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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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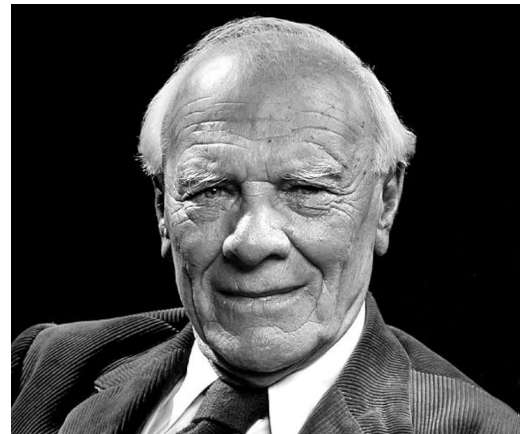
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Chesterton and the Value of Institutions

by Karl Schmude



Hugh Kingsmill



Malcolm Muggeridge

A crucial part of the crisis in Western culture is the growing contempt for its central institutions.

Surveys - such as the one conducted annually on civics and citizenship (reported in *The Australian*, February 28, 2025) - reveal a growing distrust of our parliaments, political parties, courts, churches, universities, and media organisations.

We are ceasing to believe that our institutions are fulfilling their purpose, whether it be political governance, natural justice, educational integrity, or objective reporting. Yet we seem unable to recover the original inspiration and communal spirit that enable these purposes to be realised.

Even a century ago, long before the woke era, G.K. Chesterton was alive to the early signs of this cultural corruption. He had little confidence in England's political and educational institutions. He judged the nation's parliament as a nest of political intrigue and perversion, so that it was no longer responsive to real democratic needs, and he thought that schools were losing sight of their essential educational role of being "truth in a state of transmission".

Individual identity – vs – institutional loyalty

Initially the abandonment of our institutions might have been expected as a by-product of the modern cult of individuality – of prizing the individual to the exclusion of any other loyalty. But it has now gained new impetus as our sense of organic community and cooperation has waned, and our culture feels compelled to cancel its institutions rather than sustain and reform them.

In pondering the modern tension between individual identity and institutional commitment, the writings of a 20th century intellectual gadfly, Hugh Kingsmill (1889-1949), are illuminating.

Kingsmill, a brother of the well-known Catholic apologist Sir Arnold Lunn, was a brilliant thinker and writer who served as literary editor for different journals, including the satirical magazine, *Punch*.

In his boyhood he rejected Christianity and embraced a resolute sense of individuality. But he was caught in the dilemma of a secular outlook that cannot finally be satisfied by secularism. He had, in fact, "a deep strain of mysticism", according to his biographer Michael Holroyd. He treated "the normal

sights of this world, of nature . . . as symbols of some other life." (*The Best of Hugh Kingsmill*, 1970)

One of his closest friends was Malcolm Muggeridge. Describing himself as "among the walking-wounded from the ideological conflicts of the age", Muggeridge found in Kingsmill "the perfect physician", for "he managed to remain uncontaminated and unbrainwashed in an age that specialised in both processes." (*Chronicles of Wasted Time*, Vol.2, 1973)

This was shown above all in Kingsmill's ingrained resistance to any kind of secular substitutes for religion. He thought they held out the promise of an earthly paradise that could never be realised. As he once wrote:

"What is divine in man is elusive and impalpable, and he is easily tempted to embody it in a concrete form – a church, a country, a social system, a leader – so that he may realise it with less effort and serve it with more profit. Yet, as even [Abraham] Lincoln proved, the attempt to externalise the kingdom of heaven in a temporal shape must end in disaster. It cannot be created by charters and constitutions nor established by arms. Those who set out for it alone will reach it together, and those who seek it in company will perish by themselves."

This was a salutary warning on Kingsmill's part against the proneness for utopian solutions. In his own lifetime he witnessed the seductive power of the secular substitutes of Communism and Nazism, and the resultant horrors they inflicted on millions of people.

