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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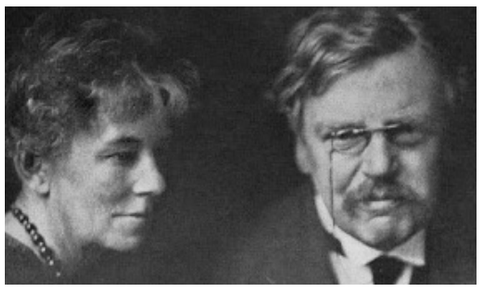
The Freedom of the Vow

by Karl Schmude



Gilbert and Frances Chesterton the living of a vow

Chesterton cherished freedom as a virtue, not just a conviction. It was central to the moral life of the individual, endowing every person with the power to choose good over evil.

But it also underpinned the health of a culture, for freedom was the precondition for social and political flourishing.

Unsurprisingly, Chesterton's conception of freedom abounded in paradox. Far from the modern libertarian view of unrestricted freedom, a means of fulfilling every possible human desire, he believed it actually rested on the acceptance of limits. It was such acceptance that made possible a higher and greater freedom:

"I could never conceive or tolerate any Utopia which did not leave to me the liberty for which I chiefly care, the liberty to bind myself." (*Orthodoxy*, 1908)

The most striking example of accepted limits was marriage. In a little-known book, *The Superstition of Divorce (*1920), Chesterton pointed out that marriage is based, not on a contract (though it was now lapsing into this lower state), or even simply a promise. It turned on the mutual making of a vow.

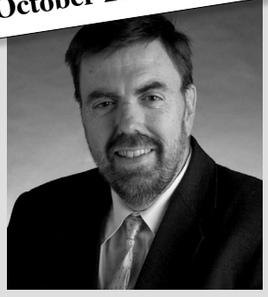
Tracing the history of vows in the chapter, "The Story of the Vow", he showed its historical importance in religious and social institutions alike – such as the monasteries, the guilds, and the relationships of medieval feudalism. The monk's vow was of a *spiritual* relationship, the guild member's was of a *vocational and professional* relationship, and the feudal lord's was essentially *commercial*, offering legal and military protection to serfs in return for their labour and loyalty.

But in all cases, Chesterton argued, these relationships carried a higher value.

Civilisation of vows

The governing ideal of a vow, he believed, "is to combine the fixity that goes with finality with the self-respect that only goes with freedom."

Register for October 21 Conference - see enclosed flyer



Excitement is building for this year's Australian Chesterton Conference on 'Chesterton and the Rise of a Counter-Culture', which will be held at Campion College on **Saturday, October 21**.

A featured speaker will be **Greg Sheridan**, the well-known journalist and commentator.

He will speak on the signs of a counter-culture in publishing and the media, based on the responses to his writings on Christianity, including his best-selling books, *God is Good For You: A defence of Christianity in recent times* (2018) and *Christians: The urgent case for Jesus in our world* (2021), as well as his feature articles in *The Australian* and his frequent appearances on the ABC and Sky News Australia.

The vow carried a certain sacredness, even in a secular setting. It found expression in what Chesterton memorably called a "civilisation of vows". This was undermined when Henry VIII broke his own vow of marriage, and visited a wider brokenness upon Western culture. "It began with divorce for a king," wrote Chesterton wittily, "and it is now ending in divorces for a whole kingdom."

The spiritual and social consequences were pervasive:

"The monasteries, that had been built by vows, were destroyed. The guilds, that had been regiments of volunteers, were dispersed. The sacramental nature of marriage was denied; and many of the greatest intellects of the new movement, like Milton, already indulged in a very modern idealisation of divorce."

Why has this destructiveness continued to spread? In a much earlier essay, "A Defence of Rash Vows" (*The Defendant*, 1901), Chesterton defined a vow as an appointment a person makes with himself at some distant time or place. Of course, it carries the risk that he will not keep this appointment, that he will dishonour his vow – and such fear is now an overwhelming deterrent to making a vow. In Chesterton's words:

"This terror of one's self, of the weakness and mutability of one's self, has perilously increased, and is the real basis of the objection to vows of any kind." The ideal of constancy that inspires the vow is now seen as "a yoke mysteriously imposed on mankind by the devil, instead of being, as it is, a yoke consistently imposed by all lovers on themselves."

