

# THE SOURCES AND USES OF DISTRIBUTIVISM: A ROMAN CATHOLIC'S VIEW OF ANGLO-CATHOLIC GENIUS

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The past popularity, the long tradition  
of religion supported it diverse champions  
against a present neglect.  
--Charles Williams, *Shadows of Ecstasy*

Tradition asserts itself especially in a crisis. Deeply held but forgotten beliefs present us with familiar novelty, a '*commodius vicus* of recirculation' of ideas which offer themselves as solutions to contemporary social problems. In our current economic crisis, the early 20th-century idea of Distributism is receiving renewed attention as a serious contribution to national policy in the United Kingdom. This essay is a personal response which I hope may find a place in the growing debate.

In September 2008, the bankruptcy of the Wall Street investment bank Lehman Brothers caused financial markets around the world to freeze with fear. The consensus of City pundits and Whitehall policy-makers was that the world had entered uncharted economic waters. Not just respectable opinion, but long-held theories about economics were discredited decisively. A revival of the unconventional and marginal in an environment of intellectual despair was probably inevitable. One little known socio-economic concept, *Distributism*, which was championed by G.K Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the 1920's and 30's, came to some renewed prominence on both sides of the Atlantic.

In North America, for example, within only a few months of the Lehman failure, the American quarterly *Chesterton Review* conducted a symposium advertising the relevance of Distributism as a solution to the global economic meltdown. Fr Ian Boyd, the editor, recommended what he considered an 'evolved distributism' in several cooperative industrial movements as economic models on a scale which could be controlled by human beings.<sup>1</sup> In July, Fr Boyd gave a further lecture in Oxford on 'A Distributist View of the Economic Crisis'. Thomas Storck, an editor

of the same publication and of the American *Distributist Review*, participated on behalf of Distributism in a debate with one of the leading 'capitalist' theologians, Michael Novak, in New York.

During the same period, Phillip Blond, a former academic and student of the theologian John Milbank (of Radical Orthodoxy fame, this movement itself a younger cousin of Distributism), penned an article on his UK blog entitled 'On the Rise of Red Toryism'.<sup>2</sup> In this piece, he sets out a case for the divorce of political conservatism from economic liberalism, a union which was apparently cemented forever by the 'hard' politics of Margaret Thatcher. He also suggests size restrictions on companies within key industries. For Blond, the roots of conservatism are to be found in more ancient English traditions than economic liberalism. He finds the thought of Edmund Burke particularly congenial. Burke's notion of 'little platoons' of family and civic associations, he feels, has some affinity with the Distributist ideas of Belloc and Chesterton.<sup>3</sup> Reported to be an advisor to the Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, Blond may be a conduit for Distributist ideas into modern British politics.<sup>4</sup> It is timely to question, therefore, whether Distributism is authentic wisdom whose time has come or merely old folly. My view is that there are good reasons to take Distributism seriously in the early 21st century. But I also believe that taken apart from its theological and historical context it is incoherent and probably dangerous. What may be most significant about it, therefore, is its provocation to recollect some cultural insights which are part of a specifically English social theology.

Distributism is conceived primarily in the thought of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc as a sort of middle road, an alternative to socialism (collectivism) and capitalism (individualism), both of which they consider to be forms of social servitude. Although the fundamental ideas of Distributism were developed by Chesterton and Belloc in their short pieces in *New Age and New Witness* from roughly 1911 onwards,<sup>5</sup> the closest thing to an originating manifesto for the movement is Belloc's 1912 publication *The Servile State*, in which he analyses what he perceives to be the repressive logic of both systems.<sup>6</sup> But the movement's 'launch' was not until 1926, when Chesterton's pamphlet *The Purpose of the League* was published together with K.L. Kenrick's *What is Distributism?*<sup>7</sup> In *Purpose*, Chesterton lays out his intention for the movement succinctly: 'Distributism means every man his own master'.<sup>8</sup> It becomes clear that he means this in an almost medieval sense:<sup>9</sup> 'The only way to preserve liberty is to preserve property. The only way to preserve property is to distribute it much more equally'.<sup>10</sup> Chesterton's logic is consistent on this point (even if that of his epigones is not): individual ownership of *productive* property, property which is the means of existence, particularly agricultural land, is the key to personal and political freedom.<sup>11</sup> Belloc also regarded

agricultural land as the key political factor but recognized that in some areas of industry, financial and industrial capital might be important. In these, distributed share ownership would substitute for the possession of physical property.<sup>12</sup>

