



The *DEFENDANT*

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'I have found that humanity is not incidentally engaged, but eternally and systematically engaged, in throwing gold into the gutter and diamonds into the sea. . . . therefore I have imagined that the main business of man, however humble, is defence. I have conceived that a defendant is chiefly required when worldlings despise the world – that a counsel for the defence would not have been out of place in the terrible day when the sun was darkened over Calvary and Man was rejected of men.'

G.K. Chesterton, 'Introduction', *The Defendant* (1901)

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Chesterton and Pope Francis – Early Hints of a Papal Encyclical

by Karl Schmude

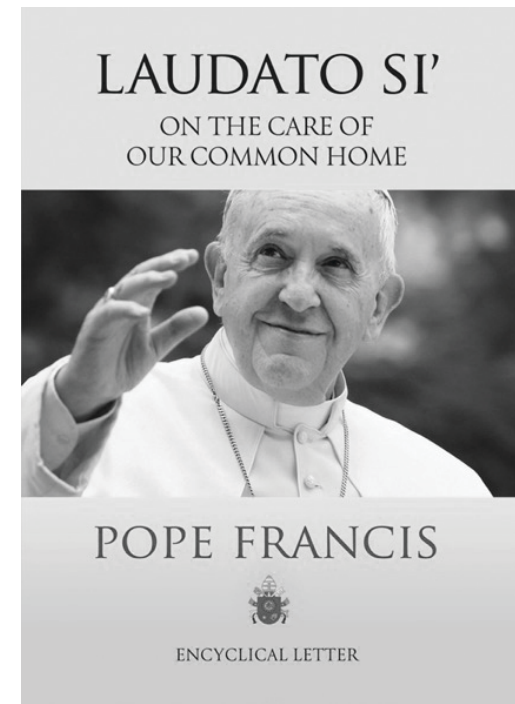
How would G.K. Chesterton have reacted to the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudate si'* ('Praise Be To You', taken from St Francis of Assisi's poem of praise to God, *Canticle of the Sun*)?

Without canvassing the issue of whether he would have sided with the Pope's views on climate change, I have been struck by the various parts of the encyclical that resonate with Chesterton's thought - in particular, his grounding of his love of nature in a divine order of life and beauty, and his deep empathy with the poor - and the extent to which the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental damage.

A contributor to an American blog, Joseph Sunde, has remarked upon the parallel imagery of Pope Francis and Chesterton in speaking of nature and the environment. ('Sister Earth: Pope Francis Reads G.K. Chesterton?' at: <http://blog.acton.org/archives/79375-sister-earth-pope-francis-reads-g-k-chesterton.html>)

Sunde notes that the recent encyclical opens with the following statement about Earth being our 'sister':

'*LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore* – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be



to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs". This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.'

These references to 'sister earth', Sunde observes, appear throughout the encyclical, and the metaphor is one that has been used before by Chesterton:

'The essence of all pantheism, evolutionism, and modern cosmic religion is really in this proposition: that Nature is our mother. Unfortunately, if you regard Nature as a mother, you discover that she is a step-mother.

'The main point of Christianity was this: that Nature is not our mother: Nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father; but she has no authority over us; we have to admire, but not to imitate. This gives to the typically Christian pleasure in this earth a strange touch of lightness that is almost frivolity. Nature was a solemn mother to the worshippers of Isis and Cybele. Nature was a solemn mother to Wordsworth or to Emerson.

'But Nature is not solemn to Francis of Assisi or to George Herbert. To St. Francis, Nature is a sister, and even a younger

sister: a little, dancing sister, to be laughed at as well as loved.' ('The Eternal Revolution,' *Orthodoxy*, 1908)

Sunde goes on to comment: 'For whatever other shortcomings of the encyclical, as we strive to understand our role in stewarding creation, when properly framed, it's an apt image indeed.'