A vow testifies to "the greatness of a great moment. . . a moment of immortality." To diminish it is to rob a person of "that sense of daring actuality which is the excitement of a vow."

Chesterton dismisses as an inherent contradiction the popular idea of "free love". No lover is "free" in that sense, since "it is the nature of love to bind itself." He cites a George Bernard Shaw play, *The Philanderer*, in which the main character "is perpetually endeavouring to be a free-lover, . . . wandering in a hungry search for a certain exhilaration which he can only have when he has the courage to cease from wandering."

More than a century later, this "hungry search for a certain exhilaration" has become a cultural imperative, no longer simply a trend.

It has found expression in the cult of individual autonomy, which underlies the continuing fall in marriage rates and the corresponding rise in single-person households locked in virtual connections rather than participating in physical communities ("We all need people, yet more of us are living alone," *Weekend Australian*, July 29-30, 2023).

Gilbert's letter to Frances as on the eve of their marriage in 1901 - the reflections of a bridegroom

"But there are four lamps of thanksgiving always before him. The first is for his creation out of the same earth with such a woman as you. The second is that he has not, with all his faults, 'gone after strange women.' You cannot think how a man's self restraint is rewarded in this. The third is that he has tried to love everything alive: a dim preparation for loving you. And the fourth is – but no words can express that. Here ends my previous existence. Take it: it led me to you."

This, in turn, spreads and intensifies the desperate loneliness of so many in present-day culture.

Pascal's insight in the 17th century is proving painfully true in the 21st century - as if he anticipated the long-term consequences of Covid lockdowns and "physical distancing":

"All the unhappiness of man arises from one thing only, namely that he is incapable of abiding quietly in one room." (*Pensées*, 116)

Political importance of the family

The freedom of the individual to make a vow in marriage is of political importance. In giving rise to a family, it creates the one institution that can meet the power of the state.

Its unique representation of freedom is because, as Chesterton notes, the family is "at once necessary and voluntary." It provides a check on the state that is communal, and it goes beyond the power of the individual. Crucially, it supplies a counter-institution to the dominance of the state. In Chesterton's words:

"The state consists of coercion; and must always be justified from its own point of view in extending the bounds of coercion; as, for instance, in the case of conscription. The only thing that can be set up to check or challenge this authority is a voluntary law and a voluntary loyalty. That loyalty is the protection of liberty, in the only sphere where liberty can fully dwell." ■

Society Membership

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

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

BSB: 932-000 (Regional Australia Bank, Armidale NSW)
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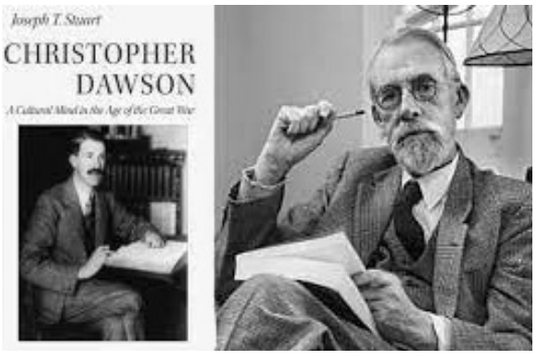
The Cultural Mind of Christopher Dawson

by Thomas V. Gourlay



In a new study, Christopher Dawson: A Cultural Mind in the Age of the Great War *(Catholic University of America Press, 2022), the American historian, Joseph T. Stuart, has brought alive the perennial value of Dawson's historical insights.*

In this review, **Thomas V. Gourlay**, *a lecturer in the school of philosophy and theology and the national director of chaplaincy at the University of Notre Dame Australia, as well as co-founder of the Christopher Dawson Society in Western Australia, praises the quality and thoroughness of Joseph Stuart's book.*

His review was first published in the American Catholic journal, Homiletic & Pastoral Review. *This shorter version is reprinted with its kind permission.*

Joseph T. Stuart's biographical study of the British cultural historian Christopher Dawson (1989 – 1970) is masterful.