Distributist concern with the wide-spread allocation of productive property is the distinctive characteristic of the movement, explicitly challenging the concentration of wealth among the moneyed classes in capitalism and the concentration of resource control with the state in socialism.<sup>13</sup> After the Second World War, however, the interpretation of property ownership changed considerably. The 1947 tract by Hope, *Man Unchained*, for example, while still considering land as the source of wealth, and productive property as the focus of its agenda, raises a quite different concern by stating that ‘Our chief material aim is to ensure that as many people as possible shall have the chance of owning the house or flat they live in’.<sup>14</sup> Home and hearth are not in usual circumstances productive assets, and had not been mentioned as such in previous statements. Interestingly as well, the distribution of productive property (including corporate share-holdings) is considered necessary not just for the attainment of personal freedom but for the provision of ‘material incentives to work’, suggesting that the latter was no longer considered part of the former. This uncertainty about the intention and locus of distribution of property persisted in the neo-Distributist revival towards the end of the 20th century. Lanz focuses on ‘real property’ (not necessarily ‘productive’), for example,<sup>15</sup> while Santamaria is more explicit about ‘the land’ as the only property that really counts.<sup>16</sup> Cooney, in contrast, perceives Distributism as a form of the Social Credit Movement which was contemporaneous with it.<sup>17</sup> Thus Aidan Mackey, concurring with Chesterton’s own evaluation,<sup>18</sup> makes the accurate if not very illuminating comment that ‘there is no precise definition of Distributism’.<sup>19</sup>

However, despite its theoretical ambiguity, Distributism has one consistently expressed insight which seems on its face to be relevant to current economic and social circumstances. The movement anticipated E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* by almost half a century.<sup>20</sup> Like Schumacher, Distributists distrust size. Economic concentration in relatively few hands, whether official or commercial, has always been suspect in democratic society because it threatens the concentration of political power as well. From Thomas Jefferson to J.K. Galbraith, the threat to democratic institutions posed by disproportionately distributed wealth has been a persistent worry for political theorists.<sup>21</sup> But Chesterton had a more subtle concern. Even if the democratic process could be protected from the obvious corrupting allures of power created by wealth, there remained the problem of the possible social damage brought about by a concentration in *judgement* which was an inevitable and undesirable consequence of financial concentration. The

benefits of the coordination in judgement within large economic institutions are offset by an increase in harmful effects *if this judgement is wrong*. Dispersed judgement, self-mastery in Distributist terms, may be less efficient economically but it is also less dangerous. The principle involved is that of *diversification*, the spreading of the possibility of failure (and success) over a wide field. Some judgments will be erroneous or otherwise misplaced, but they will be offset to the maximum degree possible, by those that hit the mark. With diversification, the 'highs' of the economic cycle are unlikely to be as high as they would be under central direction. On the other hand, the economic 'lows' would not be as low. The result is social stability with relatively steady economic progress.

Not until over three decades after Chesterton wrote did financial economists discover a name for what Chesterton was concerned about: *systematic risk*, the correlation among decisions and therefore the possibility that they may all go wrong together with catastrophic consequences.<sup>22</sup> Belloc had shown already that both capitalism and socialism tended to increase economic concentration. Hence their conclusion that industrial society tends toward mass slavery not just politically but economically. Only by diversifying decision-making widely within society could the risk of economic (and therefore social) calamity be reduced. After the very systematic failure of the financial and industrial system, post-Lehman, current-day proponents of Distributism often point to this insight as reason enough to bring the movement back into the political debate.

But political concern with systematic risk brings its own practical difficulties. There was no precise definition of how Distributism could be either established or maintained politically in any of the Distributist writings.<sup>23</sup> In fact, there was more than a hint of contradiction in its basic platform. On the one hand the movement sought self-mastery, freedom, for everyone. There was to be 'minimum interference with the lives and work of the people' by the state.<sup>24</sup> However the level of coercion necessary to distribute land and other productive resources implied by Chesterton and Belloc was staggering, suggesting Stalinist levels of dispossession and massive official intervention in daily life. In addition, there was never any consideration given to the maintenance of any distribution once initially achieved.<sup>25</sup> The presumption seems to have been that the Distributist ideal of dispersed capital, once experienced, would recommend itself to all.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, by some unspecified means, those who failed would be presumably given a new start; while those who were too successful and began to become 'large' relative to their neighbours would not mind periodically parting with some of their excessive wealth. The bureaucratic and police powers necessary to maintain such a system would likely be beyond the capabilities of any absolute ruler, ancient or modern. In any case they clearly would violate the very principle of self-mastery.

