



The Incredulity of Father Brown

G.K. Chesterton

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In "The Incredulity of Father Brown," G.K. Chesterton treats us to another set of bizarre crimes that only his "stumpy" Roman Catholic prelate has the wisdom and mindset to solve. As usual, Chesterton loves playing with early twentieth-century class distinctions, "common-sense" assumptions, and the often anti-Catholic biases of his characters. He loves showing, through his characters, how those who hold themselves superior to the "fantasies" of Brown's Catholic faith themselves devolve into superstitious blithering when faced with the tiniest of mysteries. In this collection, Brown finds himself as the main event at his own funeral (The resurrection of Father Brown), contemplating the possibility of death from the sky (The arrow of heaven), piercing the mystery of a dog's "prophetic" behavior (The oracle of the dog), and facing off against a curse hanging about a medieval burial (The curse of the golden cross). A collection of excellent tales from one of the finest British mystery writers. Newly designed and typeset in a modern 6-by-9-inch format by Waking Lion Press.

The Incredulity of Father Brown Details

Date : Published July 1st 2008 by Waking Lion Press (first published 1923)

ISBN : 9781600964473

Author : G.K. Chesterton

Format : Paperback 200 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Short Stories, Classics, Crime, Detective

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From Reader Review The Incredulity of Father Brown for online ebook

John says

Another fun set of stories from Chesterton. Fr Brown is a simple and humble little priest who is barely noticed. But he's the one who is sane. Wonderful writing from a master.

Juan Escobar says

Los primeros cuentos que leo escritos por el famoso **G.K. Chesterton**. Y me gustaron.

Es precisamente porque sé un poco sobre mística que los mistagogos no pueden engañarme.

Claro, como el personaje es el padre Brown, la fórmula del cuento de investigador privado es la misma, y aún así te logra sorprender en cada texto.

Puesto que todavía queda mucho de ese gran Jefferson y esa cosa que los hombres llaman democracia, en este país, aunque los ricos gobiernan como tiranos, los pobres no hablan como esclavos; y hay sinceridad entre opresor y el oprimido.

Siempre que me acerco a los libros de detectives, me digo que desperdicio mucho tiempo leyendo cosas "serías" sabiendo que lo que me gusta es la novela negra. Pero luego, cuando voy a escoger el próximo libro, se me olvida lo de escoger historias más divertidas.

Por un instante hubo el silencio de una casa alcanzada por un rayo y llena de cadáveres.

Briana says

I will never look at a coat rack the same way ever again.

More great Chesterton cleverness.

F.R. says

For whatever reason I didn't get along that well with the previous collection featuring Mr Chesterton's ecclesiastical detective – 'The Wisdom of Father Brown'. I thought as I read the tales that they were somewhat laborious and lacking in substance. As such I've been pleasantly surprised at how much I've enjoyed the subsequent volume – 'The Incredulity of Father Brown'. I can't tell without reading them again back to back whether one volume is genuinely more fun than the other, or whether it was the case that I was just in the wrong mood last time, but I have been decidedly pleased with the eight stories in this collection.

The format remains unaltered: Father Brown finds himself involved in a case which seems to have a supernatural element, and whilst solving it bats away the preternatural part while simultaneously reaffirming how strong and true Catholicism is. (Chesterton was always a writer wedded to his faith). But within that format there's room for variety; so here we have family curses, gothic tales, a musing on Capitalism versus Bolshevism and a very nice line in locked room mysteries. There's even a tale where Father Brown becomes a celebrity sleuth in the mould of Sherlock Holmes thanks to these very stories.

What really makes them shine though is Chesterton's wit and the quality of his prose, the aspects (along with his size and shape) which made him such a literary celebrity in the early Twentieth Century. Here, as an example, is the opening sentence of the second story in this collection, 'The Arrow of Heaven': *"It is to be feared that about a hundred detective stories have begun with the discovery that an American millionaire has been murdered; an event which is, for some reason, treated as a sort of calamity."* A line I liked so much that I quoted it on this site about fifteen minutes after I read it.

It's a volume to dip into rather than take on a long train journey. I imagine reading them all in a day or so would prove rather repetitive, but taken in moderation each one is a lovely, sweet treat.

