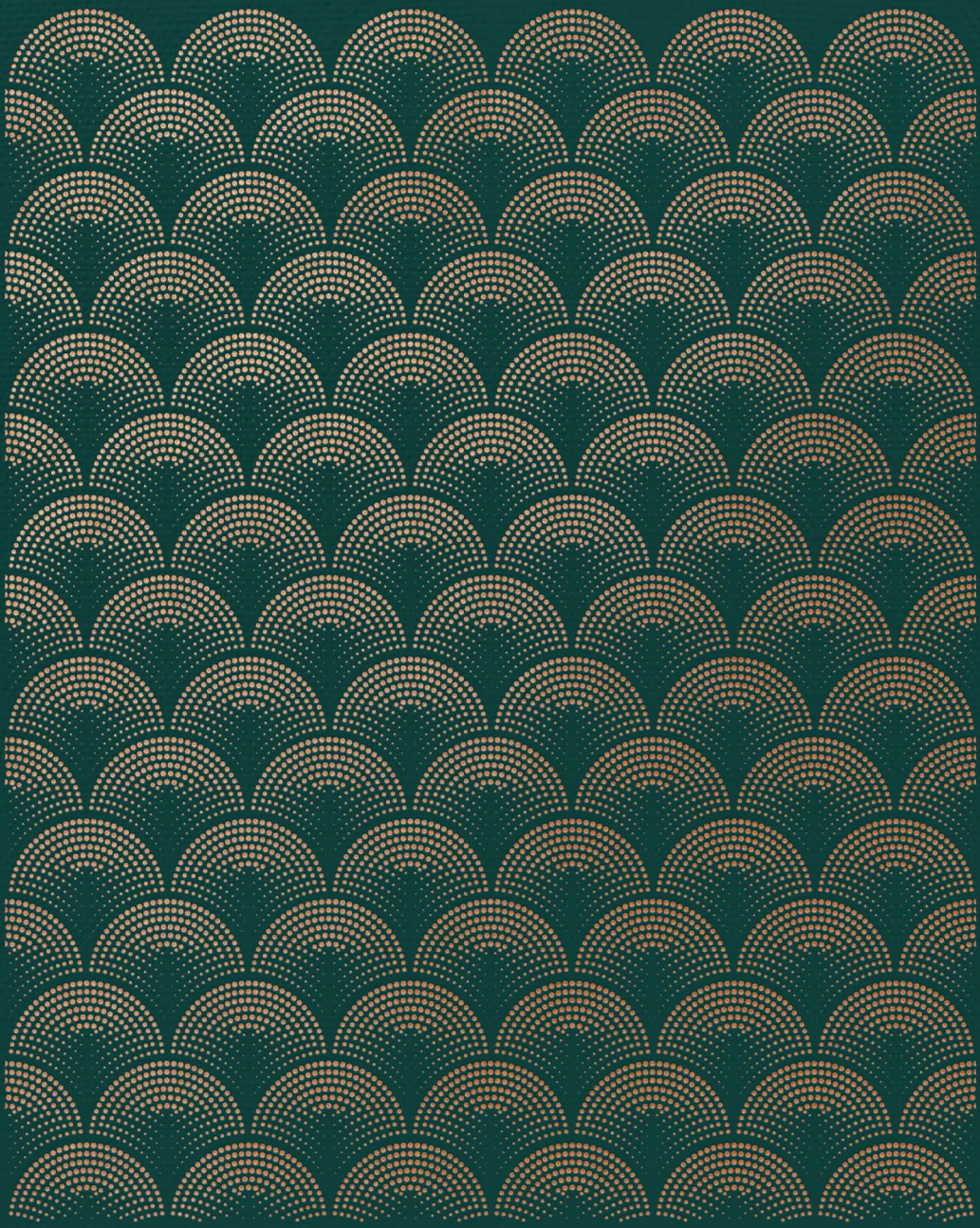
ORTHODOXY

G. K. Chesterton

With Annotations & Guided Reading
by TREVIN WAX



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Dedication

To my mother

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INTRODUCTION TO G. K. CHESTERTON AND *ORTHODOXY*

Where should we start when considering Gilbert Keith Chesterton? I struggle to describe him, beyond the general description of "writer." What kind of writer was he? He wrote poetry, perhaps best represented in *The Ballad of the White Horse* and *Lepanto*. But he was much more than a poet. He also wrote works of philosophy, apologetics, and history—often debating with the luminaries of his time, whether in person or on the page.