It is no surprise to find affinities between Chesterton and Pope Francis. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998 to 2013, the future Pope would have known of Chesterton. This is clear, not only as a result of his admiration of the Argentinian author, Jorge Luis Borges (Borges thought highly of Chesterton and translated some of his stories into Spanish), but also because the then-Archbishop Bergoglio served as honorary chairman of the committee that organised a Chesterton conference in Buenos Aires in 2006. ■

Power - and the Plight of the Poor

POPE FRANCIS:

'Yet it must also be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired, have given us tremendous power. More precisely, they have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. . . . In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it.' ('*Laudato si'*', Sec.104)

CHESTERTON:

'It fills me with horrible amusement to observe the way in which the earnest Socialist industriously lays the foundation of all aristocracy, expatiating blandly upon the evident unfitness of the poor to rule. . .

'If clean homes and clean air make clean souls, why not give the power (for the present at any rate) to those who undoubtedly have the clean air? . . .

'Is there any answer to the argument that those who have breathed clean air had better decide for those who have breathed foul? As far as I know, there is only one answer, and that answer is Christianity. Only the Christian Church can offer any rational objection to a complete confidence in the rich. For she has maintained from the beginning that the danger was not in man's environment, but in man.' ('The Eternal Revolution,' *Orthodoxy*, 1908)

St Francis of Assisi - God Speaking Through Nature



POPE FRANCIS:

'Saint Francis [of Assisi], faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. . . . Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.' (*Laudato si'*, Sec.12)

CHESTERTON:

'St Francis was a man who did not want to see the wood for the trees. He wanted to see each tree as a separate and almost a sacred thing, being a child of God and therefore a brother or sister of man. . . . He did not call nature his mother; he called a particular donkey his brother or a particular sparrow his sister. If he had called a pelican his aunt or an elephant his uncle, as he might possibly have done, he would still have meant that they were particular creatures assigned by their Creator to particular places; not mere expressions of the evolutionary energy of things.' ('The Little Poor Man,' *St Francis of Assisi*, 1923)

Chesterton - Theologian of the Environment?

Reading the recent encyclical brought to mind a journal article by Lawrence Cunningham, now Emeritus Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame (USA), in which he suggested that a theology of the environment could be drawn from the writings of Chesterton.

This is an excerpt from the article, entitled 'On Re-reading Chesterton,' which appeared in the London Tablet (15 May 1971). The complete article can be found at: <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/15th-may-1971/8/on-re-reading-chesterton>

Closely allied to social protest is the contemporary preoccupation with ecology and environmental conservation. There is yet to appear a satisfactory theological treatise on ecology and conservation. Theologians, up to the most recent times, have been so busy spinning out the implications of subduing the earth that small attention has been given to man's stewardship over the earth.

It is my feeling that the framework for a theology of ecology and stewardship may well be constructed out of the religious writings of Chesterton.

For, better than any other Christian writer of this century (with the possible exception of Teilhard de Chardin), Chesterton understood the profoundly religious nature of this world as it comes from the hand of God.

What has often been misunderstood as a lighthearted Stevensonian optimism (even by as perceptive a writer as Christopher Hollis) is in reality Chesterton's almost mystical intuition that the world of creation, in its very facticity, is the object of wonder and one source of our search for the transcendent long before it is an object to despoil, manipulate, and subdue. . . .

Chesterton seems to me to be the father of the theologians of wonder and play. ■

Society Membership

The annual membership fee of the Australian Chesterton Society is \$25.00.

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Is Chesterton's Common Man Becoming Uncommon?

by Ray Finnegan

Ray Finnegan is the Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society

My article in the previous *Defendant* (Autumn 2015) offered a reminder of Chesterton's love of the common man and his humble institutions, which include the pub - or the public house, to give its proper title.

So what would Chesterton make of the fact that the pub is disappearing as a hub of English social life?

A short article on English pubs appeared in the *US National Geographic* last May. In a faint echo of Chesterton, it refers to the English pub as 'a social institution that can anchor a community'. But the pubs are a dying institution.

Since 2008, about 7000 English pubs have closed, and currently an average 31 close each week. The decline is put down to, inter alia, changing tastes and the move to dining at restaurants. A profound change in social interaction is underway, but not only in pubs.

In a different context – same sex marriage: David Brooks, a *New York Times* columnist, aptly commented that 'we live in a society plagued by formlessness and radical flux, in which bonds, social structures, and commitments are strained and frayed. Many communities have suffered a loss of social capital.'

