



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 - A Celestial Phenomenon

by Siobhan Reeves

*A member of the Australian Chesterton Society, **Siobhan Reeves**, recently made the exciting discovery of a crater on the planet Mercury named after Chesterton. She describes her finding in this article.*

Siobhan's previous contribution to The Defendant was an article earlier this year in our occasional series, Desert Island Chesterton. Her interest in Chesterton was sparked at Campion College, where she graduated with a BA in the Liberal Arts in 2011.

Readers of *The Defendant* may be surprised to learn that a large impact crater on the innermost planet in the Solar System is named in honour of GK Chesterton.

The International Astronomical Union's (IAU) Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature is the body responsible for officially naming objects in our solar system, galaxy and broader universe. The Working Group names all new craters identified on Mercury after significant artists, who must have been famous for more than fifty years, and dead for a minimum of three years.

Mercurian craters are named for a number of distinguished artists, composers, poets, writers, dancers and even a stained glass window artist from all around the world and from ancient civilizations to the current day.

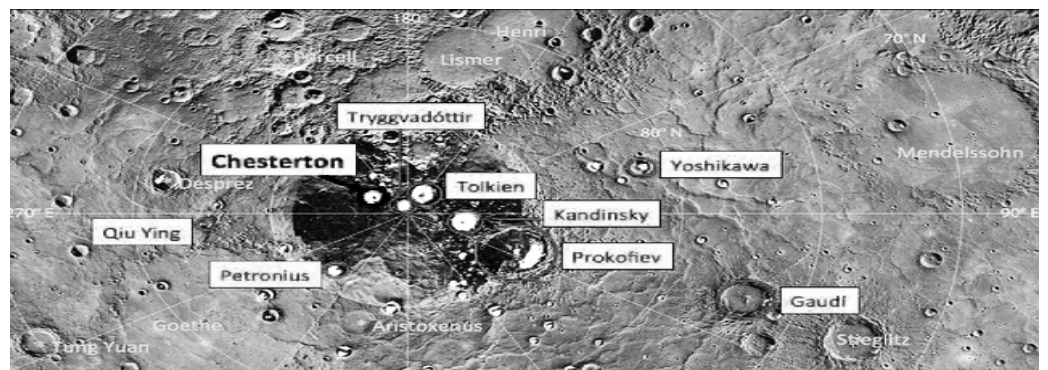
In August 2012, the IAU approved naming a 280km in diameter crater near Mercury's north pole after Chesterton. This crater joined nine other craters named in August 2012 in the same region, including craters named after Tolkien, the Spanish architect Gaudi and the Roman satirist Petronius.

The Chesterton crater has been photographed in detail by NASA's Messenger probe (which orbited Mercury from 2011 to 2015) and hosts radar-bright deposits that may contain water ice.

Chesterton joins a number of other English writers acknowledged by a crater on Mercury, including Charles Dickens, Samuel Coleridge, John Donne, John Milton and William Shakespeare - a feat his contemporaries such as Hilaire Belloc and George Bernard Shaw cannot boast of.

It would be fascinating to hear what quip Chesterton himself would make about this distinction.

Indeed, there is something charming about the fact that on the planet named for the messenger god, earthlings in their wisdom have named a crater for someone whose astute observations about our world continue to leave a mark today. ■



Crater named after Chesterton, as photographed in 2012 by a NASA robotic spacecraft. NASA/Johns Hopkins University

Changes at the Chesterton Society

by Karl Schmude



It is a sad occasion to announce the retirement of Ray Finnegan (pictured) as Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society, while at the same time a pleasure to welcome Gary Furnell as Ray's successor.

Ray served in this key role for almost the entire life of the society after it was

established as a national body in 2000 - from its origins in 1993 as a State-based association in Western Australia.

Born with a love of puzzles and mysteries, one of Ray's prized possessions is an omnibus edition of the 49 Father Brown stories, given to him as a birthday present by his parents when he was a teenager.

Father Brown led to a wider interest in GKC's output, and Ray became a GKC devotee. He soon tackled Orthodoxy. When he heard of the formation of a Chesterton Society in Western Australia he contacted the founder, Tony Evans, and enrolled as a member even though he initially had no means of participating in the Society's activities.

In 2001, Ray attended the annual conference of the Chesterton Society in Sydney. He recalls that he went

intending to be a happy 'back-bencher' but came away as Secretary/Treasurer 'after succumbing to the blandishments of Tony Evans and Karl Schmude'!

