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Social Christianity and the Constitution of a New Political Subject

CĂTĂLIN-VALENTIN RAIU

The methodological approach of this paper is inspired by Michel Foucault's work on power and subject. He has seen the political power as a mode of action on actions, meaning that the essence of power is to be found not in institutions or individuals, but in the deep structures of the society because the power relations are rooted in the whole network of social bonds. While the foucauldian approach is due to make us understand the nature of the political subject, we are also using a discourse analysis in order to explore the thought of the western Social Christians mainly in the late nineteenth-century France.

Likewise we are using the view of theologian John Milbank on liberalism¹ as a political philosophy which does not have in its very heart the true nature of the human person, but an invented abstract individual, pure material, asocial, whose own nature is broken from God's creation. The classic liberal ideal was that of a human being lacking its traditions and faith, who just wants for the seek of wanting because he is the owner of a free will and not the receiver of the gift of God. So, liberalism is very unnatural, which means that both the social contract and the social order are in need for a social christian reflection superior to the liberal discourse of rights or the primacy of the will².

The Ambivalence of The Subject

Although the concept of "political subject" is one of the most important issues in political science, very few political scientists tried to use and define it³. There is no operational or straightforward definition of the concept. Based on the current state of knowledge we will try in the following rows to understand its centrality in the realm of political theory and philosophy, as well to see if the social Christian movement had tried to change the political subject of the modernity.

Before John Locke, it is impossible to speak about the human beings as political subjects, excepting the divine sovereigns. The dignity of our self-concern as human subjects, knowing and knowable beings, coexists with the condition as individuals whose conduct and normality is subject to constant supervision. The forms of power that are applicable on daily basis are those which turn individuals into subjects. For this reason we need to have in mind the ambivalence of the English term *subject* used

¹ John MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, pp. 9-26.

² IDEM, "The Gift of Ruling", in John MILBANK, Simon OLIVER (eds.), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London/New York, 2009, p. 339.

³ Daniel BARBU, "Critica comunismului românesc. O lectură teologico-politică", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. X, no. 4, 2010, p. 628.

for two different political concepts. The term reveals its ambivalence in Latin language as *subjectum* means the author of an action while *subjectus* means someone ruled by the sovereign¹. So, we do have two meanings of the subject: subject to someone else by control and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Moreover, both meanings are linked and suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subjects to.

While in the political regimes based on kingly and divine sovereignty, the king is the only political subject, the discourse of rights and specially the philosophy of Immanuel Kant have created a new political subject which is the citizen as being the embodiment of the rights and of the operation of practical reason. Actually, in the political arrangement of the rights and duties determined by the state

“the subject is considered a citizen to the extent he or she embodies the general will, in which case the only laws worthy of the name are those framed to reflect the united will of the whole nation”².

The political scientist William Connolly argues that in the contemporary political and social framework dominated by market discipline and democratic virtue, the liberal political subject has lost its freedom and it is under a sever disciplinary control:

“The contemporary imperative to generate economic growth under adverse conditions of realization intensifies pressures to extend disciplinary control into new corners of life [...] The idea of slack, serving as a counterpoint to the logic of disciplinary control, itself stands in an ambiguous relation to radical and liberal doctrines. Echoes from an earlier liberalism reverberate within it. The classical liberal doctrine – in its support for constitutionalism, human rights, fallibilism, privacy and the market as invisible coordinator of economic life – sought to protect the self from close dependence on state power and to restrict the space for political contestation. But while the doctrine of constitutionalism retains its importance, several other institutions and economic priorities in which liberalism place its faith have become enlisted today as vehicles of disciplinary control”³.

Apart from the critique of contemporary economical and political order, William Connolly shows that the so-called “turn to the subject” is related with the rise of modernity and a phenomenon which lies at the center of liberalism and constructed on the centrality of the will and the loss of transcendence. Following the Cartesian idea of subjectivity, in which case the subject is transparent to himself, being rational aware

¹ G. GUȚU, *Dicționar latin-român*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1983, p. 1166.

² Kenneth SURIN, “Rewriting the Ontological Script of Liberation: On the Question of Finding a New Kind of Political Subject”, in Creston DAVIS, John MILBANK, Slavoj ŽIŽEK (eds.), *Theology and the Political. The New Debate*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2005, p. 243.

