



Hilaire Belloc

Joseph Hilaire Pierre René Belloc (/hɪˈlær ˈbɛlək/ also US: /bɛlˈɑːk/; French: [ilɛːʁ bɛlɔk]; 27 July 1870^[1] – 16 July 1953) was a French-English writer, politician, and historian. Belloc was also an orator, poet, sailor, satirist, writer of letters, soldier, and political activist.

Belloc was considered one of the most versatile authors of the 20th century.^[2] His Catholic faith had a strong effect on his works.^[3]

Belloc became a naturalised British subject in 1902 while retaining his French citizenship.^[4] While attending Oxford University, he served as President of the Oxford Union. From 1906 to 1910, he served as one of the few Catholic members of the British Parliament.

Belloc was a noted disputant, with a number of long-running feuds. He was also a close friend and collaborator of G. K. Chesterton. George Bernard Shaw, a friend and frequent debate opponent of both Belloc and Chesterton, dubbed the pair the "*Chesterbelloc*".^{[5][6][7]}

Belloc's writings encompassed religious poetry and comic verse for children. His widely sold *Cautionary Tales for Children* included "Jim, who ran away from his nurse, and was eaten by a lion" and "Matilda, who told lies and was burned to death".^[8] He wrote historical biographies and numerous travel works, including *The Path to Rome* (1902).^[9]

Family and career

Family

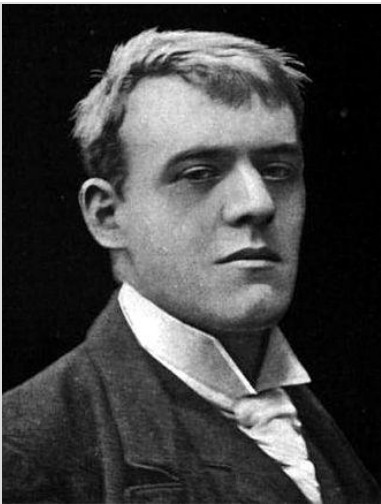
Belloc was born in La Celle-Saint-Cloud, France to a French father, Louis Belloc (1830–1872) and an English mother. His sister Marie Adelaide Belloc Lowndes also became a writer.

Hilaire Belloc




Portrait by E. O. Hoppé, 1910

Born	Joseph Hilaire Pierre René Belloc <div>27 July 1870</div> <div> La Celle-Saint-Cloud, Seine-et-Oise, French Empire</div>
Died	16 July 1953 (aged 82) <div> Guildford, Surrey, England</div>
Resting place	 Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation , West Grinstead
Occupation	Writer, historian, politician
Alma mater	 Balliol College , Oxford
Period	1896–1953
Genre	Poetry, history, essays, politics, economics, travel literature
Literary movement	 Catholic literary revival
Spouse	 Elodie Hogan (m. 1896; died 1914)
Children	5



Hilaire Belloc portrait, c. 1903

Belloc's mother Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829–1925) was a writer, activist and an advocate for women's equality, a co-founder of the English Woman's Journal and the Langham Place Group. As an adult, Belloc campaigned against women's suffrage as a member of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League.

Relatives	<u>Bessie Rayner Parkes</u> (mother) <u>Marie Belloc Lowndes</u> (sister)
Member of Parliament for Salford South	
In office	1906–1910
Preceded by	<u>James Grimble Groves</u>
Succeeded by	<u>Anderson Montague-Barlow</u>
Personal details	
Political party	<u>Liberal</u>
Signature	

Belloc's maternal grandfather was Joseph Parkes (1796–1865). Belloc's grandmother, Elizabeth Rayner Priestley (1797–1877), was born in the United States, a granddaughter of Joseph Priestley.

In 1867, Bessie Rayner Parkes married attorney Louis Belloc, son of Jean-Hilaire Belloc. In 1872, five years after they wed, Louis died but not before being wiped out financially in a stock market crash. The young widow then brought her children from France back to England.

Early life

Belloc grew up in England; his boyhood was spent in Slindon, West Sussex. He wrote about his home in poems such as "West Sussex Drinking Song", "The South Country", and "Ha'nacker Mill"; after graduating from John Henry Newman's Oratory School in Edgbaston, Birmingham.

