



The *DEFENDANT*

Newsletter of the Australian Chesterton Society

Vol. 27 No. 2

Autumn 2020

Issue No. 105

'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)

Chesterton in Isolation

by *Karl Schmude*

In an article on the BBC website, *Worklife* (18 April 2020), the British journalist Hephzibah Anderson explored how the life of a hermit might shed light on the isolation experienced by so many during the coronavirus.

She cited a Chesterton essay, "The Case for Hermits", in which he reflected on the purpose and significance of solitude. It appeared in his last book of essays, *The Well and the Shallows* (1935).

Born and brought up in London, Chesterton knew the importance of sociability and communal interaction amid the bustle of a large city. Only in his mid-30s, following his marriage to Francis, did he move to the small town of Beaconsfield, about 40 kms west of London.

Chesterton's essay on hermits presents a balancing rather than a counter argument to urban sociability. He does not deny the value of close community; rather, he ponders the benefits that can come from 'isolation' (though he does not use that term).

Solitude and sanity

He emphasizes two advantages in particular. One is the link between solitude and sanity. He thinks of the small child who is teased or bullied at a school or party: "Let me alone!" is the child's protesting cry. Chesterton notes that "so spontaneous, instinctive, almost animal an ejaculation contains the word alone."



A young Chesterton alone in a garden

He then compares the yearning to be left alone to the experience of sleep. He highlights how inescapable is our human need for sleep, and that if we cannot have it, we go mad. "It is also a fact," he adds, "that if men do not have solitude, they go mad."

We may be inclined to dismiss – and even to denigrate as lunatic – those who wish to be alone and live a solitary existence as "hermits". But, says Chesterton, they were "nice lunatics", and he cites the ways in which hermits connected with – and tamed – wild animals.

Solitude and sociability

The second benefit Chesterton proposed was the link between solitude and sociability.

Pondering the witness of the hermits, he argues that they "must have a society in which to be unsociable." He proposes a typical Chesterton paradox – full of meaning and challenge. The hermits, he points out, especially the saints, "had a solitude in which to be sociable."

He cites the example of St Jerome, who lived with a lion – which, in a typical Chesterton play on words, was "a good way to avoid being lionized."

Chesterton in Isolation (Karl Schmude)

Pages 1-2

Shedding light by switching metaphors (Greg Sheridan)

Page 3

Laughter in the Service of Truth – Bruce Marshall (Gary Furnell)

Pages 4-5

Obituaries – John Coates and Bruce Dawe (Karl Schmude)

Pages 6-7

Desert Island Chesterton (Garry Nieuwkamp)

Page 8

But Chesterton notes that the conventional sociability of St Jerome's time in the 4th century, shown in amphitheatres and public festivals, was not a sign of social freedom, but of "social suffocation". He compares it with the urban experience of our time - whether in the trains and buses of modern urban life, or - as we now experience - the almost overly accessible channels of internet communication, which provide every kind of "virtual" connection.

Remarkably, given that Chesterton was writing in the 1930s, well before the electronic age, he recognized the special value of being a hermit. He compared it with a holiday, which makes us more human than less. He suggested that St Jerome "could get on better with a lion than with the sort of men who would throw him to the lions. . ." and that he "actually liked men better when they left him alone."

"It is in society that men quarrel with their friends; it is in solitude that they forgive them."

This is the secret of the hermitage - that it offers the mind "a half-holiday". In Chesterton's words:

"It is the only way to get any fun even out of the facts of life. . . . It bears most resemblance to the unpacking of luggage. . . . Mere society is a way of turning friends into acquaintances. . . . It is in society that men quarrel with their friends; it is in solitude that they forgive them."

Solitude, not loneliness

Hephzibah Anderson endorses Chesterton's comment, arguing that we should "nurture those replenished feelings of goodwill" which solitude affords. She reflects further on its benefits:

"Being on your own can in fact be calming and restorative. Even teens, one study has found, are less self-conscious when they're alone.

"Time spent with yourself gives you a clearer sense of who you are, and however discontented hermits are with the societies from which they walk, on some deep, peaceable level, they're quite contented with themselves. As American philosopher Henry David Thoreau confided: 'I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude.'"