Should we begin with his art and literary criticism, of which his *Charles Dickens* is considered a classic, that introduced him to larger audiences? Or maybe his travelogues that contained his observations of different cultures? Some would point to the novels he wrote; the mind-bending *The Man Who Was Thursday* stands out. Chesterton's friend and intellectual opponent George Bernard Shaw thought highest of Chesterton's plays and always wished he would lean more into his identity as a playwright. But Chesterton was too busy as editor of a newsweekly, while dictating books on economics, culture, and society. Above all, he wrote essays—thousands of them over a period of nearly four decades, appearing in newspaper

columns worldwide. First and foremost, Chesterton saw himself as a journalist. Interestingly, a century later, he is best known not for his essays but his detective stories, most notably *Father Brown*.

Not knowing how best to describe Chesterton's prolific output, I turn to an accidental work of the great writer, a work never intended for publication: *Platitudes Undone*. This rare book is a facsimile edition of *Platitudes in the Making* published in 1911 by Holbrook Jackson, a disciple of Nietzsche and Fabian socialism. Jackson communicated his progressive "wisdom" through a collection of short and memorable statements, properly categorized for the readers of his day. In celebration of the book's release, he sent a copy to Chesterton, who, with a green pencil, proceeded to work his way through Jackson's book, commenting on nearly every one of the platitudes.

A few of my favorites:

- **As soon as an idea is accepted, it is time to reject it.** *No: it is time to build another idea on it. You are always rejecting if you build nothing.*
- **Truth is one's own conception of things.** *The Big Blunder. All thought is an attempt to discover if one's own conception is true or not.*
- **No opinion matters finally: except your own.** *Said the man who thought he was a rabbit.*
- **Don't think—do!** *Do think! Do!*
- **Every custom was once an eccentricity; every idea was once an absurdity.** *No, no, no. Some ideas were always absurdities. This is one of them.*
- **Doubt is the prerogative of the intellect; Faith, of the emotions. Nowadays the emotions have all the Doubt and the intellect all the Faith.** *The mind exists not to doubt but to decide.*
- **The great revolution of the future will be Nature's revolt against man.** *I hope Man will not hesitate to shoot.*
- **Love is protective only when it is free.** *Love is never free.*

Chesterton tested the platitudes of his age with countercultural thought and humor. Slogans and sayings, new terms and shifts in language, ideas that gain a foothold and then spread throughout our society—he believed all of them should be put to the test of deliberative evaluation. In *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton's most famous work of apologetics (*The Everlasting Man* is probably his best apologetic book), we see this countercultural thought on display, with writing that sparkles with wit and wisdom and wonder.

G. K. Chesterton's Impact

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born in England. He lived from 1874 to 1936. In the 1890s, while a student at the Slade School of Art, he experienced a period of profound pessimism and despair, due in part to the philosophical currents swirling about during that time. In his autobiography he describes himself "plunging deeper and deeper as in a blind spiritual suicide" before he revolted: "I hung on to the remains of religion by one thin thread of thanks." Groping his way toward a mental equilibrium based on a foundational first principle—that existence is better than nonexistence—Chesterton emerged from this experience and began to write. He began his career in 1900 and married Frances Blogg a year later. He wrote more than fifteen million words in his lifetime.

Chesterton's impact was and still is significant. In C. S. Lewis's autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis commented on his first encounter with Chesterton's writing: "In reading Chesterton . . . I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading." Chesterton's work became part of Lewis's journey to faith. "I had never heard of him and had no idea of what he stood for," Lewis wrote, "nor can I quite understand why he made such an immediate conquest of me. It might have been expected that my pessimism, my atheism, and my hatred of sentiment would have made him to me the least congenial of all authors. . . . Liking an author may be

as involuntary and improbable as falling in love." Lewis, the author famous for *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, considered Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* to be "the very best popular defense of the full Christian position I know."