Courtship, marriage, and premature death of his wife

In September 1889, Belloc's sister Marie made the accidental acquaintance of a Catholic widow, Mrs. Ellen Hogan, who was travelling from California on a European tour with two of her children, her daughters Elizabeth and Elodie. The travellers were both devoutly Catholic and keenly interested in literature, and Marie arranged a visit with her mother, Bessie, who in turn arranged an audience with Henry Cardinal Manning. These acts of generosity cemented a strong friendship, further deepened when Marie and Bessie accompanied the Hogans on their tour of France, visiting Paris with them. Hilaire was absent touring the French provinces as a correspondent for *The Pall Mall Gazette*, but when the Hogans stopped back in London on their return from another European trip the following year, Belloc met Elodie for the first time, and was smitten.^[10]

Shortly after this meeting, Ellen Hogan was called back to California prematurely to take care of another of her children who was stricken with illness. She left her two daughters, who wished to remain in London, under the care of the Belloc family, and, Bessie asked her own son to squire the Hogan daughters around London. Belloc's interest in Elodie grew more fervid by the day. This was the beginning of a long, intercontinental, and star-crossed courtship, made all the more difficult by the opposition of Elodie's mother, who wished Elodie to enter the convent, and Hilaire's mother, who thought her son was too young to marry. Belloc pursued Elodie with letters, and, after her return to the United States, in 1891, he pursued her in person.

The impoverished Belloc, still only twenty years old, sold nearly everything he had to purchase a steamship ticket to New York, ostensibly to visit relatives in Philadelphia. Belloc's true reason for the trek to America became apparent when, after spending a few days in Philadelphia, he began to make his way across the American continent.^[10] Part of his journey was by train, but when the money ran out, Belloc just walked. An athletic man who hiked extensively in Britain and Europe, Belloc made his way on foot for a significant part of the 2870 miles from Philadelphia to San Francisco. While walking, he paid for lodging at remote farm houses and ranches by sketching the owners and reciting poetry.

Hilaire's first letter on his arrival in San Francisco is effervescent, happy to see Elodie and full of hopes for their future, but his manifestly zealous courtship was to go unrewarded. The joy he felt at seeing Elodie soon gave way to disappointment when the apparently insurmountable opposition of her mother to the marriage manifested itself. After a stay of only a few weeks, far shorter than the time he had spent in his journey to California, the crestfallen Belloc made his way back across the United States, after a fruitless journey of thousands of miles. His biographer Joseph Pearce compares the return to Napoleon's long winter retreat from Moscow.^[10] When Belloc finally reached the East Coast at Montclair, New Jersey, he received a letter from Elodie on 30 April 1891, definitively rejecting him in favour of a religious vocation; the steamship trip home was tainted with despair.

The gloomy Belloc threw himself into restless activity. Determined to fulfill the obligation of military service necessary to retain his French citizenship, Belloc served his term with an artillery regiment near Toul in 1891.^[11] While he was serving in France, Elodie's mother Ellen died, removing a significant obstacle to Belloc's hopes, but Elodie, although torn between her affection for Hilaire and her desire to serve God in the religious life, was unwilling to cross her mother's wishes so soon after her mother's untimely death and persisted in refusing Belloc's advances.

After his year of service was concluded, still pining for and writing to Elodie, he took the entrance exam to Oxford University, and matriculated to Balliol College in January 1893. Belloc later wrote in a poem:

Balliol made me, Balliol fed me,
Whatever I had she gave me again;
And the best of Balliol loved and led me,
God be with you, Balliol men.^[12]

While at Oxford he was bestowed by his fellow students with a great honour: he was elected and served as President of the Oxford Union, the University debating society. He and another undergraduate, Anthony Henley, also achieved the record-breaking and athletic feat of walking from

Carfax Tower in Oxford, to Marble Arch in London, a distance of some 55 miles, more than double that of a marathon, in only 11½ hours.^[10] He was awarded a first-class honours degree in history in June 1895.