Hephzibah Anderson

On the other hand, the French philosopher

Blaise Pascal famously wrote in his *Pensées* (no. 116) that "all the unhappiness of man arises from one thing only, namely that he is incapable of abiding quietly in one room." Anderson rejects any simple identification of solitude with loneliness. She notes that the word "hermit" comes from the Greek and means "desert", which in turn derives from another Greek word meaning "desolate". And yet, she adds:

"While a certain bleak emptiness can accompany unsought solitude, there is solace to be found even so. . . . Being alone doesn't mean you need feel lonely, especially not when staying apart is a course of action collectively undertaken."

The conclusion of Anderson's reflections is thoughtful - and challenging in a communication-saturated culture:

"If you've ever wondered," she writes, "what echoes of long-forgotten longings and ambitions you might hear within yourself were life only quiet enough, then now is the time to find out - especially if you're brave enough to switch off your internet connection." ■

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,
6/68 Short Street, Forster NSW 2428

Phone: 0419 421 346 Email: garyfurnell@yahoo.com

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

Society Membership

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

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

BSB: 932-000 (Regional Australia Bank, Armidale NSW)
Account No.: 722360

Account Name: Australian Chesterton Society

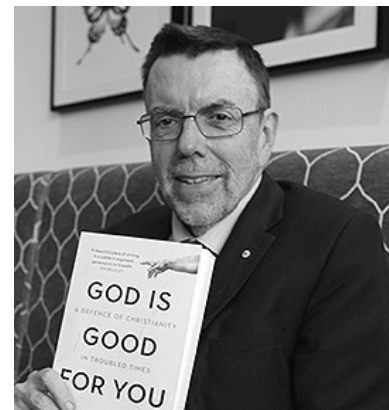
Please include your name as depositor in the details box.

Shedding Light by Switching Metaphors

by Greg Sheridan

The admiration which the Foreign Editor of The Australian, **Greg Sheridan**, has for Chesterton is undisguised. He spoke at the 2016 Australian Chesterton conference on the inspiration Chesterton had given him as a journalist, and the previous issue of The Defendant (Summer 2020) published his photo (taken by his wife Jessie last year when he was a Visiting Fellow at King's College, London) in front of Chesterton's former London home.

Greg Sheridan's reputation has widened in recent years as a result of his writings in defence of Christianity, in particular his best-selling book, *God is Good for You*. In this Weekend Australian article (Review section, February 7, 2020), reprinted with his kind permission, he applied a typical piece of Chesterton advice – frivolous on the outside, enlightening on the inside.



Greg Sheridan

One of my great heroes in journalism and in life, G.K. Chesterton, had a sage piece of advice about how to look clever, advice he said he always followed himself. Whenever you are asked to write for, or speak to, a very serious audience, try to be funny. And whenever you are asked to write or speak to a normally light-hearted audience, try to be at least superficially profound, so to speak. You will surprise both audiences, who will think you very clever as a result.

Chesterton, the master of paradox, understood that much humour relies on two factors – introducing something unexpected, or introducing something familiar in an unexpected context.

Theological meaning in politics

Chris Uhlmann of Channel 9 makes occasional, quite deft use of his background as a seminarian studying to be a priest. I heard him talk once of analysing a prime ministership through the “via negativa”. This is a theological method of trying to know God only by knowing what God is not. Like Uhlmann, though less cleverly, I often introduce some elementary theological formulations in discussing politics, noting for example how rare the “angelic disposition” is in politics. The angelic disposition is the tendency of angels to do good purely for its own sake, rather than for the more human motive of avoiding punishment.

Catholic theological formulations can sound like voodoo if you've never been part of the tradition – the holy blood, the hypostatic union, holy mother church, the four last things (death, judgment, heaven, hell). These can illuminate a subject, but if you're using them as humour their unfamiliarity means you have to explain them. But the best jokes often need a bit of explanation. Certainly they're exotic.

