

his work to that of current historians such as Hobsbawm, contemporaries like Belloc, and predecessors like Buckle, Green, Froude and Acton. The book touches on the development of Chesterton's philosophy of history in his literary criticism, in his novels, *The Ball and the Cross*, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* and *The Man Who Was Thursday* and in his poems *The Ballad of the White Horse* and *Lepanto*. Finally, McCleary examines the influence Chesterton's historical views may have had on later Catholic writers such as Christopher Dawson, Evelyn Waugh and Marshall McLuhan.

Perhaps the most obvious problem is that McCleary's book ranges over a great many subjects, of considerable depth and significance and attempts to do so in 158 pages, including notes and index. The matters of which McCleary treats require more extended discussion than his limited space enables him to give. What he offers is a useful pointer to some of Chesterton's leading historical concerns. Certainly, locality, nationalism and patriotism were among these, McCleary quotes aptly and interestingly from Chesterton and from other historians. What he has to say about the material to which he refers and the topics he raises is sensible and would, generally, not be disputed

by most readers of Chesterton. For those unfamiliar with Chesterton's work, McCleary provides a helpful introduction to some of the key historical preoccupations they will encounter within it.

Often, however, one has the feeling that crucial subjects deserve more detailed treatment and that interesting themes are being raised that the author hurries past, neglecting the opportunity and the need for fuller exploration. Such a passage as this suggests the problem:

Chesterton also pointed out that not everything contained in human nature is rational. His acknowledgement of the irrational forces in human history is coupled with an acknowledgement of something dark. Thus, we are led to the role of evil as an antagonist in the drama of human history. Indeed, Chesterton acknowledged the influence of the diabolical in his own life when he spoke of his youthful encounter with evil in his autobiography. This person encounter would naturally be a part of his understanding and interpretation of the collective life of nations. In both cases, it is a matter of the exercise of human freedom (p. 44).

What McCleary raises here is of great significance, deserving several pages of close analysis, rather than a brief summary. Often, as in this case, McCleary whets our appetite but snatches the plate away before we have time to satisfy it. Readers of his book will see some of the reasons why Chesterton's historical work is interesting but they will be left feeling they need to be told more about the points that have been raised. More importantly, the plan of *The Historical Imagination of G.K. Chesterton* does not allow McCleary to show how alive and vital Chesterton's reading of history is for us now, in these troubled times. It is, of course, interesting to have it suggested that his historical views may have influenced Marshall McLuhan and Evelyn Waugh, but what Chesterton's historical writing raises is far more disturbing. It appeals to its readers to "burst through the filthy cobwebs of four-hundred years" and to see that, rather than obtaining the benefits of progress, the poor have been "broken in every revolt, bullied in every fashion, long despoiled of property and now being despoiled of liberty."<sup>2</sup>

John Coates  
Lancaster, England

1 G.K. Chesterton: *A Selection from his non-fictional prose*, Selected by W. H. Auden (Faber and Faber: London, 1970), pp. 15-16.

2 G.K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, (Chatto and Windus: London, 1917), p. 237.

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*The Making and the Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950.*

by James R. Lothian  
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James Lothian's book on the English Catholic intellectual community in the first half of the twentieth-century is a timely and suggestive book for several reasons: first, he deals with a group of writers who are still much read, discussed and appreciated today, a group moreover which contained several very colourful personalities, including Chesterton, Belloc, Waugh and Eric Gill. Secondly, although this does not become clear until the very end of the book, Lothian raises the question of what stance Catholic intellectuals, and, *a fortiori* the Church herself, should take with regard to the life of the world around them, with the various currents of modern thought and with contemporaries

who disbelieve in the Christian revelation. No one would deny, I think, that questions such as these have been in the forefront of the numerous intellectual battles within the Church since the 1960s, and that they often underlie disputes about the liturgy, about catechetics, about the behaviour of Catholic politicians and many other matters about which there is controversy today. By raising these questions and situating them in the careers and works of an important group of thinkers and writers, Lothian's book could be a real help toward fruitful discussion of these matters.

