



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)

The Monarchy - A Chesterton Perspective

by Karl Schmude

The outpouring of popular feeling on Queen Elizabeth II's death highlighted certain truths about present-day politics which bear upon Chesterton's thoughts about democracies and the distribution of power in society.



Queen Elizabeth II, in the early and later parts of her reign (1952-2022)

Until the Queen's death, it might have been thought that the monarchy was no longer significant in the popular imagination - or relevant to our political systems. Had it not outlived its usefulness, and was now just a ceremonial relic from earlier times?

But the reaction to Elizabeth II's death would suggest otherwise - that it still holds a valued place in the minds and hearts of people today, and a pivotal place in the political balance of power and authority.

In the history of the West, the monarchy is indisputably a religious institution. It is invoked in Judaic imagery, and then in Christian imagery - of Christ reigning as Christ the King, and of Mary, the mother of God, as the Queen of Heaven.

The Proclamation that made King Charles III, shortly after his mother's death last September, celebrated the Christian foundation of the English monarchy. The new King will be crowned in May 2023 in a ceremony of Christian coronation, sanctified by tradition and resounding with sacred overtones and transcendental messages.

Patriotism and love - nationalism and pride

Queen Elizabeth II's extraordinarily long reign illustrated several truths of enduring importance.

While the Queen embodied personal qualities now often missing in public life,

such as dignity and decency, she also projected certain symbolic values - notably, stability and continuity. She represented something solid and consistent, serving as a focus of unity in the midst of political ferment and cultural upheaval.

In times of crisis, such as during war, she stood for patriotism - a loyalty born of love - more than nationalism - based as it is on pride.

The Queen exemplified a crucial distinction between authority and power, which is often lost in the daily turmoil of politics, especially when it has become (as in our time) so divisive and dysfunctional.

Chesterton pointed out that authority "simply means right; and nothing is authoritative except what somebody has a right to do, and therefore is right in doing."

By contrast, "he cannot have a shred of authority if he merely has the power to do it and not the right to do it. . . . To abuse authority is to attack authority." ("False and True Comparisons," *Illustrated London News*, June 29, 1935).

The institution of monarchy at once elevates and restrains. It *lifts* politics to a new level - so that it can become a vocation of service and devoted duty (notably lived out by the late Queen during her reign). At the same time,

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it *limits* politics by setting it in a universe of higher beliefs and ideals.

The popular appeal of the monarchy draws on both these strengths. Ordinary people prize an institution like the monarchy that seeks to embody and advance the common good, while resenting the profligate use of power for self-promotion rather than social and political service.

They sense that the monarchy is about more than politics – that it stands for higher convictions and values. It prevents a society from making politics the supreme pursuit and preoccupation – a role it can never fully carry out, projecting promises it can never fulfil.

The monarchy can serve as a counter - and a corrective - to the obsessive dependence on politics to provide all of the solutions to human needs; solutions that so often prove elusive, if not illusionary, and also temporary.

As Western culture has become more secularised - distancing, if not expelling, the public expression and influence of religious faith - it cannot but look upon this world as the be-all-and-end-all.

It is uneasy with an institution like the monarchy, which presents a decidedly threatening alternative to unmitigated government power.

This challenge is posed, on the one hand, by the monarchy's **cultural** authority, which has garnered the weight and testimony of history and is expressed in public ceremonies, and on the other, by its **religious** authority, which appeals to the human yearning for an authority that is above earthly experience, and extends the promise of redemption beyond the grave.

Only such a foundation can prevent an earthly cause – in support of even the most worthy ideals like liberty and equality - from being perverted into a powerful ideology, and functioning as a substitute religion.

In practice, an ideology will always promote a falsehood - that a perfect and sustainable happiness is achievable in this world. It fosters utopian hopes, or else – as an obverse in our time - an apocalyptic fear and panic at uncontrollable forces.

Modern politics is full of ideologies – notably in the areas of sexual liberation and climate control – that serve as substitute faiths. They project the promise of salvation, but do not correspond to any truly transcendental realities that can sustain and justify such hopes.

In Chesterton's prophetic words:

"The world cannot keep its own ideals. The secular order cannot make secure any one of its own noble and natural conceptions of secular perfection."



