

# Christianity and Socialism in Italy in the early twentieth century

by Daniela Saresella

(Professor of Contemporary History, University of Milan)

*Though a Catholic country, Italy has always been distinguished by the presence of a deeply-rooted Socialist Party. At the beginning of the twentieth century, encouraged by the economic and social changes taking place, as well as by a new and growing awareness, a number of Catholics decided to open up to a dialogue with the socialist world. Some, such as Don Murri, identified Turati's party as a possible political interlocutor, in the conviction that the programmes of the democratic Catholics and those of the left had many elements in common. Others, particularly in intellectual circles, sensitive to modernist issues, believed that Christianity at its origins and the early forms of socialism shared the same basic identity. Thus some scholars (including Father Buonaiuti) chose to focus on the origins of the Church, convinced that examples could be found there of how the world could be changed according to Christian ethics.*

*The response of left-wing culture to these ideas was varied. Some, such as Camillo Prampolini, an exponent of "evangelical socialism," appeared to be interested in a dialogue, like those socialists who were readier to accept idealist inspiration. The party leadership, instead, barred any suggestion of debate, convinced that Marxism was an alternative to Christianity.*

Over the last years historians have focused on the importance of nineteenth-century struggles by political liberals to separate Church and State, which led to the "secular age" of Europe. Such struggles have been viewed by historians as a "cultural war", a conflict between modernization and ultramontanism, a key moment for the formation of Secularized states and Political parties.<sup>1</sup> In this

context, however, the impact of the contrast between the radical secularism embraced by the socialist left and the defence of a Catholic social order has been given scant attention.

In spite of important contributions, published in the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>ii</sup> on the relations between Christianity and Socialism, this issue has not become central, inasmuch as scholars have mainly focused, in monographs and articles, on the years of the Second Vatican Council,<sup>iii</sup> showing little interest in the period studied in this paper. Resuming research on the early twentieth century, putting those crucial years at the center of a new historical investigation is therefore necessary.

## I Catholicism and socialism in the nineteenth century

From the outset the views of the ecclesiastical institutions on socialism were highly critical. The first official condemnation came in the encyclical *Qui pluribus* of 9 December 1846 and the concept was confirmed by Pius IX in December 1864 in the encyclical *Quanta cura* and the *Syllabus errorum*, in which, whilst stigmatizing the century's ills, the “deadly error of communism and socialism” was emphasized. Leone XIII, who had already inspired a doctrinal analysis of socialism, dealt systematically with the problem in the *Rerum novarum*, which was published in May 1891,<sup>iv</sup> a year before the constitution of the Socialist Party in Italy, when the main organizations linked to the Second International had already been founded. The intention of the first part of the encyclical was to confute the theory of socialism, whilst in the second part alternative solutions were proposed, dictated by general ideals of solidarity between classes and a corporative model that was little suited to the industrial society of the late Eighteen Hundreds.<sup>v</sup> Along the same lines were the initiatives by the *Unione Cattolica per gli Studi Sociali* (Catholic Union for Social Studies), founded in Padua by Giuseppe Toniolo, who in 1894 drew up the

*Programma dei cattolici di fronte al socialismo*, (Catholic Programme on Socialism) in which he argued the need to adopt a Catholic social doctrine to solve the problems of contemporary society.<sup>vi</sup>

In Italy contact between the Catholic and socialist worlds began late compared to other European countries, because of slow economic development. The first attempts by a Catholic to deal with the challenges introduced by socialism were made by Father Carlo Maria Curci, the author in 1885 of *Di un socialismo cristiano nella questione operaia*, (On a Christian Socialism regarding the Workers Issue) which revealed strong sensitivity to social issues. After arguing that the aim of socialism was to find remedies for a system marked by “an economic disorder that is not temporary and accidental, but alters the very fabric” of society, with effects that are “pernicious for most of society itself,” the Jesuit suggested the need to unite the terms “Christian” and “Socialism.” Moreover, Curci did not fail to recall how, according to the apostle Paul, Christ had intended to encourage the renewal of humankind and that the task of this “new creature” would be to create a “new society.”<sup>vii</sup>

From the Eighteen Hundred onwards the mainly Waldensian Protestant minority in Italy also showed interest in the fate of the workers’ movement. Whilst still expressing reserves as regards Marxist materialism, the Protestants considered the criticisms of the capitalist economic system formulated by the socialists to have some justification.<sup>viii</sup> Predominantly inspired by the Waldensians and therefore sensitive to the values of the poverty of the Christian tradition, Italian Protestants were attentive to the social problems caused by the emergence of capitalism.<sup>ix</sup>

The debate on social issues was tackled mainly in the journal *Il Rinascimento*, published in Rome between 1903 and 1907 by the Comitato di Evangelizzazione (Committee for Evangelization); subsequently the discussion continued in the journals *La Luce* and *L’Avanguardia*, the latter a monthly publication by Italian-speaking social Christians, founded and edited by Giovanni Enrico Meille<sup>x</sup> and published between 1908 and 1910. *La Rivista Cristiana*, *Bilychnis*, *Fede e vita* and *Lumen de lumine* also took part in the discussion. The Protestant intellectuals rarely shared the

socialists' arguments, preferring the prospect of social Christianity, but still considered dialogue and exchange with the cultural and political proposals of the left to be a possibility.<sup>xi</sup> Amongst these socialist-leaning evangelists, we should remember Pastor Enrico Meynier, author of two small volumes, one published in 1894, *Il socialismo e il cristianesimo di fronte alla questione sociale*, (Socialism and Christianity faced with the Social Issue) and the other in 1902 *Problemi sociali contemporanei* (Contemporary Social Problems).<sup>xii</sup>

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, Catholics in Italy had to deal with the sort of socialism which, unlike the German version circulating predominantly in industrial areas,<sup>xiii</sup> was rooted in the rural world; this peculiarity put believers in a unique situation since if, on the one hand, it highlighted conflicting elements, on the other it also created the conditions for possible collaboration. Be that as it may, in practice there was often a shared attempt to improve the living conditions of workers: in Milan Don Umberto Benigni<sup>xiv</sup> (who was to become one of the fiercest opponents of modernism), together with Angelo Mauri<sup>xv</sup> and Filippo Meda,<sup>xvi</sup> founded the journal *La Rassegna sociale* which challenged the bases of both the liberal and Marxist schools of thought and considered the *Camere del Lavoro* (official Workers' Centres),<sup>xvii</sup> once Christianized, useful tools for solving the problems of both workers and farm labourers.<sup>xviii</sup> Some Catholics even decided to cooperate with the socialists: Aristide Tagliabue, representing the Catholic workers' mutual aid society, was on the organizing committee of the *Camera del Lavoro* in Monza in 1893; Don Anastasio Rossi (who was to become Bishop of Udine) collaborated with the *Camera del Lavoro* in Pavia and Don Luigi Cazzamali<sup>xix</sup> with the one in Lodi. Although the intention of these Catholics was to tackle the spread of Socialist theories amongst the proletariat, their contact with the problems of the poor encouraged them to accept strikes as a means of defence by the workers and to accept the class war,<sup>xx</sup> in contrast to the corporative theories put forward by the *Rerum novarum*.

I. II The “turn-of-the-century” watershed at the end of the twentieth century: the political thought of Romolo Murri

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Italy was still a backward country. Not a national state until 1861, and characterized by deep economic differences between North and South, Italy began the process of industrialization very late (after the protectionist turn of 1887). While in Germany the Sozialdemokratische Partei was founded in 1875, the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party) emerged many years later, in 1892, and took root in both industrial areas (Milan, Turin, Genoa) and in the countryside (especially in the Emilia Romagna region).

In May 1898, when the population of Milan organized strongly supported demonstrations to protest against food shortages, that part of the Catholic world which, since the French Revolution, had tended to condemn the modern, bourgeois, liberal civilization born in the nineteenth century, started to realize that another, far more serious problem was appearing in Italian politics, i.e. the affirmation of socialism.

