



All Things Considered

G.K. Chesterton

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A collection of essays dealing with various topics, such as human nature, current affairs, science and religion

All Things Considered Details

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From Reader Review All Things Considered for online ebook

Sarah says

This was a highly entertaining read. While much of it had to do with the issues of Chesterton's day, his insight into things still applies today.

There were a couple of times he rambled, but I still enjoyed every minute of this book.

Abdelrahman Mustafa says

Chesterton's critical outlook and unwavering voice of Truth opens up gates and windows of understanding the present condition through inspection of the past, in addition to the wit of a genius and the incomparable sense of humor which left me roaring with laughter like no other writer did. This is a much more 'philosophical' writer than most 'philosophers' you've heard about, because he dared to dissent from the traditional philosophical 'form' yet his insight remained powerful and intense.

Mary says

I think I know why I like Chesterton so much: not because he's the great Christian apologist, but because he's the great Christian sophist.

Turns of paradox, disregard for conventional wisdom, all paired with a fierce dedication to the idea that there are something worth fighting for, not least of which, the welfare of our brothers and sisters.

Eustacia Tan says

Every time I read a book by Chesterton, I come away with a ton of quotes that I just want to memorise. This book is no exception.

All Things Considered is a collection of Chesterton's essays for London Daily News and covers a wide variety of topics. Some of the topics are light-hearted (for example, when he talks about canvassing for votes), while others are a bit more serious (basically when he starts talking about religion or science). But even when he's serious, he's not ponderous. Then again, he does say in the second paragraph of the book:

Their [the essays] chief vice is that so many of them are very serious; because I had no time to make them flippant. It is so easy to be solemn; it is hard to be frivolous.

It's ok Chesterton, I think you weren't that serious.

There's even a chapter on fairy-tales (and I love reading Chesterton when he talks about fairy-tales), and of course, I loved it. He compared journalists to fairies, which is something you definitely don't read about

every day. But my favourite quote doesn't talk about journalists, it talks about the nature of fairyland. If you've read Orthodoxy or anything that involves fairy-tales, you'll notice that Chesterton is sort of like C.S. Lewis. Lewis believed that all myths foreshadow Christianity (see The Weight of Glory). So does Chesterton. It's a really long quote, but I don't feel I can cut anything out!

If you really read the fairy-tales, you will observe that one idea runs from one end of them to the other - the idea that peace and happiness can only exist on some condition. This idea, which is the core of ethics, is the core of the nursery-tales. The whole happiness of fairyland hangs upon a thread, upon one thread. Cinderella may have a dress woven on supernatural looms and blazing with unearthly brilliance, but she must be back when the clock strikes twelve. The king may invite fairies to the christening, but he must invite all the fairies or frightful results will follow. Bluebeard's wife may open all doors but one. A promise is broken to a cat and the whole world goes wrong. A promise is broken to a yellow dwarf and the whole world goes wrong. A girl may be the bride of the God of Love himself if she never tries to see him; she sees him, and he vanishes away. A girl is given a box on condition she does not open it; she opens it, and all the evils of the world rush out at her. A man and woman are put in a garden on condition they do not eat one fruit: they eat it, and lose their joy in all the fruits of the earth.

I love how Chesterton goes from the traditional fairy-tales, to the myths and finally, to the Bible. I think that by using fairy-tales and myths, he makes one see the Bible in a fresh light.

I don't agree with his viewpoint on a lot of things (what he says about Asia, for example, feels a lot like a White Man's Burden mentality), but he's just so entertaining that I wasn't even offended.

This is definitely a book that you should read. It's entertaining and will give you food for thought.

This review was first posted to Inside the mind of a Bibliophile

Daniel Wright says

Physics, you can take back your Diracs and your Einsteins. I raise you Chesterton, the maddest genius of his day.

Rachel says

Chesterton wrote brilliantly- his musings are quite eloquent and almost always witty. As I read the book I found myself sending entire paragraphs via text because I found them so laughably clever.

At the same time, I must note that it tends towards political incorrectness. Both because he was born in the mid/late 1800's and times were quite different and also because Chesterton seemed to care very little what others thought of him.

He was quick-witted and wrote a thought-provoking book (and if nothing else I believe/hope many readers would enjoy All Things Considered simply for that reason).

