Section 2 presents a biblical foundation for the author's approach to church leadership. This section defines the meaning of *ekklesia* and highlights Jesus as the cornerstone of the church. *Ekklesia* is compared with its German and Latin counterparts, *Kirche* (“house of the Lord”) and *basilica* (“public building or official meeting place”). According to Stanley, the term *ekklesia* underlines the importance of the church’s mission to the world, with a primary task of attracting sinners. Jesus attracted large crowds and played to the consumer instincts of his crowds. In Stanley's opinion, people flocked to Jesus because “he fed them, healed them, comforted them, and promised them things” (17). These are examples of ministry that North Point Ministries seriously embeds into its strategy to reach the community.

Section 3 presents the author’s “secret sauce” for his ministry. In essence, the secret consists of a spiritual formation program to form spiritual disciples. The model aims to “lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus” by increasing “people’s faith . . . and knowledge” (105, 107). To increase people's faith, he uses five faith catalysts, which he discusses at length throughout the section: practical teaching, private disciplines, personal ministry, providential relationships, and pivotal circumstances.

Section 4 shares the essential ingredients for irresistible church environments and “rules of engagement”—engage, involve, and challenge worshipers from the moment they enter the church's parking lot to the moment they leave the premises (208). Irresistible church environments have an appealing setting that leave good first impressions and engaging biblical presentations. The author devotes an entire chapter on how to preach to dual audiences in which unchurched people are present and offers insights on how to transition a local traditional church to a church that is able to attract visitors.

The book is well organized. Stanley's thoughts are presented in a conversational style, making them easy to follow. Occasionally, I wondered whether the intent of the book was primarily about attracting customers rather than about making disciples. However, as I read section 3, I began to see that discipleship and spiritual formation is part of Stanley's theology and methodology. North Point Ministries is successful because of its strategies that may help stagnated churches attract the unchurched.

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**Ricardo Norton**


Baylor University Press's new series, “The Making of the Christian Imagination,” is fortunate to have Ralph C. Wood, Professor of Theology and Literature at Baylor University, because he is no stranger to the connection between Christianity and twentieth-century literature. His previous monographs include *The Comedy of Redemption: Christian Faith and Comic Vision in Four American Novelists (Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, John Updike and Peter De Vries)* (1988); *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth* (2003); and *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* (2005); and a collection of essays from various twentieth-century litterateurs in *Literature*
and Theology (2008). This is his first book-length foray into the work of Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

Chesterton is commonly remembered for his winsome wit and pithy paradox (even the picture on the dust jacket portrays the rotund jester in what appears to be an incisive wordplay). While his opposite, darker side has been recently explored—for example, Mark Knight's Chesterton and Evil (2004)—it has not been explored to the extent that Wood does in this volume. What sets this book apart from recent publications on Chesterton's life is the focus on the “nightmares” that haunted him. “The chief contention of this book,” Wood succinctly declares in the Introduction, “is that Chesterton makes his deepest affirmations about God and man and the world in the face of nightmarish belief” (2). In this reasoning, Wood aims to disabuse the reader of the mistaken images of Chesterton as an indestructible optimist or as an intellectual geriatric stuck in the medieval world.

The juxtaposition in the subtitle of Nightmare and the Goodness of God is not entirely clear. The opening pages mention that God's grace is not always “cheering and comforting” (6), and then in the closing pages Wood compares the “nightmare goodness of God” with the dreadful epiphany of Sunday (a character in The Man Who Was Thursday) who, in Wood's opinion, represents YHWH (216-221). However, in the intervening pages there is scarcely any other mention of the relationships between these two terms. Rather the nightmares in each chapter are the antagonist's exogenous to the church: evolution, capitalism, imperial (and Protestant) Germany, Islam, tyrannical tolerance, decaying civilization, and illusionism. Wood, then, is far more interested in Chesterton the social critic than in Chesterton the theologian or literary artist.

