

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Chesterton's Gateway

(December 3, 2021)

Ladies and gentlemen, many years ago in the London Times, an editor asked his readers: What is wrong with the world? And he wanted people to write back and explain what's wrong with the world. And one man wrote back the pithiest two-word answer to the question: What's wrong with the world? This was his two-word answer. "I am", signed GK Chesterton. Now, who was this GK Chesterton? And if you haven't heard of him, you're going to hear of him today. He is one of the wittiest writers of the past couple of centuries, one of the most influential Christian writers of the past couple of centuries. In fact, Chesterton helped partially bring CS Lewis to faith. The problem with Chesterton, it can be difficult to find a book or an essay that you can read and understand and enjoy without a little bit of guidance. And we have a resource for you that will give you that guidance so you can enjoy and get the benefits of Chesterton. That resource has been written by my friend, Ethan Nicolle. And you've probably heard that name before. Who's Ethan Nicolle? Ethan Nicolle is one of the brilliant minds behind the Babylon Bee and we're going to talk a little Babylon Bee here today. But he's just come out with a new book called, Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. It's always great to have Ethan on. Ethan, how are you?

Ethan:

I'm good. Thank you so much for that introduction.

Frank:

Well, man, this book is a lot of fun, and you're making Chesterton understandable. For many of us, we like so many of the quotes we hear from Chesterton, but to be honest with you, I started reading one of his primary books, Orthodoxy, I got through maybe a third of it, and I went, I'm getting some good stuff here but it's a tough grind to get through some of this stuff. But you knew that, and you've made it easy to understand the brilliance of Chesterton in this new book. First of all, give us a little bit of background. Who was this guy Chesterton?

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Ethan:

Chesterton was mostly a journalist in his time. He wrote a lot of opinion pieces. I mean, he wrote something like 5000 essays in his lifetime, 100 books, just a prolific writer. He was very prophetic. A lot of the things he said came true. After he died, he predicted a lot of the evils and horrors that would come in the 1940s and he died in the late 30s. He was right up there with George Bernard Shaw, and HG Wells, and all these guys. He'd debate them publicly, he was good friends with them, loved them, despite, you know, vehemently disagreeing with them, but had this very jovial relationship. He's one of the most quoted authors out there, but also, at least until recent times, for a long time, one of the least read. There's been a real resurgence of Chesterton. I got into it because I was a big CS Lewis fan, and I was looking for something in the same vein, so I thought, oh, Chesterton is supposed to be just like CS Lewis. I started trying to read him and had a lot of trouble getting into it, like you were saying. A lot of people do that. They get into orthodoxy, and they just get lost.

Frank:

Yeah.

Ethan:

And I thought, I would love to read this and discuss it with somebody, like, we'll sit down and talk about it. So, I end up starting at Chesterton group with a bunch of my friends who are Christian, conservative leaning artists, who had moved to the LA area. We started this group, and it became one of the greatest men's groups I'd ever been a part of. We'd all get together, cigars, and whiskey, and Chesterton on Sunday after church, and it was awesome. And so, my goal was to make a book that gives that experience. It has introductions that kind of set you up for what you're going to read. It has footnotes that are very casual, they're not scholarly, they're me going, I think this means that and me kind of guessing. And it's more conversational. It's not a British guy showing you how smart he is and how he really gets Chesterton, it's this casual reading with your buddy Ethan.

Frank:

Well, for those who don't know, Chesterton was born in 1874, and he died in 1936. So, he died at 62. And he was a man of great girth. In fact, he probably went between 300-400 pounds. And there is a story about him during World War One, which I find hilarious, because he was a funny

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guy. In fact, it even says this on his Wikipedia page. It says, Chesterton was a large man standing six foot four inches and weighing 286 pounds, but he probably went more than that. His girth gave rise to an anecdote during the First World War when a lady in London asked why he was not "out on the front". And Chesterton replied, if you go around to the side, you will see that I am. [laughing] He was so big that, yeah, I'm actually on the front, lady, even though it's just on the other side of me.

Ethan:

It's a self-dissipating humor, so funny.

Frank:

Oh, yeah, he was just hilarious. And he had so many witty quips that I think many people have heard, but they don't know the source. Give us a couple of them. I got a couple here that I can jump to but what are some of the quips, or the quotable sayings, that Chesterton had, Ethan?

Ethan:

Oh man, there's so many. I'm trying to find some of the funnier ones. Well, he has a whole essay on cheese and it's very funny. He always manages to make a deeper point, but you know he says, poets have been seriously silent on the subject of cheese.