It is important at the outset to recognise that this book is not simply a history of the Catholic intellectual revival in England, still less of the Catholic *literary* revival. Lothian insists that he is writing of an intellectual *community*, and he is interested in their ideas, not in their literary talents. "To view Catholic intellectuals through a literary lens is most often to restrict one's studies to the 'great writers,' selected via aesthetic criteria" (p. xv). Secondly, the author writes from a definite organising principle. He selects his subjects and much of what he says about them with that principle in mind, a principle stated in the title of the book, the *making* and

the *unmaking* of the community. Thus this work also constitutes an interesting contribution to a sociology of intellectuals, quite apart from its implications for the life of the Church.

Lothian states his thesis in the beginning in these words: "It argues that the Catholic intellectuals in interwar England were not a disparate collection of individuals but a genuine community united not only by close personal ties but especially by ideology. The foundation for this community ... lay in the ideas of Hilaire Belloc ... Belloc presented a unified and self-consciously Catholic theory of government, political economy, and history. [Belloc's] ideology made its first influential converts," and these included Vincent McNabb, Eric Gill and G. K. Chesterton. "The next generation of Bellocians"—chiefly Douglas Jerrold, Douglas Woodruff, Christopher Hollis, Evelyn Waugh and Arnold Lunn—"ensured that Bellocianism remained the unifying ideology for this community." Although a new group of writers and thinkers, including Frank Sheed, Maisie Ward and Tom Burns "promoted, under the influence in part of ... Christopher Dawson ... an aesthetic and philosophical vision at odds with Belloc's agenda ... [this] did not mean the end of

the community" (xii-xiii). Only under the stress of World War II and its aftermath was the Catholic intellectual community dissolved. Although Lothian devotes much space to what he considers the divergent interests of Dawson and those he influenced from the "Bellocians," he stresses that the intellectual community remained united until the war and postwar years. And in fact, the fracturing of the community during and after the war had almost nothing to do with any differences between Dawson and Belloc, either intellectual or personal.

It is not clear whether Lothian means to suggest that all, or nearly all, Catholic intellectuals in England at this time were part of a community united around what Lothian calls "Bellocianism." Important figures, such as Ronald Knox, C. C. Martindale, Maurice Baring or Grahame Greene receive only a passing mention here, while others do not appear at all. But many of them were doing important work during this period and arguably could be said to represent inter-war English Catholicism as well as any of those who are treated in this book. Lothian does explain why he does not include Greene, saying simply that he was not sufficiently in sympathy with "Bellocianism"

nor was he "closely connected personally" to the members of the community (388). Lothian can hardly be faulted for not discussing every writer of note, but it seems to me that some attempt to place the group of writers that constitutes the community under review within the larger context of English Catholic intellectual life would have been useful.

In the Prologue, after a review of the relevant historiography of the period, Lothian turns his attention to the background for his work, the pre-1910 state of English Catholicism. Here he recounts the familiar emergence of English Catholics from the penal regime, the impact of the Oxford movement, the restoration of the hierarchy, Irish immigration, and the work and influence of Cardinal Manning toward the end of the nineteenth-century. He gives some interesting concrete statistics of the growth of the English Catholic church in this period (70,000 Catholics in 1780, 1.35 million by 1891; 469 churches in 1840, 1,387 in 1891; and 788 priests in 1851, 2,812 in 1900). But Lothian reveals what seems to me a kind of intellectual axe he has to grind when he states that Manning had "more in common with the defiant 'fortress' Catholicism of Pius IX regarding the relation