Throughout the years Ray took professional care of all membership matters, including renewal payments and conference fees. As a citizen of Canberra, he organised the annual conference held in the national capital in 2002. He was always vitally involved in arrangements for the Society's other conferences, most of which have taken place in Sydney.

When not engaged with things Chestertonian, Ray was a senior public servant in the Department of Defence. In 1991 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for public service.

Ray is married to Angela (Travia), a leading pianist and former organist at St Mary's Cathedral in Perth. They have four children, none of whom shares Ray's penchant for puzzles and mysteries. That is one mystery Ray does not enjoy...!

Ray has served the Chesterton cause in Australia wonderfully well. He has an honoured place in our Society, which could so easily have floundered over the years without his wise counsel and careful sense of custodianship.



Gary Furnell (pictured) is a well-known speaker at the Society's annual conferences at Campion College, delivering papers on different topics at our last three gatherings.

Most recently, at the 2018 conference, he presented a short play he had written demonstrating the influence

of toy theatres on the imagination of Chesterton and other prominent authors as well as artists and actors.

Gary has also assisted in various ways in organising our recent conferences. By profession he is a public librarian who served for some years as a branch manager in northern NSW. He now lives and works on the State's mid-North Coast.

A writer of diverse interests, he is a frequent contributor to Australian literary and cultural journals, in particular *Quadrant* for which he has written essays on literature, philosophy and religion as well as short fiction. He recently completed a book on the insights of various writers, including Chesterton, into the Hebrew wisdom books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.

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Society Membership

The annual membership fee of the Australian Chesterton Society is \$30.00. Additional support in the form of donations is always welcome.

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Greg Sheridan speaking about his book at Campion College last October

Greg Sheridan Is Good For You

by David Daintree

Greg Sheridan's latest book is reviewed by **David Daintree**, Director of the Christopher Dawson Centre for Cultural Studies in Hobart, which holds a two-day colloquium each June on vital issues of religion and culture. David served as President of Campion College Australia from 2008 to 2012.

God is Good for You: A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times, by Greg Sheridan. Allen and Unwin, 2018; paperback; A\$32.99.

It's official. The hard-bitten, tough-minded foreign editor of *The Australian* is a softie, a Christian in love with God and proud to say so.

Soft in heart, mind you, but not in the power of his thinking, for he wages his defence of Christianity from a position of strength: he is intellectually formidable, morally courageous and thoroughly well informed.

The flippancy of my opening remarks reflects a reviewer's good cheer at reading a book that is free of the encumbrances of modern pessimism. Here is a writer who clearly prefers the light to the darkness. It is always a comfort to be in the presence of a companionable and like-minded soul.

But it's certainly not all good cheer. Sheridan's lengthy introduction *Is God Dead?* contains as grim a survey of the current state of Christianity as it is possible to imagine. He demonstrates that throughout the entire Western World Christianity is in decline, in some places terminally, and humanly speaking there appears to be little hope of recovery.

Moreover the rate of decline is increasing exponentially: Australia's census figures 2006-2016 reveal a gentle decline in the first five years to 2011 and a radical decline in the next. The proportion of Australians claiming to be Christian is now slightly more than half; in the UK it has already fallen below the 50% mark. The US, surprisingly, is not much better and certainly in decline too. Worse, the younger Australians are, the less likely they are to believe in the existence of God. This is deeply disturbing stuff.

So after such an introduction, where to from here? The bulk of the book that follows falls into two major parts.

The first deals with *Christianity* itself: it covers what Christians actually believe (as opposed to what is commonly imputed to them), why belief is intrinsically reasonable, the good that Christianity does and the social benefits that flow from it, the problem of evil, and (as an attractive coda) the importance of the Old Testament. This section turns the tables on all that depressing introductory material! It is immensely heartening to read an intelligent writer firmly

assert that reason is impossible without belief, that atheism is death to the human spirit, and that the good deeds of Christianity are too numerous to list (though the list he does provide is impressive indeed).

The second part is entitled *Christians*. Sheridan's special interest naturally lies with politics and politicians. Here he tries to show that many of our leaders are more sympathetic to Christianity than we might have supposed. He reports on interviews with many. Tony Abbott's faith will not surprise us, but the carefully-probed opinions of such as Peter Costello, Bill Shorten, Penny Wong, Malcolm Turnbull, Kevin Rudd, Kristina Keneally and John Howard, for example, are quite fascinating.