Frank:

Subject of cheese, okay.

Ethan:

Yeah. So, he talks about how he has an epic and, you know, something like 40 volumes on the importance of cheese in western civilization. He hasn't had time to release it, so he wrote this essay. But he has these facetious things. He paints himself as absent-minded guy. He talks about just those random things he finds in his pockets. And, you know, there's stories about him walking around the street, he goes and telegraph's his wife and asks her: Where am I supposed to be? He is very absent-minded professor. And his funny quote about absent mindedness is, "absence of mind is really just presence of mind somewhere else".

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Frank:

That's right. That's right. He famously said, the real question is not: Why is Christianity so bad when it claims to be so good? He said, the real question is: Why are all human beings so bad when they claim to be so good? Because you hear people all the time saying, oh yeah, people are inherently good. Right?

Ethan:

Right.

Frank:

When in reality, was it Chesterton who said, the most empirical fact...I think it was Chesterton, who said, the saying that is so prevalent that, men are inherently good can be empirically verified as faults so easily, I can't remember how he put it. But that's the one thing that people believe. People are inherently good, and yet, empirically, you can demonstrate it's exactly the opposite. We're not inherently good.

Ethan:

Yeah, he says sin is the one provable thing, and we even denied that.

Frank:

That's right.

Ethan:

So, you don't even have that basis to start from.

Frank:

And one of the essays...in fact, you picked 14 essays for this book that Chesterton wrote, and we're coming up on a break, so we're not gonna be able to get to list them all here. But the book is called, Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. Essays, selections, introductions, footnotes and illustrations all by my guest, Ethan Nicolle. Yes, that Ethan Nicolle of the Babylon Bee. Ethan, before we go to the break, what do you do for the Babylon Bee, by the way?

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Ethan:

My title is the Creative Director. So, when I came on, I was mostly doing Photoshops. I was writing a lot of articles at the time too. And then that kind of morphed into...I've always had this vision for broadening out the Babylon Bee to other media, so animation, video, all that kind of stuff.

Frank:

Well, you're doing plenty of that. And if you guys haven't been to the Babylon Bee website, why not? If you haven't subscribed, why not at BabylonBee.com. Check it out. Your trusted source for fake news. And you need a pick me up every day and the Babylon Bee will give it to you. Much more with Ethan Nicolle. His brand-new book, Chesterton's Gateway, pick it up. It's great. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. You're not going to hear this on NPR. We're talking to my friend Ethan Nicolle. His brand-new book is dealing with Chesterton. Yes, G. K. Chesterton. If you hadn't heard of him, you've heard some of what he said because he's very quotable. The book is called, Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. And you know, I didn't do the proper introduction to Ethan. He didn't get a round of applause. But we'll do so now. Here he is. He's getting a round of applause now, ladies and gentlemen.

Ethan:

Now I feel better.

Frank:

You feel much better now. One of the themes that Chesterton talks about is this theme of wonder. Tell us a little bit about that.

Ethan:

Yeah, when I first cracked into Chesterton, I think the first book I read was Heretics. Because I was gonna read Orthodoxy, everybody starts with Orthodoxy, but I found out that Heretics was actually the first book and Orthodoxy was kind of the follow up. So, I want to do things in order. And he starts off talking about a theme he constantly talks about, and that's wonder. That's

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kind of stepping back and admitting what we don't know and the things we take for granted. One of my favorite essays, it's the first one I put in my book, is from his book, Tremendous Trifles, which you can see from the title he likes making a big deal out of small things. So, he had this essay in there, it's the introduction to the book, he tells us a little fairy tale in there about Peter and Paul, these two kids playing in their little English Garden. In the garden, there's like a little faucet, and a little piece of cork, and some little shrubs and things like that. And then a milkman walks up, who's a fairy, and he offers them each one wish. One wishes to become a giant. So, he becomes massive, and he starts striding across continents. He sees the Grand Canyon; it looks like the little kind of muddy area of his garden. He sees Niagara Falls; it looks like the little faucet. And you just realize he's shrunken the world down to make it not interesting because he's looking down on it. And he just has his head cut off like any giant fairy tale.

And the other kid decides to be a pygmy, he becomes microscopic. And suddenly that garden becomes the most amazing thing. He sees it for what it really is, because he's now looking up at it. And he says that the hills are blazing with the light of the sun, a little piece of cork looks like some kind of amazing mountain formed out of Armageddon, you know. He just goes in all this beautiful language. So, that concept of you know, he says, satan wants to be up on the peak, because he wants to look down on things, not because he likes the view. He likes to see people as insects. He likes to look down. And the idea of taking a position of humility, not just...you know, we're often told to do as it's our duty to be obedient and humble, but there's actually a broadening. Your world will become an infinitely bigger, God will be bigger, the mundane will become magical, in humility.