of English Catholics to the broader society than with the Liberalism of Mr. Gladstone, who after all sided with his friend Acton in 1870" (xxii). It is not clear what relevance Gladstone has to the internal constitution of English Catholicism, but I think it is a mistake to focus primarily on one side of Manning's thought, such as his opposition to Catholic attendance at Oxford or Cambridge. His work with the labour movement, which Lothian acknowledges, certainly shows a great desire to relate to "the broader society." And while it is surely true that Belloc inherited via Manning and passed on to those he influenced "the antipathy toward the modern world that had come to characterize Catholicism in the second half of the nineteenth-century," this antipathy hardly constituted an "impulse to turn away from" the contemporary world (xxiii). It is hard to imagine two individuals with more of a desire to engage their contemporaries than Belloc and Chesterton. Instead of situating Belloc and most of the other writers discussed in this book simply as heirs of Pius IX, it makes more sense, it seems to me, to see their work as in part at least a response to the project of Leo XIII to engage the modern world, but to engage it from the standpoint of a confident Catholicism that

could yield on nonessentials while holding fast to what was essential.

After the Prologue, Lothian devotes chapter one to Belloc, chapter two to those he calls the first generation of Bellocians, Fr. McNabb, Eric Gill and Chesterton, and chapter three to the second generation, focusing on Douglas Jerrold, Douglas Woodruff, Christopher Hollis, Evelyn Waugh and Arnold Lunn. For each of these individuals he sketches something of their education, careers and writings. Although it is obviously necessary to include such background, I think that much of this material does not contribute to building up the book's thesis, but is merely a recital of biographical facts sometimes at greater length than necessary.

In addition, one can make some other general comments on the contents of these chapters. First, it is essential to Lothian's thesis to make Hilaire Belloc the foundation of the English Catholic intellectual community and the real source of its ideas. Yet to what extent were these ideas the common property of most literate Catholics of the time, not just in England, and even of many non-Catholics? Distributism, for example, was rooted in the response to Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* and

shared important features with continental theories such as Corporatism or Pesch's Solidarism, as well as with Guild Socialism. Similarly Belloc's admiration for the Middle Ages was hardly unique. Even before Leo XIII Catholic thinkers in Germany and elsewhere were looking to mediaeval institutions as the source for ideas on how to deal with Capitalism and the resulting exploitation and alienation of workers. Even Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* put in a good word for the Middle Ages, speaking of how the "bourgeoisie ... has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations." Belloc indeed did set out to rescue English historiography from its Whig, anti-Catholic bias, but that project was part of a much wider revival of interest in the Middle Ages that dated to the end of the eighteenth-century and the beginnings of Romanticism. And although Belloc certainly had very considerable influence on Chesterton's sociopolitical ideas, the latter's interests ranged much wider than politics and economics, and it seems to this reviewer that Lothian tends to present Chesterton as simply or primarily an exponent of "Bellocianism." Maisie Ward in her biography of Chesterton holds that Belloc was the decisive influence on his friend in matters political, economic and historical. But, "In

pure literature, in philosophy and theology he remains untouched by the faintest change" based on his association with Belloc. And certainly Chesterton was as much at home in these fields as in sociopolitical matters. For that matter it is a mistake to limit Belloc to "Bellocianism." Though obviously Belloc's interests centred around history and social affairs, such books as *Survivals and New Arrivals* or *Essays of a Catholic* range widely over other territory, and constitute, in my opinion, a distinguished portion of his work.

Lothian devotes considerable space in these chapters to Belloc's and Chesterton's cautiously favourable attitude toward Mussolini and Fascism. He does this in part because he later stresses the even more favourable attitude of many of the later "Bellocians," especially Douglas Jerrold, who was naive in the extreme toward Mussolini and Pétain. In chapter five he presents Jerrold as a counterpoint to the efforts of Christopher Dawson and others to promote liberal democracy as part of the British war effort, an event which helped to fracture the Catholic intellectual community. As part of a summing up of "Bellocianism" he writes that because of "Belloc's antipathy to parliamentary democracy and his advocacy of

