



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)

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Reimagining the Past - A Chesterton Vision

by Karl Schmude

What if history had turned out differently? What if the past had taken another path - and shaped a different society?

In 1931, Chesterton published a thought-provoking piece of historical speculation. He wondered whether, in the midst of the 16th century Reformation, a single marriage could have saved Christian unity.

Chesterton's essay first appeared - as did the speculations of other prominent authors such as Hilaire Belloc and Winston Churchill - in a book titled *If It Had Happened Otherwise*, which was edited by the English literary critic, Sir John Squire. (The essay was reprinted in 1950 in a posthumous collection of Chesterton's essays, *The Common Man*, and is available online - http://www.gkc.org.uk/gkc/books/Common_Man.txt.)

Sir John Squire had a special interest in 'alternative history'. He thought that conjecturing about the past - of asking questions beginning with 'if', or 'suppose', or 'if only' - was not at odds with what had actually happened. Rather it offered new ways of reflecting on historical developments, and probing the inner and underlying realities of human history, not just the outward manifestations.

Chesterton's chapter was called 'If Don John of Austria had married Mary Queen of Scots'. He considered the changed course of history if the Austrian Catholic military leader (most famous for his victory at Lepanto in 1571) had married the Scottish Catholic queen.



Mary Queen of Scots



Don John of Austria

His essay has a remarkably contemporary ring to it - in the light of the continual weakening of Christianity in the West and the new advance of Islam.

Chesterton placed his conjecture in the context of historic Christendom. He pondered the impact of the imagined marriage on the course of European history - and, beyond that, on the history of America.

In Chesterton's judgment, the marriage would have extinguished Scottish Calvinism at an early stage of its emergence. And, by Don John and Mary serving jointly on the English throne, it would have arrested the Protestant Reformation and kept England a Catholic country.

Chesterton was alive to the historical accident of the Reformation and the Renaissance taking place in the same century – the turbulent combination of divided religious loyalties and a new surge of cultural energies.

He noted the comment of the Glasgow University Professor, John Phillimore, a great friend of Hilaire Belloc's, that 'the tragedy of Scotland was that she had the Reformation without the Renaissance.'

For Chesterton, the significance of Mary Queen of Scots and Don John of Austria lay in a unity of faith in the midst of cultural ferment:

'There was a moment when all Christendom might have clustered together and crystallized anew, under the chemistry of the new culture; and yet have remained a Christendom that was entirely Christian....'

'[In Mary and Don John] Religion and the Renaissance had not quarrelled; and they kept the faith of their fathers while full of the idea of handing on new conquests and discoveries to their sons.'

'They drew their deep instincts from medieval chivalry without refusing to feed their intellects on the sixteenth century learning; and there was a moment when this spirit might have pervaded the whole world and the whole Church.'

'There was a moment when religion could have digested Plato as it had once digested Aristotle. For that matter, it might have digested all that is soundest in Rabelais and Montaigne and many others; it might have condemned some things in these thinkers, as it did in Aristotle. Only the shock of the new discoveries could have been absorbed (to a great extent indeed it was absorbed) by the central Christian tradition.'

In a similar way, Chesterton argued, a united Europe would have made the emerging settlement of America 'a very different place'.

He acknowledged that, at the time of the Reformation, the Catholic Church may have been 'curiously negligent of the northern danger from Protestantism'; but this was because of its tenacious belief in 'the eastern danger from Islam. . . the [stopping of] the Turk from sweeping the whole Mediterranean.'

Chesterton did not disdain 'the real virtues and the sane if sleeping virility of Islam'.

He readily admitted his sympathy for 'that element in it that is at once democratic and dignified', an attitude which he suspected that most people in the West 'would call lazy and unprogressive'. (One might reasonably wonder whether the 'sane if sleeping virility of Islam' might be

precisely what is attracting the progressive elites of the West at present, deprived as they are of any compelling model of belief.)

Yet Chesterton was also conscious of the negative aspects - what he called 'the vetoes of primitive Islam; and most of its virtues were vetoes.'

He thought that, to Mediterranean peoples at this time, 'there passed across their shining sea merely the shadow of the great Destroyer.'

Reuniting a Christian Europe - and Resisting Islamic Expansion

In proposing the unlikely union of Don John of Austria and Mary Queen of Scots, Chesterton believed that it would have been decisive in reuniting the Christian civilisation of the West - and resisting Islamic expansion.

