crowd of children on whom to experiment. (North American Review, Nov. 1929)
- We give the name of enlightenment to a lightning succession of illusions and disillusionments. This dream and self-deception are nowhere more dominant than in the thing we call science. Scientific ideas, even more than social and political ideas, are valued because they are new rather than true. (Illustrated London News, May 29, 1920)
- It is a slander to say that science never arrives at any real and true conclusion. It often happens that science arrives eventually at a truth which common-sense has discovered without its aid a long time before. (Illustrated London News, Jan. 10, 1920)
- The disinfectant of science is conscience, or conscience. (Illustrated London News, June 26, 1915)
- It would be an ideal definition of a liberal education that every citizen ought to know enough about science to leave it alone. (Illustrated London News, July 15, 1918)
- Science boasts of the distance of its stars; of the terrific remoteness of the things of which it has to speak. But poetry and religion always insist upon the proximity, the almost menacing closeness of the things with which they are concerned. Always the Kingdom of Heaven is “At Hand”; and Looking-Glass Land is only through the looking-glass. So I for one should never be astonished if the next twist of a street led me to the heart of that maze in which all the mysteries are lost. I should not be at all surprised if I turned one corner in Fleet Street and saw a queer-looking window, turned another corner and saw a yet queerer-looking lamp; I should not be surprised if I turned a third corner and found myself in Elfland. ("A Glimpse of My Country," Tremendous Trifles)
the narrative, the supporting cast manages to make the Founding Fathers heroic, interesting, and also engagingly human. This is not hagiography; each of the major players is presented as a flawed human being, but still full of moral courage and a preternatural capacity for leadership.

David Morse is properly dignified and inspiring as George Washington, consistently setting the highest possible standard for the executive office, despite being plagued incessantly by the cares of governing and by horrible dentures. Intriguingly, Washington is portrayed as an upright and uncommonly principled leader, but he lacks the media savvy that is almost invariably a prerequisite for a successful political career even then.

Stephen Dillaine’s Thomas Jefferson hits all the right notes in his depiction of the like/hate relationship between himself and Adams as they evolve from the friendly days of revolutionary collaboration to their friction-filled relationship as President and Vice-President, culminating in their falling out as political opponents, to their final years as reconciled and engaged compatriots in a rich and reflective correspondence.

Definitely the most eccentric, and arguably the most endearing, is Tom Wilkinson as Benjamin Franklin. His penchant for saying exactly what is on his mind with wit and often-bawdy humor belies a shrewd capacity for diplomacy evidenced by his uncanny skill and unorthodox methods of winning over French high society.

Watching these men at work crafting a new diplomacy unlike any other at that time is inspiring filmmaking, but it also has the unintended effect of making contemporary elected officials look like blithering incompetents in comparison. (Come to think of it, our elected officials have done a pretty fair job of making themselves look ridiculous even without comparisons to the Founding Fathers.)

John Adams takes pains to emphasize that friction. Character assassination and bitter infighting have always been a part of the American political experience; it is wrong to presume that the days of the early republic were somehow purer and more innocent than later eras.

Students of history will find much to interest them in the minute details scattered throughout the series. Odd little bits such as the effect of poor dental hygiene over time (pay attention to the makeup on the actors’ teeth as the series progresses) accentuate the more ordinary aspects of life during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of John Adams is not that it recreates the external trappings of the past, although it does do this so extraordinarily well. Rather, every scene and conversation is filled with a sense of wonder. Unless the viewer is historically illiterate, he knows that the Revolution will prove successful, that the Colonies will grow united and strong despite all the infighting and squabbling, and that the main characters will become legendary within a few short decades. Yet each scene is permeated with an organic sense of suspense, as every character is aware that there are countless ways that everything could go wrong. Yet somehow, to the amazement of all, the newly United States of America turn out better than anyone could have hoped. John Adams does more than make history come alive, it also makes a case for American exceptionalism.

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**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

_The tail wagging the dog._ Tom Taylor (1817–1880)

Tom Taylor began as a London journalist. Eventually he was appointed editor of the English humor magazine, _Punch_, and later taught English literature at University College. His first love was the theater, and he achieved his fame by writing a number of hit comedies. His attempts at more serious drama were not successful.

Taylor is remembered today for his 1858 play, _Our American Cousin_, which is recalled now chiefly because it was the comedy Abraham Lincoln was watching when he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. In the play, Lord Dundreary, a good natured aristocrat, is given to inventing jokes and riddles. Here is the pertinent example:

Dundreary. Now I’ve got another. Why does a dog wag his tail?

Flo. Upon my word, I never inquired.

Dundreary. Because the tail can’t wag the dog.

It wasn’t long before “the tail wagging the dog” became a commonplace expression for situations in which the trivial controls the essential.