They're not so exotic, of course, to well-informed Christian audiences, so there I tend to use military terminology and

metaphors. The churches need better situational awareness, or the centre of strategic gravity is moving, or the correlation of forces has changed. And Stalin's great one-liner: in the argument between quantity and quality, quantity has a quality all its own.

Some Christian friends don't like military metaphors being used in Christian contexts. Still, you can't please everyone, especially with your metaphors. It's embarrassing, though, to mis-use a metaphor in front of an audience that understands the subject too well. So I avoid military metaphors with military audiences.

In that case I'm more inclined to use elementary financial terms, such as declaring myself to be like a stock analyst contrarian, taking a position against the consensus of analysts. Or I might talk of describing China's geo-strategic power as a chartist analyses a stock, understanding its various ups and downs, but trying to chart those short-term stock movements within a broader net band moving either upwards or downwards.

Naturally therefore when talking to a finance audience I use international relations jargon: talking of soft power, international norms, the rules-based order, etc. I'm a pretty hard fellow to embarrass, but there is almost no jargon known that is more nakedly designed to add the appearance of substance to pure wind, as Orwell put it, as international relations jargon. Its use does sometimes bring a blush even to my generally unblushing cheeks.

None of this jargon switching is rocket science, but it is an essential part of the giant game of bluff involved whenever you are so bold as to make a big statement on a big subject. Suggesting, though of course never quite claiming, a world of expertise through the use of exotic jargon disguises the one true thing you can say about the future – it's unpredictable. ■

Laughter in the Service of Truth – Bruce Marshall



Gary Furnell

by Gary Furnell

Bruce Marshall (1899-1987) was a Scottish Catholic writer who became best known for a series of novels with religious themes, beginning with Father Malachy's Miracle (1931). Two of his novels were translated to the screen – Vespers in Vienna (1947), which came out as The Red Danube in 1949 and starred Walter Pidgeon and Ethel Barrymore, and The Fair Bride (1953), which was the basis of the 1960 movie, The Angel Wore Red, starring Ava Gardner and Dirk Bogarde.

Another Marshall novel, The World, The Flesh, and Father Smith, has been reprinted (2017; orig. ed. 1944), and Gary Furnell offers a fresh introduction to a neglected Catholic author. Gary, who is secretary/treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society, contributes articles and book reviews to various journals and newspapers, including the Sydney Catholic Weekly, where a shorter version of this review first appeared.

In order to properly review this book, I read it twice in two months. I had not heard of Bruce Marshall, nor previously read such overtly Catholic fiction; I was pleased to discover that this novel is both good literature and entertaining.

The chapters are short, the characters are sharply delineated, and the narrative is spiced with shrewd observations, frequent wit and occasional farce.

The writing from start to finish is accessible, engaging, well-paced and sometimes strangely poetic; for instance, observing the short skirts of two young women, Father Smith, the main character, says they dress as if their wobbly bottoms are “wiser than Aristotle”. That phrase will come to mind next time I go to the beach.

On another occasion, at the Carlton-Elite Hotel, Father Smith watches the rich sophisticates “smoking with aggressive venom as though they were doing something both sinful and complicated, like committing adultery in Russian.”

When Father Smith is introduced, he is fifteen years into his priesthood, serving in a working-class section of a Scottish town where Catholics and their Popish ways are viewed with suspicion and sometimes with open hostility. We are told briefly how Father Smith came to his vocation as a young man, but his childhood and youth are largely skipped, taking us straight into his mature priesthood. His life is joined to his clerical colleagues and a small band of exiled French nuns. We follow these characters from the period prior to World War I to Father Smith's death in the early 1940s.

These four decades coincide with the rise of Modernism which was, as Chesterton wrote, not a new idea or the development of an idea but the abandonment of an idea: the idea of Western Christendom.

In an early chapter Father Smith and two other priests visit the new technology of a moving picture house — owned by one of the parishioners — and they worry about

the effect of this diversion on their parish. Expecting sin and folly, they all hugely enjoy a Western and a slapstick cops and robbers reel. Over the years the various movie genres and their stars come and go in quick succession. The cinema-owner's daughter, baptized by Father Smith, becomes a Hollywood actress and struggles to reconcile her fame with her faith. The cinema owner, an Italian man, is enamored of Mussolini and believes the Duce's pronouncements of restored greatness for Italy.