That autumn, Elodie entered religious life and joined the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg, Maryland, as a postulant. She left a month later, writing to Belloc that she had failed in her religious vocation. In March 1896, having secured financing as an Oxford Extension lecturer in Philadelphia, Germantown, Baltimore and New Orleans, Belloc took a steamship to New York, and started making his way to Elodie in California. He expected to receive letters from her on his journey, but received none. To his shock and dismay, when he finally arrived in California in May, he discovered Elodie was deathly ill, worn out by the stress of the previous year. Belloc, thinking that after all their suffering, he and his beloved would be denied one another by her death, also collapsed. Over the next few weeks, however, Elodie recovered and after a tumultuous six-year courtship, Belloc and Elodie were married at St. John the Baptist Catholic church in Napa, California, on 15 June 1896. They settled initially in Oxford.^[13]

In 1906, Belloc purchased land and a house called King's Land at Shipley, West Sussex in the United Kingdom. The couple had five children before Elodie's untimely death on the Feast of the Purification, 2 February 1914, likely from cancer.^[10] She was age 45, and Belloc, at age 43, had more than 40 years of life ahead of him. He wore mourning garb for the rest of his life and kept her room as she had left it.^[14]

Nearly five years later, his son Louis was killed in 1918 while serving in the Royal Flying Corps in northern France. Belloc placed a memorial tablet at the nearby Cambrai Cathedral. It is in the same side chapel as the icon of Our Lady of Cambrai.

Political career

At Oxford University, Belloc served as president of the Oxford Union. He went into politics after he became a naturalised British subject. A great disappointment in his life was his failure to gain a fellowship of All Souls College, Oxford in 1895. This failure may have been caused in part by his producing a small statue of the Virgin Mary and placing it before him on the table during the interview for the fellowship.

From 1906 to 1910, Belloc was a Liberal Party Member of Parliament for Salford South. During one campaign speech, he was asked by a heckler if he was a "papist". He responded:

Gentlemen, I am a Catholic. As far as possible, I go to Mass every day. This [taking a rosary out of his pocket] is a rosary. As far as possible, I kneel down and tell these beads every day. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God that He has spared me the indignity of being your representative.^[15]

The crowd cheered and Belloc won the election, despite his Catholic faith. He retained his seat in the first 1910 election but did not stand in December 1910.

Belloc's only period of steady employment after that was from 1914 to 1920 as editor of *Land and Water*. Otherwise, he lived by his writing and was often financially insecure.

In controversy and debate

Belloc first came to public attention shortly after arriving at Balliol College, Oxford as a recent French army veteran. Attending his first debate of the Oxford Union Debating Society, he saw that the affirmative position was wretchedly and half-heartedly defended. As the debate drew to its conclusion and the division of the house was called, he rose from his seat in the audience, and delivered a vigorous, impromptu defence of the proposition. Belloc won that debate from the audience, as the division of the house then showed, and his reputation as a debater was established. He was later elected president of the Union. He held his own in debates there with F. E. Smith and John Buchan, the latter a friend.^{[16][17]}

In the 1920s, Belloc attacked H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History*. Belloc criticised what he termed Wells's secular bias and his belief in evolution by means of natural selection, a theory that Belloc asserted had been completely discredited. Wells remarked that "Debating Mr. Belloc is like arguing with a hailstorm". Belloc's review of *Outline of History* observed that Wells's book was a powerful and well-written volume "up until the appearance of Man, that is, somewhere around page seven". Wells responded with the small book *Mr. Belloc Objects*.^[18] Not to be outdone, Belloc followed with *Mr. Belloc Still Objects*.

G. G. Coulton wrote *Mr. Belloc on Medieval History* in a 1920 article. After a long-simmering feud, Belloc replied with a booklet, *The Case of Dr. Coulton*, in 1938.

