



G.K. CHESTERTON

(1874-1936)

AUTHOR, CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST

**"AT LEAST FIVE TIMES, THE FAITH
HAS TO ALL APPEARANCES
GONE TO THE DOGS. IN EACH OF
THESE FIVE CASES, IT WAS THE
DOG THAT DIED."**

Chesterton

- Gilbert Keith Chesterton: Born London, Educated at University College London
- Author:
 - 80 Books, 100s Poems, 200 Stories, 4000s Essays
 - Orthodoxy (1908) and The Everlasting Man (1925)
 - Creator of Father Brown (1910 - 1936)
- Debater: G.B. Shaw, H.G Wells, B. Russel, C. Darrow
- Catholic 1922 (Age 48)
- Master Polemicist: a.k.a “The Apostle of Common Sense”

Master

- Old Joke: *Diplomat*: Tells Someone to Go to Hell so that they look forward to the trip.
- Master *Polemicist*: The Art of Aggressively Refuting opinions in a witty, charming, and good humored way (without malice) that makes them look forward to what you have say.



- "This book is a joke – on me. Like the man who sails from England and inadvertently returns thinking he has discovered a new country, I tried to found my own heresy; when the finishing touches were complete, I discovered it was orthodoxy."

The Maniac

- Insane Asylum: Destination of the “Self-Confident”.
- Self Confidence/Esteem: Sinful, Superstitious, Weak.
- What Should We Believe? *Orthodoxy* answers this.
- Original Sin: The One Indisputable Fact
- Historically: Judge Philosophies by Impact on the Soul
- Modernity: Judge by Impact on the Wits / Others Emotions

What is the Real Issue?

- Humanity: Double spiritual need for *imagination* and *commonsense* = psychological health (sanity).
- Christian Worldview: Saner than alternate worldviews as these fail to satisfy this spiritual need.
- Reasonable to accept Christian worldview (e.g., Pascal's Wager)
- Chesterton's focus: Health of Christian belief and practice Versus its truth value.

Chesterton: Fides et Ratio

- Truth is *transcendent*: it "measures" the mind versus the mind measuring it.
- Reason is generally reliable, e.g., The Light of Natural Reason.
- Reason alone can't deal with the Big Questions; these require the light of faith/authority/revelation.
- Reason is a Matter of Faith
- View of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and the Catholic tradition.

The Suicide of Thought

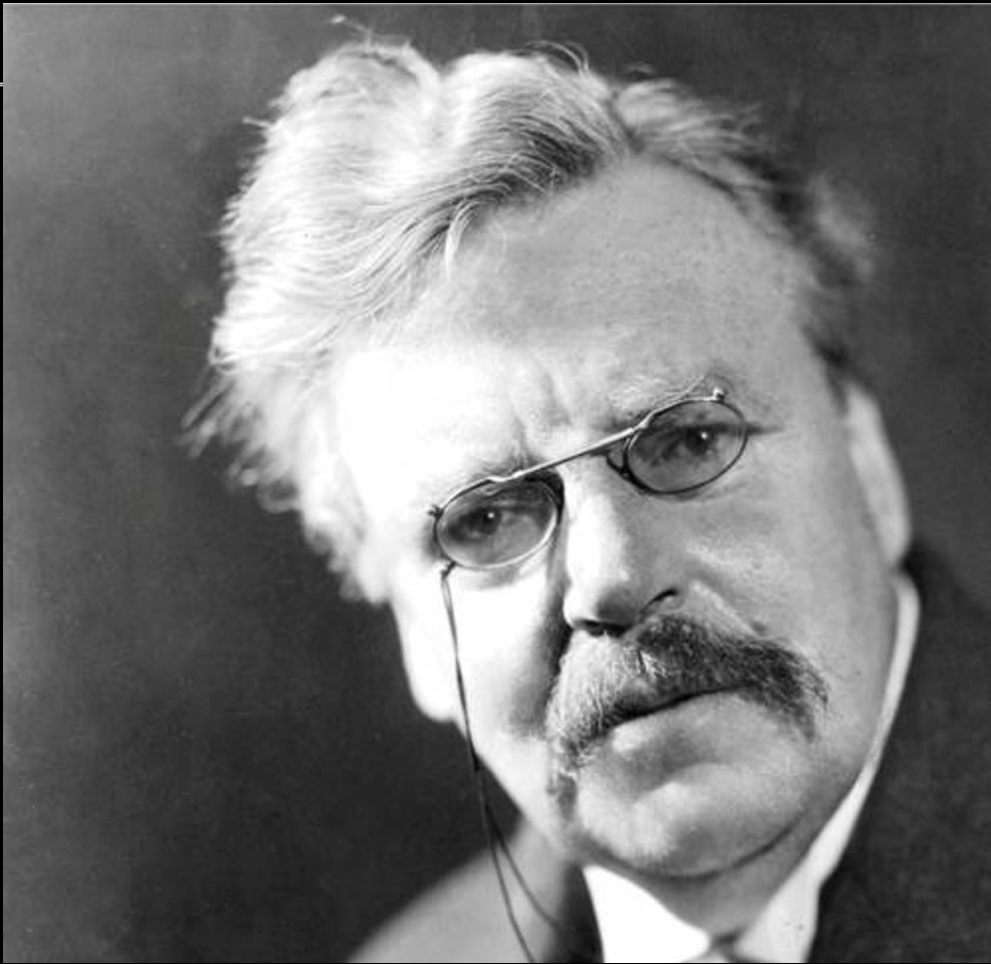
- Renaissance/Reformation: Shattered Christianity
- Bad that Vices Let Loose; Worse is that Virtues Let Loose!
- The World: Old Christian Virtues Gone Mad:
- *Humanitarianism*: Dislocated Untruthful Pity
- *Scientism*: Pursuit of Pitiless Truth
- *Untruthful Charity*: “There are No Sins to Forgive”
- *Humanistic Mercy*: Anarchy due to Unreformed Humanity
- *Self Esteem*: Dislocates Humility – the only restraint on Human Appetites
- Man Should Doubt Himself Not the Truth; World: *The Opposite!*