³ William CONNOLLY, “Discipline, Politics, Ambiguity”, in Tracy B. STRONG (ed.), *The Self and the Political Order*, New York University Press, New York, 1992, pp. 157-158.

of his own thoughts, interests and motivations¹, the Citizen Subject was "the ideal of the political system of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries"². The extension of universal suffrage was also linked to new methods of government based on new styles of classification and calculation, meaning new forms of subjecthood.

The political scientist William Connolly provide us with definitions on what political subject means. The subject is

"a claimant of rights within it, an independent center of knowledge and a bearer of socially established criteria of knowledge, a seeker of self-transparency and a interiorizer of social norms. This ambiguity is its essence; but its denial is crucial to its identity"³.

And:

"The modern subject carries around too much rancor⁴ against that in itself which resists subjectivity and that in others which deviates from its standards"⁵.

Thus, the subject is both free and an agent of freedom, a freedom which can be lost if the subject deviates from the conditions surrounding the privilege because political liberalism

"it is founded on the presupposition of a rational, autonomous and right-bearing bourgeois *subject*, one who has been liberated from the shackles of aristocratic privilege and may now express this freedom in the public sphere"⁶.

Classical liberalism may be seen as a logic that has regulated the individual's relationship with the state, cutting out the complex intricacies of feudal relationship – tithes, guilds, communes and so on – and allowing a more direct and absolute connection with the state⁷. This means that citizenship has become a mode of subjectivity based on obedience and devotion to the state following its direction through liberation of the bourgeoisie subject from the aristocratic hands and may now express and act itself freely within the public sphere. Yet, some categories of citizens cannot live up to bourgeois norms (proletarian, prostitutes, paupers, etc.) so they are excluded. If we seen socialism as another version of liberalism, as Max Stirner puts it⁸, then social liberalism (socialism) is to be understood as the extension of the principle of equality to the economic and social realm:

¹ Saul NEWMAN, *Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought. New Theories of the Political*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 118-119.

² Kenneth SURIN, "Rewriting the Ontological Script of Liberation...cit.", p. 247.

³ William E. CONNOLLY, *Political Theory & Modernity*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993, p. 156.

⁴ The American spelling of "rancour".

⁵ William E. CONNOLLY, *Political Theory...cit.*, p. 158.

⁶ Saul NEWMAN, *Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought...cit.*, p. 16.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁸ Max STIRNER, *The Ego and Its Own*, Cambridge University Press, ed. by David Leopold, third printing, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 105-110.

"In political liberalism – which is ostensibly a discourse of rights that guarantees the individual freedom from political oppression – the individual is constituted as a subject of the state. In the discourse of social liberalism, the individual is tied to external collective arrangements through a subjection to the idea of society"¹.

Social liberalism demands that the principle of equality should be extended to the economic and social domain. This can only be achieved by the restriction of private property, which means that for socialism

"society itself becomes a new locus of sovereignty and domination, rather than the liberal state"².

As opposing both liberalism and socialism seen as caught in materialism, the Social Christianity movement was in search for a new political subject. The Social Christian thought observes that the new kind of political power developed since the sixteenth century, the state, tends to ignore the traditional communities and is looking only at the whole society, or a class or a group³. Welfare is shifted into a bureaucracy that renders its beneficiaries more susceptible to disciplinary control, which makes Michel Foucault to understand the the normalized modern self as the one that maintains self-surveillance to avoid treatment for delinquency, mental illness, etc. Thus, the modern self is a locus of disciplinary normalization. A power relationship involves that "the other" (the one whom power is exercised)

"is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up"⁴.

Foucault's words describe both the way and the methods used by Social Christians at the end of the nineteenth century to fulfill the status of the liberal citizen with the human dignity based on Christian teachings. As Michel Foucault puts it, liberty is the precondition of power relations. This means that, for example, slavery is not a relation of power:

"Power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individuals or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available"⁵.

Foucault starts to study the historical constitution of the subject as an object for himself by taking into account the procedures by which the subject observe, analyze

¹ Saul NEWMAN, *Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought...cit.*, p. 21.

² *Ibidem*, p. 19.