Kings and Queens of England & Britain. Clockwise, from top left: Henry VIII, James VI, Mary Queen of Scots, William III

Monarchy in a disguised form

Chesterton, as well as Hilaire Belloc, expressed in books their profound understanding of secular and transcendental truths following lecture tours of the United States – Chesterton's *What I Saw in America* (1922) and Belloc's *The Contrast* (1923).

The American experience emphasised to them how much the secular ideals of freedom and equality could be kept, but only if they were subsumed into a higher order.

Both authors believed that the political character of America was essentially **monarchical** – not in the sense of a person sitting on a throne, but as a system that vested executive responsibility in a single person.

The institution of monarchy had not been abandoned in America so much as adopted in a disguised form. For all its manifestations of modernity, the American Republic was, in fact, an historical monarchy.

It was, in Chesterton's judgment, "the last medieval monarchy, . . . [in which] the President shall rule, and take all the risks of ruling. . . . The idea is that the President shall take responsibility and risk; and responsibility means being blamed, and risk means the risk of being blamed."

Thus the office was not that of an "absolute king". It gave the power of national decision-making and military command to a single person, but it was subject to the constitutional authority of checks and balances - the constraints of a legislature (as a States-based Congress changeable by regular elections) and a judiciary (with the Supreme Court at the apex).

The practical power of government was finally responsible to the people. Belloc thought that, in America, "the fusion of the individual with the people" was "the sacramental stamp of monarchy."

Yet the office of the President was not merely functional. It assumed symbolic weight, as an incarnation of the unity of the Republic and the loyalty of its citizens.

In time, this symbolism, particularly in a media-saturated age, acquired the pervasive trappings of popular celebration.

The 1940s saw the sculptures at Mount Rushmore in North Dakota as a personal portrayal of several American Presidents. And from the 1960s, certain dynastic families emerged - such as the Kennedys, Bushes and Clintons - so that a modern democracy came to resemble the hereditary succession of a family-based monarchy.

Monarchy as counter-cultural

Amid the paralysis of contemporary politics, the death of Queen Elizabeth II may prompt a fresh look at the monarchy as a counter-cultural institution.

It could offer lessons on different ways of distributing and authorising the use of power in society. ■



Mount Rushmore National Memorial. From left: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln



Chesterton and the Personality of Government

by Gary Furnell

Gary Furnell (pictured) is a former librarian and occasional writer whose latest book is *The Hardest Path is the Easiest: exploring the Wisdom literature with Pascal, Burke, Kierkegaard and Chesterton* (Connor Court, \$29.95). He is Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Chesterton Society.

His reflections on the types of government formed part of a longer article, "Personal Policing, Personal Government," which was published in *News Weekly*, June 25, 2022 (<https://ncc.org.au/newsweekly>), and is reprinted with the kind permission of the Editor, Peter Kelleher.

Chesterton observed that there are two types of government: personal and impersonal.

Monarchy is an obvious and direct form of personal government. When the Church observes the Feast of Christ the King, it is celebrating the ultimate form of personal government.

Constitutional monarchies are a weakened but still vital form of personal government.

A strictly secular republic is an example of impersonal government; laws and edicts are the primary means of control no matter who is actually in power at any given time.

The European Union — its clumsy parliament notwithstanding — is another example of impersonal government, with a distant, unaccountable and anonymous bureaucracy imposing arcane regulations.

Impersonal governments tend to drift towards an *ersatz* of personal government by developing a surrogate. For example, France has the Marianne figure. Other republics develop a cult around the president or dictator.

Broadly speaking, people prefer personal government to impersonal government. People identify with a king or queen more readily than with a political system. The reason is obvious: a royal family has babies, weddings, illnesses, hardships, birthdays and bereavements like we do.

Another benefit of a royal family—even when their role is largely ceremonial or social—is that they remind people of shared values and customs. This is one worthy characteristic of the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

In the 1930s, Chesterton wrote about the good things in England (and by extension the Commonwealth) that King George V helped to preserve simply by being above fads and fashions - especially at a time when social changes were at least as influential as political changes.

It was an era like ours, when long-established customs, roles, values and manners were being upended to serve impulsive

minorities who had social power.