And the other quote, you know, this is one of his most famous quotes, but I just love this. It's out of, The Ethics of Elf Land in Orthodoxy, and he's talking about how we take for granted things because they repeat in nature, so the sun rising every day. He says, "Because children have abounding vitality because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore, they children want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, do it again, and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. The grown-up people are not strong enough to exalt in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exalt monotony. It's possible that God says every morning, do it again to the sun, and every evening, do it again to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike. It may be that God makes every daisy separately but has

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never gotten tired of making them. And maybe that he has the eternal appetite of infancy, for we have sinned and grown old, and our father is younger than we." I love that picture of God that he paints. God doesn't grow weary of these things, or, you know, the fact that a thing repeats doesn't make it any less magical.

Frank:

You know, in fact, I think that's one of the best arguments for God out there, believe it or not. It really goes back to Aristotle, final causality, and Thomas Aquinas picked it up in the 1200s. And he said, this is going to be my fifth way to argue for God. And basically, the argument says that all of nature's going in a direction. That an acorn, if it's properly nourished, will always go in the direction of becoming an oak tree. You got to ask yourself a question: Why does it always do that? Why doesn't it become an elm tree, or a birch tree, or a seahorse? You say, well, it's programmed to become an oak tree. Yeah, well, who programmed it? Right? Why does it do that repeatedly over and over again? I mean, acorn doesn't have a mind, right. It's not sitting in the ground going: How do I become an oak tree, right? But it reliably goes in a direction. Well, if it reliably goes in a direction, but it doesn't have a mind of its own, there must be an external mind directing it toward an end. In other words, there must be a director. Those are my words, not Aquinas' words. There must be someone directing all of this toward an end and nature, although it does the same thing over and over again, we have to ask ourselves the question: Why does it do that? Because there's a mind behind it.

And Chesterton is brilliant for pointing out that oh, it might be it might seem mundane to us, but it's not mundane at all. It's amazing what happens, and I think most people are amazed if they really stopped to think about it, that when a man and a woman come together and have sex, and nine months later a human being pops out: You go, how does this happen? I mean, it happens all the time. We don't call it a miracle, but it happens all the time. And when you see that, Ethan...you don't say when you see a baby, you see your own flesh and blood come out of your wife...you don't go, evolution, right. You go, this is incredible. Yet it happens every day. And Chesterton gets us to stop and say, man, maybe we ought to consider that. Maybe we ought to think about that. Just seeing an ant walking across the ground ought to cause us wonder. Kids are enthralled by that and we're not. We just blow it off. It happens all the time, kids, let's keep moving. Right?

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Ethan:

Yeah, he talks about how the older you get, you know...a very young child, you don't need to come up with all this crazy stuff to amaze them. They're amazed simply by [unintelligible] as a door or a wall. You know, they're amazed by the simplest things.

Frank:

Yeah.

Ethan:

And we simply have to keep creating ways to amaze ourselves as we get older. He says that, you know, one reason that we create fairy tales, we create the unicorn, we add a horn to a horse, because we forget how amazing it was the moment we realized horses exist, you know.

Frank:

As you say, kids are amazed by anything. This Christmas, if a kid gets a toy, he'll play with the cardboard box that it comes in for a while.

Ethan:

Yeah, my son was obsessed with garbage trucks, so he saves his money up, he buys a new toy garbage truck, he has a fleet of toy garbage trucks. But one day he asked me to turn a cardboard box into a garbage truck, and so, we sat there, and duct taped a bunch of cardboard together. I drew magic marker on it. I did my best to put a little side claw on there, you know, loader to clean and everything, and it's his favorite.

Frank:

Man, you must have the cleanest house in the neighborhood.

Ethan:

No, it's filthy because he fills every garbage truck with just junk he finds from around the house and then dumps it out. And so, he just scatters filth all over the house. So, no, not a clean house.

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Frank:

Chesterton said something else regarding wonder about adventure. Tell us what he says about that.

Ethan:

Yeah, well, another one of his most famous quotes, he says, "An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered, an inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered". And this is from his essay on, Chasing After One's Hat, which is a very short, simple essay. It's very funny. But he talks about the guy at the park chasing his hat in the wind and how angry he is. And he you know, he talks about how he'd like to walk up to that guy and say, why aren't you happy right now? You're creating such a hilarious site; you're bringing so much joy to everybody here at the park. And he talks about these inconveniences. If you can wrap your head around it, look at it differently, you can see that you're on some kind of adventure.