Moreover, the question of the mere size of any industrial or financial enterprise is not always central to the problem of systematic risk. We are aware today, as Chesterton and Belloc were not, that the issue of systematic risk is extremely complex. Without an articulate theory, Distributism was myopic about the dangers of concentration in judgement. If decisions, however apparently independent, are in fact correlated with one another, it matters little that formal power is concentrated or distributed. Concentration of judgement can be created in a variety of subtle ways that have nothing to do with ownership: through media promulgation of information, false or otherwise; through systematic temptation to human frailties like greed or fear; through shared theoretical presumptions about the way the world works; through regulation which by its very nature seeks to reduce judgemental variations; and even through the simple human desire to be friendly and at peace with one's neighbour. Correlation among decisions is especially worrisome in the notoriously symbol-sensitive world of finance. Both 'bulls' and 'bears' run in herds. The 'liquidity crisis' of 2008/9 affected not just all financial instruments, many of which are priced independently of each other in normal times, but most industries in most economies because of the interdependencies established through global trade. True, where a single decision directs enormous resources, risk is by definition systematic. But there need not be one decision or decision-maker in order to be subject to systematic risk. The worldwide financial crisis that we are currently enduring is not the result of a single decision, by Lehman for example, to pursue and promote the distribution of actuarially untested portfolios. Thousand of banks had independently decided to invest in them, spreading so-called 'toxic assets' throughout most of the planet. It is this correlation which is the essential problem, and this cannot be overcome by the mere distribution of power.

So it might seem that Distributism really has very little to offer in our circumstances. It is, on the surface, theoretically incoherent in socio-economic terms and practically unworkable in political terms. Yet it exerts an attraction which is real, even among those who might be expected to know better. Why? I believe the answer is because Distributism is an expression of a much more substantial tradition which has deep cultural roots and authentic social insight and therefore real cultural legitimacy. It can hardly be contested that Distributism emanates in large part from the religious beliefs of its promoters. In fact, there is strong evidence that Distributism is in the first instance a spiritual not an economic or social movement.<sup>27</sup> The spiritual tradition underlying it is certainly Christian as would be expected given its most public protagonists.<sup>28</sup> But what is the real substance and source of this tradition?

In his public lectures, Blond often characterizes Distributism as a Roman Catholic idea. Both Chesterton and Belloc were of course well-known members of the Church, the latter by birth the former through conversion in 1922 at the age of 38. Both were leading public figures as Catholic Christians, and well known for their apologetics. Others associated with the movement, like Eric Gill and Vincent McNabb, were also prominent Catholics. Indeed McNabb, as a Dominican, was but one of several important Catholic social activists promoting Distributist-friendly ideas throughout Europe in the 1920's.<sup>29</sup> Therefore it is perhaps natural that many have sought to claim the theological foundation of Distributism in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 is often cited as a theological justification for the movement.<sup>30</sup>

However, even a casual reading of *Rerum Novarum* shows that the radical Distributist proposals for social transformation are nowhere to be found in the rather vague corporatism of the document. The encyclical does indeed recommend that 'The Law...should favour ownership and its policy should be to induce as many as possible to become owners.... Not only legislative enactments but the administrative action should tend to spread the system of ownership to as many as possible'.<sup>31</sup> Why, how and what they should become owners of is not specified. And the document does not even remotely suggest either a limit on size for industrial enterprise, or a programme for large-scale re-distribution of economic wealth.

Therefore, despite its Roman Catholic face, it seems prudent to look elsewhere for the matrix of Distributist thought, not because of any sectarian claim to superiority, but in order to interpret that thought intelligently. In this light, it is almost unnecessary to note that Distributism is a typically *English* phenomenon.<sup>32</sup> In fact it is difficult to untangle Distributism, in terms of either ideology or membership, from the many other movements under way simultaneously in early 20th-century England: Guild Socialism, The Back to the Land Movement, The Christendom Movement, Social Credit, The Village Club Movement, The Industrial Christian Fellowship, The Worker's Educational Association, The Industrial Partnership Concept and the Cooperative Movement among many others.<sup>33</sup> These had the same cultural roots as Distributism; and these roots are certainly religious, but they are not essentially Roman Catholic. They are *Anglo-Catholic*.<sup>34</sup> The tradition of importance was not that which was inspired by a single papal encyclical, but by the much earlier, and more extensive intellectual and practical experience of those who called themselves Christian Socialists. Chesterton and Belloc were doctrinally Catholic but culturally English, and it is their cultural heritage, including its social theology, which is expressed in Distributism.

