



The **DEFENDANT**

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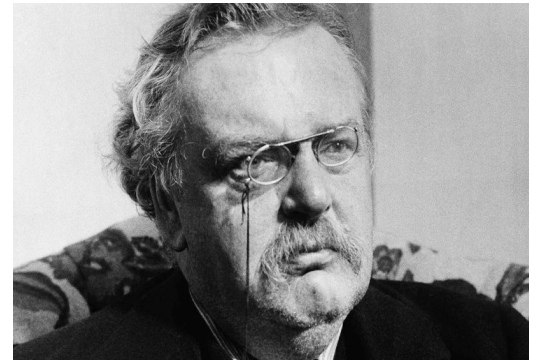
'I have found that humanity is not incidentally engaged, but eternally and systematically engaged, in throwing gold into the gutter and diamonds into the sea...; therefore I have imagined that the main business of man, however humble, is defence. I have conceived that a defendant is chiefly required when worldlings despise the world - that a counsel for the defence would not have been out of place in the terrible day when the sun was darkened over Calvary and Man was rejected of men.'

G.K Chesterton, 'Introduction,' *The Defendant* (1901)

The Wonder of Chesterton

by Andrew Murphy

*How do we see and appreciate the real world when it has become staled by familiarity? In *The Coloured Lands* (1938), sub-titled as "a whimsical gathering of drawings, stories, and poems," Chesterton speaks of a pilgrim who is keen to discover America. When it is pointed out to him that Columbus had already discovered it, he simply replies: "They might have discovered America, but I have not."*



Andrew Murphy (pictured) provides a reflection on the sense of wonder and renewed vision which Chesterton's writings generated. Andrew is a student of Campion College in Sydney who comes originally from Albury NSW. He was introduced to Chesterton by his grandmother, who gave him a copy of Dale Ahlquist's *The Apostle of Common Sense*. He has since read many of Chesterton's books and essays, notably *The Everlasting Man*, *Orthodoxy*, and *The Complete Father Brown Stories*.



A consistent theme which runs through the writings of G. K. Chesterton is the capacity to wonder at the world, and in particular to rediscover a wonder for ordinary and familiar things by looking at them from a new perspective.

In *The Everlasting Man*, he says that we have become familiar with matters of faith to the point that we are no longer astonished by them, and even begin to hold them in contempt. He encourages the reader to look at matters of faith as "entirely unfamiliar and almost unearthly" in order to regain an appreciation for the truth we have lost sight of.

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Register for October Conference

The next Australian Chesterton conference will take place on **Saturday, October 19, 2019, on the theme, "Reclaiming the Economy: The Chesterton Alternative".**

Conference details are provided on a flyer inserted with this issue of *The Defendant*.

To determine numbers and ensure proper provision on the day, it'd be helpful if members would register before the event – via the Society's website: <http://chestertonaustralia.com/conference.php>

Conference Possibility in Melbourne

A Chesterton Society member has suggested the possibility of an additional conference being held in Melbourne at some stage, which might be more convenient for members and others in Victoria to attend.

The Society would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in such an event, and know of a suitable venue and potential speakers. Please contact Karl Schmude – email: kgschmude@gmail.com; phone: 0407 721 458.

To demonstrate his point, he offers an example of what might be necessary for someone to recover a sense of wonder at the fact that men are able to ride horses.

He attempts to describe a horse as the first man might have seen it, as some kind of prehistoric creature lumbering out of a forest on "solid clubs of horn" with a "strangely small head" like the face of a gargoyle protruding from a neck almost wider than itself.

The image he offers is monstrous, but it causes us to look at a horse with new eyes and realise what a strange creature it actually is, and how impressive it is that men are able to ride them.

We might attempt a similar thing with something as commonplace as the humble pineapple. Imagine encountering one for the first time while exploring a tropical island after being shipwrecked. You would see what looks like a yellow football covered in a skin of armour, with a green crown exploding from the top. In a sense it is a very ugly thing that we would probably steer clear of if we encountered it for the first time in some foreign jungle. Yet pierce its outer shell and a soft and juicy flesh is unveiled, and a refreshing sweetness that is hidden by a rigid, highly protective exterior. Suddenly it seems almost adventurously exciting that this strange plant is something we can eat, and not only eat but thoroughly enjoy.