He talks about the guy who's trying to get his drawer loose, he has a jammed drawer. And he's like, yeah, why don't you see yourself as, you know, Arthur trying to pull the sword from the stone?

Frank:

Something like that, right.

Ethan:

He's taking this very childish view of it, which my kid would you know... One of my favorite memories of my kid, my first daughter. we had a curtain hook above the seat that I'd sit with her by her crib to get her to go to sleep. And she was so fascinated by this curtain hook. It was like she was reaching up and touching God. She was so excited she could reach it and then she could touch it. So, I don't know, I think that there's just that constant reminder to like to look at the things you take for granted. And also, we find the security in the idea that we take, you know, just like we're talking about, things that are repeated, or we get wrapped up in reason and logic. And this is a big thing that Chesterton talks about. He starts off Orthodoxy talking about the madman. He says, there's a madness inherent in building your worldview completely on reason alone, and how that leads to madness.

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Frank:

What do you think he meant by that? He's not saying to be unreasonable. He's saying that reason alone isn't enough.

Ethan:

Right. He likes to talk about paradox, how there's two truths that are often true at the same time. And often, when you build a worldview on one concept, you have to throw all the other stuff out. So, for instance, when somebody becomes a naturalist, believes that everything is nature, they suddenly have to throw all these things out that are really the most inherent, most important things in life, love, beauty. All this stuff has to be kind of like taken for granted and tossed aside and just be seen as like, oh it's just mating, or we just made that up, we just made-up beauty. It's just a thing we came up with ourselves.

Frank:

Right. It's just a matter of chemicals going off in our brains that opinion appeal to us somehow.

Ethan:

Tastes and opinions. Yeah, I guess even opinions and taste don't actually happen. If you truly believe that we're just purely chemical creatures, then even this conversation right now is pointless.

Frank:

Yeah, right, we're just robots.

Ethan:

Yes, that's gross.

Frank:

It's all we are. We're just moist robots if atheism is true. They're trying to reduce everything to physicality. They're trying to reduce everything to molecules in motion. But as you said, and as Chesterton says, the most important things in life are not molecules in motion, love, justice, beauty. These things you can't reduce to molecules in motion. You can't even reduce reason to molecules in motion, for all these people claiming to be reasonable, right? If reason is just

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molecules bumping into one another, we should have no reason to believe it, because we're not thinking, we're just reacting. So, Chesterton was ahead of his time then, wasn't he? And by the way, how did he influence Lewis because you mention that, Ethan?

Ethan:

He had a book called, *The Everlasting Man*, which is one of his hardest reads, but it's one of his most beautiful. It's just a glorious book. It was written later in his life, a much more mature Chesterton, and he takes this broad view of history, and he looks at how there's no other explanation than, God created man and man is in God's image, to the whole thing.

Frank:

Alright, let's pick that up right after the break. You're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with me, Frank Turek. My guest, Ethan Nicolle's brand-new book, *Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton*. And you want to get hooked on Chesterton, because he was brilliant and ahead of his time. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

I want to mention that I'll be down in Port St. Lucie, Florida this weekend for Saturday night services and then Sunday services (December 4-5) at Calvary Chapel Port St. Lucie. And then in the afternoon at 2:30pm we're going to continue with *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, there at Calvary Chapel Port St. Lucie, and take your questions. And then the following week I'll be out west, the Northwest Church Apologetics Seminar in Federal Way, Washington. That's just south of Seattle about 20 to 30 minutes. I'll be there on Saturday and Sunday, December 11-12, lord willing. Check our website, CrossExamined.org, and Events for that. We also have some new online courses coming up for January. Check that out. Just go to CrossExamined.org, click on online courses. And if you want to give somebody a nice gift, you can buy a gift certificate to one of those courses. Just go to CrossExamined.org, click on Online Courses, you'll see it there.

My guest today is Ethan Nicolle. Yes, that Ethan Nicolle of *Babylon Bee* fame. Well, he's also put together a great book on GK Chesterton. It's called, *Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton*. And Ethan, one of the things that Chesterton continually debated with George Bernard Shaw was this issue of progressivism, that in his day, that meant that we were

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going to get progressively better, that man was inherently good and will ultimately lead to perfection. What was Chesterton's view on that?