But his aversion to the embodiment of belief in institutional form leaves individual identity in a vacuum, isolated from a human being's spiritual and cultural roots. Human nature is communal, not just individual, and it is institutions that give communal meaning to our individual lives, starting in the family and spreading out to other social and political institutions.

In one essay, Kingsmill interpreted the course of Chesterton's spiritual understanding (which culminated in his conversion to Catholicism in 1922) as representing loss rather than gain:

"Religion in [his early] years still meant more to Chesterton than creeds and institutions."

Yet what Kingsmill spurned as a false step, Chesterton saw as a fulfilment of faith. Creeds and institutions are the ways in which the supernatural finds expression in human life and gains access to the human mind and heart. They are the incarnational reality of the Church -what Chesterton called

The Thing (the simple title of his 1929 book of apologetical essays).

"How natural," Chesterton noted, "is the craving for the supernatural." He opposed the idea that "worship shall be wholly spiritual, or even wholly intellectual," and argued there should be no feeling of "disgust at the idea of spiritual things having a body and a solid form." (*The Thing*, 1929)

To be anti-institutional is to overlook a fundamental human part of our nature – that we rely on institutions to give body to our spirit and soul. They store our historical memories and traditions, and make them part of our daily experience to deepen the meaning and hope of our lives.

When we express these meanings and hopes in a religious doctrine, we connect our earthly experience and supernatural destiny in a concrete way. Thus the belief in the Communion of Saints, affirmed in the Apostles' Creed, captures the spiritual solidarity that the faithful on earth share with those who have gone before them and are now in heaven or purgatory. It is an expression of human unity that transcends death.

Naming of children after saints

A popular expression of this spiritual communion, in a custom that has now largely lapsed, was the naming of children at their baptism after saints. This united each child spiritually with a particular man or woman who had been recognised for a life of heroic goodness. It lifted the significance of a bestowed name above the level of parental choice, imparting it with a higher meaning and inspirational quality. It created a personal relationship beyond this life with a patron saint to whom the child could pray for intercessory help and support.

Such a simple custom signified the value of an institutional heritage. It elevates an individual's identity rather than diminishing it. And it testifies to the nature of the relationship that ordinary people have felt with the Church throughout the centuries. In the words of the historian Christopher Dawson:

"The men of power and the men of learning have quarrelled with the Church, but the little men and women of all ages have made it their home. For the relationship of the individual Christian to the Church is never external or legalistic: every Christian has a direct access to the heart of the mystery, and his importance does not depend on his social or ecclesiastical position but on his personal participation in the life of the spirit by which the Church is animated." (*The Formation of Christendom*, 1967) ■

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 Gary Furnell,

62/12 Goldens Road, Forster NSW 2428
Phone: 0419 421 346 Email: garyfurnell@yahoo.com

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Ernest Hello - A Precursor of Chesterton

by Gary Furnell

Ernest Hello was born in 1828, in France, almost 50 years before Gilbert Chesterton was born in England in 1874.

Despite these geographical and generational differences, Hello and Chesterton shared remarkable similarities. They were journalists, devout Catholics, sharply intelligent, superb essayists and shrewd critics of their age.

In addition, both men suffered chronic ill health. Fortunately, each had a devoted wife whose loving care extended her husband's life—but without children.

Hello is almost unknown in the Anglosphere. *Life, Science and Art* has not been published in English, in a new edition, for over 100 years. The book deserves many readers, especially those weary of short-term answers that turn into long-term problems. In the third essay of this collection, 'Intellectual Charity', we read:

"Now, written speech may be a great charity, and its diffusion, whenever it is true and beautiful, is one of the acts of charity most suited to our time. In many souls, a hunger and thirst exist which can only be satisfied by printed words. Between these eager readers and the writer (who should also be eager) a current of sublime charity may be established, since all give and all receive."

Hello understood that an accessible, engaging style attracted eager readers. He was sensitive to literature and art, writing in a manner that embedded timeless aphorisms in overlooked articles. Perhaps his journalistic training alerted him to the merit of brevity. Certainly, the pieces collected in this book have focused brevity—large ideas are encapsulated in, at most, five or six pages.