"Historians quarrel," he said, "about whether the English under Elizabeth preferred the Prayer-Book or the Mass-Book. But surely nobody will quarrel about whether they preferred the Crescent or the Cross."

'There was always in [Mary Queen of Scots'] heart a hunger for civilisation. It is an appetite not easily appreciated now, when people are so over-civilised that they can only have a hunger for barbarism.'

Were Chesterton's conjectures entirely fanciful? Was there any basis for believing that a marriage could have taken place between Don John of Austria and Mary Queen of Scots?

The spur to Chesterton's speculation was a remark, in the early years of the 20th century, by the Scottish writer, Andrew Lang, in his historical study of King Philip II of Spain.

Don John was the King's half-brother, and following an earlier study, *The Mystery of Mary Stuart* (1901), Lang believed that Don John 'intended to carry off Mary Queen of Scots'. Chesterton saw an immediate - and exciting - connection. What would have been the long-term effects of such a marriage?

It is now an unlikely scenario to contemplate - and, in any case, did not materialise. But pondering how different 16th century Europe - and Europe and the Western world subsequently - might have been, if a single union could have been achieved between two European leaders, offered Chesterton a stimulating opportunity to reimagine history. ■



Aidan Mackey

The Daughter the Chestertons Never Had

by Aidan Mackey

Despite the painful deprivation of never having children of their own, Gilbert and Frances Chesterton were blessed by the arrival of Dorothy Collins, who served as Gilbert's secretary for the last ten years of his life.

This assessment of her contribution to their lives was penned by **Aidan Mackey**, who has enjoyed personal memories of the Chesterton era and knew Dorothy Collins. It was originally published in the obituary columns of the London Daily Telegraph on 10 September 1988, on the occasion of Dorothy's death.

Her role as the custodian of Chesterton's voluminous writings, not only during his lifetime but for many years after his death as literary executrix, cannot be overstated.

She continued to live in Top Meadow Cottage, near Chesterton's home in the small town of Beaconsfield, where his papers were stored. In addition to assisting scholars with access to his works, she edited and published several collections of his writings, including *The Glass Walking-Stick and Other Essays* (1955) and *Chesterton on Shakespeare* (1971).

Aidan Mackey's 1988 obituary is republished in *The Defendant* with his kind permission.



Dorothy Collins

Dorothy Collins, who has died aged 94, played a major role in the present upsurge of interest in G.K. Chesterton whose secretary she became in 1926.

Dorothy Edith Collins was born in Ashstead, Surrey [south-east of London] in 1894 and educated at a private school on the south coast.

She was working in London when a friend persuaded her to go to Beaconsfield to become the secretary to GKC who – because of his undemanding approach to such secretarial skills as typing, spelling and shorthand – had suffered a succession of secretaries whose competence was less than adequate.

It was Miss Collins who first anchored the chaos, dealt with a mass of neglected correspondence, and ensured that speaking engagements were kept, literary and journalistic deadlines met, and the working day organised without interruptions for shopping and messages.

Gilbert and Frances Chesterton had been greatly disappointed at the failure of an operation which Frances underwent in the hope of being able to bear children, and it soon clear that Dorothy was to fill the role not only of secretary, but of the daughter they could not have.

Frances wrote a poem "To Dorothy in Gratitude" which ended:

*There is an empty space that must be filled
There is an empty room that needs a guest;
Enter my daughter, here you shall find rest
All is for you, for so your mother willed.*

In recognition of Dorothy Collins's supporting role, GKC inscribed copies of his books to her, writing in his *Collected Poems*:

*Here you watch the bard's career
Month by month and year by year
Writing writing writing verse
Worse and worse and worse and worse*

His study of Thomas Aquinas was dedicated "To Dorothy Collins, without whose help the author would have been more than usually helpless".

Chesterton died in 1936, and Frances two years later. Dorothy Collins then became his literary executor, a post she never relinquished, sorting out the tangles of copyright and availability as his books were reissued in many countries, and compiling the stream of new collections and books, including *The Coloured Lands*, *Chesterton on Shakespeare* and *The Common Man*.

The revival of Chesterton's reputation and stature over the past years meant that almost anything could have been profitably published over his name, but Miss Collins refused to sanction anything below his best mature work, so that the standard remained as high as anything published during his lifetime.

