

'The Everlasting Man' is revealed as Jesus Christ

Part of the rage on the contemporary scene is the promise of transhuman technology in creating “the everlasting man.” That is, the blending of humans, robotics and artificial intelligence may offer up the everlasting man or eternal life. Some of us may laugh at this idea, but there are those exercising faith in the promise of this technology. My faith, however, has a longer history and will be celebrated later this month. It is a faith defended by some of the most brilliant human beings ever to walk this planet. One of those brilliant thinkers wrote in the first half of the twentieth century about his own understanding of an everlasting man. The Christmas season is therefore, an appropriate time to hear his voice.

One hundred years ago, "The Everlasting Man" was published by Gilbert Keith (G.K.) Chesterton. He was an essayist, poet, journalist, philosopher, and Christian apologist. In his lifetime, he would write 80 books, 200 short stories, several hundred poems, and about 4,000 essays. He would be nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1935. In other words, Chesterton was an extraordinary and consequential writer. His book "The Everlasting Man" would be a major influence upon the conversion of the great Oxford and Cambridge scholar C.S. Lewis to the Christian faith. The book naturally warrants our attention at Christmas time, as most of us sense that Chesterton's “everlasting man”

is the incarnate Jesus Christ.

This is what Lewis wrote about Chesterton: “In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, 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. There are traps everywhere ... God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous.” Lewis reveals his high regard for Chesterton and shares Chesterton's humor, but what did he think about Chesterton's book? Lewis wrote: “I read Chesterton's "The Everlasting Man and for the first time saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to me to make sense.” Later, Lewis put it even more eloquently: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” And, so, the coherence of worldview was important to Lewis's conversion to Christ. In fact, it would be Chesterton's Everlasting Man that would prompt Lewis's reexamination of the historicity and reliability of the New Testament gospel accounts. And Lewis's professional expertise would convince him the accounts were historical, not legendary. Other influences would be important to Lewis as well, including his conversations with Oxford friend Owen Barfield and colleagues Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien.

However, the influence of Chesterton's The Everlasting Man cannot be overestimated. The work

was a rebuttal to H.G. Wells's atheistic account of human history in The Outline of History (1923). Wells's argument emphasized an understanding of human evolution without God, providence, or purpose. Social progress depends upon humanity



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alone, especially scientific and technological advances. The work was consequential not only in England but throughout the world. Chesterton disagreed. His survey led him to a different conclusion. If Jesus Christ truly is the “everlasting man,” then all of history and civilization has changed. Rather than beginning with the premise that the human species is progressively evolving, we begin with the premise that history has been radically interrupted. As Chesterton, in summarizing his book, puts it, “Rather have I deliberately dwelt on that incredible interruption as a blow that broke the very backbone of history.” The evidence of this radical interruption is all around us. And as Chesterton the apologist observes, “If it (Christianity) were an error, it seems as if the error could hardly have lasted a day. If it were a mere ecstasy, it would seem that

such an ecstasy could not endure for an hour. It has endured for nearly two thousand years, and the world within it has been more lucid, more level-headed, more reasonable in its hopes, more healthy in its instincts, more humorous and cheerful in the face of fate and death, than all the world outside.”

And, so, what do we make of this clash between the worldviews of H.G. Wells and G.K. Chesterton? I submit two observations. First, the “clash” seems highly relevant to discourse in the West one hundred years after the initial debate. Much of the “culture war” and polarization in the West resembles this debate. And second, the “clash” seems to call for a choice rather than a synthesis. Hopes for synthesis strike me as unreasonable and probably impossible. As I intimated at the outset, I personally agree with Chesterton, and for many other reasons. The ancient promise of a profoundly new, everlasting life, not a humanly manufactured one, has great appeal. The choice is not even close. Merry Christmas!

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Love gives, lust takes

Romans 5: 8 "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us".

Advice we occasionally hear given to young people is, “Don’t confuse love with lust.” Lust is usually associated with sexual desires. Our physical bodies cause us to do many things we later regret, and the powerful sexual desire of humans at times affects our ability to reason rationally.

The word love is often confused. Eros love is a love between a husband and wife, and not to be confused with agape love. Agape love is actually the highest form of love. God's love for His creation is demonstrated in this definition. Jesus demonstrated this selfless sacrificial love on the cross.

Lust, of course, can be for riches, power, or prestige. A strong, insatiable desire for anything that causes one to act irrationally to be satisfied can be classified as lust.

Exodus 20: 17a “Thou shalt not covet.” Coveting is very closely connected to lust. In many cases, they may be exactly the same. Our desires can very easily overreach into sin.

Lust is of the body, and love is of the heart. Lust is a physical desire, while love is a deeper, more emotional, and committed feeling.

Lust could never provide the commitment that does actual love. Lust is selfish and immediate, while love is selfless and patient.

Many non-believers in the world consider the story of Jesus giving

Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind to be an irrational, illogical belief. Why would, how could the Creator of all things do such a thing?

This is where the differences between Christianity and some other world religions begin to emerge. Whereas Christianity is about God's love for His creation (mankind), various other religions are about power, selfishness, hatred, human sacrifice, or man's actions to gain eternity.

We do not have eternal salvation by what we may do but by what Jesus did. His sacrificial shedding of blood became the sacrifice for the sins of all.