Ethan:

He had a lot of views on that. I mean, he was in the days of modernism, where the whole idea was, do what works, you know. Get rid of all this tradition and all these old ideas and just whatever works, we do that. And that had a lot of implications that he felt he needed to warn his culture about. But one of the big criticisms he made, and this this essay is in my book called, *The Medical Mistake*, where he talks about, you know, all the sociology books and things talk about how there is a great illness, and they'll talk about what we need to do. And then he says, you know, when you look at a human being, and you say somebody is sick, or they're hurt, they're broken and need to be fixed, you have an idea of what a right human being is, what a human body is supposed to look like and be before you go and heal them. He says the big problem in progressivism, and in all of our social programs, is nobody can agree on what the human body is supposed to look like in that situation. One guy wants to add an extra eye, one guy wants three arms, and everybody has a different idea of what the ideal human is.

And that's kind of how progress works. Progress just means whatever you think would be good, just go that direction. And it does, kind of, become what eventually became postmodernism, is everybody chasing their feelings. So, that was one of his big ones. He also talks about how, you know, this age of freedom of religion that they had kind of come into, where everybody can talk about their faith, everyone could talk about their beliefs. He said, the big effect of that has been, never has there been so little discussion about the nature of man as now when, for the first time, anyone can discuss it. He talks in *Heretics* about how you're supposed to have a worldview on everything except for everything. So, you can have a worldview on sports, you can have worldview on your favorite color, or MCU universe, or whatever, but if you have a point of view on how it all comes together, that's the one thing you're not supposed to talk about.

Frank:

Right. You can't have a grand narrative how everything's supposed to be because there are no grand narratives. But you can have your own truth in the small things, not the big things. Right?

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Ethan:

Right. And that's why he talks about another quote, "If there's one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals, it's the modern strengthening of minor morals". In his time, the big thing was cleanliness, and really, you know, the morality of soap. And he often said that this is the rich talking because the rich are the ones taking baths, so they wanted to put this on everybody else. You know, probably in our time, whether it's masking up, or recycling, you know, we turn these things into major moral issues and then throw out the real moral issues that everybody takes for granted.

Frank:

Hey, that is a brilliant comment. In fact, let me read it again. Chesterton, "If there is one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals, is the modern strengthening of minor morals". That's so true because it's going on right now. Ethan, as you know, we now have the nanny state, and you guys at the Babylon Bee do a great job of pointing that out. We have the nanny state, where we prohibit people from using certain lightbulbs, but we won't prohibit them from killing their children. And this is the kind of injustice that Jesus spoke directly to, to the politicians of his day. The Pharisees. They were the politicians. They helped run Israel. Rome delegate a lot of their authority to the Sanhedrin, in whom was the Pharisees. They were part of the Sanhedrin. And he said, you've neglected the weightier matters of law.

He says this in Matthew 23:23, "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness." You're strengthening minor morals, but you are weakening major morals. And if Jesus were here today, in person, I think he would highlight exactly what Chesterton said, because that's probably where Chesterton's getting it from. He's getting it from Jesus. And he would scold these politicians for saying, oh, you can't use certain lightbulbs, but yeah, you want to kill your children, that's just fine. I mean, that's brilliant commentary right there.

Ethan:

Yeah, one of his funnier criticisms, but also very serious, was that, you know, his culture could go on and on about the evils of alcohol, but they couldn't really come up with a good reason not to drink cyanide. You know, we're not sure why you should be alive, but you at least shouldn't get drunk all the time. We don't know why.

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Frank:

That's right. Yeah, he went after the progressives. And I guess Bernard Shaw was a progressive, correct?

Ethan:

Yes. [unintelligible]

Frank:

And he and Chesterton had, I guess, several public debates, but they were very friendly, weren't they?

Ethan:

Very friendly. I've seen at least one transcript out there and probably the first three pages are them joking with each other and complimenting each other and telling the audience how great the other guy is. They had a great relationship.

Frank:

Oh really?

Ethan:

Yeah. That was another thing I loved about Chesterton that I want people to get. Like, I want to get the idea that you can truly love your enemy. It's not that begrudging love, you know, where it's like, I guess I love him, I'll pray for him, you know, but they're jerks. Like to truly take joy. Chesterton wrote a bunch of fiction books, he wrote plays, he wrote poetry, he was an illustrator. That's something I love about him, he's a cartoonist. He dropped out of art school. He did a book called, *The Ball and the Cross*. It's about a hardcore Catholic Irishman showing up in England and there's this Scottish atheist there who has insulted the name of Mother Mary. And so, they decided to have a duel to the death but all of society does not think they should have this duel. And so, they become buddies. It's a buddy comedy, where they're being chased across the countryside, confronting different philosophies. Each one is telling them why the question of God's existence is not really that important and they shouldn't kill each other over it. And the thing they bond on is they both think it's that serious. They become friends, but they both think it's that serious. It's really good. Very funny. It's a pretty easy read. I mean, it gets

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trippy, but like a lot of Chesterton, you don't know what he was smoking sometimes, but it has a lot of really funny parts and veritable.