Chesterton's influence was significant among other key figures of the twentieth century. Mahatma Gandhi translated one of Chesterton's essays in the *Illustrated London News,* an essay he described as leaving him "thunderstruck," which later influenced his book *Hind Swaraj*, a key source for inspiring the movement to end British rule in India.

Of Chesterton, T. S. Eliot wrote: "If I were to state his essential quality, I would say that it is a sort of triumphant common sense—a joyous acclaim toward the splendor and the powers of the soul."[1]

Marshall McLuhan, the respected Canadian philosopher and commentator on media theory and the influence of technology, wrote: "He is original in the only possible sense, because he considers everything in relation to its origin."[2]

Scott Randall Paine claims that the uniqueness of Chesterton lies in "precisely his fusion of the philosophical with the rhetorical, the imaginative and even the charitable. Perhaps the fullness of these harmonized endowments could best be captured by saying that he possessed an Augustinian imagination, a Thomistic intellect, and a Franciscan heart."[3]

We could multiply the tributes to Chesterton issued from his contemporaries and from leaders today. I submit just one more, from H. L. Mencken, a man who stood opposed to Christianity yet acknowledged *Orthodoxy* was "the best argument for Christianity I

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[1] T. S. Eliot, "Obituary Note," *Tablet*, June 20, 1936, 785.

[2] Marshall McLuhan, "G. K. Chesterton: A Practical Mystic," *Chesterton Review* 10, no. 1 (February 1984): 83; and McLuhan's introduction to Hugh Kenner's *Paradox in Chesterton* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1947), xii, xix.

[3] Scott Randall Paine, *The Universe and Mr. Chesterton* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2019), 14.

have ever read—and I have gone through, I suppose, fully a hundred."[4] It is to *Orthodoxy* that we now turn.

Brief Background on *Orthodoxy*

Dale Ahlquist, president of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, says, "If you only read one book by Chesterton—well then shame on you—but if you only read one book by Chesterton, it has to be *Orthodoxy*. (However, if you read only *Orthodoxy*, you had better read it more than once.)"[5] I agree. This is the best entry point into Chesterton's work, especially if you are most interested in Chesterton's role as an apologist for the Christian faith.

How did *Orthodoxy* come about? Chesterton's parents were nominally religious, baptizing Chesterton as an Anglican although they held to Unitarian beliefs. Once Chesterton emerged from a period of pessimism in the late 1890s, his philosophy of life became increasingly visible in his writing. In the early 1900s, he took part in a long-running debate over religion with Robert Blatchford of the *Clarion*. The debate focused primarily on theism against determinism; he did not delve into the particulars of the Christian creed.

In 1905, *Heretics* was released—a book that featured Chesterton's interaction with many of the leading thinkers of his day. In chapter after chapter, Chesterton argued with his contemporaries, combining the sharpness of intellect and stylistic verve that readers had come to appreciate in him. *Heretics* caused a stir, but to Chesterton's dismay many leading thinkers treated it superficially, as if his dazzling wit and rhetorical skill were merely a game for entertainment purposes. In 1937 Émile Cammaerts wrote of Chesterton's opponents:

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[4] H. L. Mencken, quoted in S. T. Joshi, *God's Defenders: What They Believe and Why They Are Wrong* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2003), 86.

[5] Dale Ahlquist, *G. K. Chesterton: The Apostle of Common Sense* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003), 22.

> They talked of his brilliant "fireworks" and of his "delightful paradoxes" when he was delivering his soul to them. They treated him as a conjurer when he spoke with the earnestness of a prophet, when his juggling was as sacred to him as a prayer, as the juggling of the juggler of *Notre-Dame*. They said that he dazzled them when he tried to open their eyes, and that he deafened them when he tried to open their ears. They confused the act and its motive, the words and the intention which dictated them.[6]

One of the reviewers of *Heretics* issued a challenge: the writer claimed he would consider his own philosophy of life only if Chesterton was willing to disclose his. Chesterton had critiqued contemporary philosophies, but he had not yet done the work of revealing his own. *Orthodoxy* was the book that came as a result. Chesterton was just thirty-four.