Generally, journalists emphasise temporal, profane matters to the exclusion of eternal, spiritual concerns. Hello and Chesterton are prominent exceptions to this rule. They critiqued their respective ages—epochs characterised by rapid technological changes and the abandonment of Judaeo-Christian values.

Both writers warned that this abandonment would create a society that was confused, irrational and unhappy—but fastidious about faddish values.

In France, Hello saw long-standing, functional religious customs, values and ideas dismantled to allow, supposedly, human flourishing under the rule of triumphant science and liberal politics. He disliked this aspect of his era, arguing that we were deluded if we thought temporal imperatives were more important than divine imperatives.

Hello's Catholic perspective gives *Life, Science and Art* a prophetic quality, not by foretelling, but through forthright truth-telling. Robust truth excited Hello because it liberated us from confusion, slippery trends and manipulation's half-truths.



Ernest Hello

He wrote, "to cure an evil we must look it in the face." Hello looked various evils in the face, including indifference, envy, ignoring intransigent reality to embrace fashionable ideas, and promoting mediocrity.

He pointed to the cure: the values provided by reality's Creator. The quality of this cure has been demonstrated by the saints. Always, humanity has the Church and her saints, the invisible God and "severe reality" calling to us and guiding our life's pilgrimage.

Receivers of truth, not constructors

A post-modern pilgrim will benefit from Hello's reminder that we are receivers of truth, not its constructors.

Our adventure in life, science and art—inclusive of every human activity—is to discover and explore the truth we encounter. The misadventure of imagining that we create truths is not given to us; it's forbidden, condemned as pride's attempt at a misguided autonomy. We are finite creatures in a universe not of our making and if we refuse to submit to the physical and spiritual truths we discover, we will not prosper. Instead, we will die frustrated and depressed.

A pilgrim artist will find encouragement. Hello considered Art an interweaving of Divine ideals, especially Beauty, with time and space. When Art is cheapened by ugliness or untruth it becomes tawdry and falsifying, and forgets the greatness of both Art and humanity. This forgetfulness, unfortunately, is widely evident across Western culture.

Life, Science and Art is filled with hope. Hope, Truth, Beauty, Art, Peace and Justice are not impersonal abstractions. Hello capitalised them because they're Divine attributes of a Person: God, for Whom all things are possible.

Hello concluded his book with astonishing Hope for humanity:

"Every human act, even the most impotent, loses its impotence when united to the Self-Existent. God grants to us, and even commands us to accept, the glorious productiveness of an activity united to His own. We act in Him, and our very work is repose in Him." ■

Vices and Virtues

"There is no subtle spiritual evil in the fact that people always brag about their vices; it is when they begin to brag about their virtues that they become insufferable."

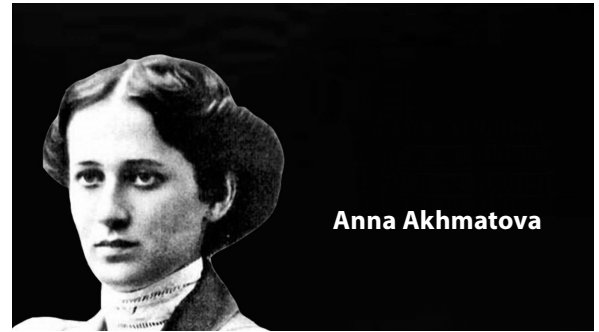
- G.K. Chesterton, Tremendous Trifles

Seeing with new eyes - A Russian Echo of Chesterton

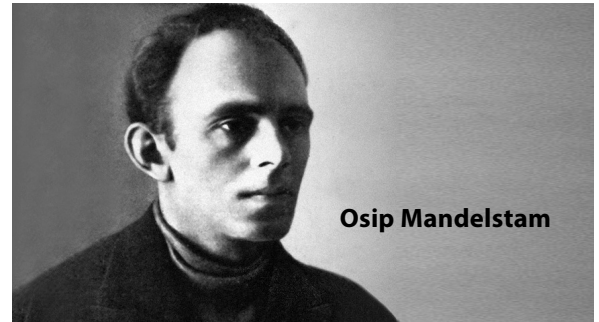
by Richard Egan

Echoes of Chesterton can be found in unlikely places, such as among Russian writers and Soviet dissidents during the Stalinist era. **Richard Egan** has been reading these authors for over 40 years, and in this article highlights the insights of the poets, Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) and Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938).