³ Michel FOUCAULT, "The Subject and Power ", in James D. FAUBION (ed.), *Power. Essential Works of Foucault. 1954-1984*, vol. 3, transl. by Robert Hurley and others, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p. 333.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 340.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 342.

and recognize himself as a domain of knowledge. Rooted in the Enlightenment the modern man tries to invent himself as an autonomous subject who exercise or submit to power relations. In his work on the history of sexuality the French philosopher describes sexuality not as a natural given, but as a deployment of power linked to the body, something historically constructed and produced through the strategies of power-knowledge. Thus from the seventeenth century onwards the sovereign's power was replaced by "anatomy-politics of the human body" which is in fact a disciplinary power due to turn individuals into subjects of knowledge and of power. Therefore subjectivity is constructed through various discourses, practices, regulative codes and institutions¹. For example, sexuality is a kind of regime of power which does not operate just at the level of discourse, it is also institutional – based though the practice of confession. For Foucault the subject is constituted both by discursive and institutional practices.

"Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified and a space in which they could be disturbed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence [...] Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself"².

Political subjects are thus to be constituted on two bases:

"Starting in the seventeenth century [...] the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed [...] the bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production"³.

We can sum up the Foucauldian approach of the political subject as a body which is self-empowered, but also a locus of disciplinary normalization, a free, knowing, willing and autonomous agent who is in the same time obeyed to the power exercised upon himself and compelled to act under certain conditions for its own self-empowerment. Our definition is only a methodological one, as we do not find in Foucault's work a straightforward definition. Moreover

¹ Christopher NORRIS, "What is Enlightenment?: Kant and Foucault", in Gary GUTTING (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994, p. 160.

² Michel FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (translation of *La Volonté de savoir*), transl. from French by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, pp. 142-143.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 139-141.

“the individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle”¹,

being also involved in a different manner in the realms of his existence:

“We do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting or when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship”².

In the late nineteenth-century context, the social Christian intellectuals observed that just the bourgeois citizen was a political subject while the socialists and syndicalists wanted that the working class should have been the political subject. In our understanding, the political subject is a human body who is constituted by power, but at the same time can resist that power and act contrary to that power. The citizen is the the subject at the level of politics³, but the attempt of Social Christianity was to prove that the individual could have not been pure individualistic or some insignificant atom of the hole society, but a human person with specific Christian goals in Haven, as well on earth. Rejecting both liberalism and socialism, as well as their political subject – the citizen and the society dominated by the working class – the Social Christian thinkers designed a new political subject starting with the questions: What kind of spaces or opportunities are necessary to conserve the liberty of the human person as understood in Christianity?

Social Christianity

This paper refers in a very particular way at Social Christianity as the socio-political thought and movement from the late nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth century developed mainly in countries like France and Austria, but also in Belgium, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany or Romania. It is also understood by the scholars as being one of the forerunners of Christian Democracy⁴. What we are interested in is the intellectual core of this socio-political thought and not in the historical development or the political achievements of a movement that in spite of its lack of visibility, has had tens of millions of adherents, journals, reviews, conferences, representative in the legislative in many European countries including Romania.

Inaugurated by René de Chateaubriand in his work *Génie du Christianisme* whereby he meant to prove the historic role of Christianity in Western civilization, the

¹ Robert E. GOODIN, Philip PETTIT (eds.), *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, second edition, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., Cornwall, 2006, p. 544.

² Michel FOUCAULT, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom”, in Paul RABINOW (ed.), *Ethics. Essential Works of Foucault. 1954-1984*, vol. I, Penguin Books, London, 2000, pp. 290-291.

³ William E. CONNOLLY, *Politics and Ambiguity*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin/London, 1987, p. 111.

⁴ Ronald Eckford Mill IRVING, *The Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, p. 22-31.

awakening of the Christian conscience was to be born again by restoring the confidence of Catholics in their own allegiance. The purpose of the book was to create a new sensibility, as the very obscurities of Christianity are to be preferred to the lucidities of the so-called age of Reason¹ promoted by the French Revolution. Furthermore, liberal Catholicism of Felicite de Lammenais² or René de Montalembert are considered as forerunners of the late nineteenth-century Social Christian movement as they have opened the door to new political ideas into the counter-revolutionary mainstream promoted by the Catholic Church³.

In spite of these remarkable figures, we can not speak about Social Christianity before 1871 when two prisoners in the Franco-Prussian war, Count Albert de Mun (1841-1914) and Count René de la Tour du Pin (1834-1925) dedicated themselves to the social Catholic cause and along with Léon Harmel the three of them could be considered the fathers of Social Christianity regarding theory and practice as well.