Names like Maurice Reckitt, V.A. Demant, and Arthur Penty, among many others, were as important intellectually to Distributism as those of Chesterton and Belloc. These were not Catholic names but Anglican. In many ways they were more important to Distributism because they publicized the principles upon which the movement was based in a much less polemical and much more considered style.<sup>35</sup> Reckitt's *Faith and Society* (1932), Demant's *God, Man and Society* (1933), Penty's *Towards a Christian Sociology* (1923) and a collection of essays entitled *The Return to Christendom* (1922) to which Reckitt and Penty contributed are roughly contemporary works which contained the sociological and anthropological themes of Distributism without the 'hype', as it were, demanded for less cerebral political tracts.<sup>36</sup> These men were long-standing friends of Chesterton, even after his conversion of course. They are also representative of the intellectual circle within which Distributism was taken seriously. One must be somewhat impressionistic about the connections with Chesterton in a brief essay, nevertheless the intimacy is clear. Chesterton wrote the epilogue to *The Return to Christendom*, which launched Christian Sociology. Chesterton also was involved with both Reckitt and Demant in the ensuing Christendom group. Arthur Reckitt was a member of the editorial board of *GK's Weekly* from 1924, and Treasurer of the Distributist League from its inception in 1926. And he wrote a tribute to Chesterton after his death as a 'Christian Prophet for England', reflecting not just his assessment of Chesterton's role in national life, but his gratitude for the faith he believed he had received through Chesterton.<sup>37</sup> A quotation from Chesterton is engraved on his memorial in Roehampton, reflecting the hero-like status he gave to Chesterton.<sup>38</sup> Arthur Penty (Fabian colleague of Tawney, Morris and Ruskin), associated with the Distributist-inspired Ditchling Community of Eric Gill and Hilary Pepler, among others, and is likely to have influenced Belloc though his 1906 *The Restoration of the Gild System*.<sup>39</sup>

So Distributism is part of English Catholic social thought. Marking a specific date for the Anglican inspiration for Distributism is risky. But a good bet can be placed on the year 1852, in which the prominent corporate lawyer, John Malcolm Ludlow, successfully orchestrated the passage of the *Industrial and Provident Societies Act*.<sup>40</sup> At a time when English law effectively prohibited small-scale incorporation of cooperative effort because of substantial capital requirements which were beyond the reach of all but the wealthy, this act provided for the creation of a new sort of legal entity, possessing the identity and protection of a corporation but the ease of establishment of a cooperative.<sup>41</sup> Under the act, Ludlow successfully created the first modern craft 'guilds' among tailors, seamstresses and shoemakers in London.<sup>42</sup> The new law freed association members from what Maurice termed 'the idolatry of social mechanism'.<sup>43</sup> These 'associations' had short half-lives, dissolving through the stresses caused by their vey success. What remained

however was a legal institutional framework that is still operative in the Britain of the 21st century.<sup>44</sup>

But for Ludlow, the achievement was not primarily legal, or even social; it was theological. Ludlow was carrying out a proposal which he had formulated after his experience of French political strife of 1848: the ‘Christianization’ of socialism.<sup>45</sup> The recipient and then collaborator with that proposal was the Anglican theologian F.D. Maurice, whom H.R. Niebuhr identified as the exemplar of ‘Christ the Transformer of Culture’ and who is often cited as the originator of Christian Socialism.<sup>46</sup> Maurice accepted this proposal not as the basis for a political programme but as the theme for a purely theological effort which had political implications.<sup>47</sup> If the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement (Pusey, Keble, Newman) attempted to get people into church, the activists of Christian Socialism (Maurice, Ludlow, Kingsley<sup>48</sup>) had the complementary mission of getting the church to the people.<sup>49</sup> Niebuhr summarizes Maurice’s view concisely:

Universal salvation meant more than the turning of individual selves to their true center. By creation through the Word, men are social. . . The full realization of the kingdom of Christ did not, then, mean the substitution of a new universal society for all the separate organizations of men, but rather the participation of all these in the one universal Kingdom of which Christ is the head.<sup>50</sup>

Maurice’s theological presuppositions are evident in Niebuhr’s *précis*: 1) The Christian gospel of love (particularly as expressed in the Gospel of John) is to be taken literally and in a clear universalist sense; redemption is a social not just a personal event.<sup>51</sup> 2) The Kingdom of God is in *this* creation made new, not in some other ‘heavenly’ place; existing social structures will not be destroyed but transformed in and through Christ.<sup>52</sup> In a word Maurice’s view of the world is eschatological. He is an agent of the divine in bringing about the Kingdom which has been promised. Ludlow’s ‘new corporation’ was but a small step in the realization of this Kingdom.

