G.K. Chesterton, the Quotemeister

"The act of defending any of the cardinal virtues has today all the exhilaration of a vice." - *A Defense of Humilities, The Defendant, 1901*

"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions." - *ILN, 4/19/30*

"What embitters the world is not excess of criticism, but an absence of self-criticism." - *Sidelights on New London and Newer New York*

"He is a [sane] man who can have tragedy in his heart and comedy in his head." - *Tremendous Trifles, 1909*

"Among the rich you will never find a really generous man even by accident. They may give their money away, but they will never give themselves away; they are egotistic, secretive, dry as old bones. To be smart enough to get all that money you must be dull enough to want it." - *A Miscellany of Men*

"I believe what really happens in history is this: the old man is always wrong; and the young people are always wrong about what is wrong with him. The practical form it takes is this: that, while the old man may stand by some stupid custom, the young man always attacks it with some theory that turns out to be equally stupid." - *ILN 6-3-22*

"The person who is really in revolt is the optimist, who generally lives and dies in a desperate and suicidal effort to persuade other people how good they are." - *Introduction to The Defendant*

"To have a right to do a thing is not at all the same as to be right in doing it." - *A Short History of England, Ch.10*

"The free man owns himself. He can damage himself with either eating or drinking; he can ruin himself with gambling. If he does he is certainly a damn fool, and he might possibly be a damned soul; but if he may not, he is not a free man any more than a dog." - *Broadcast talk 6-11-35*

"The reformer is always right about what is wrong. He is generally wrong about what is right." - *ILN 10-28-22*

"Man is always something worse or something better than an animal; and a mere argument from animal perfection never touches him at all. Thus, in sex no animal is either chivalrous or obscene. And thus no animal invented anything so bad as drunkeness - or so good as drink." - *Wine when it is red* *All Things Considered*

"Progress should mean that we are always changing the world to fit the vision, instead we are always changing the vision." - *Orthodoxy, 1908*
"My attitude toward progress has passed from antagonism to boredom. I have long ceased to argue with people who prefer Thursday to Wednesday because it is Thursday." - *New York Times Magazine, 2/11/23*

"Men invent new ideals because they dare not attempt old ideals. They look forward with enthusiasm, because they are afraid to look back." - *What's Wrong With The World, 1910*

"Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to that arrogant oligarchy who merely happen to be walking around." - *Orthodoxy, 1908*

"I still hold... that the suburbs ought to be either glorified by romance and religion or else destroyed by fire from heaven, or even by firebrands from the earth." - *The Coloured Lands*

"The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." - *ILN, 1/14/11*

"Once abolish the God, and the government becomes the God." - *Christendom in Dublin, 1933*

"Men are ruled, at this minute by the clock, by liars who refuse them news, and by fools who cannot govern." - *The New Name, Utopia of Usurers and Other Essays, 1917*

"All government is an ugly necessity." - *A Short History of England, 63*

"The whole modern world has divided itself into Conservatives and Progressives. The business of Progressives is to go on making mistakes. The business of the Conservatives is to prevent the mistakes from being corrected." - *ILN, 4/19/24*

"The modern city is ugly not because it is a city but because it is not enough of a city, because it is a jungle, because it is confused and anarchic, and surging with selfish and materialistic energies." - "The Way to the Stars" Lunacy and Letters

"Love means loving the unlovable - or it is no virtue at all." - *Heretics, 1905*

"Women are the only realists; their whole object in life is to pit their realism against the extravagant, excessive, and occasionally drunken idealism of men." - *A Handful of Authors*

"The whole pleasure of marriage is that it is a perpetual crisis." - "David Copperfield," *Chesterton on Dickens, 1911*

"The first two facts which a healthy boy or girl feels about sex are these: first that it is beautiful and then that it is dangerous." - *ILN 1/9/09*

"The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people." - *ILN, 7/16/10*
"If there were no God, there would be no atheists." - Where All Roads Lead, 1922

"There are those who hate Christianity and call their hatred an all-embracing love for all religions." - ILN, 1/13/06

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried." - Chapter 5, What's Wrong With The World, 1910

"The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man." - Introduction to the Book of Job, 1907

"These are the days when the Christian is expected to praise every creed except his own." - ILN 8-11-28

"If a man called Christmas Day a mere hypocritical excuse for drunkenness and gluttony, that would be false, but it would have a fact hidden in it somewhere. But when Bernard Shaw says that Christmas Day is only a conspiracy kept up by Poulterers and wine merchants from strictly business motives, then he says something which is not so much false as startling and arrestingly foolish. He might as well say that the two sexes were invented by jewellers who wanted to sell wedding rings." - George Bernard Shaw, Ch. 6