While some great publications detailing Dawson's life and his work already exist, Stuart's contribution is unique, providing a biographical study that contextualizes Dawson and his intellectual and cultural vision against the backdrop of the implosion and fragmentation of European culture that began with the First World War and continued, according to Stuart, at least until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Stuart demonstrates a wide reading not only of Dawson's own work, but the work which Dawson himself engaged in. He presents what he refers to as Dawson's "cultural mind" in all its breadth and depth, as he brought together a multiplicity of various disciplines of his era, such as anthropology, ethnography, archaeology, history, and sociology — some of which were very new — to get past various reductive modes of rendering reality and to "see things whole."

As Stuart describes it, "The purpose of this book is to excavate the frame of Dawson's cultural mind in order to demonstrate how it not only reconciles intellectualist and behaviorist approaches to culture but also provides a synthesis helpful in thinking about the relationship between religion and politics, reforming education as enculturation, coordinating specialized research, and constructing a more meaningful cultural history today."

Stuart is largely successful in fulfilling the book's stated purpose by means of his mastery of Dawson's sizable published corpus, and also through an impressive command of the significant archival resources made available at a number of Dawson archives, both in England and in the United States, not to mention his familiarity with Dawson's own source material, as well as the most contemporary of history of the period covering Dawson's life.

Dawson's cultural mind engaging various disciplines

The book proceeds in two parts. The first addresses the development of Dawson's cultural mind, examining his engagement with and use of the disciplines of sociology, history, and comparative religion, and how he brought them together to create a rigorous "science of culture."

As Stuart describes it, "culture is so complex that no single formal object sufficiently makes it intelligible," all of which meant that Dawson had to incorporate a variety of (sometimes new) disciplines to get at the understanding of culture he so earnestly desired, and desired to communicate.

Stuart presents Dawson's unique dexterity across a multiplicity of disciplines, but is careful to show how Dawson's approach did not fall into the kind of superficiality which seems to plague much of what passes for interdisciplinary work nowadays. Instead, Stuart depicts Dawson as a truly *trans-disciplinary* thinker, what he refers to as Dawson's "cultural mind."

Dawson's Cultural mind in politics and education

Part two examines the application of Dawson's cultural mind in the areas of politics and education.

Stuart shows how valuable Dawson's cultural mind was in its application to the many problems that plagued Europe and the West following the Great War and throughout the 20th century. The intellectual framework he developed - and out of which he operated – could well be employed today in the face of the past few years' of global pandemic, war in Europe, and what seems like almost universal unrest.

While the focus of this work is squarely on Dawson's cultural mind, the expansive nature of that mind is such that no aspect of culture seems to have been left out. The work also doubles as something of its own cultural history of English-speaking Europe between the Wars.

Stuart has demonstrated that he is precisely the right person to take us on this journey of discovery, exhibiting his own remarkable aptitude for following Dawson's lead in finding the balance between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to culture, allowing the truth of things to reveal itself instead of getting caught up in telling his own story.

While he is obviously an admirer of Dawson, Stuart is unafraid to critique his work where appropriate, thereby demonstrating his own 'cultural mind'. Not everyone will agree with everything that Dawson wrote or thought, but he cannot be dismissed as a reactionary or a thoughtless ideologue. We could all learn from reading Dawson, using Stuart's study as either an introduction to the man and his thought, or an opportunity to think through again what Dawson made available through his cultural mind. ■

The Fragility of Freedom

by Gary Furnell

A speaker at this year's Australian Chesterton Conference on October 21 is Peter Fenwick, a Melbourne businessman and author. ***Gary Furnell****, Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society, reviews his 2014 book,* The Fragility of Freedom: Why subsidiarity matters *(Connor Court, 2014), which is relevant to Chesterton's social philosophy as well as to this year's conference theme of an emerging counter-culture.*

Peter Fenwick

A few excerpts from the prologue are likely to encourage anyone sensible to read this book:

"The state has become pervasive in our lives. We have lost the belief that we can do things ourselves. We live with the peculiar notion that if we cannot afford some desired service it should be provided by the government. A cargo cult has developed in which the state has an inexhaustible supply of funds. The consequences are unmanageable debt, unsound money, poor investment decisions, and unfair burdens on the productive, the thrifty and the young.

