Chapter III

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'A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS'

Father Brown is the offspring of Chesterton's inventive genius and literary imagination. This chapter will study Father Brown in all his dimensions.

Father Brown is perhaps the most important character created by Chesterton, not only because he occurs more often than any other in his writings, but also because the clerical detective measures up to an August Dupin or a Sherlock Holmes easily, though he is significantly different from both of them. Father Brown does not occur in any of his writings other than the Father Brown stories but he is quite pervasive there. He is not only peerless as a detective but he also suggests so many problems relating to his attitude to crime and its consequence that a multi-dimensional study of his 'career', achievements and character is needed and justified, and a 'Brown' study will be an integral part of an assessment of G.K. Chesterton as a literary person.
As in the case of history, so in fiction too one comes across persons at a cut-off point in time catching them in a single act or profile, or alternatively gets a long term view of them to enable one to know their beginnings and growth. In fiction, a character can appear as a fixed type or as one who evolves i.e. outgrows himself from time to time. The former is known to critics as the 'template' and the latter the 'evolutionary' type. In the template series, the repeating characters are the same in story to story; they grow no older and do not develop in any way, so that it makes little difference whether you read these tales in chronological order. The other is the 'evolutionary' series wherein the repeated characters age and show signs of character development or deterioration. Perry Mason on T.V. is a template character; Holmes and Watson are evolutionary characters. The Sherlock Holmes stories as a unit have a biographical element. One important aspect of the evolutionary series

is that even a lesser story in the series will maintain interest for its depiction of the characters, while a weak unit in a template series (and no series of tales can be of uniform excellence) is a dead loss". If the same detective appears in a series of short stories and if he is known only as a solver of riddles as they come up and if his development either as a person or as a professional in the meantime is not known, he is template, but if his origins are known and if the evolution of his personality as well as of his techniques of detection can be traced then he is 'historical' within the framework of fiction; i.e. he is subject to the laws of change through time. If his parentage, place of birth, education, profession and other items of evolving bio-data are known he can be studied as a character himself. The reader's interest in the detective then will not be confined to the momentary thrill of observing his tackling a particular criminal at a particular time. It can extend to the study
of the detective himself.

An attempt to trace the 'biography' of a fictional character who is but a detective who appears in a number of unconnected short stories whose common points are a crime, its detection and the same detective, has been made in respect of Sherlock Holmes. W.S. Baring-Gould tried it in his *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*. The first meeting between Watson and Holmes, Watson's marriage, Holmes' 'death', his 'resurrection' etc., suggest themselves as possible points in an evolving 'biography'. It is common knowledge that we know next to nothing about the personal life of Dr. Thorndyke. Similar is the case with many other detectives. They are introduced to us even in the first instance as well-established detectives hot on the pursuit of hardened criminals, and in the last story also they continue to be the same. We know little of their early lives, or retired lives; a very
distinguished and popular sleuth like Holmes for whom his fans refuse to imagine a physical end, retires to the country and settles down to the unexciting business of farming. Sergeant Cuff in _The Moonstone_ talks about a similar mode of retirement. Agatha Christie saves herself the trouble of inventing a mode of retirement for Poirot by killing him in _Poirot's Last Case_. But the beginnings are all misty, though we are told that Poirot was before retirement a Belgian police officer. Very little is known of Father Brown besides what we know of him as a clerical sleuth with specific and abiding characteristics. But one could piece together the little bits of known data and see if one could get the picture of an evolving person.

When a literary artist creates a character who is endowed with unusual characteristics he usually keeps a model in mind and fashions his character accordingly; but of course with
necessary changes which would save the author from a charge of forgery but with enough resemblance to help identification of the original of the character. Characters based on real models could be picked up anywhere in literature. Charles Dickens has modelled Micawber\textsuperscript{2} on his own father, and lampoon\textsuperscript{5} Leigh Hunt in his Skimpole.\textsuperscript{3} But at least two detective story writers have drawn for their sleuths on persons known to them and whom they respected. Conan Doyle was struck by the uncanny ability of Dr. Joseph Bell, his professor in the Edinburgh medical faculty to notice more about his patients than anybody else could and diagnose not only their diseases but also tell about the details of their lives after a single observation. Dr. Joseph Bell, MD., FRCS was consulting Surgeon to the Royal Infirmary and Royal Hospital for the sick children. His rare qualities of acute observation made him a legendary, University figure. Doyle wrote in his autobiography that "he would sit in the receiving

\textsuperscript{2) Vide Charles Dickens David Copperfield}
\textsuperscript{3) Vide Charles Dickens Bleak House.}
room and diagnose the patients as they came through the door - sometimes before they had opened their mouths, he would tell them their symptoms and even give them details of their past life and very seldom was there any error. Dr. Bell was his model for Sherlock Holmes whose enormous power to discover many intimate details about his clients by mere careful observation and the process of deduction baffled a simple minded Watson. G.K. Chesterton got his inspiration for the creation of Father Brown from Father O'Connor, a clergyman who was well acquainted with criminals and their ways. The beginnings and the nature of this influence are best described in the words of Chesterton himself.

"When a writer invents a character for the purposes of fiction... he may have taken and probably has taken a hint from a human being, especially in externals, because he is not thinking of a portrait but of a picture. In Father Brown it was his chief feature to be faultless and one might say that his conspicuous quality was not being
conspicuous. His commonplace exterior was meant to contrast with his unsuspected vigilance and intelligence; and that being so, of course I made his appearance shabby and shapeless, his face round and expressionless, his manners clumsy and so on. At the same time, I did take some of his inner intellectual qualities from my friend O'Connor of Bradford who has not as a matter of fact any of these external qualities. He is not shabby but rather neat, he is not clumsy but very delicate and dexterous ... he is a sensitive and quick-witted Irishman with the profound irony and some of the potential irritability of his race. My Father Brown was deliberately described as a Suffolk dumpling from East Anglia. That and the rest of his description was a deliberate disguise for the purpose of
detective fiction. But for all that there is a very real sense in which Father O'Connor was intellectual inspiration of these stories.  

Chesterton first met Father O'Connor when he had gone to give a lecture at Keighley in the high moors of the West Riding and where he stayed that night with a leading citizen of the town. Father O'Connor was among those who met them. He described him as 'a small man with a smooth face and a demure but elvish expression.' This meeting took place sometime in 1904, and the friendship that was made then continued till the end. In the meantime in 1922 it was Father O'Connor who received him into the Roman Catholic Church.

From the above, it will be clear that Father O'Connor was the original model for Chesterton's great protagonist; in a sense the former Father was the grandfather of the latter.

Before the creation of Father Brown the important discovery that Chesterton had made was that priests got to know about crime and criminals through their confessions and that if any priest should be interested in the detection of crime it must be only to save the sinners from further sin by converting them to the path of virtue. Chesterton, however, transferred to Father Brown only two characteristics of Father O'Connor: (1) Roman Catholic priesthood; and (2) familiarity with crime. For the rest he made Father Brown develop his own methodology of detection of crime and management of criminals.

Incidentally it would be interesting to note that Chesterton himself was taken as a model by John Dickson Carr who created Dr. Gideon Fell. In that case, it seems that corpulence was the only peculiarity which the protagonist shared with the model.

Glimpses of Father Brown's personal life

can be seen in scattered references, so that it cannot be said that the author does not let us into any detail regarding Brown's biography. Apart from his personal traits and physical appearance we know also that he was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Some more details about him are given in the 'Eye of Apollo'. There it is said that "The official description of the short man was the Rev. J. Brown attached to St. Francis Xavier's Church, Camberwell, and he was coming from a Camberwell deathbed to see the new offices of his friend" - i.e. Flambeau. We do not know whether the J. stands for John or any other name. From a passage in 'The Mistake of the Machine', we learn that when he was thirty years or so he was "Chaplain to his co-religionists in a prison in Chicago..." and that "the official second in command under the Governor was an ex-detective named Greymood Usher, a Yankee philosopher".


8) 'The Mistake of the Machine' in ibid, p. 221.
The following information one gathers in the very first detective story Chesterton wrote with Father Brown as the detective: "he was a very short Roman Catholic priest going up from a small Essex village; he had a large shabby umbrella which constantly fell on the floor". His Essex nativity is often mentioned and in fact he is frequently referred to as 'The Essex priest'.

"I'm an English rustic myself; at least I was grown, with other turnips, in Essex".

As for the umbrella, "He even found himself eyeing the knobbed and clumsy head of his own shabby umbrella". R.G.G.Price says that the umbrella had no 'crook' but was knobbed at the handle. He further says that "repeated comparisons with turnips prove he was brachycephalic".

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9) 'The Blue Cross', p. 10.
10) 'Vampire in the Village', p. 713.
Father Brown himself tells Flambeau in his first encounter with the thief that he was once a curate in Hartlepool and it was there that he learnt about some of the tricks of criminals. This shows that Brown was a curate very early in his life in Hartlepool and that he was receiving confessions from the numerous criminals there. He learnt from them details about the anatomy of crime. From the use of the word 'curate', Erick Routley infers that it was Brown's appointment.

Father Brown had only a few relatives; one of them was "Elizabeth Fane, simplified into Betty; and she was the child of a sister who had married into a race of refined but impoverished squires". Since her father had died, Father Brown was her protector, guardian and a sort of uncle.

Father Brown was for sometime a priest in Cobhole which he visited again somewhat later.