Belloc's style during later life fulfilled the nickname he received in childhood, *Old Thunder*. Belloc's friend Lord Sheffield described his provocative personality in a preface to *The Cruise of the Nona*.^[19]

Later years

In 1937, Belloc was invited to be a visiting professor at Fordham University in New York City by university president Robert Gannon. Belloc delivered a series of lectures at Fordham which he completed in May of that year. The experience ended up leaving him physically exhausted, and he considered stopping the lectures early.^{[20][21]}

On 2 April 1941, Belloc's son Peter Gilbert Marie Sebastian Belloc died at the age of 36 of pneumonia. He fell ill while on active service with the 5th Battalion, Royal Marines in Scotland. He is buried in West Grinstead at Our Lady of Consolation and St. Francis churchyard.^{[22][23][24]}

Death and legacy

In 1942, Belloc suffered a stroke and never recovered from its effects. On the 12 July 1953, he also suffered burns and shock after falling on his fireplace. He died on 16 July 1953 at Mount Alvernia Nursing Home in Guildford, Surrey.^[25]

Belloc was buried at the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Consolation and St Francis at West Grinstead, where he had regularly attended Mass as a parishioner. His estate was probated at £7,451. At his funeral Mass, homilist Monsignor Ronald Knox said "No man of his time fought so hard for the good things". Boys from the Choir and Sacristy of Worth Preparatory School sang and served at the Mass.

Recent biographies of Belloc have been written by A. N. Wilson and Joseph Pearce. Jesuit political philosopher James Schall's *Remembering Belloc* was published by St. Augustine Press in September 2013. A memoir^[26] of Belloc was written by Henry Edward George Rope.

Hobbies

During his later years, Belloc sailed when he could afford to do so and became a well-known yachtsman. He won many races and was on the French sailing team.

In the early 1930s, he was given an old pilot cutter named *Jersey*. He sailed this for some years around the coasts of England, with the help of younger men. One sailor, Dermot MacCarthy, wrote a book about it, called *Sailing with Mr Belloc*.^[27]

Writing

Belloc wrote more than 150 books,^{[28][29]} the subjects ranging from warfare to poetry to the many current topics of his day. He has been called one of the Big Four of Edwardian Letters,^[30] along with H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and G. K. Chesterton, all of whom debated with each other into the 1930s. Belloc was closely associated with Chesterton, and Shaw coined the term "Chesterbelloc" for their partnership. Belloc was co-editor with Cecil Chesterton of the literary periodical the *Eye-Witness*.

Asked once why he wrote so much,^[31] Belloc responded: "Because my children are howling for pearls and caviar." Belloc observed that "The first job of letters is to get a canon", that is, to identify those works a writer sees as exemplary of the best of prose and verse. For his own prose style, he said he aspired to be as clear and concise as "Mary had a little lamb."

Essays and travel writing

In 1902, Belloc published *The Path to Rome*, an account of a walking pilgrimage from Central France across the Alps to Rome. *The Path to Rome* contains descriptions of the people and places he encountered, his drawings in pencil and in ink of the route, humour, poesy. In 1909, Belloc published *The Pyrenees*, providing many details of that region. As an essayist he was one of a small group (with Chesterton, E. V. Lucas and Robert Lynd) of popular writers.

During World War I, Belloc was perceived by soldiers as a "kept correspondent" for the Entente leadership. *The Wipers Times* mocked him as "Belary Helloc," a satirical persona who



A *Punch* caricature lampooning Belloc, 27 June 1917

advanced foolish suggestions for winning the war.^[32]

Poetry

His 1907 *Cautionary Tales for Children*, humorous poems with implausible morals, illustrated by Basil Temple Blackwood (signing as "B.T.B.") and later by Edward Gorey, are the most widely known of his writings.^[33] Supposedly for children, they, like Lewis Carroll's works, are more to adult and satirical tastes: "Henry King, Who chewed bits of string and was early cut off in dreadful agonies".^[34] A similar poem tells the story of "Rebecca, who slammed doors for fun and perished miserably".