"Newly elected political leaders proclaim that they will govern for all constituents. That never happens. Our democratic system ensures that politicians act in the best interests of themselves, their party, their electorate and the sectional interests that support them. They do this at the expense of the wider group.

"Policies are usually presented to show only their immediate effect or their effect on a single group. For balance, it is necessary to investigate the long-term effects, which may prove to be less desirable, and the expense of the policy on the wider group."

There is a lot more worthy of close attention, and it's embedded in only 226 pages divided into 8 succinct chapters. I read the book twice to try to fix the many wise principles in my heart and mind.

At times, I felt like cheering the good sense. For example, here is the definition of subsidiarity:

"Subsidiarity is the principle of devolving decisions to the lowest practical level, that what individuals are able to do, society should not take over, and what smaller societies can do, large societies should not take over. It facilitates a wider range of solutions, quicker and more informed decision-making, and greater involvement of more citizens. Because there is a diversity of solutions there is less chance of one bad decision causing a systemic failure. Because there is more responsibility for one's actions there is less opportunity for moral hazard."

Moral hazard means others to suffer the consequences of your bad decisions. Bureaucracies are exemplars of this folly: it's always other people—never themselves!—who suffer from their faults and inefficiences.

Blessed variety

Peter Fenwick makes the point that subsidiarity provides variety and in that variety we can better see what does and doesn't work. We can learn from each other's successes and failures. Improvements can be emulated. Further, a multiplicity of views are presented, which encourages the emergence of different aspects of reality. It also means that domination by the majority—or one vocal minority—is more readily prevented. Individual liberty is enhanced.

Widespread prosperity and social peace go together. This distributed prosperity doesn't arrive by government edict; it's created by a variety of factors that are too complex and dynamic for *anyone to govern*. When governments try to manage them they harm them. Fenwick details these beneficial factors: specialisation, exchange and trade, trust, co-operation, cheap energy, innovation, investment, property rights, enforceable contracts (a just and efficient legal system), the synergies of urbanisation, and using everyone's talents.

People who work hard and create wealth should be abetted, not scorned or seen as exploiters. Fenwick observes:

"Provided a man or woman has earned their wealth legitimately, and not by coercion or political influence, they should be admired not denigrated... Your opportunity to live a life of contemplation depends on others' willingness to live the life of an entrepreneur."

Throughout the book there are sections introducing key modern thinkers who have best articulated the principles of liberty, prosperity and responsibility, including Vaclav Havel, Matt Ridley and Ludwig von Mises. These introductions add value to Fenwick's arguments by providing philosophical background and insights.

Muddle-headed government and crony capitalism

There are strong arguments for wealth creation via free enterprise—lifting many into relative prosperity. There are equally strong arguments against multiplying the government's provision of services. Typically, these are inefficient, undiscerning, hugely expensive, unfair and hard to restrain. Welfare assistance, education and health services are best delivered by locally-based private organisations:

charities, churches, friendly societies, small businesses, community groups, insurance schemes and user-pays systems. Fenwick laments that we are so accustomed to government provision of so many services that we find it difficult to imagine how else they might be delivered. In this, as in so many areas, entrepreneurs and open competition will show us how it can be achieved. Established bureaucracies will resist this change.

Crony capitalists will also resist this change. Cronyism involves businesses or entities (like unions) lobbying, exploiting or manipulating government to create conditions most suitable for themselves. They give capitalism and free enterprise systems a bad name. Fenwick notes, "Any business that behaves unethically, or illegally, or simply not in the interests of its customers fails because soon it has no customers." Very large businesses tend to collapse eventually because they become indifferent to innovation, captured by self-seeking executives, and reliant on government contracts and support—which are changeable. They forget to focus on their customers and focus instead on secondary matters—for example, mates in government or extraneous social justice concerns.