Frank:

But in your new book, you are putting footnotes that will help people understand maybe the cultural things that we don't get now, 100 or so years later, that he was speaking about. And the book, again, is called Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. Let me go back to Bernard Shaw for a second, because apparently, Shaw was skinny. And of course, Chesterton wasn't.

Ethan:

A tiny little skinny guy. Yeah.

Frank:

And here's one of their exchanges in one of their debates. It says, "on another occasion, Chesterton remarked to his friend, George Bernard Shaw, to look at you anyone would think a famine had struck England. Shaw retorted, to look at you anyone would think you had caused it." [laughing] He apparently ate all the food, right?

Ethan:

Yes.

Frank:

So, in the footnotes...

Ethan:

That's one thing about Chesterton books out there. There are so many Chesterton books, they're public domain, so tons of people are publishing and republishing them. You'll find some with a few footnotes, but never like all the stuff you don't get. So, on mine I did over 400 footnotes in this thing. And anytime something's confusing, I just went and put a footnote down. And so, that's one of the ways that I wanted to make it more digestible. I also broke up some of the massive paragraphs, these giant paragraphs sometimes. So, those are two main ways that I did it. And I've gotten a lot of comments on the audio book, actually, because most

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to be an **ATHEIST**

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Chesterton audio books you get in a very nasal British voice. And, you know, it just blows through the essay. I incorporate the footnotes into the audio book, and they're very conversational, and I think it's the best version of what I was trying to do with this book in making it casual and conversational Chesterton.

Frank:

Now, are you reading the audio?

Ethan:

Yeah, that's me.

Frank:

Okay. Alright. Good. Well, get the audio book then, ladies and gentlemen. Chesterton's Gateway. Here's another thing that I thought was great. Chesterton at one point pretty much went after Shaw's progressivism and here's what he said. "Mr. Shaw, not being easily pleased, decides to throw over humanity with all its limitations and go in for progress for its own sake. If man is we know him is incapable of the philosophy of progress, Mr. Shaw asks, not for a new kind of philosophy, but for a new kind of man."? And here's the analogy he draws to this. He says, "It is rather as if a nurse had tried a rather bitter food for some years on a baby, and on discovering that it was not suitable, should not throw away the food and ask for new food, but throw the baby out the window and ask for a new baby." And it seems to me that's what so-called progressives do. They don't understand human nature, and they think they can change human nature with philosophy somehow, instead of getting a new philosophy that actually comports with human nature, I mean, it goes back to the whole idea that conservatives want to change their behavior to fit reality, whereas leftists want to change reality to fit their behavior. I think Chesterton realized that long ago.

Ethan:

Right. And that's kind of the wishful thinking of evolution, you know, is that we aren't really a thing. Humans, we're some morphed version of a thing.

Frank:

There's no human nature?

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Ethan:

Well, even just physically, we always started as these blobs, fish, whatever, became some kind of squirrel monkey to a monkey, and now what are we? We're just on the path to becoming whatever, some kind of nine-armed octopus with eyes, and I don't know what we're gonna become. But we can become whatever they want us to become.

Frank:

Let's figure out what we're going to become right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. I'm Frank Turek. My guest, Ethan Nicolle has a brand-new book, Chesterton's Gateway. You want to pick it up, get the audio version, because Ethan's reading it. And he's also one of the brains behind the Babylon Bee. Back in two minutes.

G.J. Chesterton, an amazing mind, who passed away back in 1936. But he wrote about 80 books, and about 5000 essays, and my friend Ethan Nicole has picked out 14 of his best essays in his brand-new book, Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. And you want to get hooked on Chesterton, because he was a brilliant mind who was way ahead of his time. In fact, Ethan, there's a famous essay, I think it's in your book, about Chesterton's gate. What's that about?