Joseph Sverker says

F. Scott Fitzgerald writes in *The Beautiful and the Damned* that one tires of Chesterton because of his sheer natural cleverness, or if it was talent (ironically, maybe the same thing can be said about Fitzgerald?). Nonetheless, the latter part of the statement is certainly true. Chesterton is incredibly clever in his articles. However, I certainly don't tire of him, but this is only a selection though. There are many snippets that I will take away with me from this book. His point about science and religion is very interesting. He argues that science brings nothing new in the argument between materialism and supernaturalism since if one has seen a corpse decomposing and still is able to believe in a God and after-life, then nothing that science brings will change things. I don't know if it is quite true, but it is certainly a good point. I think the problem might be rather that so few in today's society has really seen a corpse. Chesterton writes very insightfully about humor in this book as well and draws very interesting theological conclusions. There are twists and turns and enjoying phrases scattered throughout this book. Very well worth reading and a good way in to Chesterton's non-fictional writing. Next step, I would recommend *Orthodoxy* or *Everlasting Man*.

G.R. Hewitt says

Classic Chesterton - always a pleasure to read and although this book was published over 108 years ago, the content is still current. My favourite chapter in this book is entitled 'The Fallacy of Success' and I am in full agreement with it; the sad thing is that no-one was listening then and they still aren't - our bookshops remain crammed with books on how to be successful. Chesterton writes, and rightly so, that "...there is no such thing as Success." and states that "... there is nothing that is not successful ... That a thing is successful merely means that it is; a millionaire is successful in being a millionaire and a donkey in being a donkey." With various other examples and observations it is hard to refute his logic or his advice that those who have purchased such books have a "moral if not legal right to ask for their money back." The other chapters on various subjects are all treated to the hallmark Chesterton wit and insights, by which the reader cannot fail to be impressed, amused and edified.

Heidi says

One of the more eclectic and disorganized collections of his essays, but it's worth reading if only for the sake of chapter 24, which is brilliant and an excellent introduction to the spirit that bursts through almost all of Chesterton's writing :o)

Brian Eshleman says

I've heard it said of some writers, I would read his grocery list. If this is Chesterton's self-admitted collection of writings scraps, I would say he is in that league. Taken alone, his thoughts on sensational "American style" journalism, are worth the read. Only the word "soundbite" has yet to be coined

Mary Catelli says

A collection of essays about odds-and-ends of the era. His first essay is on the ephemeral and how insignificant the essays all are -- and how their worst fault is that they are so serious, since he could not expend the effort to make them funny.

But he touches on canvassing for vote, inconvenience, higher culture, jokes, Christmas and much more. He tells the soldier who said his religion was Methuselahite -- to live as long as he could -- but then, why was he enlisting as a soldier? The famous incident of the Captain at Koepenick. (Who was, if you haven't happened on this story, an imposter who did a lot of stuff merely by feigning to be a captain.) The essay on fairy tales touches on themes that will later be elaborated in Orthodoxy. He discusses the reporting of speeches by describing how Mark Anthony's speech in Julius Caesar could be reported, and actually would be.

But the true delight of this collection is that it's Chesterton who's saying it all. There is no substitute for actually reading him, because you miss out on such gems as:

I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance, merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out.

or

When some trick of this sort is played, the newspapers opposed to it always describe it as "a senseless joke." What is the good of saying that? Every joke is a senseless joke. A joke is by its nature a protest against sense. It is no good attacking nonsense for being successfully nonsensical.

or

I have even seen some controversialists use the metaphor, "We must fight them with their own weapons." Very well; let those controversialists take their metaphor, and take it literally. Let us fight the Soudanese with their own weapons. Their own weapons are large, very clumsy knives, with an occasional old-fashioned gun. Their own weapons are also torture and slavery. If we fight them with torture and slavery, we shall be fighting badly, precisely as if we fought them with clumsy knives and old guns. That is the whole strength of our Christian civilisation, that it does fight with its own weapons and not with other people's. It is not true that superiority suggests a tit for tat. It is not true that if a small hooligan puts his tongue out at the Lord Chief Justice, the Lord Chief Justice immediately realises that his only chance of maintaining his position is to put his tongue out at the little hooligan. The hooligan may or may not have any respect at all for the Lord Chief Justice: that is a matter which we may contentedly leave as a solemn psychological mystery. But if the hooligan has any respect at all for the Lord Chief Justice, that respect is certainly extended to the Lord Chief Justice entirely because he does not put his tongue out.

David says

I literally LOL'd multiple times. Loved this collection of essays.

