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**A GUIDE TO
CURSO DE ECONOMIA SOCIAL
BY R. P. CH. ANTOINE, S. J.
TRANSLATED BY MIGUEL FERREIRA DE ALMEIDA**

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According to Cornelius Michael Buckley, Charles Antoine, S. J.¹, was born in Fumay, Ardennes on December 16th 1848 and died in Dorat, Haute-Vienne, on April 24th 1921². One of Louis Ruellan³ fellow novices, he graduated in engineering at the École des Mines in Paris and was a member of the Berlin Royal Society of Chemistry. He taught the sciences, but then began to be interested in dogmatic and social theology and, towards the end of the century, in social questions. After the publishing of the encyclical letter of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, he published two books: *Éléments de science social* (1892) and, the most important one, *Cours de économie social* (1896). The text met immediate success and was still being revised and published (by Henri Du Passage) in 1921. When, in 1913, the Society of Jesus was expelled from France, Antoine retired to a convent but continued writing on social questions, which he considered of great importance for the French Church⁴.

C. M. Buckley cites Antoine in the third chapter of his book, the one dedicated to the years Louis Ruellan spent in Angers (1870-71). And, in fact, on the cover of the Portuguese translation of *Cours de économie social*, Antoine is referred to as a «lente cathedratico na universidade catholica de Angers». Moreover, Romolo Murri talks about his *Cours de économie social* in *La vita nova, 1895-1896*: «L'autore aderisce a questa seconda scuola che alcuni impropriamente chiamano de' socialisti cristiani e che ha certo in suo favore, oltre ai programmi di quasi tutti i partiti sociali cattolici militanti, l'insegnamento e gli incoraggiamenti dello stesso Sommo Pontefice [it is very likely the Pope referred to is Leo XIII. Ed.]»⁵.

What Murri refers to is Catholic Social Teaching, a doctrine developed by the Catholic Church on the foundations laid by Pope Leo XIII with his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*. It was published on May 15th 1891 and it marked the beginning of the creation of a body of social teaching inside the Church (even though its roots trace to the writings of thinkers such as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine Hippo, and to

¹ "S. J." stands for *Societas Iesu*, the Society of Jesus. These initials after a name mean that the person is a Jesuit priest or brother.

² Cornelius Michael Buckley, S. J., *When Jesuits Were Giants: Louis-Marie Ruellan, S. J., 1846-1885 and His Contemporaries*, San Francisco, California, Ignatius Press, 1999, p. 101.

³ Louis Ruellan (1846-1885) was a French Jesuit Father who asked his superiors to be sent to North America as a missionary for the Native American peoples. He had shown promise as an outstanding Jesuit academician, but died before reaching his forties. His untimely death caused Rome to recruit many more Jesuits for the western American Jesuit missions, especially French Jesuits, who would have founded many fine institutions of learning in western United States and Alaska. Cfr. *When Jesuit Were Giants, Interview with Father Cornelius Michael Buckley, S.J.*, July 31, 2006, Feast Day of St. Ignatius of Loyola, available at the URL http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2006/frcbuckley_jesuits_july06.asp (consulted 19/05/13).

⁴ Cornelius Michael Buckley, S. J., *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁵ Romolo Murri, *La vita nova, 1895-1896*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1971, p. 274.



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concepts present in the Bible)⁶. What prompted the Church – embodied by Pope Leo XIII – to develop such a doctrine were those economic events that turned around the whole society in the 20th century. Events linked to the Industrial Revolution that upset social and political structures that were centuries old.

The first question raised by the new post-industrial system was the «questão operária», caused by the conflict between labour and capital⁷. Pope Leo XIII affirmed that justice and peace were integral to the Church's mission and, in order to promote them, three co-ordinates were to be dealt with: persons, systems and structures. In his encyclical letter the Pope «elenca gli errori che provocano il male sociale, esclude il socialismo come rimedio ed espone, precisandola e attualizzandola, «la dottrina cattolica sul lavoro, sul diritto di proprietà, sul principio di collaborazione contrapposto alla lotta di classe come mezzo fondamentale per il cambiamento sociale, sul diritto dei deboli, sulla dignità dei poveri e sugli obblighi dei ricchi, sul perfezionamento della giustizia mediante la carità, sul diritto ad avere associazioni professionali»⁸.