Movie fans may remember the 1997 film, _Wag the Dog_, a comedy about a United States president who invents a fictitious war to divert public attention away from a White House scandal.
As a whole there are signs of a healthy reaction in the relations between painting and literature; and it is a matter upon which saner ideas are much needed. Much good has been done of late years by the recognition that the crafts, as crafts, are distinct; that a line from Tennyson does not make a bad landscape good, or the possession of the most subtle allegorical ideas justify the violent disarrangement of the muscles of a fellow-creature’s leg. But in place of the old sentimentalism there has come upon us the tyranny of a dogma equally fantastic and illogical—the notion that the two arts may not even be allied, as poetry and music are allied in a song. Critics have arisen who bitterly accuse a picture of intelligible meaning: “literary,” “symbolic,” and “moral” have become vituperative epithets of great strength; and it is touching to reflect that an artist of older sympathies might read through a tirade in which his work was torn in pieces with the firm belief that it was being tenderly appreciated.

Now, this attempt to isolate art in a world where all things are linked together is really a somewhat humorous thing. Every occupation, of course, can be looked at purely technically if necessary. Good shooting, for example, is good shooting, whether we shoot a target or shoot our maiden aunt. If we shoot her under circumstances (technically) difficult, as, for example, if she is running violently across a distant range of mountains, then the shot which brings her down is (technically) admirable. But to say that good shooting is good shooting whether we shoot a target or shoot our maiden aunt is one thing; to say that it does not matter which we shoot is quite another. Her death may be regarded from a moral, a legal, a financial, or a poetic point of view.

So it is with the higher arts; a man who objects to a thing having many aspects should rebel against the three dimensions. This singular modern desire to resolve things into their elements is surely the mortal sin against civilisation. A man who seeks to break these immemorial unions, to keep everything separate, might as well analyse the air and divide the world into Oxygenists and Hydrogenists. And of all these alliances the highest is that between painting and literature—the parent of nearly all the pictorial masterpieces on earth. But if men must protest against painting, and literature the parent of the sister art of letters, they would be more logical if they did not, the moment they have gained their freedom, name their pictures after the sister art of music.

Probably the picture which is the most hopeful in this respect is that Shakespearian picture of Mr. Abbey, "The Trial of Queen Catherine." It may well flare like a dawn, for it is the rise of historical painting once more, after its long discredite. When it fell, it had become an ignorant and bombastic thing of padded calves and Byronic whiskers. Nor did it deserve much sympathy when its stagey hypocrisy went down before the fiery lances of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

But now that it returns, it comes from the land of Whistler and Pennell, with all the technical mastery and dashing realism of the young American school. But though his craftsmanship is modern, Mr. Abbey comes to deliver us from that Impressionist twilight in which there were no harmonies except between the greenest grey and the greyest green. He does not condemn the portrait painter forever to ply his trade in the darkest corner of the room, as though he were selling bad hats. He offers to the artist once more the ancient wine of colour and poetry and historic passion. The red robes of Wolsey are alone a raging fire to scare away the weak-eyed lovers of "art colours." And as the pictorial method has lost its early Victorian clumsiness, so the literary feeling has lost its early Victorian superficiality. Wolsey is not the somnolent hippopotamus we knew of old: his face, gross indeed, is able and vigilant. It seems to us that a purified art has been reunited to an enlightened history.

(from The Bookman, July, 1900)
Evolution,” he exclaimed, when he returned from the races. “Sounds like a winner to me,” I replied. “From random mutation and natural selection.”

“Good pedigree, too, I suspect.” My system for picking horses centers on their names. I’ve had better luck with their names than with their track records. A couple of years ago I won a bundle on a horse named Revolution. That’s only one letter away from Evolution.

“I can’t reconcile evolution with racial equality,” he said. “If they’re running against each other, why would you need to?”

“For the sake of political peace and scientific consensus,” he replied. “Were they running, too?”

He told me that while watching his favorite sport, he began reflecting on the theory that horses developed from fox-sized forest dwellers into the majestic mounts we see today.

“They were born, the theory goes, from an eons-long interaction of chance and necessity.”

Chance and Necessity. Now there’s a couple of ponies I could bet on. Which one was the stallion?”

“Chance,” he explained, “refers to randomly occurring characteristics. Necessity indicates the characteristics required to survive and reproduce in different environments.”

“I thought we were talking about horse racing.”

“Oh, we are,” he said. “According to the theory, random variation and environmental selection produced the forebears of the racers I was just watching.”

“What about the betters?”

“All of us, betters included, are said to have evolved from lower life forms. But in the latter stages, groups of us did it in different environments, and therein lies the difficulty.”

“Is this still about horse races?”

