From Hilaire Belloc

No Alienated Man


... The first alienation of man from himself was healed in an ancient world by the Incarnation. Aristotelian Man, like St. Thomas the Doubter, could put his fingers in the side of his Creator; and Platonic Man, like the mystic John, found the Word, but it was the Word made Flesh. Revelation restored to man the unity that was himself. *Anima naturaliter Christiana.* This unity was achieved as a reality both personal and corporate for a period of time in that small segment of the globe known as Western Europe.

Human unity was gradually lost, and a new man came into being. This man has his life neither in the rooted things of the world nor in a heaven beyond. Nor is the Christian Man reconciled to himself. This new man has neither outward and above nor outward and round about him. He looks within, and attempts to find his salvation by a penetration and purgation of the hidden depths of his own personality. This is Modern Man, man twice alienated from himself, and he has not yet found his soul. "*Je est un autre,*" said Rimbaud. "*I ES an Other.*" And yet the Other which he is, is shrouded in darkness, and it is in this crucifixion of himself that Modern Man has come to see, without knowing that he see, the hidden irony of the Cross.

... A whole body of literature has grown up within the last seventy-five years devoted to exploring and understanding the estrangement of contemporary civilised man. That this body of art, chiefly found in the novel, should deal with the expatriate seems extremely significant of the crisis facing man today. One need only recall the world of Henry James to find an apt symbol for the modern dilemma. This New Englander left his American home to find himself in a Europe that existed chiefly in his imagination. Some of his best work is an attempt at penetrating into the restlessness and homelessness of the Western soul. James is full of trans-Atlantic crossings.

... If Belloc is almost completely incomprehensible to the post-war intellectual (even the post-war Catholic intellectual), the lack of understanding can be traced to the amazing personal integration of the man, and to the lack of a comparable integration today on the part of those most representative of the modern spirit. ... Above all else, Belloc is an unalienated man: a representative of a rarely achieved ideal, that of the integrated Christian humanist.

The integrated man achieves himself by making his own these dimensions of human personality and perfection which when isolated from one another seem mutually incom-
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of writing history synthetically; they perpetually find meet- 
gings between an East and West, where there is only conflict; 
they fall into the trap of treating history cyclically; they 
build vast structures in the air that reveal nothing to a 
man searching for his own antecedents. A Christian comes 
away from Belloc knowing his own soul.

The Welschung historian must fail in the end because no 
"world view" has ever acted to cause anything historically. 
History is caused within cultures, and the clash of 
 civilisations occurs when two cultures in act meet on the 
field of battle, be it economic, military, or spiritual.

The final objection that the "world historian" has 
against Belloc is that he takes sides, and the final answer 
to that objection is simply this: to refuse to take sides is 
to refuse to enter history. A historian who does not see 
that rather brutal fact will never see more than the surface 
of things. . . .

The Bellocian concept of history, as set forth 
(Europe and the Faith) . . . might well be called Anselmian: 
historical understanding follows Faith . . . The historian 
who views the European story as a series of "phenomena" 
external to himself must either fall into the Aristotelian 
conception of history as mere chronology, or he must super- 
impose on this series some conceptual framework to render 
it intelligible. He simply cannot enter into its spirit and see 
with the eyes of the men he would know, or feel with them 
as they erupt into common action. He is alienated from 
them. . . .

Belloc keenly grasped the tendencies at work within 
the Western intelligentsia, which insisted on fencing itself 
off from the world by weaving round itself fabric upon fabric 
of theory. He had nothing but contempt for the scholar 
who lives in a world of images, unrelated to existing things. 
The typical intellectual inevitably commences to think in 
terms of, let us say, maps coloured this way and that; he 
judges peoples and ideas according to the standards of 
textbooks and fashionable opinions; he sees the human person 
in the light of statistical tables (what Belloc could have done 
with the American School of Education mentality!); he 
measures reality by rulers on pads of paper. This sort of 
things, typified and caused by idealism, breeds jingoism, 
pacifism, internationalism, and other brands of ideologies 
unrelated to reality, and conform to nothing but systems 
of phantasy and imagery.

Belloc's historical attack against German Historismus 
must be coupled with his social satire . . .
modern world to have been a necessity. These intellectuals fail to see that Christendom is rather a fundamental urge, deep within man, grounded in an ontological need for the complete integration of man’s spiritual and temporal destinies.

... Today probably all would agree that Christendom is largely a state of mind; but with Belloc the writer of these pages asserts that Christendom must become a place, because man is a material as well as a spiritual creature, existing in space, ending in time ...

In one sense, a Christian is always an exile. In another sense, he is an island, and it is in this that is to be found the heart of the need for Christendom—a corporate theocentric humanism—a place so penetrated by the Faith that a man who was there could say that “Jesus Christ was in the morning skies.” ...

A change in fashion partially accounts for Belloc’s decline in popularity, but there is something deeper than mere fashion. If Belloc is not understood today, it may be because his own brand of Christian integration has become almost impossible of achievement at this late date in the disintegration of the Western World. Most of us are not rooted men; we do not live in a traditional culture, and to pretend to do so would be to fall into an archaic lie ...