monarchy as the more desirable form of government ... subsequent English Catholic writers ... shared Belloc's enthusiasm for the authoritarian regimes in nations such as Italy, Austria, and Portugal ... " (70). In his discussion of Chesterton's views toward Mussolini and Fascism (128-134), although Lothian seeks to present the nuances of Chesterton's thought, he seems to think that Chesterton has committed the unpardonable sin in that "the tone of his *Resurrection of Rome* was that of moral equivalence" between Fascism and liberal democracy (132). But a reading of what Chesterton wrote in that book shows his realisation that the façade of liberal democracy very often masked rule by the rich, who in fact controlled the government on their own behalf. Chesterton thought that the Fascist state at least had the power to curb the rich and that on occasion it seemed willing to do so. Even if Chesterton was utterly wrong in his judgement about Fascism and social justice, in the 1920s and 30s Fascism and its associated movements, such as the Falange in Spain, did present a critique of Capitalism and economic exploitation which is not without interest. "Fascist" has since become simply a synonym for Bad Guy, so that people actually took seriously the Bush administration's term Islamo-Fascist, a particularly mean-

ingless expression. But in Chesterton's lifetime it was not a mark of moral depravity to see elements of the Fascist system as a reasonable alternative to both Capitalism and Communism. That Mussolini later brutally invaded Ethiopia and embraced the Nazi racial theories could hardly have been known in the 1920s when Chesterton wrote. Belloc, moreover, as Lothian notes (325), specifically criticised Nazi anti-Semitism, and at least privately opposed the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (62).

Moreover, Belloc's criticism of parliamentary government and advocacy of "monarchy" was not simply a brief for the dictators of continental Europe. His notion of "monarch" included any strong executive, such as the president of the United States and the governors of the separate American states. Belloc in fact met and was favourably impressed by President Franklin Roosevelt, whose economic policy, by the way, especially the National Recovery Administration, was compared by critics to Mussolini's own Fascist economic programs.

After the chapters devoted to the "Bellocians," in chapter four Lothian introduces Christopher Dawson and others more or less associated with him. These include Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward, Tom Burns, David Jones,

and in chapter five, Barbara Ward (no relation to Maisie). It is clear that Dawson did not especially like Belloc, writing in a letter to Maisie Ward, as Lothian quotes, that Belloc "is not only not a philosopher himself, he is definitely an anti-philosophic influence and has done a lot to make the younger generation of Catholics hostile and contemptuous toward modern thought" (289), and refusing to meet him, much to Frank Sheed's dismay (289-90). Lothian claims that Dawson influenced Sheed to publish continental theologians and philosophers, such as Karl Adam and Maritain, thereby making a partial break with the "Bellocians" who had been allegedly occupied solely with sociopolitical matters. I think Lothian draws too much of a contrast here, for in reality some of the "Bellocians" had strong interests in philosophy and theology, notably Chesterton, Vincent McNabb and Eric Gill. But it is true that there was a definite slant in their intellectual interests toward the social question. Although Lothian is clear that the unity of this intellectual community was not really broken by any differences in outlook or interest between Belloc and Dawson, he does try to make the most of whatever differences there were, titling this chapter, "The Dawsonite Challenge." One

example of what seems to me to be Lothian's undue stress on differences between those whom he calls Bellocians and those whom he places in the Dawsonite camp, is his comment about the "sustained criticism of Bellocianism in Tom Burns' *Order*" (372). But in fact Lothian cites only one article in *Order* specifically targeting Belloc (262) and his summary of that periodical's contents evinces little that could be called antipathetic to Belloc's thought (261-3). In the end he writes, "Common agreement, despite Dawson's objections still united Catholic writers in England, and there remained close personal bonds among them ... . It would be remiss, indeed, not to acknowledge the similarities and personal links even between Dawson himself and the Bellocians ... . Nor were Dawson's ideas entirely unrelated to those of the Bellocians. In fact, much of his diagnosis of the maladies of contemporary Europe were so similar to those of Belloc, Chesterton, and Gill that even the most orthodox Distributist greeted his work approvingly, passing over the differences. Dawson was a valuable and frequent contributor to the *English Review* during Douglas Jerrold's tenure as editor, and Jerrold believed that he and Dawson were of the same mind" (290-91).