While it is highly important not to lose sight of how amazing pineapples are, there are actually more serious things that we fail to appreciate through familiarity.

For me, one of these is the crucifix. It is the most iconic image associated with Christianity, and yet because of this I find that I am exposed to it so frequently that it becomes merely a symbol made up of two intersecting lines. It becomes a standard part of Church decoration, or something people wear on a necklace. While I obviously know the significance and meaning of it, more often than not I fail to think of this when I see one.

The crucifix for the first time

One time during Mass at Rouse Hill in Sydney, I was looking at the impressive crucifix above the altar, and was randomly struck by how it is such a strange symbol. It's something I see every time I'm in a Catholic Church, or most homes, but I usually fail to see how shocking it actually is. I started to think about what it would

be like to encounter one for the first time, with no knowledge of what it meant.



Imagine walking into the temple of some unknown religion, marvelling at the towering pillars, beautiful paintings, and intricate stained glass windows, only to look to the altar and see a massive sculpture of a dead man hanging from a noose. Then, imagine turning in shock to one of the worshippers and asking why there is such a terrifying image of death and execution staining their otherwise beautiful building, only to be told that it is the greatest sign of the love of the Universal Creator, and the image in which they place all their hope, and find the meaning for their lives.

Surely we would see the worshipper as a madman, and the temple as a horrifying place.

Yet this is exactly what the cross is, an image of horrendous torture and death, proudly displayed in our churches as the greatest sign of love the world has ever seen.

On the surface level it is actually repulsive: a bloodied human body run through with nails, stretched out on two pieces of wood, with a tangle of thorns digging in to its lifeless head. It is probably one of the most striking images of human evil and cruelty – and yet paradoxically, it is because of this that it is truly an image of hope.

If the crucifix were simply a glorified image of the victim of a Roman crucifixion, then the churches in which it hangs would be madhouses for some sick and twisted cult of human sacrifice. But, of course, this is not the case.

Deeper than the surface is the belief that this tortured body is actually the body of the Universal Creator, who descended from his Heavenly throne into the darkness of a world which had cut itself off from its source of life.

This image of death brings hope and life, because it reminds us that no matter how much we suffer, or stray into the darkness, the Light of the world has gone there before us and is waiting with open arms, saying that there is no place He will not go to bring us back.

Most importantly, it is a reminder that the horror and suffering of the cross, and of this life, is only a brief moment in time before the Resurrection. A short night of darkness before an eternal dawn. ■

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Society Membership

The annual membership fee of the Australian Chesterton Society is **\$30.00**, which entitles subscribers to receive the Society's quarterly newsletter, *The Defendant*.

Subscriptions may be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer, Mr Gary Furnell, at the address in the adjacent box or by electronic transfer -

BSB: 932-000 (Regional Australia Bank, Armidale NSW)

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Krish Kandiah

The Power of Paradoxes

by Gary Furnell

All readers of Chesterton know of his love of paradoxes. His central chapter in *Orthodoxy* (1908), “The Paradoxes of Christianity”, reveals how his appreciation of supernatural paradoxes gave him insight into the realities of earthly life.

In this book review of *Paradoxology: Why Christianity was never meant to be simple* (London, 2015), by an Anglican theologian, Krish Kandiah, **Gary Furnell**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society and a frequently published author, highlights the central significance of paradoxes in the Christian faith.



Gary Furnell

Kierkegaard wrote that the person who began to philosophise but refused paradoxes was like a tailor who refused to knot the thread before he sewed; the work falls apart even as it proceeds.

Paradoxes are difficult but generous; paradoxes allow one to begin thinking without neglecting complicating aspects of life.

Christianity is a thicket of offensive paradoxes; it is not a simple faith. Like Kierkegaard before him, Krish Kandiah embraces paradoxes because they cannot be honestly avoided, and because they have rich explanatory power.

In *Paradoxology: Why Christianity was never meant to be simple*, Kandiah examines thirteen paradoxes of Christianity, beginning with the Abraham paradox—why the God who needs nothing demands the sacrifice of Isaac, the child of promise, through Biblical history to the Corinthian paradox—why does God Who “so loved the world” entrust the Church particularly to embody his good news knowing it will do a mediocre job of its one crucial task?

