Renew Membership for 2026

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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Chesterton and the Culture of Dependency

by Karl Schmude



(From left) George Bernard Shaw, Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton in a famous debate in 1927 between Shaw and Chesterton with Belloc in the Chair.

In the early 20th century, when the welfare state was being established, Chesterton provoked controversy by opposing compulsory workers' insurance.

Britain's National Insurance Act of 1911 and other measures, he believed, did not give workers the relief they needed. Rather, they were a new imposition of state power that would threaten individual and family freedom. This was a perversion of the popular will.

Chesterton opposed the new welfare state legislation, as Margaret Canovan argued in *G.K. Chesterton: Radical Populist* (1977), because he thought it was paternalistic and repressive. It took away the freedom of the poor and undermined personal initiative and family responsibility.

The socialist solution to poverty, Chesterton once said of George Bernard Shaw, was to distribute money among the poor. Chesterton thought that the need was "to distribute power". In Canovan's words, the social reformers added the insult of regimentation to the injury of exploitation.

Chesterton found himself against both the oppressors and the reformers. On the one hand, he opposed the entrenched upper class rich, who tolerated a society in which one-third of the population was perpetually on the verge of starvation. On the other hand, he took issue with the humanitarian idealists, whether they were Liberals (who introduced the welfare state) or Socialists (who believed the solution was to abolish private property rather than distribute it).

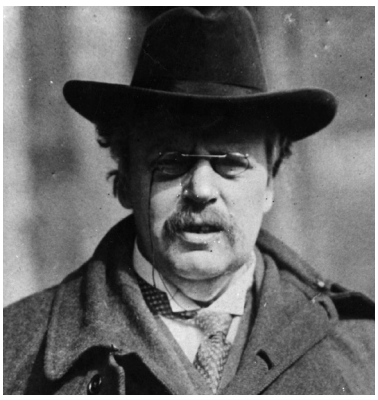
Welfare state – embedded but how sustainable?

The welfare state is now so taken for granted that it challenges the imagination to see the trap of dependency that so perturbed Chesterton.

In Australia, where the sad plight of the Indigenous people persists without solution, voices are occasionally raised questioning the value of welfare measures.

In 2011, for example, the Indigenous leader, Noel Pearson, lamented the damaging grip of dependency which the welfare state had imposed on his people ("Social policy begets social misery as the Western World fails the poor," *Weekend Australian*, July 30-31, 2011). Most recently, his Cape York Partnership has called for a major revision of Indigenous politics and proposed "a post-welfare vision" for the most disadvantaged Australians regardless of race. (Paige Taylor, "Cape York Partnership's radical plan to save all Australians from welfare trap and make education a legal right," The Australian, November 18, 2025)

It may be that disquiet over a culture of dependency is destined to grow as doubts



A Concerned Chesterton

arise over the sustainability of the welfare state. When it was introduced – at first in Bismarck's Germany in the 19th century, and later in Britain and worldwide – it was built on certain assumptions unstated at the time. Above all, it assumed a relatively stable society centred on the traditional family.

But there were other, unrecognised assumptions. The first related to the demographic balance that prevailed - that the proportion of taxpayers to support a system of mass redistribution of wealth would greatly outnumber those receiving welfare benefits. An underlying assumption was that the fertility rate would continue at a high level, and that the family would remain intact to sustain this rate.

Another assumption was that those requiring welfare assistance would be confined to a relatively small minority of the population. It would be extended to only the most needy and vulnerable. There was no expectation that the balance of transfers – between those providing and those receiving - could be affected by such changes as a declining birth rate, a large intake of immigrants from overseas, or the breakdown of the family as a functioning social unit. Nor was it seen how corrupted it could be by political stratagems designed to buy votes in certain electorates through welfare handouts.

Welfare state and social expectations

Such developments have become unmistakable in Australia – and in the West. They now imperil the theoretical foundations of the welfare state. Our society is rapidly aging, and people are living longer. As birth rates drop, the percentage of aged pensioners changes in relation to the number of taxpayers – and thereby jeopardises the demographic balance that underpinned the welfare state.

At the same time, a psychological barrier to any change may have developed at the popular level, so that dependency is accepted to the point where it saps the appetite for freedom. Chesterton was alive to this psychological factor as early as 1908: "When a great revolution is made, it is seldom the fulfilment of its own exact formula; but it is almost always in the image of its own impulse and feeling for life."