Shanna says

<https://2aughlikecrazy.wordpress.com/...>

This piece dives right into it's subject which is plainly stated in the title, Chesterton makes certain to give examples to other genres before seriously laying into the matter of point, but once doing so, doesn't let up, giving specific reasons to support his side throughout the article.

He starts by describing different sides of the spectrum of the genre of focus, then lands on chivalry and religion at least being about their respective subjects whilst the genre of success is about "nothing". He continues by relating these texts claim to tell of how men can succeed in anything, but the writers themselves not even being able to succeed in doing their job of writing about the subject correctly. Chesterton states the idea of success doesn't exist, but then allows this is because success is in anything if one looks at the available examples given: "Any live man has succeeded in living; any dead man may have succeeded in committing suicide.", as well as listing a couple others. He goes on to explain how writers of success try to convince those who read their subject matter can be helped to succeed in their specific area of need, but how if it were any other person writing about a distinct subject and didn't actually deliver in seeming to know about what they were writing of, that piece would certainly never be published. Chesterton reiterates his argument of people who write of success and those who've obtained it don't have the knowledge of why this is so. He then informs of two ways one is successful, one of which most (hopefully) would rather choose, but some would be satisfied with the underhanded way of procuring the desired gem. We learn by Chesterton's deductions of how one would usually try to go about learning a specific subject, those including the seeker being a natural, a cheat or acquiring books on the various subjects relating to the talent wanted, but the idea of going straight for a book on success due to the general statements within such a text shouldn't be at the forefront of one's mind. We get another couple of examples of how a book on success would go about giving "advice" on how to attain triumph over one's various endeavors, but how empty they would seem since it would lack detailed strategies about how one could potentially go about this. Chesterton then shares an article title of success about Lord Rothschild which he found odd and entertaining going on to add some article excerpts after, including a description of Vanderbilt's background, he having been a millionaire and his successes, this obvious selection was given due to its sober evaluation of how whilst one couldn't necessarily find success the same way, it gave the optimism it was still possible for others, Chesterton listing this article as, "...the horrible mysticism of money." He perceives the author was in awe of Vanderbilt's ability to have been given such success, but was only giving a fanboy list of Vanderbilt's achievements rather than truly knowing how he'd become one of the few and the sparkling and celebrating Vanderbilt's mysterious wealth. Chesterton then debunks another statement by the same author which brings to light his careful cover up of facts to support his theory on those who were able to succeed, showing that some mentioned, didn't stay successful. Chesterton then admits how whilst he'd read about the figures mentioned and knowing that he might not be able to fall into success easily, he admitted to also having not tried, preferring to focus on other more attainable pleasures. He begins to wind down with statements of how he doesn't deny others' successes, but had felt they may have been keeping something hidden and hoping people would soon come to disdain these success books as they should (which people still struggle with today, obviously) since all it seems to do is educate people on how to be conceited and give a false sense of

experience. Chesterton ends with how some qualities should be preferred over the ones made to seem important, for instance the want of doing good work for not the possibility of becoming rich, but for being good at one's job, he ending with the question of what could happen to those who are encouraged to attain greatness through their indecency rather than morality.

I quite enjoyed Chesterton's flow and giving entertaining examples as to the absurdity of what authors of success books try to do with their "work". There didn't seem to be any arguments on the subject since I can relate to his viewpoint on success or D.I.Y. books, for that matter. Chesterton set out to describe the lack of facts to back up what success writers publish and I believe he succeeded (gold star, Chesterton, already ahead of the game). He sets out his arguments with viable representations of the facts and regardless of how long ago it was written, it still holds up even by today's standards. I'll be glad to continue my reading of him with Father Brown.

Will Yumoto says

Chesterton's wit and mastery of turning what appear to be complex arguments into the simpkeat of ideas shines through in this collection of essays, albeit I found myself disinterested in a few of them, due to my ignorance of the subject matter... a eulogy of a prominent early 19th century Brit, while well-written doesn't hold my thoughts captive the way articles regarding more enduring subjects (like politics, religion, manners, modernism, etc.) does. Worth a read and full of "quotables" that ring true today.

Ben Thurley says

Although the concerns of several of the pieces are pretty opaque to a twenty-first Century reader, this collection of essays and articles is of more than antiquarian interest. G.K. Chesterton was an astute observer of human nature, a genuine eccentric and wit as well as a lovely prose stylist, so there are plenty of thought-provoking snippets to be gleaned throughout the collection, as well deeper offerings on human dignity, wealth and privilege, humour, democracy, identity, nationalism and – of course – religion and the Catholic faith.