The tale of "Matilda who told lies and was burned to death" was adapted into the play *Matilda Liar!* by Debbie Isitt. Quentin Blake, the illustrator, described Belloc as at one and the same time the overbearing adult and mischievous child. Roald Dahl was a follower. But Belloc has broader if sourer scope. For example, with Lord Lundy (who was "far too freely moved to Tears"):

It happened to Lord Lundy then
as happens to so many men
about the age of 26
they shoved him into politics[...]

leading up to

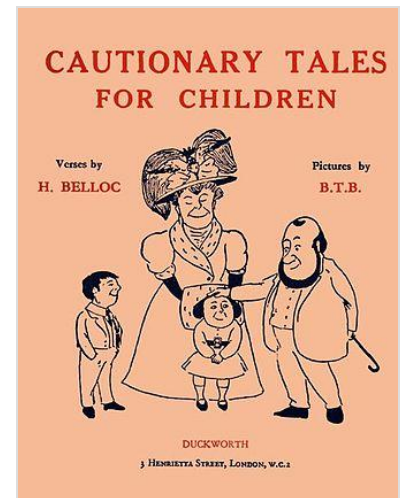
"we had intended you to be
the next Prime Minister but three...

instead, Lundy is condemned to the ultimate political wilderness:

...The stocks were sold; the Press was squared:
The Middle Class was quite prepared.
But as it is! . . . My language fails!
Go out and govern New South Wales!"

The Aged Patriot groaned and died:
And gracious! how Lord Lundy cried!

Of more weight is Belloc's *Sonnets and Verse*, a volume that deploys the same singing and rhyming techniques of his children's verses. Belloc's poetry is often religious, often romantic; throughout *The Path to Rome* he writes in spontaneous song.

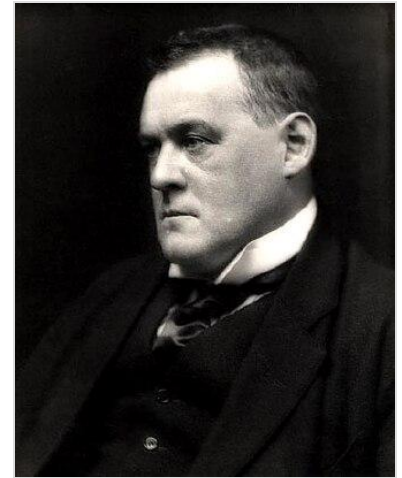


Original cover for *Cautionary Tales for Children*, illustrated by Basil T. Blackwood

History, politics, and economics

Three of his best-known non-fiction works are *The Servile State* (1912),^[35] *Europe and the Faith* (1920) and *The Jews* (1922).

He authored the 1924 book *Economics for Helen*, which has lessons about economics for a 16-year old Helen. Economists criticized the book, with one writing, "for example, he defines wealth as a sum of values rather than valuable things; he fails to distinguish between interest and profit; he says that there is no such thing as interest on money, that the intention of using wealth for further production is the essential feature of capital, and that taxes should fall proportionately to the wealth of the taxed, in order that the sacrifice should be equally felt by all."^[36] Another economist wrote, "On the whole this very readable book is interesting as affording some insight into an original mind rather than useful as an introduction to Economics."^[37]



Hilaire Belloc portrait by Emil Otto Hoppé, 1915

From an early age Belloc knew Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, who was responsible for the conversion of his mother to Catholicism. In *The Cruise of the "Nona"* (1925), he mentions a "profound thing" that Manning said to him when he was just twenty years old: "All human conflict is ultimately theological." What Manning meant, Belloc said, is "that all wars and revolutions, and all decisive struggles between parties of men arise from a difference in moral and transcendental doctrine."^[38] Belloc adds that he never met any man, "arguing for what should be among men, but took for granted as he argued that the doctrine he consciously or unconsciously accepted was or should be a similar foundation for all mankind. Hence battle."^[39] Manning's involvement in the London Dock Strike of 1889 made a major impression on Belloc and his view of politics, according to biographer Robert Speaight. He became a trenchant critic both of capitalism^[40] and of many aspects of socialism.^[41]

With others (G. K. Chesterton, Cecil Chesterton, Arthur Penty) Belloc envisioned the socioeconomic system of distributism, which advocates for a market economy with state regulation favoring cooperatives and small to medium enterprises against the concentrated economic power of large firms, finance-owned trusts, and monopolies. In *The Servile State*, written after his party-political career, and in other works, he criticised the modern economic order and parliamentary system, advocating distributism in opposition to both capitalism and socialism. Belloc made the historical argument that distributism was not a fresh perspective or program of economics but rather a return to the economics of widely distributed property that prevailed in Europe for the thousand years when it was Catholic. He called for the dissolution of Parliament and its replacement with committees of representatives for the various sectors of society, similar to medieval guilds, an idea that was popular under the name of corporatism at the time.