Matthew says

The immediately striking aspect of G K Chesterton's third collection of Father Brown stories is the title of the book, taken presumably from Caravaggio's painting, The Incredulity of Saint Thomas. Father Brown seems to inhabit a world with a disproportionately large number of religious sceptics, and yet, Chesterton says, he is the incredulous one.

This is borne out by the stories in the collection, which all hinge on some peculiar event that the sceptical characters attribute to the supernatural, but which Father Brown realises has a more realistic explanation.

I will say a little more about the first story, 'The Resurrection of Father Brown' before briefly giving you a summation of the rest. Only Chesterton could be so arrogant as to give his priestly hero a status that is reminiscent of Jesus. The title is apt in another way, as Chesterton had not written a Father Brown story that was published in over 12 years, so it represents a return of the detective priest.

Yet in this story Chesterton seems determined to undermine the previous status of his hero. We are told that Father Brown is working in South America, and that he is baffled by his current fame, since the stories that we read earlier were absurd tales made-up by a journalist, and lacking any truth. This wry comment on the nature of accidental fame has an autobiographical tinge, since Chesterton too was surprised by his sudden popularity.

In the context of the story it is odd, since this is the first in a series of tales in which Father Brown does precisely the things that the story tells us that he never did. This particular story has Father Brown being killed, and then brought back to life. However the miracle is false. Brown was not dead, and his apparent death was faked by the dictator and demagogue Alvarez, who hopes Brown will have his head turned by the miracle, so that he can be undermined when it is exposed as a hoax.

The other stories also revolve around similar miracles that turn out to be false. In 'The Arrow of Heaven', a millionaire is murdered by an arrow that could not possibly have killed a man in a room on his own, but Brown shows that the arrow was used like a dagger. In 'The Oracle of the Dog', a murder is seemingly foreseen by a dog with psychic powers, but Brown shows that the dog's behaviour was motivated by less lofty and more dog-like motives instead.

'The Miracle of Moon Crescent' proves to be no such thing. It is not a miracle, but a murder plot by three men. 'The Curse of the Golden Cross', proves to be fake and part of a scheme to kill two men. The weird supernatural powers of the murderer in 'The Dagger with Wings' turns out to be a hoax created to throw dust in the eyes of the investigators.

In 'The Doom of the Darnaways', another family curse proves to be a fiction invented to allow the heir to be murdered. The final story is about 'The Ghost of Gideon Wise', but of course he is not a ghost. He is still alive, and his apparent death and survival is a smokescreen intended to cover other murders.

Father Brown is the incredulous one here, although he makes it clear that he is not incredulous about the possibility of some of these things being true on principle – only sceptical about these particular instances. Instead it turns out that it is the unbelievers who will swallow anything, and have to be disabused.

This brings us to the most famous quotation that is attributed to G K Chesterton, but which there is no record of him having said: "When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything." The words of the quotation appear in many forms as well they might, since he probably never said it.

However Chesterton comes closest to saying it in *The Incredulity of Father Brown*, and I suspect this is where the misquote comes from. In 'The Oracle of the Dog', Father Brown says, "It's the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense and can't see things as they are." In 'The Miracle of Moon Crescent', he tells the sceptics, "You were all balanced on the very edge of belief – of belief in almost anything."

Chesterton probably sees himself as being like Father Brown, the dispenser of wise sayings in defence of his faith. I see him as being more like Don Quixote, the inheritor of a series of antiquated beliefs who is tilting at windmills. I do not mind Chesterton having beliefs that I do not share, but I do mind him defending them dishonestly with fallacies that misrepresent the position of his rivals.

Indeed I do wonder why Chesterton chooses to sprinkle these ideas through works of popular fiction such as the Father Brown stories. Of course all writers express their political and religious convictions, consciously or unconsciously, in all their works, and Chesterton may be using the sugar of a fun detective story to make us swallow indigestible medicine of Catholicism.

Another part of me wonders if Chesterton chooses a popular medium because it ensures that he can present the ideas in a superficial and glancing manner, making sweeping statements that he does not need to defend within the short running time of a light-hearted crime mystery.

Before I get carried away in criticising Chesterton's take on scepticism, I shall pull myself up and say that the author is not completely wrong in his comments. I would agree with him that many people do turn their back on religion, only to continue to believe in all manner of silly and preposterous things that have even less foundation in fact.

