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The Apology of Catholicism in Writings of G.K. Chesterton. A Theological and Moral Perspective

SUMMARY

In 2022 hundred years had passed since of G.K. Chesterton's conversion from the Anglican Church to the Roman Catholic Church. The conversion was a culminating point in his search for the Truth, which he found in the Catholic Church and which he consequently proclaimed in his writings. It was also the root of a deep impact upon many contemporaries, leading to the conversion of many British intellectuals and artists. His greatness is confirmed by the enormous heritage, which left behind and which included many writings of clearly apologetic character of the Catholic faith. Pope Pius XI named him *The Defender of the Catholic Faith* in his word given to the participants of the funeral service for G.K. Chesterton at the Westminster Cathedral, on the 27 June 1936.

The main aim of the dissertation is to present G.K. Chesterton as a defender of the Catholic Faith from a twofold perspective: theological and moral. This will be done by showing his life and his mission of proclaiming the doctrine and the moral principles of the Catholic Church in his writings and public discussions. Chesterton used frequently the theological argument, with words quoted straight from The Bible. Referring to moral rules and the Church dogmas he defended the „ordinary” man both from the point of view of his place in the social system, and in light of dignity received from God in the Act of Creation.

The following research questions are addressed in the dissertation: Which of Chesterton's writings are strictly apologetic and to what degree? What exactly is that apologetic value? How did he see Catholic faith and Catholic Church of which he was an excellent apologist? Does Chesterton's defence of Catholic faith carry the *praxis – christianum*, and is it a result of his responsibility as a practicing Christian?

The first Chapter offers some basic definitions from the domain of apologetics, together with the works of first apologists of early Christianity. In this chapter some philosophical concepts and social trends of the XIX and early XX century are discussed to give the intellectual and social context to his thinking and writing. His family environment and life experience with the most significant points, which influence his apologetic mission, are also presented.

The second Chapter contains the analysis of three new philosophical and social currents which appeared at the end of the XIX and start of the XX century, impacting the worldview and socio-economic systems at the time. Chesterton was particularly interested in Darwin's evolution theory and the evolutionary arguments, which he questioned. He also disagreed with Nietzsche, considering his thinking, in particular the Superman Theory – as disrespecting the principle of God's primacy. He analysed and rejected materialist theory, introduced by Marks and Engels, as a theory devoid of any transcendental elements.

In the third Chapter the reader will find Chesterton's path to the discovery of *orthodoxy* and to the defeat of all non-orthodox views. This chapter also shows Chesterton's insight into Christianity, his search of the Truth by confronting his own intuition and knowledge acquired through life experience and analysing common views.

The next Chapter presents Chesterton as a Christian responsible for learning about his own faith. It points to the values that Chesterton embraced. These included constructing an integral life and the achievement of the final objective which is salvation and eternal life.

A significant topic in the fifth Chapter is the matter of a moral life, including threats to marriage and family, together with claims about the place of the disabled in society and their protection. It presents Chesterton's propositions for a life in accordance to Christian conscience, particularly through the development of virtues and charisms. In this chapter, his personal motivation and the difficulties on his way to conversion to Catholicism are presented.

The last, sixth Chapter of the dissertation, discusses the actuality and applicability of Chesterton's ideas to the contemporary contexts. This chapter shows areas in which Chesterton's apology of Catholicism can be the way leading to the Truth; may show a harmonious connection between the faith and the reason; the courage to face the enemies; Christian positive individualism that can underpin heroic attitudes. These areas are very essential to today's perspective: retreat from Christianity, rejecting God as the Creator, defence

of conscience, defence of family, activities for social justice, consumerism, new ideology (gender) and pressure for political correctness.

The conclusion includes the main threads of the dissertation and points to these Chesterton's works, which – in Author's opinion – have a strictly apologetic character: *Heretics* (1905), *Orthodoxy* (1908), *The Everlasting Man* (1925), *The Catholic Church and Conversion* (1926) *The Well and the Shallows* (1935), *Autobiography* (1936) and the biographies of the Catholic Church Saints: *St. Francis of Assisi* (1923), *St. Thomas Aquinas* (1933).