

Reviews

Orthodox Churches, which had valid orders and were acknowledged to be Churches, if schismatic and heretical ones. The Protestant "Churches," without valid orders, though with valid baptisms, and more deeply in heresy, were not acknowledged to be Churches, so that it must be doubtful at the very least if the decree refers to them.

The work is, however, essentially an anthology of hostile judgements on individual popes like the eighteenth century Pius VI ("weak, timid and egotistical"). We hear of a succession of papal ailments, from Pius VII ("a serious urinary infection"), Leo XII ("excruciating piles"), Pius VIII ("herpes of the neck") and Gregory XVI ("a bright red clown's nose" and a "tumour of the face" caused by excessive snuff-taking), to the "pusillanimous and "hypochondriac" Pius XII, who is spared no humiliation, up to the hiccups of which he died. The reader will find here the case against him, but not the case for him. A more disinterested reading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council would stress their mediating character in reaffirming traditional positions while balancing these with new ones. This is why the great majority of more conservative Catholics accepted the Council (even Archbishop Lefebvre signed all but two of its documents), the problem lying in some of its liberal interpreters. The assertion here that *Opus Dei*, for example, rejected the council (it is listed with a number of organisations which did) is simply

libellous. Critics of Rome like Hans Küng are cited as Gospel. The authors' conclusion is that under John Paul II, "the Vatican itself remains immured in a ghetto of its own making." For an armoury of historical arguments against the modern Roman Catholic Church and Rome especially, stated with a baldness lacking in qualification or nuance, the reader need look no further.

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Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie by Heinrich Pesch, SJ was published in five volumes by Herder in Freiburg between 1905 and 1923. The first three volumes appeared in revised editions before the last two volumes were published. The recent English translation by Rupert Ederer is in ten volumes (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002). Pesch also published in two volumes his *Liberalismus, Socialismus und Christliche Gesellschaftsordnung*, 1899-1901, recently published as *Liberalism, Socialism and Christian Social Order* also by Edwin Mellen Press. Pesch's shorter *Ethik und Volkswirtschaft* has just been reissued as *Ethics and the National Economy* by IHS Press in Norfolk, Virginia. All these are in translations by Rupert Ederer.

The 1920s and 1930s were good times to be alive for Catholics interested in the social apostolate, that is, in the role of the faith in reshaping not only individual lives but societies, cultures, political systems, the whole of our common life, after the pattern of Jesus Christ. During most of those decades Achille Ratti reigned as Pope Pius XI, a pope whose efforts to promote social

Catholicism included the establishment of the Feast of Christ the King in 1925 and the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931, an encyclical whose stated aim was nothing less than "reconstructing the social order and perfecting it conformably to the precepts of the Gospel." Much of *Quadragesimo Anno* deals with the economic order, and the encyclical's criticisms of the free market and of the existing capitalist system were nearly as trenchant as those made by socialists.

Catholic interest in social questions had already been fostered by Leo XIII's encyclical of 1891, *Rerum Novarum*, and thus throughout Europe, and indeed beyond Europe, the social apostolate thrived under the guidance of Pius XI. Many individual Catholics were intensely interested in finding an alternative to both capitalism and socialism and in bettering the lot of the poor and of the workers. Among these were two men, G.K. Chesterton and Heinrich Pesch, S.J., different in many ways but sharing a fundamental approach to social and economic questions that make a comparison of these two writers useful. Heinrich Pesch, born in 1854, was Chesterton's senior by twenty years. At his death in 1926, Chesterton still had ten years to live. Though there is no reason to suppose that Chesterton had ever heard of Heinrich Pesch, and though Chesterton often enough poked fun at Germans who wrote ponderous books, I doubt that Chesterton would have done so with Pesch, even though the

German Jesuit's *magnum opus* runs to well over four thousand pages in five volumes, nor was this the only lengthy work that he wrote.

Aside from a multiplicity of articles, Chesterton's social thought is chiefly contained in three books: *What's Wrong With the World* (1910), *Utopia of Usurers and Other Essays* (1917), both written before he became a Catholic, and *The Outline of Sanity* (1926), none of them overlong in pages, but all rich in contents. In contrast to Pesch's tomes, Chesterton's can seem like occasional writings, tossed off to satisfy some immediate concern or demand. But despite these superficial differences, Chesterton and Pesch were writing for the same reasons and saying much the same thing. They were both writing to defend man, to defend the family, to defend human society against socialism and capitalism. The systems that each offered in place of capitalism, distributism by Chesterton, solidarism by Pesch have different emphases, but more similarities than differences. Let us look a little more closely at some of the ways in which the thought and concerns of Pesch and Chesterton overlap.

