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GIUSEPPE TONIOLO AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

TO Catholics of the older generation the names of La Tour du Pin, Léon Harmel, l'Abbé Naudet, l'Abbé Pottier, Henri Lorin, and with them those of Mgr. Ketteler and the two Cardinals Mermillod and Manning, evoke memories, memories of the movement known as *Christian Democracy*.

It is strange that those two words, which forty years ago aroused such hopes on the one hand, and at the same time such rage and resentment among good Conservative Catholics, mean very little to the youth of to-day. Is this really so? And if it is, will people ever speak of Christian Democracy again?

Professor Giuseppe Toniolo was not only one of its chief supporters, but its theorist. The epithet Christian as applied to democracy (which was then as much feared as communism is to-day) appeared in Italy for the first time in Father Curci's voluminous work *Christian Socialism*, published in 1885. But it was the Belgian Verhaegen who, in 1893, brought the expression into current usage as an ideal to be fought for: "Christian Democracy" had henceforth an established footing.

Four years later, Leo XIII, addressing the French working men pilgrims presented to him by Léon Harmel, said: "I bless the Christian democracy of the North." In the same year, 1897, Toniolo published a study in the *International Review of Social Sciences* of Rome, entitled *The Christian Conception of Democracy*.

I remember the time. I was then in Rome, studying at the Gregorian University, and Professor Toniolo, who was already well known as holding the Chair of Political Economy at the University of Pisa, came to Rome to give a course of lectures to Catholic university students.

The great hall of the Italian Catholic Union was crowded, and besides us students there were many representatives of the international world. Professor Toniolo's studious, ascetic face (he was then in his fifties) aroused the admira-

tion and affection of all. His eyes, more often lifted to heaven than turned upon the audience, gave an impression of continuous inspiration. The profound conviction with which he spoke constrained the agreement of even those who were reluctant. In those days the appeal to Catholic youth to follow democratic ideals sounded like a warning, a hope, a prophecy.

Two years earlier, in my native city of Caltagirone and in other parts of Sicily (in so far as my studies allowed), I had begun to organize leagues of peasants and workers and to found co-operatives. These were the first timid beginnings of social action, inspired by the *Opera dei Congressi Cattolici*. The Christian Democratic movement gave them a fresh impetus.

We were then at the most acute period of working class agitation in Northern Italy and peasant agitation in the South. From the formation of the *Fasci Siciliani* in 1893 to the revolts of 1898 in Milan and elsewhere, the various currents of labour were represented by Socialists and Christian Democrats. The blind repression that ensued on the part of the Conservatives found victims in either camp. Among the Christian Democrats, Don Albertario, the valiant priest journalist of Milan, was sentenced to imprisonment, just as the Deputies, Turati and Treves, were among the Socialists. I myself, then a novice in the battle, got off with a trial but without a sentence. All the Catholic associations were dissolved by the Government, all propaganda was forbidden. Against such abuses Leo XIII protested in vain.

When the panic of the conservative classes had blown over and political liberties were restored, Catholics were able to reorganize and to engage in renewed activities, but the cleft between conservatives and democrats grew very deep. In those years between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a crisis came in the shape of irremediable division between old and young, between the *Opera dei Congressi* and the democratic Leagues. In 1900 Professor Toniolo brought out his book *Christian Democracy*, published by the *Società di Culturä* founded by Romolo Murri. The young, for whom he had a two-fold

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affection, as professor and as apostle, were on his side. Leo XIII, who had supported him for many years and had set him to work during the period of preparation of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, hoped that he would succeed in fusing together the ardour of the young and the experience of the old, and would be able to draw both into a middle course, in intensive work for the programme outlined in the great Encyclical.

Unhappily, the struggle between the two Catholic wings became acute. Leo XIII intervened with *Graves de Comuni Re*, in order to remove any political significance from Christian Democracy (Italian Catholics were still under the prohibition of the *non expedit* and could take no part in political elections, neither as voters nor as candidates), and to give the Catholic movement unity in policy and practice. On this basis Professor Toniolo sought to conciliate right and left; loyalty to the Holy See and Christian democratic principles found in him a perfect synthesis. The Bologna Congress in 1903 followed, at which Toniolo had an enthusiastic reception, and was able to draw a part of the conservative Catholics in the direction of social ideals and trade-unionism. But it was at this Congress that the right Catholic wing, represented by Count Paganuzzi, stiffened its attitude, and the left wing, led by Murri, became more bitter and more exacting. The new Pope, Pius X, dissolved the *Opera dei Congressi*. A general referendum among Catholic associations resulted in the formation of the "Popular Union," which represented the triumph of Toniolo's policy, and he himself was its founder and first president. His work was arduous and intense, till his health, undermined by overwork and the worry entailed by a position in which he was exposed to assaults from both left and right, forced him to retire for a time.