The effect is almost as though he were still alive and writing.

Miss Collins's integrity and standards may sometimes have put difficulties in the way of the over-eager, but she was always generous with help and advice to those who had valid contributions to make.

Those who knew Gilbert Chesterton are quite sure that without Dorothy Collins the great quantity and quality of his output must have been less, and the great burden of overwork which he carried throughout his life very greatly increased. ■

Reflections on the Latest Father Brown

The great paradox about Chesterton's priest-detective, Father Brown, is that such a bumbling and seemingly unworldly priest could solve crimes. How could this happen without a forensic investigation of the evidence and a rationalist interpretation of human behaviour?

The genius of Father Brown is that he did not simply rely on external evidence. His fundamental insight was metaphysical – not in the sense of relying on supernatural evidence, but on a deep penetration of the human heart. Years in the confessional had enabled him to understand the profound weaknesses to which all human beings are prone.

*In recent months there have been two critical articles on the current TV series of Father Brown – one by **Michael Davis**, the USA editor of the London Catholic Herald, the other by **Michael Wilding**, Emeritus Professor of English and Australian Literature at Sydney University and a widely published author of fiction, essays and reviews in Australia and internationally. These are excerpts from their respective criticisms.*



Mark Williams in the BBC-TV's Father Brown series

What has the BBC done to Father Brown?

Michael Davis' article with this title, which appeared in the *London Catholic Herald* (January 19, 2018), acknowledged that the current BBC series (now in its sixth series) is 'an admirable addition to the proud tradition of British crime dramas.'

Davis is, however, critical of the political correctness that has now captured the characterisation. 'Alas,' he writes, 'the BBC's in-house theologians have rather dropped the ball.'

'It's slightly unbelievable, for instance, that Father Brown would balk at the idea of performing an exorcism on a haunted house.' Sneering at the homeowner, the BBC's Father Brown says he is sure there is a rational explanation for the strange noises that the family hears. He offers to give the house a blessing, but then says pointedly that 'there are no such things as ghosts.'

That may be doctrinally true, notes Davis, in that the Church does not teach that ghosts exist. But 'the tell-tale signs of haunting (bumps in the night and all that) could certainly mean the house is under demonic oppression. No

decent priest – and certainly not one that sprang fully formed from Chesterton's skull – would dismiss the idea of evil spirits who prowl about the world, seeking the ruin of souls.'

David at first assumed that this was an isolated example, but he cites several others in the series – including a favourable view of witchcraft and voodoo as well as the fashionable idea that the Church is anti-science, which reflect the BBC's recasting of the Father Brown character in terms of political correctness.

'There is a word,' writes Davis, 'for a kind of Christian who thinks exorcism is bunk and the Catholic Church hates science, but witchcraft and voodoo are marvellous. They are called Unitarians. So, I'd like to make a suggestion to the BBC. In the next season, make Father Brown a Unitarian minister. Rename the show *The Reverend Mr Brown*, and have him marry the parish secretary, Mrs McCarthy (or, better yet, the voodoo priestess).'

'You don't need to explain the change. It couldn't possibly be more confusing than the silly pretence that Father Brown is a Catholic priest – a pretence from which this otherwise marvellous show suffers so needlessly.' ■

Father Brown

Michael Wilding's article with this title appeared originally in *Annals Australasia* (November-December 2017) and subsequently in the *Weekend Australian* (February 3-4, 2018).

Wilding is also highly critical of the way in which the characterisation of Father Brown is made subject to the dictates of political correctness.

He points to the absence of women, particularly as villains, in the original stories, and quotes Ronald Knox in attributing

this to Chesterton's 'obstinate chivalry'. 'He hardly ever introduces you to a woman you are meant to dislike'. In Wilding's discerning comment:

'To rewrite Chesterton in the light of contemporary social values is to rewrite history. And when history is rewritten, we have lost the framework from which to view and understand and assess the way we live now. Sometimes the past was worse than now, sometimes better; and we need to be able to understand these differences and their causes, not deny and erase them.' ■

Chesterton's Autobiography - Father Brown Solves the Mystery

Chesterton's vast literary output was so varied that readers and critics alike tend to focus on particular types of works – his philosophical studies, poems, detective fiction, literary criticism, or biographies of saints – as a way of reining him in and coming up with a more “manageable” Chesterton.