“Human races,” he said. “If they developed separately for a significant time, their different environments would have selected for different characteristics, according to evolutionary theory.”

“And the difficulty?”

“Different characteristics mean different strengths and weaknesses that would become apparent when the races share the same environments.”

“You’re on sensitive ground, my friend,” I warned him.

“Not I,” he replied. “I’m only the messenger. It’s evolution that’s on sensitive ground. As I said, I can’t reconcile it with racial equality.”

“I’m afraid I’m no help. I have difficulty reconciling the deposits and withdrawals in my check book.”

“Maybe the politicians can do it.”

“I wouldn’t trust a politician within a mile of my check book.”

“Politicians are masters of reconciliation,” he said. “Truth, error, good, evil—all dwell peaceably in the political conscience. Politicians eat contradictions for breakfast.”

“For lunch and dinner, too, I suspect.”

“If anyone can explain how the races are biologically equal when they evolved in different environments, it will be a politician.”

“Charles Darwin should have explained it,” I said.

“Charles Darwin?”

“When he advanced his theory of evolution.”

“The society Charles Darwin grew up in wasn’t noted for a belief in racial equality. He probably saw nothing to explain, no contradiction to reconcile.” Pausing a moment, he added, “Don’t get me started on Darwin’s Bulldog.”

“I didn’t know he had one.”

“Thomas Huxley, a true believer who championed his theory, doggedly.”

“Who would have thought bulldogs were that highly evolved?”

“When Darwin left England with the Beagle—”

“The beagle?”

“Surely you’ve heard of the Beagle.”

“Of course. Everyone has. I’m just surprised Darwin had a beagle. I didn’t think it would get along with the bulldog.”

“The Beagle was the ship Darwin took to gather evidence.” First horses, now dogs. As I had no interest in further digressions into the animal kingdom, I tried to move the discussion forward.

“Now, let me get this straight,” I said. “According to evolutionary theory, environments are the great discriminators.”

“Absolutely,” he said. “They select and they reject.”

“On the basis of survivability.”

“Yes, but since survivability varies from one environment to another, location is crucial.”

“Organisms that flourish in one place might die out in another.”

“Evolutionary theory is rife with placial discrimination.”

“Placial discrimination?”

“It’s with us still,” he said. “North against south, east against west, urban against rural.”

“And vice versa?”

“Absolutely. Country bumpkin and city slicker are among the more common placist epithets.”

“Country Bumpkin and City Slicker! I lost money on both those nags.”
Walk the Straight and Narrow Path

by Chris Chan

I’m glad that I don’t have cable TV. I’m underwhelmed by most of HBO’s acclaimed series, with two major exceptions: The Sopranos and The Wire. It’s the latter show that I wish to address here. Simultaneously inundated with critical praise and starved of ratings and awards, The Wire is an amazing achievement. I would not go so far as the tired cliché that it’s “the best show on television.” But I would unhesitatingly call it a great television series and a magnificent indictment of the ills that plague American society. I don’t have enough space to do The Wire justice, but I will try.

The Wire revolves around the Baltimore drug trade—from the perspectives of the pushers who sell the drugs, the cops who investigate crimes, and the citizens who get caught up in the mayhem. The human costs of drugs are presented in gritty detail, where vices cripple a run-down city in which existence is brutal and life is cheap. Profanity, sex, and violence; trademarks of any self-respecting HBO series, appear in abundance, but they are used to illustrate the inescapable ugliness of a corrupt and crime-ridden system, not for titillation or shock value. The show takes its name from the fact that throughout the series, the police advance their investigations mostly through wiretapping the drug dealers’ phones.

The Wire consists of five seasons and sixty episodes. Amazingly, each season gets progressively better and more profound, with increasingly scathing social commentary and compelling character development. With each season, the storylines grow more majestic and the insights more perceptive. The one exception is the theme song, which is excellent in the first season but gets worse with successive season, with a new and inferior remix of the same tune tune. Maybe this is meant to reflect the series’ bleak outlook. Certainly, while each remix grew on me, the changes are never for the better.

Each season has a different setting that reveals a different level of the corruption that America faces in the early twenty-first century. The first season opens in the dilapidated inner-city projects, where the drug dealers rule like tyrants and a ragtag police detail tries to bring down the kingpins. After the first arc ends with some minor setbacks, season two moves to the Baltimore dockyards, where de-industrialization imperils the city’s worst crooks do not deal drugs on the streets, but instead serve in City Hall. The midpoint of the series has a “that for which we fight” theme, showing just what might happen if the police were to give up on their struggles against drugs. Season four critiques how the public schools fail their students, and season five points an accusing finger at a local newspaper and a media culture that values Pulitzer over the truth. Throughout each season, cops of varying levels of virtue try to wrest control of their city from thugs and opportunists. Perhaps the finest season is the fourth one, although my favorite is the fifth.

