

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Biography:

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born on May 29th, 1874 in England. As a man of letters, he wore many hats of a critic, essayist, novelist and short story writer during his time. He had an exuberant disposition and rotund personality.

Chesterton was educated at St. Paul's school and later studied art at the Slade School and literature at university college, London. Politically he began as a liberal but after a brief radical period became , with his christian and medievalist friend Hilaire Belloc, a Distributist, favouring the distribution of land. His social criticism are collected in *The Defendant* (1901), *Twelve Types* (1902) and *Heretics* (1905). His literary criticism is directed on the famous authors and poets of the 19th and 20th century such as *Charles Dickens* (1906), *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens* (1911), *George Bernard Shaw* (1909) , *The Victorian age in literature* (1913) etc.

As an essayist:

Chesterton has written essays on a wide variety of topics over a span of more than 40 years. When his first collection of essays, *The Defendant* appeared in 1901, he had already gained the reputation as an essayist for his contributions for a number of english periodicals such as the *Speaker*, the *Bookman* and the *Daily News*. Chesterton's prose had a paradoxical approach and was imbued with a healthy dose of humour. His subject matter ranged from deeply philosophical, topical to nonsense and ugly things of day to day life. While not given to writing overtly funny, rollicking essays, Chesterton was always cognizant of the fact that a little humour in an otherwise serious work could strengthen its argument and draw attention to the essays salient points.

In addition to his humour, perhaps the other characteristic Chesterton's work was noted for was his occasional laudatory stance on Orthodox Christianity. Then, as now, alluding to one's

religious beliefs could be literary suicide, but Chesterton never appeared to worry about offending his readers; in fact he seemed aware that his place as a man of letters provided him a unique opportunity to share his views and religious opinions.

Hilaire Belloc, his friend said at Chesterton's death that his "was a voice from which I learnt continually, from the first day, I heard it until the last; acquiring its discoveries, explanations, definitions which continue to increase my possessions. Nor does it cease. Nor will it cease."