Changing fashions, unchanging promises

As he moves about town, Father Smith notes the passing parade of cinema and literary fashions, advertisements, women's clothes and attitudes, and the false promises of politicians and opinion-makers. The contrast between the eternal teaching of the Church with the merry-go-round of worldly pleasures and ambitions is evident but left for the reader to mark. Catholics in an increasingly anchorless, secular society is a theme in the novel.

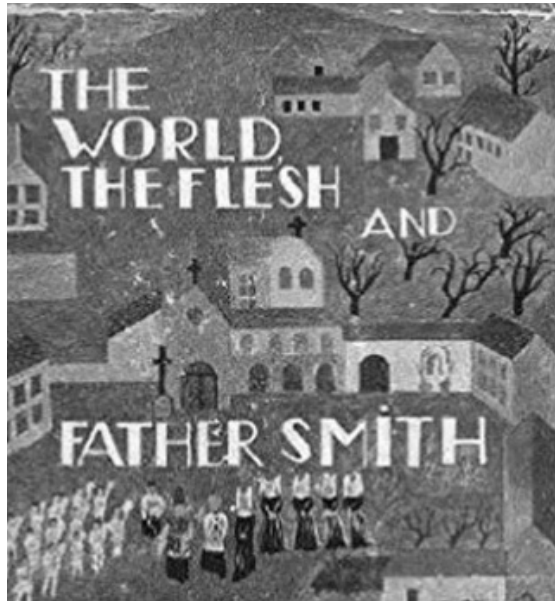
War and its aftermath is another obvious theme. Father Smith enlists, in his late thirties, as padre in World War I. He serves on the Western Front, sees the suffering, comforts the fearful and dying, and hears the hopes that the war will bring a better world.

Even the bishop and his fellow priests expect a rebirth of spirit and civilisation after all the horror and the lives sacrificed. Of course, the opposite happens as hedonism, restlessness, joblessness and other indignities prevail.

De-mobbed, Father Smith returns to parish work. Over the years, the small tin shed that long-sufficed as a chapel is replaced by a handsome stone church; the French nuns establish a school; babies are baptised, marriages and funerals solemnised and pastoral work undertaken in poor, damaged families.

The Catholic community becomes ensconced in the town. There are even some converts, although too many cradle

Catholics and Protestants fall into unbelief or, rather, into faddish beliefs. In an amusing encounter, Father Smith is taken to task for his oppressive religion and repressive celibacy by a young, opinionated, free-loving Communist woman. His courtesy tested and really angry, Father Smith says to her "You do talk a lot of balderdash, don't you?"; and he wishes that "his holy religion did not forbid him to slap the young woman's face." Instead, he responds to her ephemeral fancies with facts and the sapience of faith. He reflects later that celibacy becomes ever more attractive as he meets more women like her.

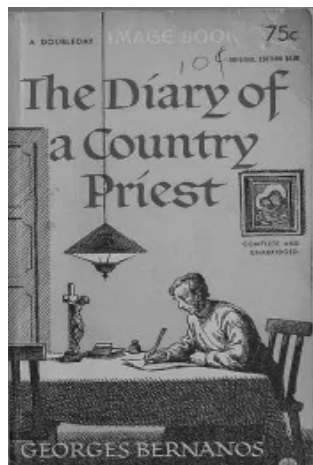


To arrest their community's slide into fashionable unbelief and lassitude the priests organize a mission and get the fiery Monsignor O'Duffy to preach. The mission fails. Chastened by their lack of success, the priests learn again the value of trust in the mystery of God and in the traditional patient ways of the Church.

The novel closes with a series of deaths: the Bishop, Mothers Leclerc and de la Tour, Father Smith's priestly colleagues, and finally Father Smith himself are buried. A new generation of religious men and women take their place. A lot happens in only 223 pages.