13) 'The Blue Cross' Penguin Father Brown, p. 22.
14) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p. 90.
when he was in London. 'The Absence of Mr. Glass', introduces him to us as a priest in the little Catholic Church in Scarborough. There is reference to his short figure, his shortsightedness and his undistinguished countenance. His visit to the New World is attested in more than one place. It seems he had been there on missionary work. Father Brown's visit was to the U.S.A. as mentioned in 'The Resurrection', 'The Arrow of Heaven'. His visit to South America is mentioned in 'The Resurrection'. In England he had been moving about often due to the mere lust for travel. He had been to Spain at least once, to visit Flambeau whom he had saved from a career of crime. In 'The Resurrection' mention is made of the fact that for a short period (when exactly it was not known) during which he did not enjoy fame. His learning especially in matters relating

17) 'The Absence of Mr. Glass', ibid, p. 182.
18) 'The Arrow of Heaven', ibid, p. 333.
19) ibid, pp. 319, 333.
20) 'The Secret of Father Brown' ibid, p. 461.
21) 'The Resurrection of Father Brown' ibid, p. 319.
Theology was so great that he could paraphrase any page in St. Thomas Aquinas. He had a certain mannerism of "holding his temples tight like a man in sudden and violent pain while he was on the eve of discovery." Poirot in Agatha Christie has a similar mannerism. R.G.G.Price working out a close biography of Father Brown says that he was Chaplain in the Chicago Prison in 1914.

But all these bits of information do not help us make out even a roughly continuous biography of Father Brown. But these are enough to show that he was not a template character but a person growing through time and acquiring varying experiences in different places and at different times.

The literary origin of Father Brown goes back to the experiment in detective story writing

22) 'The Secret Garden' Ibid, p. 36.

23) Ibid.

which Chesterton was making in his *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *The Flying Inn*. He was in search of one who according to him would be a perfect detective. He was contemplating evidently a multiple role for his protagonist. He was not only to be sufficiently queer and eccentric to become memorable as a type, but also serve unmentioned but always remembered additional purposes like openly preferring religious conversions after confession to secular judicial convictions after legal trials, and advancing a new attitude to crime and present to the reader fresh and marginally mystic methods of detection of crime. He introduced his ideal detective in his full form even in the first story of *The Innocence of Father Brown* namely 'The Blue Cross' which was published in *Story Teller* in September, 1910.

"It is arguably not only the first but the best - this tale of how a little priest tricked a tall, international criminal, Flambeau, out of stealing a silver cross inlaid with
sapphires the priest was carrying and laid a trail of oddities for the Chief of the French Police to enable him to make his arrest on Hampstead Heath. Anybody of perception reading that piece in the Story Teller might well have felt that a new fictional detective had been created to rival Holmes".  

He came to stay forever in the history of detective fiction as an unforgettable new model who along with his creator would be affectionately remembered by a more or less permanent readership. Along with him were introduced two more characters: one, the oversized Flambeau who was to begin as a distinguished thief and then turn into an undistinguished detective; once chased by Father Brown and later settling down to a law-abiding life, after being spiritually chastened by the 'inconspicuous little Quixote' of 'an Essex priest'; and two, the French Police Chief Valentine,  

who in the Father Brown stories is short-lived. He is introduced and got rid of with a purpose which was mainly to show the total difference between Father Brown and Valentine in beliefs, methods and practices. Father Brown himself remains throughout the forty-eight stories with undiminished brilliance and little changing characteristics. He goes about always with his ungainly umbrella, a flat hat and unmanageable small parcels etc. O'Connor admits: "the flat hat is true to life, the large cheap umbrella was my defence against wearing an overcoat. Brown paper parcels! I carried them whenever I could, having no sense of style or deportment".

Characteristically Chesterton has made his detective also a sort of paradox. "That incisive little cleric does occasionally and briefly pose as a simpleton but always for a dead serious purpose".  


This little priest is supposed to rank among a dozen best known detectives of fiction. The stories in which he figures are collected into five groups. (1) The Innocence of Father Brown (1911), (2) The Wisdom of Father Brown (1914), (3) The Incredulity of Father Brown (1926), (4) The Secret of Father Brown (1927) and (5) The Scandal of Father Brown (1935). The last two have explanatory narratives (1) 'The Secret of Flambeau' (2) 'The Vampire of the Village' appended to them. These groupings raise queries which are relevant to the question of the evolution of Father Brown in the manufactory of Chesterton's detective fiction. It is known for certain that 'The Blue Cross', the first Father Brown story, was written in 1911 and the others followed over a quarter of a century at unequal intervals. But the stories were bunched into the aforesaid five groups later on. There is no certainty that all the forty-eight stories were

27) Dudley Barker, A Centenary Appraisal, p.3.
written in the order in which they appear in the Omnibus Volume published in 1935, though the groups themselves appeared in that order as can be seen from the dates given above. When 'The Blue Cross' was written, Chesterton was sure only about the physical, mental and moral traits of the Essex cleric, and he could not have precisely and in detail anticipated the course his stories would take in the future; and it is surprising that each group from three to five has only eight stories in it while one and two have twelve—eight and twelve being the first multiples of four; but why only twelve or eight in each group? He could not have written the stories with a view to neatly fitting them into an 'Innocence' or "Wisdom" or 'Incredulity' etc. The grouping was clearly an afterthought, for the headings of the groups do not apply to all the stories in the groups, except, perhaps the first one. In the case of the fourth and fifth groups, the ninth narrative is left unnumbered and made to look like an appendix; but 'The Vampire of the Village' the
last story is as good a story itself as any other in the Omnibus. 'The Secret of Father Brown' which precedes the first story in the bunch called 'The Secret of Father Brown' is no story at all, but merely an account of Father Brown's exposition of his detective method (or absence of method) to a curious American, Mr. Chase which could well be a symbolic name for a detective. Similarly 'The Secret of Flambeau' which is appended to this group contains Father Brown's account of the psychology of a thief and the incident of Flambeau revealing himself to the American. So in the Father Brown Omnibus there are fifty-one narratives, of which forty-eight are listed as Father Brown Stories, one (the last one) though a Father Brown detective story is not numbered along with the forty-eight and two which are only the accounts of how a detective (Brown) detected and a thief (Flambeau) stole. The stories within this edited framework do not help us get a glimpse of Father Brown's development as a detective or even as a person; but in the first two pages of
the opening unnumbered chapter 'The Secret of Father Brown' enough details about the career of Flambeau from his early adventurous criminal exploits to his later sedate settling down in Spain as a peaceful householder are given to help one write a brief biography of Flambeau. But such details are lacking, in the case of Father Brown except those mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter. But personally, while Flambeau, probably the detective's junior contemporary was growing, his senior the detective also presumably was evolving - though 'evolution' as an expression and an idea would have been most repugnant to Father Brown. It is not hard to read such a meaning into the group of captions as to suggest an evolution and steadily growing maturity for Father Brown himself. For example, a linkage between groups is possible thus:

1) The detective begins with innocence, which however, is not to be mistaken for ignorance. He knew all about crimes and
criminals. He could even stupify and frighten the great Flambeau himself with details of horror known only to the most seasoned among the wicked. His innocence - the childlike innocence - however, is beyond question. If innocence be equated with ignorance, it might be said that his innocence is only 'seeming' and apparent and not real.

2) From this 'innocence' he graduates to 'wisdom' in the second series. The shift from the first condition to the second is described in the following passage occurring in 'The Absence of Mr. Glass'. Father Brown's reaction to the expert Hood's explanation of the condition in which Mr. Glass was found was not the blank curiosity of his first innocence. It was rather that creative curiosity which comes when a man has the beginnings of an idea.

3) In 'The Incredulity of Father Brown', the credulity of the public which thought that Brown was resurrected after death, is proved wrong by the great detective explaining the natural process by which
he recovered from a faint. The incredulity of the priest, who was often and by many, associated with belief in the supernatural, is important, for it introduces us to a maturer and more reasoned state of Father Brown's mind.

4) In an introduction to the fourth group of stories the detective reveals the secret of his unfailling success as a detective; and we meet here the perfect detective adopting inimitable methods of crime detection.

5) The last group significantly and symbolically shows that Brown not only detected the crimes of others but was also personally free from crimes mentioned briefly as scandal - particularly a scandal from which a Roman Catholic priest ought to be free. But in fact there was no truth in the report of Father Brown's involvement in a sex-scandal. He was and ought to have been far too sober to be capable of such involvement. He had attained the maturity needed to treat the
world as his companion and refuse to treat it as his judge.

It is to be remembered that Father Brown figures in a story which has escaped all the omnibus volumes containing Father Brown stories. 'The Donnington Affair' which has remained a stray journal publication as published as early as 1914, though it was not included in any of the Omnibus volumes, the first of which appeared in 1935. 'The Donnington Affair' was included for the first time in a collection of G.K. Chesterton's detective stories in 1987.28

The simplicity of Father Brown often goes so far as to look childish; but he has only some characteristics of a child. He is not ignorant but only innocent. Hence the Innocence of Father Brown. Kingsley Amis puts it clearly: "G.K. Chesterton never developed a character who is and remains a child, but his tales are full of insights

into childhood and celebrations of it and of the disregarded truth of which only a child is conscious. Thus does Father Brown with his ability to probe mysteries with the uninhibited vision of children become an ideal detective whom no mystery could baffle.

It was in that very first story that Chesterton makes the witty and true statement that 'The criminal is the creative artist, the detective only the critic'.

But it is not sufficiently true when applied to Father Brown, for he is not a mere critic but a creative critic. He could create a saint out of a thief. In his case the criticism itself becomes an art, as it surely is in the case of the great master detectives. The idea of associating art with crime could have been suggested to Chesterton by De Quincey's famous essay on 'Murder as a Fine Art'; but linking it

with its natural reaction, namely detection, was Chesterton's characteristic way. It also happens to be a halfway house leading to treating murder as sin and not merely secular, legal crime and the follow up of the saving of the soul of the criminal and not punishing his body. So the aesthetic approach to the problem was the starting point of a process which would finally give it a moral and then a spiritual connotation.  