Richard has been a librarian as well as a researcher and speech writer for members of several State Parliaments in Australia. He has published two online books on euthanasia. He can provide on request (richardjohnnegan@gmail.com) an expanded and footnoted version of this article.



Anna Akhmatova



Osip Mandelstam

In his essay, 'The Riddle of the Ivy' (*Tremendous Trifles*, 1909), Chesterton describes setting off from Battersea to find Battersea.

"I am going to wander over the whole world until once more I find Battersea ... I cannot see ... any England ... because a cloud of sleep and custom has come across my eyes."

He applies this to the plan of *The Everlasting Man*:

"There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk round the whole world till we come back to the same place."

Through an imaginative effort to see Christianity "from the outside", we "find that it really looks like what is traditionally said about it inside".

Russian poet Anna Akhmatova expresses the same idea:

"Like someone who has left by the western gate
Of his native city and, having circled the earth,
Approaches the eastern gate confusedly
And wonders: "Where is the spirit guiding me so wisely" –
So I ..."

Akhmatova's husband, Nikolay Gumilov, wrote from London on 21 June 1917:

"I have also been promised a meeting with Chesterton, who, it turns out, is just over 40 but has written around 20 books. He is either greatly loved or utterly despised, but acknowledged by all."

In line to deliver a parcel to her imprisoned son, Akhmatova was recognised by "a woman with bluish lips ... who woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered ... 'Can you describe this?' She answered:

'Yes I can'. Then something that looked like a smile passed over what had once been her face".

Akhmatova's *Requiem* includes these lines:

"Mary Magdalene beat her breast and sobbed,
The beloved disciple turned to stone,
But where the silent Mother stood, there
No one glanced and no one would have dared."

Akhmatova continues to inspire. In 2017 when a bust of Stalin was unveiled in Moscow a lone woman protested, holding a placard with Akhmatova's *To the Defenders of Stalin*:

"There are those who shouted 'Release
Barabbas for us on this feast,'
Those who ordered Socrates to drink poison
In the bare, narrow prison.

"They are the ones who should pour this drink
Into their own innocently slandering mouths,
These sweet lovers of torture,
Experts in the manufacture of orphans."

Akhmatova expresses the belief that sustained her:

"Gold rusts and steel decays,
Marble crumbles away. Everything is on the verge of death.
The most reliable thing on earth is sorrow,
And the most enduring — the almighty Word."

She sums up the murderous gangsters who had control of Russia:

"They swore by the Hammer and Sickle
In the face of your agonizing death
'We pay in gold for betrayal,
For songs we pay in lead.'"

Stain - the Kremlin Mountaineer

Akhmatova's friend, Osip Mandelstam, died in 1938 while being transported to Siberia. He was arrested in 1934 when an informant reported his epigram on Stalin:

"Our lives no longer feel ground under them.
At ten paces you can't hear our words.
But whenever there's a snatch of talk
it turns to the Kremlin mountaineer,
the ten thick worms his fingers,
his words like measures of weight,
the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lip,
the glitter of his boot-rims.

"Ringed with a scum of chicken-necked bosses
he toys with the tributes of half-men.

"One whistles, another meows, a third snivels.
He pokes out his finger and he alone goes boom.

"He forges decrees in a line like horseshoes,
One for the groin, one the forehead, temple, eye.

"He rolls the executions on his tongue like berries.
He wishes he could hug them like big friends from home."