Few shows demand as much of their audience as The Wire does. By the fifth season, viewers are required to keep track of more than a hundred finely drawn characters, as well as keeping several dozen plot lines an entire social class and desperate men make foolish choices in order to survive. Season three proves that some of the city’s worst crooks do not deal drugs on the streets, but instead serve in City Hall. The midpoint of the series has a “that for which we fight” theme, showing just what might happen if the police were to give up on their struggles against drugs. Season four critiques how the public schools fail their students, and season five points an accusing finger at a local newspaper and a media culture that values Pulitzer over the truth. Throughout each season, cops of varying levels of virtue try to wrest control of their city from thugs and opportunists. Perhaps the finest season is the fourth one, although my favorite is the fifth.

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The character development is brilliant, although it takes two seasons for all the nuances to start shining brightly. The titular main character is Jimmy McNulty (Dominic West), a self-destructive, hard-drinking, womanizing cop whose primary shot at redemption lies in his stellar police work. Among the massive supporting cast, the standout performances are Omar Little (Michael K. Williams), a principled bandit who robs drug dealers; Lester Freamon (Clarke Peters), a quiet virtuoso investigator; world-weary detective “Bunk” Moreland (Wendell Pierce); abrasive boss William Rawls (John Doman); Tommy Carcetti (Aidan Gillen), an up-and-coming politician who starts by seeking power in order to save his city; and “Bubbles” (Andre Royo), a homeless addict and police informant starving for redemption.

Fans of The Wire commonly praise the show for being “realistic,” and in a way, that’s true. There are no mindlessly happy Hollywood endings, the actors are always talented but rarely glamorous, actions always produce consequences, and everything is far less than ideal. Yet simultaneously, the Sisyphean worldview, where nearly every gain by the good guys is quashed and all attempts to repair fractured institutions are crushed, is contrived in its own way. The show’s creators are trying to make a point, but at times the futility is spread a trifle thick. At no point, however, are hope and virtue discredited.

Without preaching or condescension, The Wire explains why nihilism is poisonous, why sin is not a private matter, and why virtue is necessary despite the fact that doing the right thing frequently seems futile and rarely earns thanks. Even as the magnificent closing scenes of the final episode depict wrongs going unpunished and selfish ambition reaping obscene rewards, every second of the series is a desperate cry for justice and righteousness to prevail. The Wire is often charged with promoting moral ambiguity, but this is a misguided view. The show maintains a finely tuned moral compass, even though few characters are able to find their way out of the jungle.
When G.K. Chesterton wrote his book *What's Wrong With The World* back in 1910, he cited several things that were wrecking or would wreck civilization. Among these were attacks on productive private property, the integrity of the family, and the tyranny of self-appointed elites. These troubles are not only still with us today, they have worsened.

Chesterton never relished the role of prophet that we give him today. He wrote back in 1926:

> The one really rousing thing about human history is that, whether or no the proceedings go right, at any rate, the prophecies always go wrong. The promises are never fulfilled and the threats are never fulfilled. When good things do happen, they are never the good things that were guaranteed. And even when bad things happen, they are never the bad things that were inevitable. You may be quite certain that, if an old pessimist says the country is going to the dogs, it will go to any other animals except the dogs.

But in this case, he saw his England and the world going not to the dogs but the bugs. In the chapter called “The Empire Of The Insect,” he observes:

> The old moralists, I say, permitted the ant to enforce and typify man’s morality; they never allowed the ant to upset it. They used the ant for industry as the lark for punctuality; they looked up at the flapping birds and down at the crawling insects for a homely lesson. But we have lived to see a sect that does not look down at the insects, but looks up at the insects, that asks us essentially to bow down and worship beetles, like ancient Egyptians.

The average supporter of the two rivals to Distributism would shudder to think so and deny it. But both capitalism and socialism—especially its Communist and Fascist variants—are materialist in nature. The things of God, faith, and the soul are relegated to the edges of life or exiled altogether. As a result, both systems tend to see humans as similar to insects; one as numbers to be raised or lowered to enhance profit margins or aid in...
undercutting financial rivals, the other as part of the oppressed masses, ripe with revolutionary potential, cannon fodder for establishing a global proletarian dictatorship.

Chesterton coined the word “insectolatry” for this twisted worldview, as twisted as anything spewed from the depths of Hell. But Man is not a bug. Mankind is not a hive. It is cruel to think so even as an unconsciously accepted principle of either Wall Street or Red Square. But as Shakespeare wrote in his play Henry V (and I slightly paraphrase), when leniency and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the surest winner.