The prophetic voice

One quality of this book, and I noted the same quality in George Bernanos's novel, *Diary of a Country Priest*, is the prophetic voice. In both books the main characters are pious men (although in very different circumstances) who see with spiritual eyes. They lament the destructive irreverence, greed and selfishness of their culture.



The expression of their transcendent clarity and wisdom is not an imposition on the stories but part of the rich texture because of the protagonists' vocation, and it comes with the ready admission of their own troubles and inadequacies. It's no surprise that this prophetic but broken voice is missing in the great majority of novels because temporal concerns are often the only concerns.

This prophetic voice is ultimately Bruce Marshall's voice. A Scotsman, Marshall was a Protestant who converted to Catholicism, an accountant who wrote novels. He said that among accountants he is thought to be a significant

novelist, among novelists he is assumed to be a competent accountant.

He served in the Royal Irish Fusiliers in World War I. One week before the Armistice, he was badly wounded in the leg. Brave German stretcher-bearers ventured into no man's land to rescue him—they saved his life, but he lost his leg.

After the war, he married, settled in France and wrote novels and audited ledgers. He took his family back to England as the Nazis rolled over Europe, and served in the pay corps and then intelligence services in World War II. After the war, he returned to France and devoted himself to writing.

He wrote forty books, many well-received and some quite popular. Despite this success, his work has suffered neglect until this welcome re-issuing of *The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith*. Other titles are expected to surface in new editions.

Chesterton thought it was easy to make calamity more interesting than goodness because goodness was normal and undramatic whereas calamity was rare and therefore dramatic. In *The World, The Flesh and Father Smith*, Bruce Marshall succeeds in the difficult task of making common goodness interesting as he portrays a devout man who is secure in his faith and glad in his role.

Flannery O'Connor thought that, however we defined a novel, it had to be wide enough to include her own odd novels. It also has to be wide enough to accommodate unfashionable novels about orthodox priests and their everyday activities.

The World, the Flesh and Father Smith is not a work of "holy bilge and sacred bunk" as Father Smith himself describes some Catholic writing, but of careful artistry that creates worthwhile fiction. ■

John Coates – RIP

by Karl Schmude

A notable Chesterton scholar, John Coates (pictured), has died in England at the age of 76.

While he produced works of literary criticism on various writers, in particular Rudyard Kipling, he was chiefly recognized for his outstanding books and articles on Chesterton – above all, his definitive study, *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis* (1984), which afforded vital insights into Chesterton's work during the most formative phase of his development as a writer.

Coates knew this period of history intimately. In a touching tribute to her husband (*The Guardian*, April 23, 2020 - <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/apr/22/john-coates-obituary>), Carole Coates recalled that it was in his grandfather's study, filled with Edwardian literature, that John was introduced to Chesterton – and to other popular intellectual leaders of the period, such as George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells.

John Coates revealed with new clarity the historical and cultural wellsprings of Chesterton's works, covering his journalism and fiction as well as his social and religious works. He captured the intellectual dynamism of the Edwardian period (1901-1910) – following the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) – and made clear the eagerness of the reading public for serious debate on fundamental matters.

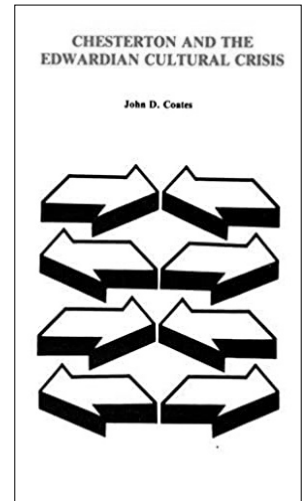
He shed light on Chesterton's ingrained sympathy for popular culture. This was not the passing and superficial expressions of present-day popular culture, but rather the traditions of faith and loyalty deeply rooted in the life of a people. They were instinctively opposed, in Chesterton's worldview, to the preoccupations and prejudices of an expanding elite, whose education and wealth insulated them against the loves and concerns of ordinary people.