The shift from aesthetics to ethics in this context makes some critics notice a strand of moralism in the Father Brown stories allegedly put purposely in by Chesterton. But why not moralism? can be a justifiable rejoinder; though it would be more consistent with scholarship and prudence to enquire if the moralist component in the Father Brown stories, is too obtrusive. Occasionally it looks as if it is; e.g., 'The Miracle of Moon Crescent'. Undoubtedly, however, the moralist element is to a large extent inherent.

30) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p.91.
in the genre for it is essentially virtue seeking wickedness out and saving the innocent from the wiles of the vicious. But then that is to be only basic and not to be seen on surface.

Erick Routley says

"without reprinting the whole of Father Brown stories in extenso, I see no way of demonstrating beyond question, G.K. Chesterton's innocence of the charge of dragging in moralism so that Father Brown may be given a chance to preach. But innocent he is. The artistry of the stories is not in their moralism but in the skill which makes the reader miss the moralism altogether until his third or fourth reading. That is why the Father Brown stories are almost universally misunderstood". 31

But there is another aspect of this argument. Readers go to literary works like the Father Brown stories not expecting or wanting any

moral instruction or spiritual pourings out, but for the pleasure of reading a good story well-told. So in such a case it is not necessary to regret the misunderstanding; for they are enjoyable only when they are misunderstood. It is obvious that the moral purpose did weigh with Chesterton. Father Brown's attitude to crime is conditioned by his attachment to Christian values like charity having to be limitless. Justice has to be so rigorous and impartial and inflexible that there can be no ground for relaxing on the inviolability of the bases of justice; charity and mercy can have no influence on justice; in other words, sentiment must not weaken reason as determined by law, whether such law be human and secular or divinely transcendental. But Christian charity as Chesterton insists is different from human charity. In 'The Chief Mourner of Marne' the following passage occurs:

"There is a limit to human charity"
said Lady Outram, trembling all over.
"There is"

said Father Brown dryly

"and that is the real difference between human charity and Christian charity ... We alone are left to deliver them from despair when your human charity deserts them".  

This invites comparison with a statement by Charles Dickens in his Martin Chuzzlewit that "charity begins at home, justice begins next door". As a devout man of orthodox religion Chesterton lays down through Father Brown the moral absolutist dictum of unlimited charity. Everywhere as here Father Brown speaks emphatically from the Christian moral point of view which is more comprehensive and inflexible than secular, human, moral doctrines.

In Father Brown aesthetics slide into ethics quietly but effectively. The art of that priestly detective, i.e. the art of detection as

well as the art of reasoning and powers of speech, come straight to the reader without the adventitious and distorting aid of a narrator like Dr. Watson. W.W. Robson says:

"The artistic reason of Father Brown's powers of repartee and his witticisms in general is that we look straight at him as we do not look at Sherlock Holmes, who is reflected in the sometimes exasperating admiration of Dr. Watson; and so Father Brown has to seem brilliant to us; the only way this can be done is by making him brilliant." 33

But it is not entirely true to say that an intelligent reader of Conan Doyle depends so exclusively on Dr. Watson as not to be able to form his own judgement about Sherlock Holmes in spite of the medium. And it must also be considered that Doctor Watson's role is played by the author (Chesterton) himself who shapes

33) W.W. Robson. A Centenary Appraisal, p. 64.
his protagonist as he wants his readers to know him. After all both are fictitious characters and they are only what their creators want them to be.

In spite of Father Brown being an extraordinary man, the intention of Chesterton seems to be to present him as a very ordinary commonplace man, simple, quiet, unobtrusive, incapable of violence in language or action etc. The following estimate of that detective seems to be correct.

"Father Brown is represented as ... an ordinary man of simple tastes who enjoys simple pleasures and at the same time a clever, shrewd person with observation and sensitiveness beyond the ordinary. But he is not a mystic. He remains true both to traditional theology and to the genre of the detective story in never decrying reason. It is when Flambeau, disguised as a priest does
this" (i.e. denies reason) "that Father Brown is
certain that he is a fraud. Of course Father
Brown is represented as a religious man. It is
not by accident and not merely to find a new twist
to the Sherlock Holmes formula that Chesterton
makes him a priest; but once again G.K. Chesterton
is at pains to dissociate him from anything
exotic, any suggestions of the allegedly subtle
lures of Rome". 34

Brown's very 'normality' is exaggerated to the
point of looking very abnormal.

"Father Brown by himself has no solidity.
He is not a credible priest" says W.W. Robson;
and adds" he seems to be away from his parish
as often as Doctor Watson was away from his
practice. He comes and goes from nowhere". 35

Really these remarks call for criticism on more
than one ground. It is not proper to compare

35) Ibid., p. 64
Father Brown, the protagonist in the Father Brown Stories with Conan Doyle's Dr. Watson who is after all a foil to Sherlock Holmes; he must be compared only to the Baker Street detective. That the latter has a permanent habitation is one of Conan Doyle's tricks to make the detective come alive from his pages and to familiarise him even to an occasional reader. But failure to provide such a permanent address to Father Brown is no discredit to his creator; for Father Brown was not a detective by profession who would wait for his customers in his office but was a priest whose duties entailed his commuting from place to place and in search of pious duties to perform. It is again wrong to suggest that the priest was neglecting his official duties. The nature of his duties are such that he has to be found wherever spiritual succour is needed and wherever evil has to be faced and countered and the evildoer rescued from the consequences of sin. It is precisely this duty that we find Father Brown performing.
It has been suggested that Father Brown has an uncanny way of being present wherever crime is committed. "Nothing could be more improbable than Father Brown's habit of always being in it on the spot when a crime is committed". 36 It is not as if no crime could be or was committed anywhere without Father Brown being present there. But quite naturally in a bunch of stories all of which deal with Brown's discovery of the criminal and exposé of the crime, every story will have that simple man in the midst of it. The author is concerned to narrate only the incidents in which his detective is involved. Further the charge of improbable ubiquity is not serious since there are occasions when Father Brown is sent for. For example in 'The Three Tools of Death' and 'The Oracle of the Dog' Father Brown's services are sought and he is called in to investigate. In 'The Queer Feet' he is present for some other reason but the situation soon includes one of robbery which he detects on his own.

36) Ronald Knox. 20th Century Literary Criticism. Vol. 6, p. 100.
Undoubtedly it is necessary for any character to possess eccentricities if it wants to become memorable. In fact most of Dickens' characters become unforgettable because of this; and in stories such as the genre of detective fiction offers and in which characterization is not as important as plot construction and events move on unexpected lines, any single character with unusual features becomes memorable. That is how "solitary violin playing and opium-taking and Sherlock Holmes as well as orchid-growing and Poirot", become inseparable in the minds of the readers. Kingsley Amis' view that "Father Brown does without these adventitious eccentricities"37 is surely not supported by facts; for he is dumpy, short-sighted and given to blinking; he rarely parts with his umbrella and is noted for his flat hat. Ronald Knox is nearer the truth when he says,

"personality of the detective counts in detective stories. He must be real, he must have

idiosyncrasies, eccentricities... he must appeal through his weakness. It is because he drops his parcels and cannot roll his umbrella, because he blinks at us and has fits of absent-mindedness, that Father Brown is such a good publisher's detective".  

Father Brown fulfils all the requirements of a good detective. He has his method, his objective, attitude to crime and criminals and last but not least his quota of eccentricities; but these are all different from those of other well known fictional detectives; but it is necessary to note that he has them all the same. It will not do to deny these in one's anxiety to emphasise his distinct character.

How a detective sets about his task of discovering a criminal and then disposing of would explain his philosophy of crime and punishment

and his attitude towards law-breakers. If a person like Sergeant Cuff or Inspector Bucket who officially belongs to the police force is seen to be at one end of a spectrum, Father Brown would naturally be at the farthest other end. It is the professional duty of the former to place the criminal before justice after discovering him; the affair which begins with a hammer or a gun shot or arsenic must end in a prisoner's cell or the gallows.

The criminal is the villainous hero in the earlier part while the detective is the avenging hero in the later part. The former arouses the reader's indignation and the latter satisfies his sense of justice. The reader is anxious and curious to know how exactly the detective achieves his ends; and therein lies the excitement; the denouement provides the satisfaction which the victory of righteousness and the punishment of wickedness bring. Almost all the detectives from
Dupin onwards share these characteristics; the one solitary exception is Father Brown. He has a different attitude to crime; and it is so different that it is not merely a variation of the usual attitude of a conventional detective towards crime. It is almost the opposite of it.

Father Brown's attitude to crime can be summarised as follows:

Any violation of the moral or statutory law constitutes crime. It is not to be treated leniently. A certain violation of secular law - which may at times involve the violation of moral law also - is at times and by certain people condoned on the ground that the ultimate objective of the law-breaker is to do some unobjectionable good; i.e., to hold the view that the ends justify the means. To Father Brown they do not. Robin Hood and Rob Roy are examples of this kind of virtuous law-breakers who violate the law to
unofficially punish worse violators of law. They are usually very popular and the nineteenth century crime literature which specialised in glorifying the bandit - for example Arsene Lupin of Maurice Leblanc - had its origin in this philosophy. This generally takes the form of robbing a wicked and miserly Peter to pay a good and needy Paul. This is a kind of evil which it is easy to mistake for virtue. Father Brown is certain that a crime is under any circumstance a crime; so that in circumstances in which the secular arm of the law might be inclined to be lenient, Father Brown would be inflexible. That is, his religion and his profession would oblige him to be. But it does not follow that he would be vindictive or cruel to anyone who had had the misfortune to commit a crime. He would catch him and try to convert him to good. This is the attitude toward criminals familiar to students of Victor Hugo's Les Miserables. The Bishop of D succeeded in converting Jean Valjean. Father Brown himself dealt with Flambeau in a
similar manner. So it is clear that his major concern was not secular punishment but salvation of the impoverished soul. He treats all crimes as sin, and is never interested in handing over the criminal to the punitive arm of the state.