While de Mun and his collaborators intended to avoid mere paternalism and the patronizing attitude that had been too characteristic of the conservative Catholics, they were all the same apostles of the Counter-Revolution, and they were royalists who were opposed to the republican regime. De la Tour du Pin refused to abandon his royalism even when in 1890s Pope Leo XIII directed the French Catholics to rally to the Republic. They created a workingmen's club consisting not of industrial or agricultural workers as in trade unions, but of shop assistants, caretakers, vergers and so on.

"It was in this context that social Catholicism developed among left-wing Catholics in France after 1871, though the work of Albert de Mun and the Marquis de la Tour du Pin. Catholic trade unions were developed [...] the aim of social Catholicism was to direct [...] the economic life of society as to allow Christian morality to exercise a beneficent effect, so mitigating the worst effects of egoistic competition"⁴.

They resisted attacking the liberal principles and looked back to Ancien Régime conceptions of economic organization (Albert de Mun), while others like Léon Harmel and De la Tour du Pin proposed a corporatist vision on society. They set up a mixed unions of employers and workers whose task would have been to apply the Christian principles. Social Catholicism remained opposed to socialism, as Albert de Mun pointed out that the later is the enemy of Catholicism being atheist and negating private property.

Albert du Mun and La Tour du Pin had studied the German social catholic doctrine, while being war prisoners at Aix-la-Chapelle⁵. Albert de Mun entered politics as a candidate for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies with a clerical and counter-

¹ François René de CHATEAUBRIAND, *Génie du christianisme*, 2 vol., chronologie et introduction par Pierre REBOUL, Garnier-Flammarion, Paris, 1966, passim.

² Bernard REARDON, *Liberalism and Tradition. Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/London/New York/Melbourne, 1975, pp. 62-112.

³ A.R. VIDLER, *A Century of Social Catholicism. 1820-1920*, SPCK, London, 1964, pp. ix-xii.

⁴ Eric CAHM, *Politics and Society in Contemporary France (1789-1971). A Documentary History*, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London/Toronto/Wellington/Sydney, 1972, p. 606.

⁵ John MCMANNERS, *Church and State in France, 1870-1914*, SPCK, London, 1972, p. 81.

revolutionary platform. He tried to explain the need of restoring the monarchy, as a means of reconciling paternal authority with genuine liberty. As a deputy, Albert de Mun often created alliances with the socialists concerning anti-liberal policies. He insisted for a eight-hours working day, the right of workers to create associations, the responsibility of employers for work accidents. If de Mun was the orator of this social group, La Tour du Pin was the intellectual leader¹ and the one that led the movement towards corporatism². In his reflections, he contrasted the individualism of liberal capitalism which had left every man in the hand of the law of supply and demand with the pre-revolutionary guilds or corporations. He believed in an alternative to both laissez-faire and socialism. Léon Harmel (1829-1915) went even further than de Mun and Tour du Pin, both in theory and practice, as he invented a system in which the workers were co-partners in industry developing "a Catholic industrial democracy", his formula being that the workers should

"be achieved by themselves so far as possible, never without them and a fortiori never in spite of them"³.

His root principle was co-partnership, not patronage. Following *Rerum novarum*'s teachings and impetus, lots of priests, journalists and orators took up the cause of the workers attacking the capitalist system. While in France the liberal economists were arguing against any legislative protection of the working class, the social Catholic ones have supported a minimum wage, social legislation and a modernized guild system. Even if Catholics as Le Play or Charles Périn attacked economic liberalism, they still were supporters of economic freedom⁴. Their strategy was to implement the reform within the existing social order, rather that against it.

Therefore Social Christian thought was concentrated on a modernized guild system as an alternative to state socialism. Because labor must not be regarded as a commodity, they sustained trade unionism and enacted legislation against child labor, establishing a social insurance system. The principle of association was the first article of their program, inspired by the abolished medieval craft guilds. Industry should take the form of a

"Catholic guild, which is neither a trade union, nor a tribunal of arbitration, but a center of Christian activity where the interest of the profession is superior to private interest, where antagonism between capitalist and workingmen gives way to patronage exercised in a Christian spirit and freely accepted"⁵.

¹ Marquis René DE LA TOUR DU PIN, *Vers un ordre social chrétien: jalons de route, 1882-1907*, Gabriel Beauchiane, Paris, 1929.

² Chantal MILLON-DELSOL, *Statul subsidiar*, trad. de Maria Petruț, Efes, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, pp. 216-217.

³ A.R.VIDLER, *A Century of Social Catholicism...cit.*, p. 124.