At the outset of his *summa economica* (as it is sometimes called) Fr. Pesch stated that "man must always and everywhere be the subject and end of the economy." That brings to mind the wonderful and lyrical passage at the end of *What's Wrong With the World*, where Chesterton says the same thing, but in so

different a way. Commenting on the proposals of some officious "doctors and other persons permitted by modern law to dictate to their shabbier fellow-citizens" that "all little girls whose parents were poor" must cut their hair short because long hair might harbour lice. Chesterton, with almost a shout, replies: "Now the whole parable and purpose of these last pages, and indeed of all these pages, is this: to assert that we must instantly begin all over again, and begin at the other end. I begin with a little girl's hair. That I know is a good thing at any rate. Whatever else is evil, the pride of a good mother in the beauty of her daughter is good. It is one of these adamantine tenderesses which are the touchstones of every age and race. If other things are against it, other things must go down. If landlords and laws and sciences are against it, landlords and laws and sciences must go down. With the red hair of one she-urchin in the gutter I will set fire to all modern civilization. Because a girl should have long hair, she should have clean hair; because she should have clean hair, she should not have an unclean home; because she should not have an unclean home, she should have a free and leisured mother; because she should have a free mother, she should not have a usurious landlord; because there should not be an usurious landlord, there should be a redistribution of property, because there should be a redistribution of property, there shall be a revolution. That little urchin

with the gold-red hair, whom I have just watched toddling past my house, she shall not be lopped and lamed and altered; her hair shall not be cut short like a convict's; no, all the kingdoms of the earth shall be hacked about and mutilated to suit her. She is the human and sacred image; all around her the social fabric shall sway and slip and fall; the pillars of society shall be shaken, and the roofs of ages come rushing down; and not one hair of her head shall be harmed."

Although Pesch seldom became lyrical, he shared the same passion that animated Chesterton in this passage. Pesch spent the years 1885 to 1888 near Liverpool in England because Bismarck's Kulturkampf had driven the Jesuits out of Germany. It was this experience of the exploitation and degradation of the English working class by industrial capitalism that made him resolve to devote his life as a priest to the apostolate of social justice. Although he was not able to take up the formal study of economics until he was nearly fifty, at the University of Berlin, he more than made up for lost time. After that, sent to Luxembourg until 1910 to write, Pesch began the *Lehrbuch* which he did not complete until 1923. The task wore him out, and his superiors sent him to Holland to recuperate, where he died three years later. And although the thousands of pages of this work read like a German academic tome, with extensive review of other authors, careful definitions and close argument, through

it all runs the same zeal for the little red-headed girl in the slums that captured Chesterton's heart.

If Chesterton and Pesch were saying much the same thing, what was it that each was saying? What is their distinct *ratio*, the thing that marks out their approach to economics? I think one can say that for neither of them was economics something self-contained, for each always kept the little red-haired girl in view, and not only the little girl, but her mother and also her father, because of whose work the mother could be "free and leisured." Chesterton always kept before himself the human being, the human family, their ordinary, normal needs, desires, virtues and faults. Socialism and capitalism were both impositions on the small man. As he wrote in *What's Wrong With the World*: "I dislike the big Whiteley shop, and . . . I dislike Socialism because it will (according to Socialists) be so like that shop. It is its fulfilment, not its reversal. I do not object to Socialism because it will revolutionize our commerce, but because it will leave it so horribly the same."

Pesch, of course, sees the same parallels between socialism and capitalism, saying, in his more academic manner of expression, that socialism "has not without some justification been designated as the rightful heir of the individualistic idea."

If both these thinkers objected to capitalism, what did they propose in its place? Chesterton proposed distributism, the system of small,

well-divided property. Distributism achieves its most precise form in the writings of Chesterton's friend Hilaire Belloc, for example in *The Restoration of Property*. Chesterton himself was less precise both as to ends and means for establishing a distributist economy and society. In *The Outline of Sanity* he replies to those critics "who will . . . say that I generalize because there is no practical plan." And he proceeds: "The truth is that I generalize because there are so many practical plans. I myself know four or five schemes that have been drawn up, more or less drastically, for the diffusion of capital. The most cautious, from a capitalist standpoint, is the gradual extension of profit-sharing. A more stringently democratic form of the same thing is the management of every business (if it cannot be a small business) by a guild or group clubbing their contributions and dividing their results. Some Distributists dislike the idea of the workman having shares only where he has work; they think he would be more independent if his little capital were invested elsewhere; but they all agree that he ought to have the capital to invest. Others continue to call themselves Distributists because they would give every citizen a dividend out of much larger national systems of production. I deliberately draw out my general principles so as to cover as many as possible of these alternative business schemes.