Erick Routley is of the view that the first four of the five collections are almost all moral theology presented as detection. He holds that it is impossible in writing about him to avoid a language that recalls moral theology in its popular form. His substitute for court room trial and punishment is confession followed by absolution. There are critics who would consider this latter method uncertain and ambivalent; in short, that the danger of sacramental confession is precisely that one acknowledges the darkness without understanding it, fitting one's complicatedly guilty self into a too easy and too public objective framework. The idea is that


confessions can become merely symbolic and not necessarily genuine. Pardon is assured even to those whose confession might be formal. But this is something which Father Brown could not help; for it is part of the machinery of Roman Catholic Christian religious reaction to sin.

There is also the view that Father Brown could see "not as a psychologist but as a moralist into the dark places of the human heart". This view represents a narrow perception of psychology and precludes ethical thought from its purview, but it is true that moral considerations do weigh much with the clerical detective in his dealing with crime.

It has been noted that "The Father Brown stories are not blood-thirsty as detective stories go. A full third of them deal neither with murder nor with attempted murder". Murder, however, is


the favourite crime with detective story writers. The reason possibly is that it is the most heinous of crimes in that it is irreversible, and lost life cannot be regained; again murder does away with the prime witness. G.K. Chesterton knew and has demonstrated in his Father Brown stories that a detective story can be made very exciting even without the crime being a murder. What the reader expects from a detective story is not as many might imagine horror or sensation but ingenuity; and Chesterton has endless capacity for providing that. Edgar Allan Poe's famous story 'The Purloined Letter', is a simple but extremely interesting mystery story without anything like a murder in it. In the forty-eight Father Brown stories in the collected volume one comes across murder only in twenty-four stories. There are also cases in which no crime is committed; in some it is prevented. In one very interesting case the crime is no more than a wife eloping with her husband.
G.K. Chesterton wants to show that no man shall presume to judge his fellowmen, be they saints or sinners. Charity must inform a person's attitude to his fellowmen. In 'The Miracle of Moon Crescent' there is the statement, "What is any man that he should be a judge of men?" 43

He, like a truly religious man considers it presumptuous on the part even of the best of men to think of judging others. That must be left to God. That is why Father Brown does not bother to be concerned with legal and police proceedings. In 'The Three Tools of Death' after he had solved the mystery, and when his attention was drawn to the fact that the coroner's inquiry was about to begin, he excused himself saying that he was going back to the deaf school and left the place. He was more interested in helping the deaf than in punishing a criminal. In 'The Hammer of God' Father Brown does not hand over the murderer to the Inspector nor does he allow him to commit suicide. The murderer surrenders and confesses

to the police. The reason for this attitude to crime is that "he saw law to be unsatisfactory because it imposes punishment mechanically. Religion provides for confession which acknowledges God and recognizes the limits of man". The lesson is brought home sharply in 'The Mirror of the Magistrate' in which a judge is killed and the prosecutor is the murderer.

It was Chesterton's view regarding crime that is reflected in the utterances of Father Brown. In Orthodoxy itself he speaks of the Church as a private detective with the aim of tearing the evil out of man and of the Church pardoning him when he faces his crime. He speaks of his conversion to the Roman faith as due to his desire to get rid of his sin. He emphasises the efficacy of confession, for he also thinks of the sacredness of Christian charity. He believes that due to the mercy of God everything must end happily. Tragedy, therefore, is a very

objectionable word for the man of religion. It is a pagan concept as it were. In legal crime there can be a punishment to the criminal to which naturally the religion of Chesterton does not subscribe'. It is interesting to note that apart from the pagan and pre-Christian Greeks the classic tragedians, even Shakespeare, treated tragedy with respect and produced some of the best tragedies in literature.

The connection between the Church and crime and detection does not stop here. When one considers not the religious institution called the Church but (the architecture of) the building called church, the relation becomes more material and mundane. During a good part of the later middle ages, Gothic was the style of architecture the churches adopted; and the opportunities afforded for the safe commission of crime by the numerous recesses and labyrinths, in the church are comparable to the meaning of 'primitive,
The Gothic style of literature correctly supposed to have been made fashionable by Horace Walpole through his *Castle of Otranto* (18th century) was one of the beginnings of terror, horror, suspense, detection etc. stories of the subsequent centuries. There are many instances of detective novelists choosing the inner premises of the church as a very suitable place for the commission of many kinds of crime. The churchyard is not merely the kind of romantic last resting place of unknown heroes as imagined by Thomas Gray in his *Elegy* but a really eerie place as described by the author of *The Tale of Two Cities*. His *Edwin Drood* describes in detail the church and the churchyard whose connection with the crime in the story remains unknown only because the story is unfinished. The final punishment for the criminal in Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White* is meted out providentially in the very church in which she had earlier committed a crime.
Father Brown treats the Church as the most appropriate instrument for the correction and prevention of crime. To him "the Church is the enormous private detective which corrects the official detective the State".  

P.D. James, a leading detective story writer of recent times commenting on her mode of setting about writing her whodunits says "as for A Taste for Death, when I visited a church vestry in Oxford in 1983, I thought I will put my bodies there".  

"The setting of A Taste for Death is a complex violent and very real London of the 1980s. A former cabinet minister is found with his throat slashed in a dingy room behind the altar of the church. Across the room, a local derelict has been killed in the same manner" says J.D. Reed


46) Quoted in P.D. James, 'Mistress of Murder' by J.D. Reed Reader's Digest, Jan., 1988, p. 49.
accounting for her preference for the church as a venue for crime. P.D. James was once reciting a parody of Rupert Brooke's 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester'.

'Sstands the church clock at ten to three?
And is there arsenic still for tea?'

Obligingly for her even in this revised version of a harmless couplet it is the church clock that stands at ten to three. The original reads - 'And is there honey still for tea?'

As might be expected from a committed religionist like Father Brown he reveals a supercilious attitude towards other religions and even other denominations of Christianity. Naturally like an Englishman he has inbred objection to foreigners. His good breeding, innate nature

47) Quoted in P.D. James, 'Mistress of Murder', by J.D. Reed Reader's Digest, Jan., 1988.
and modesty save him from excesses in this regard; but still the reader is left in no doubt as to his real sympathies or want of sympathies. But any prejudice one finds harboured by Father Brown is after all G.K. Chesterton's. Chesterton's anti-Semitic attitudes are well known; this is almost a relic from the middle ages if not from the day of crucifixion. Shakespeare could portray a Shylock as he did and it has persisted till quite modern times when Hitler and Stalin persecuted the Jews. It was only Charles Dickens who wished to make amends for a Fagin in his *Oliver Twist* by creating a Riah, a benevolent Jew in his *Our Mutual Friend*. G.K. Chesterton was consistently anti-Jew, ideologically as it were. His personal relationship with particular Jews or his condemnation of Hitler cannot mean that he approved of the Jews. It is once in a way that one comes across a generous Macaulay who can eloquently plead for the admission of the Jews into Parliament. It is not as if Chesterton was only against usury and not against the Jews.
This is specious for the two cannot be separately thought of.

The anti-American bias comes naturally to Englishmen. It has been independent of the relations between the U.S. and the British Government. Men like Chesterton dislike the U.S.A. almost as Dickens did. Erick Routley remarks:

"On the one hand G.K. Chesterton through the mouthpiece of Father Brown offers comfort to any who are alarmed at the prospect of computerised civilization; and on the other hand there is the social leg-pull. Father Brown enjoys pulling American legs even more, if that be possible, than pulling English ones".

Father Brown has no faith in modern detective gadgets which he associates in his mind with


49) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p. 95.
American technology: "Who but a Yankee would think of proving anything from heartbeats" — this question shows not only Father Brown's anti-American sentiments but his basic anti-scientific stand. That, in addition to literal faith in the theory of special creation, makes him sneer at Darwin in his poem 'Race Memory - A Dazed Darwinian':

"I feel a little funky
To think I'm further off from
heaven
Than when I was a monkey."

It must be noted that the standard theory of evolution never speaks of man being a descendant of the monkey. The missing link is an important proposition in the theory. This is an instance of Chesterton's inability to be accurate.

Interestingly enough Father Brown is not only anti-American, he is also anti-Communist. To him a Communist is objectionable because "he is an atheist; he wants to destroy the Ten Commandments; and root up all the religions and civilizations that had made him and wash out all

50) G.K. Chesterton, 'Mistake of the Machine"
Penguin Father Brown, p. 221.

51) G.K. Chesterton, The Collected Poems, p.27.
the common sense of ownership and honesty".\(^{52}\)

The prejudice against the Orient suggests also a racial bias. A fair critic summarises this by saying, "in G.K. Chesterton's often praised short stories there are gratuitous racial remarks that are certainly by today's standards offensive".\(^{53}\) They should have been so even by the standards of Chesterton's times; that is perhaps why he made them. To him the East has no sense of sin or regard for morals, though it has a spiritual tradition and religion of sorts. He associated morality only with Christianity. To him the East is like the tea which (only when) compared to the hated cocoa is just tolerable.