⁴ Nicolae T. BUZEA, *Socialismul și creștinismul social*, Tipografia Eparhială "Cartea Românească", Chișinău, 1926, pp. 248-275.

⁵ Albert de MUN, speech at Chartres, September 8, 1878; cf. *L'Association catholique*, vol. VI, pp. 587-593, *apud* Parker Thomas MOON, *The Labor Problem and The Social Catholic Movement in France. A Study in the History of Social Politics*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1921, p. 99.

Albert de Mun's understanding of the guild system was also based on the principle of association. The modernized guild should be a community formed among employers and workingmen of the same profession, held together and with common duties as common possession, voluntary sacrifice and corporate property. His view of trade unions as *syndicats mixtes* should be empowered to establish collective funds, insurance against sickness or unemployment and so on. Therefore they were meant to be not just substitutes for medieval guilds, but tools of removing "the antagonism between capital and labor"¹. We can sum up his social and political thought under three heads: social insurance (a pension after retirement of the workers and social insurance in case of accidents, sickness and unemployment), labor organization and legislation. All these things shouldn't have been placed under the state's bureaucracy and duty which have meant state socialism, but the social funds should have been managed by a board of trustees representing both the employers and the workers themselves². As a constitutional reform they asked mainly through the voice of De la Tour du Pin for a vocational senate as a complement of the existing parliament based on political representation. Nevertheless they were divided in opinions concerning republicanism or private property.

The one that also put into practice these social ideas was the rich industrialist Léon Harmel: "What Harmel had achieved in fact, – the reorganization of industry on a Christian basis, – de Mun was demanding in theory"³. He based his factory on three principles: association, democratic control and capitalist paternalism. These elements were combined and balanced in a mixt trade union run by a Guild Board and based on Christian charity. The textbook written by Léon Harmel⁴ at the request of Albert de Mun and De la Tour du Pin laid down the label of paternal care (*paternité*) for the workers. Harmel insisted that the guild should be primarily religious and moral, he wanted to reconcile capitalism and Christianity.

Within his industrial park from Val-de-Bois there were living the happiest French workers of those times as they had had their own banks, medical care, family subsidies, social insurances, education for their children, etc. As for him, philanthropy by itself was never able to cover up the social problems, he always tried to make the workers understand that they needed to have their own organizations⁵. In 1884, when the trade unions were legalized in France, Harmel started to promote the idea of mixt unions consisting of both employers and workers⁶.

In politics, Albert de Mun was a bitter believer of state's interventionism in helping the workers. Simultaneous, La Tour du Pin, the intellectual leader of the movement insisted for a decent wage enough to feed a family, the unemployment insurance and other kinds of financial support. He exposes these ideas at The Fribourg Union, where the *laissez-faire* it is also denied from 1885 onwards. Following this, the state interventionism gained ground among Social Christians. De la Tour du Pin's corporatism was conceived as a revival in modern terms of the medieval guilds,

¹ Parker Thomas MOON, *The Labor Problem...cit.*, p. 104.

² *Ibidem*, p. 112.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

⁴ Léon HARMEL, *Manuel d'une corporation chrétienne*, Tours, 1876, *passim*.

⁵ John MCMANNERS, *Church and State...cit.*, p. 84.

⁶ On Harmel's work: Joseph B. GREMILLION, *The Catholic Movement of Employers and Managers*, Gregorian&Biblical Bookshop, 1961, pp. 24-37.

where the state was representing the economic interests of each group or community¹. We can sum up the core of Social Christianity as consisting of the realism of Léon Harmel, the leadership of Albert de Mun, the thought of De La Tour du Pin and also the politics of Pope Leo XIII. Becoming a political movement, it has also changed its core from charity to justice².