"The great majority of people will go on observing forms that cannot be explained; they will keep Christmas Day with Christmas gifts and Christmas benedictions; they will continue to do it; and some day suddenly wake up and discover why." - On Christmas," Generally Speaking

"Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable." - ILN, 10/23/09

"All men thirst to confess their crimes more than tired beasts thirst for water; but they naturally object to confessing them while other people, who have also committed the same crimes, sit by and laugh at them." - ILN 3/14/08

"Idolatry is committed, not merely by setting up false gods, but also by setting up false devils; by making men afraid of war or alcohol, or economic law, when they should be afraid of spiritual corruption and cowardice." - ILN 9/11/09

"I say that a man must be certain of his morality for the simple reason that he has to suffer for it." - ILN 8/4/06

"Great truths can only be forgotten and can never be falsified." - ILN 9-30-33

"Most modern freedom is at root fear. It is not so much that we are too bold to endure rules; it is rather that we are too timid to endure responsibilities." - What's Wrong With the World
"Business, especially big business, is now organized like an army. It is, as some would say, a sort of mild militarism without bloodshed; as I say, a militarism without the military virtues." - *The Thing*

"All but the hard hearted man must be torn with pity for this pathetic dilemma of the rich man, who has to keep the poor man just stout enough to do the work and just thin enough to have to do it." - *Utopia of Usurers, 1917*

"[Capitalism is] that commercial system in which supply immediately answers to demand, and in which everybody seems to be thoroughly dissatisfied and unable to get anything he wants." - "How to Write a Detective Story." *The Spice of Life*

"Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere." - *ILN, 5/5/28*

"Our materialistic masters could, and probably will, put Birth Control into an immediate practical programme while we are all discussing the dreadful danger of somebody else putting it into a distant Utopia." - *GK's Weekly, 1/17/31*

"We are learning to do a great many clever things...The next great task will be to learn not to do them.- "Queen Victoria" Varied Types*

"Psychoanalysis is a science conducted by lunatics for lunatics. They are generally concerned with proving that people are irresponsible; and they certainly succeed in proving that some people are." - *ILN, 6/23/28*

"It is still bad taste to be an avowed atheist. But now it is equally bad taste to be an avowed Christian." (*Introductory Remarks" Heretics)*

"The atheist is not interested in anything except attacks on atheism." (*Frozen Free Thought* "The Well and the Shallows)*

"There are only two kinds of people, those who accept dogmas and know it, and those who accept dogmas and don't know it." (*The Mercy of Mr. Arnold Bennett" Fancies vs. Fads)*

"Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die." (*Orthodoxy*)

"I would rather a boy learnt in the roughest school the courage to hit a politician, or gained in the hardest school the learning to refute him - rather than that he should gain in the most enlightened school the cunning to copy him." (*ILN 8-31-12*)

"It is assumed that the sceptic has no bias; whereas he has a very obvious bias in favour of scepticism." (*ILN 5-4-07*)
"The average businessman began to be agnostic, not so much because he did not know where he was, as because he wanted to forget. Many of the rich took to scepticism exactly as the poor took to drink; because it was a way out." (Eugenics and Other Evils)

"The sort of man who admires Italian art while despising Italian religion is a tourist and a cad." ("Roman Converts" Dublin Review, Jan-Mar. 1925)

“Merely having an open mind is nothing; the object (goal) of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.” G.K. Chesterton

“It is because we are standing on our heads that Christ’s philosophy seems upside-down.” – G.K. Chesterton

“A new philosophy generally means in practice the praise of some old vice.” G.K. Chesterton

“Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions.” -G.K. Chesterton

“An imbecile habit has risen in modern controversy of saying that such and such a creed can be held in one age but cannot be held in another. Some dogma was credible in the 12th century, but is not credible in the 20th. You might as well say that a certain philosophy can be believed on Mondays, but cannot be believed on Tuesdays.” -G.K. Chesterton

"'My country, right or wrong,' is a thing that no patriot would think of saying. It is like saying, 'My mother, drunk or sober.'" – G.K. Chesterton (The Defendant, 1901)

"If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly." What's Wrong With The World, 1910

“When a Man stops believing in God he doesn't then believe in nothing, he believes anything.” G.K. Chesterton

“The obvious effect of frivolous divorce will be frivolous marriage. If people can be separated for no reason they will feel it easier to be united for no reason.” G.K. Chesterton

“Birth control is a scheme for preventing birth in order to escape control.” G.K. Chesterton

“We are like the penny, because we have the image of the king stamped on us, the divine king.”-G.K. Chesterton, Charles Dickens