So are we to lose the common man as a social force?

Perhaps for once, modern technology may come to the aid of good. Social media has become the playground for bombast,

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crudity and spleen. It has provided a ready means for rallying those wishing to challenge and bellicosely confront whatever is current.

But a couple who moved to Bologna, Italy, is reported as using social media to establish a network among their neighbours. The couple posted a flyer in their street that they had established a closed group on Facebook for the people in their street. Now two years later, the group has expanded from

its narrow beginning and has 1100 members. As reported, everyone in the town knows one another.

Probably Chesterton would have adapted well to the new social medium. He communicated effectively in the written word, in public debate and on radio. But he would probably have pined about discourse being conducted without a pot of ale at hand. ■

Father Brown: The Detective Who Philosophized

by John Young



John Young is a Melbourne-based philosopher who has written frequently for journals and newspapers in Australia and overseas. He is the author of various books, including *Reasoning Things Out* (1982) and *The Natural Economy* (1997).

No special qualifications are needed for becoming a fictional detective. You can be a teenager like Nancy Drew or the Hardy boys; you can be an elderly man or woman like Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple; you can be a nobleman like Lord Peter Wimsey or a traveling salesman like Mr Montague Egg.

Blindness is no disqualification, as shown by Ernest Bramah's detective Max Carrados, nor is laziness – Nero Wolfe employed Archie Goodwin to do the legwork for him. Brother Cadfael was a mediaeval monk, while Father Dowling was a Catholic priest. You can even be a member of the police force.

In this article I want to reflect on G. K. Chesterton's famous priest-detective, Father Brown. He was not Chesterton's only fictional detective, by the way; a dozen others, sometimes working in two's or three's, were created by Chesterton (see the collection *Thirteen Detectives*, selected and arranged by Marie Smith).

Chesterton was keenly interested in this genre, and was first President of the Detection Club, formed in 1930, which also numbered Dorothy L. Sayers among its enthusiastic members. It was all taken lightheartedly, with a mock-solemnity. (In his story 'The Mirror of the Magistrate' Chesterton has the police officer James Bagshaw say: 'Ours is the only trade where the professional is always supposed to be wrong. After all, people don't write stories in which hairdressers can't cut hair and have

to be helped by a customer; or in which a cabman can't drive a cab until his fare explains to him the philosophy of cab-driving.')

A feature of Chesterton's detective stories, as of his other fiction, is the communication of a sane view of life, and that is what I want to deal with here, as presented in the Father Brown stories. Reason is extolled and defended, superstition, bigotry and hypocrisy are shown up for what they are.

Contrast with Sherlock Holmes

Father Brown's method is quite different from that of Sherlock Holmes.

Take, for instance, a passage from Conan Doyle's story 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery'. Holmes observes footprints, cigar ash and other clues, then concludes that the murderer 'is a tall man, left-handed, limps with the right leg, wears thick-soled shooting-boots and a grey cloak, smokes Indian cigars, uses a cigar-holder, and carries a blunt penknife in his pocket.'

By contrast, Father Brown usually employs a psychological approach and often imagines what he himself would be capable of doing if he were in the shoes of the criminal. As he expresses it:

'No man's really any good till he knows how bad he is, or might be; till he's realized exactly how much right he has to all this snobbery, and sneering, and talking about "criminals", as if they were apes in a forest ten thousand miles away... till his only hope is somehow or other to have captured one criminal, and kept him safe and sane under his own hat' (The Secret of Father Brown).

The need for humility and for seeing ourselves as we are is shown in several stories. In 'The Man in the Passage' each witness saw a man he assumed to be the killer, but they differed in their descriptions, except that each was unfavorably impressed by what he saw. One described the man as a brute with huge humped shoulders like a chimpanzee, and bristles sticking out of its head like a pig. The only witness who recognized the figure was Father Brown, and he recognized it as himself. Each witness had seen himself, for they had been looking in a mirror.

When the judge asked Father Brown how he could know his own figure in a looking-glass when two such distinguished men had not recognized themselves, the priest replied that he didn't know, 'unless it's because I don't look at it so often.'