It is also a refreshing change to meet somebody who recognises that a dog is just a dog, and not endowed with special psychic abilities. I cannot help feeling sceptical when people imagine that dogs are somehow shrewd judges of character. Any animal that eats the excrement of other creatures is not my idea of a wise psychologist.

Where I part company with Chesterton is in his attempt to suggest that this is the default position of atheism, and that this credulity about silly beliefs is unique to atheists. Actually many atheists including myself would share Father Brown's scepticism about ghosts, curses, miracles and so on, and a number of religious people would be just as likely to accept those silly ideas as non-believers.

If Chesterton wishes to tilt at the windmills of atheism, it would help if he played fair, and did not attribute bad qualities that are neither universal to all atheists nor exclusive to unbelievers. He also attributes behaviour to atheists that I have never seen in any. We saw this in 'The Secret Garden', a story in *The Innocence of Father Brown*, where an atheist is bigoted enough to murder a man for contemplating becoming a Catholic.

We see it again in 'The Resurrection of Father Brown' where the atheist Alvarez engages in an elaborate hoax for no better reason than to discredit Father Brown. Admittedly Alvarez has more credible reasons, since Father Brown's work in South America poses a political threat to him too.

However I imagine Chesterton would feel that an atheist would be willing to try underhand techniques for that reason alone, just as the atheist murdered a man for that reason alone in 'The Secret Garden'. This is not how atheists behave except when under the influence of another faith-based belief system such as communism.

It may be a comfort for Chesterton to imagine that his enemies will go to any lengths to destroy members of his faith, but the reality is that the risk comes from other believers. They are the ones who need to convert others.

There is one final problem with Chesterton's outlook in *The Incredulity of Father Brown*. Chesterton does a good job of exposing the absurdly illogical beliefs of others, and imagines that he is drawing a line between his own sensible beliefs and the irrational ideas that he does not share.

This distinction is not as clear as Chesterton imagines. Whatever Chesterton might say about intuition and emotion, Father Brown reaches his conclusions by a process of deduction based on facts and evidence. Some of this is admittedly not strong, and I suspect that a number of stories end before an arrest or conviction because one could not take place on the basis of Father Brown's deductions alone.

Nonetheless the point is that there is always a natural rather than a supernatural explanation for all the phenomena that Father Brown studies, and there is never the slightest proof that any supernatural dimension exists of the kind that Father Brown believes in.

If Father Brown's resurrection was a hoax, how can we be certain about the resurrection of Jesus? If family curses are not handed down the generations, then why should original sin be passed on? If a dog is no oracle

to the spirit world, then why should a priest be? And so on.

The theology may be shaky, but viewed as detective stories the tales here are hugely entertaining. Chesterton may be infuriating and obtuse at times, but his style has enough mischievous humour and imagination to keep the interest.

Ero says

Good stuff. I don't really subscribe to Chesterton's theology or politics, but I do adore his ethics and style: he wants a more sacred and kind world, in which people behave with kindness to each other. But the primary appeal of the Father Brown stories is always Father Brown himself, more Columbo than Holmes, more sensible than sensational; and the settings of the stories, which place this seemingly ordinary little cleric in fanciful and ridiculous murder scenes, like placing a ball bearing in a jeweled setting.

Gloriamarie says

One either loves Fr Brown or not, I do.

Found this interesting essay

Lecture 46: The Incredulity of Father Brown
by DALE AHLQUIST

We could probably consider this collection as the most autobiographical of the Father Brown stories. In them Chesterton talks about fame, about traveling to America, and about conversion. We learn that Father Brown has, all his life, “been led by an intellectual hunger for truth, even of trifles.” We see his concern for justice on a small scale and on a large scale, as he not only deals with minor complications such as murder but also is found writing a series of lectures on Rerum Novarum. We see him reflecting on good and evil, on his own triumphs, his own sins, and we even get to see him angry.

The Incredulity of Father Brown was the third of five books featuring the umbrella-toting, crime-solving cleric. It was published in 1926, twelve years after the previous book of Father Brown mysteries. In the interim, at least two things had changed. Father Brown had become famous. And Chesterton had become Catholic. But while those two facts add interest to the stories, they are only incidental to them. Some reviewers, however, did not see it that way. Suddenly they were complaining that the stories had become too religious, as if they had never noticed before that the main character was a priest.