The Italian government, headed by the Marquis Antonio Starabba Di Rudinì, reacted forcefully to the peoples’ uprisings and the Catholics largely supported its policy, putting aside their doubts about the Italian State that had taken the city of Rome in 1870. The Catholics’ gradual reconciliation with the State took place despite the problems between Italy and the Vatican being extremely serious. The new national entity, which was based on the principles of liberalism, had been formed by conquering the territory of the Holy See and it had been decided that Rome - the cradle of Christianity – had to be the capital city of the State.

But these issues were now forgotten, and the main problem was considered social subversion. So Mother Francesca Saverio Cabrini, who had already been working with her sisters alongside Italian emigrants in the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and who was therefore sensitive to the needs of the “poorest of the poor,” finding herself in Milan during the uprising took

up a firm position in favour of repression and military operations against the strikers, clearly demonstrating the widespread concern of the Catholic world about the spread of socialist ideas.<sup>xxi</sup>

However, not everyone in the Catholic universe restrained their animosity towards the liberal government: in fact Don Davide Albertario<sup>xxii</sup> and Don Romolo Murri<sup>xxiii</sup> heightened their criticism of a political class that had upset the old equilibrium of traditional society, depriving the people of the chance to make a decent living. Some figures from traditional Catholicism thus found themselves sharing their support of peoples' uprisings with the socialists and at times, as happened at Albertario, even sharing prison (the priest was put in the same cell as the socialist Filippo Turati).<sup>xxiv</sup> On that occasion, as the historian Pietro Scoppola points out, "the basic uniformity of the Catholic ranks" was broken<sup>xxv</sup> and whilst the Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica* (founded in Rome in 1850) expressed concern at the violent solutions proposed, which aimed to overthrow established power, Murri sided with those who were fighting on the barricades.

Murri hit a bullseye when in June 1898, in the journal *Cultura sociale*, founded by him and the voice of the Christian Democratic movement, he stressed that the bourgeoisie was interested in conserving the privileges they had acquired: the ideas they had professed in the past were now denied "egoistically and crudely and they forbade their adversaries freedom of association, limiting their political rights, attacking the freedom of the press, creating special laws, with military tribunals and penal colonies for political prisoners;"<sup>xxvi</sup> of the freedom they had once boasted of, all that remained was economic freedom. The only two parties able to fight to "free us from the awful burden that is crushing us," were, according to Murri, "the two opposites in recent Italian politics, social radicalism and Catholicism which has become a basis for a legal and honest national party that is also valid and vigorous."<sup>xxvii</sup> Murri's intention to include the religious inspiration of the Catholics amongst the progressive forces of liberal Italy thus became clear.<sup>xxviii</sup>

It was obviously the direct experience of poverty that came with the work of the parish priests, as well as evidence of the contradictions of capitalism, that opened up the possibility of an alliance of Catholics and Socialists; this alliance was especially favorable in Italy, since both had grievances

against the Italian State and the liberal bourgeoisie (which had promoted national unification and change in the economic structure).

It is already well-known that Murri, who in 1893-94 attended courses on historical materialism held at the La Sapienza University in Rome by the philosopher Antonio Labriola,<sup>xxix</sup> had started out along a path that would lead him away from the cultural prospects that had distinguished Catholicism from 1789 onwards, condemning outright the modern, contemporary world.<sup>xxx</sup> He soon declared himself to be no part of this culture and stated forcefully that he considered the social contradictions introduced by capitalism to be far more serious than the unresolved territorial bickering between the two States. He began to work on drawing up a project for a peoples' Catholic party – the Democrazia Cristiana - capable of fighting alongside the poorer classes. He openly declared that he wished to assume the socialist organizational model for the party's constitution but what is more interesting to note is his respect for Marxist organization, considered as a bulwark against those who attempted to compromise democracy in Italy.

In 1905 came the surprising and provocative proposal to Turati that the Christian Democrat movement, founded by Murri, and the Socialist Party should come to an agreement on a political programme. Murri did not underestimate the differences of the two movements, particularly as regards the interpretation of religious issues, but believed it was possible to fight together for the implementation of the “basic programme,” proposed by the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) and based on a project for social reforms, which he had declared himself in favour of for years. The Catholic leader argued that the political affinity between democratic Catholics and those reformist socialists who had abandoned the revolutionary perspective<sup>xxxi</sup> was no less important than the religious aspect that linked democratic Catholics and moderates: he thus challenged the idea that Christ's message could or should be interpreted in one way only from a social and political point of view, as well as challenging the unity of the faithful faced with Pius X's conservative directives.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In addition Murri, a careful reader of Marx's texts and Marxist imitators, encouraged by the reflections of Antonio Labriola and Benedetto Croce,<sup>xxxiii</sup> suggested a distinction between

historical materialism and dialectic materialism, believing it possible to accept the analysis of contemporary society provided by the former and thus opening up the way to an exchange between Marxist philosophy and the Catholic world which would be useful to many believers in the years to come.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Hope in an agreement was put into perspective by a derisive and ironic reply from Turati who, influenced by a positivist cultural and philosophical perspective and probably aware of the split with Arturo Labriola's revolutionary union wing of the party (close to George Sorel and decidedly anti-clerical) that a move towards dialogue would create, stressed the differences between the Catholic and the socialist movements: "We are the firstborn of the devil, of free thought [...] and no fear of election whistles would persuade us to give up our Satanic status as firstborn," Turati further accused the Catholics of not supporting the strikes, of wanting Sunday to be a day of rest so as to make Mass obligatory, of "talking about the proletariat but supporting the conservatives."<sup>xxxv</sup> Murri's proposal thus came to nothing but it is interesting to stress, as the socialist philosopher Giuseppe Renzi<sup>xxxvi</sup> did in a letter to Murri, that the proposal served to acknowledge that, for Murri, "it was not the religious criterion but the criterion of social, economic etc. issues (to sum up, earthly ones) that were the only ones capable of forming the cement for building a political party."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Most of the Catholic world reacted with disagreement or perplexity to Murri's proposal, to the extent that the priest would affirm that a sort of "holy war" had been declared against him and counter-attack by remarking on the strange alliance that had formed between Turati and the more conservative of the faithful, since both agreed that the Church could not be reformed and was politically aligned with the conservatives.<sup>xxxviii</sup> However, the position of the Bologna Curia's official journal, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, which had already distinguished itself in the past for its sympathy towards Murri's movement, should not be neglected. The newspaper wrote that Murri's initiative in itself had "nothing unorthodox" about it, since "what was and is acceptable elsewhere is acceptable for Italian Catholics, too" (what was referred to was the situation in Belgium, where



Catholics and socialists had been working together for years).<sup>xxxix</sup> More importantly, *L'Avvenire d'Italia* condemned the alliances between Catholics and conservatives approved by Pius X and foresaw a political position for Christians on the progressive front.<sup>xi</sup>

The group of believers that gathered around Murri wished to put an end to electoral abstention and intended presenting its own programme in Italy, one that was for the people but an alternative to the socialists'; Pius X's politics proved quite different because they involved Catholics abandoning their isolated position not by forming their own Party but through an alliance between clergy and conservatives. This programme took shape for the first time in the 1904 elections, when the Catholics, who had not voted since 1874, because they hadn't recognized the Italian liberal state, started to direct their votes, with tacit permission from the Holy See, towards the conservative candidates. Once all hope had been lost of involving the whole of the Catholic movement in his project, Murri decided to lead a minority campaign against clerical-moderates and in November 1905 in Bologna founded the Lega Democratica Nazionale (Democratic National League), thus taking a stand against the policy of the ecclesiastic hierarchy.<sup>xli</sup>

The League included the division between the spiritual and the temporal realms amongst the main points on its agenda, and was founded as a contrast to Pius X's conservative position, criticizing the clerics for their inability to come up with a social and economic programme that would meet the needs of the masses. Concerned with the need to distinguish themselves from socialist currents, whose influence in the rural world they intended challenging, the League refused collective property and worker management of industries but supported the peaceful expropriation of landed property when the latter failed to carry out its social function.<sup>xlii</sup> Assuming as its aims the defence of workers' interests and their political education, the League nonetheless accepted its members taking part in socialist unions, believing the principle of the unity and non-religious nature of the union organizations to be important.<sup>xliii</sup> Thus, some of its members came into contact with exponents of reformist socialism and tried to find agreements on the basis of their mutual aversion to the position of clerical moderates.<sup>xliv</sup> In a political system squeezed between the two blocks, that

of radical socialism and that of the moderate clerics, the LDN proved to systematically prefer the progressive area as its interlocutor, hoping to modify extreme anti-clericalism.

