

## Book Reviews

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**G. K. Chesterton, *ABCs of the Christian Life: The Ultimate Anthology of the Prince of Paradox*. (South Bend, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2017) \$12.45 (paperback), 192 pp.**

One of the primary difficulties when encountering the writings of G.K. Chesterton is to know where to begin. He was a prolific writer who explored a plethora of topics through a variety of literary genres in both prose and poetry. Moreover, Chesterton was not a systematic writer in the strict sense of the term. Often he surprises his readers by offering a profound philosophical or theological insight in the most unexpected of places, often hidden within the pages of his many biographies, newspaper articles, detective-fiction novels, and essays.

The *ABCs of the Christian Life* offers a welcome contribution to remedy both of these inherent obstacles. With one topic corresponding to each letter from the alphabet, this anthology of Chesterton's writings provides excerpts from his reflections on a variety of topics under titles such as Charles Dickens, Bethlehem, Kensington High Street, Words, and Religions Compared. The selection of writings offered in this collection provides a nice introduction for new readers to Chesterton, while refreshing the memories of seasoned followers and devotees. The editors have succeeded in selecting writings that reflect the ideas and concepts that were most significant for Chesterton and that demonstrate his range as a thinker and writer, including important excerpts from *St Thomas Aquinas*, *Orthodoxy*, and *The Everlasting Man*. Moreover, the format is significant for introducing new readers to the profound thoughts of Chesterton. One needs to become accustomed to his unique style of writing and the profound insights he offers through the employment of literary devices, such as paradox and estrangement. By digesting these observations in small portions, the reader is able to reflect upon the multiple layers of insight that Chesterton brings to ordinary life and to appreciate the depth of his thought.

While the volume provides a nice representation of Chesterton's reflections, there are a few minor quibbles that might improve its accessibility. Firstly, the inclusion of an introduction that explains the reasons why these particular excerpts were selected would have enhanced this collection. Even for those individuals familiar with Chesterton, it is not entirely clear why some writings were included and why others were not. Secondly, the inclusion of a short introduction at the beginning of each selection, along with the relevant bibliographical information, would have provided more

clarity for the reader. Instead, one is left to refer back constantly to the end of the anthology to find out where Chesterton wrote that particular piece. By providing this information, the anthology would have been more effective at presenting the ideas and unique writing ability of Chesterton.

The world needs more G.K. Chesterton. In an age when a myriad of distractions tend to obscure the perceptual lens through which humans view the world, Chesterton is able to illuminate and focus upon the important, foundational aspects of reality. If carefully digested, the reader of the *ABCs of the Christian Life* will never perceive the world in the same manner again and that, in itself, is all the reason one needs to justify this volume.

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