The "practical proposal" of the revolution might not be fulfilled, Chesterton thought, but its "ideal vision" would be. In other words, an entrenched welfare state shapes and seals social expectations. It becomes difficult to countenance "turning back".

In company with Belloc, Chesterton feared that a servile attitude might have gained hold, after centuries of Big Business, with its relentless advertising promoting the conversion of wants into needs. And this was now reinforced by Big Government, with its pervasive provision of social services.

The force of Big Business had stimulated a culture of high - and rising – expectations that would be formidably hard to dampen, and the culture of Big Government heightened these expectations, creating a culture of entitlement.

Surrendering liberty for security

In the early writings of Distributists, there is a lurking fear that many people may have become so inured to the experience of security, of the sanctuary of dependence, that they would resolve the tension between security and liberty by giving up on liberty – and finding a certain satisfaction in being servile.

Chesterton loved the common people, but in *The Outline of Sanity*, he was troubled by the existence of a 'servile disposition'. He described this condition as 'a catastrophe of contentment', and was troubled that it could envelop large numbers of people.

Belloc, in *The Servile State (1912*), recognised that the people at large retained 'the instinct of ownership', but he worried that our society had now reached a point where its modes of thought and habit were so permeated by collectivist assumptions and expectations that they would baulk at a wide distribution of ownership.

Why? Because it involved new demands of risk-taking and personal responsibility that a people conditioned by a collectivist culture and accustomed to the dependency of social provisions, would struggle with.

By contrast, private property implies the acceptance of personal responsibility. It is not an easy path to happiness, since freedom is a fraught condition – and a perpetually endangered gift.

Both Chesterton and Belloc nursed the fear that the psychology of a society conditioned by capitalism and socialism might induce people to give up on liberty for the sake of security and sufficiency – as occurred during the Covid era, when basic freedoms were surrendered, in response to a health crisis that was politically exploited in the name of safety.

Freedom is finally a spiritual need and condition, not just a social or political ambition. Can it be desired sufficiently by the people of the West, now swayed by social or political substitutes for religious faith, which have the effect of transferring power and responsibility to the state? Will it take a religious revival to reanimate the desire for freedom - inspiring personal initiative on the one hand, and buttressing personal responsibility on the other? ■

Australian Chesterton Conference 2025
"The Everlasting Chesterton"

The 2025 Australian Chesterton Conference was held at Campion College on 1st November.

Its theme, "The Everlasting Chesterton", marked the centenary of publication of a Chesterton classic, *The Everlasting Man* (1925). An audience of more than 60 people heard from various speakers on the contribution of Chesterton and other writers to enacting "The Everlasting Chesterton in Time," and always finding, in T.S. Eliot's description of a journalist's vocation, the topical excuse for writing about the permanent.



Emily de Rotstein

The main speakers were:

Emily de Rotstein, Executive Director of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton in America, who has played a key part in developing the Chesterton Schools Network, spoke on "The Christian Inspiration in Education."

Emily's husband, Nes Rotstein, who serves the Society in America by developing the Chesterton Schools Network globally, reported on the international expansion of these schools offering a Catholic classical education.



Greg Sheridan



Nes Rotstein

Greg Sheridan discussed his recently published book, *How Christians Can Succeed Today,* which explores how 21st century Christians can reclaim the inspirational grace and genius of 1st century Christians.

Michael Cook reflected on his long-time editing of the Australian online cultural and religious journal, *Mercator.*

Gary Furnell recalled a French forerunner of Chesterton, the 19th century Catholic writer, Ernest Hello.



Gary Furnell



Michael Cook

Karl Schmude spoke on another Chesterton forerunner, the 19th century English journalist, William Cobbett, who foreshadowed some of Chesterton's social and economic ideas.

A sad omission from the Conference was **David Daintree**, who was prevented by injury from travelling to Sydney from his Tasmanian home, and was unable to present his reflections on the Christopher Dawson Centre, of which he was the Inaugural Director.