Ethan:

Right. So, this is a concept that you may have heard, Chesterton's Gate. It's a famous analogy that he made, it's out of his essay, The Drift from Domesticity. And he says, "Let us say, for the sake of simplicity, a fence or gate erected across a road. The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to the fence and says, 'I don't see the use of this. Let's clear it away'. To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer, 'if you don't see the use of it, I certainly won't let you clear it away. Go away and think, then when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it.'" So, this is his respect for tradition. He says, I'm a Democrat, I believe I do believe in democracy, and that's why I believe in tradition, because it's the democracy of the dead. All people throughout history have said this thing is important. And so, for us to arrogantly think that our culture, in this time, our little fad that we're in right now here on Earth, to just tear it all down, there's nothing more arrogant and undemocratic than that, to have no respect for those who went before you. So, that's one thing that helped me a lot. I was in a crisis of faith at the time that I started reading Chesterton

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and it helped me, not only start to see my life and the world around me with wonder and new eyes and to embrace humility with joy, but to suddenly have that respect and to really see the smallness and the uselessness of fads. Just because everybody's thinking a certain way right now, that doesn't really add any credence to it as true. Chesterton was very critical of that.

Frank:

Right. In fact, Chesterton famously said...I use this quote in one of my presentations. He famously said, "fallacies do not cease being fallacies when they become fashions". I mean, there are a lot of things that are fads, and they're fashionable now, that still aren't true. Like a man can become a woman, or a woman become a man, or what you think in your head makes you what you are. Those are fallacies. They're fashionable, but they're still fallacies, and yet people want to believe them.

Ethan:

They never define their terms. Like we were just talking during the break about how there's this idea of following your heart. Nobody says what the heart means. Most people deny, when it really gets down to it, their worldview doesn't even really make sense of what a soul is or what the heart would be, yet we're told to follow it and say: What is a woman? What is a man? If we're all just kind of morphing evolved globs, it's all meaningless. So, to even say this is that you're not getting to the heart of it, and I think that's one thing that drove Chesterton crazy with modern philosophies.

Frank:

Yeah, exactly. And in fact, we just spoke about for a second the idea that a man can become a woman and a woman can become a man. All that presupposes fixed genders. Because if I'm a man, and I think that I'm really a woman trapped in a man's body, I have to have some idea of what a man is and some idea of what a woman is to recognize the difference. And I also have to have some idea of what a man is and some idea of what a woman is in order to want to transition to become to become a woman. In other words, you're presupposing there are men and women, even have the conversation, or even have the mismatch in your psychology, between your psychology and your biology. And that's what gender dysphoria is. It's a mismatch between your psychology and your biology. And those things are presupposed, then, but people want to make it seem like No, it's all fluid. If it's all fluid, transgenderism doesn't

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exist. If it's all fluid, men and women don't exist, which means transgenderism doesn't exist. I mean, we've had these conversations on this program before. So, even though it's fashionable to say that men and women are interchangeable, it's a fallacy. And I love also what he said about this here, Ethan, Chesterton said...I can't tell you how true what he says. He says, "Thoroughly worldly people never understand even the world. They rely altogether on a few cynical Maxim's which are not true." Maxims.

Ethan:

Yeah. Because the worldly person isn't really looking at the Earth as a creation of God that was good in the beginning. They're looking at you know, modern times, fads, and their peers and trying to fit in with them.

Frank:

Yeah.

Ethan:

Which drove Chesterton nuts. He was a singular voice in his time against eugenics. Everybody was all about eugenics and he's the one guy going, we're gonna be killing a lot of people here, this is a really dangerous. Maybe we should pump the brakes a little bit.

Frank:

So, the fad of his day was eugenics, the idea that there were different racial groups and some more superior to others. Yeah, I wonder where they got that? Darwin's book, actually, Origin of Species. It's on the cover, the favored races. And Margaret Sanger who [unintelligible] Planned Parenthood.

Ethan:

Right. Imagine being in that culture. These ideas are just exciting to talk about for everybody, their new fads. World War Two hasn't happened yet, you know, so they haven't seen the cost. We take for granted what we now know, you know Yeah, it's amazing.

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Frank:

These cynical maxims that people have, you've heard them, ladies and gentlemen. Things like, oh, all religions teach basically the same thing. They're all the same. Right? Or the Bible's been changed throughout the centuries so you can't trust it. Or there's no way you can know anything about God. These are all maxims which are not true. In fact, a couple of those are self-defeating right there. Like, for example, you can't know anything about the Bible.

Ethan:

They're not designed to seek truth, they're designed to avoid it, to make people feel comfortable in avoiding it.

Frank:

Yeah, exactly.

Ethan:

That was a big thing to Chesterton. He wanted people to get to the root of it. What are we? Why are we here? What does good really mean? And his frustration was that nobody wanted to talk about that. They just wanted to jump right to the fads and the maxims.

Frank:

The fads and the maxims. And he was ahead of his time because he saw this coming, didn't he?