- "Old Men told me as a boy that I should lose my ideals and believe in practical politicians to get on; As a grownup I did not lose my ideals in the least; What I have lost is my old childlike faith in practical politics...I am more concerned about the Battle of Armageddon than the General Election"

The Ethics of Elfland - Fairytales

- “Fairytales are the sunny country of common sense.”
- “Compared with them, religion and rationalism are abnormal; religion abnormally right and rationalism abnormally wrong”
- Many noble and healthy Principles Arise From Them: Chivalry, tradition, Humility,
- Fairytale principles are laws and scientific laws are often fairy tales
- News, media, Politics built on Myths; Fairytales built on Truth



- "It is easy to see why a legend ought to be treated more respectfully than a history book; the legend is generally made by the majority of people in the village who are *sane* whereas the history book is written by the one man in the village who is *mad*."

Flag of the World: In but not of the world

- World: Recruits us for worldly (Faddish) crusades
- Church: Recruits us for Heavenly (Eternal) crusade
- Pagan: Criticizes world like a “House Hunter”
- Christian: Fights for World but doesn’t enlist
- Christian: Loyal to World Without Admiration
- Christian: Loyalty to World: *Patriotism* not Optimism

Christian Paradoxes: Christianity is ...

World	Faithful
Pessimistic, Gloomy, Killjoy, Oppressive, Cowardly	Optimistic, Uplifting, Providential
Timid, Monkish	Courageous, Crusading
Divisive, Privileged	Universal: Creed, Code, Monolithic
Oppresses Women	Marriage, The Church
Pompous, Ritualistic	Sackcloth, Ashes
Doctrines are from Hell	Doctrines are from Heaven



- "The trouble with the world ... it is almost reasonable, but not quite ... it is not illogical, but it traps logicians ... it looks more mathematical than it really is ... it's exactitude is obvious, but it's inexactitude is hidden, it's wildness lies in wait"



- "Remember the Church went for dangerous ideas ... birth via The Holy Spirit ... death of a Divine Being ... forgiveness of sins ... fulfillment of prophecies ... that the slightest retouch could turn them into something blasphemous or ferocious"

The Eternal Revolution: The Problem

- Betterment: *Progressives/Secularists* lack a context to measure *progress*.
- Secularism Lacks a known destination
- Secularism Lacks a *Gap Analysis*
- This Ages Blunder: Progress without Transcendent vision
- *Evolution*: Valueless Framework
- *Darwinism*: Justifies both cruelty and kindness; *Insane*



- "All my Utopian friends ... ultimate hope is in the dissolution of all special ties ... but I hear an echo from beyond the world ... 'You will have real obligations and real adventures when you get to My Utopia – but the hardest obligation and adventure is to get there.' "

Eternal Revolution: The Solution = *Reform*

- Must Have A Transcendent vision
- Must Be Composite: Does not Trade One thing for Another
- The minimum of the church is a deadly ultimatum to the world



- On Orthodoxy:
"Christianity is all that is left to challenge the power of the well nurtured, well bred elites; Socialists, Scientists, Politicians who say ... if we give the poor healthier conditions vice and wrong will disappear"

The Romance of Orthodoxy

- The most unpopular doctrines are real strength of the people
- The only logical negation of Utopian visions in the doctrine of original sin
- The Apocalypse and impending judgment
- Christianity is very *unlike* other religions



- "This is the thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy ... rather than heavy, humdrum, and safe, there was never anything so perilous or exciting as orthodoxy. It is sanity – and to be sane is far more dramatic than being mad"

Authority and The Adventurer

- World: “OK – why not just live according to your creed and chuck the religion?”
- Chesterton: What about Transcendence?
- Does Christianity Darken or Enlighten the world?



- "It has been said, truthfully, that religion is the one thing that makes the ordinary man feel extraordinary; it is equally true that religion is the one thing that makes the extraordinary man feel ordinary"

Epilog

- A Telegram sent by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pius XII) on behalf of Pope Pius XI to the people of England following the death of Chesterton
- Chesterton died of congestive heart failure on 14 June 1936, aged 62, at his home in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. His last words were a greeting of good morning spoken to his wife Frances. The sermon at Chesterton's Requiem Mass in Westminster Cathedral, London, was delivered by Ronald Knox on 27 June 1936. Knox said, "All of this generation has grown up under Chesterton's influence so completely that we do not even know when we are thinking Chesterton."
- He is buried in Beaconsfield in the Catholic Cemetery. Chesterton's estate was probated at £28,389, equivalent to £2,052,132 in 2021
- Near the end of Chesterton's life, Pope Pius XI invested him as Knight Commander with Star of the Papal Order of St. Gregory the Great (KC*SG).
- The Chesterton Society has proposed that he be beatified.



- "These are the days when the Christian is expected to praise every creed except his own"