Karl Schmude

The video recordings of the papers presented are available at these links:

* **Karl Schmude** - The Everlasting Chesterton in Time: https://youtu.be/CuzOjMm1hSQ
* **Michael Cook** – Mercator : online journal: https://youtu.be/k5oRdHrxy6k
* **Emily de Rotstein** - Inspiration in Education: https://youtu.be/2AMdOvNV2lQ
* **Nes Rotstein** - International Everlasting Man: https://youtu.be/qu7J2Pv8nYc
* **Greg Sheridan** - Christianity Across the Centuries: https://youtu.be/RrOv-UQc2CA
* **Gary Furnell** – Ernest Hello: A Chesterton Forerunner: https://youtu.be/B593r2aTjvc
* **Panel Discussion**: https://youtu.be/-hKNokz-5Aw
* **Emily de Rotstein** – Conversion (Conference Dinner speech): https://youtu.be/IMl4gN-4OvI

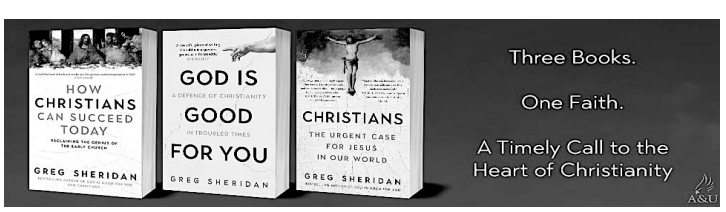


Audience at 2025 Australian Chesterton Conference

Greg Sheridan books available for purchase

At the November 1st Conference, Mark and Gai Smith provided a fine range of Catholic books for sale, on behalf of The Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc. in the western Sydney suburb of St Mary's (http://www.cardinalnewman.com.au).

The book sale included copies of Greg Sheridan's three books on Christianity – *God is Good for You: A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times* (2018), *Christians: The Urgent Case for Jesus in Our World* (2021), and *How Christians Can Succeed Today: Reclaiming the Genius of the Early Church (2025).*



Copies are available from Gai Smith at $30/copy, with a flat $10 postage for up to 3 books, or a full set of the three books at $85.00, with $10 postage. Requests can be emailed to cnfri@bigpond.com (phone – 0427 250 454).



John Kanu

The Impact of Chesterton in Africa

by John Kanu



Among the most remarkable applications of Chesterton's ideas is the work of the Chesterton Centre in the west African state of Sierra Leone.

John Kanu, *the Centre's Founder and Director, recounts his discovery of Chesterton in Oxford, England, a quarter of a century ago, and his devoted efforts to apply, in the first instance, Chesterton's Distributist ideas to the economy of his home village in Sierra Leone, and more recently, his opening of a Chesterton school to provide educational opportunities for the local community, and his establishment of a institute to develop practical skills for unemployed youths.*

What started as a dream or better still, a bridge between balance and folly in 1999 is beginning to bear fruits. G.K. Chesterton's 'distributist' ideas are at work in Sierra Leone - one of Africa's poorest countries.

In October 1999, I took a coach from London to Oxford, and soon met with a soft-spoken Englishman, who represented a life-changing turn of events.

The Englishman, providentially sent, was Stratford Caldecott (of blessed memory). He was the master of the Christianity and Society (C&S) class at Plater College, a Catholic residential college founded in 1921 in Oxford in memory of Fr. Charles Plater SJ.



Stratford Caldecott

Its purpose was to provide a second-chance educational opportunity for Catholic workers who, like me, had dropped-out of mainstream education because I had to find work to fend for my family. It was from Caldecott, through his soul-searching tutorials in the small office he occupied at Plater College, that I learnt about G.K. Chesterton and his ideas of 'Distributism'.

What was it that so fascinated me about Chesterton?

Although Chesterton never came to Africa, and I had never heard of him or his works until I met Caldecott in 1999, I was struck – and am still fascinated today – by his candour and the parallels of his writings and my experiences of community life in Kabonka, a typical small African village in Sierra Leone.

In other words, Chesterton in his distributist writings gave expression to the best qualities of traditional African communitarian values. Although I left with a Master's degree in the social sciences from Oxford University, attending Stratford's C&S classes was the best educational experience I got from Oxford! My providential encounter with Stratford Caldecott set off a litany of other encounters, some of which I will someday describe in another piece, such as my encounter with the "magnificent 4" (Aidan Mackey, Clark Durant, Dale Ahlquist and the 'consummate' Marco Sermarini).

''Distributism holds that, politically and economically, the best kind of society is one characterized by widespread ownership of property […and I will add, in the case of our realities in Sierra Leone…the means of production and productive communal assets including relevant capacity"].