The thread that ties these yarns together is, as the title suggests, Father Brown's incredulity. There is in each tale an apparently supernatural event: a murder by a ghost or by an evil spirit or by a family curse, or at the other extreme, a resurrection from the dead. However, the one who is expected to believe in supernatural explanations to the shocking and mysterious events is the one who doubts such explanations. It is the priest who is skeptical about the alleged miracles while the skeptics are only too ready to believe in them. Hence, the most famous of all Chesterton's quotations: you know, the one about the man who does not believe in God doesn't believe in nothing but believes in anything? Yeah, that one. It comes from this book. Only it doesn't come in the neat little package that is always quoted (and always should be quoted). It comes from putting together two different Father Brown lines from two different stories.

In *The Oracle of the Dog*, Father Brown says, “It’s the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense and can’t see things as they are.” In the very next story, *The Miracle of Moon Crescent*, he tells the skeptics-turned-dupes, “You were all balanced on the very edge of belief – of belief in almost anything.” (And to give credit where credit is due, it was a couple of amateur detectives, Robin Rader and Pasquale Accardo, who solved this mystery.) (And one more parenthetical remark: these two stories, especially *The Oracle of the Dog*, are considered by many critics and anthologizers, to be among the very best Father Brown mysteries.)

Father Brown travels to America in these stories, no doubt because Chesterton traveled there himself a few years before they were written. If Chesterton ever shows any weakness as a writer, I must say it is when he writes dialogue for his American characters: it’s too darn eloquent. Even allowing for the fact that Americans 80 years ago probably spoke in complete sentences unlike their modern counterparts, it is still difficult to believe that any average American spoke as well as Chesterton allows him to speak in these stories. On the other hand, Chesterton is quick to distinguish them from the English. The American characters have a distinctive native spirit, “a restless fire.” In other words, they’re all Cowboys and Indians. But in any case, American millionaires make just as good murder victims as English millionaires.

Although the priest doubts the miraculous explanations for the crimes, he never doubts the possibility of miracles. “If I want any miracles,” says Father Brown, “I know where to get them.” It is natural to believe in the supernatural, he explains. The supernatural, of course, refers to both God and the Devil. Father Brown’s belief in both is always unshaken and informs both his faith and his reason. He can recognize the good man who is merely a sinner, and the bad man who wears his religion as a mask. He does not buy the false supernatural explanations for the way things happen, but neither does he buy the false scientific explanations for the way people behave: “All evil has one origin.”

But it is not merely belief in the supernatural that makes Father Brown think so clearly; it is belief in a creed. It is the rejection of the creed that makes the skeptics so malleable and rudderless. Or, to use a word more fitting to mystery stories: clueless. They are all afraid, says Father Brown, of four words: “He was made Man.” These same four words have made a few readers uncomfortable, too. But Chesterton has the most comfortable way of making people uncomfortable. He amuses them with a puzzle. He knows that every riddle wants a solution, every skeptic wants to be convinced, every criminal really wants to be caught, and every sinner wants to be forgiven.

<https://www.chesterton.org/lecture-46/>

Tabaré Santellán says

De camino a un cumpleaños, decidí pasarme por una librería de segunda mano para echar un vistazo. Como llevaba ya algún tiempo queriendo leer algo de Chesterton y su sensacional Padre Brown, una sonrisa de triunfo se dibujó en mi cara al verlo en una de las estanterías —entendédlo, es un libro relativamente pequeño y estaba en una sección equivocada, por lo que fue toda una casualidad (y encima, a un precio casi regalado)—.

Al principio pensé que el título que le pusieron a modo de hilo conductor estaba un poco cogido con pinzas; hasta que comprendí de qué se trataba. Todos los casos tienen en común la superstición y el cómo el protagonista llega a la solución sin desviarse del razonamiento lógico y su vasto conocimiento sobre la mente humana (tantos años escuchando a los feligreses tras la rejilla del confesionario, surtieron efecto).