Distributism sees Man as he really is, made in the image of God, albeit flawed due to original sin and its effects. Unlike her rivals who believe in some form of top-down centralism, either economic or political, Distributism holds fast to its core tenet of subsidiarity. Approaching problems related to power or the purse starts at the lowest level possible. When a problem can’t be handled by means of its own resources, only then should the neighborhood, town, or city call for help from a more centralized authority. This authority would be restricted in what it could do according to law. For us in America, this process is well-spelled out in the Tenth Amendment of our Constitution.

In economics, subsidiarity means eliminating laws that micromanage small and medium-sized businesses and worker-owned, worker-managed cooperatives. It also encourages big businesses to break up into small, more manageable units, with worker-ownership and management of these newer entities as an ideal. One of the best examples of these policies is in Emilia-Romagna in northern Italy, where 40 percent of GDP is generated by such small businesses and cooperatives.

Building a Distributist society won’t happen overnight and everywhere at once. But we can start constructing it today where we live. How, one may ask? Shop whenever possible at small stores and cooperatives. Do your banking at credit unions and mutual banks whenever possible. Get involved in local politics, the policy-making body most responsive to change. If you’re able, run for local office and work to change the laws and statutes to reflect Distributist principles. Finally, network with other like-minded individuals and groups to change your county and state step by step.

Above all, resist and fight those groups and forces scheming to reduce us all to a mindless hive of consumers or “comrades”—or, God forbid, both at once.
Most of us do not regard reading books as a mere animal pleasure. But G.K. Chesterton says that it was for him; at least it was when he was a boy and he was reading books for boys. He was almost mechanically receptive, chewing up stories with “the sort of pleasure that a cow must have in grazing all day long.” He was saddened that this literary genre had degenerated in his lifetime, but even so, the newer adventure books still retained something of the original delights, even if they were only “the reflection of a hundred reflections and each in a distorting mirror.”

The Common Man is mostly a book about books. It is not dry literary criticism but is itself an adventure story about adventure stories. Chesterton walks with the classical heroes, skewering them for a moment in time. He marches across time, but writes exciting essays even about the modern monsters. He writes great essays about great books but writes exciting essays even about boring books. He marches across time, taking on the Song of Roland, Dr. Johnson, Rabelais, Francis Thompson, George Meredith, Rupert Brooke, Thackeray, Dickens (of course), the James Brothers (Henry and William), Smollet, Tolstoy, Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Chesterton’s friend, Walter de la Mare. Also included here is Chesterton’s masterful exploration of “the mysticism of happiness” in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, probably the best essay ever written about Shakespeare (or about any other writer).

There is a reason why great books cut across historical epochs. There is a reason why mediocre books get stuck in their own era. “The first use of good literature,” says Chesterton, “is that it prevents a man from being merely modern.” Eternal themes don’t wear out even when the current fashions neglect them for a moment in time. “What we call the new ideas are generally broken fragments of the old ideas.”

The theme is launched with the title essay of the book.

Modern emancipation has really been a new persecution of the Common Man. If it has emancipated anybody, it has in rather special and narrow ways emancipated the Uncommon Man. It has given an eccentric sort of liberty to some of the hobbies of the wealthy, and occasionally to some of the more humane lunacies of the cultured. The only thing that it has forbidden is common sense, as it would have been understood by the common people.

The modern intellectuals are always fleeing to different extremes and then forcing their absurd theories on the normal people who have to suffer the consequences. All of the ordinary things are under assault from the altar to the hearth. The professors who are supposed to appreciate and protect the past instead rewrite history and twist the time-honored texts into tortured meanings. Chesterton muses that he would like to put the head of such a professor on the end of stick, “in the French Revolutionary manner,” and use it as a club with which to beat some sense into other professors who have tried to empty Christianity of its divinity and empty the Bible of its inspiration.

Theologians and philosophers debate about the inspiration of scripture; but perhaps the most philosophical argument, for certain scriptural sayings being inspired, is simply that they sound like it.

They have spread the misconception that Christianity is dull, that the Christian virtues are tame and timid and even respectable. Chesterton stands up against them: he asserts that the Christian virtues are “vast, defiant, and even destructive things, scorning the yoke of this world, dwelling in the desert, and seeking their meat from God.” The modern world portrays itself as full of noise and energy and restlessness. Rather, says Chesterton, the age we live in “is really very sleepy; all the wheels and the traffic send one to sleep.”

In between these literary essays are reflections on love and laughter, including the wonderful “Two Stubborn Pieces of Iron,” a title used to describe those two very different creatures—man and woman—who can only be joined together when they are “red hot.” There is also the sermon that Chesterton would have preached—had he been a preacher—a sermon against the sin of pride and a tour de force of the history that might have been: “If Don John of Austria had Married Mary Queen of Scots.”