First published in 1908, *Orthodoxy* has never been out of print. "It is a dated work, dealing in the categories and concerns of Chesterton's contemporaries," acknowledges Matthew Lee Anderson, "and yet it comes nearer to timelessness than anything we have today. Though *Orthodoxy* was written near the start of the 20th century, I have dubbed it the most important book for the 21st."[7]

How to Read *Orthodoxy*

Orthodoxy is not a typical work of apologetics. It is the chronicle of an intellectual journey. In it, Chesterton describes a quest to found a new religion, a philosophy of life that will include everything that makes most sense of the world. Once he arrives at the end of his journey, he realizes the religion and its philosophy already exist. It is Christianity.

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[6] Emile Cammaerts, *The Laughing Prophet: The Seven Virtues and G. K. Chesterton* (n.p.: ACS Books, 1937), 17.

[7] Matthew Lee Anderson, foreword to G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.).

Orthodoxy is not an easy book. One reason it can be difficult at times is because of the historical and temporal distance between Chesterton and us. Unlike his initial readers, we are not familiar with many of the people and places he mentions. But the biggest reason that *Orthodoxy* can be a challenge is that you are reading "one of the deepest thinkers who ever existed," according to Étienne Gilson, the renowned Thomist scholar.[8] *Orthodoxy* is a workout for the mind. You will walk away feeling worn out as well as invigorated. If at first you feel more of the former than the latter, you're not alone.

The good news is there's no reason *Orthodoxy* has to be harder to read than it should be. I've done what I can to lessen the more challenging aspects of this book. For example, in line with the custom of the day, Chesterton wrote in lengthy paragraphs, sometimes spanning one or two pages. In order to enhance readability, I have inserted paragraph breaks and headings, so that the flow of Chesterton's argument becomes easier to discern. (I realize that inserting paragraph breaks and headings requires a judgment call in interpretation, but I trust that longtime readers of *Orthodoxy* who might disagree with some of my choices will still appreciate my efforts to make Chesterton more accessible to contemporary readers.) I have also updated the spelling in a number of instances.

Throughout the text, I've added annotations that give more detail on the people, events, and scriptural references Chesterton mentions. I sought to be more comprehensive than sparing in order to make the book more accessible to readers of all levels and backgrounds. My goal is to get you reading Chesterton without feeling so overwhelmed by his general knowledge and expertise that you give up. (That said, once I've left a note explaining who a certain person is, I do not leave another note about the same person if Chesterton mentions him or her again later in the text. You're on your own!)

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[8] Étienne Gilson, quoted in Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 620.

As a sidenote, if you were to read articles or books on just the people Chesterton mentions in this book, you'd get a crash course in England's history as well as the leading philosophies just before and after the turn of the twentieth century. In this way, reading Chesterton is like entering a new world, or, better said, it's entering *our* world with a trustworthy guide whose knowledge covers the terrain of history, philosophy, and theology.

I've been brief in my comments to each chapter on because I do not want to delay your getting into Chesterton's work by adding my own. My comments are designed to help you understand the lay of the land, so you can discern the pathways of Chesterton's brilliant mind and be able to follow the argument. I leave a few "memorable parts to look for" at the outset as well, so that you'll keep your eyes open for the areas of *Orthodoxy* that are most notable.

At the end of each chapter, my summaries intend to do just that—summarize what Chesterton has said, in order to make it easier to move forward to the next chapter and not forget what has gone before. Like any exercise routine or mountain-climbing endeavor, you're better off enlisting a partner or two than trying on your own. For this reason, I've included discussion questions at the end of each chapter to facilitate good conversation around the central aspects of Chesterton's work.

Orthodoxy feels at times like a cross between looking for golden nuggets in a dense jungle and whirling around on a roller coaster. Enjoy the ride. Keep the treasure.

PREFACE

This book is meant to be a companion to *Heretics,*[1] and to put the positive side in addition to the negative. Many critics complained of the book called *Heretics* because it merely criticised current philosophies without offering any alternative philosophy. This book is an attempt to answer the challenge. It is unavoidably affirmative and therefore unavoidably autobiographical. The writer has been driven back upon somewhat the same difficulty as that which beset Newman in writing his *Apologia*;[2] he has been forced to be egotistical only in order to be sincere. While everything else may be different, the motive in both cases is the same.

