



*Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us . . . fix our eyes on Jesus, . . . who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. — Hebrews 12:1, 2, NIV.*

## ***The Everlasting Man***

### **Digest**

**G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, reprint of 1925 original).<sup>1</sup>**

*Editorial Note:* Considered by many to be the greatest masterpiece of British author Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936), *The Everlasting Man* presents the “whole view of world history as informed by the Incarnation. Beginning with the origin of man and the various religious attitudes throughout history, Chesterton shows how the fulfillment of all of man’s desires takes place in the person of Christ. . . . Chesterton propounds the thesis that ‘those who say that Christ stands side by side with similar myths, and his religion side by side with similar religions, are only repeating a very stale formula contradicted by a very striking fact.’”<sup>2</sup>

“[THIS NEWS] . . . seems too good to be true. It is nothing less than the loud assertion that . . . [the] mysterious maker of the world has visited his world in person. It declares that really and even recently, or right in the middle of historic times, there did walk into the world this original invisible being; about whom the thinkers make theories and the mythologists hand down myths; the Man Who Made the World.

*“It is simply false to say that the other sages and heroes had claimed to be that mysterious master and maker, of whom the world had dreamed and disputed. Not one of them had ever claimed to be anything of the sort.”*

## The One-and-Only Creator Joins Creation

“That such a higher personality exists behind all things had indeed always been implied by all the best thinkers, as well as by all the most beautiful legends. But . . . [i]t is simply false to say that the other sages and heroes had claimed to be that mysterious master and maker, of whom the world had dreamed and disputed. Not one of them had ever claimed to be anything of the sort. . . . The most that any religious prophet had said was that he was the true servant of such a being. The most that any visionary had ever said was that men might catch glimpses of the glory of that spiritual being. . . . The most that any primitive myth had ever suggested was that the Creator was present at the Creation. But that the Creator . . . talked with tax-collectors and government officials in the detailed daily life of the Roman Empire, and that this fact continued to be firmly asserted by the whole of that great civilisation for more than a thousand years — that is something utterly unlike anything else in nature. It is the one great startling statement that man has made since he spoke his first articulate word, instead of barking like a dog. . . .

## The Enduring Message of the Incarnation

“It came on the world with a wind and rush of running messengers proclaiming that apocalyptic portent; and it is not unduly fanciful to say that they are running still. . . . Those runners gather impetus as they run. Ages afterwards they still speak as if something had just happened. They have not lost the speed and momentum of messengers; they have hardly lost, as it were, the wild eyes of witnesses. . . .

“ . . . [T]his is the last proof of the miracle, that something so supernatural should have become so natural. . . . Had it merely appeared and disappeared, it might possibly have been remembered or explained as the last leap of the rage of illusion, the ultimate myth of the ultimate mood, in which the mind struck the sky

and broke. But the mind did not break. It is the one mind that remains unbroken in the break-up of the world. If it 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. . . . Though we dared not look on His face, we could look on His fruits; and by His fruits we should know Him. The fruits are solid, and the fruitfulness is much more than a metaphor; and nowhere in this sad world are boys happier in apple-trees, or men in more equal chorus singing as they tread the vine, than under the fixed flash of this instant and intolerant enlightenment; the lightning made eternal as the light.”<sup>3</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, is available from Barnes & Noble at [www.barnesandnoble.com/w/everlasting-man-g-k-chesterton/1100045457](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/everlasting-man-g-k-chesterton/1100045457).
2. G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, reprint of 1925 original), description, at [www.ignatius.com/The-Everlasting-Man-P615.aspx](http://www.ignatius.com/The-Everlasting-Man-P615.aspx).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 267, 269-271.

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