A *precis* of the book’s thesis is found in the discussion of the Joshua paradox: the God who commands us to love our neighbour commands Israel, led by Joshua, to exterminate the Canaanites—every man, woman and child. Kandiah knows the criticism of episodes like this, by atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Daniel Dennett, cannot be airily dismissed. He writes:

“When we come across difficult questions, we should learn that ignoring them does not build faith. We must be brave enough to face our challenges head-on: then, perhaps, our faith will become stronger, not weaker.”

Of course, Kandiah does not provide thirteen neat answers to his thirteen paradoxes. He does not, and cannot, because God transcends man; we know in part and see very dimly, a truth reinforced in the Job paradox.

Kandiah’s strategy is to provide a wealth of insight and consideration of context, together with enough honest questioning and sufficient humbling answers to strengthen and stimulate faith.

This review is based on a second reading (within a few weeks of the first reading) which indicates the engaging stimulation

of the book’s 308 pages. Kandiah gives personal examples to demonstrate that the paradoxes embedded in Christianity impact the lives of all individuals, including you and I. There is nothing purely academic about the troubling questions that paradoxes provoke; in different ways at different times they are the experience of every person.

The human heart wants to understand, or at least to know why it cannot understand. Deep calls unto deep. Because of its honesty and the explanations it offers, *Paradoxology* deserves to be widely read, especially by catechists, Catholic teachers and welfare workers, and priests.

Krish Kandiah, who lives in Oxfordshire, is an Anglican theologian. One wishes that he made greater use of fellow-Protestant Soren Kierkegaard’s profound understanding of paradoxes from his masterpieces, *The Sickness unto Death* and *Training in Christianity*. One wishes that Kandiah had incorporated the insights of Catholic geniuses Gilbert Chesterton and Blaise Pascal, two experts in critical, faith-filled paradoxical thinking.

Moreover, the wider riches of Catholic thinking have been neglected; for example, gems of thought could have been added from John Paul II’s encyclical letters *Fides et Ratio* and *Salvifici Doloris*.

I found some of the personal illustrations gave a slightly frothy surface of sentimentality, but this isn’t restricted to *Paradoxology*—it is becoming a common stylistic tic in many books, Christian or otherwise. I would like to know what Kandiah has been reading, but there is no bibliography. References are footnoted, however, and they provide a sort of guide. Also, an index would have been a useful addition.

It is better to be thankful for good things that exist than lament the absence of something that does not; so these few quibbles aside, this book is a welcome addition to the ages-old conversation between faith and reason.

Even the mature reader who has arrived at the conclusion that faith and reason are not opposed but complement one another will find much of value in this book. The reader who has not delved into these paradoxes—although everyone knows something of them experientially, unconsciously or by hear-say—will find it especially valuable because it outlines commodious truths that encourage a deeper, wiser faith. ■

Chesterton Library Moves to London

A supremely important collection of Chesterton's books, journals and memorabilia is about to move from its location in Oxford to the city of London.

The collection was originally assembled by Aidan Mackey, a former teacher and bookseller and a notable Chesterton scholar. Aidan, a long-time friend of the Australian Chesterton Society, has a direct link with Chesterton's own generation, and knew his long-time secretary and adopted daughter, Dorothy Collins.

The new location will be the London Global Gateway on Trafalgar Square, which is the British hub of the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. It is hoped that the library will thereby be more accessible to researchers, and stimulate the study of Chesterton's works.

In an article in *The Defendant* (Autumn 2016), Aidan reported on the Chesterton library being relocated to the Oxford Oratory. Prior to this, it had been under the care of Stratford Caldecott (whose signal contribution to Chesterton studies was commemorated in the Winter 2014 issue of *The Defendant*) and the Centre for Faith & Culture in Oxford - with American support from the G.K. Chesterton Institute at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, and later Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in New Hampshire.

In his *Defendant* article, Aidan described the Chesterton library he had developed - "containing books from his own collection, many of them carrying his drawings and doodles not only in margins but across the text, original work, and many artefacts."