First and foremost, Chesterton was a journalist, and Coates showed, in one chapter of his book ("The Journalistic Arena"), how deeply Chesterton understood his audience. He was alive to the vulnerability of ordinary people in a volatile time, as they found themselves caught between a decaying 19th century Liberal culture and the surging impact of new ideas in the opening years of the 20th century.

Among the many strengths of *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis* is Coates' insight into Chesterton's concept of madness. His chapter, "Ideology and the Individual Mind", explores Chesterton's understanding of the links between mental health and cultural disorder, and why the pursuit of sanity and balance has become so difficult in our culture.

Ideological madness

Chesterton recognized that the special character of modern madness is ideological. In novels such as *The Man Who*



Was Thursday, he devised a range of characters to symbolize the new forms of madness, which were (and continue to be) cultural and intellectual, not simply emotional.

"Chesterton's individual madmen," writes Coates, "are metaphors of the collective ideological insanities of the 20th century". They are to do with the falsity of two dominant ideas – "first, materialist determinism and the denial of free-will and moral responsibility; secondly, the widespread tendency to deny the reality of the physical world."

Chesterton saw madness as related to the isolation of reason from the common sense of the community – the worship of reason to the exclusion of all other human motives and experiences.

Nor was it possible to think oneself out of mental confusion, since, as Coates points out, "the most unmistakable mark of madness is logical completeness" – an expectation that everything can be explained, and that there need be no allowance for mystery and a sense of reality that transcends the material and the visible.

John Coates' contributions to Chesterton studies were not confined to his ground-breaking work on the Edwardian era. He published a later book, *G.K. Chesterton as Controversialist, Essayist, Novelist and Critic* (2002), and contributed many important articles to the international journal, *The Chesterton Review*. These were written in the course of a long academic career – from 1970 to 1997 at the University of Hull, and later at Liverpool University – as well as during an active period of retirement.

His learning was not only wide-ranging – embracing such disciplines as history, literature, politics and history – but courageously distinctive, in that he gave Chesterton the kind of serious and sympathetic attention he has not, in the main, received from academic scholars.

He regarded Chesterton as, above all, an author of cultural crisis, whose original and penetrating works continue to be of unrivalled value. Part of the credit for this critical notice given to Chesterton, especially in university circles, can be justifiably awarded to John Coates. ■

Bruce Dawe – RIP

by Karl Schmude

It is improbable that Chesterton and the Australian poet, Bruce Dawe (pictured), were known to each other, as Dawe was only 6 years old when Chesterton died in 1936. But they would have found much in common if they had been part of the same generation.

Dawe died in Queensland on 1st April at the age of 90. He had a prolific output and his poems were commonly included in high school and university curricula. He published more than 10 books of poetry, and his signature collection, *Sometimes Gladness*, which he dedicated to St Maximilian Kolbe, went through six editions between 1978 and 2006 as newer poems were included on each occasion.

But the pivotal reason for his popularity would have resonated deeply with Chesterton. He had an extraordinary empathy with ordinary people, and showed how poetry could give imaginative expression to their lives.

Dawe was born in Melbourne in 1930, the youngest of four children. His parents were from a farming background, and their move to the city led to much shifting around. By the age of 16, Dawe had attended 10 schools – an experience he evoked in one of his best-known poems, “Drifters”.

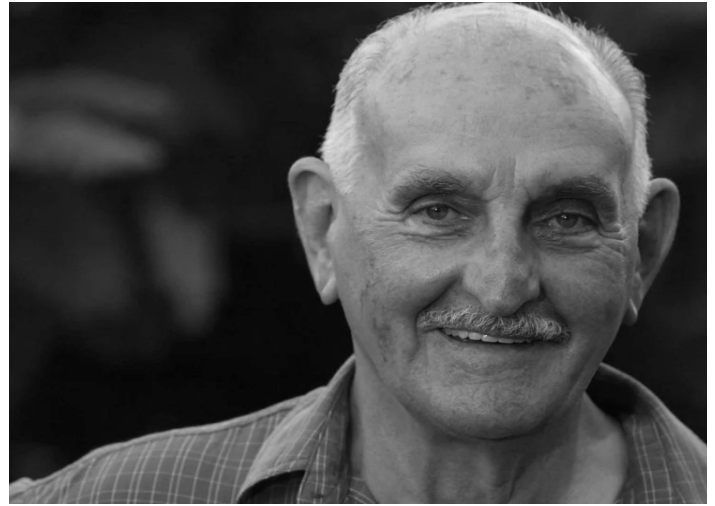
The family had limited educational opportunities: Dawe was the first to study beyond primary school. While he later completed four university degrees – including a doctorate on the English war poets – and was appointed to lecture in English literature at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba, he never abandoned his cultural roots.