The organization moved on two levels, the political and the religious: at a political level with the intention of bringing about profound innovation and at the religious with the objective, supported in particular by Tommaso Gallarati Scotti,<sup>xlv</sup> of reclaiming the freedom of Catholics to act according to their own consciences. Pius X reacted harshly to these new ideas and in his encyclical *Pieni l'animo* he denied that Catholics could act independently in the political and social fields and forbade priests to become party members. The League, which stood alone in the Catholic world and was not even properly understood by the progressive world, too heavily marked by preconceived anti-clericalism, did not have much room for movement in Giolitti's Italy.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Because of the stand Murri had taken, on 14 April 1907 Pius X had him suspended *a divinis* and in September of the same year in the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*, the priest's thought was associated with that of the modernists.<sup>xlvii</sup> In March 1909 he was excommunicated *ad personam* for accepting to stand as a candidate for the Radical Party. In his programme Murri, who had based his election campaign primarily on anti-clerical issues, would have liked to see the creation of a radical left, which would also include the socialists, holding the clerical-moderate agreement to be the country's worst ill. He believed it should be countered by a project in support of the non-religious nature of the State, freedom of teaching, the banning of catechism in primary schools and the inclusion of the history of religions in secondary schools.<sup>xlviii</sup>

### III The newspaper *La plebe*

Even more radical than Murri's was the position taken up by the group of socialist priests known as the *Plebei* (Plebeians), who gathered in Reggio Emilia (near Bologna) from 1904 onwards around the newspaper *La Plebe*.<sup>xlix</sup>

Historians point out that in that agricultural area there was no tradition of small property-owners.<sup>1</sup> There were large estates, owned by a few capitalists, which meant that farm laborers were working in the same conditions as the factory workers: a capitalist employed farmhands who did not own the means of production. It was no coincidence that the *Plebei*, living in the countryside of Emilia, where the socialist movement was particularly strong amongst farm labourers and peasants, had become convinced of the need to unite socialism and Christianity and abandoned more exasperated anti-clerical characteristics to support instead the prospect of an “evangelical socialism.” Those socialists who were active propagandists among the peasants, had, indeed, abandoned the materialism and positivism of the Second International, thinking it better to refer to the values of the Catholic tradition, which had particularly strong roots in the Italian countryside.

The objective of the newspaper, which merged on 1 November 1905 with the journal from Macerata *Giovane Italia*, was to christianize socialists and socialize Christians in the name of the Gospel;<sup>li</sup> in 1905 *La Plebe* even opened up its editorial board to some socialists. The *Plebei* thus tended increasingly to approach the position of the Socialist Party, “trying to bring respect for the Church and the observation of Christian principles to the masses”<sup>lii</sup> and affirmed clearly that they considered themselves simultaneously socialists and Christians, holding there to be no lack of compatibility between the two programmes, “at least in theory, nor any barriers dividing them.”<sup>liii</sup>

If the equating of early Christianity and socialism separated the *Plebei* from Murri, the former shared this interpretation with the evangelical socialists, who were a strong presence in the countryside of Reggio Emilia. The *plebei*, like the socialist Camillo Prampolini,<sup>liv</sup> believed that over the centuries the message of Christ had encouraged the fight for greater social equality and even went as far as to state that Jesus had been history’s “first socialist;” for them, however, unlike the socialist leader of Emilia, the teachings of the Gospels did not stop there and they refuted any secular transformation of the Christian experience, insisting on the need to safeguard its transcendent aspect.

The “good priests” (as Prampolini called them) were also in disagreement with Murri over the perplexity he had expressed towards collectivism. In an open letter to the leader of the Christian democrats, they wrote: “You say that collectivism is a Utopia. This may be. As for me, we believe it to be possible. In any case, if the people wish for it, why oppose it? Who stops you from becoming a socialist? Does one, by any chance, need to accept the entire basic philosophy of Marx’s *Capital* to encourage and help prepare a collective régime? If this were so, there would be very few socialists. Instead there are thousands, millions, just because [...] the Socialist Party is not a party of philosophers and even less of theologians, but simply a party that supports the interests of proletariats.”<sup>lv</sup>

In his reply to the letter Murri admitted that the Christian democrats had at times been “too anti-socialist” but he insisted on his belief that it was right to fight collectivism, because it was “a bad dream, a false mirage.” As to the class struggle, Murri declared that this was no problem for him and he feared it not in itself but because often “hatred and greed wormed their way in.” He concluded by repeating that he could not totally “be with the *Plebei*,” although they recalled “many principles and criteria that had been too neglected on our side and that the social movement should assimilate and put into practice,” because those extreme ideas could spark off a reaction and thus a further change in the attitude of Catholics towards the moderates.<sup>lvi</sup> Murri thus confirmed the reasons for his perplexity towards the positions assumed by the *Plebei*, criticizing them mainly for having completely abandoned all Christian social principles to adhere to the socialist project. Despite this, the leader of the DC (Democrazia Cristiana) did declare that, “my strong sympathy is with the *plebei* and I am following the development of their generous and risky attempt with keen interest.”<sup>lvii</sup>

Like Murri himself, the *plebei* stated that it was the reformist spirit they preferred within the socialist movement, reassured here by a direct knowledge of Prampolini’s work,<sup>lviii</sup> and proving to be even more intransigent than the priest from the Marche in their judgements of revolutionary

unionists: the latter were accused of sympathizing with “the egoistic instincts of the masses,” were devoid of “humanitarian and altruistic ideals” and encouraged clashes between workers.<sup>lix</sup>

The Church institutions looked on the establishment of these ideas with concern and in August 1906 Don Rodrigo Levoni, one of the priests belonging to the group, was suspended *a divinis*; the following year *La Plebe* was obliged to close down because of growing economic difficulties and Levoni decided to join the socialist organization.

During 1905 the experience of Reggio Emilia aroused interest in other regions and the map of dissidents became wide-ranging: a group of socialist priests started up in Umbria, in Val Tiberina; the latter took the side of the peasants and their claims, trying to coordinate the struggle in order to obtain agreements on agriculture that were more in favour of the labourers. In this case, too, it was a newspaper, *La Rivendicazione*, that acted as a tool for spreading the thoughts of these Christians. The priest Urbano Segapeli argued in the newspaper that the socialist message was a contemporary projection of the demand for justice and truth that existed in the Gospels.<sup>lx</sup> During the early years of the century in Mantua the weekly journal *Il destino della plebe*, close to the position of the Christian socialists, was published.<sup>lxi</sup> In Naples the demands of the Catholic socialists were spread thanks to the journals *Battaglie d'oggi* and the *Nuova Riforma*, both the fruits of Giovanni Avolio's militancy. Avolio believed that socialism must deal with the whole nature of humankind, i.e. its material needs as well as its spiritual ones, and that materialist premises should thus be abandoned. Believers and non-believers – all those working towards greater social justice –<sup>lxii</sup> should support Turati's party, which was marked by its political programme in favour of the people. Avolio's reflections found their expression in experiences such as the Associazione dei Preti Lavoratori (Association of worker-priests) and the Avanguardia dei Cristiano-Sociali d'Italia (Avant-garde of social-Christians in Italy), the latter guided by the Protestant Giovanni Enrico Meille and the Piedmontese Mario Tortonese.<sup>lxiii</sup>

IV The political thought of Ernesto Buonaiuti and the radical group in Rome

In the first decade of the twentieth century in Rome, the Gruppo Radicale Romano (Roman radical group) started up,<sup>lxiv</sup> whose most prominent member was Ernesto Buonaiuti,<sup>lxv</sup> an exponent of the modernist movement and supporter of the need to return to the values of early Christianity which he himself, as a historian of the Church, had studied in detail.<sup>lxvi</sup> It was this new interest in studying the origins of Christianity that led some scholars to examine the experiences of the early Christian communities. Many arrived at the conclusion that the latter were based on principles and values not far removed from those of contemporary socialism.