Sheridan's treatment here reveals his own generosity of spirit. My own response as a reader is a meaner one: for many in public life Christianity seems to have been reduced to a sentimental attachment that cannot be allowed to conflict with the practical business of running a modern state and rejigging social architecture to conform with prevalent theory. The doctrine of the 'God of the Gaps' might have been invented with politicians in mind. I hope Sheridan is right and I am wrong: his optimistic belief that our leaders deeply care about moral issues, even if they sometimes make wrong calls, is both noble and comforting.

There are more riches in the second part: *Free radicals* examines new movements within the Churches, such as monasticism; *Signs of new life* develops that further, including a fine compliment to Campion College. *Bold minority* proposes strategies for survival and recovery. There is nothing soggy about it, no false optimism. The situation is very grave, but we have one great advantage: we have Truth on our side.

This is a marvellous book. Much of it makes unpalatable reading, but its frank acceptance of reality gives it a power it could not otherwise have.

We must face the facts, but having done so we are well placed to live with the awesome consequence that battles have been lost and will be again, but the War is won! ■



From left: Karl Schmude, Gary Furnell, Nancy Brown, Sophie York, and David van Gend.



Nancy Brown



Sophie York



David van Gend



Symeon Thompson (left) chairing Gary's Furnell's session on toy theatres

Children and the Family – the 2018 Conference

The theme of children and the family in the light of Chesterton's wisdom provided the main focus of this year's Australian Chesterton conference on October 20 at Campion College in Sydney.

The gathering featured five speakers, including the American author Nancy Brown, and attracted an audience of more than fifty people from various parts of Australia.

Chesterton's deep insights into family life were drawn from the joy of his own childhood and his subsequent marriage to Frances. He cherished a lifelong appreciation of playful entertainment, such as toy theatres, and recognised the importance of childhood literature, especially fairy tales, in forming the imagination in early life and sustaining a sense of wonder and reality in adult life.

Nancy Brown delivered two papers. The first was on Frances (of whom she has written a definitive biography, *The Woman Who Was Chesterton*), which highlighted her

profound importance in Gilbert's life, both in coping with the practical demands of daily life and as an imaginative artist and writer in her own right.

A second talk focused on the Father Brown stories, which Nancy has adapted for younger readers in two volumes, *The Father Brown Reader* (2007) and *The Father Brown Reader II* (2010).

Other speakers were Sophie York and David van Gend, who looked at various critical issues affecting children and the family in contemporary Australia; Karl Schmude, who explored the meaning of innocence in Chesterton's life and in his detective character, Father Brown; and Gary Furnell, who illustrated the historical significance of toy theatres in developing the imagination of children.

The papers were recorded and will soon be available for viewing on the Australian Chesterton website (<http://chestertonaustralia.com/>). The text of the papers will shortly appear on the website and in a paper form. ■

Discovering Chesterton – A Moviemaker Remembers

by *Elvis Joseph*

Elvis Joseph and his wife Heather have longtime and substantial experience in the film industry, running most recently their own actors' management agency in Sydney. Their production company, Rooftop Films, has developed a film version of Chesterton's first play, *Magic*. In this article, Elvis explains how he discovered Chesterton and begun to ponder translating some of his works to the screen.



Heather and Elvis Joseph

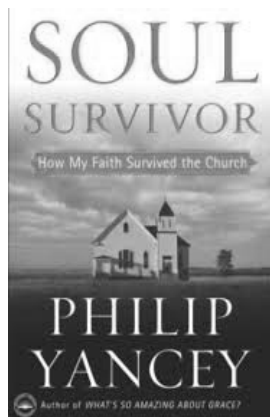
It was serendipity that brought me to G. K. Chesterton. It is the most likely vehicle that springs to mind.

Horace Walpole, author of the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Ontranto*, coined the word in a letter to Horace Mann. He formed it from the Persian tale 'The Three Princes of Serendip', whose heroes were always making discoveries by accident and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of. The sagacity part is often forgotten in the meaning these days.

Philip Yancey wrote a book called *Soul Survivor* ('How I Survived The Church'). I stumbled upon it by some fortunate accident, and it had me by the title. In it, he tells of the near loss of his faith, due to the Church, and the thirteen people whose remarkable lives shaped his spiritual journey to recovery. From John Donne to Martin Luther King Jr, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to Mahatma Gandhi, and Henri Nouwen - to name a few... Oh, yes, and G.K. Chesterton.