We can apply to Father Brown the words of St Paul about God choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

Father Brown had 'a face as round and dull as a Norfolk dumpling; he had eyes as empty as the North Sea, he had several brown-paper parcels which he was quite incapable of collecting' ('The Blue Cross'). Seeing him, the unbelieving French detective Valentin reflected that doubtless the Eucharistic Congress to which the priest was going had 'sucked out of their local stagnation many such creatures, blind and helpless, like moles disinterred.'

Reason

Many of the stories stress the validity and indispensability of human reason.

In 'The Blue Cross' Chesterton says the expression 'a thinking machine' is 'a brainless phrase of modern fatalism and materialism. A machine only is a machine because it cannot think.'

In the same story he says: 'Only a man who knows nothing of motors talks of motoring without petrol; only a man who knows nothing of reason talks of reasoning without strong, undisputed first principles.'

The master criminal Flambeau (before his conversion) betrayed himself when, disguised as a priest, he suggested that there may be other universes 'where reason is utterly unreasonable' ('The Blue Cross'). That statement made Father Brown sure Flambeau was not a priest. He explained: 'You attacked reason. It's bad theology' (Today, unfortunately, that test would be very uncertain.)

Of a character in 'The Scandal of Father Brown' he says: 'She hasn't got any intellect to speak of; but you don't need any intellect to be an intellectual.'

In 'The Red Moon of Meru' Lady Mounteagle, who is attracted to Eastern religions, says: 'Surely you must understand that all religions are really the same.' Father Brown replies that if they

are, 'it seems rather unnecessary to go into the middle of Asia to get one.'

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is exposed in several of the stories.

In 'The Chief Mourner of Marne' Father Brown is thought to be harsh and lacking in charity because he thought a man was blameworthy for having killed an adversary in a duel many years before. But when it turned out that the victor had employed an underhand trick and was guilty of cold-blooded murder, his erstwhile defenders were outraged, one calling him a filthy viper and another saying he should be lynched.

Father Brown believed the murderer should be forgiven, for he had shown deep remorse. Answering the others the priest said:

'You must forgive me if I am not altogether crushed by your contempt for my uncharitableness today; or by the lectures you read me about pardon for every sinner. For it seems to me that you only pardon the sins that you don't really think sinful...So you tolerate a conventional duel, just as you tolerate a conventional divorce. You forgive because there isn't anything to be forgiven.'

At times Father Brown is assumed to be superstitious because he believes in the supernatural; but it turns out on such occasions that it is the secularists who are the superstitious ones.

In 'The Oracle of the Dog', for instance, a young man named Fiennes interprets the behaviour of the murdered man's dog as pointing to the murderer, and suggests that dogs know a lot more than we do. Father Brown takes the dog's behavior seriously, but interprets it very differently, because whereas his friend implicitly asked himself: What do the dog's actions mean if the dog is an oracle?, Father Brown asked himself: What do the dog's actions mean if the dog is a dog?

These detective stories show a rational universe where there is objective good and evil, and where the humble, not the powerful or conventionally respectable, see the truth. ■

This article was originally published in *The Wanderer* of May 2, 2013, and is reprinted with permission. *The Wanderer*, which is published weekly in St Paul, Minnesota, is the oldest Catholic newspaper in America.

Chesterton at Notre Dame - A Rediscovered Work

by Karl Schmude

Readers of *The Defendant* would be familiar with many of Chesterton's books, as well as with the best-known studies of him. But every now and then, a new source of material emerges - an out-of-the-way work, an essay or delivered talk or essay about him, that sheds further light on his astonishing genius.

An invaluable source of such material has long been the international journal, *The Chesterton Review*. Each issue contains little-known writings that reveal - or re-emphasize - aspects of Chesterton's thought and understanding.

Recently, another source came into my hands - a book entitled *A Chesterton Celebration at the University of Notre Dame*. Published in 1983, the volume comprises papers from a special program sponsored by the Chestertonians of Notre Dame in the USA, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Chesterton's serving as a Visiting Professor there in the 1930s.

Two essays in the book are of singular interest.