In addition, The British Library (the national library of the UK and formerly part of the British Museum) had provided to Aidan an array of Chesterton memorabilia - including his walking sticks, pairs of his small pince-nez, and his fob watch; items found in his pockets and on his bedside table after his death; his rosary; and his cased Papal medal from Pius XII.

Aidan noted that recent visitors to the Chesterton library included Colin Dexter, author of the Inspector Morse novels



London's new home for the Chesterton Library



Aidan Mackey at the Chesterton Library

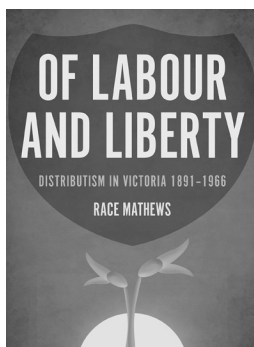
which were translated into the well-known TV series. A Chesterton admirer, Dexter told Aidan that Chesterton's "The Donkey" was one of the greatest ever poems.

The new association that has been forged with the University of Notre Dame is especially apposite. Notre Dame was an American institution with which Chesterton had strong ties. In 1930 he served as a lecturer for six weeks, speaking on Victorian literature; and subsequently, the University awarded him an honorary degree.

In her 1944 biography of Chesterton, Maisie Ward recounts his response to receiving the invitation of the then-President, Father Hugh O'Donnell CSC, to the University of Notre Dame: "He was not certain where it was, but with a name like that, even if it were in the mountains of the moon, he should feel at home."

Until the move to London is completed, any scholars or pilgrims should first email the Chesterton Library in Oxford at: chestertonlibrarytrust@gmail.com ■

Recognition of Race Mathews' book



The latest book by Dr Race Mathews, a long-time member of the Australian Chesterton Society and speaker at various conferences of the Society, has received special recognition in America. *Of Labour and Liberty, Distributism in Victoria 1891-1966* won an Honourable Mention at the 2019 Catholic Press Association Book Awards in June in St. Petersburg, Florida, in the category of Catholic Social Teaching.

The work originated in a doctoral thesis in theology which Dr Mathews completed at the Catholic Theological College, Melbourne, and the University of Divinity, Melbourne.

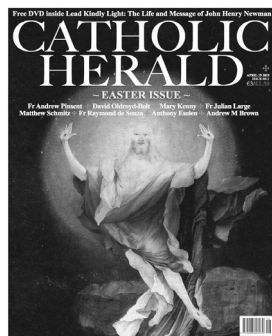
Published in Australia in 2017 by Monash University, the American edition appeared in 2018 as an imprint of the University of Notre Dame Press.

The work traces the influence of Catholic social thinkers and activists on the development of the Australian cooperative movement, focusing especially on the cooperatives pioneered by the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement in Melbourne.

Our congratulations to Dr Mathews for this distinguished tribute to his long-standing study and promotion of the social philosophy of Distributism, drawn from Catholic social teaching that became explicit in the late 19th century, and is readily identified with G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. ■

Chesterton's Impact on Young People

Amid the atmosphere of gloom now commonly felt within the Catholic Church, and Christianity generally, it is encouraging to learn of a young person joining the Church – and especially if G.K. Chesterton played a significant part in his conversion.



The London *Catholic Herald* (April 19, 2019) published a Diary piece by a young British university student, Jack Payne, who became a Catholic at the age of 17.

From an early age he had considered himself a Christian, essentially non-denominational, but in his final year of high school he discovered Chesterton.

Studying for a Religious Education exam, he was revising the topic of “evil and suffering” when he came across Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*. He “was struck by his clear intellect and, in particular, this comment: ‘Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere.’ This quotation stayed with me because it touched on the crucial question of where moral norms come from.”

“Chesterton introduced me,” wrote the young student, “to the Catholic way of thinking and he has had a huge influence on my conversion. Chesterton is a genuine hero of British Catholicism, and I truly thank him for opening me to the Catholic faith.”

Other factors proved decisive as well, such as the journey of the American convert, Dorothy Day, “from being a young bohemian to running the Catholic Worker Movement”; the impact of Bishop Robert Barron’s *Catholicism* series, “which really captures the heart and soul of the Church”; the beauty of the first Mass he attended as a catechumen; and the value of the Church’s social teaching, which “has been a beacon of hope and guidance for me”.