La prosa de Chesterton juega muy bien con las metáforas, pero sin hacerse en absoluto cargante. Todos los relatos se devoran a una velocidad pasmosa y dejan un buen sabor de boca. Sabe perfectamente en qué puntos ir al grano y en cuales detenerse, extenderse en alguna descripción o dejar que los personajes muevan la historia. La caracterización también fue algo que me conquistó. El énfasis en los rasgos más característicos de las víctimas o los sospechosos, hacía muy fácil no perderse cuando llegaba algún torrente de nombres.

Espero poder leer más aventuras del sacerdote, sobre todo en inglés.

Star Shining Forever says

Mysteries that confound the police, the doctors, and eyewitnesses, are no more than a matter of observation, intuition, and experience to Father Brown. He's gone where most haven't gone and seen what most haven't seen: the insides of men's souls. He uses these powers of his, for so shall we call them, in pursuit of righteousness and justice. Where others question, Father Brown provides answers, based on what he knows of men, and of what depths they can sink to in the rejection of their Creator.

Jim says

While **The Innocence of Father Brown** and **The Wisdom of Father Brown** contain more spritely stories, **The Incredulity of Father Brown** by G.K. Chesterton is still worthy of a closer look. If one goes to the Father Brown stories expecting to find more traditional whodunits, perhaps in the style of Arthur Conan Doyle or Richard Austin Freeman, he or she will be perplexed and disappointed. To begin with, Father Brown has no particular interest in seeing the guilty party being led to judgment. There are, in fact, no trials in these stories; and one is equally likely to see Father Brown passing heavier judgment on the victims than on the murderers.

In **The Incredulity of Father Brown**, all the stories involve murders. We find the usual Chesterton "moral landscape" -- in which the author paints a picture of nature somehow mirroring the fact that something is very wrong. A good example is this descriptive paragraph from "The Dagger with Wings":

The rolling country round the little town was sealed and bound with frost, and the sky was as clear and cold as steel except in the north-east, where clouds with lurid haloes were beginning to climb up the sky. It was against these darker and more sinister colours that the house on the hill gleamed with a row of pale pillars, forming a short colonnade of the classical sort. A winding road led up to it across the curve of the down, and plunged into a mass of dark bushes. Just before it reached the bushes, the air seemed to grow colder and colder, as if he were approaching an icehouse or the North Pole.

By the time he solves the mystery, which he does, as is usual with him, with his lightning intuition, the priest wends his way back down the hill -- but the ominous quality is all gone, because the moral Gordian knot has been cut by the Father Brown's intellect:

When the priest went forth again and set his face homeward, the cold had grown more intense and yet was somehow intoxicating. The trees stood up like silver candelabra of some incredibly cold Candlemas of purification.

Perhaps the best and most typical story in the collection is "The Doom of the Darnaways," in which a

painting with a grim prediction has cast a pall of gloom over succeeding generations of an old English family:

In the seventh heir I shall return,
In the seventh hour I shall depart,
None in that hour shall hold my hand,
And woe to her that holds my heart.

The action is set in a half-ruined estate bordering the sea (with one of the best examples of Chesterton's moral landscapes). Fortunately, the little priest is there to unravel the skeins of gloom that are draped on this grim household.

As he wrote in 1930 in the **Illustrated London News**, "[t]he essence of a mystery tale is that we are suddenly confronted with a truth which we have never suspected and yet can see to be true." And that is what the Father Brown stories are all about.

Logan Alley says

after lots of contemporary fiction and mystery, I had to use my brain differently to be able to read and enjoy this book. Once I got used to the rhythm of the storytelling (and the fact that it was completely different from the television series), I enjoyed reading each of the short stories.

LydiaMae says

I love Father Brown stories so muuuch! I remember reading all of the books in 2016 in one go (the short stories of course) and it was so exciting and clever; I was thinking about them for ages afterwards!

Yooperprof says

This is one of those cases where I am REALLY REALLY "off" from the vast majority of readers.

This is a collection of eight short stories, or cases, each one a separate bizarre mystery that is "solved" because (in all cases) Father Brown does not accept the generally accepted theory, or framework, of the case. In other words, he is "not credulous," or incredulous. But I thought that essentially there's only one story here with eight minor variations. All of the "cases" involve secret conspiracies or supposed curses or variations on the "locked room" idea, and in all of the stories Father Brown and Father Brown alone has the preternatural insight which allows him and him alone to penetrate to "the truth." In other words, these are stories which appeal to a fantasy of wisdom, rather than to hard-earned pursuit of truth through investigation, deduction, and evidence-gathering.