People worry about jobs as automation, overseas trade and technological dynamism become ever more prominent. Peter Fenwick's optimism is qualified:

"There is no need to fear that there will be insufficient work and an underclass of unemployed, provided that we do not permit the state to intervene in well-meaning but counter-productive ways. Jobs are created by entrepreneurs. We need to honour them and to create the conditions for them to flourish."

Four Follies

Four chapters examine failed policies and aberrant ideas: socialism, interventionism, unsound money and distributive justice.

Socialism and Communism have shown themselves to be incredibly disruptive of entrepreneurial activity and wealth-creation. No socialist or communist country that has stayed faithful to socialist economic theory has succeeded in lifting their populations to prosperity. Communist China's wealth expanded greatly after private enterprise was allowed. Typically, socialists try to micro-manage human and natural systems—an impossible task. In addition, they routinely suppress valuable but offending truths, compounding their mistakes. Many Western parliaments—including Australia's—have embraced a socialist model of the welfare state and the result is entitlement, unwieldy bureaucracies and massive government debt.

Many Western nations have also embraced a socialist model of economic intervention—with similar results. Recessions are always the result of foolish government interventions in the market. Left alone, the free market would quickly self-correct through changed investment, entrepreneurial activity and the price mechanism, i.e. the market sets the price of commodities, jobs and services based on the unyielding realities of supply and demand.

"Government intervention not only creates the problem but it extends its duration by interfering with the market's adjustment process. It props up businesses that should be allowed to fail. It continues to inflate the money supply. It keeps wages and prices up. It encourages consumption and discourages saving. It subsidises unemployment. In other words, well-meaning but poor policy creates the problems and prevents speedy resolution."

Unsound money refers to our financial system based naively on government fiat—not on the gold standard. Governments print money that doesn't reflect the nation's economic realities. It controls money supply and influences interest rates through a central reserve bank, creating another deleterious distortion in the market.

If unsound money, self-defeating government intervention, crony capitalism and the welfare system aren't enough drag on the economy, we're also burdened with misguided re-distributive justice. This isn't the encouragement of lots of small, independent enterprises as Chesterton and Belloc recommended. It's taxing one set of people to give money to another set of people, creating greater dependence on welfare payments. The policy foolishly seeks to establish equality of outcomes irrespective of luck, skill, risk-taking, the giving and receiving of gifts, help from family and friends, personal application and hard work. In effect, this form of distributive justice is an injustice whereby one person pinches the wealth of another using the government as the pick-pocket. We should seek *equity* in outcomes, not *equality* of outcomes.

Peter Fenwick consistently extols the virtues of individual responsibility, thrift, hard work, family loyalty and support, life-long learning, careful (not reckless) compassion, volunteerism, integrity, diligence and real justice. He writes:

"You achieve your desires [for yourself, your business projects and your family] by rational persuasion, never by influence or coercion. Fairness and justice are not achieved by putting disproportionate burdens on the productive, the thrifty and the young. This is the morality of the free market, the basis for a fair and just society."

The Fragility of Freedom: why subsidiarity matters is accessible, stimulating, inspiring, corrective and instructional. No inquisitive reader can ask for much more. ■

An Australian Chesterton Society member in Canberra wishes to find a new home for his set of the international journal, *The Chesterton Review*, 1977-2014. The set is available for personal collection in Canberra, not for despatching by mail. Anyone who might be interested in this material is invited to contact the Editor (at kgschmude@gmail.com or on 0407 721 458) for further details.

Chesterton and the Celtic Punk Musician

by Emily de Rotstein

Chesterton has always earned admiration in unexpected quarters. One of the most unexpected is his effect on Matthew Kelly, a drummer in the American-Irish Punk band, Dropkick Murphys. Very popular with their Boston hometown fans, the band gained worldwide recognition for their Platinum-selling single "I'm Shipping Up To Boston," featured in the 2006 Academy-Award winning movie, The Departed.

Matthew Kelly's discovery of Chesterton renewed his Catholic faith and opened his mind to the metaphysical, as explained in this interview with **Emily de Rotstein**, Executive Director at *The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton. The interview first appeared in the January-February 2023 issue of the Society's journal,* Gilbert*, and is reprinted with its kind permission.*

GM: Do you still have the image of GKC on your bass drum?