A personal reminiscence. I had always had a great esteem for Toniolo as my teacher of economics and sociology, and when I became professor of these subjects at the Great Seminary of Caltagirone, I kept in touch and in correspondence with him. He had given me great encouragement when my first book appeared on *Trade Unions* (in 1901)

and his kindness was unailing to the end. But in this stormy period of Catholic organization in Italy, I would not join his Popular Union because I thought that its aims were too vague and there was too much reticence in regard to social matters. On the other hand, I could not remain with Murri's wing, for he already showed the modernistic tendencies that would lead him into open revolt against the Holy See. I therefore thought best to confine my activity to the practical field of co-operative and trade-union organization and to that of municipal elections. I was then Mayor of my city, Provincial Councillor and General Councillor of the Association of Italian Municipalities.

Toniolo reproached me for my refusal in his friendly, paternal way, full of conviction and inspiration, so that I was on the point of giving way, when he himself had to abandon his position in the fighting line. A complete union among Italian Catholics became possible only later, when in 1915 Benedict XV approved the Statutes of the Central Board of Catholic Action; Count Giuseppe Dalla Torre was its President, and I was appointed Secretary General. This proposal was made at Pisa, under the auspices of Cardinal Maffi and Professor Toniolo, who thus came back at the same time into the directing centre of the Italian Catholic movement.

In the social field many things had ripened. The name Christian Democracy ceased to be (what it still is in Belgium) the banner of an organized group, and became the name of the Catholic social school, implying a doctrine and a policy.

Catholic trade-unionism, which had been so hotly opposed, was finally recognized as legitimate, and it was possible to found the Italian Confederation of Workers, a few months after the death of Professor Toniolo, who had greatly contributed to its creation, by writings, encouragement, controversies, and personal authority. It was of the greatest comfort to him, old and ill as he was, to see that after nearly twenty-five years of dissension moral unity and unity of organization had been achieved among all Italian Catholics. He was never absent from the meetings of the Directive Board till his last illness came upon him.

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With the years his aspect had become still more ascetic; his thought was ever more deeply rooted in his convictions, and his love for the working people and his devotion to the Holy See were as strong as ever. There were times when we disagreed, but this made no difference to the veneration in which we held him, or to his affection and esteem for us. His activity as organizer, apostle and philosopher of Christian Democracy—through many vicissitudes, struggles, and griefs which included a transitory period when the Vatican mistrusted him, in the time of Pius X, who however himself looked upon him as a saint—lasted about thirty years. He gave of his best to the formation of the new Catholic social life of Italy.

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This side of him was what most struck us agitators and organizers of the worker and peasant masses, but Professor Toniolo to-day remains in the memory of Catholics of Italy and abroad and of all students of social science as an eminent economist and one of the chiefs of the school of Christian and ethical economics.

Toniolo began his career as a scholar and teacher in the period of greatest conflict between the schools of classical, individualistic economics and new currents of sociological economics. German thought was then greatly in vogue in Italy, both philosophic Hegelianism and the positivist historical school in law and economics. The reaction against the individualist school of Adam Smith coincided with the social movement awakened by the socialists' and workers' risings; State intervention was openly demanded both in favour of protective duties for newly created industries and in favour of the worker. It was the period of the famous Government enquiries into work in the sulphur mines and the conditions of the peasants in Southern Italy and on the islands.

Toniolo from the beginning of his career sought to find a synthesis between the two schools, overcoming contradictory elements and taking his stand on the firm ground of a conception of man as an integral whole.

The individualist schools, whether classical or neo-classical, founded their economics on a conception of man as an indi-

vidual, neglecting more or less entirely his intrinsically social character. On the other hand, the sociological schools, which had grown up in France with positivism and in Germany with Hegelian idealism, neglected the individual, or rather, merged the individual into society.