In any case it was not any dislike of Belloc by Dawson nor any alleged lack of interest in philosophy among the "Bellocians" that led to the community's breakup, but rather the events of World War II. Here Lothian seems to be on surer ground, but also with a smaller cast of characters. By the time of World War II Chesterton had been dead for several years, Belloc became incapacitated early in the war, Gill died in 1940 and Vincent McNabb in 1943. Thus most of the important "Bellocians" were out of the picture. But there definitely was a conflict between Douglas Jerrold and Dawson. Briefly, as Lothian presents the affair, Jerrold was a proponent of the superficially interesting but actually stupid idea of the Latin Catholic bloc, a plan for the Latin Catholic countries to work together to rechristianise Europe, beginning apparently with their Nazi ally, and for Britain to make peace with Germany on distinctly unfavourable terms. Jerrold continued to promote this idea even right up to and immediately after the fall of France in 1940. It was stupid, of course, in that Mussolini clearly never had any interest in rechristianising anything, and Pétain, whatever his wishes might have been, was almost totally subservient to the Germans, while neither the Span-

ish nor the Portuguese governments, both neutral in the war and friendly to the Church, whatever they might have desired, could possibly have undertaken such an effort. Dawson, meanwhile, at the instigation of Barbara Ward and with the enthusiastic approval of Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, had become Editor of *The Dublin Review* and one of the leaders of the Sword of the Spirit movement. The Sword movement was designed to rally Catholic support for Britain's war efforts and counter opinions that continued to hold out hope for detaching Italy from Germany as part of the Latin Catholic bloc idea. Even though Jerrold, as publisher of the *Dublin*, eventually succeeded in ousting Dawson as Editor after Cardinal Hinsley's death, it was a hollow victory. For not only had Britain's position in the war improved with the entry of the United States and the Soviet Union, the end of the war meant the end of whatever coherence the Catholic intellectual community had enjoyed up to then. But before I discuss that, I should note that any conflict between "Bellocianism" and the efforts of Christopher Dawson and Barbara Ward to promote liberal democracy was really a conflict with only Douglas Jerrold. Other "Bellocians," such as Douglas

Woodruff, Christopher Hollis, Arnold Lunn and Evelyn Waugh supported the war effort, whatever may have been their misgivings about parliamentary democracy then or earlier, while the only figure to support Jerrold, Michael de la Bedoyère, Editor of the *Catholic Herald*, is presented by Lothian as one of the Dawsonites. More fundamentally, one can question Lothian's judgement that "Bellocianism" was somehow disproven by the war's successful conclusion. "Even the condemnations of parliamentary democracy for its weakness and corruption, the very hallmark of Bellocianism ... had dissipated .... Above all, Britain's victory in the war had validated its parliamentary democracy. The very system that Belloc and his acolytes had dismissed as corrupt and ineffectual compared to its continental rivals had demonstrated that it remained functional" (369). But in fact, Britain and the United States both functioned during the war under the types of strong men that Belloc and Chesterton at times championed. Though Churchill and Roosevelt were hardly dictators, each certainly exploited the powers of his office to the full, and it is not fair to judge the ordinary performance of parliamentary democracy by them. In addition, one can hardly leave out the con-

tribution of the USSR toward the victory over Germany, a contribution at least as great as that of the Atlantic powers, and achieved by a regime that hardly constituted a validation of any kind of democracy.

After his account of the dramatic events of World War II, Lothian in his Epilogue both sums up his book and also raises his most interesting questions. He writes,

"A growing segment of Catholic intellectuals had begun to recognise the inadequacy of Bellocianism in the post-war world" (374). But this was not so much because of any refutation of these ideas, rather in large part because intellectual fashions had changed. "In the end, it was World War II that had revealed Bellocianism to be an intellectual blind alley. The postwar realisation that Catholic intellectuals had to transcend the Bellocian intellectual ghetto was built on the wartime ecumenism of Dawson and his friends at the *Dublin Review* and the *Sword of the Spirit*" (381).