John 15: 12-14 “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

American military service men and women, firefighters, and police officers lay their lives on the line every day. Many jobs are more than a paycheck, and “life on the line” is an everyday existence.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (Living Bible) “Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.”

This definition of “love” given by the Apostle Paul makes a statement all need to hear and heed. When we think

of love and it does not conform to this description in 1 Corinthians, perhaps we should re-examine our personal definitions of love.

Perhaps Paul's thoughts concerning love and many world religions not practicing these simple concepts



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explains why the world is in such chaos today. The presence of love would not include the wars and many illegal activities happening in our world today.

Many resent the Christian concept of the urgency of promoting the Gospel of Christ Jesus. The vast misunderstanding is because teaching the love of Christ is an act of love.

I will never forget talking to a man in a (mostly) non-Christian country. After explaining the path to eternity through belief in Christ, he asked me, “What does it cost?” He thought I was trying to sell him something.

When I told him it was a free gift from God and that I was there because the Bible commanded me to, he was at a loss for words.

We tell others about the saving power of our Jesus because He has commanded us to do exactly that (Matthew 28: 18-20 and Acts 1: 8). Secondly, because we are Christians, we are commanded to love all mankind.

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” This cannot be interpreted as loving only those we personally know, but all the world's people. Because of this, we go to “the uttermost” (Acts 1: 8) to preach and teach.

John 13:34-35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Loving all people demonstrates to the world that we are not only believers but also followers of the Lord Jesus.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have ever lasting life." John clearly states in repeating the words of Jesus that “God so loved the world.”

With the approaching Christmas season, we are reminded of God's love for us through the sights and sounds. The birth of the Christ child was the beginning of the redemption of man. Since the “fall of man” (Genesis 3), man has had the need to be redeemed, and Jesus provided that.

We must always teach that eternal salvation is attained by a faith-based belief (Ephesians 2: 8) in Christ Jesus crucified (Matthew 27: 35) for the remission of sin (1 John 1: 9), resurrected (Matthew 28: 6) and ascended alive into Heaven (Acts 1: 9).

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The Case of the Thieving Squirrel

I must admit that I have never spent much time thinking about the morality of a squirrel. However, this week, I've been forced to do just that. Don't get me wrong, I know a squirrel will rob a bird feeder in seconds flat and never look back. However, I had no idea what lengths a squirrel would go to get one over on me.

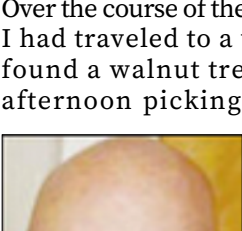
I suppose every town has that one troublemaker. Some places have a raccoon with a grudge that spreads your garbage across your lawn for you to pick up. Maybe other places have some peeved-off ducks that like to attack joggers in the park. However, in my neighborhood, we've got Ricky the squirrel, otherwise known as Jesse James, as he will rob and steal with no apparent remorse whatsoever. Ricky isn't a normal squirrel; no, he's the Ocean Eleven of wildlife. If George Clooney had buck teeth, a twitchy tail, and an addiction to birdseed, that would be Ricky.

My first interaction with Ricky started

when I saw him eating an apple core that I threw into the yard. I was so innocent and naïve then. I saw Ricky and thought how cute he was. Then, I woke up one morning to find my birdfeeder was absolutely ransacked. I made the mistake of leaving the bag of birdseed sitting on the porch, and he made me pay for my mistake as he had no problem gorging himself as if it were Thanksgiving all over again. I learned from my mistake and put the seed inside a coffee canister for storage. However, the next week, I woke up to find that Ricky had chewed through the plastic coffee can and had helped himself again. I looked up and saw Ricky taunting me from a tree limb, as if daring me to call the squirrel police. That was the last straw. I declared war.

I must admit that I was feeling a little smug when I went out and bought a metal storage bin to keep the seed in, and that seemed to be the end of Ricky and his thieving ways. However, little did I know that his biggest heist was yet to come.

Over the course of the next few weeks, I had traveled to a wooded area and found a walnut tree, and spent the afternoon picking up walnuts and



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carefully brought them home to dry out so that I could shuck and crack them with the plan of having fresh walnuts for my Christmas desserts. I brought the walnuts inside my garage because I still had a little PTSD going on from previous robberies.

I checked on the walnuts every day, just waiting for them to mature enough to husk and crack. Finally, the day had arrived, and as I went to bed, I couldn't wait to get up the next morning and start to harvest the delicious nuts. However, when I went out to the garage, all I found was a broken window and a trail of

walnut husks. Ricky the thieving squirrel had returned. While I thought I had beaten him, he was really just biding his time and recruited a syndicate of a squirrel mafia to rob me blind. I went to my phone to check the doorbell video from the previous night, and there I saw them. There was a squirrel called Lefty, who was the one-eared lookout. There was Twig, who always chewed on sticks like a nervous henchman. Big Mama fluff screamed directions from a tree branch, and of course, there stood Ricky smiling from ear to ear.

These days, Ricky sits on the fence like a tiny mob boss staring down delivery drivers. He's got a personal walnut stash hidden somewhere that will someday be classified as the largest nut storage facility on record. Every morning, we lock eyeballs, and I whisper to myself, “Someday, Ricky, someday”. Something tells me I may need a hobby.