Rerum novarum also known as Magna Charta of Social Catholicism³ helped to lay down the foundations for the economic doctrine of corporatism which became popular in the 1920s and which sought to achieve a harmony between social groups by the rejection of both individualistic liberalism and conflictual syndicalism. In these senses, Pope Leo XIII was not a liberal, but a conservative. His encyclicals encouraged Social Catholics to go further with their battle against poverty and deprivation. In France the initiatives of Social Catholics took up his principles and had many and varied practical initiatives. Albert de Mun established *Cercles Catholiques d'ouvriers* in 1871, a social study group which reached 60 000 members in 1906, belonging to 418 worker's societies⁴. Later on, Marc Sangnier set up Le Sillon (The Furrow) an youth movement for debating the worker's problems. In Germany long before Rerum novarum, the bishop of Mainz, Emanuel von Kettler, also encouraged Catholics to form their own associations. Austrian Social Catholicism was also preeminent, helped by Karl von Vogelsang who campaigned for the introduction of welfare measures and against child labor. Fr. le Play, De La Tour du Pin and Vogelsang were mainly rejecting democracy, as they were having a more paternalistic approach towards state's duties. They articulated an organicist conception of society, arguing that men could achieve spiritual and political fulfillment only through membership of a wider community as family, professional guilds and so on. It was in fact an authoritarian and corporatist outlook making the success of these Catholic associations quite limited because, as Albert du Mun puts it – they were organized by elites (*de l'extérieur*⁵), not by the workers. He also described the Church as a mediatrix between the strong and the weak, but his belonging to this far tradition of natural rights along with his anti-republicanism made him not very influential on the French political scene mainly because their clericalism was antinomic with secular republicanism⁶.

¹ John MCMANNERS, *Church and State...cit.*, p. 86.

² *Ibidem*, p. 93.

³ Nicholas ATKIN, Franck TALLETT, *Priests, Prelates and People. A History of European Catholicism since 1750*, I.B. Tauris, London/New York, 2003, p. 174.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

⁵ J. McMILLAN, "France", in Tom BUCHANAN, Martin CONWAY (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918-1965*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 34-68.

⁶ Miriam COHEN, Michael HANAGAN, "Politics, Industrialization and Citizenship: Unemployment Policy in England, France and United States, 1890-1950", in Charles TILLY (ed.), *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge/New York/Melbourne, 1996, p. 117.

The Sociology of Guild

The Social Christians were ardent believers in the private property as an inviolable and intangible right¹, as they were asking for the sharing of capitalist property by both the owners and workers using the natural right theory. The limits of private property are those revealed by God, which means that first of all the rich should help the poor and serve the common good². Concerning labor, the wage should be "just" and reflect the social status of the worker, conferring enough access to food, clothes, a roof for him and his family. In order to benefit of all these, the worker needs to afford to save some money for the times while sick or unemployed. Again, the Social Christian solution is not necessarily the state, but the corporations including both the workers as well the owners³.

For De la Tour du Pin the Social Christian justice seemed impossible "while missing the solidarity ties between people⁴. The guild brings together all those who work in the same professional branch. The guilds were called *corp d'état*⁵, as they were designed to be semi-autonomous from the state, but part of the same as a guarantor of the social and economic consensus of the society⁶. In the political realm it needed a political representation based on vocation and social function as the truth and the justice couldn't have been created through the ballot box. The state of Tour du Pin, as "the congregation of power of the nation organized for the common good, which is the national interest"⁷, should have been governed as a monarchy under the corpus of the guild's rights and with a nondemocratic political representation, but a corporatist one. By definition we cannot name a corporatist regime a democratic one because it is in the search for high purposes as national interest, not people's demands.

The nineteenth century was dominated by the view that the principles of natural sciences were also applicable in society. So, the idea of a science of society (sociology) was born as the outcome of the belief that there existed laws governing social phenomena. Politics could be reduced to a impersonal body of principles and men would be governed by scientific truths. Even the main Romanian promoter of Social Christianity, the bishop Bartolomeu Stănescu called both politics and democracy sciences:

"Democrația este în primul rând știința solidă asupra lucrurilor din lume, pe care le orânduiește prin legi; și știința profundă asupra sufletului omenească, ca legătură pe care legile o mijlocesc între om și mediul său de viață, să-i dea cu puțință sufletului și puterilor omenești să domine acest mediu, iar nu să fie dominate de ele"⁸.

¹ Peter J. WILLIAMSON, *Varieties of Corporatism. A Conceptual Discussion*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/London/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney, 1985, p. 30.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 32-33.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 34-35.

⁴ Marquis René DE LA TOUR DU PIN, *Vers un ordre social chrétien...cit.*, p. 117.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 409.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 23-24, 183.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 502.

⁸ Vartolomeiu STĂNESCU, "Discurs la legea financiară, rostit în ședința senatului dela 10 februarie 1923", in IDEM, *Produsuri sufletești și realități verificate*, Tipografia Cozia, Râmnicul-Vâlcea, 1934, p. 244.