One is entitled 'Chesterton as a Peeping Thomist,' by Ralph McInerny, a well-known Professor of Philosophy as well as Director of the Jacques Maritain Centre at Notre Dame, who died in 2010.



Ralph McInerny

On various occasions, I was delighted to meet McInerny at conferences in America, and enjoyed his sharp philosophical mind and ready wit, including his weakness (if weakness it is!) for puns. He liked the term, 'peeping Thomist', and used it as the sub-title of his 1989 book, *A First Glance at St Thomas Aquinas: A Handbook for Peeping Thomists*. So his title in the Notre Dame volume, 'Chesterton as a Peeping Thomist,' offered promise of an entertaining as well as discerning discourse - and I was not disappointed.

McInerny suggests that it was remarkable that Chesterton should have written a book on Aquinas - and particularly, according to the account in Maisie Ward's 1944 biography, that he evidently undertook scarcely any careful reading or research of Aquinas.

Having already written half the book, Chesterton sent his secretary, Dorothy Collins, off to London to fetch some unspecified works of the great philosopher. She consulted experts and brought back some books that Chesterton flipped through - after which he dictated the rest of his book without further consultation.

Intellectual affinity

McInerny points out that Chesterton grasped the essentials of Aquinas' thought because of a profound intellectual affinity between the two men. A vital basis of this harmony of thought is that they shared a conviction in the reliability of reality - that the world before our eyes is trustworthy as a source of knowledge.

In a story that McInerny does not relate, Chesterton was once talking with a man who said that the only thing he believed in was his own existence - to which Chesterton replied: 'Cherish it.'

Both Aquinas and Chesterton thought that we cannot really doubt sensible reality - the hand we hold up before our face; yet we also know that thought and language go beyond the reach of sense. They show that we are not enclosed in a merely material world. As McInerny puts it:

'A conjunction of truths about sensible things delivers up a conclusion that there is something beyond sense. . . . It turns out that the material world itself is not merely material. Chesterton puts it in a dozen ways. There is something mystical in material things.'

As a student of Aquinas for more than a quarter of a century, McInerny offers this interesting comment:

'Thomas saw it as a sign of God's mercy that He adjusted Himself, as it were, to our mode of knowing which is always and everywhere dependent on what we gather by our senses.'

McInerney remarks that the last chapter of Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, entitled 'Authority and the Adventurer,' harmonises with a basic insight of Thomism – that 'in it faith is regarded as the ambience within which reason can more surely attain its ends.'

The fulfillment – and even the exercise – of reason is impossible without faith. As Chesterton put it in the first chapter of *Orthodoxy*:

'Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all.'

A second essay in *A Chesterton Celebration at the University of Notre Dame* that I found of special interest is by the Australian Catholic author and publisher, Frank Sheed. Called 'Chesterton in all Seasons,' it was an after-dinner talk which Sheed gave during the 'Celebration' program.



Affecting the climate of a culture

Sheed focused on how one or two writers can affect the climate of a culture – in this case, how Chesterton and

Hilaire Belloc 'changed the whole attitude of England towards Catholics.'

He recalled the cultural atmosphere that prevailed in the early years of the 20th century. It was taken for granted that Catholics could not think: 'we had the faith but they had the arguments.'

It was, in Sheed's belief, 'extraordinary luck, or providence,' that Chesterton and Belloc emerged at the same time:

'They really did produce an immeasurable effect upon the whole public of England, and they did it, almost, by being themselves. To produce any notable effect by being yourself you need to be rather a remarkable self. They couldn't be overlooked.'

Sheed goes on to point out how 'very seldom [Chesterton] repeats himself. You don't find the same jests coming in.... This extraordinary power of seeing what he looked at, and more and more that mind of his was looking into the totality – he never saw anything without seeing everything – made him the philosopher.'

In a Foreword to this book, the Chestertonians of Notre Dame celebrate the vast variety of his work – from his achievement as a philosopher and a writer of detective fiction to being a poet and a literary critic, and finally a remarkable personality and humorist.