It is only, I believe, with such an eschatological sensitivity that the various experimental social movements which emerge from Christian Socialism, including Distributism, can be understood. Reckitt recognized the eschatological core of Chesterton’s intellect, and considered that Chesterton gave his ‘chief energies not to any conspicuous cultivation of the permanent, but to the interpretation, against a background of eternal values, of the significance of everyday life’.<sup>53</sup>

Demant put the matter firmly regarding a similar movement: ‘[The cause] is not merely to advocate a technical change in a mechanism; it is to demand the reversal of a [spiritually] false economic order’.<sup>54</sup> Distributism is an imaginative statement – not of the ‘real’ end-time, which is unimaginable, but certainly of an imagination-provoking possibility in which society has been re-created through divine power. It

is a theological not a political vision. That is, it is a description of the *relationships* which could be part of a redeemed society.<sup>55</sup> These relationships are primarily familial, expressing a natural mutual concern, and not contractual, reflecting mere obligation.<sup>56</sup> This is the kind of relationship in which individual ‘natural inclinations’ (vocation) can be perceived and developed as a contribution to the whole. It is the kind of relationship which Ludlow had achieved in law. The Distributists recovered this relationship as a sort of social principle in line with the Anglican Bishop William Temple’s approach:

The method of the Church’s impact upon society at large should be twofold. First, the Church must announce Christian principles and point out where the existing social order is in conflict with them. Second, it must then pass on to Christian citizens, acting in their civic capacities, the task of reshaping the existing order in closer conformity to the principles.<sup>57</sup>

The issue was never how to realize these relationships through coercive or any other means. It was about the character of the relationships themselves. Belloc recognized explicitly that Distributism was politically unattainable.<sup>58</sup> In fact it was unattainable by any merely human action. The relationships of mutual responsibility and accountability described by Distributism were a gift of pure grace. The Kingdom is not a state so much as it is this grace as power itself.<sup>59</sup> Chesterton’s orthodoxy would never have allowed him to think of them as anything else.

The tendency to see Distributism as political rather than theological is what tempts one to seek justification in papal encyclicals. There is certainly nothing *un-*Catholic about Distributism as an eschatological vision. It conforms entirely to the doctrine of the Catholic Church in its anthropological concerns. Nor is there anything inappropriate in the Church’s comment on social conditions in an encyclical letter. But there is definitely something *un-Christian* about the purely human way by which such a vision might be realized when it is perceived as a political agenda promoted by ecclesiastical directives. Reckitt is clear in his demand that: ‘the Church cease from pretending that the problems men have are the problems Christians would like to have and then give the right answer’.<sup>60</sup>

This tendency towards the political and away from the theological affects Distributism’s interpretation of itself as the post-war focus shifts from the relationships within the various ‘associations’ enabled through the allocation of resources, to the kind of property to be allocated. The result was something which could have been endorsed by either Thomas Jefferson or Margaret Thatcher on entirely worldly criteria. This is probably an inevitable result of the political process, which can only legislate effectively about property not about relationships. But it a

result which needs to be recognized as a fundamental distortion of the movement's original motives.

Maurice, his colleagues, and his theological heirs were little tempted by misdirected faith in human virtue or in the capacity of humanity to do all that needs doing. Neither, I believe, were Chesterton and Belloc in serious danger of Pelagian hubris. In today's world, however, human faith in humanity to solve human problems has reached such a level that I dare not trust myself, much less the self-promoting use of ecclesial pronouncements or the Conservative Party's policy formulation process to understand fully the sources of Distributism in grace or its uses in redemption. Given their view of party politics it is unlikely that the founders of Distributism would have had a different opinion.<sup>61</sup> The 'liberalism' which Christian Socialism, including its Distributist variant, was attacking was not simply the economic free-marketeering which Blond dislikes. It was the far broader liberal attitude towards freedom which Auden characterized so neatly as:

...imagining that free discussion was all that was needed to let truth triumph, whereas unless people have substantially the same experience logical controversy is nothing more than systematized misunderstanding.<sup>62</sup>

Freedom for Chesterton and Belloc and Reckitt and Demant, among so many others, was not the freedom of liberal democracy but the freedom to engage in purposes which are not political purposes in light of objectives which are not merely temporal, indeed purposes and objectives for which they have only the vaguest theological formulation. No thing or movement can be identified with such purpose although all of creation may be useful in suggesting it. And no political movement has the authority to co-opt such purpose as part of its repertoire. It is a purpose which can only be discovered in a relationship with one's fellow that is controlled by divine gift. Distributism is, therefore, valuable but not for its direct political content. Rather it is valuable because it is an expression of the unique religious tradition of Anglo-Catholicism which continues to act as a cultural force driving us beyond politics.