In a recent, perceptive article, ‘Autobiography as Mystery: Father Brown and the Case of G.K. Chesterton,’ the American scholar Chene Heady countered this tendency by offering a fresh interpretation of Chesterton's *Autobiography*. He probed the connections between two very different works – the narrative of the *Autobiography* and the stories of Father Brown.

Heady, an English professor at Longwood University in Virginia, took as his starting point the judgment of Ian Ker, in his 2011 biography, that Chesterton should be viewed primarily as an author in the tradition of the Victorian sages, such as Thomas Carlyle and John Henry Newman.

Thus his literary canon should consist of works such as *Charles Dickens*, *Orthodoxy*, and the *Autobiography*, and exclude his novels and poems and certainly the Father Brown stories.

Heady argues that this overlooks the integrated nature of Chesterton's writings, whatever literary mode he adopted, and that there is a vital link between ‘Chesterton-as-sage’ and ‘Chesterton-as-detective-writer’.

Focusing on the *Autobiography*, Heady points out that this work is structured like a detective story, and he suggests it is best read in that light.

Chesterton presents the story of his life by dropping clues in the early chapters. He treats his childhood experiences – highlighting the toy theatre his father made for him and the legends and fairy tales that inspired his boyhood imagination as forming and foreshadowing the adult he was to become.

The clues are provided in chapter 2 (‘The Man with the Golden Key’), and the mystery is solved in the last chapter (‘The God with the Golden Key’) in which Chesterton reveals his mature religious philosophy and worldview signalled by his reception into the Catholic Church.



Chene Heady

Father Brown enters this final chapter in the form of his progenitor, Father John O'Connor, and solves the mystery of Chesterton's life. Chene Heady offers many other insights of value in his article.

For example, he points out the ways in which the integration of Chesterton's thought and writing is at odds with the cultural and literary assumptions of modernist criticism.

These assumptions prize works of ‘high’ culture rather than of ‘democratic’ appeal, like detective stories and nonsense poetry, which resonated so deeply with Chesterton. As Heady concludes:

‘The Autobiography concludes with a dizzying vision of unity. In the work's final paragraph, Chesterton affirms – and to some extent equates – all the cultural practices by which we find meaning in the world around us. Here, no clear line divides the detective story from the fairy tale, the fairy tale from autobiography, autobiography from legend, legend from sage discourse.’

‘The critic is free to reject this genre-blurring vision of cultural unity – and the rambling, eclectic model of authorship it implies – but to reject it is to refuse Chesterton's authorial project.’

‘Perhaps the interests of criticism would be better served if instead of critiquing Chesterton in light of our assumptions about literary authorship, we re-examined our assumptions about literary authorship in light of Chesterton.’

Chene Heady's article was published in *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, Winter 2017. *Renascence* is a long-established scholarly journal produced by Marquette University's English Department in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (USA). ■

Executive of the Australian Chesterton Society

PRESIDENT and EDITOR of ‘The Defendant’

Mr Karl Schmude, 177 Erskine Street, Armidale NSW 2350
Phone: 0407 721 458 Email: kgschmude@gmail.com

SECRETARY / TREASURER: Mr Ray Finnegan,
13 Fossey Street, Holder ACT 2611

Phone: (02) 6288 5137 Email: range2@grapevine.net.au

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Mr Symeon Thompson
c/- Editor of ‘The Defendant’

Society Membership

The annual membership fee of the Australian Chesterton Society is **\$30.00**.

Subscriptions may be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer, Mr Ray Finnegan, at the address opposite, or by electronic transfer –

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Chesterton's Beaconsfield

Two footnotes may be of interest to Aidan Mackey's article on Beaconsfield ("The Little Town That Chesterton Loved"), which appeared in the last Defendant.

One provides additional background on *Top Meadow*, the house in which Chesterton lived from 1922 until his death in 1936; the other is a personal reminiscence of Beaconsfield by **David van Gend**, a family doctor and author in Toowoomba, Queensland. Dr van Gend will be speaking at the next Australian Chesterton conference on October 20 at Campion College.

The House that was Chesterton's Home

by Karl Schmude

In building *Top Meadow* in Beaconsfield, Chesterton wanted a typical English home – of oak beams and wrought-iron fittings modeled on his previous home, *Overroads*, aptly named as it was just across the road. A substantial garden, planted by GK's wife Frances, surrounded the house.