The "gold sun" of the Eucharist

Mandelstam described his poetics as a "homesickness for world culture". His poem on the Eucharist is seen from the outside:

"There: the Eucharist, a gold sun,
hung in the air — an instant of splendour.
Here nothing should be heard but the Greek syllables —
the whole world held in the hands like a plain apple.

"The solemn height of the holy office; the light
of July in the rotunda under the cupola;
so that we may sigh from full hearts, outside time,
for that little meadow where time does not flow.

"And the Eucharist spreads like an eternal noon;
all partake of it, everyone plays and sings,
and in each one's eyes the sacred vessel
brims over with inexhaustible joy."

Conversations with Dante

Mandelstam's widow, Nadezhda, recounts how while in exile he dictated his *Conversations with Dante*. Mandelstam reflects on how Dante takes his stand outside of time:

"By connecting the incompatible, Dante changed the structure of time ...he was forced to aim at a glossary of facts, a synchronism of events, names, and legends, separated by centuries, precisely because he heard the overtones of time.

"So, imagine that the patriarch Abraham and King David, all Israel, with Isaac, Jacob and all their relations and Rachel, for whose sake Jacob suffered so much, have entered into a singing and sounding organ, as if into an open mansion, and concealed themselves within it. And that after this, the organ acquires the ability to move – all its pipes and stops brought to an extraordinary degree of agitation, ever more furiously, until its sound begins to die away.

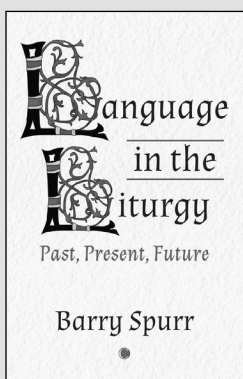
"If the halls of the Hermitage Museum suddenly filled with madness, if the paintings of all the schools and old masters suddenly fell from their hooks, invaded one another, mingled, and filled the rooms' air with a futuristic roar and a violent colourful excitement, then something like Dante's *Commedia* would have arrived."

The Many-sided Mystery of Beauty

In his essay, "On Dante and Beatrice" (*All Is Grist*, 1932), Chesterton ponders a similar point - how Dante throws everything into the mix, even pagan myths, to bring out some aspect of the one central mystery:

"Instead of saying that Beatrice looked beautiful, Dante says that he felt like Glaucus when he ate the grass that made him sea-fellow of the gods. This summoning of remote symbols, this calling of spirits from the vasty deep, like the sea-green Glaucus into the presence of Beatrice, does suggest ... that *all* beautiful images are shadows of the one real beauty, and can be ... interchanged for its service.

"Beatrice is to be loved because she is beautiful; but she is beautiful because there is behind her a many-sided mystery of beauty, to be seen also in the grass and the sea, and even in the dead gods. There is a promise in and yet beyond all such pictures; and the poet can see grass or the great sea or the great ship going over it, hearing a sort of whisper: 'Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.' " ■



In an important study, **Barry Spurr**, Literary Editor of *Quadrant* and formerly an English Literature Professor at Sydney University, addresses the on-going controversy over changes in liturgical language in both the Catholic and Anglican Churches.

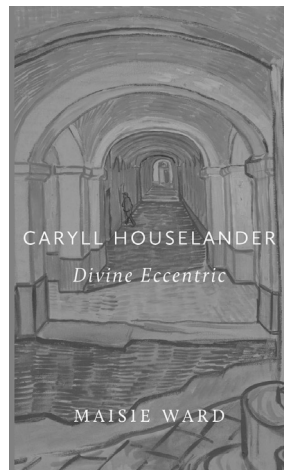
The modernising movement that produced wholesale changes to the vernacular has not achieved its stated aim of arresting the declining rates of membership and liturgical participation; rather the opposite. Barry Spurr analyses the reasons, and suggests a restoration of classical English liturgical prose-poetry.