## Notes

1. The Chesterton Institute held two further conferences in Spain on Distributism that same year. The English G.K Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture held a similar conference in July 2009.
2. <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2009/02/riseoftheredtories/>. An eponymous book by

Blond was promised at the time of writing to appear on 1 April 2010.

3. Cf. the 'little kingdoms' in *Man Unchained* p. 8 below.
4. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2009/aug/08/phillip-blond-conservatives-david-cameron>
5. Cf. G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity* (London: Methuen & Co., 1926), p. 9.
6. J. H. P. Belloc, *The Servile State* (London, 1912). This was written as extended version of a debate between Belloc and Ramsey MacDonald in 1911. Cf. H. Belloc and J. R. MacDonald *Socialism and the Servile State: A Debate Between Messrs. Hilaire Belloc and J. Ramsay MacDonald* (London: South West London Federation of the Independent Labour Party, 1911). American Distributists maintain the distinction between capitalism and socialism. Cf. also <http://distributism.blogspot.com/2009/01/interview-with-thomas-storck.html>. Race Mathews, an Australian leader of his country's cooperatist movement, in his 1999 *Jobs of Our Own*, however, makes the distinction not between capitalism and socialism but between market and state, an interesting transformation after the fall of Communism. Phillip Blond in his recent work has made the distinction not between market and state but between the market-state and the welfare-state. Cf. Phillip Blond, 'The Civic State', <http://distributism.blogspot.com/2009/07/red-tories-and-civic-state.html>. The first formal manifesto did not appear until Arthur Penty's *Distributism: A Manifesto* (London: Distributist League, 1937).
7. The Bodleian catalogue has this pamphlet published in 1900, which is certainly erroneous.
8. K. L. Kenrick and G. K. Chesterton, *What is Distributism?* (London: Distributist League, 1926), p. 3. H. Belloc, *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (London: The Distributist League, 1936), p. 11 provides Belloc's equivalent statement.  
The full name of the League was: *The Distributist League for the Restoration of Liberty through the Distribution of Property*, a suitable manifesto in itself. It is instructive to compare this with the aim of parallel movements such as Guild Socialism which was 'full individual expression'. Cf. G. D. H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1920), p. 13.
9. Cf. *An Essay on the Restoration of Property*: 'The spirit of reaction must run through all our effort at the restoration of property'. Also Arthur Penty, *Distributism: A Manifesto* (1937), p. 9: 'Distributists work for a return to the past... The modern world has been living on the spiritual capital of the Middle Ages'.
10. *What is Distributism?*; also cf. *Liberty and Property* (below) in the introduction by Chesterton.
11. Cf. *The Servile State*, p. 187. From the explanation in this pamphlet it would be difficult to distinguish Distributism from the philosophy of John Locke. Cf. also H. E. Humphries, *Liberty and property: An Introduction to Distributism* (London: The Distributist League, 1928), p. 7, and pp. x-xv of the introduction. The emphasis on 'productive property' is what Penty claims is the characteristic of Distributism which distinguishes it from Social Credit. Cf. *Distributism: A Manifesto*, p. 43. With Chesterton's implicit approval in an introduction, G.C. Heseltine equates Distributism and Agriculture *tout court*. Cf. G. C. Heseltine, *The Change: Essays on the Land* (London, 1927), pp. 94ff.
12. Cf. Brons's introduction to Belloc's *An Essay on the Restoration of Property*, p. 6, as well as pp. 11, 53. Belloc also wanted to eliminate inter-company ownership (holding companies) but does not discuss any of the immense legal problems this might raise.
13. There certainly were sympathetic theoretical discussions of this proposition abroad at the time although I am not aware of any explicit reference to them in distributist circles. Cf. For example