The truth is: there is no way I could have returned back to Sierra Leone - a war devastated place - after three years living in Oxford with my family and a job offer if I had not discovered Chesterton's distributism ideas. Through this encounter, I saw for the first time the fulfilment towards the dream and the commitment of my village folks, who as a child, had argued and debated whether or not to have me, one of their own 'sent to school'. Today, three little initiatives are taking hold in Sierra Leone in honour and fulfilment of my discovery of G. K. Chesterton's ideas.

Sierra Leone Chesterton Center (SLCC)

Founded in Oxford in 2002, and registered in Sierra Leone in 2006 as a community-based organization, the impact of the SLCC is mostly realized in Kono district, the epicentre of artisanal small-scale mining of diamonds and gold.

The SLCC initiative - working with smallholder farmer households (8 family members using rudimental tools to cultivate an average of 1.5 acres of rice fields per year) - has resulted in their being organised into cooperatives and enhancing the productive capacity of more than 2,000 smallholder farmers (80% of whom are women).



Farmers tilling the land - a critical asset for distributism in agrarian societies

After 15 years involvement in this work, we now have irrefutable evidence that the cooperative approach is an effective 'distributist' model.

Through this model, families living in mining-affected communities have cooperated with each other to convert, reclaim and own lands degraded and previously lost to decades of mineral exploitation.

Today in two communities, for example, a total of 10 acres (40,470 sq. metres) of such lands were converted into productive communal agricultural assets and fishponds, from which each family is now better able to feed itself, and one child per family has been sent to the village school. Tuition fees are paid from the proceeds and sales of agricultural products as the outcome of their combined labour.

SLCC's focus to protect land is not misplaced because land, in traditional African values, is not just a place to grow crops for food, but also a resource with aesthetic, cultural, social and spiritual values.

To start with, land does not belong to one person but must be accessible to all the members of a family or clan. It is a resource to be tendered with care and honest stewardship and to be passed on from one generation to the other. Land in Africa symbolizes the connection between the past, the present and the future. It is on this same land that our ancestors had toiled, took responsibility for their community and offspring - and therefore, the next generation should be desirous to do the same.

Chesterton Academy of Sierra Leone (CASL)

Founded in 2021 with only 14 pupils, the school has become a beacon of hope and a resource for the community to mitigate the age-old problem of poor education. Now providing for over 500 pupils today, the CASL is among the top schools, using quality and Catholic practical educational pedagogy in Science and Technology, a discipline Chesterton described as "*Scientia Est Aut Instrumentum Aut Ludus*" (science is either a tool or a toy).

From this school, we hope to scale up to a Chesterton University where a future generation of artisans, auto-engineers, computer specialists, agriculturists, business entrepreneurs and critical trade-leaders would be trained to address the extensive social and economic challenges facing their local communities - with compassion and with Chesterton's candour and laughter.

Chesterton Vocational and Skills Development Institute (CVSDI)

With dogged determination, and the counsel of Archbishop Edward Tamba Charles of the Catholic Archdiocese of Freetown, Sierra Leone, the idea of establishing a special training institute, the CVSDI, to cater for youth 18 years and above, took on practical possibility in 2022.

Like the cooperative farmer model implemented in rural Kono, in the eastern province of Sierra Leone, the CVSDI is focused on building capacity along relevant and employable skills for youth who dropped out of formal education or else missed the chance to go to school. Without this support, they would never fully participate in the dynamics of their local economies.

In sum, the Institute is in tandem with distributist objectives. The basic reason is that equipping these youth with skills is what would make a difference for unemployed youths in Sierra Leone. So many are susceptible to drugs and other forms of abuse, or they face the likelihood of becoming fodder for dangerous internal and external migration.

The CVSDI is an attempt to rediscover and enhance 'middle-man-power skills'. These have been neglected in modern education in Sierra Leone, despite the importance of such skills in job creation and the local economy.

The CVSDI was officially opened and dedicated to God on 7th October 2025 by Archbishop Edward Tamba Charles. Unlike extant development models, the blend of trainings conducted in this vocational institute are based on the outcomes of stakeholder consultations and a structured socio-economic study conducted in the western rural area of Sierra Leone, which showed a strong demand for these areas of skills development.

A total of 54 youth (86% women) is currently registered, and at various levels, pursuing training in Catering/Culinary and Hospitality skills, Tailoring and Fashion Design, Hair Dressing & Cosmetology, Information & Communication Technology; Electrification and Solar Power Installation, all of which will mitigate the prevailing challenges of high youth unemployment and poverty in the district.