He contributed an article on "Land-Tenure in the Christian Era" to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.^[42]

Belloc held republican views, but became increasingly sympathetic to monarchism as he grew older. In his youth, he had initially been loyal to the French idea of republicanism, seeing it as a patriotic duty. Michael Hennessy, Chairman of the Hilaire Belloc Society, wrote that "In some respects, Belloc remained a republican until his death, but increasingly realized that there were not enough

republicans to make a republic function effectively. Belloc thus felt that monarchy was the most practicable, superior form of government."^{[43][44]} Belloc explores some of these ideas in his work *Monarchy: A Study of Louis XIV*. Within it, Belloc also wrote that democracy "is possible only in small states, and even these must enjoy exceptional defences, moral or material, if they are to survive."^[45]

With these linked themes in the background, he wrote a long series of contentious biographies of historical figures, including Oliver Cromwell, James II, and Napoleon. They show him as an ardent proponent of orthodox Catholicism and a critic of many elements of the modern world.

Outside academe, Belloc was impatient with what he considered axe-grinding histories, especially what he called "official history."^[46] Joseph Pearce notes also Belloc's attack on the secularism of H. G. Wells's popular *Outline of History*:

Belloc objected to his adversary's tacitly anti-Christian stance, epitomized by the fact that Wells had devoted more space in his "history" to the Persian campaign against the Greeks than he had given to the figure of Christ.

He wrote also substantial amounts of military history. He also contributed to the 1931 alternative history collection *If It Had Happened Otherwise* edited by Sir John Squire.

Religion

One of Belloc's more famous statements was "the faith is Europe and Europe is the faith";^[47] those views were expressed in many of his works from the period 1920 to 1940. These are still cited as exemplary of Catholic apologetics. They have also been criticised, for instance by comparison with the work of Christopher Dawson during the same period.

As a young man, Belloc moved away from Catholicism. However, he later stated that a spiritual event, which he never discussed publicly, prompted his return to it.^[48] Belloc alludes to this return to Catholicism in a passage in *The Cruise of the Nona*.

According to his biographer A. N. Wilson (*Hilaire Belloc*, Hamish Hamilton), Belloc never wholly apostatised from the faith (ibid p. 105). The momentous event is fully described by Belloc in *The Path to Rome* (pp. 158–61). It took place in the Swiss village of Undervelier at the time of Vespers. Belloc said of it, "not without tears", "I considered the nature of Belief" and "it is a good thing not to have to return to the Faith". (See *Hilaire Belloc* by Wilson at pp. 105–06.) Belloc believed that the Catholic Church provided hearth and home for the human spirit.^[49] More humorously, his tribute to Catholic culture can be understood from his well-known saying, "Wherever the Catholic sun does shine, there's always laughter and good red wine."^{[50][51]}

Belloc had a disparaging view of the Church of England, and used sharp words to describe heretics, such as, "Heretics all, whoever you may be/ In Tarbes or Nîmes or over the sea/ You never shall have good words from me/ Caritas non-conturbat me". Indeed, in his "Song of the Pelagian Heresy" he

described how the Bishop of Auxerre, "with his stout Episcopal staff/ So thoroughly thwacked and banged/ The heretics all, both short and tall/ They rather had been hanged".

Belloc sent his son Louis to Downside School (1911–1915). Louis's biography and death in August 1918 is recorded in "Downside and the War".