- R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1921), pp. 37ff. At the time of the publication of this book, Tawney, himself an Anglican Christian socialist, became president of the Fabian Society, which in its general policies was allied to Distributism.
14. C.G. Hope, *Man Unchained* (Distributist Association, 1947), pp. 8, 10.
  15. T. J. Lanz, *Beyond Capitalism & Socialism: A New Statement of an Old Ideal: A Twenty-first Century Apologia for Social and Economic Sanity* (Norfolk, VA: Light in the Darkness Publications, 2007).
  16. *Ibid.*, cited p. xxiii.
  17. A. Cooney, *Distributism* (London: Third Way, 1994), p. 26.
  18. Cf. *The Outline of Sanity*, p. 78.
  19. *Beyond Capitalism*, p. 3.
  20. E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1973). Cf. *A History of English Christianity*, below, p. 585.
  21. Cf. S. Sagar, *Distributism* (London: Distributist Books, 1991).
  22. Cf. Harry M. Markowitz, 'Portfolio Selection', *Journal of Finance* vol. 7, no. 1 (1952), pp. 77–91.
  23. *The Outline of Sanity*, pp. 80ff, is a typical example of the level of detail provided in Distributist publications.
  24. *Man Unchained*, p. 17.
  25. *Liberty and Property*, p. 16 simply states that 'Where property is well-distributed, men will provide against the accumulation of property by some at the expense of others'. Presumably the 'provision' will be at the expense of those 'others'. *The Outline of Sanity* pp. 15ff argues that the objections to Distributism based on the premise that reasonable equality cannot be maintained is fallacious. However, it does not provide an argument that such equality can be maintained either.
  26. Cf. *Liberty and Property*, p. 12.
  27. Cf. *What's Wrong With the World*, below, pp. 21, 45, and *The Servile State*, p. 86 – *pace* Cooney in *Beyond Capitalism*, p. 19, who believes Distributism to be essentially a political movement. Cf. A. J. Penty, *Towards a Christian Sociology* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1923), pp. 15, 16, 37. Also cf. *Distributism: A Manifesto*, p. 38.
  28. I do not wish to deny the literary and philosophical influences that were clearly present, particularly those of Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, and Morris. However, the driving force even in these was, I believe, ultimately the culturally assimilated Christian theology peculiar to the English Church.
  29. Cf. F. Compagnoni and H. J. Alford *Preaching Justice: Dominican Contributions to Social Ethics in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2007).
  30. Cf. V. McNabb, *The Church and the Land* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1926), pp. 3, 17; *Beyond Capitalism & Socialism*, pp. 13ff; Thomas Storck at <http://distributism.blogspot.com/2009/01/interview-with-thomas-storck.html> and <http://www.theuniversityconcourse.com/VI,1,10-3-2000/Storck.htm>.
- Phillip Blond has also declared Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* as a 'as a decisive repudiation of neo-liberal economics and an open embrace of Distributist principles'; cf. Allan Carlson, "A Distributist View of the Global Economic Crisis", <http://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2009/07/a-distributist-view-of-the-global-economic-crisis-a-report>. Without mentioning Distributism, Adrian Pabst, a colleague of Blond, also drafts Benedict's encyclical into the same economic cause:

- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/20/pope-benedict-capitalism-economics>.
31. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), *Encyclical letter: Rerum Novarum* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1960).
  32. This despite the oft-quoted vicar of Ipswich who found Belloc far too French in his thinking. Cf. A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 176, who notes that Distributism was 'largely Anglo-Catholic in inspiration'; also cf. pp. xxiii. I do not intend to debase the contribution of the Scots, Welsh and Irish to the social improvement of Britain. However, in the case of Distributism, the protagonists and their *loci operandi* are almost entirely English.
  33. Cf. J. F. Laun and W. Temple *Social Christianity in England; A Study in its Origin and Nature* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1929). Also cf. N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism; An Historical and Critical Analysis* (New York: D. Appleton, 1922), esp. pp. 46ff.
  34. Cf. *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 174, 175. These groups share an avoidance of the centres of political power. They are all at least indirectly political but not as 'lobbies' in today's sense. Rather they focus on relationships among members, not political action.
  35. Despite his fondness for Chesterton and the movement, Reckitt noted that some part of Distributist writing was 'escapist'. Alec Vidler, another Anglican theologian, also noted the '...the awful amount of amateurishness and the lack of expertise' in Distributism. Cf. *A History of English Christianity*, p. 179. G.B. Shaw was not, therefore entirely inaccurate in his remark concerning 'Catholic credulity about fairy tales'. Cf. *The Outline of Sanity*, p. 9.
  36. Cf. As well *The Acquisitive Society*, supra.
  37. M. B. Reckitt, G. K. Chesterton: *A Christian Prophet for England To-day* (London: S.P.C.K, 1950).
  38. Cf. M. B. Reckitt, *As It Happened: An Autobiography* (London: J.M. Dent, 1941), p. 179. Cf. also J. S. Peart-Binns, *Maurice B. Reckitt: A Life* (Basingstoke: Bowerdean and Marshall Pickering, 1988).
  39. The relationships could be expanded historically as well. For example, Chesterton was decisively affected by the novels of George MacDonald, a Congregationalist minister (and a Scot), who considered F. D. Maurice his mentor. MacDonald was, like Maurice, a universalist and, in his 'dream' novels expresses the same sense of this-worldly redemption as does Maurice in his theology. Although this literary tradition can be seen more clearly in the works of Williams, Tolkien, Auden and Lewis, it is also, I believe, a sub-text in much of Chesterton's literary work as well as his social activism. In the matter of Distributism, both aspects of Maurice's theology are certainly present.
  40. Cf. *Christian Socialism*, p. 184.
  41. Cf. *Christian Socialism*, pp. 193ff.
  42. For Belloc, ancient English guilds were the most authentic form of corporation. Cf. *The Servile State*, p. 49. It is relevant to note Ludlow's affinity with Chesterton's concern for 'self-mastery': 'Let each man learn to govern himself...in fellowship with others'. Cited in *Christian Socialism*, p. 63.
  43. Cited in *Christian Socialism*, p. 187.
  44. *The Industrial and Providential Societies Act* was revised in 1965 and remains in force.
  45. Maurice was the first to use the term 'Christian Socialist' in print in 1850.
  46. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1950), pp. 218-229; and C.E. Vulliamy and Fabian Society (Great Britain), *Charles Kingsley & Christian Socialism* (London: The