Yancey grew up in a segregationist Southern Baptist church where he experienced some of the worst and morally damaging hypocrisies of the style of Christianity that prevailed in America's former confederate states at the time. His chapter on Chesterton tells of the profound effect that Chesterton (and C.S. Lewis) had on his moral and spiritual repair.

He encountered their works at an Evangelical Bible college – a place that at the time made some token attempt by admitting one black student, whom they boarded with a Puerto Rican, to exemplify themselves as being more progressive than, say, his more openly racist home church.



But it was a school that tended to punishing, rather than rewarding, intellectual curiosity: one teacher lowering his grades to teach him humility and warning his classes that 'the greatest barrier to the Holy Spirit was sophistication'.

As Yancey puts it, 'though separated from him by a vast expanse of sea and culture, they [Chesterton and Lewis] kindled a hope that somewhere, Christians existed who

loosed rather than restrained their minds, who combined sophisticated taste with a humility that did not demean others and, above all, who experienced life with God as a source of joy and not repression'.

Of Chesterton's works, Yancey suggests reading *Orthodoxy* first. Then *The Everlasting Man*, and his biographies of St Francis of Assisi and St Thomas Aquinas; various collections of his essays; and, for lovers of fiction, *The Man Who Was Thursday* and the Father Brown stories.

After *Orthodoxy*, Yancey read many of Chesterton's other works. There were more than a hundred books. As a writer, it depressed Yancey for weeks to learn that Chesterton dictated most of them to his secretary, making few changes to first drafts.

And writing on the subject of pain at the time, he found much insight in his fictional treatment of that dark subject in *The Man Who Was Thursday*, amazed, considering their differences in style, that he wrote it the same year as *Orthodoxy*.

Chesterton would later explain that he had been struggling with despair, evil and the meaning of life, and had even approached mental breakdown. When he emerged from this melancholy, he sought to make a case for optimism amid all the gloom of such a world.

He had been studying the Book of Job, and these two books resulted. One, a book of apologetics full of unexpected twists and turns; the other, a mix of spy thriller and 'nightmare'. Caught up in my own melancholy at the time, I took Yancey's advice and read *Orthodoxy*. It was liberating. I read *The Man Who Was Thursday*. Not only was I hooked on Chesterton by it, but it helped me understand *Orthodoxy* better and appreciate the Book of Job as if for the first time. That has since become one of my favourite books of the Bible.

A film version of *The Man Who Was Thursday* had also entered my imagination. That was cemented on hearing Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre on the Air 1938 radio play of it.

Turns out Orson Welles was a fan of Chesterton. And I am a fan of both... ■

Death of a Chesterton Scholar

by Karl Schmude

The author of an early and significant study, *G.K. Chesterton: Radical Populist* (1977), recently died in Scotland where she lived in retirement.

Margaret Canovan (1939-2018) was an English political thinker who served as a professor, first at Lancaster University and later Keele University, during a long and fruitful academic career.

She was perhaps most renowned for her work on the character of modern totalitarianism, revealed especially in her two books on the influential political philosopher, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). But she also wrote a number of important articles for *The Chesterton Review*, such as 'Chesterton and the People' (February 1984), which provided a succinct introduction to Chesterton's social and political philosophy.

Her 1977 book on Chesterton commands an importance that has been heightened by recent political trends.

Margaret Canovan was an acute scholar of populism and nationalism before they became fashionable to decry – in the midst of current conflicts over the European Union and Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump and other populist leaders in parts of Europe and, most recently, in Latin America with Jair Bolsonaro's election as President of Brazil.

Populist traditions, she wrote, 'enshrine human values that other ideologies have tended to neglect – values that could profitably be brought to bear on the making of political decisions.'

While noting the vices commonly associated with populism, such as a distrust of compromise and an attraction to conspiracy theories, she highlights certain characteristic virtues as well, of which she believes Chesterton's writings are a shining example – such as the importance of home and family, and 'a refusal to be impressed by the claims of wealth and cleverness' or 'to be stampeded by an elite who regard themselves as the vanguard of history.'

Chesterton and Intellectual Elites

For Canovan, Chesterton holds an honoured place in the English political tradition. He was a genuine democrat who defended common sense and the interests and ideals of the ordinary person.

There were earlier populists in English history - notably William Cobbett (1763-1835), on whom Chesterton wrote a

book in 1925. Canovan showed the extent to which Chesterton shared Cobbett's deep suspicion of a new class of intellectual elites then emerging, which disdained the values of family and communal solidarity, and preferred a culture of individual tastes, changeable loyalties and state-enforced compliance.