But the initial impetus came from Chesterton.

It is acknowledged most recently in *My name Is Lazarus*, edited by Dale Ahlquist and published by the Society of G.K. Chesterton in America, which records the stories of over 30 converts – from Judaism, Islam, various Protestant sects, atheism, or agnosticism – whose path to Rome was prepared by Chesterton.

My name Is Lazarus will be reviewed in a future issue of *The Defendant*. ■

Jack Payne’s article in the *Catholic Herald* elicited a letter in the following issue (April 25, 2019) from a reader, David Jowitt, who lives in the city of Jos in Nigeria:

SIR – I have a special reason for being cheered to learn that GK Chesterton played an important part in Jack’s conversion. For I too, in 1959, at the age of 17, warmed to Chesterton. Thanks to him I too wanted to become a Catholic. Here was a thinking man of the 20th century who had discovered Christ and His Church, and with wit and panache assailed anti-Christian progressivism. Already

fashionable in his day, the latter was rampant in the 1950s and it remains so in our own time.

Unlike Jack, however, I did not at 17 have the courage to do what I knew I ought to do. A university chaplain, an Anglican, of whom I was in awe, persuaded me that it was “not necessary” for a Christian to be a Catholic. Lazily I accepted his advice. Only 30 years later did I see that “it” was indeed necessary. Then at last I acted accordingly. With Easter joy we congratulate Jack. ■

Chesterton and Youth

The Church had any number of opportunities of dying and even of being respectfully interred. But the younger generation always began once again to knock at the door; and never louder than when it was knocking at the lid of the coffin in which it had been prematurely buried.

Islam and Arianism were both attempts to broaden the basis to a sane and simple theism, the former supported by great military success and the latter by great imperial prestige. They ought to have finally established the new system, but for the one perplexing fact that the old system preserved the only seed and secret of novelty.

Anyone reading between the lines of the twelfth-century record can see that the world was permeated by potential pantheism and paganism; we can see it in the dread of the Arabian version of Aristotle, in the rumour about great men being Moslems in secret; the old men, seeing the simple faith

of the Dark Ages dissolving, might well have thought that the fading of Christendom into Islam would be the next thing to happen. If so, the old men would have been much surprised at what did happen.

What did happen was a roar like thunder from thousands and thousands of young men, throwing all their youth into one exultant counter-charge: the Crusades. The actual effect of danger from the younger religion was renewal of our own youth.

It was the sons of St. Francis, the Jugglers of God, wandering singing over all the roads of the world; it was the Gothic going up like a flight of arrows; it was a rejuvenation of Europe. And though I know less of the older period, I suspect that the same was true of Athanasian orthodoxy in revolt against Arian officialism. The older men had submitted it to a compromise, and St. Athanasius led the younger like a divine demagogue. The persecuted carried into exile the sacred fire. It was a flaming torch that could be cast out, but could not be trampled out. (*Where All Roads Lead*, 1923; reprinted by Catholic Truth Society, London, 1963)

Chesterton – and the US Supreme Court

by Richard Egan

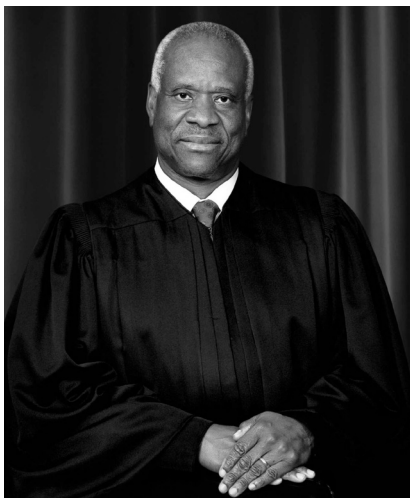
Chesterton's incisive critique of eugenics (*Eugenics and Other Evils*, 1922) continues to be relevant today.

It was quoted by Justice Clarence Thomas in his concurring opinion in the US Supreme Court case of *Box v PPINK* decided on 28 May 2019.

The case concerned, in part, the constitutionality of a law passed by the State of Indiana prohibiting abortion on the sole grounds of disability, sex or race.