In the publication *Rivista storico-critica delle scienze teologiche*, which came out in 1905, he praised the eschatological interpretation of Christian origins and this position led him to argue a “perfect likeness” between the Christian message and the hopes of modern socialism;<sup>lxvii</sup> in the same way, in the work published in Rome in 1908 *Perché siamo socialisti e cristiani*, (Why we are Socialists and Christians) we read: “We say to our companions in religious faith: be truly Christian and you will be socialist and anti-clerical. And to our companions in social faith: be truly socialist and you will be Christians.”<sup>lxviii</sup>

Buonaiuti was amongst the founders of the journal *Nova et Vetera* published in Rome in 1908 at the initiative of a group of believers, including Manlio Rossi e Nicola Turchi.<sup>lxix</sup> According to Buonaiuti, the journal was to stand as a space for meeting and exchanging views, open to all the innovative currents in modern Christianity i.e. all those who cared about the destiny of the working masses.<sup>lxx</sup> As to the closeness of Christianity to socialism, the journal emphasized that both had as their objective a fairer distribution of wealth and the establishment of an earthly world where there was also room for joy. It should be noted, however, that in this journal George Tyrell, the leading exponent of English modernism, did not conceal the fact that he kept his distance from these theories, and the group from the journal *Il Rinascimento*, directed by the aristocrats Tommaso Gallarati Scotti, Alessandro Casati and Stefano Jacini, expressed their perplexity as to the equivalence between early Christianity and socialism.<sup>lxxi</sup> Only a few months after the

publication of *Pascendi*, Buoniauti independently published *Il programma dei modernisti* (The Programme of the Modernists) and in 1908 *Lettere di un prete modernista* (Letters from a Modernist Priest), in which he confirmed his convictions.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Buoniauti's thought was shared by some young people from the Lega Democratica Nazionale, supporters of an innovative socialist hypothesis and of the need to work simultaneously for political and religious innovation. In July 1908 two of them, Felice Perroni and Guglielmo Quadrotta, who also contributed to *Nova et vetera*, went as far as to ask for membership of the Socialist Party by reason of their faith,<sup>lxxiii</sup> writing an open letter that was published in "Avanti!", the newspaper of the Socialist Party; the request was refused by Turati's party, still distinguished by a positivist culture and considering it impossible to unite religious belief with a political project for social transformation.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Unlike Murri, who had limited himself to suggesting an electoral alliance with the socialists, Felice Perroni and Guglielmo Quadrotta stated their faith in the socialist programme and declared that they accepted its methods for pressing the demands of the proletariat. The two young men thought a radical reform of economic and political institutions was needed, so that all people were in a position to express their own spiritual resources. Moreover, recalling the Christian precept of love and the hope in a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, they were convinced that historically the Christian experience was an inspiration to social progress and therefore considered that siding with socialism was the necessary and natural outlet for their religious faith.<sup>lxxv</sup>

It was Buoniauti who pointed out the differences between Perroni's and Quadrotta's political perspective and that of Murri, stressing how the Christian democrat, who had always criticized socialism and been averse to its political and social project, hardly proved credible in his attempt to approach the party. The attitude of the young Romans was not the same, as they insisted that it was the principles of their own socialism that were different, not the objective; they "re-evoked the great hope in a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, which in every troubled age of history has shaken

the ecclesiastical Christian masses and led them to change, like new yeast; they acknowledged the social aspect of religion.”<sup>lxxvi</sup>

Though it is true that the socialists refused to let them join the Party, it is nonetheless interesting to note that their request opened up a debate inside the organization and the socialists Ivanoe Bonomi<sup>lxxvii</sup> and Giuseppe Rensi expressed themselves in favour. Bonomi in particular, by then critical of the party majority, refused the idea that the socialist movement should remain entirely in “the rut of Marxism” and therefore believed that it was inopportune to refuse Christians who, despite different cultural premises, sustained the political prospects in question.<sup>lxxviii</sup> For his part, the philosopher Rensi believed that the only “eternal foundation of socialism” was a spiritual one, which he judged to be superior to “any vicissitudes in doctrine or any scientific confusion”; in his opinion, therefore, professing a religious belief, unless it adhered to an authoritarian and papist concept, could not be considered to be in contradiction with any adhesion to socialism.<sup>lxxix</sup>

In the journal *Critica sociale* an article by Domenico Spadoni appeared, in which he recognized that the preaching of Christ emanated “a spirit of brotherly equality which, together with the utmost disdain for riches, led to communism as a natural consequence.”<sup>lxxx</sup> Links between socialism and communism were also argued by Angelo Crespi, initially a socialist and a contributor to *Critica Sociale* (the theoretical journal of the Italian Socialist Party), who subsequently came to the conclusion that any real reform of society should contemplate a renewal of the spirit; he had thus come to sustain a renovated religion close to modernist positions.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

Crespi wrote: “I began to distinguish between the degeneration of religion as a phenomenon and its essence as manifest in religious genius and I felt that this was an immense power, capable of enormous good in the world.”<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Angelica Balabanoff<sup>lxxxiii</sup> declared herself sceptical towards these suggestions. Writing in the Socialist Party newspaper *Avanti!*, she argued that being a socialist implied embracing Marxism and she wondered how Perroni and Quadrotta could remain in the Italian Socialist Party, which professed the materialist “philosophical concept;” Marx’s merit was to have “thoroughly



investigated Feuerbach's materialism and transferred Hegel's dialectic method onto materialistic terrain." The Ukrainian revolutionary also argued against Rensi, declaring that Marxism was "poles apart from idealism."<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

The debate in the Socialist Party newspaper was also joined by Alberto Malatesta who claimed that "a profound contrast" existed between socialism and Christianity and, above all, that the action taken by the Catholics was "conservative and manipulative." He added that in its long history the Church had always persecuted those it considered to be "the enemies of religion," organizing wars and legitimizing the practice of the Inquisition. He concluded: "In that they advocate and spread the word of Christ, there is no possibility of an understanding with the Christians".<sup>lxxxv</sup> The radical nature of these affirmations led Quadrotta to intervene in the Socialist newspaper, making it clear that Christianity was "an eminently social movement," or "the preparation of humankind for an earthly kingdom of love and justice, through inner renewal." Quadrotta urged the socialist to consider the Gospels as a historical document and thus, in the wake of the studies carried out by Alfred Loisy,<sup>lxxxvi</sup> to realize that "Jesus' preaching had been altered by the theological concerns of certain great advocates of Christianity, such as Saint Paul." This is what gave rise to his conviction that only socialism could bring about "the great, human hope that the word of Christ had announced twenty centuries previously."<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

These statements led the editorial board of *Avanti!* to intervene in the debate, declaring that they agreed with Quadrotta when he maintained that "the theological interpretation of Christianity" was a distortion of Christ's words but adding that until the movement for the revision of the Bible had managed to substitute the notion of original Christianity for its theological version in people's minds, it was impossible to consider Christianity as an element of progress for society.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

The demand for greater social justice and for religious renewal also appeared in the journal *Coenobium*, founded in Lugano in 1906 by the socialist Enrico Bignami<sup>lxxxix</sup> and the Republican Arcangelo Ghisleri,<sup>xc</sup> which, particularly in its early months, assumed a "philosophical and pro-modernist" nature, so much so that it numbered amongst its contributors Romolo Murri, Domenico

Battaini, Arnaldo Cervesato, Angelo Crespi and Friedrich von Hügel. The journal attempted to integrate two value systems, the Christian and the socialist, which were held to be akin and complementary in terms of ethics, with a view to a “revolution in morals.” It was in the pages of this journal that Rensi coined the expression “idealist socialism,” meant as a sort of socialism that tended to “attribute greater importance to spiritual values rather than to material goods.”<sup>xci</sup>

The “cenobitic approach” was followed by *Bilycnis* (1912-1931), the newspaper of the Battista Theology Faculty in Rome which, like the Swiss journal, took up a strong position against the Great War, and by Giuseppe Gangale’s *Conscientia* (1922-1927); both shared with *Coenobium* the prospect of evangelical inspiration as a spur to the inner experience of faith, the aversion to religious dogma and the need for a new search by the individual: they were convinced that without a new individual conscience any project for political renewal was impossible.<sup>xcii</sup>

## V After the First World War

With the First World War the political and religious climate changed and the radical experiments that had marked some Christian minorities at the start of the Nineteen Hundreds were put to an end by institutional repression in Rome, where, in the encyclical *Pascendi dominicis gregis* (1907), war was declared on modernism and all attempts at free research and reflection. Many of the faithful found this highly traumatic and a number of the believers who had been most visibly in favour of a renewal of the ecclesiastical institutions abandoned the Church.