It was necessary to restore to man his two-fold and indissoluble character at once individual and social, losing sight of neither of two aspects which together form a living synthesis. As a living being, man is an historical synthesis, but as mind operating in history, even if it be for economic ends, man is an ethical synthesis.

Toniolo's economics, as evolved in the course of about forty years, may be described as ethical, sociological and historical. All his followers add the adjective "Christian." This adjective does not become economics considered as a science, for there is no such thing as Christian economics or Christian politics, just as there is no Christian history or Christian sociology. Christianity is essentially a religion, which as such informs ethics and influences the historical, social, economic and cultural life of peoples, but it cannot assume the character of a science as such.

By terming an economic system sociological, we distinguish it from individualistic economics; as ethical we oppose it to hedonistic economics; by adding the word historical, we imply that it is to be related to the various stages of human becoming. The economy of Christian countries, historically considered, is influenced by Christian thought. This influence cannot be other than ethical, that is to say, based on the moral values of Christian man.

When in 1873 Toniolo read his introduction to a course of lectures at the University of Padua, he said he would deal "with the ethical element as an intrinsic factor of economic laws." Professor Francesco Ferrara, an exponent of the classical Adam Smith school, lamented that the young professor had thus flung himself into "economic Germanism." He did not see the difference between the German sociological school, with its Hegelian tendencies and pantheistic character, and Toniolo's ethico-sociologico-historical approach, with its Christian tendency.

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This misunderstanding is a misunderstanding that will, alas! perpetually prevent the school of Christian-social economics from finding its due place in the development of economic sciences in Europe. Many of its followers will be set aside as mere propagandists and empirical exponents of trade union organization. Others, professors and students, will be confused now with the neo-classical economists, now with the sociological economists, and even with the positivists, while their concern for ethics will be derided as the intrusion of a factor extraneous to economics, produced by a deviation on the part of the scholar towards the man of religion and the professing Christian.

Toniolo little by little, through his culture and scientific probity, came to escape such accusations (which did not fail in the days when the epithet "clerical" was enough to bar a career), and he reached the chair of Pisa as an ordinary professor, respected by his colleagues, beloved by his students, and sought after by friends and opponents for the sake of his moral virtues and lofty intellect.

The premises of every serious economic system are always of a philosophic order. This rule allows no exceptions. The individualist and liberal schools presuppose Kant; the sociological schools either Hegel or Comte; the evolutionary biological schools Darwin and Spencer. The Christian-ethical school presupposes scholasticism, as personified in St. Thomas.

A work famous in its day was Abbé Pottier's endeavour to derive the ethical and social principles of economics from St. Thomas. This and like endeavours perhaps imply more the search for an undisputed authority than a strictly scientific outlook on modern economy. The vindication of the ethical values that are constant in all economies was completely successful. Sociological thought as a result gained in vitality and efficacy by its projection into the past of the Middle Ages, with its scholasticism and communes, corporations and immunities, which provided motives for the criticism of the present and the reconstruction of the future.

Toniolo's teaching is permeated with the life of the Middle

Ages, envisaged not with a view to an impossible return to the past (history is irreversible), but as an historical inspiration of perennial values. Rationalist abstractionism had no place in his method. He drew his syntheses from the historical, ethical, juridical and economic experience of the past. It may be that he was not averse to complicated constructions and often found a whole bundle of antitheses and syntheses, which formed a kind of composite order out of his methodologically architectonic thought. But thus he obliged his students and readers to appraise all the factors of every human synthesis and all the aspects of each subtle analysis of thought and history.

One of the younger Italian economists of Toniolo's school, Professor F. Marconcini, sums up the master's thought in the following items: *Society*, as a necessary providential moral institution, has as its proper end the integration of the well-being of the individual, but the *individual* remains the fulcrum, foundation and centre of social life. Hence both *freedom* and *responsibility* are necessary in the domain of economics, so that individual profit (the economic impulse) may co-exist with respect of others. For this to come about, society must be organic, comprising family, classes, municipalities, regions, States. In each stage there must be the value of a lawful social bond, specifically autonomous and co-ordinated.