The social and political power of these elites burgeoned during Chesterton's lifetime of print journalism. It has intensified in the present era of pervasive electronic media, as it has spread throughout the intersecting worlds of politics, journalism, academia, bureaucracies and business.

Chesterton's populism was influential at a time when the dominant liberal thinkers, such as George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, were susceptible to utopian fantasies and what Canovan termed 'tyrannical paternalism'; by which they patronised the poor with a focus on regulation rather than freedom. They guaranteed the poor a level of material security, via the emerging welfare state that was destined to grow prodigiously, but only by interfering in their lives in ways that sapped their liberty and trapped them in new forms of servility.

In Canovan's words, this was prompted by 'a desire to do good to the poor against their will', in such areas as compulsory education, health, drinking, and child welfare – all of which, however well-intentioned, had the effect of adding 'the insult of regimentation' to 'the injury of exploitation'.

Canovan explained the Chestertonian paradox that contemporary society faces:

'We are so used to regarding measures of this kind as laudable reforms that it is hard to understand the position of those radicals [like Chesterton] who opposed them.'

'It is important to grasp that in all these cases of compulsory reforms imposed in the name of the New Liberalism, the compulsion extended only to the working classes, and was exercised by the upper and middle classes, together with the new bureaucratic armies of teachers, health visitors, and civil servants of all kinds. 'As Lloyd George himself said, "If these poor people are to be redeemed they must be redeemed not by themselves . . . they must be redeemed by others outside.'"

This statement captures, in a disconcertingly exact way, the sense of elitist superiority and self-indulgence that so often prevails in present-day culture, finding expression in educational programs at both school and university level, and encountered in social and political discourse. ■



A Niece's Memory of Chesterton – a Fascinating Footnote

by Francis Phillips

The reminiscence by Sheila Cook of her 'Big Uncle', Gilbert Chesterton, published first in The Chesterton Review (November 1996) and most recently in The Defendant (Winter 2018), brought back personal memories to an English reader, Francis Phillips. A regular book reviewer for the London Catholic Herald, Francis contributed last year to our occasional series, Desert Island Chesterton (Spring 2017 issue). In this recollection, she provides a fascinating footnote to Sheila Cook's story.



Sheila Cook offering her uncle, G.K. Chesterton, a dandelion

I met Sheila Cook quite by chance in the early 1990s when she was a parishioner at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Thame, Oxfordshire.

I was in a neighbouring parish but often attended St Joseph's because of the reputation of its saintly parish priest, the late Fr Hugh Thwaites SJ. He would invite Mass attendees to coffee

afterwards in the church hall – and it was there that I found myself sitting next to a chatty elderly lady with white hair.

She introduced herself as "Sheila Cook", and somehow the subject got onto GK Chesterton. She told me he was her great uncle, and that she had very happy memories as a child of being invited to Top Meadow, his rambling, comfortable home in Beaconsfield.

"They couldn't have children, you know," she told me. "That was a great tragedy for them. So they loved to fill the house with the children of friends and relations."

Frances Chesterton, as well as her more famous husband, had been very involved in arranging children's parties, especially at Christmas, and Sheila had very warm memories of this devoted childless couple putting themselves at the disposal of their boisterous young guests.

She casually mentioned the well-known photograph of the large, imposing Chesterton taking the hand of a very young girl who was reaching up to him, which had always seemed to me to encapsulate his simplicity, as well as his tenderness and respect for children.

"I was the little girl in that photo," she said.

Thinking this fact might not be widely known, I mentioned my acquaintanceship to Aidan Mackey, founder member of the Chesterton Society and known for his large collection of Chestertonian memorabilia and writings. "Give me your address," I said, "and I will put him in touch with you. He would be delighted to know the true identity of that mysterious little girl."

Sheila was happy to do this. We chatted some more (how I wish I had pressed her further about her childhood memories), then made our goodbyes.

I duly put Aidan Mackey in touch with her and was pleased to learn that she had written down her reminiscences for *The Chesterton Review* of 1996. It had never occurred to this modest, friendly lady, with whom by chance I shared a cup of coffee, probably 60 years after the photo in question had been taken, that anyone would be interested in what she had to say.

And I confess that I would probably not have taken much account of our conversation if I had not recently been in touch with Aidan Mackey myself.

I was running a small Catholic quarterly newspaper at the time and naturally enough was always on the lookout for articles. Aidan Mackey obliged me with his own reminiscences as a collector of GKC's writings, accompanied by another photo – of the great man guffawing in a hilarious burst of laughter.