This was the first posthumous collection of Chesterton essays edited by his secretary and literary executrix, Dorothy Collins. The writer she had served so well had been dead for fourteen years but there was still a demand for his books, albeit a waning one. She put together some of his best uncollected essays for this volume, but there was still a wealth of scattered material to be gathered. She would bring out seven more such books over the next twenty years. But we are only seeing the beginning of Chesterton’s posthumous works. Not a bad accomplishment for a writer to keep writing so many books after his death.

Emerald is the true color of frost, The promise of winter starker than loss, The joy of forgetting not worth the cost. Emerald is the true color of frost. The slow horizon is soon to be crossed; The stone colossal corrod ed by moss. Emerald is the true color of frost, The promise of winter starker than loss.

—Christopher Nield
Dear Mr. Chesterton,

I know that we all agree on social reform, and that there are things that can be done for the poor, but let us be honest. Let us admit that there really is a deeper difference between the rich and the poor other than the fact that they are either rich or poor. Successful people are successful because they are trustworthy and hardworking. Vagabonds and beggars and people who can’t hold jobs or won’t work are for the most part not trustworthy. It is true that an executive may have his secret vices, but they are secret and don’t affect anyone else. Whereas, the public drunkenness and open vices of workers have to be prevented with strict regulation. Food is for all: freedom is for the few.

Signed,
Mr. Tobold

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

There are people who might be amused at your debates with George Bernard Shaw, but isn’t this getting a little tiring? It is obvious that neither of you is going to convince the other of anything. You seem to like each other. Why can’t you just agree to disagree?

Signed,
Mr. Higgins

Dear Mr. Higgins,

Mr. Shaw and I agree that agreement is more practical than appreciation. In other words, we agree that it is worthwhile to disagree. This is not what is meant by agreeing to differ; because it is agreeing to dispute.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
("Second Thoughts on Shaw")

Dear Mr. Spingarn,

I saw that sentence when I was sixteen years old. I saw through it when I was eighteen years old. What is the meaning of “moral judgment”? Either it means nothing at all, or it means a general judgment about the social effect of men’s actions upon each other. There must be some effect of artistic action, as of all other action. If there is, it can be morally judged; apart from any judgment when it is artistically judged.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(New York American, May 7, 1932)

Dear Mr. MacDonald,

It is no longer proper to refer to the “Scots” as the “Scotch.” You may also say “Scottish” but not “Scotch.”

Signed,
Mr. MacDonald

Dear Mr. MacDonald,

I shall boldly say ‘Scotch’ because I am talking English. I never heard of Butterscotish, or a Scots-and-soda.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(Listener, Oct. 17, 1934)
**NEWS WITH VIEWS**

Compiled by the Gilbert Magazine News-Gathering Staff

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

**FORGET THE QUEEN; GOD SAVE ENGLAND**

LONDON—In 1969, Queen Elizabeth II established the Trinity Cross to honor citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for distinguished service and gallantry. Receiving the Trinity Cross is no mean accomplishment, as the award is only exceeded by the Victoria Cross and the George Cross. That hasn’t made much impression on the 30 percent or so of the citizenry who happen to be Hindus or Muslims, a number of whom have refused to accept the honor because of its Christian symbolism. Ever ready to trash its heritage for the sake of a noisy minority, the Privy Council of London ruled the decoration unconstitutional as it breached the right to equality, freedom of conscience, and freedom of belief. Perhaps the only upside is the decision won’t strip prior recipients of their honors. Henceforth the award will be known as the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Order of the Trinity will become the Distinguished Society of Trinidad and Tobago, the latter sounding more like the subject of a gossip column than a group honored for service and gallantry. While some quarters would applaud the Privy Council for its display of tolerance, we think G.K. Chesterton would consider it another example of tolerance showing a lack of conviction.

**ANOTHER REASON TO LOVE SHARIA**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—While some still label Islam the “religion of peace,” it’s getting harder to accuse it of being a religion of compassion. A case in point occurred recently in Dubai, when a Lebanese woman who lost her unborn child in a traffic accident was convicted of unintentional homicide and ordered to pay more than $5,000 in “blood money.” The woman, who was nine months pregnant when the accident occurred, had braked suddenly and another car pushed her into the car ahead. Even though she was not at fault, the head traffic prosecutor said women in their third trimester should avoid driving to protect the lives of their unborn children. We can’t argue with protecting the unborn but as Chesterton noted, the children of the desert tend to hold a one-sided perspective on life, often-times to the exclusion of compassion.