On Islam

Belloc's 1937 book *The Crusades: the World's Debate*, he wrote

The story must not be neglected by any modern, who may think in error that the East has finally fallen before the West, that Islam is now enslaved – to our political and economic power at any rate if not to our philosophy. It is not so. Islam essentially survives, and Islam would not have survived had the Crusade made good its hold upon the essential point of Damascus. Islam survives. Its religion is intact; therefore its material strength may return. *Our* religion is in peril, and who can be confident in the continued skill, let alone the continued obedience, of those who make and work our machines? ... There is with us a complete chaos in religious doctrine...We worship ourselves, we worship the nation; or we worship (some few of us) a particular economic arrangement believed to be the satisfaction of social justice...Islam has not suffered this spiritual decline; and in the contrast between [our religious chaos and Islam's] religious certitudes still strong throughout the Mohammedan world lies our peril.^[52]

In *The Great Heresies* (1938), Belloc argued that although "Muslim culture happens to have fallen back in material applications; there is no reason whatever why it should not learn its new lesson and become our equal in all those temporal things which now *alone* give us our superiority over it—whereas in *Faith* we have fallen inferior to it."^[53]

Belloc continued:

It has always seemed to me possible, and even probable, that there would be a resurrection of Islam and that our sons or our grandsons would see the renewal of that tremendous struggle between the Christian culture and what has been for more than a thousand years its greatest opponent.^[54]

There is no reason why its recent inferiority in mechanical construction, whether military or civilian, should continue indefinitely. Even a slight accession of material power would make the further control of Islam by an alien culture difficult. A little more and there will cease that which our time has taken for granted, the physical domination of Islam by the disintegrated Christendom we know.

Belloc considered that Islam was permanently intent on destroying the Christian faith, as well as the West, which Christendom had built. In *The Great Heresies*, Belloc grouped the Protestant Reformation together with Islam as one of the major heresies threatening the "Universal Church".

Accusations of antisemitism

Belloc's writings were at times supportive of anti-Semitism and other times condemnatory of it.^[55]

Belloc took a leading role in denouncing the Marconi scandal of 1912. Belloc emphasized that key players in both the government and the Marconi corporation had been Jewish. American historian Todd Endelman identifies Catholic writers as central critics. In his opinion:

The most virulent attacks in the Marconi affair were launched by Hilaire Belloc and the brothers Cecil and G. K. Chesterton, whose hostility to Jews was linked to their opposition to liberalism, their backward-looking Catholicism, and the nostalgia for a medieval Catholic Europe that they imagined was ordered, harmonious, and homogeneous. The Jew baiting at the time of the Boer War and the Marconi scandal was linked to a broader protest, mounted in the main by the Radical wing of the Liberal Party, against the growing visibility of successful businessmen in national life and their challenges to what were seen as traditional English values.^[56]

A. N. Wilson's biography expresses the belief that Belloc tended to allude to Jews negatively in conversation, sometimes obsessively. Anthony Powell mentions in his review of that biography that in his view Belloc was thoroughly anti-Semitic, at all but a personal level. In *The Cruise of the Nona*, Belloc reflected equivocally on the Dreyfus Affair after thirty years.^[57] Norman Rose's book *The Cliveden Set* (2000) asserts that Belloc 'was moved by a deep vein of hysterical anti-semitism'.

In his 1922 book, *The Jews*, Belloc argued that "the continued presence of the Jewish nation intermixed with other nations alien to it presents a permanent problem of the gravest character", and that the "Catholic Church is the conservator of an age-long European tradition, and that tradition will never compromise with the fiction that a Jew can be other than a Jew. Wherever the Catholic Church has power, and in proportion to its power, the Jewish problem will be recognized to the full."^[58]

Robert Speaight cited a letter by Belloc in which he condemned Nesta Webster because of her accusations against "the Jews". In February 1924, Belloc wrote to an American Jewish friend regarding an anti-Semitic book by Webster. Webster had rejected Christianity, studied Eastern religions, accepted the supposed Hindu concept of the equality of all religions and was fascinated by theories of reincarnation and ancestral memory.^{[59][60]} Speaight also points out that when faced with anti-Semitism in practice—as at elitist country clubs in the United States before World War II—he voiced his disapproval. Belloc also condemned Nazi anti-Semitism in *The Catholic and the War* (1940).^[61]

Sussex

Belloc grew up in Slindon and spent most of his life in the part of Sussex that is now West Sussex. He always wrote of Sussex as if it were the crown of England and the western Sussex Downs the jewel in that crown.^[62] He loved Sussex as the place where he was brought up, considering it his earthly