Big businesses, celebrities and non-government organisations (NGOs) led the charge with too many imprudent politicians following up with silly laws.

In one of his later essays, Chesterton wrote:

"In the things that matter most at the moment, King George most definitely has a policy: a policy of despising fantastic luxury and indiscriminate innovation; of preserving the old social sanity which used to be counted specially English...

"It has probably made a vast difference that the first family in the nation has been so firmly fixed on that foundation. It has made it impossible for moderation and modesty and common sense in custom and costume to die out in the lower middle classes as things entirely dowdy and discredited ...

"Monarchy has taken on again something of its ancient leadership in matters that were once counted light and trivial, but which have become, in this strange season and in the eyes of all the wise, very weighty.

"In many vital ways, the King has been able to represent all that society that is outside Society. He had had to be the protector of something at once huge and hidden; to represent the normal when the abnormal is more in evidence; to defend a mob of inarticulate decencies that cannot defend themselves...

"It is well when the central institutions or individuals of a society represent all the neglected normality.

"The popularity of King George will stand at least as a sort of solid reminder of the proportion of things; will tell the world that we are not all divorced; that we are not all degenerates; that we are not all pestering the world with crazy philosophies and aesthetic versions; that human life can in sober reality really be lived; and as the royal sage added, with a noble irony: 'Life can be lived well even in a palace.'" (*Come to Think of It*, 1930). ■



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If you have a friend or family member who might enjoy a regular serving of Chestertonian common sense, please consider a subscription for them to *The Defendant*.

Send the Secretary-Treasurer, Gary Furnell (garyfurnell@yahoo.com), the recipient's name and address (email or postal, or both), and \$30.00 by electronic transfer to the Australian Chesterton Society's account - or by cheque to Gary Furnell (details available on page 5).

The Rise of a Chesterton Italy

by Karl Schmude

The recent elevation of Giorgia Meloni as Italy's Prime Minister has provoked comment on various fronts, not least because she quoted Chesterton in her victory speech.

It was not one of his most familiar comments which might be found in a book of quotations or summoned by a Google search. This suggested that she had actually read Chesterton – and his 1905 book, *Heretics*, in which the lines were published in the final paragraph.

It was not the first time Meloni had cited Chesterton. In 2019, she finished a speech to the World Congress of Families with the same quotation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vd-fNSF-U6zc>.

On that occasion, she said – somewhat prophetically, as it turned out:

"Chesterton wrote, more than a century ago, 'Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer.' That time has arrived. We are ready."

In the 2019 speech, Meloni attacked the cultural trends that were destroying traditional identities and ordinary loyalties:

"I can't define myself as Italian, Christian, woman, mother. No. I must be citizen x, gender x, parent 1, parent 2. I must be a number."

In her 2022 victory speech as leader of the Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia), the pro-family party heading the winning political coalition, Meloni made a similar point – and quoted Chesterton again as part of a rousing declaration of belief:

"We are not code numbers... and we'll defend our identity. I am Giorgia. I am a woman. I am a mother. I am Italian. I am Christian!"

Such statements were bound to raise the hackles of the dominant political elites in Europe who are devoted to a globalised world of shifting values, and no longer prize

the cultural roots and local loyalties that bind most ordinary people together.

"The most dangerous woman in Europe," warned Germany's *Stern* magazine - in a common dismissal of Meloni as a representative of the "far right".

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, expressed concern even prior to the Italian election: "If things go in a difficult direction, I've spoken about Hungary and Poland, we have tools."

As a columnist in the London *Telegraph*, Allison Pearson, commented:

"They call Giorgia Meloni a fascist, but it's the impeccably liberal von der Leyen who behaves like one. 'We have tools.' Spoken like a true totalitarian."

Recovery of common sense

If time had allowed in her speeches, Meloni might have read out the final sentences of *Heretics*. They expanded on Chesterton's passionate cry for a new intellectual revolution – the recovery of common sense.