**NIGERIAN POLICE ALWAYS GET THEIR GOAT**

LAGOS, Nigeria—Chesterton wrote it is when we regard man as an animal that we realize he is not. Unfortunately police in Nigeria haven’t read much Chesterton. In what has to be a milestone in the history of criminal detection, police in the Nigerian capital are holding a black and white goat as a suspect in the attempted theft of a Mazda 323. A group of vigilantes had spotted two hoodlums attempting to break into the vehicle and gave chase. While one suspect got away, witnesses said, the other attempted to avoid capture by turning himself into a goat. A wire service contacted police spokesman Tunde Mohammed, who advised that while they could not confirm the story and the alleged transformation had yet to be scientifically confirmed, nevertheless the goat remained in custody. We’re not sure whether to bring this to the attention of PETA or the ACLU.

**ONE TERRIFIC SELLING POINT**

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—After six years and $12 million, New Zealand wine scientists have discovered one of the core aromas of the country’s award-winning sauvignon blance is—drum roll, please—cat’s pee. Tests by an expert sensory panel were able to discern this particular bouquet among other scents such as those of asparagus, apples, and snow peas. They further concluded the fragrance also contributes to the wine’s unique flavor and that it is growing in popularity worldwide, although we wonder if consumer acceptance will continue once word gets out. Should it continue, it might be time to revise Chesterton’s dictum that we should thank God for beer, burgundy, and cats by not drinking too much of them.

**LET’S HEAR IT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS**

MEXICO CITY—Speaking at a colloquium in Mexico City earlier this year, Arie Hoekman of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) declared that high rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births were not signs of social crisis. Willing to see the glass as half-full, Hoekman said the statistics actually represent “the triumph of human rights over patriarchy and the rise of new values centered in fundamental human rights.” Another speaker at the same meeting stated those who see the present situation as a crisis recognize only one type of family. We guess they’d consider such people on par with the narrow individuals who acknowledge only one type of marriage. While claiming to espouse “fundamental human rights,” we note, UNFPA has subsidized forced abortions in China and coerced sterilizations in South America. As for Hoekman and his cohorts, Chesterton would caution them that the changes people talk about are never the changes that are really going on.

**IMAGINE NO IMAGINATION**

LIVERPOOL, England—South Liverpool’s Anglican cathedral was to sponsor an arts festival. What should be its theme? Ever striving for inclusiveness, organizers delegated the decision to artist Cleo Evans, who promptly selected John Lennon’s dirge
“Imagine.” Recognizing that the song’s composer himself described the tune as anti-religious, some complained of the choice. Cathedral representatives brushed aside criticisms saying, “We recognize [the song’s] power to imagine.” Recognizing that the song’s Anglican bells in the Cathedral belfry: Cathedral, even if it means turning it into something else. From what we see at present, this is not a healthy state of affairs. The moose, exhausted and severely dehydrated, had to be put down. Apparently the boys did poke the moose with a stick in an effort to get the animal to stand up, but were not trying to hurt the poor beast. According to a story in the National Post, the father of one of the boys, in an effort to clear his son and his companions, raised an interesting alibi defense. He alleged that the boys could not have been harassing the moose “because they were vandalizing a church at the time.” As Chesterton once commented, “Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable.” We wonder which is the more excusable offense under Canadian law.

AN UNDEAD ISSUE

OTTAWA—As if modern science hasn’t sought to terrify us enough, a team of scientists from the University of Ottawa has discovered civilization as we know it would most likely perish if ever attacked by zombies. We’re not making this up. Using models developed to calculate the effects of more plausible pandemics, the scientists determined that unless humanity acted quickly, we might as well give up our Vikings season tickets. While quarantine or a medical cure might lead to the coexistence of humans and zombies, the scientists were not optimistic these would be plausible measures. They’re convinced the most effective way to contain the rise of the undead is to “hit hard and hit often,” but they were a little sketchy about what that would mean.

So let’s get this straight. Scientists who for the most part call belief in God irrational and unscientific are calculating the effect of creatures that don’t exist on a world that actually does? As Chesterton once said, science is either a tool or a toy. In this case, you be the judge.

C L E R I H E W  C O R N E R

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

The Originator

Mr. H.G. Wells
Was composed of cells.
He thought the human race
Was a perfect disgrace.
—Edmund Clerihew Bentley

The Imitators

Albert Einstein
Had to pay a traffic fine
For trying to reach the speed of light
In his Packard one night.
—Lee Strong, Rochester, New York

Gerard Manley Hopkins
Lived long before pop cans.
But not before foil
And the ooze of oil.
—Archibald Skemp, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Giacomo Puccini
Liked linguini.
Had he filmed Tosca
He would have won an Osca.
—Bob Cook, Bainbridge, Ohio

The notorious Brittany Spears
Causes many a mom’s greatest fears.
Mom just hopes and prays her daughter
Will do what she oughter.
—James Wenders, West Allis, Wisconsin