Tea is like the East he grows in
A great yellow Mandarin
With urbanity of manners
And unconsciousness of sin

And like the East he grows in
He is poison when he is strong\(^{54}\)

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54) Quoted in Dorothy Collins, *A Centenary Appraisal*, p. 177.
But what follows shows his real feeling.

"Although an Oriental is a gentleman at least", meaning thereby that an Oriental is usually not a gentleman. And he speaks of Oriental immobility.\textsuperscript{55}

These undisguised statements stem from a conviction that all virtues belong to an English Roman Catholic and to none others. In "The Eye of Apollo" - "These pagan stories always fail by their strength" said Brown;\textsuperscript{56} and he cannot be supposed to be an embodiment of tolerance and modesty.

Father Brown's faith in the superiority of his religion\textsuperscript{5} to those of all others in the world is so complete that he would complain: "I fear the English decline to draw any fine distinction between the moral character produced by my religion and that which, blooms out of Voodoo".\textsuperscript{57} In 'The Wrong Shape' also an Indian is introduced to insist on the 'special' character of that national. In 'The Eye of Apollo' Indian

\textsuperscript{55} G.K. Chesterton, 'The Eye of Apollo' Penguin Father Brown, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{56} 'The Arrow of Heaven', \textsuperscript{OPA} p. 335.
\textsuperscript{57} 'The God of the Gongs', \textsuperscript{OPA} p. 281.
Sun worship comes in for adverse attention.

In his advocacy of Roman Catholicism he does not spare even non-Catholic Christians whatever their denomination be. "G.K. Chesterton rarely expressed a hatred for Protestantism such as his friend Hilaire Belloc constantly expressed, but like Ronald Knox he was really angered by what he took to be Puritanism. In one weird and terrible story 'The Sign of the Broken Sword' Father Brown demolishes the reputation of a local hero examining his character, starting from his Puritanism". Chesterton's objection to Puritanism and a weakness for whisky both figure in 'The Three Tools of Death'.

Chesterton's undoubted anti-French sentiments are expressed in many places and in many ways. His poem 'To a Certain Nation' in which his hatred of Napoleon and the Revolution are unmistakable is not saved by disguising the caption. All his prejudices are traceable to his excessive attachment to Roman Catholicism. He puts them across to his readers in every possible way: and Father Brown serves him well in this regard.

58) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p.100.
It is almost axiomatic among pace-setting writers of detective fiction that the fictional detective must be an amateur and not an official policeman, i.e., as far as possible and that the former should get the better of the official; as far as possible because Sergeant Cuff and Inspector Bucket as well as Field a character in Dickens were all officials. This tradition is as old at least as E.A. Poe, but is well established by Conan Doyle. And it is almost a convention that he must not fail to solve any problem brought to him for solution.

Apart from these characteristics we have seen that some eccentricities, oddities are associated with the detective to make him memorable as well as distinctly different from others. But none has succeeded like Conan Doyle in this respect. Among them specialisation in certain methods of detection of crime is one. Some acquire knowledge of Chemistry and Medicine to detect poisoners. Some learn extensively about forensic firearm techniques. The detective was to be averse to romance in general and be free from the burden of marital life. Conan Doyle created the tradition of providing the master
detective with a foil who serves to emphasize the qualities and achievements of the detective. Doctor Watson has been the only great success in this regard. Many others like Agatha Christie - vide her Hastings, a friend of Poirot - tried this and failed.

These had all been very nearly laid down as scriptural guidelines for would-be detective story writers by the time G.K. Chesterton thought of Father Brown. From Dupin to Thorndyke many detectives had been created and they had all acquired varying degrees of reputation. This set Chesterton, who was very much interested in detective fiction, thinking about a protagonist who would be different from all others. He had to do a lot of experimentation for this. In fact careful students of G.K. Chesterton can see that an element of crime and detection can be found in almost all his fictional writings. The earlier attempts in which he created a number of detectives like Basil Grant, Gabriel Gale, Horne Fisher etc. were not successful answers to his problem of creating an entirely new model detective. Finally when under the inspiration of Father O'Connor he created Father Brown, he
realised his ambition: but in fact Father Brown is not Father O'Connor's image; the individuality of Father Brown denies its dependence on any living model for its vitality. Chesterton made him an autonomous, unique, fictitious person, in his own way as great as Sherlock Holmes; and his way was very different from that of the Baker street detective.

Father Brown resembled the other detectives only in so far as he was also engaged in discovering criminals and in remaining an unmarried person, i.e., in view of his calling. He had no friend or co-adventurers like Watson. He was neither an official nor even an amateur detective. Problems came to him in so many ways; he did not go searching for them, nor did he make a living by that work: i.e., he took no fee from his customers or clients if he had any. His interest in the solution of problems of crime was unique. Chesterton's task was to build up a theory which would make detection of crime a legitimate business of the cleric from East Anglia. The theory which he structured consequently is nearly perfect. That is the Roman Catholic clergyman hears confessions from
criminals and gets to know all about the motivation and mechanism of crime. His contact with such persons by virtue of his main profession which is religion, is necessary and prescribed. The opportunity of converting a criminal to a good life is too tempting for a good man like Brown to resist, especially when it comes naturally without his seeking. Once a crime is brought to his notice and he has unravelled the mystery and knows the criminal, his next task is not to hand him over to the secular authorities for punishment, but take him over for conversion to a good life. It is necessary that detectives must be different from one another to sustain interest in the reader. Father Brown is different in a fundamental way.

'A Defence of Detective Fiction' was written in 1901, before Father Brown ever suggested himself to Chesterton. In that piece of writing he defended heroically a literary genre which conventional critics consider infra their dignity to recognize as literature. It required courage to declare that "Sherlock Holmes was the greatest man who never lived" and it required considerable optimism to hope to create a rivalling character as momentous as the immortal
Holmes. In this attempt he created not only a new kind of detective with a distinct character but wove new types of plots and clothed the stories in brilliant literary language and above all introduced new methods of detection. But for one thing he would not go in for a counterpart of Watson. Flambeau was no Watson for Brown. He was his antagonist who turned a professional sleuth of lesser eminence. None knew better than he, that he was saved by Father Brown and that he could never be his equal. Father Brown could never have liked the idea of someone popularising his exploits in the field of detection by publishing stories of his achievements as Watson did for Holmes; for he declined even an offer for a series of lectures on the subject in the States. This is well brought out in 'The Resurrection of Father Brown' in The Incredulity of Father Brown.

A study of Father Brown will not be complete unless the detectives created by certain other eminent writers are compared with him and the results of the comparison noted. Godwin wrote his Caleb Williams, it is usually said, with a view to propagating social reform; but his work
actually turned out to be a pioneering piece of detective fiction. But the Father Brown stories were intended as the conventional type of detective stories. But the opportunity was at hand to remind the reader wherever possible of the primacy of Roman Catholicism. In the former case, it was detective fiction in the guise of social reform while in the latter religious propaganda, however subtly done, wore the mask of crime and detection.

Dupin the prototype of fictional amateur detective "stands apart from the reader and the workings of his mind remain an essential mystery because the story is told from another point of view, that of his devoted but far less brilliant friend. 60 Though Watson also plays this role in the Sherlock Holmes stories he tells the story from his point of view, since he participates in the adventures though not in the thought process of his masterful friend. He can take the reader through wrong and devious paths and keep up the suspense. In the case of Father Brown the problem is avoided because the narrative is entirely the

60) John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance, p. 83.
author's and there is no one who shares the detective's logic of deduction. The truth seems to be that Brown himself is not quite clear about what happens within him which makes the discovery possible. Further, none of his actions can indicate the direction in which his mind is working. For he is as far from a hard-boiled detective as a game of chess is from a bout of wrestling.

Like every other fictional detective, Father Brown also is indebted to Dupin, though he may not be aware of it. The most important psychological hit of Dupin is manifest in 'The Purloined Letter'. The idea that the most obvious is the least suspected was Dupin's speciality and this occurs in different forms in Father Brown's solutions of crimes.

Poe's greatest contribution to the genre of detective fiction has been to rescue it from moralistic and melodramatic levels and put it safely on the pedestals of sheer intellectual inquiry and interest and make it a question of a complicated knot and an intelligent untying. This position was fully accepted by Conan Doyle.
whose Sherlock Holmes asserts that his chief interest in solving problems of crime is in the intense intellectual excitement that it provides. Dupin's powers have been well summarised as "a combination of aristocratic detachment, brilliance and eccentricity, a synthesis of the poet's intuitive insight into the scientist's power of inductive reasoning and a capacity for psychological analysis". 61

The influence of Dickens on Chesterton has been mostly at the level of an impression which exacted admiration but perhaps not an inspiration leading to imitation; i.e. the Dickensian sympathy for the poor and indignation at the sight of the arrogance of prosperity or the snobbery of status are not shared in the same vein by Chesterton. In the field of detective story writing, however, Dickens like W.Collins influenced all his successors to a greater or a lesser degree. W.W. Robson observes that "the quality of G.K.Chesterton's work at its best in the Father Brown stories is comparable to that of Edwin Drood. It is true to its genre: it is full of suspense, sensation, genuine clues, red

61) Ibid. p. 92.
John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, p. 93.
herrings, 'atmosphere', real mystery and spurious mystery". 62 and that "G.K. Chesterton, Stevenson and Conan Doyle are disciples of Dickens, the great master of the unfamiliar in the familiar. But G.K. Chesterton was closest of them all to the detective story side of Dickens ... The Mystery of Edwin Drood is not merely a detective story, it has imagination and moral seriousness". 63

Father Brown is placed in a different situation from those of the other reputed detectives; he is free from the intrusions of the mediocrity of a useless but unavoidable associate like Hastings in Agatha Christie. But more than this he has not to compete with the official police whose pretensions, as per the code of the genre, are equalled only by their incompetence. G.K. Chesterton has mostly avoided the policeman, who however, does figure very much in 'The Blue Cross' but who is symbolically finished off in the very next story. This may be because he had decided that Father Brown's interest in crime was to be entirely different from that of an official policeman.