Chesterton's writings are suffused with his love of home, both in the intimacy of the family and the extended loyalty of patriotism.

The house contained many door-knockers, whose meaning Chesterton saw in metaphysical as well as functional terms. 'They are there,' he said, 'to say that the meeting between one of God's images and another is a grave and dreadful matter to be begun with thunder.'

In his Will, Chesterton left *Top Meadow* to the Catholic Church. He wanted the house used for religious purposes, and in 1945 it was brought by the Converts' Aid Society, an organization caring for convert clergymen and their families.

In the 1950s, the Society's Warden at *Top Meadow* was an Australian, Harold Davies, who before being received into the Catholic Church was head of a community of Anglican monks at Goulburn NSW.

He and his wife, also Australian and a former Anglican, gave shelter and pastoral care to clergymen, but they also welcomed visitors from all over the world. The members of one visiting group provided light relief by asking: 'What is the real use of the house for the *Convicts'* Aid Society?'

By the late 1980s there were efforts, in England and America, to purchase *Top Meadow* and turn it into a Chesterton study centre.

Aidan Mackey played a key part in this process. He planned to make more widely available the major collection he had assembled at his Bedford home north of Beaconsfield, which contained not only books and Chesterton's own set of *G.K.'s Weekly* but also memorabilia (such as his hat, pen, writing table, and rosary beads).

The aim was to have, not a museum, but an active study centre that would be a symbol of Chesterton's legacy as

An Australian Memory of Beaconsfield

by David van Gend

On reading your cover story, 'The Little Town that Chesterton Loved', I was taken back twenty-seven years to when my wife and I lived for a few months on Grove Road, Beaconsfield, just five doors down from the Chestertons.

It was a short pilgrimage past their charming home with its curious thatched study to the White Hart pub, and thence to the cemetery.

Alas, a prophet is not without honour except in his home town, and the barmaid at the White Hart denied all knowledge of the great man. "Chesterton 'oo?" I demanded she take me to her leader, but he, barely older, could not tell me which room Chesterton preferred to take a pint in.

I told them what a tourist opportunity they were missing, and how there should be a plaque to Chesterton, like we see at the Eagle & Child in Oxford marking the Inklings' favourite corner. Blank stares.

Better luck at the cemetery, just around the block.

It was bigger than expected, and I had trouble finding Chesterton's grave, but an elderly man walking his dog pointed it out to me. I sat there for a few minutes regretting I had not smuggled out some beer as a libation.

Then my local guide walked past again and thought I might be interested to know that his father was a master tailor and had made all the cloaks for GKC. Nice moment of connection.

No doubt Chesterton would have enjoyed equally being forgotten by the young Beaconsfielders - and remembered by the old. ■

well as a continuing stimulus to the study of his thought and work.

The efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, but a Chesterton centre in the UK has more recently found a permanent home - at first in several locations in Oxford, and now as part of the Oxford Oratory (<http://chestertonlibrary.blogspot.com.au/>). ■

Christopher Dawson in Australia

Christopher Dawson Centre (Tasmania)
Colloquium 29-30 June 2018
On 'A World without Christianity'

On **Friday and Saturday, 29 and 30 June 2018**, the Christopher Dawson Centre for Cultural Studies will host its fourth annual colloquium in Hobart, Tasmania, on the theme 'A World Without Christianity'.

Papers will be delivered by the following speakers:

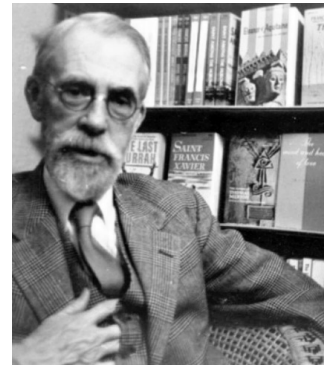
Hal Colebatch	Erik Peacock
Peter Cunich	Karl Schmude
Eric Lockett	Ben Smith
Campbell Markham	Margaret Somerville
Philippa Martyr	Augusto Zimmermann
Dom Pius Noonan OSB	Nigel Zimmermann

The Dinner Speaker on the Saturday will be the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott.