- Fabian Society, 1914).
47. This theological emphasis is an unfailing theme in the Christian Socialist Movement. Cf. W. M. Davies and F. D. Maurice, *An Introduction to F.D. Maurice's Theology Based on the First Edition of The Kingdom of Christ (1838) and The Faith of the Liturgy and the Doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles (1860)* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964); V. A. Demant, *God, Man, and Society: An Introduction to Christian Sociology* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1933), p. 19; M. B. Reckitt, *Religion and Social Purpose: Three Lectures Given to the York Diocesan Clergy School, 1934* (London: S.P.C.K., 1935), pp. 7, 28, 48, 66, 136; W. G. Peck, *A Christian Economy* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), pp. 5, 7; W. G. Peck, *The Divine Society; Christian Dogma and Social Redemption* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1925), p. 9. The claim that Reckitt and Demant make is more subtle than that of today's Radical Orthodoxy. Rather than 'There is no secular', Demant's motto might be, 'There is no secular which cannot be sanctified'.
  48. Significantly, Cooney identifies Kingsley as 'the great pre-distributist' in *Beyond Capitalism*, p. 13, and yet makes frequent reference to Rerum Novarum. What Maurice feared in Pusey and Newman was the substitution of dogma for God. Cf. Introduction to Christian Sociology, p. 12.
  49. Cf. *Charles Kingsley*, p. 3
  50. *Christ and Culture*, p. 226.
  51. Cf. *Christian Socialism*, p. 76.
  52. Maurice lost his post at King's College because he maintained this view. Cf. C. E. Raven, *Christian Socialism, 1848-1854* (London: Macmillan, 1920). The continuity of this principle is clear. Cf. M. B. Reckitt, *A Christian Sociology* (1934), p. 16.
  53. *Maurice B. Reckitt: A Life*, p. 81.
  54. The movement he was referring to was Social Credit, which he supported.
  55. Cf. V. A. Demant, *Christian Polity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936). pp. 31, 43, 44, 69. Also cf. *Religion and Social Purpose*, p. 2. As in other aspects of Christian Socialism, the continuity of emphasis is remarkable. Cf. J. F. D. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ: Or Hints on the Principles, Ordinances, and Constitution of the Catholic Church, Letters, by a Clergyman of the Church of England* J.F.D. Maurice, vol. 3 (London, 1837), p. 288: 'Human relationships are not artificial types of something divine, but are actually the means through which man ascends to any knowledge of the divine'.
  56. Cf. G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong With the World* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1910), esp. pp. 45-78.
  57. W. Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1942). Temple reportedly described himself and Chesterton as Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the two fat jovial twins of Alice's Adventures. Cf. *A History of English Christianity*, p. 233.
  58. Distributism did not present a unique case of 'unattainability'. Guild Socialism was also considered 'impossible'. Cf. G. C. Field, *Guild Socialism: A Critical Examination* (London: Wells Gardner Darton, 1920).
  59. Cf. *Religion and Social Purpose*, p. 163.
  60. *Religion and Social Purpose*, p. 149. He goes on further to note that '[t]he Christian faith...knows nothing of conflict between practice and ideals. It knows only of a conflict of wills' (p. 151).
  61. Cf. H. Belloc and C. Chesterton *The Party System* (London: Stephen Swift, 1911), esp. the Preface; also cf. Belloc's political novels *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election* and *Pongo and the Bull*.
  62. 'The Good Life' in J. Lewis, K. Polanyi *et al. Christianity and the Social Revolution* (London: Gollancz, 1935).