63) Ibid.
There can be little doubt that Chesterton was influenced by Conan Doyle when he wrote 'The Resurrection of Father Brown'. That piece is the first of the 1926 stories. 'The Incredulity of Father Brown' has this sentence:

"A series of stories about him, like the stories of Sherlock Holmes were by the instrumentality of Mr. Smith planned out and put before the hero with requests for his assistance and encouragement ... This was taken as a text for a discussion on whether Father Brown should disappear temporarily over a Cliff, in the manner of Dr. Watson's hero".64

Later occurs the following "I am ready to die and come to life again like Sherlock Holmes, if that is the best way",65 and a suggestion of Alvarez the dictator being the public Moriarty of Father Brown. This shows clearly that Chesterton had Sherlock Holmes very much in his mind when he wrote 'The Resurrection'.

It has been said that Conan Doyle's standing in literature was greatly enhanced by the invention

64) G.K. Chesterton, Penguin Father Brown, p. 322.
65)  p. 331.
of Dr. Watson: "Doyle rose to a high rank among literary magicians when he invented Dr. Watson". It has already been noted that there is no figure corresponding to Watson in the Father Brown stories, and that Flambeau is no substitute for Watson not only because he does not appear in every story but also because his character and role are different from those of Watson. It is to Watson that we owe that Holmes we know. Flambeau on the other hand does not interpret Brown. Holmes is spoken of as a typically solitary man whom it is difficult to be companion with. But Watson fills a difficult role to perfection. Father Brown on the other hand seems to be so far away from any one that it looks as if one goes to him only to confess.

Chesterton in his anxiety to make his Father Brown a different person from Holmes, really made him fundamentally different. Emerson said of Doyle, "Do is a fine word than believe and action is a far surer watchword than faith". This is the philosophy of Holmes too. He was a man of action. The moment his mind had a clear

conception of what had to be done, he would spring into action. But Father Brown's thinking was mixed up with or conditioned by something else which he himself could not spell out; all this precluded or obviated the need for any action.

There is an important point of difference between Doyle's Holmes and Chesterton's Brown. In Holmes we see an instance of his failure to solve the problem and haul up the criminal as he would have wished to. That is the famous 'Scandal in Bohemia' in which he admits his failure at the hands of the one woman who entered his mind but never his heart - even at unprofessional moments. One should think that Doyle purposely put this in to show that after all even Holmes the personification of intellectual power was not exempt from failure; that even he was after all human; that in short even Holmes would nod. That only adds to the credibility of Sherlock Holmes and to the quality of Doyle's craftsmanship as a creator of character. But then in Father Brown we hear no instances of failure; that is not exactly like saying that no other detective story writer i.e., except Doyle, has created a detective who could once in a way be successfully challenged. To hold that the object of a crime story is to detect and not to document failure would be to oversimplify
the function of the genre, and to forget that formula variation for artistic purposes must be permissible. But the case of Father Brown takes on a different aspect. He is not like any other detective. It is not that his infallibility strains one's credulity only. Father Brown was a representative of the Church. The religion of the Bible cannot approve of successful crime which leads to tragedy. Brown cannot afford to fail as Holmes can, for the Christian religion says that evil will be punished for religion posits the final happy ending by a theory of redemption. If Father Brown fails to save the souls of criminals and direct them to redemption his procedure would be in conflict with the philosophy of Catholic religion and he is too great a Christian pastor to be able to afford to do it.

Father Brown has a superficial resemblance to another great fictional detective, namely Poirot. On the eve of detection both of them show similar signs of tension born of intense mental activity. For example, in 'The Secret Garden' the following passage occurs.

"He (i.e., Father Brown) buried his head in his hands and stood in a rigid torture of
thought or prayer while the other three could only go on staring at this last prodigy of their wild twelve hours".68

This can be compared with Agatha Christie in 'The Mysterious Affair at Styles'.

"But I stopped suddenly for Poirot uttering a hoarse and inarticulate cry again annihilated his masterpiece of cards and putting his hands over his eyes swayed backwards and forwards apparently suffering the keenest agony".69

The addition of the words or Prayer emphasized in the above quotation was perhaps an unintended trick on the part of G.K. Chesterton to lead the reader away from the strictly secular. But the two passages fairly clearly show that both the detectives suffered the same kind of mental tension arising from severe intellectual strain.

The single big difference that distinguishes one great detective from another is the method employed by each in tackling the criminal facing crises and analysing the problem. In fact when the writers of detective stories

68) G.K. Chesterton, Penguin Father Brown, p.36.
think up their detectives they begin with providing them with special attributes which make them adopt different methods of detection. These methods depend on the aptitudes of particular detectives. Armchair detectives like Mycroft Holmes are naturally a different species of sleuths from Sexton Blake, the 'hard-boiled' school believing in physical effort and adventure rather than in logical deductions and cool analyses. Even as criminals vary in their choice of crime and methods of committing them, detectives will also vary in their choice of methods. These depend on many factors like temperament, physical strength and opportunities. Flambeau used to boast that he was only a thief, but a great one at that; and that he never would stoop to murder. Even murderers varied from each other in the different degrees of ingenuity they brought to bear on the commission of that crime. Similarly detectives specialise in particular methods of discovering the criminal. Just as no crime is committed without inflicting some pain or loss, no discovery is possible without the aid of some activity and some reasoning. Even here Father Brown is sui generis and falls into a category represented only by himself.
"It may seem odd to class a man who has difficulty in rolling his umbrella and does not know the right end of his return ticket among the supermen of detection; but Father Brown belongs among them through the knowledge given to him by God". This remark made by Julian Symons seems true enough, but such incompatibilities exist in human nature and certain deficiencies e.g., in smartness and obvious signs of cleverness are more than made up by some other hidden sources of extraordinary talents. They seem to possess or acquire a sort of sixth sense which may be transcendental of plodding reason. Such seems to have been the case with Father Brown. But what the same critic goes on to state is a somewhat weightier argument. "Logicians of the detective story complain with some bitterness that G.K. Chesterton outraged all the rules they have drawn out that he did not tell you whether all the windows were fastened or whether a shot in the gun room could be heard in the butler's pantry".

Such complaints merely amount to saying that Father Brown did not closely follow the methods of enquiry adopted by other detectives.

70) Julian Symons Bloody Murder, p. 82.
71) Ibid.
created by other writers. There are clues in the Father Brown stories of a peculiar and unusual nature which he grasps quickly and uses intelligently to reach his conclusions: e.g., he is able to link the barking of a dog with the sinking of a stick; the wording of a single question with a 'where' instead of 'when' made him take a line of thinking which took him to the truth. All oddities like the queer spacing of foot-treads set his mind on the trail. His imagination is vivid and almost poetic. A red light from a closed door looks like a splash of blood that grew vivid as it cried for vengeance; retrospectively, anyone can see the appropriateness of Father Brown's line of reasoning. Though he does not mention every step in his argument a little thought shows its logicality. There is no mystery in his actual discovery; his reactions to situations, and his cryptic statements often expressed oddly, look mysterious and that has to be attributed to his nature.

There are certain external aids which detectives use and to which readers of detective stories are so much accustomed that one looks for them in Father Brown also. Did he disguise himself to deceive the criminals? Did he take
the assistance of expert personnel for chemical analysis, fire-arm testing, thumb-impressions, handwriting testing, finger prints, even police dogs and so on? He is not known to have done these at any time. That he was not proficient in the use of any such technique but depended only on the use of reason aided by intuition may be one reason why in none of the Father Brown stories we get crime situations which require the necessary use of these techniques.

In fact, perhaps, he could not be disguised even as Flambeau could not do away with his height. Vidocq and Holmes were the great disguisers; Brown never thought of such things. He did not mind being recognized at once as he almost always was. He would not seek the assistance of any specialist since his methods were so extraordinarily ordinary that no assistance could be of any use. After all, the author has to adjust the stories to the character and competence of the detective he has created. This means that there can be no detective whose power of detection can be equal to any criminal situation; for some crimes might be amenable to armchair speculation and some others might require 'hard boiled' tactics. It is difficult to imagine
a detective suitable to all possible situations of crime. None knew this better than Sherlock Holmes who confessed to Watson that his brother Mycroft was more adept at armchair reasoning than himself. Availability of and accessibility to all relevant data are exclusive advantages which the official police enjoys; but still the amateur detective wins because his rational handling of even the limited data at his disposal is more effective than the incompetent use of masses of information. But even so no one can depend on a single method or system of detection. Many popular and well known methods are out of bounds to the modest priest; but it is made to appear as if the extra unmentioned nearly esoteric dimension of intuition or by whatever name it goes which helps his patent reasoning from behind, can steer him through any difficulty in comprehension.

It would be very interesting no doubt to see how Brown could handle crime in which women figure as the suspects or accused. Chesterton sees to it that such situations do not arise. It has been suggested and it is to an extent true, that Chesterton's sense of chivalry could not allow him to put women in such positions. But supposing, for a moment, such a situation, Father Brown
would have been obliged to seek assistance to handle it, in view of his office as celibate clergyman, and given his withdrawing nature and modest behaviour.