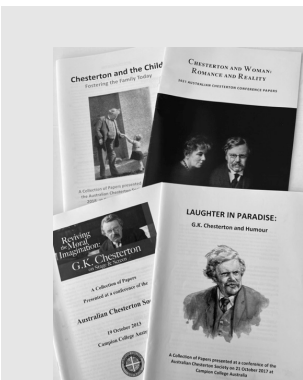
In Chesterton's words, immediately after the statements Meloni cited:

"We shall be left defending, not only the incredible virtues and sanities of human life, but something more incredible still, this huge impossible universe which stares us in the face. We shall fight for visible prodigies as if they were invisible. We shall look on the impossible grass and the skies with a strange courage.

"We shall be of those who have seen and yet have believed." ■



Giorgia Meloni at a victory rally in Rome, October 2022



Australian Chesterton Conference Papers

The papers from previous Australian Chesterton conferences are available for purchase - at \$20 per conference set (including postage) – by request from Karl Schmude (kgschmude@gmail.com) – for example:

- 2021 – "Chesterton and Woman: Romance and Reality"
- 2018 – "Chesterton and the Child – Fostering the Family Today"
- 2017 – "Laughter in Paradise: Chesterton and Humour"
- 2013 – "Reviving the Moral Imagination: G.K. Chesterton on Stage and Screen"



The 3-volume Chesterton bibliography

The Large Nation that was Chesterton

by Karl Schmude



Geir Hasnes in his study

The vastness of Chesterton's mind found expression in a vast output, and the challenge of capturing it in a bibliography would daunt even the most ambitious scholar.

Geir Hasnes is a Norwegian researcher who refused to be daunted. His long-awaited bibliography, *G.K. Chesterton: A Bibliography*, has now been published in three hardbound volumes.

It more than fulfils expectations as a truly phenomenal achievement – a work of comprehensive coverage and scholarly value which could not be surpassed.

The bibliography contains the expected listing of Chesterton's books and pamphlets (with abundant detail of their contents and publication history), as well as of his contributions to well-known periodicals such as the *Daily News*, the *Illustrated London News*, and *G.K.'s Weekly*.

But it has also managed to gather in a huge number of articles that were published in hidden and elusive places.

One example is the Chesterton pieces published in Australia, usually from British periodicals, such as in the *Catholic Fireside* (a monthly magazine founded in Sydney in 1934) and *Freeman's Journal* (now the *Sydney Catholic Weekly*).

A special section on "Australian Sources" notes a remarkable range of newspapers and journals that reprinted Chesterton's articles and gave lengthy accounts of his speeches.

Volume I and the first half of Volume II of the bibliography itemise these works in clear and painstaking detail. They reflect Geir Hasnes' operating principle of having a copy of everything at hand for examination, to ensure he could check content and sources directly and personally.

The remainder of Volume II records works by other authors relevant to Chesterton. One category of special interest is the works that feature his illustrations (as the natural artist he was throughout his life), particularly in the novels of Hilaire Belloc.

Another part of Volume II is an extensive section, of over 500 items, which lists books and pamphlets written on Chesterton, ranging from major biographies and specialised studies

to works partly devoted to his thought and writings. It conveys a remarkable picture of the enduring and worldwide interest he has generated for more than a century.

Volume III is in some ways the most fascinating compilation as it covers the most varied material – for example:

- periodicals devoted to Chesterton (including our own Australian quarterly, *The Defendant*, listing authors and articles);
- portraits and caricatures of Chesterton;
- translations of his works in many languages (amounting to over 1,300 items), representing not only European countries and (in Spanish and Portuguese) South America, but also Asia (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Thai) and the Middle East (Hebrew);
- films based on Chesterton's works – the most recent entry being the Australian-made movie of his play, *Magic*;
- significant Chesterton collections in mainly university libraries in the UK, Canada and the USA;
- impersonations of Chesterton as a character in fiction, including in Kel Richards' *Murder in the Mummy's Tomb: A G.K. Chesterton Mystery* (2002), and parodies of his style in over 50 books and a great many short stories, particularly relating to Father Brown.

The English poet and editor, Sir John Squire, once remarked of Hilaire Belloc, that "the man who attempts to survey [his] writings will think he is undertaking to write the literary history of a small nation."

Belloc was prolific, but this vast bibliography suggests that Chesterton was more like a *large* nation! ■

The first print run of Geir Hasnes' *G.K. Chesterton: A Bibliography* has already sold out and a second edition is being prepared. Anyone interested in acquiring a set is invited to contact Karl Schmude (kgschmude@gmail.com).