And as far as a method for achieving a distributist society,

Chesterton also countenances a variety of possible approaches, in fact, "half a dozen things which would help the process of Distributism," which range from a "league of voluntary dedication," apparently to patronize only small shops, to subsidies to small businesses to the "taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors." Chesterton's end was, in a general way, clear: property should be well-distributed. He realized that to be too doctrinaire about means, or even about what exactly the end would be like, would hurt the cause of distributism more than it would help. But to anyone reading him with an unprejudiced eye, it should be obvious where his sympathies lay and who the real enemies of the workingman are: socialist bureaucrats and capitalist bosses, both in their own way enemies of the family, enemies of the small, enemies of the particular.

And even though Heinrich Pesch was a trained economist and a German to boot, solidarism is not a rigid scheme, an *a priori* academic abstraction which he would impose on the real world. Not at all. This is how he characterizes solidarism: "Considered overall, solidarism is the social system which brings to proper expression the solidaristic bond among people as such and as members of the natural communities—the family and the state—i.e., in accordance with the specific nature of each community. At the same time it encourages the fullest possi-

ble development of cooperative, representative, and corporative associations according to occupation and stations-in-life, as adapted to given historical circumstances, on the firm basis of a community of interests and in a proper juridical form. Considered in the broadest terms possible, the essential meaning of the solidarist system consists in complementing weakness and regulating power by binding people together in solidarity, while exercising mutual consideration and concern in accordance with the demands of justice and charity, by a well-ordered cooperation and reciprocity within the various forms of natural and free, public and private communities, and in accordance with their natural and historical peculiarities, directed toward the ultimate goal of securing the true welfare of everyone involved.

While this may seem vague, from such general definitions Pesch carefully draws out the specifics of his system. One may say the key factor in Pesch's solidarism also appears in distributism, though less emphasized there. This factor is the formal establishment of organizations, especially occupational organizations, which under solidarism will bear a large role in economic regulation. They are involved in setting prices, wages, and in many other kinds of economic regulation now either done directly by the government or not at all. Such were by no means unknown to distributism. Belloc, for example, wrote: "The safe-

guarding of the small unit, the seedlings of re-afforestation, the delicate experiments in the reconstruction of property, must take the form of the Guild: not the unprotected guild arising spontaneously (for that would soon be killed by the predatory capitalism around it) but of the Guild chartered and established by positive law.

Belloc goes on to discuss, as a means to eventually setting up true guilds, the question "of chartering . . . trade unions," that is, of conferring official powers on them so they could "regulate wages, consider the opportunities of employment, prevent their function from being swamped with numbers and in general substitute status and order for chaotic competition." These are some of the same functions which under solidarism would be performed by the occupational groups. Both looked to the medieval guilds for their inspiration and aims: the establishment of order and justice throughout economic life, an order and justice which had been destroyed by the strife of free competition. While Chesterton sometimes emphasizes different aspects of the solution than Pesch, they both want basically the same thing. Pesch was probably less sanguine than Chesterton and Belloc about the possibility of largely eliminating the wage relationship in commerce and industry, but when we turn to farming and rural life, the German writer reads like the English distributists: "Of the greatest importance for the general

welfare and the public interest is the preservation of an extended middle- and small-sized type of farming, first of all, with regard to the economics of it, because here agriculture is carried on most intensively. In farm population which can work independently on its own soil and maintain itself by its own work, there will be a love of work, thrift, and morality, along with Christian family life, love of fatherland, and loyalty to God-given authority, and a sense of peace and order in social and political life. Nothing will provide the state with such solidity and the preservation of continuing stability to the degree as when it numbers among its population a large number of settled healthy, farm families. All other classes will be the beneficiaries of having on hand the largest possible number of citizens living on their own land.

And a few pages later he writes what could easily be a distributist motto: "While socialism calls for the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, the motto of solidarism is: increase the number of owners!" This, of course, was exactly what Leo XIII had called for in *Rerum Novarum*: "The law, therefore, should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many people as possible to become owners." Thus both distributism and solidarism worked to fulfill the papal mandate, while capitalism did not care how many people became or remained owners, as long as freedom of competition and the free move-

Reviews

ment of money and goods prevailed. But for those who realized and realize that economics must serve man, not enslave him, a constant concern for its effect on family life, are necessities.

Although the Catholic Church is one, national, cultural and intellectual traditions can play a large role in how Catholic ideas and ideals are present in each nation. English-speaking Catholics, and distributists who are not Catholics, can learn much from Pesch's detailed treatment of economics, just as German-speaking Catholics could doubtless profit from the single-minded focus of the distributists on dividing property. Solidarism emphasizes the natural community of mankind, the nation, the occupation, the family.

Distributism emphasises the need for well-distributed property to safeguard the family in freedom from both bureaucrat and boss. But neither system denies or even omits the concerns of the other. If either tends ever to downplay them, then solidarists and distributists can help each other to gain a more balanced view and program. The two systems are such that they complement rather than conflict. Both are monuments to Catholic social thought during what was probably its brightest age. Both should be serious subjects of study now and in every subsequent age of the Church and the world.

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