Upon completion of an 18-month training cycle in any of the above skill sets, successful candidates will be awarded proficient certificates by Sierra Leone's National Commission of Technical Education, and then organized into small-scale enterprise cooperatives, accompanied with financial and technical inputs, to ensure success and sustainability.

All these will be impossible without your prayers, and we look forward to working with any of you in Australia as partners, through the agency of G.K. Chesterton for the glory of God.

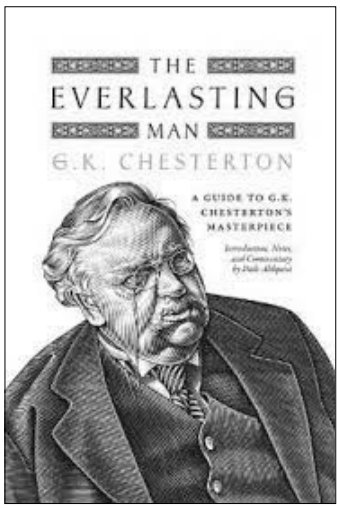
For further details or comments, please contact:

John Kanu at jkanuox@gmail.com

You are also encouraged to visit our new website at:
http//www.slcchesterton.org



First crop of CVSDI trainees



The Adventurous Chesterton:
Capturing the paradox of *The Everlasting Man*

by Garry Nieuwkamp

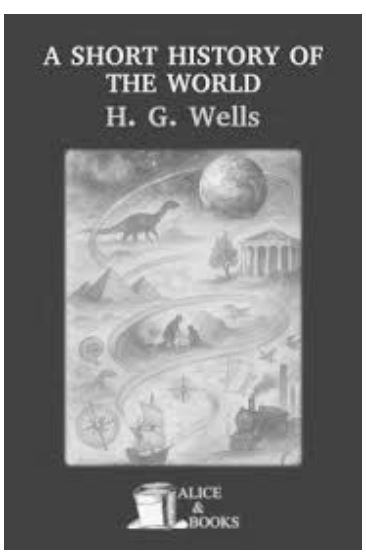
Garry Nieuwkamp, *a frequent contributor to* The Defendant, *reviews the latest edition of Chesterton's classic,* The Everlasting Man *(published by Word on Fire, 2023), which contains explanatory notes and extensive commentary on each chapter by Dale Ahlquist, President of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton.*

The year 1922 was a standout year in publishing. *Ulysses* by James Joyce was despatched to the public from a little bookstore on the left bank of the Seine, while, during that year, members of the Bloomsbury group were enjoying a weekend retreat listening to the first recital of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

1922 is also the year in which H G Wells published *A Short History of the World*, which caught the attention of our friend, Gilbert Keith Chesterton. (Incidentally 1922 was also the year that Marcel Proust entered eternal life, and that Chesterton entered the Universal Church.)

Three years later, in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* was published, the Locarno Treaties were signed, Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs Dalloway,* and T.S. Eliot's poem, *The Hollow Men*, were making their way to the printing presses, and George Bernard Shaw was getting the nod from the Nobel Committee.

And in 1925, Chesterton responded to H.G. Wells with what some regard as Chesterton's greatest book, *The Everlasting Man*.



A Short History of the World, an abridged version of his *Outline of History* (1920), was an ambitious project. In ca.350 pages we pass through the age of coal swamps, monkeys, apes and sub-men, nomadic peoples and the first sea-going peoples. We encounter the splendour of Greece, the life of Gautama Buddha, the teaching of Jesus, and on and on through to Mohammad and Islam and the dynasties of Suy and Tang in China.

Before long we are reflecting on the development of material knowledge, the Industrial Revolution, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. And soon after that, we are in the trenches of the Great War with "the monstrous anger of the guns." Breathtaking in its scope, as the blurb on the back of Wells' book says.

But not all of this steady accumulation of facts sits well with Chesterton. Wells wrote a wonderful book, passionate in its intensity but he attempted to pray a lie. *The Everlasting Man* is a corrective.

Reading the book, and perhaps Chesterton more generally, can be both exhilarating and frustrating. Bill Clinton once said that you campaign in poetry and govern in prose. The one requires "footwork and firework", the other attention to detail.

These two aspects in Chesterton are in constant tension. The poet is ever present, even when what is needed is the unadorned prose of apologetics. Evelyn Waugh is reputed to have expressed the desire to rewrite *The Everlasting Man* so as to eliminate what he regarded as Chesterton's stylistic exuberance - his linguistic pirouettes and pliés.