Clerihew: A humorous, unmetrical, biographical verse of four short lines—two closed couplets—with the first rhyme a play on the name of the subject. Readers are invited to submit clerihews for “The Clerihew Corner,” with the understanding that submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned, nor will all be published.
The Meeting of the British Association has been remarkable for at least one pleasant feature this year. We have been spared the painful exhibition of intelligent men making fools of themselves, or being made fools of by the Press. This learned Association, as David Brewster conceived it, should be a gathering of scientists which gives them an opportunity of talking shop together, and showing one another what they have found in their gropings since they last met. It was not meant to be a gathering of vain jargon-mongers airing their dog-Latin to impress the ignorant mob. Still less was it meant to be a spectacle for the Peeping Toms of Fleet Street. The British Association probably did itself the worst possible service when it let the Press in. For the Press is out for something startling, and whether anything startling is uttered or not, the reporter who is sensitive to his family responsibilities, will find something startling either by design or accident.

The bulk of the proceedings of the British Association are intensely interesting to the specialists. Yet while the specialists admit quite frankly that they have difficulty in understanding one another, the reporter is not allowed to have any difficulty in understanding them and conveying the great news to the cabman’s wife. It should not be surprising that the man who cannot, or does not, usually report a fire or an aeroplane crash or a public meeting without getting the principal names wrong, is expected to report correctly a new theory of the nature of matter or the nature of man.

In justice to the scientists it must be admitted that they are very often traduced by misreporting. They also very often traduce themselves by succumbing to the publicity-complex—it is the pardonable result of a natural weakness. Some of them, again, will make fools of themselves anyhow just because they are wrong headed. It is a mistake to suppose that an academic degree or a professional chair, even when capped by a knighthood, makes a great scientist of a man, still less a thinker or philosopher. He may be little more than a skilled technician and a keen observer; he may be even less. But it is a still greater mistake to suppose that his colleagues do not know his failings or that they are taken in by him. The Press may be taken in, and through the Press, the Public. But the world of science as a whole will tolerate a deal of foolishness for the little good in him.

Scientists as a body are not so foolish as many people accuse us of believing them. Individually they may be as foolish as the rest of us. And speaking of foolishness it is curious to reflect that if we less academic mortals make a statement completely at variance with the common experience and belief of mankind, such as that water never finds its own level or that fish thrive best on dry land, we should be ignored or treated as lunatics. In fact the plight of the ordinary man is little better if he makes a statement completely in accord with the common experience and belief, such as that the family is a natural group or that men dislike slavery. Yet when a man is labelled a scientist or a professor, and he makes a statement as completely outrageous as our first examples, such as that there is no God or that we are only a bigger sort of ant, we are expected to listen respectfully and assume that there must be something in it. Of course, scientists are not so foolish, but the Press is. And since the Press is now the general public’s only source of information, and the public, being systematically un-educated, has no means of distinguishing between the true and the false, scientists in general suffer discredit. It is a grave injustice done to science and scientists. But it is not we who do it. We are indeed most eager to undo it.

Nevertheless, even sound and reputable scientists have not been without blame in bringing discredit upon their fraternity. In the intoxication of a new discovery of great value, or in the formulation of a new theory of great ingenuity and beauty, they have fallen into the sin of intellectual pride. Their lack of traditional philosophic balance, their ignorance of philosophic standards and lack of philosophic anchorage, has left them at the mercy of the storm in a sea of error and unwisdom. They have fallen into the grave error and foolishness of assuming that because they discovered even partially the how, they had simultaneously discovered the what as well as the wherefore and the why.

There is hope when the scientists really begin to distinguish between knowledge and understanding—hope that they are approaching the frame of mind in which they will merit the respect of all intelligent men, when they will not need to be reminded, as their own Kronecker reminded them, that “God made the integers.”

(G.K.’s Weekly, September 20, 1930)
“It is strange how seldom a literary journal is actually a good read.” —Joseph Sobran

“The Special Polish Issue is indeed a magnificent edition.”
— Luke Coppen, London’s Catholic Herald

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<td>Chesterton and Frank Capra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAVID DEAVEL</td>
<td>Chesterton and Alfred Hitchcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MARK SHEA</td>
<td>Becoming Innocent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MICHAEL WARD</td>
<td>Seven Days and Seven Heavens: Chesterton &amp; CS Lewis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL CDs @ $6.00 EACH**

**OR ORDER THE COMPLETE SET OF CDs $55.00 (SAVE $11)**

---

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**ADDRESS:**

**CITY:**

**STATE/ZIP:**

**E-MAIL:**

**PHONE:**

**AMOUNT ENCLOSED**

**I’m paying by:**  

- Check  
- VISA  
- MC  
- DISC  
- AMEX card

**Card #:**

**SIGNATURE:**

**EXP:**