As Sheldon Wolin puts it, by the end of the nineteenth century, elites turned to society, as "the source of a new *mystique*" and politics as an art was lacking interest¹. Everything was society's creation and even the highest human aspiration (religion, philosophy, etc.) were stripped of mystery and exposed as expressions of society. For people as Émile Durkheim, Joseph de Maistre and others upholders, society needs first of all authority and organization. But, it was not conservatives alone who held a deep faith in organization. Durkheim suggests a society based on professional groups or under the control of managerial elites who have the knowledge for maintaining the social equilibrium in an age of successive technological revolutions². The nostalgia for the vanished simple community was both socialist and conservative. Saint-Simon invented a scientific religion because of the need for a foundation of common belief. By the end of the nineteenth century the social utility of religion has been expressed in a nostalgia for the values of the Middle Ages:

"In his description of society ridden by anomie Durkheim provided his age with an up-to-date version of the Hobbesian state of nature: it was the same authorityless condition. Without effective moral control or legal controls [...] the difference was an ironic one: where Hobbes men killed each other in the state of nature and finally forms civil society to halt the slaughter, Durkheim's man finds life in society intolerable and is driven to kill himself. The obsession with anomie was rooted in the yearning for solidarity and nineteenth-century sociology its task to be that of redefining the conditions of social cohesion. Solidarity was a social fact, and thus could have been studied as an object"³.

Durkheim's social theory also borrowed by the same bishop, Bartolomeu Stănescu⁴, was founded in opposition to the liberal view of society as an artificial arrangement arising from a social contract.

"The big assumption that sociology accepted was that power and authority were natural because they were necessary to social solidarity"⁵.

Without a stable society, an unquestioned authority, the bonds of family, vocational group, parish and so on, individuals will feel lost. So the people need structures. In some senses, Durkheim was as hostile towards liberalism as Marx because liberal society was abnormal considering the high rate of suicide and divorce indicated. There were also elements of philosophical liberalism in Durkheim's thought as the defense of rights, the theory of freedom of mind and his moral and political individualism. He stresses the dignity of the individual, free thoughts, free democratic institutions, tolerance and pluralism. François Guizot's liberalism was based on the property qualification on the basis of the franchise, the power should be limited to the middle

¹ Sheldon S. WOLIN, *Politics and Vision. Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1961, p. 361.

² Émile DURKHEIM, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, transl. by Cornelia Brookfield, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, pp. 14-64.

³ Sheldon S. WOLIN, *Politics and Vision...cit.*, p. 399.

⁴ Bartolomeu Stănescu studied at Sorbonne with Emile Durkheim for B.A. and a PhD thesis in sociology having as coordinator the French sociologist from 1905 until 1912.

⁵ Sheldon S. WOLIN, *Politics and Vision...cit.*, p. 400.

classes. He held that the revolutionary principle (the equality) of the Revolution was a great danger as inherited inequality and property inheritance were foundations of civil society. For the liberals of Durkheim's time freedom was opposed to democracy and equality. He was not a true liberal, as the cry for social justice was specific to socialist at his time. Durkheim's original thought can be seen in the political realm in his critique of liberalism, understood as *laissez-faire* and being full of contradictions, rather than supporting real individualism:

"For Durkheim rights are real and positive and not just defensive and negative as they were for the liberals: solidarity creates a system of 'rights and duties' not merely a forum of exchange"¹.

So the acknowledgement of the society as a system of rights and duties is central to moral individualism. For him the positive rights that the individuals acquire against the state are to be protected by secondary groups. Although socialism was synonymous with revolution, it had an ethical aspect as well: it was ethically by contrast with the corruption of the capitalism. The hole point of the science of sociology, as the way that elites were looking at the society, was during Social Christianity movement the need for finding the genuine social authority that offers protection, welfare and social security. This also explains the steady attachment of the Social Christians to monarchy.

Whereas the Church had been associated traditionally with monarchy and authority, the Revolution set about introducing into French society both democracy and freedom. The French Catholics were divided since the nineteenth century into left and right wings. The right-wing Catholic attitude, which is our concern here, is based on the assumption that the teaching of the Church is imitable and that salvation is to be achieved only by obeying to Church rule. Thus, later on

"the religious authoritarianism inherent in right-wing Catholicism has marked political authoritarianism. Emphasis is laid by right-wing Catholics on the traditional duty of Christians to obey the legitimate government in the civil sphere"².

For them, the only legitimate form of government remained the monarchy.