One can easily sympathize with Waugh. But thankfully there is a new edition of *The Everlasting Man* recently published, annotated by Dale Ahlquist, which helps to deconstruct the lexical fouettés and frappés. Ahlquist speaks fluent Chesterton, and so provides the reader with two ways of reading *The Everlasting Man*; reading each chapter by Chesterton first, followed by the commentary by Ahlquist, or the other way around - through the eye of the needle or through the open gate?

This latest edition of the book is published by the Catholic media organisation, Word on Fire, started by Bishop Robert Barron to take advantage of the new digital platforms. The first thing that can be said about this latest edition is that the book is beautifully constructed, which is in keeping with their mission statement of harnessing truth, beauty and goodness to draw people into, or back to, the Catholic faith. Bookmark ribbons are both beautiful and practical.

But despite this new edition, the contemporary reader is still at a disadvantage. It is one thing to negotiate one's way through Chesterton's expressive exuberance, it is quite another thing to familiarize oneself with the vast reading habits of Chesterton's contemporaries.

The reading public of the 1920's had little distraction from other forms of entertainment that were later to become readily available, so the reading of newspapers, magazines, weeklies, and pamphlets was the entertainment. The criticism, for example, that Chesterton's poetry was overly influenced by reading too much Swinburne, would make sense to an Edwardian audience, but go largely unnoticed by a contemporary audience, distracted by binge watching Criminal Minds and scrolling through interminable cat videos on TikTok.

These contextual elements in Chesterton's writing present the reader with a challenge that an annotated copy of *The Everlasting Man* can help overcome but not eliminate.

Notwithstanding these elements, Chesterton has distilled into this book a lifetime of concerns in responding to Wells. It is clear to Chesterton that "The world is charged with the grandeur of God".

"Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world?" he has Syme ask in *The Man Who Was Thursday*. "We see everything from behind, and it looks brutal. That is not a tree, but the back of a tree. That is not a cloud, but the back of a cloud. Cannot you see that everything is stooping and hiding a face?"

For the materialist like Wells, there is only the back of things; there is no "in front". Consequently, when he tells the story of mankind, he leaves much unsaid. Ronald Knox has said of Chesterton that there was a boyish strain in him, as of one who has never got over reading *Treasure Island*. It is true.

The adventure among the facts

What is missing in Wells is the adventure that Chesterton sees lurking among the facts and events of history that are "stooping and hiding a face". There is human progress certainly, as Wells has enthusiastically documented, but it is no accident that both authors are writing after the carnage and unprecedented slaughter of the trenches of World War I, "The hell where youth and laughter go". Chesterton has been in Plato's cave and has turned to see the light.

Within that history of mankind, religion for Wells is just another station on the Hegelian arc towards perfection. As Bishop Robert Barron has noted, Muhammad dies in his bed. The Buddha full of years dies surrounded by his disciples. Confucius the same thing. Moses dies at a ripe old age.

And then there is Jesus. He dies 33 years old, naked, pinned to a desperate instrument of torture, betrayed and denied, his disciples having abandoned him, his enemies mocking him. Jesus is a sign of contradiction.

"Full religion is the large poem in loving repetition; / like any poem, it must be inexhaustible and complete / with turns where we ask Now why did the poet do that?" (Les Murray, "Poetry and Religion")

Wells doesn't ask - but Chesterton does, and sees it clearly: "that the midst of the earth is a raging mirth / and the heart of the earth a star" (Chesterton, "A Child of the Snows"). As Ronald Knox has noted, Chesterton was [and so was Les Murray] an artist in thought. He sees the paradox at the heart of Christianity. He sees the "poetry of the cross". There are no creeds to Neptune and Aphrodite, but a symbol of torture sustains the martyrs as they utter credo - *I believe*.

If you reduce the supernatural to the natural, you get Christianity as just another story, just another event in the Short History of the World.

Chesterton sees a chasm between mythology and religion and between God and the gods. Jesus is not just another story in the ever-evolving trajectory of mankind. He is the author of the story, and so the main task of *The Everlasting Man* is to "quicken his readers' perceptiveness", to use John Holloway's expression, so that the texture of the whole book becomes an experience of the divine for the reader, a source of wonder and truth, beauty and goodness.