Father Brown has no need for any kind of expert knowledge.

"There was nothing of the expert about Father Brown. He should have no knowledge of obscure poison or of the time required to let the rigor mortis to set in. He was not to be the author of any treatise about the different kinds of cigarette ash". 72 This indicates Brown's qualification for detection fairly simply. But no thought is bestowed on the question how Brown would set about the business if cigarette ash was the crux of the problem and much depended on when rigor mortis set in.

It is easy to see that Brown, true to his nature, objects to mechanical gadgets being used to help detection. These non-human tools could be of many kinds ranging from a police dog to a lie detector. The more mechanical a gadget the less patient Brown is with it. He had some faith at least in the psychology of animals as one can see in 'The Oracle of the Dog'. But he had no

faith in machines. 'The Mistake of the Machine' is an appropriate title for a Father Brown story. The priest detective is of the view that a reliable machine like a lie detector can speak neither a lie nor a truth, for its efficiency and reliability cannot be more than those of the person who operates it. He is certain that a mechanical gadget is a 'reliable' thing worked by a very 'unreliable' machine namely man. The story seems to have been written for the specific purpose of proving the unreliability of mechanical gadgets. Men soaked in religious faith look upon machines with great suspicion, for to them, perhaps, these men-made contrivances somehow repudiate the primordial arrangements in a God made world. M.K. Gandhi's objection to machinery is well known. But in a world in which criminals enjoy mechanical, electronic etc. gadgets for the pursuit of crime, disowning the utility of a knowledge of these gadgets on the part of the detective, may not be useful.

Father Brown is not convinced of the utility of the insistence of character as a determining factor in identifying criminals; he is true when he says that no one's character is the same all his life; it is wrong to suppose a criminal
is always a criminal and a virtuous man always one. Fixed assumptions were rightly rejected by him as the unchanging norms. He had a quiet way of suspecting everyone. It is right for a policeman to hold that a suspect is guilty till he is proved innocent even as for a judge it is proper to hold an accused innocent till he is proved guilty. Father Brown, in the capacity of a detective has to adopt the policeman's attitude of suspicion and never take anything for granted and never trust what is seemingly innocent. This helped him in suspecting the 'Postman' in 'The Invisible Man'. Doubtless on particular occasions, it looks as if he was guided by a sixth sense; for example in 'The Eye of Apollo' Father Brown, with undisclosed contempt for the religion of Kalon, concluded that a false prophet could not be so absorbed in his prayer to the sun as not to hear the cry of terror aroused by the tragic death he had caused. Again in 'The Wrong Shape' the victim could not cut his paper in such a wrong shape as the one upon which he wrote his confession of suicide. But it may not be quite right to call these guesses the product of a sixth sense. They are, perhaps all, part of the ordinary rational process functioning without even the thinker being fully aware of it; and therefore mistaking it for
something para-psychological. Father Brown was endowed with certain patterns of behaviour including speech, look and so on, which were supernormally effective by their being merely excessively non-violent. A steady silent gaze can unnerve a person especially if he is guilty, even grim silence can be significant and effective; a quiet silence can be significant and effective; a quiet word put in at an unexpected moment will cause all chatterers to stop talking and to attend to him. For example, in 'The Secret Garden'. occurs the following:

"In the centre of this morbid silence an innocent voice said 'Was it a very long cigar?' The change of thought was too sharp but they had to look round to see who has spoken.

"'I mean' said Father Brown from the corner of the room. 'I mean that cigar Brayne is finishing. It seems nearly as long as a walking stick'".

Father Brown was a modest and shy person by nature. But his look could disconcert. In 'The Wrong Shape' the doctor who had killed Quinton wrote a confession which was addressed to Father Brown and began with this sentence:
"Damn your eyes which are very penetrating ones". It was that look which told the doctor that the priest had guessed aright.

In spite of Father Brown's methods being inscrutable it is often suggested that after all it was common sense which was guiding him. Charles Albert Lingria speaks of "the Thomistic common sense of the priest". Evidently the common sense is qualified by the 'Christian reason' of Thomas. The qualification makes all the difference.

Ronald Knox says that Father Brown had nothing of a mystic about him, "when he falls into a reverie, other people in the story think that he must be having an ecstasy because he is a Catholic priest and will proceed to solve the mystery by some kind of heaven sent intuition".

These reveries of Father Brown have already been compared to similar visible exhibitions of mental tension by Poirot. Most critics are agreed in disabusing the reader of all suspicions of any esoteric, psychic gift which the priest might possess. McLuhan is of the opinion that Father

73) Albert Lingria, A Centenary Appraisal, p.213.
75) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p. 169.
Brown is "a psychologist rather than a sleuth and the culprit he exposes is shown to be the sinner rather than a mere criminal". But one should think that any sleuth worth his name must also be a psychologist for the detecting mind must be fully familiar with the criminal mind. 'Sin' and 'crime' refer to the same thing; only the former is its religious name and the latter its secular, legal. The causes and nature of the two would be the same while only the consequences are imagined to be meted out by different agencies. No one is likely to object to Father Brown being called a psychologist; for ultimately detection is a process of reasoning which is a psychological function; "the only mystery Father Brown is interested in is how people's minds work". McLuhan puts it plainly: "Real mystics don't hide mysteries, they reveal them. They set a thing up in broad day light and when you have seen it, it is still a mystery. But the mystagoques hide a thing in darkness and secrecy, and when you find it, it is a platitude". The mysteries revealed by Father Brown are the daily miracle of sense and consciousness.

77) Erick Routley, _Puritan Pleasures_, p. 93.
Chesterton owed his idea of "the most obvious being the least suspected" to Edger Allan Poe who exemplified this psychological principle in his 'Purloined Letter'. Chesterton used the idea effectively in his 'The Invisible Man'. H.G. Wells', 'Invisible Man' related to physical invisibility. But Chesterton speaks of mental invisibility caused by naturally looking for a missing thing only in places where things could be hidden. None would include a postman among visitors, for his visit is regular, official routine. That this fact could be criminally abused by a person coming in disguise as a postman does not suggest itself to many. So they exempt the obvious from their suspicion. A variation of the theme is seen in 'The Sign of the Broken Sword'.

"The priest said: where would a wise man hide a leaf? In the forest.

The other did not answer.

"If there were no forests he would make a forest. And if he wished to hide a dead leaf, he would make a dead forest".
"And if a man had to hide a dead body he would make a field of dead bodies to hide it". 79

This technique is best summarised in Samuel Rosenberg's neat phrase "naked is the best disguise". 80

This is a case of restricting observation to a limited area of scrutiny - but anyway the ability to intelligently and purposefully observe is a necessary talent of a good detective. Brown had it in large measure. The most famous, however, among observers was Sherlock Holmes who was modelled on Dr. Bell whose acute powers of observation are described by Conan Doyle. Who observed more carefully and subtly than Holmes and who used his 'grey cells' to greater purpose than Poirot? But the difference between Father Brown and these other detectives lies in the former depending on Christian Reason and not human reason. How these two are different is a theological question.

The reader of the Father Brown stories is frequently informed that the priest detective

80) Quoted in Robin Winks, Modus Operandi, p. 93.
never has recourse to the supernatural. Hugh Kenner says that the Father Brown stories turn on mystification behind the wall of reason. Father Brown the professional supernaturalist is constantly at war with the sham supernaturalist.\(^{81}\) The idea perhaps is that all supernaturalism which is not connected with Father Brown's religion is sham and is therefore to be rejected.

"In 'The Arrow of Heaven' there is talk of a curse. In 'The Perishing of the Pendragons' a family doom figures, and in 'The Doom of the Darnaways' one comes across an ancient interdiction; but all these yield ultimately to rational explanation".\(^{82}\)

In 'The Arrow of Heaven' Father Brown makes it clear that there can be no supernatural solution to a locked-room mystery. 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' by E.A. Poe and 'The Problem of Cell 13' by Jacques Futrelle prove the same point.

At least two stories in the Father Brown stories turn on a single theme of a mirror misleading careless or hurried observers. This is


\(^{82}\) Ibid.
seen in 'The Man in the Passage' and 'The Mirror of the Magistrate'. This is also a particular elaboration of the principle of observation.

In 'The Invisible Man' the story ends, not with an arrest but with a confession. Strangely enough a similar thing happens in a Holmes' story. The similarity is worth looking into. Father Brown, having identified the man with the fiendish squint as the murderer and revealed this discovery to his friend Flambeau, "Walked those snow covered hills under the stars for many hours with a murderer and what they said to each other will never be known"; but not exactly, for we can guess that the murderer was confessing to the priest. There was no question of the murderer being handed over the police.

In the Sherlock Holmes' story the 'Adventure of the Second Stain', the guilty lady finally comes to terms with Holmes and says "Mr. Holmes I will tell you everything...". The detective listens in patience and with a sense of relief. Here again the great man saved the lady from suspicion and other consequences of her act. "The ends of justice have been met; then why delight in hunting a person?" was Holmes' attitude. It is interesting how in such disparate persons these similar
things could happen.

Father Brown does not believe in micro
eexamination of small pieces of evidence, the kind
of thing in which Holmes is a specialist and
Thorndyke a pastmaster. To Father Brown the
gravest issues may not depend upon the smallest
things and "nothing may hang from a bootlace". It
may be said that even regarding the famous
epigram, of the criminal being an artist and the
detective a critic, Conan Doyle had said something
like that earlier; in 'The Adventure of the
Retired Colourman' the following occurs:

"I assured him that the financial question
did not arise".