Language in the Liturgy: Past, Present, Future can be purchased from Quadrant - <https://quadrant.org.au/product/language-in-the-liturgy-past-present-future/>

Caryll Houselander - A Divine Eccentric Choosing to do the thing into which you can put the most love

by Francis Phillips

Francis Phillips, a frequently published English writer and a valued contributor to *The Defendant*, captures the distinctive qualities and insights of Caryll Houselander, an English author and artist (1901-1954). This article first appeared in April 2022 in Mercatornet, and is reprinted with the kind permission of its editor, Michael Cook, as well of Francis herself.



Shakespeare writes in *Julius Caesar*, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." Sometimes excellent writers also get buried after their death; their books fall from public interest. Decades later they are rediscovered for a new readership.

This literary cycle could be applied to the life and writings of the English wood carver and mystic, Caryll Houselander, widely read in the pre- and post-war period who then faded from view.

Cluny Publications now brings her to the attention of modern readers in a republication of Maisie Ward's 1962 biographer of her, *Caryll Houselander: Divine Eccentric*.

The description "divine eccentric", bestowed on her by a psychologist friend, is a concise summary of her unique personality. Houselander was certainly touched by the divine, transcending the loneliness of her youth. A gifted artist and writer, she applied the spiritual insights she had learnt from her own sufferings to her books and to consoling her many friends, followers and readers in their own struggles.

Indeed, although often in poor health she exhausted herself in being available to others; she could not shut the door on anyone. In her company they felt enveloped by her understanding and compassion. Despite constant fatigue and the deadlines for her writing and carving commissions, Caryll was enormously generous with the time she gave to those who demanded it of her.

Her rule was: "To choose always the thing to do into which she could put the most love."

Her oft-repeated insight was that "We must learn to see Christ in everyone", to which she gave a renewed urgency in the

times in which she lived, particularly during World War II. She wrote in her *Journal*, "Some people cling to what is past; some, the fewer and braver, face the future; but to live harmoniously in the present is an almost superhuman task". This was the task she set herself.

A fresh vision – seeing everything for the first time

This War is the Passion, the title of her first book to be widely read, published by the Catholic publishers Sheed and Ward, was a collection of her articles written about the War. Monsignor Ronald Knox, a convert like Caryll, made the acute observation, "She seemed to see everything for the first time." It was this immediacy and freshness of her spiritual writing that attracted readers, struck by the clarity and simplicity of her prose style and her unaffected originality.

What also drew readers to Caryll was her admission of her own weaknesses. In her autobiography she tells the story not "of her life but of what drove her out of the Church and of how she returned to it."

She writes candidly of her love affair with the spy Sidney Reilly, who had lived in Russia before the Revolution and who eventually disappeared in the Terror. Her oddity is also implicit to this story: Caryll was instinctively at odds with conventional piety. With her bright red hair, thick glasses, and her mask-like face, on which she applied layers of white cream which made her look like a clown, most people would have found her disconcerting.

"Eccentric" barely does justice to Caryll's style of living, in which she crammed little sleep, less food, much merriment, fun and entertaining, cigarettes, strong language, her carving and writing, an intense devotional life and a wide range of devoted friends.

Unsparring honesty – unswerving seriousness

Her unsparring honesty about herself is endearing. A journal entry for March 6th 1929 reads, “After all these Holy Communion, Masses, Confessions, books, rules, resolutions – *nothing* is done. No, God forgive me, His grace works silently, secretly; in the hour of trial, I shall know that it is so – I need to trust. But alas I know *this*: I am as unkind as before, my tongue as violent, my mind as melancholy, my will *more* weak, my fervour died out, my self-indulgence grown as I could never have imagined, my spirit of prayer fading...”

There is some over-scrupulosity here and, as Maisie Ward comments, “‘Self-indulgence’ seems always to mean smoking. Caryll resolved to fine herself a penny for every cigarette in excess of the allotted daily ten.”

Beneath this portrait of “a wit, a conversationalist...with a contagious sense of fun, an altogether delightful companion”, lay a person of unswerving seriousness, who knew her vocation to be “to bring to men the truth that Christ is in men; and it involved bringing alive in them the great truths about Him and about their own souls.”