We must not forget that, in October 1922, Fascism came to power in Italy. Mussolini, who had been socialist and anti-clerical before the First World War, found important points of contact with the Catholic Church, precisely in defense of order and tradition. As the historians Giovanni Miccoli and Guido Verucci point out,<sup>xciii</sup> this agreement closed any space for debate and discussion in the church and in Italian society.

Even before the First World War, the “plebeian priests”, decided to join the Socialist Party and embrace Marxist philosophy. Murri, who had now been ex-communicated, drew close to Fascism after the War, under the incomprehensible illusion that Mussolini’s project might make some of the hopes he had professed in his youth come true. Now married with children, he became a journalist with the Bolognese daily newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino*: the hostility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy towards him was ferocious, even though in November 1943, only a few months before his death, Pius XII revoked his excommunication. Perroni and Quadrotta remained faithful to their ideals of freedom and opposed Fascism, joining Giovanni Amendola’s *Unione Nazionale* project in 1924.<sup>xciiv</sup> Quadrotta, both journalist and editor and a member of *Azione Cattolica* from the end of the ‘Twenties onwards, committed himself to the *Democrazia Cristiana* Party in the second post-war period.

Buonaiuti’s<sup>xcv</sup> trajectory was interesting, because he became the emblem of Catholic anti-fascism: in 1915 he became Professor of History of Christianity at the Sapienza University in Rome. The Roman Curia opposed him fiercely: his books were put on the Index (the Prohibited Books List) and in 1925 he was excommunicated for having taken up the defence of the modernist movement. A regulation in the Concordat, signed in 1929 between the Italian State and the Holy See, and supported by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri (Pius XI’s Secretary of State) especially to punish Buonaiuti, ruled that an excommunicated priest could not teach in Italian universities. First deprived of his teaching post and then dismissed in 1931 as a consequence of his determination not to swear loyalty to the Fascist régime, Buonaiuti lived in poverty right up to his death in April 1946.

Giorgio La Piana, who had shared Buonaiuti’s passion for historical and religious research at the beginning of the Nineteen Hundreds, and who had been obliged, like many “modernists,” to leave Italy because of the climate that had developed under Pius X’s pontificate (in 1916 he became Professor of History of the Church at the Harvard Divinity School), wrote of his friend, who had remained true to the ideas he had professed in his youth: “When he was driven outside the Church,

he found consolation in the idea that his expulsion decreed by ecclesiastical power had no value in the sight of God. Up to the end Buonaiuti considered himself a member of the Church of God and a tool chosen by the Spirit to communicate the Divine law.<sup>»xcvi</sup>

## Conclusions

The Catholics who sought to establish a dialogue with Socialists at the beginning of the twentieth century were intellectuals, genuinely interested in political cultures other than their own as a result of their disappointment with the backward culture of the Church, which, after the French Revolution, had been mostly impervious to the stimuli of modernity. With its ability to gain insight into the contradictions of contemporary society, Socialist thought represented for them the emblem of modernity, and the socialist party seemed the political organization best equipped to meet the needs of mass society.

Usually based in the big cities of Northern and Central Italy or in economically developed agricultural areas, these intellectuals therefore voiced the need to conform Catholic culture to modernity. Southern Italy, instead, underdeveloped and facing serious issues related to poverty, was hardly involved in any attempt at change.

Socialist parties in Europe were usually too pleased to find that some clergy wanted to join them: as we have seen, though, the Italian situation was different and the Catholics' opening to the Socialist world provoked debates and misgiving. The reasons for the specificity of the Italian context are likely to be found in the role that the Church had traditionally played in the country. Until 1861, when the Italian State was established, a great part of the Italian peninsula, traditionally a Catholic area with Protestant and Jewish minorities adding up to more or less 1% of the population, was occupied by the Papal States.

Even after 1861, however, the Church performed a crucial function in the country: Catholics, therefore, were judged for their political stance more than for their religious belief. The Italian Liberal State tried to promote the separation between the religious and the secular sphere, which,

however, did not prevent the Church from being a strong actor in the political field, and a conservative one at that.

Such politicization of the Catholic world generated misgivings in many Socialists, even about those Catholics who were most sympathetic to issues of social justice. The Socialists' attitude vacillated between distrust and the awareness of the fact that Catholic principles were deeply rooted in the Italian people. Catholics were thus considered conservative in politics and, at the same time, dangerous competitors. Only few Socialist intellectuals understood the importance to forge an alliance with Catholics, or at least to seek dialogue with them. They understood that in Italy the poor's condition could be improved only through an alliance between the two popular forces.

---

<sup>i</sup> See Guido Verucci, *L'Italia laica prima e dopo l'Unità* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996); *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); *La secularización conflictiva: España (1898 - 1931)*, eds. Julio de la Cueva and Feliciano Montero (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2007); Timothy Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism; France and the United States in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Manuel Borutta, *Antikatholizismus: Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); Olaf Blaschke, "Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 38–75; *Nation und Religion in Europa: Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (Frankfurt a. M., 2004); Todd H. Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany. The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Lorenzo Bedeschi, *Cattolici e comunisti: dal socialismo cristiano ai cristiani marxisti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975).

<sup>iii</sup> See Gerd-Rainer Horn, *Western European Liberation Theology 1924-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2008); Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Daniela Saresella, *Cattolici a sinistra. Dal modernismo ai giorni nostri* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2011); ID, "The Dialogue between Catholics and Communists in Italy during the 1960s," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 3 (July 2014) 493-512.

- 
- <sup>iv</sup> *Le Pontificat de Léon XIII: Renaissance du Saint-Siège?*, ed. Philippe Levillain and Jean-Marc Ticchi (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2006), 225-244.
- <sup>v</sup> Camillo Brezzi, *Laici, cattolici. Chiesa e Stato dall'Unità d'Italia alla Grande guerra* (Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, 2011), 122-135.
- <sup>vi</sup> Paolo Pombeni, "Movimento cattolico e movimento socialista," in *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia (1860-1980)*, I/2, I fatti e le idee (Turin, Italy: Marietti, 1981), 17-19.
- <sup>vii</sup> Carlo Maria Curci, *Di un socialismo cristiano nella questione operaia* (Florence-Rome: Fratelli Bencini Editori, 1885), V-VII. "un disordine economico, non accidentale e passeggero, ma che altera l'intima compagine;" "perniciosi alla parte maggiore della società stessa;" "nuova cultura;" "nuova società." Curci (1809 - 1891) was an Italian Jesuit and theologian.
- <sup>viii</sup> Giorgio Spini, "Movimenti evangelici nell'Italia contemporanea," *Rivista storica italiana*, no. 3 (1968): 463-498.
- <sup>ix</sup> The Waldensians, like other movements from the XII century onwards, argued that a return should be made to the origins of the Church; they assumed a critical position towards the temporal Church as constituted by Constantine. Waldo (1140 – 1206), who inspired the movement, was a rich bourgeois from Lyons, who gave all his riches to the poor and took the principles of the Gospels as his commandments.
- <sup>x</sup> Meille (1848 -1901), a Waldensian pastor, secretary of the Waldensian Church, was one of the founders of the Société d'Histoire Vaudoise.
- <sup>xi</sup> Valdo Vinay, *Storia dei Valdesi* (Turin, Italy: Claudiana, 1980), 291-293.
- <sup>xii</sup> Alfredo Luciani, *Cristianesimo e socialismo in Europa (1700-1989)* (Rome: ASCE, 1989), 748-749.
- <sup>xiii</sup> See Sebastian Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vor der religiösen Frage 1863-1890*, (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 287-211.
- <sup>xiv</sup> On entering the Secretary of State's office in 1906, Benigni (1862-1934) was appointed *Sottosegretario agli Affari Straordinari*. He devoted himself to fighting Modernism through information bulletins and by organizing a secret society, the *Sodalizio Piano*.
- <sup>xv</sup> From 1900 to 1904, Mauri (1873-1936), was President of the Italian Catholic University Federation. He was one of the founders in 1919 of the Italian Partito Popolare.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Meda (1869 - 1939) was a Catholic politician and a journalist. A Member of Parliament since 1904, he became Minister of Finance in 1916.

