

# Chesterton's America: A Distributist History of the United States

Rod Bennett

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Distributism has been called 'a really bad name for a really good idea.' "Chesterton's America" tells the story of the United States in the light of that really good (and distinctly Christian) idea, another excellent instance of history teaching philosophy by example. Though the book which forms the skeleton of this collection was written by one particular Chesterton—soldier and journalist Cecil Chesterton—the title I have chosen is deliberately ambiguous, since the story presented here includes not only large excerpts from the works of his more famous brother Gilbert Keith Chesterton but also from what might be described as a whole 'Chestertonian school' of American history. Cecil's brief History of the United States was written under dramatic circumstances and was sealed, as a kind of last testament, by the author's own death. This seems to have made a uniquely powerful impression upon his friends and co-laborers, inspiring them to study the subject closely themselves and, in several cases, to mount fuller and more careful but very much dependent works in their own right. The other Chestertonians contributing to this collection include Anglo-French historian Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953), with whom Cecil collaborated on 'The Party System' (1911); G.K.'s friend, author and Conservative Member of Parliament Christopher Hollis, who published 'The American Heresy in 1930'; and Kentuckian Herbert Agar, editor of the famous Southern Agrarian manifesto 'I'll Take My Stand' -- also, according to commentator Herbert Shapiro, "[G.K.] Chesterton's leading American political disciple." G.K. Chesterton called the approach featured here 'very brilliant and original,' but also prophesied that 'it will not be taken sufficiently seriously; because the reader will have to wrench his mind out of a rut...to imagine anybody saying that a small, limited and agricultural America would have been better for everybody—especially Americans.' 'Chesterton's America'—the first ever Distributist History of the United States—is your chance to prove him wrong!

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