The poetic imagination in Australia has long contended with a deeply secularist culture closed to transcendental meanings. Dawe was a vital example of a counter-tradition represented by Catholic converts – poets such as James McAuley, Les Murray and Kevin Hart.

Like McAuley, Dawe’s conversion took place in the 1950’s. He was in his early 20’s, seeking purpose and direction in life. He studied initially at the University of Melbourne, which brought him into contact with Catholics, in particular Vincent Buckley and other Catholic poets, which nurtured his interest not only in Christianity but also imaginative writing.

For Dawe, the special attraction of the Catholic Church was the richness of its ritual and the luminous lives of the saints. His interest in ritual was inspired by the beauty of High Church Anglican services. Just as Chesterton was indebted to his wife, Frances, for the inspiration of her deep Anglican faith, so Dawe gratefully acknowledged the influence of a high school teacher who combined her vocation as a Methodist lay preacher with Sunday morning participation in Anglo-Catholic services.

In his poetry Dawe caught the connections between his Christian faith and the experiences of ordinary life. He captured in everyday language our human yearnings and



devotions, our fears and frustrations, our sufferings and grievances. Unlike Chesterton, he had a passionate love of football (Australian Rules), which he celebrated in a number of poems, notably “Life Cycle”, dedicated to ex-Collingwood committee man Big Jim Phelan.

Dawe was ever conscious that his faith gave a new centre of meaning and higher purpose to all these experiences. “We have to preserve a vision,” he said. “Writing is part of a total moral vision. You just can’t escape that.”

A crucial part of this moral vision was his opposition to abortion. His powerful poem, “The Wholly Innocent,” in which he protests against the destruction of the unborn by imagining himself as one of the vulnerable, bears comparison with Chesterton’s poem, “By the Babe Unborn”, in which the unborn child longs to be born. (Dawe’s poem is excerpted first, followed by Chesterton’s.)

*I never walked abroad in air
I never saw the sky
Nor knew the sovereign touch of care
Nor looked into an eye...
Remember me next time you
Rejoice at sun or star
I would have loved to see them too
I never got that far.*

*In dark I lie; dreaming that there
Are great eyes cold or kind,
And twisted streets and silent doors,
And living men behind...*

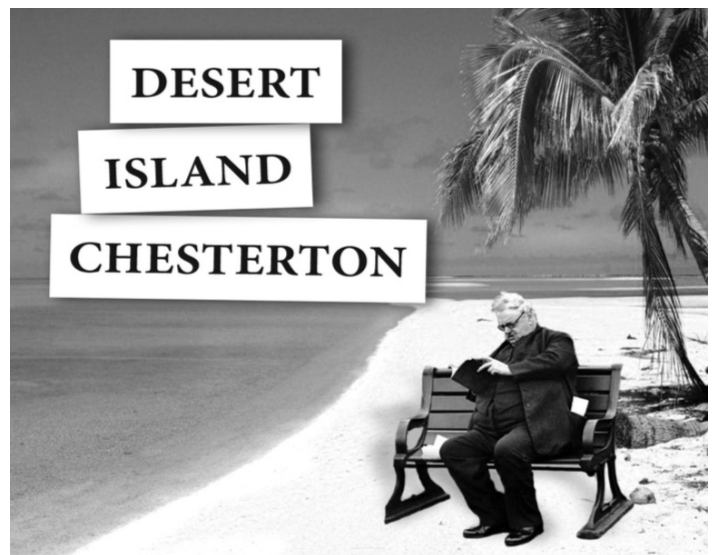
*I think that if they gave me leave
Within the world to stand,
I would be good through all the day
I spent in fairyland.
They should not hear a word from me
Of selfishness or scorn,
If only I could find the door,
If only I were born.*