To-day no one disputes State intervention in economic matters. But in the second half of the last century, when Toniolo was teaching at Padua or Pisa, it was still a semi-heresy, accepted by economists only as a political expedient. Toniolo was no State worshipper. On the contrary. At that time there was immense mistrust of the State, but he faced it, to reconstruct an organic social life with the State as political and juridical centre and, in economy, as a co-ordinator. "The State should intervene to assist the spontaneous activity of individuals for the more complete attainment of the ends of civilization." Thus Toniolo in his *Synthetic Programme*. Such, according to him, is the nature and such are the limits of State intervention. We are a long way from what is thought and done to-day in respect of State intervention,

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to the point of the monstrous idea and practice of the *totalitarian* State.

Toniolo's axiom was: "Everything for the people and everything by means of the people." According to Toniolo, "people" meant the individual as organized in families, classes, free municipalities and an integrating State. To-day Mussolini's maxim is the opposite: "Everything in the State and for the State and by the State; nothing outside or above or against the State." The antithesis is a striking one.

But to-day there is no room in Italy for a social economy or for a political organization such as Toniolo conceived and worked for. For forty years he worked for autonomous corporations, based on free trade unions; to-day in Italy there are the State Corporations, an inorganic bureaucracy, based on the compulsory trade unions of a single party, the Fascist one. Toniolo wished for freedom of initiative, to be developed within the social organisms; to-day in Italy all initiative is bound up with the State and depends on the State. He aspired to the Christian and peaceful regeneration of the proletariat; to-day in Italy the proletariat is chained to the State by means of a party that denies all liberty. And while Toniolo, in the first fifteen years of the present century, saw the rebirth of Italian economy, and demanded only an improvement in the conditions of workers, peasants and artisans, to-day he would see the ruin of Italian economy involving every class, from the well-to-do to the poorest.

Toniolo cannot be said to have been original in his construction of an ethical and Christian economy. On the one hand he continued, in his own domain, the efforts of those who in the last century sought to quicken scientific studies by Christian thought, and in this his work is connected with that of Görres, Ozanam, Balmes and Rosmini. On the other, he gave a synthetic completion to political economy, combining its technical side with its ethical and sociological side, completing and perfecting the ideas to be found in such pioneers as Count de Villeneuve-Bargemon, Le Play, De Coux, Charles Périn, and his contemporary, but dying young, Claude Jannet, professor at the Catholic Institute of Paris.

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To-day, nineteen years after Toniolo's death, the Christian ethical social school cannot be said to have yet acquired the scientific autonomy that might have been hoped from the maturity of studies and the creation of Catholic universities. What is worse, in the domain of political experiments on a large scale, it has lost the instruments for becoming a reality. To-day the Christian trade-unions, for which Toniolo laboured and fought, have lost their two greatest organizations, the German, with nearly two million members, and the Italian with one million two hundred thousand members. The Austrian trade-unions have failed in their task and to-day vegetate, under the awkward blows of the leaders of the so-called Christian corporative State. Only the Utrecht International still lives, through the merits of our friends in Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and France. The political instrument has likewise been weakened by the fall of the Centre in Germany and the Popular Party in Italy.

To-day people look to the dictators who, with the magic wand of absolute and personal power, are to bring the nations to new life and to reconcile productive forces on a national basis. But here it is more prudent to consider the economic disaster and moral weakening of which Italy and Germany are mournful examples.

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The beginning of last year brought consoling news to those of us who had had the good fortune to know Professor Toniolo. The Archbishop of Pisa had taken the first steps to collect information for the canonical cause of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God. Without venturing to anticipate a judgment that belongs solely to the Church, many during his lifetime were convinced that they had to do with a saint.

He was exemplary in private life, in his home, in his professorial office, in his apostolate. His piety was profound and his effort to maintain self mastery visible. His devotion to the Holy See was made up of conviction and humility. He suffered acutely from the misunderstanding of many and from intrigues against him, but he never uttered a word of

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complaint. His life was always modest, dedicated to study and meditation. Already one University Professor, Contardo Ferrini, who was Toniolo's friend, is in course of beatification. The informatory cause for another, Dr. Moscati, Toniolo's contemporary, has been started in Naples. Toniolo would make the third of those who in a period of political anticlericalism and scientific positivism, were able to be scholars of high value and men of great virtues like those of the saints.

LUIGI STURZO.