The core teaching of Christianity, which she wrote in a letter to a friend just before the Blitz, in October 1940, is simple: “The real thing...depends not on what school of thought one grew up in, or what creed one believes in, but on one’s capacity for love and for humility.”

Again: “The healing of mankind begins whenever any man ceases to resist the love of God”.

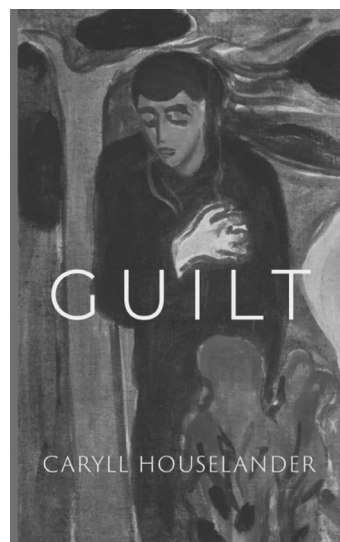
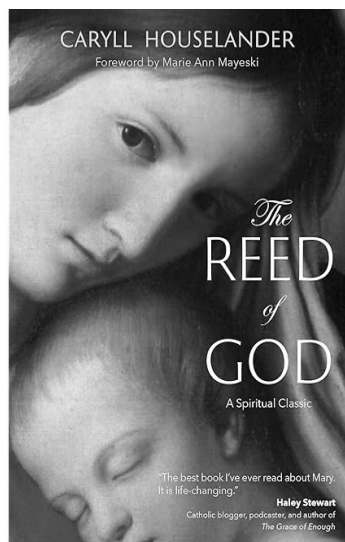
As someone who spent much of her later life befriending patients in a mental asylum, Caryll brought her own unconventional life experiences, along with her gifts and insights, into her approach.

She was a natural mystic, clairvoyant in her grasp of the supernatural reality beneath the surface of life, demonstrated by her account in her autobiography of three extraordinary interior “visions” she had as a young woman.

The last of these occurred on a crowded tube train in London when “she saw Christ” in all the people around her, “living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them and sorrowing in them”. In a passage of stark spiritual perception, Caryll concludes this mystical “vision”:

“I saw too the reverence that everyone must have for a sinner; instead of condoning his sin, which is in reality his utmost sorrow, one must comfort Christ who is suffering in him. And this reverence must be paid even to those sinners whose souls seem to be dead, because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ.”

Maisie Ward also quotes from some of the innumerable letters that Caryll sent to friends and other correspondents.



She had an instinctive understanding of human psychology and was usually correct in her diagnosis of where her correspondents’ problems lay.

Her book *Guilt* explores the psychological suffering experienced by those who cannot face their sinfulness and who hide behind fashionable therapies which “offer [man] an escape from the responsibility of being human, for the soulless man is not a human being.” She was firmly convinced that anyone can become a saint, including neurotics among whom she counted herself: “The one essential for sanctity is the capacity to love.”

Readers have sometimes first encountered Caryll through her book on Our Lady, *The Reed of God* (1944), which has made them curious to read more of this unclassifiable author. Other titles include *The Flowering Tree*, a collection of her prose-poems, which she called her “rhythms”.

Sometimes her imaginative response to a dilemma was much larger than its possible execution, as her more practical friends pointed out to her. She always gave herself wholeheartedly to whoever she was with and whatever activity she was engaged upon; despite her austerities, her energy was formidable.

After being recommended her autobiography years ago, I discovered that she was buried in a churchyard only a few miles from where I live in Buckinghamshire.

Her long-time friend, Iris Wyndham, had bought a cottage in the area where Caryll used to work in a studio in the garden when she was well enough to do so. For this garden she had carved a tender Madonna and Child in wood, still in the branches of an apple tree where it was first placed.