"No, of course, it is art for art's sake
with him" said he "but even on the artistic side
of crime he might have found something here to
study". Father Brown had seen roles of these
artists being reversed interestingly; for Flambeau
the robber who fled from law became a detective
in pursuit of criminals; and Valentine the Chief

83) A.C. Doyle. "The Adventure of the Creeeping
Man" in The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes

84) Ibid. 'The Case of Identity' in The
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Vol.I.

85) Ibid. 'The Adventure of the Retired Colour-
man' in The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes.
of the French Police lived to become a murderer and a suicide.

The question remains: What was the chief method Father Brown employed as a detective? In story after story regarding his modality of arriving at the explanation he offers truth, he never speaks out precisely how he discovers 'who did it'. In fact his mode of communication merely proves the guilt but does not tell us how he learnt the truth. It is in 'The Secret of Father Brown' that the great detective discloses his mind to an uninhibited American and answers his close questions. Even then he speaks in figures all the time asserting that he is speaking literally. Mr. Chase the American says: "it is for you to tell us the secret after all", i.e., the secret of how Father Brown managed to detect the criminals. "Very well, I must tell the secret". This was encouraging. His audience consisting of the American gentleman and his own old friend Flambeau awaited a revelation. Then after attempting twice to spell out and failing, finally he said:

"You see, it was I who killed all these people". This was not a very good way of being explanatory. Naturally the listener cried "What?"
in amazement. The detective patiently repeated his old statement "You see, I had murdered them all myself --- so of course I know how it was done"; he explained further and said "I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully. I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course, I knew who he was", but the explanation does not seem to be fully satisfactory for the simple reason that no one can get out of himself entirely and get completely into another; the uniquely subjective particular which belongs to each person exclusively will make this kind of total exchange of experience impossible unless one is thinking of mystic, spiritual powers, etc., but all of which Father Brown stoutly denies. There is again the logical difficulty; how can Father Brown who is yet to discover the criminal totally identify himself with an unknown person? The utmost that can be said is that the detective tries to look at the crime from the criminal's point of view. In a general and simple way without going the whole hog with Father Brown, it may be right for a person to say that a
detective must put himself in the position of a criminal to understand his motivation and will to commit a crime. But more than that Father Brown does not convince one about. Lynette Hunter says: "Significantly he calls the process a religious exercise and indeed it is a ritual act of total surrender of personal identity to the object he wishes to understand. it is the action of the purely creative artist". Even so it is difficult to see how by surrendering oneself one can gain the other. How it would be possible to exactly know the full background of the crime still will remain unexplained. This is what makes Father Brown unique and his creator's voice 'a voice in the wilderness', but other voices are also not quite audible for how can one account for the uncanny ability of Sherlock Holmes to tell half the life story of a visitor by looking at his boots? Even the close reason of Dupin will leave many questions unanswered.

The Father Brown stories are no doubt essentially detective stories but they are more than that. They are allegorical and moral, besides being good sources of cultured allegorical and presented in a very attractive manner. In these stories his literary mannerisms like excessive indulgence in paradox are kept fairly under control. The plots in some stories reach great heights of excellence. The narrative, in spite of digressions

is sustained at the required level of intelligible communication. Father Brown's character provides occasion for serious thought, for he plays many roles simultaneously. He is a detective, a consoler of the ill-fated sinners, a promoter of his religious doctrines. But these coalesce so nicely in him that he seems quite integrated and these multiple roles do not affect the reader's main interest in following the unravelling of criminal tangles. His humour is not strained and his epigrams do not pall. Chesterton chose the short story form to put his detective stories in; for his purpose of projecting Father Brown the best medium was the short story. The short story as Poe and Conan Doyle discovered had the advantage of being short and an ideal container of a single theme of crime-detection syndrome. Chesterton found it equally serviceable. But he had literary mannerisms to indulge and religious purposes to serve in these stories. His tendency to create the atmosphere for the story, as he very well does often, does not only not interfere with the story-telling but serves a positive purpose of creating the necessary imaginative climate in the reader's mind. The dialogues have to somehow smuggle religious statements, moral asides etc., into the story. These will demand more space than short stories can normally allow.

Even grouping of these stories stands for a certain
value; and it is represented best as has been noticed earlier by the first story therein; for example the 'seeming innocence' is best portrayed in 'The Blue Cross'. The incredulity gives a moral lesson which is sustained in the following stories. The last bunch begins with a scandal and ends with another. Thus there is some sort of a coherence in the arrangement of these stories. Perhaps there is also a justice in the first story being the best. In each of these there is a paradox or contrariness emphasized. The innocence of the priest contrasted with the wickedness of the thief and the knowledge of the Police Chief, the incredulity of the true believer as against the credulity of the crowd, the true religious wisdom of Father Brown by the side of the worldly wisdom of the rest. The secret which once explained ceases to be one and a scandal which is not a scandal. The paradox is built into the theme of crime and detection; the great moral is that the most famous criminal in France turned a very private detective in England, falls in love, marries and brings up a large family while "that most famous investigator of the world" committed murder followed by suicide with more than the pride of Cato, one cannot be too sure if something is not to be read into the association of criminality with France and private honest work with England.
Chesterton will come in even without his being aware of it. The implied lesson is that those who confess their crimes to good and rationalist atheists turn mad and become criminals. The lesson is inherent in almost all the stories.

Father Brown rejoices in converting heathen evil to Christian virtue. The repentant sinner is the source of the priest's, professional as well as personal happiness. Even as the Bishop in Victor Hugo knew "the angels in heaven are joyous more to see the tears on the cheeks of the repentant sinners than all the smiles of the virtuous."

The manner in which Father Brown reveals his mind to his hearers never taking leave of the enigmatic mode of expression is somewhat irritating. But when finally the truth is fully known the irritation wears out and the reader puts it down to his nature.

"Now and again a solution is fudged, the criminal is unbelievably lucky. A witness is unbelievably unobservant. Father Brown sits on a clue, now and again he pauses pregnantly and the feed man obligingly throws up a "by which you mean" - so that Brown drops his revelatory block buster in a voice like the roll of a drum. I admit to surges of irritation at times like

87) Victor Hugo, Les Miserables.
There are two characteristics which are complementary and which together make up a phenomenon called Father Brown. One is purposeful observation which leads to the discovery of truth, and the other essential sympathy with man which leads to his redemption.

The purpose of these stories may be to entertain, may be to spread the gospel; the former regales every reader; the latter is felt by the more careful ones!

"It is impossible, in writing about him, to avoid a certain amount of language which recalls moral theology in its popular form. Detective literature is 75% moralism anyhow but here it is entirely moralism."

The didactic purpose, it is generally admitted, spoils the effect of art, if it is overdone or if even conspicuously done"; "it must be confessed that in some of the Father Brown stories, especially the latter ones, the didactic purpose tends to overshadow and even to crowd out the detective interests; if we read such stories as 'The Arrow of Heaven' and 'The Chief Mourner of Marne', with interest it is not because they are good detective stories but because they are good

89) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p. 96.
Chesterton". It is interesting to note that both the first story 'The Blue Cross' and the last story 'The Vampire of the Village' indulge in detection of flaws in the criminal's theology; this is at least symbolic.

Some of the stories derive from it; and mutatis mutandis these comments may have relevance to all the rest too. 'The Blue Cross' is an absolutely new mode in detection. It is really prevention of theft rather than detection of the thief. The priest knew his companion to be the thief. All that he contrives is to lead him to a place to which he draws also the Chief of the French Police by a series of extremely interesting strategems. The conversation the two men in black hold on Hampstead Heath is the crux of the story. The author is not interested in telling the reader what happened to Flambeau, i.e., after Valentine and his men had revealed themselves. In curiously prophetic language Valentine says: "Let us both bow to our master"; for it was the master who discovered both of them.

'The Secret Garden' apart from contriving an extremely complicated double murder is also a criticism of the near atheistic anti-clericalism of post-revolutionary France.

'The Queer Feet' deals with social snobbery in

upper class France; the great gulf between gentlemen and waiters is exploited by the gifted th^jf.

That Father Brown's detective powers are connected with his aesthetic sense is seen in the 'The Wrong Shape'. That is how he got the clue to the truth in that story.

'The Invisible Man' applies to a new situation, the lesson taught by Poe in his 'Purloined Letter'. 'An invisible man?' enquired Angus raising his red eyebrows. "A mentally invisible Man" said Father Brown.

This kind of observation was not invented by Chesterton for in Conan Doyle's 'The Case of Identity' one comes across this.

"You appeared to read a good deal upon her which was quite invisible to me" I remarked.

"Not invisible but unnoticed, Watson"
The distinction originated by Poe and elaborated by Conan Doyle is employed by G.K. Chesterton in this story.

"The Hammer of God" is an unusually grave and haunting exposure of the symbolism of towers. The exaltation of a church spire perverted into the kind of pride which William Golding so memorably handled in his novel 'The Spire'.

91) Erick Routley, Puritan Pleasures, p. 98.
"The Eye of Apollo" is a commentary on the sun worship practised by certain heathen creeds. In this story the high priest of the cult of sun-worship gains an ascendancy over a simple-minded woman who is persuaded to stare at the sun until she is blinded.

'The Arrow of Heaven' deals with a locked-room mystery and is an attack on the superstitions of supernaturalism. This is carried over to 'The Resurrection' in which the Americans who wished to have the prospect of a dead man coming alive were told about the futility of such beliefs. There can be no supernaturalism in 'The Resurrection' of the Holmesian variety. The word is significant, for it is intended to exclude the Resurrection of Christ.

The Father Brown stories being unique in their purpose and achievement naturally had neither models nor imitations; and remained a 'lone voice in the wilderness'.