---

<sup>xvii</sup> The first “Camera del Lavoro” was founded in Milan in 1891; the CdL had the task of coordinating and organizing salaried workers. After the foundation in 1892 of the Socialist Party, the CdL (which spread throughout northern Italy) had close ties with the workers' Party.

<sup>xviii</sup> Giorgio Vecchio, “I cattolici milanesi e la locale Camera del lavoro (1889-1896),” *Bollettino dell’archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia*, no. 1 (1977) : 151-179.

<sup>xix</sup> Francesca Anzi, “Le origini delle Camere del lavoro,” *Critica sociale*, no. 15-16 (1947) : 297-298.

<sup>xx</sup> Luisa Osnaghi Dodi, *L’azione sociale dei cattolici nel milanese (1878-1904)* (Milan, Italy: Sugarco, 1974), 149-158.

<sup>xxi</sup> Letter from F.S. Cabrini to “mia figlia carissima,” Milan, 9 maggio 1998, in Archivio Generale Congregazione del Sacro Cuore; see Daniela Saresella, *Cattolicesimo italiano e sfida americana* (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 2001), 165-166. Cabrini (1850 - 1917) was an Italian missionary, founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

<sup>xxii</sup> Albertario (1846 - 1902) was an Italian priest and journalist, editor of the *Osservatore Cattolico* newspaper, which brought together intransigent positions concerning faith with open positions on social issues.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Murri (1870 -1944), a priest since 1893, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, promoted the Democratic Catholic movement in Italy. A critic of the conservatism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he tried to reconcile socialism and social doctrine.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Turati (1857 - 1932) was an Italian politician and journalist. In 1892, he was one of the founders of the Italian Socialist Party.

<sup>xxv</sup> Pietro Scoppola, *Coscienza religiosa e democrazia nell’Italia contemporanea* (Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, 1966), 61.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Romolo Murri, “La crisi del liberalismo in Italia,” *Cultura sociale*, no. 12 (1898) : 178. “egoisticamente, ruvidamente, e vietava agli avversari la libertà di associazione, restringeva i diritti politici, attentava alla libertà di stampa, creava le leggi eccezionali e i tribunali militari e le colonie per i condannati politici.”

<sup>xxvii</sup> Romolo. Murri, “Il momento e i cattolici,” *Cultura sociale*, no. 10 (1898) : 146. “liberarci dal fardello immane che ci schiaccia;” “i due poli estremi della nuova politica italiana, il radicalismo socialista, e il cattolicesimo divenuto base di un partito nazionale legale e onesto, ma insieme valido e vigoroso.”

<sup>xxviii</sup> Scoppola, *Coscienza religiosa e democrazia*, 112.

<sup>xxix</sup> Labriola (1843 -1904) was an Italian philosopher, with particular interests in the field of Marxism. He was one of the founders of the Italian Socialist Party.

---

<sup>xxx</sup> See: D. Saresella, *Romolo Murri e il movimento socialista (1891-1907)* (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 1994), 21-35. On Murri, see: C. Giovannini, *Romolo Murri dal radicalismo al fascismo: i cattolici tra religione e politica (1900-1925)* (Bologna, Italy: Cappelli, 1981); Francesco Maria Cecchini, *Romolo Murri* (Rome: Il Poligono, 1982); *Romolo Murri e i murrismi in Italia e in Europa cent'anni dopo*, ed. Ilaria Biagioli, Alfonso Botti and Rocco Cerrato (Urbino, Italy: Quattro Venti, 2004).

<sup>xxxi</sup> The Italian Socialist Party, reflecting the ongoing debate in the Second International, was divided between two factions: a reformist one, led by Turati, and a revolutionary one, led by Arturo Labriola. Murri showed interest in Turati's reflections.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Pius X (Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto, 1835 -1914) was Pope from 1903 to 1914. He supported the alliance between Catholics and liberals, against the socialists.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Croce (1866 -1952) was an Italian philosopher, historian, politician, literary critic and writer. He was the ideologist of twentieth-century Italian liberalism.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Romolo Murri, "Partiti ed accordi," *Cultura sociale*, no. 187 (1905) : 305-306.

<sup>xxxv</sup> "Noi siamo figli primogeniti del diavolo, ossia del libero esame [...] e nessun timore di fischi elettorali ci persuaderebbe a rinunciare alla nostra satanica primogenitura;" "parlare di proletariato ma di sostenere i conservatori."

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Rensi (1871 - 1941) was an Italian philosopher. He taught moral philosophy at the University of Genoa.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Letter from Giuseppe Rensi to Romolo Murri, Bellinzona 12 novembre 1905, Archivio Romolo Murri, Fondazione Romolo Murri di Urbino, box. 8. "non era il criterio-religione, bensì il criterio-questioni sociali, economiche ecc. (terrene in una parola) che solo poteva formare il cemento di un partito politico."

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Romolo Murri, "La guerra santa," *Cultura sociale*, no. 192 (1906) : 2.

<sup>xxxix</sup> In Belgium abbé Adolphe Daens founded the Christene Volkspatij in 1893. On several occasions the latter came to local agreements with the Socialist Party (for example for the local elections in Alost in 1899).

<sup>xl</sup> Alessandro Cantono, "Echi," *Avvenire d'Italia*, 25 October 1905. "niente di eterodosso;" "quello che fu ed è lecito altrove è pure lecito per i cattolici italiani."

<sup>xli</sup> See Claudio Giovannini, "Lega democratica nazionale," in *Dizionario storico del movimento cattolico in Italia 1860-1980*, ed. Francesco Traniello and Giorgio Campanini, I/2, I fatti e le idee (Turin, Italy: Marietti, 1981), 304-309. See Claudio Giovannini, *Politica e religione nel pensiero della Lega Democratica Nazionale (1905-1915)* (Rome: Cinque Lune, 1968).

<sup>xlii</sup> Giuseppe Rossini, Introduzione to Giuseppe Donati, *Scritti politici*, ed. Giuseppe Rossini (Rome: Cinque Lune, 1956), X.



---

<sup>xliii</sup> Scoppola, *Coscienza religiosa e democrazia*, 123.

<sup>xliv</sup> Ernesto Vercesi, *Democrazia cristiana in Italia* (Milan, Italy: Tipografia e Libreria dell'Unione, 1910), 33-34.

<sup>xlv</sup> Gallerati Scotti (1878 -1966) was a member of Italian Catholic modernism. An aristocrat and a writer, in 1907 he founded the journal *Rinnovamento*, with Alessandro Casati and Stefano Jacini. See Nicola Raponi, *Tommaso Gallarati Scotti tra politica e cultura* (Milan, Italy: Vita e Pensiero, 1971); e *Rinnovamento religioso e impegno civile in Tommaso Gallarati Scotti*, ed. Fulvio De Giorgi and Nicola Raponi (Milan, Italy: Vita e Pensiero, 1994); *Tommaso Gallarati Scotti tra totalitarismo fascista e ripresa democratica*, ed. Luciano Pazzaglia and Claudia Crevenna (Milan, Italy: Cisalpino, 2013).

<sup>xlvi</sup> "A proposito delle 'Lettere di un prete modernista'," *Nova et vetera*, no. 11-12 (1908) : 379-382. See Alfonso Botti, "Rinnovamento religioso e riforma della Chiesa: 'Nova et vetera'," in *La riforma della Chiesa nelle riviste religiose di inizio Novecento*, ed. Marina Benedetti and Daniela Saresella (Milan, Italy: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 2010), 77-91.