The Court, while expressing no opinion on the merits of the question, declined to hear this aspect of the case on procedural grounds, with which Thomas concurred, as the issue had not been considered by more than one of the Courts of Appeals.

However, Thomas did deliver a masterful 20-page summary of the history of eugenics and its links with abortion. Thomas observed that, while much of eugenics focused on race, its targets were much broader:



Justice Clarence Thomas

Although race was relevant, eugenicists did not define a person's "fitness" exclusively by race. A typical list of dysgenic individuals would also include some combination of the "feeble-minded," "insane," "criminalistic," "deformed," "crippled," "epileptic," "inebriate," "diseased," "blind," "deaf," and "dependent (including orphans and paupers)".

He went on to quote from GKC's *Eugenics and Other Evils* (1922), p. 61, parts of this passage on the slipperiness of the term "feeble-mindedness":

"[F]eeble-mindedness is a new phrase under which you might segregate anybody" because "this phrase conveys nothing fixed and outside opinion".

This quotation is from a section in which Chesterton attacks the provisions of the Feeble-Mindedness Control Bill 1912 in England which proposed registration and segregation of those deemed to be "feeble-minded". The whole passage is worth quoting:

"Dr. Saleeby did me the honour of referring to me in one of his addresses on this subject, and said that even I cannot

produce any but a feeble-minded child from a feeble-minded ancestry. To which I reply, first of all, that he cannot produce a feeble-minded child.

"The whole point of our contention is that this phrase conveys nothing fixed and outside opinion. There is such a thing as mania, which has always been segregated; there is such a thing as idiocy, which has always been segregated; but feeble-mindedness is a new phrase under which you might segregate anybody.

"It is essential that this fundamental fallacy in the use of statistics should be got somehow into the modern mind. Such people must be made to see the point, which is surely plain enough, that it is useless to have exact figures if they are exact figures about an inexact phrase.

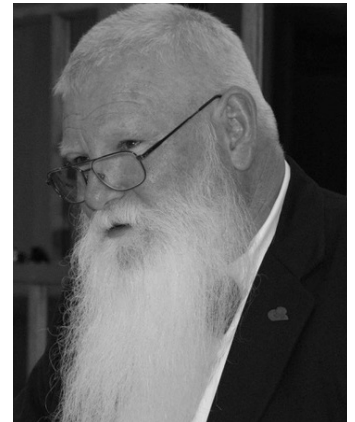
"If I say, 'There are five fools in Acton,' it is surely quite clear that, though no mathematician can make five the same as four or six, that will not stop you or anyone else from finding a few more fools in Acton.

"Now weak-mindedness, like folly, is a term divided from madness in this vital manner—that in one sense it applies to all men, in another to most men, in another to very many men, and so on.

"It is as if Dr. Saleeby were to say, 'Vanity, I find, is undoubtedly hereditary. Here is Mrs. Jones, who was very sensitive about her sonnets being criticised, and I found her little daughter in a new frock looking in the glass. The experiment is conclusive, the demonstration is complete; there in the first generation is the artistic temperament—that is vanity; and there in the second generation is dress—and that is vanity.'

"We should answer, 'My friend, all is vanity, vanity and vexation of spirit—especially when one has to listen to logic of your favourite kind. Obviously all human beings must value themselves; and obviously there is in all such valuation an element of weakness, since it is not the valuation of eternal justice. What is the use of your finding by experiment in some people a thing we know by reason must be in all of them?'

"Here it will be as well to pause a moment and avert one possible misunderstanding. I do not mean that you and I cannot and do not practically see and personally remark



Richard Egan

on this or that eccentric or intermediate type, for which the word ‘feeble-minded’ might be a very convenient word, and might correspond to a genuine though indefinable fact of experience.

“In the same way we might speak, and do speak, of such and such a person being ‘mad with vanity’ without wanting two keepers to walk in and take the person off.

“But I ask the reader to remember always that I am talking of words, not as they are used in talk or novels, but as they will be used, and have been used, in warrants and certificates, and Acts of Parliament.