Bruce Dawe was steeped in the experience of ordinary Australian life – and only Australia could have produced him. But his faith raised this experience to a higher plane, and offered a Chestertonian reminder of the light which transcendent truth can confer on temporal reality. ■

Lepanto

by Garry Nieuwkamp

An unusual slant on offering a single selection for our occasional series, *Desert Island Chesterton*, is provided by **Garry Nieuwkamp**, a doctor on the NSW Central Coast who is a regular contributor to *The Defendant*. He compares this challenging process to choosing musical pieces from the vast output of the movie composer, Ennio Morricone.



Some years ago I managed to persuade James Valentine, who hosts a programme on ABC radio, to invite me on as a guest music presenter. He used to have a weekly segment where he'd invite a musician onto his programme to discuss their musical influences, and to introduce three songs that reflected this influence.

As I have been a fan of the music of Ennio Morricone ever since I heard that haunting opening refrain to Jill's theme from 'Once Upon a Time in the West', I have been persuaded that the world would be a better place if only more people would listen to the maestro. With that in mind, I emailed James Valentine, with the confidence of an obsessive, and all but demanded that he invite me on to discuss Morricone's brilliance. He agreed.

Like our friend Chesterton, Morricone has had a prodigious output - more than 400 soundtracks. So the problem of choosing **only** three pieces of music from this huge repertoire was daunting.

Adding to this challenge was the necessity of appeasing a large and international fan base that took an interest in what my choices might be. There was a general consensus on the Morricone message board that one of the pieces would have to be 'On Earth as it is in Heaven' from 'The Mission'. Three themes, like the Trinity, are woven into one almighty wall of sound. A sacramental worldview as Chesterton would say.

Again, there was general approval that 'Ecstasy of Gold' from 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' would be a reasonable choice. But it was with the third selection that things went a bit "Lord of the Flies." Morricone, like Chesterton, has mastered a number of genres, so the need for variety suggested that the third choice should come from one of the political soundtracks, like 'Sacco and Vanzetti' or 'Casualties of War', or maybe from one of the comedies like 'Il Viziutto'.

But if it is the idea - in Chesterton's description of music - of the 'shapeless and liquid element of beauty, in which a man may really float' that best represents Morricone's brilliance, then one of the religious soundtracks like 'Moses' or 'Padre Pio' or 'Il Papa Buono' would be a better

selection. Whatever the determination, the choice was never going to be easy.

The third choice would entail leaving out extraordinary works of musical brilliance. How does one choose between 'The Legend of 1900' and 'Malena', or between 'Once Upon a Time in America' and 'Fateless'? Nevertheless, the radio programme dictated that a choice had to be made and so I went with 'Baci Dopo Il Tramonte from La Venexiana (The Venetian Woman)'. Not orthodox, not heretical, but safe.

Now here I am with a choice of a different kind, but with remarkable similarities. Both Morricone and Chesterton have extraordinarily large bodies of work. They can be profoundly spiritual but not averse to a laugh. One lives in Rome, the other turned to Rome. Choosing a work from either entails leaving out an equally brilliant work that would have been a legitimate choice.

But like 'The Venetian Woman', I'm not going with the orthodox or the heretical but with 'Lepanto'. It has echoes of Macaulay's narrative poems, *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and I can hear the laughter of Chesterton, Bentley and Oldershaw in every one of its lines. It has knights and heroes and sultans and popes. It has queens and kings and crescents and crosses. It has galleys and guns and colonnades and captives.

It doesn't have dragons but has Azrael and Ariel. It has Solomon and St Michael and Don John laughing. It has princes and turbans and peacocks in gardens (and these are a few of my favourite things!).



It has King Phillip with a face of fungus and kettle-drums galore. It has might and right and trumpets that sayeth ha! It celebrates a battle won and a battle at sea, and so for a 'desert island choice', it's the Chesterton for me. ■