<sup>xlvii</sup> There is a considerable bibliography dealing with modernism. As regards France, the following are still essential reading: Émile Poulat, *Histoire, dogme et critique dans la crise moderniste* (Paris: Casterman, 1962); Pierre Colin, *L'audace et le soupçon. La crise moderniste dan le catholicisme française* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1997); Émile Goichot, *Alfred Loisy e ses amis* (Paris: Les editions du cerf, 2002). Regarding England: Alexander Roper Vidler, *A Variety of Catholic Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1970). The following are more recent works: David G. Schultenover, *A view from Rome. On the eve of the Modernist Crisis* (New York: Ferdham University Press, 1993); *Catholicism contending with Modernity: Roman catholic modernism and anti-modernism in historical contexts*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2000); *In wilder zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem. 100 Jahre Modernismus und Antimodernismus in der katholischen Kirche*, ed. Hubert Wolf and Judith Schepers (Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009); Guido Verucci, *L'eresia del Novecento. La Chiesa e la repressione del modernismo in Italia* (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 2010); *La condanna del modernismo. Documenti interpretazioni, conseguenze*, ed. Claus Arnold and Giovanni Vian (Rome: Viella, 2010); *Modernismo. Un secolo dopo*, ed. Luciano Vaccaro and Marco Vergottini (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 2010).

<sup>xlviii</sup> The Radical Party was founded in the late nineteenth century by Felice Cavallotti and Agostino Bertani, heirs of the culture of the Risorgimento and advocates of a secular and liberal spirit, which aims to promote suffrage and the secular school system on a wider scale. See Alfonso Botti, *Romolo Murri e l'anticlericalismo negli anni de 'La Voce'* (Urbino, Italy: Quattro Venti, 1996), 34-35; e Lucio D'Angelo, *Il radicalismo sociale di Romolo Murri (1912-1920)* (Milan, Italy: Angeli, 2007).

---

<sup>xlix</sup> Many of the journals and newspapers quoted in the essay were basically typewritten sheets, very cheap and irregularly printed; publication of them was frequently suspended for economic reasons. They might – as in the case of the journal “Rinnovamento” - be subsidized by their rich directors.

<sup>i</sup> The old book: Emilio Sereni, *Il capitalismo nelle campagne* (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1947) is essential reading on this subject.

<sup>ii</sup> “Cristianizzare i socialisti e socializzare i cristiani,” *La Plebe*, 1° November 1905.

<sup>iii</sup> Franco Boiardi, “‘La Plebe’ (1904-1907) e i radicali cristiani di Reggio Emilia,” *Rinnovamento*, no. 4 (1960) : 61. “cercando di portare tra le masse popolari il rispetto per la Chiesa e l’osservanza dei principi cristiani.”

<sup>iiii</sup> “Chi siamo,” *La Plebe*, 30 April 1905. “almeno nel campo delle teorie, né alcuna barriera che li dividesse.”

<sup>lv</sup> Camillo Prampolini (1859-1930) was an Italian socialist politician. Born in Reggio Emilia, he was the most important exponent of Evangelical Socialism. See. Arnaldo Nesti, *Gesù socialista* (Turin, Italy: Claudiana, 1974) : 38-44. See also, Silvia Dominici, *La lotta senz’odio: il socialismo evangelico del «Seme» (1901-1915)* (Milan, Italy: Angeli, 1995); Patrizia Audenino, *L’avvenire del passato. Utopia e moralità nella sinistra italiana alle soglie del XX secolo* ( Milan, Italy: Angeli, 2002).

<sup>lv</sup> Il prete della plebe, “Fra la gens emiliana,” *Cultura sociale*, no. 181 (1905), 221. The letter was also published in *La Plebe* on 9 July 1905. “Voi dite: il collettivismo è un’utopia. Sarà. Per me lo credo possibile. Ad ogni modo, se il popolo lo vuole perché dovete opporvi? Chi vi vieta di essere socialisti? Forse che per favorire e preparare il regime collettivista è necessario accettare anche tutta la base filosofica del *Capitale* di Marx? Se così fosse i socialisti sarebbero molto pochi. Invece sono migliaia e milioni proprio perché [...] il partito socialista non è un partito di filosofi e tanto meno di teologi, ma semplicemente il partito degli interessi proletari.”

<sup>lvi</sup> “troppo antisocialista”; “un cattivo sogno, un falso miraggio;” “vi si annidava l’odio e la cupidigia;” “molti principi e criterii che erano stati troppo dimenticati dai nostri, e che il movimento sociale cristiano dovrebbe assimilare e applicare.”

<sup>lvii</sup> Murri’s reply appears at the bottom of the letter “Il prete della plebe” and was subsequently re-published in *La Plebe* on 6 August 1905. “i plebei hanno la mia vivissima simpatia ed io seguo con vivo interesse le vicende del loro tentativo generoso e rischioso.”

<sup>lviii</sup> See: Enrico Decleva, *Anticlericalismo e religiosità nel socialismo italiano*, in *Prampolini e il socialismo riformista*, (Rome: Mondo operaio-Edizioni Avanti!, 1979), 258-260.

<sup>lix</sup> “Gli eccessi del materialismo. Socialismo e sindacalismo,” *La Plebe*, 9 July 1905. See. Saresella, *Romolo Murri e il movimento socialista*, 118-121. “gli istinti egoistici delle masse;” “gli ideali umanitari e altruistici.”

---

<sup>lx</sup> Bedeschi, “Le correnti cattoliche novatrici nell’Umbria all’inizio del secolo,” *Studi economici e sociali*, no. 3 (1966) : 125-136.

<sup>lxi</sup> Lorenzo Bedeschi, *Cattolici e comunisti: dal socialismo cristiano ai cristiani marxisti* (Milan, Italy: Feltrinelli, 1974), 20-22.

<sup>lxii</sup> Avolio (1848-1928), a friend of Murri’s, was the organizer in Naples of Christian-Democrat groups. See Ulderico Parente, *Riformismo religioso e sociale a Napoli tra Ottocento e Novecento: la figura e l’opera di Gennaro Avolio* (Urbino, Italy: Quattro Venti, 1995).

<sup>lxiii</sup> Luciani, *Cristianesimo e socialismo in Europa*, 741-742.

<sup>lxiv</sup> *Fonti e documenti*, no. 1 (1972) is devoted to the Roman radical group. See also: Lorenzo Bedeschi, “Il processo del Sant’Uffizio contro i modernisti romani,” *Fonti e documenti*, no. 8 (1978) : 7-24.

<sup>lxv</sup> Buonaiuti (1881-1946), a historian and priest, was one of the leaders of Italian modernism. See Fausto Parente, *Ernesto Buonaiuti* (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1971); Annibale Zambarbieri, *Il cattolicesimo tra crisi e rinnovamento, Ernesto Buonaiuti ed Enrico Rosa nella prima fase della polemica modernista* (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1979); Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Eretico e profeta. Ernesto Buonaiuti, un prete contro al Chiesa* (Milan, Italy: Mondadori, 2001); Rocco Cerrato, “E. Buonaiuti e l’essenza del cristianesimo,” *Filosofia e teologia*, no. 1 (1991): 58-68; Id., “Filosofia e teologia nella crisi modernista,” in *Il modernismo in Italia e in Germania nel contesto europeo*, ed. Michele Nicoletti and Otto Weiss (Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, 2010), 99-135; Fabrizio Chiappetti, *La formazione di un prete modernista. Ernesto Buonaiuti e ‘Il Rinnovamento’* (Urbino, Italy: Quattro Venti, 2012).

<sup>lxvi</sup> See Ernesto Buonaiuti, *Lo gnosticismo. Storia di antiche lotte religiose* (Rome: Ferrari, 1907).

<sup>lxvii</sup> See Annibale Zambarbieri, “La ricerca e la disciplina. Ernesto Buonaiuti e la condanna della ‘Rivista storico critica delle scienze teologiche’,” in *Fede e libertà. Scritti in onore di p. Giacomo Martina*, ed. Maurilio Guasco, Alberto Monticone and Pietro Stella (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1998), 423-481; Rocco Cerrato, “La ‘Rivista storico critica delle scienze teologiche’ e il progresso della ricerca contemporanea,” in *La riforma della Chiesa nelle riviste religiose di inizio Novecento*, 45-76.