I also disliked how it is never explained how Father Brown "just happens" to find himself in the middle of so many mysteries.

I also disliked Chesterton's pretentious, windy, and obtuse writing style. But mine is the minority view. (I feel like the token liberal on one of Fox TVs panel discussion shows.)

Ryan Young says

these stories are wannabe sherlock holmes mysteries with a catholic priest as the detective. in each one, we encounter a scooby-doo like event, where many people are duped into believing that supernatural forces are at work. they call in the priest, who will 'look around equably,' and figure out why the events in question are entirely of this world.

father brown is like chesterton in that he is logical and quick witted. he is not like chesterton because he is not acerbic and mean spirited. he is never described as 'meek,' but i'm sure that's what gk was going for when he built the character. father brown is soft spoken, unassuming, and the only reasonable person in any of the stories.

it is a standard trope in the stories to have everyone expecting the priest to swallow all supernatural explanations because he's into spiritual things. he always explains that only people without faith are easily duped into believing silly things. this is a bit disingenuous because i would wager that in real life - even in chesterton's life - this is not a common thing. father brown absolutely believes in ghosts, but that's very different from believing in a particular ghost. he absolutely believes in the devil, but that's a far cry from believing in the devil actually manifesting itself.

i love chesterton's nonfiction attacks on his contemporaries and on the world in general. i do not love this patronizing set of pseudomysteries designed to show me how stupid atheists are always scared of curses and ghosts and vampires.

Deepti says

This collection of crime short stories makes for a fascinating read. Father Brown is an unusual but great choice for a detective.

All the stories carry a supernatural element and Father Brown dislodges superstitious beliefs and solves crimes. My only grudge with Father Brown is that he never saves the victim who comes to him for help but it's always a post murder whodunnit.

Forewarning, Chesterton's writing is laborious. It is difficult to read more than a story in one sitting.

Mehmet Bozkurt says

Chesterton, Peder Brown öykülerinde, normalde polisiye hikayelerde al???k oldu?umuzdan farklı bir yol izlemi?. Önce ?a??rt?c? olay, ilk aç?klamalar?yla birlikte herkesin gözü önünde gerçekleş?iyor. Peder Brown, ortaya ç?kan ilk hikayeye ?üpheyle yakla??yor, gerçekçi ve mant?kl? nedenleri ortaya ç?kar?p olay? çözüme kavu?turuyor. Hikayelerin sonunda bir yarg?lama yok, suçlular?n cezaland?r?lmas? anlat?lm?yor. Asl?nda

polisiye yerine dedektif öyküleri demek daha do?ru belki de. Her?ey tad?nda b?rak?lm???. Saçmal?klar?n alg?y? nas?l bozdu?unu, irrasyonelin s?k?c? rasyonelden daha çekici ve hipnotize edici oldu?unu, insan?n nedensellik olu?turma sürecindeki eksikliklerini bilen ve kendisini bu bozukluklar?n neden oldu?u yanl??l?klar? düzeltmeye adam?? gösteri?siz bir dü?ünür-dedektif Peder Brown...

Adam Graham says

Twelve years after his second Father Brown books, G.K. Chesterton brought readers a new collection in 1926 entitled, *The Incredulity of Father Brown*.

While the previous collections titled, *The Innocence of Father Brown* and *The Wisdom of Father Brown* had very little with the theme of the stories, *Incredulity* is a key theme of each story in this collection.

In each story, an event happens to which a miraculous supernatural explanation is offered. Father Brown by and by doesn't buy into the supernatural solution, but finds a natural, but often amazing solution to the case. Of course, in each case, the people expect Father Brown to go along with a supernatural solution as he's a priest and all. However, the book makes the point that being religious and being given superstition are not the same thing.