God is, in Les Murray's words, "in the world as poetry / is in the poem," an insight that Wells missed entirely. You can't pray a lie. *The Everlasting Man* is a reminder of that. ■

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

Layout of 'The Defendant' designed by Jenna Fulop

Society Membership

The annual membership fee of the Australian Chesterton Society is available as *two options* - **$35.00 for an electronic subscription** to *The Defendant* (quarterly - by email), or **$45.00 for a printed/posted copy.**
Combined subscription - $45.00

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

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Chesterton display at Campion

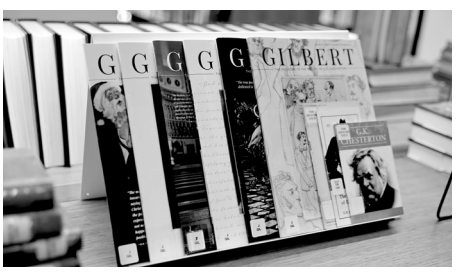


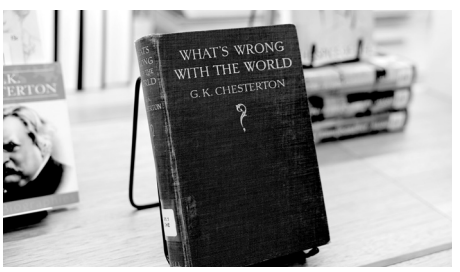
The Campion College Library holds a significant collection of Chesterton's books, together with sets of contemporary journals devoted to the study of Chesterton. Such sets include *The Chesterton Review* (quarterly journal of the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, USA) and *Gilbert Magazine* (published every eight weeks by the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton in America), as well as our Australian Chesterton Society quarterly, *The Defendant*.

To coincide with the Australian Chesterton Conference at Campion on November 1st , the College Librarian, Anusha Jebanasam, prepared a display of many of these works.

Campion has an active Friends of the Library Group which exists to support the continuing development of the Library. Members enjoy borrowing rights from the Library and are invited to attend "Library Friends Receptions".

Enquiries from anyone interested in joining the Friends Group are very welcome. Contact Anusha by email (library@campion.edu.au) or by phone (02 – 9896 9307).

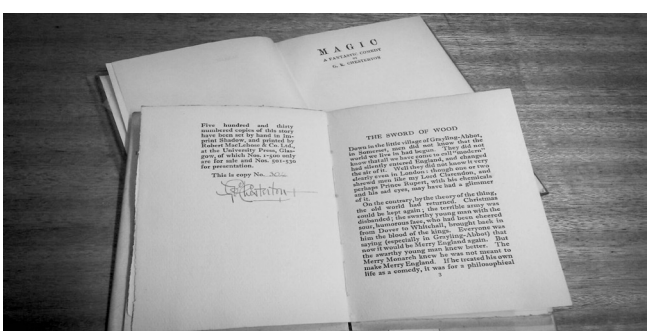






Signed Chesterton Books at Campion

by Keziah van Aardt



Keziah van Aardt, *former Campion College Librarian, as well as a Campion College graduate, reflects on the special value attached to books signed by Chesterton.*

There is something elusively compelling about a book that is signed by its author. A handwritten signature is a very individual, personal touch on a printed book and seems to somehow bring to life the woman or man who wrote it.

Among my treasured possessions is a book of verse written and signed by the poet, Les Murray. Holding this volume in my hand I am reminded of the time I spent at an event listening to the Australian legend read his poetry. Seeing his handwriting on the title page of my book is a lovely reminder of this time and helps me connect the man with his writing in a very tangible way.

Several years ago, Campion's Library was fortunate to acquire two books by G. K. Chesterton, both of which have been signed by him. *Magic: A Fantastic Comedy,* was written in 1913 and is a play in three acts, one of Chesterton's first dramatic works. It is delightful to think that the author held the blue boards of this book and turned the pages himself to write his distinctive signature across the paper.

The second book is *The Sword of Wood,* a short story written in 1928. This Elkin Mathews & Marrot edition was the only publication of Chesterton's short story in book form – a mere 530 copies were made. Not only is this a rare work, but the craftsmanship of the book is beautiful – the pages are made of rag paper, the type is set by hand, and the endpapers are decorated with a curlicue design. Chesterton's signature on the verso of the title page adds an extra element of curiosity to this lovely little volume.

The Library is privileged to own these two works as they provide examples of Chesterton's early writing and demonstrate his ability to turn his hand to different genres and styles of writing.

The fact they are both signed by their author is a special feature that brings Chesterton to life; not just as an author, but as a man full of imagination and life. ■