<sup>lxviii</sup> *Perché siamo socialisti e cristiani* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Romana, 1908), 28. “Noi diciamo ai nostri compagni di fede religiosa: siate pienamente cristiani e sarete socialisti e anticlericali. E ai nostri compagni di fede sociale: siate pienamente socialisti e sarete cristiani.”

<sup>lxix</sup> Rossi (1885 -1971) was an Italian philosopher and scholar of English. Turks (1882-1958) was a priest and historian of religions. See Rocco Cerrato, ‘*Nova et vetera*’, *una rivista modernista a Roma, Annali di storia dell’educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche*, no. 16 ( 2009) : 311-334.

---

<sup>lxx</sup> Nesti, *Gesù socialista*, 50-51.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Pombeni, *Movimento cattolico e movimento socialista*, 23.

<sup>lxxii</sup> See: Pietro Scoppola, *Crisi modernista e rinnovamento cattolico in Italia* (Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, 1963), 261-262; Zambarbieri, “Prime censure a Buonaiuti: tra cultura e appartenenza religiosa,” in *La condanna del modernismo*, 13-44.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Felice Perroni, Guglielmo Quadrotta, “Possono i socialisti cristiani iscriversi nel nostro partito? Lettera di Perroni e Quadrotta,” *Avanti!*, 17 luglio 1908.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Filippo Turati, “Possono i socialisti cristiani iscriversi nel nostro partito?,” *Critica sociale*, 1° August 1908, 227-228.

<sup>lxxv</sup> On the debate over the letter from Perroni and Quadrotta, see: *Socialismo e religione* (Rome, Libreria Editrice Romana, 1911). For a historical reconstruction of the facts, see *Un dibattito politico su religione e socialismo (1908-1910)*, ed. Alberto De Sanctis (Florence, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2010).

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Paolo Vinci (Ernesto Buonaiuti), “Polemiche. Socialismo cristiano, *Nova et vetera*, no. 11 (1908) : 88-89. “rievocono la grande speranza del regno di Dio sulla terra, che in ogni commossa epoca della storia fece trasalire e rinnovò la massa del cristianesimo ecclesiastico, come un nuovo lievito; riconoscono l’aspetto sociale del fatto religioso.”

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Bonomi (1873-1951) joined the Socialist Party in 1903, and became one of the most prominent members of the organization. A Member of Parliament, he was expelled from the party in 1912 for his support for the Italian war in Libya.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Ivano Bonomi, “Possono i socialisti cristiani iscriversi nel nostro partito?,” *Avanti!*, 17 July 1908.

<sup>lxxix</sup> Giuseppe Rensi, “Socialismo e cristianesimo,” *Critica sociale*, no. 23-24 (1908) : 52-53. “nell’alveo del marxismo;” “fondamento eterno del socialismo;” “ogni vicissitudine di dottrina e ad ogni confusione scientifica.”

<sup>lxxx</sup> Domenico Spadoni, “Dal cristianesimo al socialismo,” *Critica sociale*, no. 23-24 (1908) : 365-367. “uno spirito di fraternità egualitaria, che congiunto al massimo disprezzo della ricchezza, portava per naturale conseguenza al comunismo.”

<sup>lxxxi</sup> Daniela Saresella, “Angelo Crespi collaboratore di ‘Coenobium’ e la crisi religiosa di inizio Novecento,” in *Spiritualità e utopia: la rivista ‘Coenobium’*, ed. Fabrizio Panzera and Daniela Saresella (Milan, Italy: Cisalpino, 2007), 297-320.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> Angelo Crespi, *Le vie della fede* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Romana, 1908), 20. Cfr. Alberto De Sanctis, Introduzione to *Un dibattito politico su religione e socialismo (1908-1910)*, 47-49. “Cominciai a distinguere tra la

---

degenerazione del fenomeno religioso e la sua essenza quale manifestatasi nella genialità religiosa e sentii che esso è una forza immensa, capace d'immenso bene nel mondo.”

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Born in the Ukraine, and a pupil of Antonio Labriola's, at the beginning of the Nineteen Hundreds Angelica Balabanoff lived between Lugano and Italy.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Angelica Balabanoff, “Religione e socialismo,” *Avanti!*, 13 August 1908. “concetto filosofico;” “approfondito il materialismo di Feuerbach e di aver trasportato sul terreno materialista il metodo dialettico di Hegel;” “agli antipodi rispetto all'idealismo.”

<sup>lxxxv</sup> Alberto Malatesta, “Possono i socialisti cristiani iscriversi al nostro partito?,” *Avanti!*, 11 August 1908. “un'antitesi profonda;” “conservatrice e antiproletaria;” “nemici della religione;” “Coi cristiani, in quanto essi propugnano e diffondono la parola di Cristo, non v'è possibilità di intesa.”

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> In winter 1900 Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), Professor of Church History at Berlin University, gave a series of lectures on the original substance of the Christian message. The lectures were brought together in the book *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1902). Harnack was sceptical about subordinating the means of salvation to the Church authorities, believing that the spirit was sufficient to attain the salvation of human beings. In reply, Loisy wrote his book: *L'Évangile et de l'Église* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1902) in which he challenged the conclusions of the German Lutheran theologian, using the same scientific research criteria. See Harvey Hill, *The politics of modernism: Alfred Loisy and the scientific study of religion* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002).

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Guglielmo Quadrotta, “Polemiche coi cristiani,” *Avanti!*, 14 August 1908. “un movimento eminentemente sociale;” “la preparazione degli uomini mediante un rinnovamento interiore, ad un regno terreno di amore e di giustizia;” “la predicazione di Gesù era stata alterata dalle preoccupazioni teologiche di alcuni grandi propagatori del cristianesimo, come san Paolo;” “la grande speranza umana che la parola di Cristo annunciò venti secoli fa.”

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Redazione “Avanti!,” “Polemiche coi cristiani. Il Vangelo vero e quello falsificato,” *Avanti!*, 14 August 1908. “l'interpretazione teologica del cristianesimo.”

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Bignami (1873-1951), a member of the Italian Socialist Party, moved to Lugano in 1898 and tried to spread the ideals of pacifism through the review “Coenobium”, published from 1906 to 1919.

<sup>xc</sup> Ghisleri (1855-1938), close to the political thought of Giuseppe Mazzini, in 1895 was among the founders of the Partito Repubblicano.

---

<sup>xcii</sup> Laura Demofonti, *La riforma nell'Italia del primo Novecento. Gruppi e riviste di ispirazione evangelica* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 54-65. “filosofica e filomodernista, “rivoluzione in ambito morale;”  
”“socialismo idealista;” “attribuire una maggiore importanza ai valori spirituali rispetto ai beni materiali.”

<sup>xciii</sup> Alberto Cavaglion, “La cultura italiana del ‘900 attraverso le riviste. La linea cenobitica,” in *Coenobium (1906-1919), Un’antologia* (Comano: Edizioni Alice, 1992), 37.

<sup>xciiii</sup> Giovanni Miccoli, “Chiesa e società in Italia dal Concilio Vaticano I (1870) al pontificato di Giovanni XXIII”, in *Storia d’Italia*, V/2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1973), 1520-1528; Guido Verucci, *La Chiesa nella società contemporanea. Dal primo dopoguerra al Concilio Vaticano II* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1988), 49-52. See also Lucia Ceci, *L’interesse superiore : il Vaticano e l’Italia di Mussolini* (Rome- Bari: Laterza, 2013), 27-38.

<sup>xcv</sup> The Unione nazionale was an anti-Fascist party founded by Amendola just after the killing of Giacomo Matteotti by Fascist squadrons. Figures from various political and cultural backgrounds joined it. In November 1926 the Unione nazionale, like all other anti-Fascist parties, was dismembered by the Régime.

<sup>xcvi</sup> In 1945 Buonaiuti published his autobiography under the title *Il pellegrino di Roma* (Rome: Darsena).

<sup>xcvii</sup> Modernism. Giorgio La Piana Papers, bMS 104, Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.