Nevertheless while some began to abandon the idea of monarchy after *Rerum Novarum*, very many right-wing Catholics in the twentieth century simply went over to other forms of political authoritarianism, notably the doctrines of *Action Française* and those of Vichy. Their opposition to socialism has always accompanied their opposition to democracy because of "the fear of seeing the people enroll themselves under the red flag of the antichrist"³.

The republican anticlericalism came to have a mythic and irrational dimension for the Social Christians. What kind of labels are "clericalism" and "anticlericalism"

¹ Susan STEDMAN JONES, *Durkheim Reconsidered*, Polity Press, Oxford and Malden, 2001, p. 51.

² Eric CAHM, *Politics and Society in Contemporary France (1789-1971)*...cit., p. 605.

³ Charles GIDE, *Curs de economie politică*, trad. de George Alexianu după ediția a noua, vol. I, Editura Casei Școalelor, București, 1927, p. 50.

in nineteenth-century France? The Church tried to promote the religion as a social phenomenon, not just as a matter of private conscience and individual acts of piety¹. The Church claimed the right to be a public presence in the life of the nation and to reconstruct a Christian social order. Republicans on the other hand, as adepts of positivism and progress, were committed from 1860s onwards to a secular vision of society in which religion was meant to be a remnant of the feudal society. So, the republicans wanted a secular society and a secular state. Later on, attempts by Jacques Piou and Albert du Mun to launch a successful Christian Democratic party were discouraged by Rome and Marc Sangnier's flourishing Catholic youth movement was condemned outright in 1910.

During the nineteenth century, hostility towards Christianity took the forms of positivism and materialism. Georges Goyau (1869-1939), another Social Christian, was convinced that French Catholicism needed to be awakened from its ancient dreams of monarchy and accept the republic². Thus the Social Christianity as a movement was making its way very slowly as the process is impeded by the Church who had failed to understand the times.

A New Social Theology

The theologian John Milbank makes us understand the connection between late nineteenth-century sociology and Social Christianity:

"In the wake of French Revolution, various Catholic thinkers denied the possibility of a secular politics on the grounds that politics had its basis in a 'social' order directly revealed or created by God. This conclusion was not at all an obscurantist and temporary interruption of the forward march of liberal enlightenment. On the contrary, it represented a new attempt to resolve the new antinomy encountered by secular social science – do humans construct society or does society construct humanity?"³.

The new social theology introduced the divine providence into the political reality. Robert Nisbet argues that sociology as a science has shared a common ideological ethos with the conservative Christian thinking of the nineteenth century, both of them having concerns with common faith, the importance of the education, the need for a spiritual and hierarchical power in order to maintain the cultural identity as well as the importance of intermediary associations and guilds⁴. The issue is that we have a sort of continuity from Bonald and Maistre to Comte and Durkheim, not in ideological terms, but in methods and metaphysics⁵.

¹ James F. McMILLAN, "Religion and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France: Further Reflections on Why Catholics and Republicans Couldn't Stand Each Other", in Austen IVEREIGN (ed.), *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival*, Institute of Latin American Studies, London, 2000, p. 47.

² Georges GOYAU, *Autour de catholicisme social*, 5 vol., Perrin et Cie., Paris, 1897-1912, passim.

³ John MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory...cit.*, p. 51.

⁴ Robert NISBET, *The Sociological Tradition*, Heinemann, London, 1966, passim.

⁵ John MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory...cit.*, p. 52.

The Social Christian conservatism seen as a new social theology very similar with the durkheimian sociology, both of them having at their very end the idea of a society organized on the principle of authority, meet each other in the intellectual process of the formation of a new political subject: the modernized guild. These were seen as the only groups able to offer some stability for modern society as the social and political malaise has the same origin, namely

“the lack of secondary cadres to interpose between the individual and the State [...] these secondary groups are essential if the State is not to oppress the individual: they are also necessary if the State is to be free of the individual”¹.

Therefore we do have a sort of common ethos concerning the body that creates the power, it is also able to resist the power created and act contrary to it, meaning the Social Christian movement along with the new social theology born at the end of the nineteenth century have created, at least in a discursive manner, a new political subject. This was not the citizen as in the liberal thought, not the society dominated by the proletarian ethos as in the socialist thought, but the modernized guild – the only community able to render the human dignity. Later on, Social Christianity has dissolved into several directions, some of them democratic regimes (Christian Democracy) and some of them very authoritarian such as the interwar corporatist regime from Europe.

¹ Émile DURKHEIM, *Professional Ethics...cit.*, p. 96.