Unlike Sheila, who had known Chesterton as a relative, Mackey had discovered Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* as a 14-year-old boy from a humble background, and it was the start of a lifelong passion.

Indeed, in 1946 and not yet demobbed, he told me he had hitched from his RAF base in Wiltshire to Chesterton's old home, Top Meadow, where Sheila had spent so many happy hours, simply to gaze at the house from the gates. ■



Aidan Mackey

Christmas and the Chestertons

by Karl Schmude

For readers of Nancy Brown's biography of Frances Chesterton, one of the most delightful discoveries was that Frances as well as Gilbert Chesterton celebrated Christmas with new literary creations.



Gilbert and Frances Chesterton

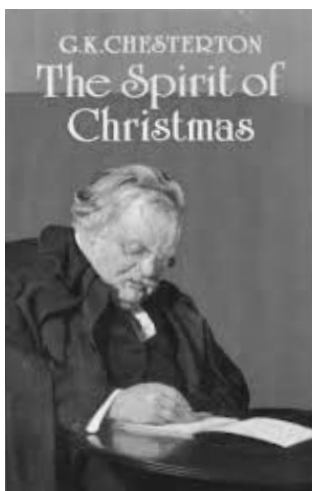
Frances wrote a poem each year for the Christmas card they sent to friends. She also wrote prayers for the children she and Gilbert entertained at their annual Christmas party (which was a children-only event).

At least four of these plays were published – and are now available in a collection edited by Nancy Brown - *How Far Is It to Bethlehem: The Plays and Poetry of Francis Chesterton* (2012).

Gilbert wrote frequently on Christmas – several essays each year, over a lifetime of journalism, as well as poems and stories. Two collections have been published – *The Spirit of Christmas – Stories, Poems, Essays* (1984), and *A Chesterton Christmas: Essays, Excerpts and Eggnog* (2015).

These books, while bringing together only a small proportion of Chesterton's writings on Christmas, have given new life to the vast array of material that was lost or elusive.

The Spirit of Christmas, for example, includes the full text of a rare Chesterton play, 'The Turkey and the Turk'. The final poem in the collection is 'Gloria in Profundis', which had not appeared in any previous edition of Chesterton's collected poems.



From his earliest years, Chesterton was alert to the supreme Christian paradox that Christmas revealed – a mysterious, and finally mystical, combination, that God became a child, that divinity entered into infancy, and that the omnipotent became powerless. As he wrote in 'Gloria in Profundis': 'Glory to God in the Lowest.'

Extending this paradoxical insight to the family-based

nature of Christmas celebrations, Chesterton framed the meaning of Christmas in this way:

'Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home.' (*'The Spirit of Christmas,' The Thing*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1929)

Christmas and Charles Dickens

Another theme close to Chesterton's heart was the significance of Charles Dickens in reviving Christmas as a popular festival – Dickens and Chesterton being the two English writers who most readily come to mind as champions of Christmas.

In various essays, such as 'The Shop of Ghosts' and 'The Modern Scrooge' (both reprinted in *The Spirit of Christmas*), and in the two books he wrote on Dickens, Chesterton argued convincingly that Dickens saved Christmas in England.

In Puritan England, following the 16th century Reformation, there was a powerful opposition to the celebration of Christmas, which was seen as an indulgent and unseemly feast, at odds with the transcendental glory of God.

Yet this was at odds with the incarnational quality of Christianity, which blessed matter, and reconciled the sacredness of earthly creation (that God Himself had sanctified in Christ) with the eternal meaning and destiny of human life.

Dickens shared the anti-Catholic attitudes of his Victorian generation and a dislike of organised religion, as well as a contempt for the Middle Ages. But Chesterton recognised his profound, if unconscious, sympathy for popular culture and the religious passions that underlay it.

As Chesterton noted, Dickens 'defended the medieval feast', even though 'he could only see all that was bad in medievalism. But he fought for all that was good in it.'

Nowhere in English literature, believed Chesterton, was the condition known as happiness better captured than in Dickens' Christmas tales. And nowhere more than in his penetration of Christmas was Dickens more medieval, and even Catholic, despite his contempt for medieval culture – and for Catholicism.

'In fighting for Christmas,' as Chesterton concluded, 'he was fighting for the old European festival, Pagan and Christian, for that trinity of eating, drinking and praying which to moderns appears irreverent, for the holy day which is really a holiday.' ■