MK: Oddly, I have two drum kits, both having had GKC's image on them ... the one in the USA has unfortunately been upended by an image of Woody Guthrie, as my band has recently released an album featuring his until-now unpublished lyrics. I hope to return Mr. Chesterton's image to its rightful place as soon as I can! Chesterton's face is still on my bass drum in Europe, and we'll see how long that lasts.

GM: Tell us about your background and professional career.

MK: I was a poor kid from Central Massachusetts who grew up surrounded by a family of musicians, philosophers, and athletes. I started drumming at the age of nine, to the joy of my father and my Uncle Mike, who are both drummers. I joined my first band at the age of twelve, and have been playing out ever since.

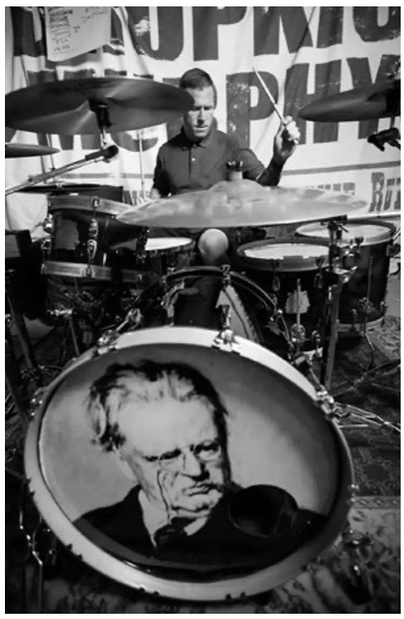
I joined the Dropkick Murphys in 1997, and that's pretty much it. I never attended college, so I'm pretty useless unless you need a drummer!

GM: Were you raised in a religious family?

MK: Both sides of my family are Catholic. I remember my maternal grandfather lectoring at Mass on Sundays; he and my grandmother were very pious Catholics. Most of my dad's uncles were philosophers, some very familiar with Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and their ilk. One of our aunts was a nun many years ago, but followed the vocation of married life. Also, we had an uncle in seminary for a while, but also ended up getting married, too. My paternal grandmother went to Mass daily until she was about 84 and a series of strokes took the wind out of her sails.

As far as my immediate family, while growing up my siblings and I attended a Catholic parochial elementary school. For a long time, we attended Mass regularly, but things faded a bit as we got older. I stayed interested in the Church and Christianity in general, but my teen years saw a lot of secular influences and disinterest in spiritual life.

GM: How did you first encounter G.K. Chesterton?



Matthew Kelly

MK: Oddly enough, it was while reading the liner notes to an Iron Maiden LP! Their song "Revelations" uses Chesterton's "O God of Earth and Altar" hymn as the first verse.

The Maiden boys, being good lads, credited the lyric to G.K. Chesterton. The name wasn't familiar to me, so I used the double-edged sword that is the internet and did a bit of research. I noticed that he was a hero to my favorite writer, J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as C.S. Lewis, among others, and that he was Catholic. Sounded good to me. So I looked him up on a well-known book distributor online, and the first book that came up was *Common Sense 101*, by your own Dale Ahlquist!

GM: How did Chesterton play a role in your faith journey?

MK: Chesterton sort of "connected the dots" for me between faith and reason. I always read the Stoics like Aurelius, Epictetus, and Heraclitus, and I had been a "half-arsed" Catholic (I believed but didn't participate much), without attending Mass regularly or receiving the sacraments ... I just didn't know *why* I believed.

Reading *Common Sense 101* and then *Orthodoxy* transformed my "philosophical journey" into a "theological journey," and looking into the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as more recent and contemporary writers. It brought me into a much, much deeper understanding of the scriptural basis of the sacraments, and the reason for the traditions in the Catholic Church. It kind of opened my eyes to ponder the metaphysical as much as the visible and physical.

GM: What is your favorite work by G.K. Chesterton?

MK: Tough question! As far as fiction, I love *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *The Ball and the Cross.* But for apologetics it's got to be *Orthodoxy*. However, I love Chesterton's poetry, especially Lepanto. What an absolute masterpiece! I usually have a book or two of his in circulation.