It is the purpose of the writer to attempt an explanation, not of whether the Christian Faith can be believed, but of how he personally has come to believe it. The book is therefore arranged upon the positive principle of a riddle and its answer. It deals first with

[1] Chesterton's book *Heretics*, published in 1905, was a collection of twenty essays interacting with the leading thinkers of his day and explaining why he believed so many of their most popular ideas to be wrong.

[2] John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (Latin for "A Defence of One's Own Life") was published in 1864 as an answer to Charles Kingsley of the Church of England. Newman quit his position as the Anglican vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, and became one of the nineteenth century's most famous and influential converts to the Roman Catholic Church.

all the writer's own solitary and sincere speculations and then with all the startling style in which they were all suddenly satisfied by the Christian Theology. The writer regards it as amounting to a convincing creed. But if it is not that it is at least a repeated and surprising coincidence.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

ONE

The first chapter of *Orthodoxy* is the shortest (and easiest to read). Chesterton sets out by introducing the purpose of this book and by giving us one of his most famous parables: the tale of the yachtsman. Fans of the late singer/songwriter Rich Mullins might recognize in the song "Creed" a few lines inspired by Chesterton's introduction. The lyricist wrote of his conviction that it was what he believed that made him who he was. He didn't make himself, the song says; his beliefs were making him. It was the Word of God—"the very truth of God"—and not any human invention. In other words, the lyrics seem to say, it was no man-made philosophy that shaped the songwriter, but God's own Word, which the singer had embraced and which was continually shaping his character.[†]

Chesterton's goal in this chapter is to explain his approach and rationale for the book, and also to introduce humanity's "double spiritual need" to be happy in the world but not completely comfortable in it—to be astonished at this world and yet feel welcome here. In seeking to solve the riddle of why we have this double need, Chesterton set out to discover and propound a new philosophy, only to find it was Christian orthodoxy.

[†] Rich Mullins and Beaker, "Creed," in Mullins, *A Liturgy, a Legacy, & a Ragamuffin Band*, Reunion, 1993, studio album.

Memorable Parts to Look For

- The parable of the yachtsman
- Humanity's double spiritual need

Introduction: In Defence of Everything Else

The only possible excuse for this book is that it is an answer to a challenge. Even a bad shot is dignified when he accepts a duel.

When some time ago I published a series of hasty but sincere papers, under the name of *Heretics*, several critics for whose intellect I have a warm respect (I may mention specially Mr. G. S. Street[1]) said that it was all very well for me to tell everybody to affirm his cosmic theory, but that I had carefully avoided supporting my precepts with example. "I will begin to worry about my philosophy," said Mr. Street, "when Mr. Chesterton has given us his."[2] It was per-

[1] George Slythe Street (1867–1936) was a British journalist and novelist, best known for his 1894 novel *The Autobiography of a Boy*.

[2] In the June 17, 1905, edition of the *Outlook*, Street's article "Mr. Chesterton" praised *Heretics* as a book with a thousand ideas, "a feast indeed . . . for a mind which loves ideas," revealing Chesterton as "an intellectual acrobat" who is, at times, "over-anxious to astonish" with his reliance on paradox. Street's biggest critique was that in *Heretics,* Chesterton's doctrine is "vague." He wrote: "That would not signify if he did not insist that a man's doctrine is the most important thing about him—I do not believe it—and

haps an incautious suggestion to make to a person only too ready to write books upon the feeblest provocation. But after all, though Mr. Street has inspired and created this book, he need not read it. If he does read it, he will find that in its pages I have attempted in a vague and personal way, in a set of mental pictures rather than in a series of deductions, to state the philosophy in which I have come to believe. I will not call it my philosophy; for I did not make it. God and humanity made it; and it made me.

The Man in the Yacht

I have often had a fancy for writing a romance about an English yachtsman who slightly miscalculated his course and discovered England under the impression that it was a new island in the South Seas. I always find, however, that I am either too busy or too lazy to write this fine work, so I may as well give it away for the purposes of philosophical illustration.