“The distinction between the two is perfectly clear and practical. The difference is that a novelist or a talker can be trusted to try and hit the mark; it is all to his glory that the cap should fit, that the type should be recognised; that he should, in a literary sense, hang the right man.

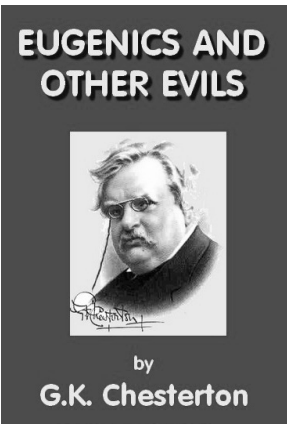
“But it is by no means always to the interests of governments or officials to hang the right man. The fact that they often do stretch words in order to cover cases is the whole foundation of having any fixed laws or free institutions at all.

“My point is not that I have never met anyone whom I should call feeble-minded, rather than mad or imbecile. My point is that if I want to dispossess a nephew, oust a rival, silence a blackmailer, or get rid of an importunate widow, there is nothing in logic to prevent my calling them feeble-minded too.

“And the vaguer the charge is the less they will be able to disprove it.”

Justice Clarence Thomas is a shining light on the US Supreme Court. He has been an implacable exposé of the irrationality and pretensions of *Roe v Wade*, and its invention of a constitutional right for a woman to, as Pope Francis recently remarked, hire a hit man to kill her unborn child.

It is no surprise to see him quoting that consummate exposé of nonsensical thought, GK Chesterton. ■



The actress opposed to the new eugenics

The English actress Sally Phillips recently spoke on what she sees as a eugenic mindset in Britain towards the testing of unborn babies suspected of Down’s Syndrome.

Phillips has a Down’s Syndrome son, Olly, now aged 14. In an emotional presentation to a conference of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the star of the TV series *Miranda* and the *Bridget Jones* movies told the assembled medics that current attitudes towards the screening of unborn infants are intrinsically and subconsciously biased towards abortion:

“If making money out of testing that leads in most cases to termination is not a form of eugenics, then I do not know what is.”



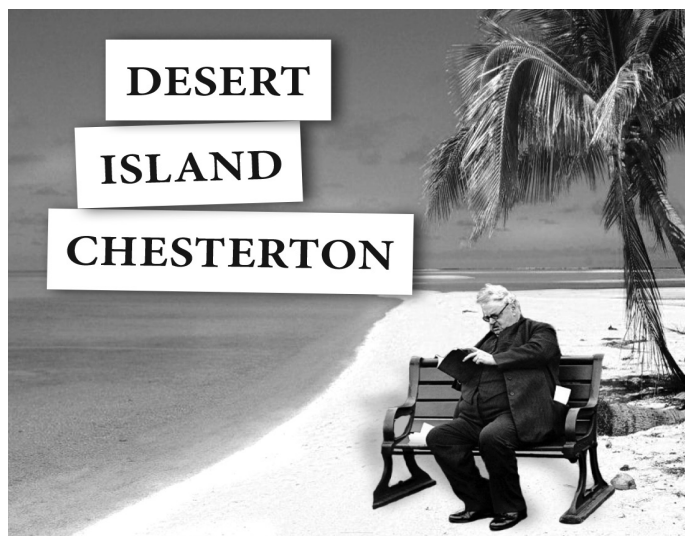
Sally Phillips and her son Olly

The actress ended by urging people, especially healthcare professionals, to understand that people with Down’s Syndrome like her son live happy and fulfilling lives. ■



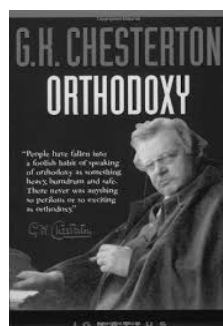
The Wisdom of Chesterton

“Most Christians fail to fulfil the Christian ideal. This bitter and bracing fact cannot be too much insisted upon in this and every other moral question. But, perhaps, it might be suggested that this failure is not so much the failure of Christians in connection with the Christian ideal as the failure of any men in connection with any ideal. That Christians are not always Christian is obvious; neither are Liberals always liberal, nor Socialists always social, nor Humanitarians always kind, nor Rationalists always rational, nor are gentlemen always gentle, nor do working men always work. If people are especially horrified at the failure of Christian practice it must be an indirect compliment to the Christian creed.” (*Daily News*, February 13, 1908)



Orthodoxy

by Karl Schmude



In this occasional series of *Desert Island Chesterton*, **Karl Schmude** recalls the formative impact which reading Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* had on him as a teenager, and reflects on why it would be the single book he would want if marooned on a desert island. The article is adapted from one originally published in the Melbourne Catholic newspaper, *The Advocate* (July 12, 1984).