GM: Do you have a favorite quote by GKC?

MK: A favorite quote from the most quoted man of the twentieth century? Hmmmm, it's hard to pick just one ... "A dead thing goes with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it" is one that comes up a lot in my thoughts and in dealing with the things life throws at me.

GM: You've mentioned you're a fan of classical education. Please tell us more about that.

MK: I think the Trivium is a hugely important (and now widely-neglected) aspect of a child's development. It was the basis on which a solid classical education was built. A classical education is what grounds a student in the fullness of reality; showing how these subjects complement each other forms a proper understanding of life.

Being an autodidact, I had to do part of my personal (and paltry) education myself, and I'm still learning!

GM: Chesterton Academy students are required to sing in the choir all four years, and study music history each year. What do you think about requiring music for high school students?

MK: Music is a language. Knowing a language other than your own helps you understand the world that much better... Granted, I suppose I'm biased, but I think it's an important part of a child's development. The creative aspect of music as well as the theory aspect massage both the left and right brain.

As far as compulsory parts of high school education, music could be one of the things that jaded teens might look forward to in their daily life. Hey, they could, and some do, waste their time studying things a lot less savory.

GM: What are your preferences on Catholic liturgical music? Any thoughts on the role of music in the church today?

MK: I prefer traditional Church music in the liturgy. I believe that just as we conduct ourselves and dress in a reverent manner when we go to Mass, we should also have music to reflect that, oriented vertically, *ad orientam*, towards God.

Rock music, to me, is oriented horizontally. It's strictly entertainment. I love rock and roll music, and jazz, etc., but they're forms of entertainment, and they draw the eye and attention towards the performers. We as Catholics are asked that while we live IN this world, we shouldn't be OF the world. What other place on earth should that phrase ring true but in the presence of the Eucharist?

The music in church should be set apart, as a break from "the World," so we can focus on the fact that we're receiving Christ's body and blood, and this isn't some kind of casual party.

GM: Why do you believe Chesterton is relevant for the world today?

MK: I think that he had a keen eye for what was wrong with the world he lived in. The people who lived millennia before him, and we who live after his passing, are all flawed souls. There always have been and always will be well-intentioned people with bad ideas, and sometimes just bad people. Most of the world's problems stem from the flawed nature of human persons. Chesterton pointed these things out with a laser focus, and the innocence, humor, and joy with which he went about it is an example to us all of how Christ asked us to live.

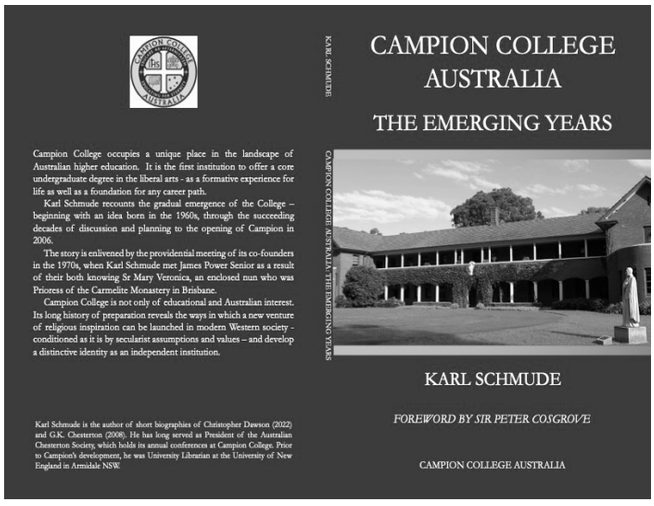
The beauty of GKC's writings is that he wrote on such a myriad of subjects, there's something for everyone... and the more one reads Chesterton, I think the more one comes to finding the keys to the Truth. It's like he's chuckling and pointing at that door ... and we just need to walk through it. ■

Chesterton and Campion College

The emergence of Campion College as Australia's first liberal arts institution of higher education was influenced by Chesterton, who provided much of the imaginative inspiration for the project.