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Layout of 'The Defendant' designed by Jenna Fulop

Society Membership

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

Donations are always welcome.

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Chesterton's Devotion to Mary

by Gary Furnell

A review of *G.K. Chesterton and Our Lady: Readings and Essays on Chesterton's Spiritual Life*. Compiled and edited by Nancy Carpentier Brown, 2022. Available from The Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton - <https://www.chesterton.org/store/product/g-k-chesterton-and-our-lady/>

Reviewing this book was a challenge. The difficulty lay entirely with me.

The book is attractively presented with short chapters by a variety of engaging writers. Its sole subject is Gilbert Chesterton—whom I admire—and it focuses on only one aspect of Chesterton's life, his adoration of Mary. The book has been skilfully edited by Nancy Carpentier Brown.

My difficulty is that I didn't grow up Catholic and therefore the adoration of Mary is an exotic practice. Compounding my ignorance, I converted to Catholic in my mid-fifties — a few short years ago—and haven't yet developed much in Mariology. If no book review is definitive, my review must remain distinctly tentative.

Mary the stranger

Like Frances Chesterton — Gilbert's wife — for decades Anglicanism framed my Christian experience. Frances Chesterton's experience was High Church Anglicanism featuring vestments, a formal liturgy, bells and smells, and Saints' days with Mary being prominently honoured.

My Anglicanism was evangelical. The liturgy was informal; the sermon was the focus, not Holy Communion. We were wary of venerating saints lest they detract from Jesus.

Mary got only an honorary mention during Christmas services. She must decrease so Christ could increase.

In my many years attending Anglican churches I can't remember one sermon about Mary. When I visited a Uniting Church the minister there preached on Mary, after admitting that it was the first time in his decades of ministry he would present a sermon on her. It was a refreshing, enlightening message. I'm thankful for it.

By that time I was already heading towards Catholicism and that Uniting Church minister helped smooth my way by highlighting Mary's vitally important role in Christ's life.

Mary everywhere

Chesterton's books also smoothed my way. For example, in the Anglican Church aggrieved feminists—feeling underappreciated and dishonoured—agitated for greater roles, for ordination and clerical advancement.

I'd noticed that sometimes their feminist beliefs tended to trump their Christian beliefs and I grew alarmed at their divisive, almost bullying agenda.

In contrast, as Chesterton highlighted, nobody could legitimately accuse Catholicism of neglecting or dishonouring women. Everywhere you looked in Catholic churches, chapels, schools and hospitals there was a statue, an image, a cult around women — Mary predominately, but lots of women saints as well.

Throughout Catholic history the female genius, virtues and special talents have been celebrated with no lapse into harmful ideology, unfaithful compromise or disrespect between men and women. Chesterton helped me see this remarkable, balanced complexity. Mary was crucial to the balance.

Chesterton's deep respect for women was engendered by the example of his kind, loving, self-giving mother. This respect was reinforced by marriage to Frances, a wise, patient, endlessly helpful and loyal wife.

Underpinning his respect was his love for Mary, Mother of God, the unique woman whose vocation was to bear God and give Him to His creation.

I admit I have a lot to learn about Mary in particular and the communion of saints in general. This book has provided me with insight into Mary's importance and the varieties of veneration: prayers, songs, poems, requests for intercession, feast days and emulation of her simplicity, humility and purity.

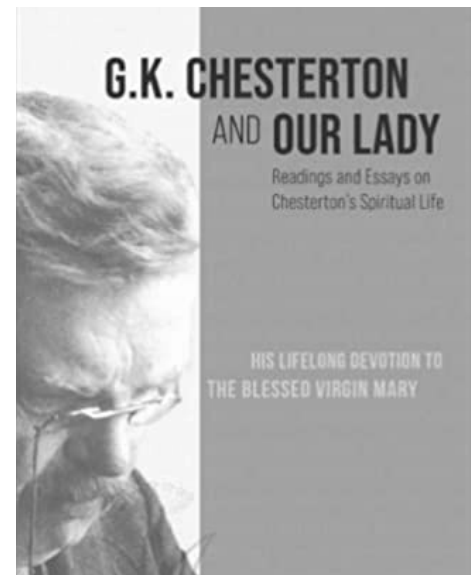
We see how important Mary was to Chesterton's devotional life.