What the author writes in his Preface to the first French edition is that the aim of the book is to lead society to its «typo normal» — that is, to restore and revive the characteristic of a less developed past, which, however, had a clearer idea about «verdadeiros direitos e verdadeiros deveres»⁹. Besides, he states his agreement with Pope Leo XIII, “founder” of Social Catholicism, about the deep necessity of Evangelic philosophy to rule nations and permeate laws together with Christian wisdom. Then Antoine explains that not only is this “third way”, suggested as a midway between socialism and liberalism, not accepted by all economists, but also that it does not comply with the official teaching of political economy in France. Basically, we can infer that his main goal was to write and publish a book that could interpret the papacy intent and demands about intervention on society. What the author did was to assemble a textbook that could hopefully drive educated people to find solutions to the «questão social».

As for the Portuguese translation, we may say that there seems to be a slight difference in intent between the aim of the author and the one of the Portuguese publisher (assuming that the publisher's ideas are those expressed in the introduction by the Jesuit Father António de Santa Maria). Father António states

⁶ «La locuzione *dottrina sociale* risale a Pio XI e designa il «*corpus*» dottrinale riguardante temi di rilevanza sociale che, a partire dall'enciclica «[Rerum novarum](#)» di Leone XIII, si è sviluppato nella Chiesa attraverso il Magistero dei Romani Pontefici e dei Vescovi in comunione con essi. La sollecitudine sociale non ha avuto certamente inizio con tale documento, perché la Chiesa non si è mai disinteressata della società; nondimeno, l'enciclica «[Rerum novarum](#)» dà l'avvio ad un nuovo cammino: innestandosi su una tradizione plurisecolare, essa segna un nuovo inizio e un sostanziale sviluppo dell'insegnamento in campo sociale.

Nella sua continua attenzione per l'uomo nella società, la Chiesa ha accumulato così un ricco patrimonio dottrinale. Esso ha le sue radici nella Sacra Scrittura, specialmente nel Vangelo e negli scritti apostolici, ed ha preso forma e corpo a partire dai Padri della Chiesa e dai grandi Dottori del Medio Evo, costituendo una dottrina in cui, pur senza espliciti e diretti interventi a livello magisteriale, la Chiesa si è via via riconosciuta». Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, *Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, available at the URL: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendi_o-dott-soc_it.html#b Dalla «[Rerum novarum](#)» ai nostri giorni (consulted 24/05/2013)

⁷ «Gli eventi di natura economica che si produssero nel XIX secolo ebbero conseguenze sociali, politiche e culturali dirimpenti. Gli avvenimenti collegati alla rivoluzione industriale sovvertirono secolari assetti sociali, sollevando gravi problemi di giustizia e ponendo la prima grande questione sociale, la *questione operaia*, suscitata dal conflitto tra capitale e lavoro. In tale quadro la Chiesa avvertì la necessità di dover intervenire in modo nuovo: le «*res novae*», costituite da quegli eventi, rappresentavano una sfida al suo insegnamento e motivavano una speciale sollecitudine pastorale verso larghe masse di uomini e di donne. Occorreva un rinnovato discernimento della situazione, in grado di delineare soluzioni appropriate a problemi inconsueti e inesplorati». Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, *Ibidem*.

⁸ Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, *Ibidem*.

⁹ Charles Antoine, *Curso de economia social*, Viseu, Imprensa da «Revista Catholica», 1904, pp. 19-20.



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the great importance of the translation, a work that finally meets the need of a teaching/doctrine in social economy. He underlines the usefulness of a textbook such as that by Antoine to teach this new science to educated people, to teach them how to help eradicate wrongs and evils from modern society. In the Jesuit Father point of view the new science of political economy could successfully bring justice inside society, so people should not fight it. On the contrary, they should embrace it. The first people who should do so are priests: he believes that they should inoculate moral and principles into the social organism, and that they should acquire the knowledge needed to successfully lead individuals to make the just choices. Without this knowledge priests are like «soldados sem armas, e bem sabemos o que vale um soldado desarmado, é alvo do inimigo e mais nada»¹⁰. In this way priests, who are too often criticized for not knowing social matters and political economy, can become a light and a secure guide to Christians¹¹. The author, however, didn't seem to be intentioned to address his work to clergymen only (in the *Prefácio da primeira edição francesa*¹², he mentions other categories such as economists and students).