Karl Schmude, co-founder of the College, has written a short history of how Campion was created. Sir Peter Cosgrove was among the first to recognise the value of Campion, which (he writes in the book's Foreword) "would give students the opportunity to explore the great traditions of learning that underpin our civilisation, and receive the added cachet of the spiritual and moral foundation of a Catholic education."

The work is available for $15.00 (incl. postage) from Campion College by calling **(02) 9896 9318.**



Baptising the Imagination - The Impact of George MacDonald

by Richard Egan

George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a Scottish Congregational minister who wrote books of fantasy - for both children and adults – as well as novels, poetry and sermons. **Richard Egan***, a frequent contributor to the pages of* The Defendant*, highlights MacDonald's profound influence on both Chesterton and C.S. Lewis.*

George MacDonald

In his Introduction to *George MacDonald and His Wife* (1924) by MacDonald's son, Greville, Chesterton writes:

"I for one can really testify to a book that has made a difference to my whole existence, which helped me to see things in a certain way from the start; a vision of things which even so real a revolution as a change of religious allegiance has substantially only crowned and confirmed. Of all the stories I have read, including even all the novels of the same novelist, it remains the most real, the most realistic, in the exact sense of the phrase the most like life. It is called *The Princess and the Goblin*, and is by George MacDonald, the man who is the subject of this book."

In 1924, Chesterton chaired a celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of MacDonald's birth.

In his autobiographical *Surprised by Joy* (1955), C.S. Lewis wrote of his first encounter with MacDonald's work when as a sixteen-year-old he picked up a copy of MacDonald's fantasy novel, *Phantastes* (1858). He later realised he had "crossed a great frontier":

"That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptised: the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion what I had let myself in for by buying *Phantastes*."

Despite their genuine admiration for Macdonald, neither Chesterton nor Lewis endorsed Macdonald's universalism – the doctrine that all human beings will ultimately be saved. As he expressed it in his sermon "*The Consuming Fire*", Macdonald was absolutely convinced that it was a necessary consequence of the doctrine that God loves each of us that his infinite mercy will purify even the most hardened sinner.

This universalism is a persistent theme in his writings, including his novels, such as *Robert Falconer* (1868), which recounts a son tracking down his wayward father, and urging him to repent. "You will have to repent some day, I do believe—if not now under the sunshine of heaven, then in the torture of" hell.

In his *Autobiography* (1936), Chesterton comments on Macdonald's universalism, referring to what he calls "the glamorous mysticism of George Macdonald":

"It was full and substantial faith in the Fatherhood of God, and little could be said against it, even in theological theory, except that it rather ignored the free-will of man. Its Universalism was a sort of optimistic Calvinism."

In Lewis' theological dream fantasy novel *The Great Divorce,* Macdonald takes the role of Dante's Virgil in guiding the narrator through purgatory/hell. In this dialogue between the narrator and Macdonald, it could be said that Lewis is attempting to reconcile Macdonald's universalism with the orthodox position that eternal damnation is a real possibility, precisely because of the reality of human freedom.

"In your own books, Sir," said I, "you were a Universalist. You talked as if all men would be saved. And St. Paul too."

"Ye can know nothing of the end of all things, or nothing expressible in those terms. . .

"The choice of ways is before you. Neither is closed. Any man may choose eternal death. Those who choose it will have it. But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity, if ye are trying to see the final state of all things as it will be (for so ye must speak) when there are no more possibilities left but only the Real, then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears.

"Time is the very lens through which ye see - small and clear, as men see through the wrong end of a telescope - something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all. That thing is freedom: the gift whereby ye most resemble your Maker and are yourselves parts of eternal reality."

Thankfully it is not necessary to accept all an author's beliefs to benefit from reading their works – otherwise we may have very bare bookshelves indeed. In the early 1970s, when I first read everything of CS Lewis's that I could get my hands on, and came across references to George Macdonald (and Charles Williams), it was almost impossible to find their books. Later I read *Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) to my children.

Thanks to Librivox and Project Gutenberg, I have now listened to or read on my phone several of Macdonald's novels. For those who haven't yet dabbled in Macdonald, I encourage you to do so. ■