It was my father, Alfred Schmude, who introduced me, at the ripening age of 17, to the writings of G.K. Chesterton.

He lent me a copy of *Orthodoxy* – without marked enthusiasm, as it happened, since he harboured the uneasy feeling that a book published in 1908, and written to answer the principal questions confronting Christianity in the years prior to World War I, might not speak to a young mind in the 1960s.

To his delighted surprise, however, my response was immediate captivation. That experience remains vividly in my memory, more than half a century later.

At the time, I was halfway through a university degree in Sydney and feeling the first tremors of challenge to the Catholic faith of my upbringing.

Not that this process of questioning, in my case, arose from any animus towards the Church or alienation from its teachings. I had no itch to abandon Catholicism. My outlook was rather one of sympathetic inquisitiveness. I felt the need for explanations and insights, for a Christian intellectual vision, which would make clear the credibility of the Church and the foundations of my belief.

I later came across – and readily endorsed – the remark of the English apologist, Sir Arnold Lunn, whose own conversion to Catholicism was influenced by Chesterton, that religious education in schools attaches too little weight to the fundamental issue of Christian belief.

It seeks to proclaim the Good News, but it commonly takes for granted the first question that people typically ask about news – namely, whether it is true.

My own sense of faith in my teenage years was that it could hold its own against the evasions of scepticism and the attractions of self-sufficiency. But I did need, in St Peter's words, a reason for the hope which animates Christians, and I was looking for an author who believed that the proper end of thought was not doubt, but devotion.

When I came to read *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton's great elaboration of Christian belief, I found it supplied precisely the intellectual excitement and direction for which my mind yearned.

Like the British journalist and broadcaster, Bernard Levin, who was of Jewish background, I can remember how "enthralled, stirred and delighted" I was by Chesterton – and later by Belloc.

Their works were "immediately intelligible to a schoolboy", said Levin (and, one might add, to a young university student

in the 1960s), for they "spoke of rebellion, and non-conformity, and romanticism...."

The first thing that struck me about Chesterton was his sense of humour and fun. He took the weapons of wit and irony, which had for so long served anti-Christian interests, and used them to reveal the absurdity of unbelief.

Yet the very shock value of this approach meant that it could not be sustained indefinitely; and this was a second thing I came to realize about Chesterton – that he is usually best taken in small doses.

By temperament and vocation he was a journalist. His literary forte was the essay. He wrote for the immediate occasion and his style was at once compact and extravagant.

Even when he seemed most mundane, Chesterton was a visionary. His philosophy of life was rooted in common realities. It did not rest on esoteric knowledge or exalted experience. He believed that he could start anywhere – and develop from anything – the whole of his philosophy.

The paradoxes which marked his style reflected the deeply integrated nature of his thought.

As Frank Maher, a founder of the *Campion Society* in Melbourne in the 1930s and himself a vast admirer of *Orthodoxy*, noted, life can often be expressed and understood only in terms of paradoxes; that the truth is not a mere mean between extremes (which would represent a dilution), but rather an emphasis on two aspects of an idea at the same time.

One example is the paradox of charity, which Chesterton said means loving unlovable people – or pardoning unpardonable acts.

A merely rationalist ethic would say that a person was pardonable only insofar as an act was pardonable. But Christianity opposed this dilution of judgment. It came in startlingly with a sword, averred Chesterton, and separated the crime from the criminal:

"The criminal we must forgive unto seventy times seven. The crime we must not forgive at all ... We must be much more angry with theft than before, and yet much kinder to thieves than before."

It was by such intuitions that Chesterton enhanced my own understanding of Christianity. I am inexpressibly – and inexhaustibly – conscious of the intellectual debt I owe him. ■