A Picture in chapters

The first three chapters, two by Nancy Brown and the third by Karl Schmude, provide an overview of the place of Mary in Chesterton's spiritual life.

Karl admits that anyone's spirituality must contain mystery, and Chesterton's especially because he wrote so little about that aspect of his interior life. But he wrote more than enough about religion, philosophy and social concerns in poems, novels and essays that we can discern clear patterns.

Mary Romine contributes a chapter looking at Mary in Chesterton's poems. The poems reveal his loyalty to Mary and the inspiration for *his* life he derived from *her* life.



I've come late to appreciate Chesterton's poems, and this chapter together with other chapters by Nancy Brown and Peter Floriani assist with that poetry appreciation. They highlight poems I might not have otherwise encountered, or may have read without proper attention to Chesterton's intention.

Sam Guzman and Fr. Robert Wild each contribute stirring, sly and valuable chapters into the life and world-changing potential of venerating Mary.

Surely it would cure many ills that now afflict our societies - from our troubled relation to nature to our view of courage and humility. Venerating Mary would also aid the return of an immensely beneficial code of chivalry. I enjoyed these witty, piercing pieces.

I was glad to read a chapter about Frances Chesterton because no story about Gilbert is complete without her. In addition, I like her short lyrical poetry. It's accessible and honest. Devotion to Mary was natural to both Frances and Gilbert and perhaps it was one more reason for their happy marriage.

Chesterton fans will be rewarded by reading this meditation on his spiritual life, mostly revealed through his own writing.

Wisely, the authors avoid attempts at adventurous speculative psychology. They reveal what they can but leave intact the mystery of another person's interior life. ■

The Statue of Mary that Chesterton Bought

by Karl Schmude

In *Christendom in Dublin* (1933), the second of two books Chesterton wrote on Ireland, he recalls a story he heard long ago in Donegal.

It told of a meeting in the rocky wastes with a beautiful peasant woman carrying a child, who, on being asked her name, answered simply:

"I am the Mother of God, and this is Himself, and He is the boy you will all be wanting at the last."

Chesterton thought of this story while looking for a statue of the Virgin Mary for his new local church in Beaconsfield. He visited a shop in London where he was shown a range of beautiful and expensive examples which were not to his liking.

He then accompanied the proprietor upstairs to a store-room where he was struck by a particular Marian statue that had only just been unpacked. "[S]he was standing there," he wrote, "amid planks and shavings and sawdust, as she stood in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth."

The proprietor said that it had just arrived from Ireland; but, even without being told, Chesterton recognised it as unmistakably Irish – in its blend of simplicity and sublime majesty.

He bought the statue, which still stands in the church in Beaconsfield, on a high pedestal to the right of the altar. He realised it would have wider appeal. He remembered one man he knew who often walked a great distance out of his way to visit the church - and gaze at the image.

Chesterton himself always associated this image of Mary with the Donegal legend:

"She looks across the little church with an intense earnestness in which there is something of endless youth; and I have sometimes started, as if I had actually heard the words spoken across that emptiness:

'I am the Mother of God and this is Himself, and He is the boy you will all be wanting at the last.'" ■



The statue that Chesterton purchased is pictured in a travel diary by Brandon Vogt, who is a bestselling author and Senior Publishing Director for Bishop Robert Barron's Word on Fire (https://brandonvogt.com/chesterton-lewis-tolkien-newman-pilgrimage/?doing_wp_cron=1587121956.4124760627746582031250#chesterton). In the entry under "G.K. Chesterton" is an image of the statue of Mary in St. Teresa's Church in Beaconsfield.

Chesterton – The Great Detective

Report on the 2022 Australian Chesterton Conference

After a two-year COVID-related gap, the Australian Chesterton Society resumed its pattern of annual conferences - on Saturday, October 22, at Campion College in Sydney.

The 16th national conference since 2000, it addressed the theme, “G.K. Chesterton – The Great Detective,” and was attended by nearly fifty people.