I particularly liked his description, in "Conceit and Caricature", of the peculiar and unjustified satisfaction that some develop

which is neither a pleasure in the virtues that we do possess nor a pleasure in the virtues we do not possess. It is the pleasure which a man takes in the presence or absence of certain things in himself without ever adequately asking himself whether in his case they constitute virtues at all. A man will plume himself because he is not bad in some particular way, when the truth is that he is not good enough to be bad in that particular way.

This is a great collection to have at the bedside or next to the loo. Skip over the essays that don't appeal to you, and savour the ones that do.

Vaughn says

"All Things Considered" brings together about thirty columns that Chesterton wrote for the London Daily News in the years before World War I. There's no theme here. As s the title suggests, it is a mishmash of short articles that wander over everything imaginable (from politics, to daily annoyances, to literature, and many others). The common thread is Chesterton's wit and high quality writing style.

Overall, the writing was as expected. However, I'm rating it 3 stars due to the Kindle formatting which was poor.

Hope says

Sometimes Chesterton's brilliance leaves me breathless with awe, but most of the time he leaves me feeling like an intellectual midget (not a feeling I particularly enjoy). *All Things Considered* has moments of genius, but at times it reads like garbled nonsense. Chesterton's own assessment of himself was that he "suffered from a simplicity verging on imbecility" so maybe that explains it.

Chesterton excuses himself in the book's introduction by saying that "This is a collection of crude and shapeless papers upon current subjects for it is mostly concerned with attacking attitudes which are in their nature accidental and incapable of enduring. Brief as is the career of such a book as this, it may last twenty minutes longer than most of the philosophies that it attacks."

He was right in saying that the book would be outdated twenty minutes after publishing because many of the subjects of the article have long been forgotten. Nevertheless nuggets of gold are sprinkled throughout the book and patient digging turned up treasures.

Anie says

If I were to rate this based on how often I actually agreed with Chesterton, this would probably get a two. Chesterton is an English Christian apologist from the early 1900s; I am very much none of those things, and I'm a feminist to boot.

Luckily, I can enjoy essays without agreeing with them. Chesterton is damned hilarious, while also being at times quite compelling. The man has an excellent turn of phrase, he's sharp, and I think that I would very much like to rant and argue with this man over beers. He makes you laugh and he makes you think, and that's worth having around.

Loraine Laurie says

How I enjoy reading Chesterton! Funny, witty, absolutely insightful. *All Things Considered* was a collection of short essays that were really about pretty much all things.

The way he puts his point across is rather interesting. He seems to connect the most unconnectable things

together, throw them into the mix, and create something wonderfully insightful. And he maintains a stylish humor while doing so.

I could read more Chesterton. I definitely could. I also wish I knew more about 19th century and post WWI Europe -- that way I could probably appreciate his work a bit more.

Great read along with Wilde and Shaw. He does mention Shaw briefly.

Skylar Burris says

A highly entertaining and insightful compilation of musings on a wide variety of topics, All Things Considered sometimes seems time-bound (I am not always familiar with the people and events to which Chesterton is referring) but is often oddly a propos of the current moment. For example, Chesterton is not speaking of the “War on Terror” when he discusses why we should not fight our enemies “with their own weapons” of torture, but he could be. He is not speaking of modern American politics when he discusses the lack of truthfulness that undergirds the party system, but he might as well be. When he writes of “modern journalism” in England in the early 20th century, he could just as well be writing of “modern journalism” in America in the early 21st century.

The collection, which consists of just over thirty columns he wrote for the London Daily News, is of varying quality, but the parts that were good were so good that I must give the compilation five stars. Even when Chesterton is being a chauvinist, of either the male or Eurocentric variety, I cannot help but like him. There is something perpetually affable about his writing.

I laughed out loud at a rate of at least once per ten pages, and I am not a reader who often does so (out loud, at least). And I highlighted far more lines than I can reasonably add to my favorite quotes.

I was once asked in a scholarship interview whom I would wish to meet if I could meet any person, living or dead. I found myself stuttering for an answer. My first, and quite conventional, thought was Jesus, but I did not want to come off as a religious freak, so, after some stammering, I settled instead, quite spontaneously, for...drum roll please...John the Baptist. Yes, the wild-haired, locust-eating, prophet-hollering John the Baptist...Yeah...I didn't get that scholarship. Unfortunately, I had not read Chesterton in high school. Today, I'm quite certain what my answer would be. And I really do wish I could sit down to a glass of port wine with the man...