Full registration (including dinner) is \$200. Concession and casual options are available. Further information on the colloquium is available from the Centre's website (<http://www.dawsoncentre.org/colloquium-2015/>), or by contacting the Centre's Director, Dr David Daintree at: director@dawsoncentre.org or phone: 0408 87 9494.

Christopher Dawson Society (WA) – Conference 12-14 July 2018 on '1968 – Five Decades On'

The Dawson Society in Western Australia (<http://dawsonsociety.com.au/>) has announced a conference on the legacy of 1968 as a watershed year in 20th century thought and culture. Taking advantage of the 50th anniversary, the conference will spotlight that year as representative of the countercultural movements of the 1960s as a whole and the various responses that they generated.



The Conference will take place on **Thursday-Saturday, 12-14 July, 2018**, at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, WA. The conference fee is \$125 (student concession available). Registration can be arranged via: <https://dawson.society.brushfire.com/events/443519>

Further information is available on the Dawson Society's conference website: <https://www.1968fivedecadeson.org/>, or by contacting Tom Gourlay, The Dawson Society for Philosophy and Culture, at: Thomas@dawsonsociety.com.au

Journal Back Sets Available

Readers of *The Defendant* newsletter may be interested in the back sets of two journals being made available from the library of deceased member:

Chesterton Review, Vol.X, No.1 (February 1984) to Vol.XXV, Nos.1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2009). There is a gap in the collection – of six issues, from 2004-2007.

Australasian Catholic Record, Vol. 59, No.2 (April 1982) to Vol.83, No.3 (July 2016).

Any interested member could contact the Editor of *The Defendant* (on kgschmude@gmail.com) who would be happy to pass on the request to the member's widow.

Rebirth of the Hilaire Belloc Society



A society designed to stimulate interest in the works of Hilaire Belloc (pictured) has been re-founded in England.

The Hilaire Belloc Society had fallen into abeyance in recent years, but the re-launch took place at a suitable Bellocian

setting – the Bridge Inn, one of the pubs mentioned in Belloc's famous work, *The Four Men* (1911), which describes an imaginary journey on foot across the county of Sussex in 1902 and records the conversations of the four

characters – all aspects of Belloc's personality. Praising the work, Chesterton said: 'there are few speeches in modern books better than the conversations in *The Four Men*.'

Among the people involved in the revived Society is Ann Feloy, who has written a dramatic adaptation of *The Four Men* which has recently been performed to great acclaim all over Sussex.

Belloc cherished a special love for the county where he lived most of his life, and Sussex will be the location for several events which the Society is planning to hold this year.

Further information can be obtained by subscribing to the Society's blog at: <http://thehilairebellocblog.blogspot.com.au/>

*'He does not die that can bequeath
Some influence to the land he knows.'* ■

CHESTERTON AND THE CHILD: Fostering the Family Today

A Conference of the Australian Chesterton Society
at Campion College Australia, Sydney
Saturday, October 20, 2018, 8.45am - 5.00pm



Chesterton had a special love of children, and he and his wife Frances, while they were not able to have a family of their own, gave much of their time and affection to the children of others in the English town of Beaconsfield where they lived.

Chesterton's love of children came from the joy of his own childhood. He cherished a lifelong appreciation of playful entertainment and fairy tales, and recognised the value of these childhood experiences in sustaining a sense of wonder in adult life. Children formed a continuing theme of his writings, and shaped his understanding of the centrality of the family in a civilised society.

The 2018 Conference will focus on children and the family. A keynote speaker will be the American author, Nancy Brown, who will give two papers – one on Frances Chesterton (of whom she has written a definitive biography), the other on the Father Brown stories (which she has adapted for young readers) and other works appealing to the imagination of children.

Speakers will include:

- Nancy Brown, *The Woman Who Was Chesterton and Father Brown and Other Imaginative Books for Young People*
- Karl Schmude, *The Innocence of Father Chesterton*
- Gary Furnell, *Chesterton's Toy Theatre*
- Sophie York and David van Gend, *Children and the Family in Australia Today*



Nancy Brown

VENUE:

Campion College Australia
8-14 Austin Woodbury Drive,
Old Toongabbie NSW 2146

COST:

\$65 - includes lunch
\$25 - Student concession

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Contact Karl Schmude
Email: kgschmude@gmail.com
Phone: 0407 721 458