There will probably be a general impression that the man who landed (armed to the teeth and talking by signs) to plant the British flag on that barbaric temple which turned out to be the Pavilion at Brighton,[3] felt rather a fool. I am not here concerned to deny that he looked a fool. But if you imagine that he felt a fool, or at any rate that the sense of folly was his sole or his dominant emotion, then you have not studied with sufficient delicacy the rich romantic

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that the fault of the age is its lack of doctrine. But he is always so insisting, and all I can gather of his own doctrine is his belief that everyone else ought to have one. I shall not begin to worry about my philosophy of life until Mr. Chesterton discloses his." This was the challenge that prompted Chesterton to write *Orthodoxy*.

[3] The Brighton Pavilion is a former royal residence located in Brighton, England, built in 1784 as a seaside retreat for George, Prince of Wales, who became King George IV in 1820. Chesterton might have chosen this place for the yachtsman's "discovery" because of its Indo-Saracenic style, with domes and minarets that were the work of architect John Nash.

nature of the hero of this tale. His mistake was really a most enviable mistake; and he knew it, if he was the man I take him for.

What could be more delightful than to have in the same few minutes all the fascinating terrors of going abroad combined with all the humane security of coming home again?

What could be better than to have all the fun of discovering South Africa without the disgusting necessity of landing there?

What could be more glorious than to brace one's self up to discover New South Wales and then realize, with a gush of happy tears, that it was really old South Wales.

Answering a Double Spiritual Need

This at least seems to me the main problem for philosophers, and is in a manner the main problem of this book. How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it? How can this queer cosmic town, with its many-legged citizens, with its monstrous and ancient lamps, how can this world give us at once the fascination of a strange town and the comfort and honour of being our own town?

To show that a faith or a philosophy is true from every standpoint would be too big an undertaking even for a much bigger book than this; it is necessary to follow one path of argument; and this is the path that I here propose to follow. I wish to set forth my faith as particularly answering this double spiritual need, the need for that mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar which Christendom has rightly named romance. For the very word "romance" has in it the mystery and ancient meaning of Rome.

Any one setting out to dispute anything ought always to begin by saying what he does not dispute. Beyond stating what he proposes to prove, he should always state what he does not propose to prove. The thing I do not propose to prove, the thing I propose to take as common ground between myself and any average reader, is this desirability of an active and imaginative life, picturesque and full of a poetical curiosity, a life such as western man at any rate

always seems to have desired. If a man says that extinction is better than existence or blank existence better than variety and adventure, then he is not one of the ordinary people to whom I am talking. If a man prefers nothing I can give him nothing. But nearly all people I have ever met in this western society in which I live would agree to the general proposition that we need this life of practical romance; the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable. It is *this* achievement of my creed that I shall chiefly pursue in these pages.

My Discovery of Orthodoxy

But I have a peculiar reason for mentioning the man in a yacht, who discovered England. For I am that man in a yacht. I discovered England.

I do not see how this book can avoid being egotistical; and I do not quite see (to tell the truth) how it can avoid being dull. Dullness will, however, free me from the charge which I most lament; the charge of being flippant. Mere light sophistry is the thing that I happen to despise most of all things, and it is perhaps a wholesome fact that this is the thing of which I am generally accused. I know nothing so contemptible as a mere paradox; a mere ingenious defence of the indefensible.

If it were true (as has been said) that Mr. Bernard Shaw lived upon paradox,[4] then he ought to be a mere common millionaire;

[4] George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), an Irish playwright, critic, and political activist, was Chesterton's most famous philosophical opponent. Chesterton wrote a book on Shaw in 1909, which opened with the statement: "Most people say that they agree with Bernard Shaw or that they do not understand him. I am the only person who understands him, and I do not agree with him." Despite the stark differences in their beliefs, Chesterton and Shaw were good friends with genuine affection for each other. Shaw said Chesterton was a "colossal genius."

for a man of his mental activity could invent a sophistry every six minutes. It is as easy as lying; because it is lying. The truth is, of course, that Mr. Shaw is cruelly hampered by the fact that he cannot tell any lie unless he thinks it is the truth. I find myself under the same intolerable bondage. I never in my life said anything merely because I thought it funny; though of course, I have had ordinary human vainglory, and may have thought it funny because I had said it. It is one thing to describe an interview with a gorgon or a griffin, a creature who does not exist. It is another thing to discover that the rhinoceros does exist and then take pleasure in the fact that he looks as if he didn't. One searches for truth, but it may be that one pursues instinctively the more extraordinary truths. And I offer this book with the heartiest sentiments to all the jolly people who hate what I write, and regard it (very justly, for all I know), as a piece of poor clowning or a single tiresome joke.