Facts or experiences themselves, however, rarely teach anything without some framework to interpret them by. Whether or

how Catholic intellectuals before the war had lived in an intellectual ghetto, and what this meant and whether that was good or bad, depends on what view one holds on the proper relations of Catholics to those outside the Church. In fact what had occurred after the war was one of those difficult-to-explain shifts in ideas and outlook, the kind of shift that leads people to talk about an idea whose time has come. At certain times certain ideas are eagerly greeted and welcomed, not usually because they have refuted their opposition but for reasons not always clear. Lothian, for example, writes of Bernard Wall, who before the war as Editor of the *Colosseum*, had been typical of the extreme "Bellocians," increasingly hostile to liberal democracy and supportive of Franco and of Maurras's Action Française. After the war his whole intellectual outlook seems to have changed, not only on politics, but more fundamentally on the very stance that Catholics should take toward the world. Lothian notes a 1946 letter to Dawson on "the dilemma they faced after the war ... whether to continue to separate themselves from the greater society or to 'collaborate.' The first option led in his estimation to 'sterility.' Where the second led Wall admitted he was not sure, but there was, he believed, no alternative" (381).

All this, Lothian rightly remarks, had meaning beyond the English Church. "The postwar rejection of Bellocianism by the English Catholic intellectuals was thus part of a much more significant development. The reconciliation of English Catholic intellectuals with modern English society had been a step in the direction of the Church's subsequent advocacy, in *Gaudium et Spes* ... of active engagement in contemporary society, of dialogue with modernity rather than reflexive opposition to it" (383).

No doubt this is largely true. But I must reiterate that it is false to refer to Belloc and his contemporaries and followers as proponents of a "fortress Catholicism," opposed to "active engagement in contemporary society." They engaged the world outside the Church at least as much as Catholics do now. Nor is it true that Catholics were having no impact on the world around them. Aside from the large numbers of converts, Lothian recounts the interesting incident that in 1932 the *Manchester Guardian* had taken note of the publishing house of Sheed & Ward and its role in "bringing the fruits of the intellectual renaissance among Catholics in Europe to the English public" (242). The main difference is that then there was agreement among

Catholics on the purpose of such engagement with their contemporaries. Today there is little agreement on what is the purpose of engagement and dialogue, whether conversion, mutual understanding and collaboration or even an effort toward syncretism. "Bellocianism" had its defects, to be sure, especially as it was carried on by those who considered themselves Belloc's disciples, such as Woodruff, Jerrold and Hollis, and who often took more extreme positions than did Belloc himself. But it was an intellectual view built around Catholic teaching and tradition and which sought to apply that teaching and tradition to the world, even if its judgments were sometimes skewed.

Thus Lothian in his Epilogue raises the always pertinent question of what stance the Church should take toward the contemporary world outside her boundaries. He clearly thinks that what he calls "Bellocianism" was a mistake. But we will judge Belloc, Chesterton and the rest largely by what we think the Church is and what her stance should be toward the world. Chesterton says somewhere that the Church is larger than the world. If we believe that, if we believe that the Church's classical understanding of her mission was largely correct, then we will favour

engagement, yes, but engagement that seeks in some fashion to apply what Christ mandated when he told his Apostles to go out into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. On the other hand, if we see the Church as a valuable institution no doubt, one among many probably equally valuable institutions, and not only with no monopoly on the truth but in fact with at least as much to learn from those outside her as to teach them, we will want a very different kind of engagement and a dialogue whose purpose is far from clear, except that it is definitely not the conversion of our interlocutors. Lothian's book is valuable in that it presents these alternative approaches to engagement in the context of an especially interesting group of writers. For all their shortcomings, the "Bellocians" did try to apply Catholic teaching to the world around them and to present the Church in a fresh and attractive manner to the world. If conversions are any index of success, to a great extent they succeeded. But beginning after the war, and even more today, we do what Bernard Wall advocated, we "collaborate." And what that will achieve we appear to have no better idea than did Wall himself.

Thomas Storck  
Greenbelt, MD

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