"spiritual home".^[62]

Belloc wrote several works about Sussex including *Ha'nacker Mill*, *The South Country*, the travel guide *Sussex* (1906) and *The County of Sussex* (1936). One of his best-known works relating to Sussex is *The Four Men: A Farrago* (1911), in which the four characters, each aspects of Belloc's personality,^[63]^[64] travel on a pilgrimage across the county from Robertsbridge to Harting.^[64] The work has influenced others including musician Bob Copper, who retraced Belloc's steps in the 1980s.^[64]

Belloc was also a lover of Sussex songs^[65] and wrote lyrics for some songs which have since been put to music.^[65] Belloc is remembered in an annual celebration in Sussex, known as Belloc Night, that takes place on the writer's birthday, 27 July, in the manner of Burns Night in Scotland.^[66] The celebration includes reading from Belloc's work and partaking of a bread and cheese supper with pickles.^[66]

In the media

- Stephen Fry has recorded an audio collection of Belloc's children's poetry.
- The composer Peter Warlock set many of Belloc's poems to music.
- Peter Ustinov recorded Belloc's *The Cautionary Tales* in 1968 for the Musical Heritage Society (MHC 9249M).
- A well-known parody of Belloc by Sir John Squire, intended as a tribute, is *Mr. Belloc's Fancy*.
- Syd Barrett used *Cautionary Tales* as the basis for the song "Matilda Mother" from the 1967 album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.
- King's Mill, Shipley, once owned by Belloc, was used in the British TV drama *Jonathan Creek*.
- On the second episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, in the sketch "The Mouse Problem", a list of famous people who secretly were mice is concluded with "and, of course, Hilaire Belloc".

See also

- Hilaire Belloc bibliography
- Mr. Belloc Objects to "The Outline of History"* – H. G. Wells's dispute with Belloc
- Hilaire Belloc – Wikiquote



Notes

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17. Francis West, *Gilbert Murray*, p. 107, describes Murray's impression on an occasion in 1899: "In July [...] [Murray] attended a meeting on the principles of Liberalism, at which Hilaire Belloc spoke brilliantly although Murray could not afterwards remember a word that he had said."
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Was chewing little bits of String.
At last he swallowed some which tied
Itself in ugly Knots inside.
Physicians of the Utmost Fame
Were called at once; but when they came
They answered, as they took their Fees,
"There is no Cure for this Disease.
Henry will very soon be dead."
His Parents stood about his Bed
Lamenting his Untimely Death,
When Henry, with his Latest Breath,
Cried – "Oh, my Friends, be warned by me,
That Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch and Tea
Are all the Human Frame Requires..."
With that the Wretched Child expires.
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60. In my opinion it is a lunatic book. She is one of those people who have got one cause on the brain. It is the good old 'Jewish revolutionary' bogey. But there is a type of unstable mind which cannot rest without morbid imaginings, and the conception of a single cause simplifies thought. With this good woman it is the Jews, with some people it is the Jesuits, with others Freemasons and so on. The world is more complex than that. R. Speaight, *The Life Of Hilaire Belloc* (<https://archive.org/details/lifeofhilairebel009626mbp>), 1957, pp. 456–58.

61. The Third Reich has treated its Jewish subjects with a contempt for Justice which even if there had been no other action of the kind in other departments would be a sufficient warranty for determining its elimination from Europe...Cruelty to a Jew is as odious as cruelty to any human being, whether that cruelty be moral in the form of insult, or physical...You may hear men saying on every side, 'However, there is one thing I do agree with and that is the way they (The Nazis) have settled the Jews'. Now that attitude is directly immoral. The more danger there is that it will grow the more necessity there is for denouncing it. The action of the enemy toward the Jewish race has been in morals intolerable. Contracts have been broken on all sides, careers destroyed by the hundred and the thousand, individuals have been treated with the most hideous and disgusting cruelty...If no price is paid for such excesses, our civilisation will certainly suffer and suffer permanently. If the men who have committed them go unpunished (and only defeat in war can punish them) then the decline of Europe, already advanced, will proceed to catastrophe. (pp. 29ff.)
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