It is, I suspect, a salutary illustration of the range of reasons why members of the Australian Chesterton Society find him to be a writer of inexhaustible interest – and unceasingly stimulating. ■

A Plea from Our Secretary-Treasurer

Please Renew Your Annual Subscription

Treasurers are formed to be pessimistic; they are often reminiscent of Hanrahan of 'Around the Boree Log' fame who regularly proclaimed: 'We'll all be rooned before the year is out,' whether due to lack of rain or too much rain.

The Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society is more optimistic than Hanrahan and does not suggest the Society is facing ruin, but nevertheless must state that unavoidable rising costs for the Society emphasise the vital importance of receiving annual subscriptions from members. They are our lifeblood.

We are planning a conference at the end of October and that calls for prophetic wisdom to set attendance charges that are

neither a deterrent nor too low to cover costs. The less we have in kitty, the less buffer we have to cover poor prophecy.

Having said that, such exhilaration as can arise in a Treasurer's monotonous life comes from the band of stalwarts who each year renew their subscriptions (which remain at \$25.00 per annum), with most including a generous donation to boot.

We are most grateful for this generous and faithful support. **Dear members - if your membership fee is outstanding, please consider remedying that soon.**

Ray Finnegan
Secretary-Treasurer

The Accidental Discovery of Chesterton

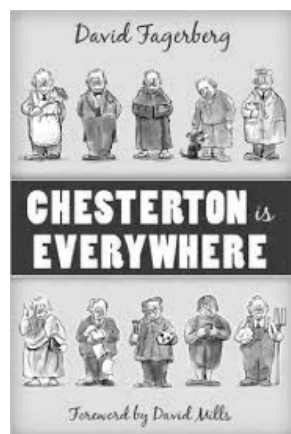
Sarah Reinhard is an American writer who, in the newspaper, *National Catholic Register* (1 August 2015), highlighted Chesterton as one of the authors to read during the American summer.

She reviewed David Fagerberg's book, *Chesterton Is Everywhere* (Emmaus Road, 2013):

'I found Chesterton quite by accident,'" David Fagerberg says in his introduction.

'I added a \$2.50 copy of *Orthodoxy* to an armful of books to bring my total exactly up to my spending limit on that visit. Like most people, I had heard Chesterton's name in association with a clever quotation, but knew nothing more about him.'

Reinhard writes that she is glad that Fagerberg began his



Chesterton binge, because it started him writing with a Chestertonian flair. His book is a collection of essays originally published in *Gilbert* magazine by the American Chesterton Society.

'Most of them have their origin in a faint smile caused by an irony, a juxtaposition, a curiosity, a foolishness, a forgiveness. Something connects in my mind with a Chestertonian point of view. These essays do not so much look at Chesterton, as they use Chesterton to look at things.'

Fagerberg is as entertaining as Chesterton, remarks Reinhard. 'This is one of those books that I'm glad I didn't start dog-eared, because the whole book would be a crumpled mess. I was laughing and nodding throughout'

'The essays are divided into five parts: "Happiness," "The Ordinary Home," "Social Reform," "Catholicism" and "Transcendent Truths." Most of them are only a couple of pages long, making them the perfect pick-up-anytime companion.

'It's as refreshing a book as it is insightful. You'll be a better person for having read it — and maybe that's because you'll have enjoyed it so much.'

To read Sarah Reinhard's review in its entirety, see: <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/summer-reading-books-that-are-fun-to-read/#ixzz3hbregoYM> ■


The Chesterton Review

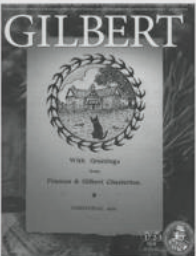
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Unconscious Dogma

'The special mark of the modern world is not that it is sceptical, but that it is dogmatic without knowing it. It says, in mockery of old devotees, that they believed without knowing *why* they believed. But the moderns believe without knowing *what* they believe – and without even knowing that they do believe it. Their freedom consists in first freely assuming a creed, and then freely forgetting that they are assuming it. In short, they always have an unconscious dogma; and an unconscious dogma is the definition of a prejudice.'

(*Illustrated London News*, 15 March 1919 – published in *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*, Volume XXXI, *The Illustrated London News 1917-1919*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989)