Ethan:

Right. Well, that's one reason I wanted to get people to Chesterton. It feels like he's talking about today and it's just amazing. I mean, this is kind of a long passage, but it fits our time so much. He says, "Suppose that a great commotion arises in the street about something. Let us say a lamppost, which many influential persons desire to pull down. A grey clad monk who is in the spirit of the Middle Ages is approached upon the matter and begins to say, in the arid manner of the schoolmen, 'let us first all consider my brother, the value of light if light be in itself good'. At this point, he is somewhat excusably knocked down. All the people make a rush for the lamppost, the lamppost is down in ten minutes, they go about congratulating each other on their [unintelligible] practicality.

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But as things go on, they do not work out so easily. Some people have pulled the lamppost down because they wanted the electric light. Some because they wanted old iron. Some because they wanted darkness because their deeds are evil. Some thought it not enough of a lamppost, some too much. Some acted because they want to smash municipal machinery, some because they wanted to smash something. And there's war in the night, no man knowing whom he strikes. So, gradually, and inevitably, today, tomorrow, or the next day, there comes back the conviction that the monk was right after all, and that all depends on: What is the philosophy of light? Only what we might have discussed under the gas lamp we now must discuss in the dark."

I mean, I think I reread that, but that was when the Antifa riots were really at their peak. And I just love the imagery. Everybody wanted to tear that light down, but they have no idea why. And then in that darkness realizing they need to...now they're trying to figure out: What is light? And they don't have light to use as an example. They've knocked it out their philosophy. It's one of my favorites.

Frank:

Yeah, they even went to the point where they wanted to tear down statues of Abraham Lincoln, the man who freed the slaves.

Ethan:

Right, yeah, they're all tearing down statues.

Frank:

What are you doing? He's on your side.

Ethan:

Yeah, literally nothing can be good but them and their philosophy that they just invented. To not be able to look back and see that every fad, every philosophy of every age has had a lot of things wrong, and to think that somehow, you're the one unique one that's got it all right. It's very old.

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Frank:

Yeah. In fact, that's what CS Lewis called chronological snobbery. And Chesterton, I was reading in Orthodoxy today, and I think this is also in your book, that he's going, it's easy to be a snob. It's easy to say, oh, we're brighter and better than everybody else. It's hard to be orthodox, in the sense that we're going to hold on to what we know is true, despite the fact that it is unpopular today. Right? It's easy to go with the flow. It's easy to say, oh, yeah, the culture is right, because the culture is gonna applaud you for that. Chesterton is saying, no, it's hard to stay true to what's true.

Ethan:

A famous quote of his is also, "A dead thing goes with the stream. Only a living thing can go against it." I love that one.

Frank:

You're going to get all these witticisms, by the way, in Ethan's new book. It's called Chesterton's Gateway: 14 Essays To Get You Hooked On Chesterton. Ethan, where can I learn more about you personally? I know we got BabylonBee.com, but where can people go to learn more about you and your other books you've written?

Ethan:

EthanNicolle.com. This is my only book like this ever written. I've got a children's book called, Brave Ollie Possum. I'm very proud of it. It's a really fun, kind of, epic bedtime story to read to your kids. A little scary but ultimately very hopeful. I got a book called, Bears Want to Kill You, the book of survival guide in a world where bears will definitely kill you. And lots of stuff. My old band, actually just put out our old album, remixed and released it. I got a lot of stuff, but mostly I've been an illustrator most of my life, so you can see all my artwork there. But that's one thing that drew me to Chesterton, I think, that's the way he thinks like an artist. He's all over the place. And when I found out he was a failed illustrator, I was like, oh, wow, okay. Not to mention, he's 300 pounds.

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Frank:

Well, check him out, ladies and gentlemen. And by getting Ethan's new book, Chesterton's Gateway, you can get it in audible too, which Ethan, you really like and other people really like. So, you can do that, or you can get the hardcopy as well.

Ethan:

There's a hardcover, softcover, audible and Kindle.

Frank:

And don't forget BabylonBee.com.

Ethan:

You can also get it from my site if you want a signed copy or anything for Christmas or something like that.

Frank:

Oh, great.

Ethan:

Books are available there too.

Frank:

Great. Hey, thanks for being on. Thanks for pulling this together.

Ethan:

Thanks for having me.

Frank:

It's a great work and a necessary work, ladies and gentlemen. Ethan Nicolle, check him out at his website also. Port St. Lucie, Florida this weekend then Seattle, Washington next weekend. And I'll be back here, Lord willing, with you guys next week. God bless, Merry Christmas. See you.

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