As we infer from the title *Curso de economia social*, the book has a didactic intent; in the preface to the first French edition, reported in the Portuguese translation, we read: «A obra que publicamos não é um tratado mas –o título o indica– um curso ensinado desde ha muitos annos a estudantes e a homens que desejam iniciar-se nos problemas sociaes. Eis o motivo por que se apresenta com toda a simplicidade sob a forma de lições e n'um estylo didactico»¹³.

While in the original French edition the two parts of the treatise belong to the same volume, in the Portuguese translation each part becomes a separate one. The first volume begins with the preface to the translation and the prefaces to the first and second French editions. Then we have an introduction in which some definitions, such as the one of social science, are given; each definition is usually shorter than two pages and is preceded by a title in bold.

At the end of this introduction, the author explains how his treatise was conceived¹⁴: the first volume is devoted to the fundamental constitution of society, the second to the economic order. The two volumes are divided into sections, two for the first and three for the second: in the first section of the first volume Antoine talks about the aim of political society, of social units and of the role of the Church; in the second he applies these theories to the «questão social», for which he points out three solutions: the liberal one, the socialist one and the catholic one. In the second volume the author deals with wealth and especially with its production, distribution and consumption.

Each section is divided into chapters, each chapter into articles and each article into smaller sections. The index is very detailed and must be very helpful for those who are looking for a specific concept. The style is clear but articulate, appropriate for conveying Antoine's elaborate and deep thought.

In the Portuguese translation we also find some additional material: firstly, an introduction called *Duas palavras de introdução*, by Padre António de Santa Maria, who said to be at the Collegio Internazionale S. Antonio in Rome at that time¹⁵; then, at the end of the book, we find a thematic index and an appendix containing some texts by Pope Leo XIII and a text by Pius X, *Motu Proprio de Sua Santidade Pio X sobre a Democracia Cristã*.

¹⁰ Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹¹ Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, p. 10-11.

¹² Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, pp. 17 et seq.

¹³ Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, p. 17.

¹⁴ Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, p. 56-57.

¹⁵ Charles Antoine, *Ibidem*, p. 16.



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The translator is the presbyter Miguel Ferreira de Almeida. Thanks to the cover of the Portuguese edition we learn that he was «Doutor na S. Theologia e Direito Canonico, Conego Honorario na S. Basilica do Loreto com Honras de Familiar e Commensal do Papa, Capitular da Sé de Vizeu, Secretario geral da Congregação Universal da Santa casa do Loreto em Portugal, Condecorato por Leão XIII com a cruz d'ouro de 1ª classe «pro Ecclesia et pontifice» e redactor da Revista Catholica de Vizeu». According to the *Inventário da imprensa católica entre 1820 e 1910*, by Joaquim Azevedo e José Ramos¹⁶, Miguel Ferreira de Almeida has been, with the help of Alfredo Paes Pereira dos Santos, not only the editor but also the director of Revista Catholica, which was devoted to the defense of Christian truths and of great social principles. Revista Catholica is, actually, the publisher of *Curso de economia social*.

On the site of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal we find many books edited by Miguel de Almeida: some of them are translations from Italian, so we learn that he could translate from Italian as well as from French.

Finally, we cannot avoid to point out some interesting features of the Portuguese language of the time, especially at an orthographic level:

- the almost complete absence of the accent on the tonic syllable in proparoxytone words like *cathedratico*, *logico*, *methodo* and false proparoxytone ones as *necessarios*, *principio*, *providencia*, *paciencia*;
- the acute accent (instead of the circumflex one) in words like *téem*;
- the use of the acute accent (instead of the grave one) for the prepositional article *á*;
- the presence of double consonants as in *summamente*, *desappareçam*, *programma*, *admitte*, *elle*, *annos* and of silent consonants as in *auctores*, *introducção*;
- the use of nexus like *ch*, *th* in *catholica*, *christã*, *these*, *theologia*;
- the use of the grapheme *y* instead of *i* in words like *presbytero*, *estyllo*, *systema*;

All of these features and many others, such as the use of the apostrophe, the hyphen, and the syllabic division, will be dealt with in the *Formulário Ortográfico* of 1911¹⁷, the first attempt in Portugal to establish an orthographic model for official publications and for teaching¹⁸.

¹⁶ available on the archive of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa at the URL http://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/4890/1/LS_S2_03_Joaquim_AzevedoeJoseRamos.pdf

¹⁷ available at the URL <http://www.portaldalinguaportuguesa.org/?action=acordo&version=1911>

¹⁸ some more information on this topic at the URL <http://www.portaldalinguaportuguesa.org/?action=acordo>



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