Wavell on Power

... and Doyne Bell remembered an evening when Wavell had dined with us at the Saville Club, and startled our table with his comment on some excesses of the time. There had been talk of authority’s growing taste for authority, of the concentration of power in political hands and the politicians’ excessive demand for power. It was not, in essence, a political debate, but rather a moral discussion: it was no political doctrine that was deplored, but only political excess. And Wavell, leaning forward, heavily shouldered, listened in silence until, by infection, silence grew general. And then he spoke. Kipling, he said, had noticed such a tendency in our times, and deplored it. He had, indeed, propounded a drastic remedy for it. Did we remember Macdonagh’s Song? he asked. And in a very gentle voice, with a gentle smile on his desert-graven cheeks, he recited:

“Whatsoever, for any cause,
Seeketh to take or give
Power above or beyond the Laws,
Suffer it not to live!
Holy State or Holy King—
Or Holy People’s Will—
Have no truck with the senseless thing.
Order the guns and kill!”

“Silence returned—but only for a moment—to our table. It was, indeed, more than an ordinary silence, more than mere lack of words. The little currents of thought and apprehension that usually clutter in worn runlets through the mind were stilled as if by a sudden frost; and in the hush of a winter morning we looked, and blinked, at the ice-glare on that cold conclusion. It was Wavell himself who broke the silence and found an easier topic.”—From A Year Of Space by Eric Linklater.

From Week to Week

THE CANON:

“And, incontrovertibly, we experience something of the sanctifying power of Beauty when we subject ourselves to the impression which great art or natural loveliness makes upon us. Holiness signifies wholeness. And great Beauty has a unifying effect upon the personality. During the time that we are under its sway, the ordinary limitations of our nature are expanded, and we become free of another world. Have we sufficiently examined and pondered the meaning of the psychological reaction which any of the Ultimate Values induce in us? In the normal day-to-day activities of life we suffer from tension, the sway of contending appetites, the restlessness of unsatisfied hearts, and all the thwarting of human finitude; but when under the dominance of Beauty we become unified and feel released. Pressure relaxes. ‘A bolt is shot back somewhere in the breast.’ Then a conviction of ‘rightness’ possesses us. I cannot describe that feeling; but you have known it. It brings with it an assurance of harmony—not only with yourself but with the universe: the sense that things are (as we say) ‘all right.’ The dreadful tyranny of solitude is ended for the time being. We are emancipated from the temporal and transitory. The sense of sequence is abolished (as in the moment to which Faust cried ‘stay!’) and we have a fleeting notion of Eternity: a ‘Now-for-ever’ baffling speech and explanation. At least momentarily we experience ‘salvation.’ Self is transcended and swallowed up in the larger whole.”—Bishop Lumsden Barkway, in Theology.

On the morning of Appotomax, when an officer who opposed surrender said, “Oh General, what will history say?” General Lee replied, “That is not the question, Colonel. The question is, is it right to surrender this army? If it is right, then I will take all the responsibility.”

A clergyman has written expressing the opinion that “things have now gone very far indeed, and the threat of the H-Bomb has two psychological effects (1) a still greater centripetal force making people wish to be even more closely organised for safety’s sake, (2) A possible feeling that anything would be better than the threat of complete extinction.”

There isn’t any doubt in the minds of many of us that society is in the grip of demonic psychological forces, against which mere argument is unavailing. Whether General Lee was right or wrong in his decision, his mind was at least exercised by the right question. His mind was concerned not with expediences nor with other peoples’ opinions, but with Ultimate Values.

If there is anything in this world which can defeat the force of demonic psychology it is the psychological reaction to Ultimate Values: God is our judge. In practical terms how can the Church be induced to test Bishop Barkway’s question seriously in society?

“No-one would wish to deny or under-estimate the critical urgency of the present time. Never was there an age in which it was more imperatively necessary to implement the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the

"Broadly speaking it is true that every heresy is a distortion or exaggeration of a neglected truth. If Adventist sects abound, it is because the Church has neglected the truths in the traditional Christian eschatology."—Ibid.

"Christianity has always understood that evil is resident not only in individual men, but also in the powers of this world, in 'thrones, dominions and principalities'—in institutions, groups, social structures. Without the profounder analysis of the nature of the structure, institution, system itself, it is even possible that palliation may do more harm than good."—Ibid.

"It is for these reasons that Christian social thinking does believe in wise patching up of social systems, except in those cases where Anti-Christ himself is in power, or where any social change is made impossible by tyranny. Christian social thinking does approve of compromise, negotiation, and concession on almost all issues."—Ibid.

"Christianity sets the challenge of perfection... We should therefore be distrustful of perfectionist thinking..."—Ibid.

PERFECTION: vide St. John XVII, 23.

If the Church is distrustful of perfectionist thinking, it is distrustful of Christianity, and it is therefore not surprising that the world has lost faith in Christianity and turns away from the Church; the Church has ceased to be sanctified, and lost its psychological influence. And with its loss of sanctity it ceases to be the Mystical Body of Christ and becomes just part of the world.

The adjective 'absolute' comes from the Latin 'absolutus,' meaning 'loosened or freed from'; and absolution is a freeing from. It is only when we reach the Absolute that we are absolved of our cares and sins.

If the Church can again be brought to be true to its Founder, standing fast and fearlessly in defence of absolutes in our society (not merely the half-truth of Moral Rearmament), the Demon in our midst will meet its match and vast numbers of people experience with Robert Bridges.

The highest of all these occult influences the quality of appearances that thro' the sense wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man.

Can Christianity again flame in the Church?

"Modern man has for some time been puzzled by the dominance of the body collective and the loss of his liberty, and notes with dismay that he is being overrun by the masses without being able to explain the advent of the procedure. In fact, it is not happening at all suddenly, but represents only the last stage of an historical process which began with the Italian Renaissance, and is being rapidly pushed by the crisis to its end... Western man has passed once more under the compelling dominance of the collective body, from which Christianity freed him when it placed him as an individual before God."—Hanz Zehrer in Man in this World.