In "The Curse of the Golden Cross," Brown explains his believe in "common sense as he understands it:

It really is more natural to believe a preternatural story, that deals with things we don't understand, than a natural story that contradicts things we do understand. Tell me that the great Mr Gladstone, in his last hours, was haunted by the ghost of Parnell, and I will be agnostic about it. But tell me that Mr Gladstone, when first presented to Queen Victoria, wore his hat in her drawing--room and slapped her on the back and offered her a cigar, and I am not agnostic at all. That is not impossible; it's only incredible. But I'm much more certain it didn't happen than that Parnell's ghost didn't appear; because it violates the laws of the world I do understand.

Father Brown applies such incisive common sense to eight problems, with all but one of them involving murder. One thing that makes these stories different is that the goal of the story is not catching the murderer. In the vast majority of cases, the suspect is not caught. The story is about the puzzle and how Father Brown solves it. In one case, "The Oracle of the Dog," Brown stays one hundred miles away from the scene of the crime and solves it secondhand.

The best story in the book was, "The Arrow of Heaven" which involves the seemingly impossible murder of a millionaire in a high tower with an arrow when it was impossible for anyone to be able to shoot it that distance.

"The Miracle of the Moon Crescent" is a fascinating story that has three religious skeptics contemptuously dismiss Father Brown but they begin to think a supernatural cause may be involved in the seemingly impossible murder of a millionaire when the police fail to turn up any satisfactory solution.

"The Doom of the Darnaways" may be one of the most profound stories in the collection. Father Brown encounters a young man whose family is said to be subject to a curse that leads inevitably to murder and suicide. An expert on genetics declares the curse is nonsense, but that heredity indicates the same type of fate. Here Chesterton illustrated that it's possible for both superstition and science to develop a fatalism about

human life and destiny that excludes free and leads people to helplessness and despair. The story has a well-told murder mystery, though I don't know why Father Brown put off the solution.

There's not really a story I didn't like in the collection, although I do think, "Oracle of the Dog" may have a little too much literary criticism and not enough story. Also, some of Chesterton's rough edges and lack of racial sensitivity are present in this collection. However, if you can get past that, The Incredulity of Father Brown is a truly wonderful collection of stories about the original clerical detective.

Evgeny says

This collection contains eight short Father Brown mysteries. The guy justifiably earned his place among the greatest detectives of all time. He is probably the most harmless of them all. Consider Sherlock Holmes as an example: he never shied away from a little action and was in a fairly good physical shape.

If you recall famous American hard-boiled detectives: Sam Spade, Continental Op, Philip Marlowe, and Lew Archer - these guys took and delivered quite a lot of beating during their investigations.

Father Brown is as timid as they make them: from his description he looks even less prone to violence than a typical old maiden Miss Marple.

As such while almost all of these stories deal with murders they are never about catching the culprit: Father Brown's task is to just expose him/her. The mysteries themselves are quite complicated (some of them I would even call too complicated) with some paradoxes thrown in for a good measure. The resolution of the paradoxes are at times trivial (once they are explained), sometimes implausible, and sometimes why-the-hell-have-not-I-think-about-it type. With all of them I think Chesterton have to be credited with creation some of the tropes even modern mysteries and thrillers still use - I can think of at least two out of the top of my head.

I am done with my praise, now it is time for some criticism. It looks like Chesterton was deeply religious person and he never missed a chance to show how feeble-minded and prone to superstitions the minds of atheists are. In fact the acting Catholic priest Father Brown always appears to be least superstitions of all present characters.

As an atheist the appropriate modern reaction would be to shout to the whole world (which really does not care) that I am offended and rate this book with 1 star. Being old-school I just laughed at it and ignored it; I do judge this book on all its merits.

The writing style makes for slow read - I cannot even figure out the reason for this. The first collection was more lighthearted; the second and this books failed to capture the lightheartedness again. This would be only part of the reason, but this is the only one I can think of.

The rating is 3.5 stars. I though about rounding it down until I finished the last story dealing with evil Bolsheviks; the final words of Father Brown (and through him the author's) were nothing short of prophetic; they were not related to Bolsheviks by the way.

I was very much impressed and as a result the rating was rounded up: 4 stars.

An Odd1 says

Starts exciting with Father Brown in a tropical village, recovering from his own "murder", then degenerates into quasi-philosophical maunderings.

Nan Silvernail says

Chesterton's language is beautiful. Father Brown has a keen mind and eyes with which to see. I'd warn that there is racism in the stories and that some solutions left me hanging. But the puzzles are very clever.