For if this book is a joke it is a joke against me. I am the man who with the utmost daring discovered what had been discovered before. If there is an element of farce in what follows, the farce is at my own expense; for this book explains how I fancied I was the first to set foot in Brighton and then found I was the last. It recounts my elephantine adventures in pursuit of the obvious. No one can think my case more ludicrous than I think it myself; no reader can accuse me here of trying to make a fool of him: I am the fool of this story, and no rebel shall hurl me from my throne.

I freely confess all the idiotic ambitions of the end of the nineteenth century. I did, like all other solemn little boys, try to be in advance of the age. Like them I tried to be some ten minutes in advance of the truth. And I found that I was eighteen hundred years behind it. I did strain my voice with a painfully juvenile exaggeration in uttering my truths. And I was punished in the fittest and funniest way, for I have kept my truths: but I have discovered, not that they were not truths, but simply that they were not mine. When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed up by all Christendom. It may be, Heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original; but I only succeeded in

inventing all by myself an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion.

The man from the yacht thought he was the first to find England; I thought I was the first to find Europe. I did try to found a heresy of my own; and when I had put the last touches to it, I discovered that it was orthodoxy.

The Meaning of "Orthodoxy"

It may be that somebody will be entertained by the account of this happy fiasco. It might amuse a friend or an enemy to read how I gradually learnt from the truth of some stray legend or from the falsehood of some dominant philosophy, things that I might have learnt from my catechism—if I had ever learnt it. There may or may not be some entertainment in reading how I found at last in an anarchist club or a Babylonian temple what I might have found in the nearest parish church. If any one is entertained by learning how the flowers of the field or the phrases in an omnibus, the accidents of politics or the pains of youth came together in a certain order to produce a certain conviction of Christian orthodoxy, he may possibly read this book. But there is in everything a reasonable division of labour. I have written the book, and nothing on earth would induce me to read it.

I add one purely pedantic note which comes, as a note naturally should, at the beginning of the book. These essays are concerned only to discuss the actual fact that the central Christian theology (sufficiently summarized in the Apostles' Creed) is the best root of energy and sound ethics. They are not intended to discuss the very fascinating but quite different question of what is the present seat of authority for the proclamation of that creed. When the word "orthodoxy" is used here it means the Apostles' Creed, as understood by everybody calling himself Christian until a very short time ago and the general historic conduct of those who held such a creed. I have been forced by mere space to confine myself to what I have got from this creed; I do not touch the matter much disputed

among modern Christians, of where we ourselves got it. This is not an ecclesiastical treatise but a sort of slovenly autobiography. But if any one wants my opinions about the actual nature of the authority, Mr. G. S. Street has only to throw me another challenge, and I will write him another book.

Chapter Summary

In this introduction Chesterton compared himself to a yachtsman who set sail for foreign lands only to succeed in discovering his homeland. When Chesterton set out to create a philosophy that aligned with what he saw as common sense in the world, he found to his surprise that Christianity had discovered these truths long before him.

What is the philosophical conundrum that Chesterton seeks to resolve in the book? Put simply, it is the double spiritual need: finding the world both familiar and unfamiliar—to wonder at the world while feeling welcome in it. "How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it?"

The rest of the book seeks to answer this question, not as an apologetic in the classic sense, but as an intellectual autobiography. Chesterton will tell of his discovery of orthodoxy through a series of mental images, not through a systematician's approach. Chesterton has on his artist's cap, and he plans to paint a series of pictures that helps us see why humanity feels both the instinct of wonder at the world and the need for security and comfort in it, and why Christianity alone satisfies this double need.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of Chesterton's comment that he is not the maker of the Christian creed but that the Christian creed is what makes him?
2. In what ways do you feel "at home" and "welcome" in the world? In what ways do you feel uncomfortable or "astounded" at the world?
3. What mental images and associations are stirred up in you by the word "orthodoxy" in relation to Christianity? Are they positive or negative, or somewhere in between? Where do you think these associations come from?