Introducing the conference, Karl Schmude commented on the enduring interest in detective fiction - both in literature and TV series - and the extent to which Chesterton’s Father Brown, Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, and Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot are perennially popular.

He reflected on the idea of Chesterton as “the great detective”, not only as the literary creator of Father Brown, but also as a writer who extended the art of “detecting” to the good as well as the bad.

In an early essay, “A Defence of Detective Stories,” he stressed the value of looking imaginatively at people walking down the street, and how it is “more exciting to hunt their virtues than to hunt their crimes.”

He was alive to the full reality of the human person, “detecting” goodness and virtue, not just evil and vice.

Chesterton built this philosophy into his conception of Father Brown as an unusual character. His detective was a priest who investigates crime, in contrast to the conventional figures of a police officer or a private eye. And he was inspired by a different motive – to redeem the criminal rather than condemn him; to save him, as Chesterton put it, not to slay him.

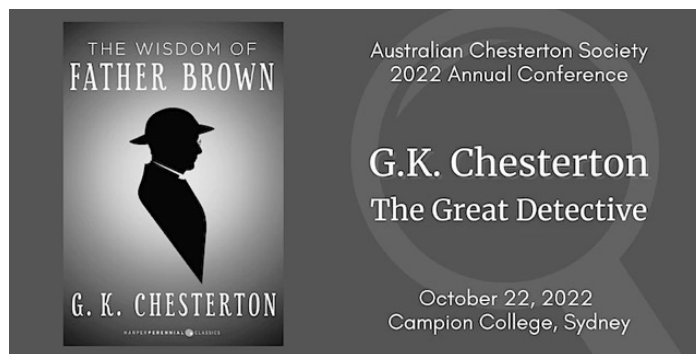
The opening speaker was **Symeon Thompson**, resident film critic for *News Weekly*. Walking down “The Mean Streets of Merrie England” (the title of his paper) he found parallels between Chesterton’s ideas and the hardboiled school of detective fiction expressed cinematically in film noir.

The works of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, and their film noir adaptations (starring actors like Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall), may seem at odds with the picture of a benign Chesterton without social awareness. But Symeon showed how this image was challenged by Chesterton’s passionate concern for social injustice and suffering.

Both Chesterton and the hardboiled writers responded to the dehumanising impact of modern industrial society, particularly the alienation resulting from it.

A second speaker was the researcher and author, **Richard Egan**, who offered a comparison between Chesterton and Dorothy Sayers as mystery writers who were also defenders of the mysteries of Christian orthodoxy.

He showed how both authors saw the connections between unravelling the mystery in a detective story and following



the divinely scattered clues in life that allow us to discover the Truth.

A special highlight of the conference was the presentation by the Sydney-based film-makers, **Elvis and Heather Joseph**, on their feature-length adaptation of Chesterton’s play, *Magic*. The project was self-funded, with Elvis as writer/director and his wife Heather as producer.

They showed excerpts from the movie and recounted their long period of preparation to bring different Chesterton works to the screen. In the pipeline they now have two of his novels, *The Ball and the Cross* and *The Man Who Was Thursday*.

The session after lunch began with a comparison by **Karl Schmude** of two detective characters - Father Brown and Inspector Clouseau (played by Peter Sellers in the *Pink Panther* movies).

Video clips of Clouseau were played which entertained the audience while also revealing the more serious points of contrast with the priest-detective, Father Brown.

Clouseau made his mark as an “anti-detective”. He misread evidence and undermined any investigation by causing confusion among witnesses and suspects alike.

Father Brown’s approach, on the other hand, was to concentrate on the character of the criminal rather than the discoverable details of clues and alibis. As a priest, he peered into the soul of the man. His interpretation of crime was spiritual and moral, not simply material and psychological.

This approach was illustrated in the closing session of the conference when the 1954 British movie, “The Detective,” was screened. It starred Alec Guinness as Father Brown, and the Australian actor, Peter Finch, as the master criminal, Flambeau, who under Father Brown’s influence later reformed and became a detective himself.

The conference papers will be available in both text and video form on the Society’s website (<http://chestertonaustralia.com/>). A paper version will also be produced as a conference booklet, for sale at \$30 (incl. postage), and details will be announced in *The Defendant* and on the website.