A more subtle theme recurrent throughout the book is the collective and social nature of Christendom. Chapter 1 opens with this point in Wood's composite treatment of the Christian humanism of la nouvelle théologie and evolution. Chesterton clearly saw the importance of the corporate Body of Christ, and Wood is right to see Chesterton's fear of Darwinism in its capacity to destroy the unique wonder of Humanity, in particular in its immoral social extension to eugenics (Appendix 1). Wood, however, criticizes the old defender of the Faith's stubborn resistance to modern scientific rationalism and his strict adherence to the logic of Elfland (which resembles modern Chaos Theory) because these theories blinded him to the remarkable “web of dependencies” in nature that would reinforce his own sociological tenets (18).

In chapter 2, Wood continues the theme of corporate solidarity, resembling a Durkheimian functionalist in his treatment of patriotism: “Kindred loves are the source of the corporate identity and solidarity that become the basis for a common culture and heritage” (47). Thus, Chesterton castigated capitalism as an agent of collective society's estrangement and dismemberment. In response, he vigorously promoted Distributism, a plan for the equal sharing of existing property (not money). Chesterton's strong support for Distributism came from his sentimental attachment to the parochialism of medieval Europe and his failure to appreciate the modern nation-state.
Chapter 3 considers Chesterton's blindness—“less perceptive than Nietzsche if only in this one regard” (85)—to the nationalization and unprecedented horrors of World War I. Chesterton portrayed the war, which Wood views as a Darwinian struggle fought out in real time on the battlefield, as a traditional holy war against Germany.

Chapter 4 presents the most sensitive topic—Chesterton's contempt for Islam. Wood, who considers Chesterton's fundamental concepts to be applicable to today, tones down his previous criticism of Chesterton's antediluvian stances and permits the “orthodoxologist” a fair amount of latitude in his anti-Islamic and anti-Jewish comments. The latter was a large part of Christopher Hitchens's posthumous (2011) review article of Chesterton in *The Atlantic*. The reader should be reminded when reading these sensitive chapters that Chesterton's greatest enemies were his greatest friends (e.g., George Bernard Shaw).

Wood expands upon polite protestation in chapter 5 (modified from his previously published article in the Fall 2009 edition of *Logos*). Wood, who keeps returning to Chesterton's political Liberalism, finds that the great debater's core life principle, *hospitality* (as opposed to tolerance), “make[s] room even for enemies” (131).

Chapter 6 depicts Chesterton as the Catholic Spengler, prophesying the doom of Christendom in the face of the onslaught of civilized modernity. The “nightmare goodness of God” returns in the concluding chapter with Wood's representation of Sunday as YHWH, dreadful to believers and unbelievers alike.

Wood's intended reader is, in Chesterton's words, “the ordinary man, sympathetic but skeptical” (5). The book has a number of strengths for such a reader. Although one could delve into multitudinous antiquarian topics upon which Chesterton wrote, Wood has deliberately chosen topics to engage the modern intellectual. Wood, like Chesterton, writes in a lucid yet poetic manner that brings the words to life; yet, he does not allow decoration to detract from content. Each chapter causes one to deeply reconsider the value of both orthodoxy and modernity. At a number of points, Wood critiques Chesterton's antiquated beliefs, but he never fails to contextualize those ideas and propose relevance for the modern world. In the process, the reader reevaluates previous positions and gets to know Chesterton's mind, but not his life. This is not a biography.

Only haphazard hints appear regarding Chesterton's personal journey from adolescent unbelief to Anglicanism to Catholicism—an important pilgrimage that would have shed further light on his intellectual and metaphysical nightmares. Rarely are dates given for the publications under discussion, precluding any easy diachronic reconstruction of his intellectual development. Furthermore, it will be difficult for the reader to pursue further studies on the basis of this book because Wood has not prepared any sort of guide to Chesterton's own writings or any secondary commentary. The endnotes are considerable, but difficult to use without a bibliography.