Since my discovery of this link, every so often I drive over and tend to her grave which would otherwise be neglected. Someone has to do this. Such an indomitable spirit, touched by a quirky, unique and generous genius, should not be forgotten. ■

Catholic Social Thought in Australia - The Life of Race Mathews

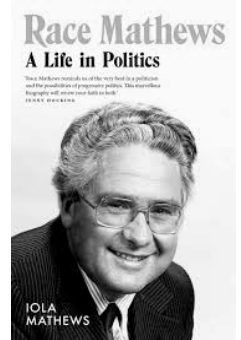
by Garrick Small



Dr. Garrick Small speaking at the 2019 Australian Chesterton Conference at Campion College

Dr Garrick Small, an economist and university professor who is a frequent contributor to *The Defendant*, reviews a biography of Race Mathews, a well-known Labor Party figure with a strong interest in Catholic social thought and the principles of Distributism. Race was a long time and valued friend of the Australian Chesterton Society. He has only very recently died (on 5 May 2025) in Melbourne at the age of 90.

The biography, *Race Mathews: A Life in Politics*, by his wife, Iola Mathews, can be purchased from the publisher, Monash University Publishing - <https://publishing.monash.edu/product/race-mathews/>



Race Mathews will be remembered as one of the most eloquent apologists for Catholic social thought of the second half of the twentieth century.

This is all the more remarkable given his long association with Fabian Socialism, and with that part of the Australian Labor Party that remained after so many serious Catholics, particularly in Victoria, left or were expelled at the time of the Labor Split in 1955. While this could make Race an enigma, his wife's recent biography of him goes some distance towards revealing a deeper consistency.

The natural virtues are those good habits that are available to man without the benefit of supernatural grace. They come through the application of reason, and the conscious personal resolution to reject the tyranny of the passions. Race Mathews was known for his dignified manner and intelligent commitment to fostering "*a better life for ordinary people*".

His manner of achieving this was formed by his circumstances and education.

This biography begins with his foundations: "My mother shaped me with her love and my father with his passion for reason."

Both had come from backgrounds of hard work. During his formative years he discovered socialism, which later displayed itself in his involvement in the Fabian Society and a career in the Australian Labor Party.

On leaving school, Race became a teacher. He was married at age twenty in 1956. By 1960 he was focused on moving into a career in politics. The pursuit of natural virtue was apparent in both aspects of his life.

His first forays into fulltime politics were marked by failure due to him not being attractive to the hard Left of his party. His marriage to Jill gave him three children before she died of cancer in 1970. In 1972 he married Iola and was devoted to her until his recent passing. He served in many capacities in the ALP, including ministerial positions at both federal and state levels.

There is a dignity in political leadership that is often lost in the Left/Right squabbling and utopianism of both. The scandals that attract media attention also obscure the dedication of the many who consider, like Plato, that politics is the highest pursuit, and despite their limitations dedicate themselves to using it to improve the lot of their fellows. These are probably the people who keep the government going, and Race Mathews was amongst them. While many might be critical of the wisdom of the Whitlam government that he served, his service was sincere.

His sincerity became apparent when he discovered Catholic social thought. Despite its association with the DLP and the Labor split that happened early in his political apprenticeship, Race recognised its power and devoted himself in later life to understanding it. The result was two doctorates and two books celebrating the achievements of distributist and co-operative initiatives, both in Australia and overseas.

Race followed this academic interest with papers that he delivered at several Australian Chesterton conferences (in 2004, 2008 and 2011) and with the promotion of distributist initiatives, including the Business Council of Cooperatives.

Despite his achieving a Doctor of Theology, Race's continuing focus never wavered from the promotion of social justice through political action and education. Personal religion seems curiously absent from his entire biography. Perhaps that was due to the time and role Race found himself in. Likewise, his wife Iola reveals herself as strongly dyed with the feminism that was flourishing as she came to maturity and found herself arguing over amongst her parents' circle of conservatives.

The book has many facets. It can be read as an in-house outline of the fortunes of the ALP from the time of the 1955 split to the present. It can be read as an adventure in discovery of effective applications of Catholic social thought by a non-Catholic willing to recognise the power of Catholic thought. It can even be read as a love story. ■