

De geschiedenis van het christen-democratische begrip ‘solidariteit’

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Het begrip ‘solidariteit’ heeft een prominente plaats gekregen in het ontwerp voor de Europese Grondwet. Op deze manier wordt een belangrijk begrip uit de West-Europese politieke geschiedenis daarin vastgelegd. Vaak wordt het geassocieerd met de sociaal-democratie. En inderdaad: in die traditie heeft het een belangrijke rol gespeeld. Het heeft echter een niet minder belangrijke rol gespeeld in de christen-democratische traditie. Niet voor niets is ‘solidariteit’ een van de vier kernbegrippen van het CDA. De Noor Steinar Stjernø heeft een boek geschreven over de geschiedenis van het idee solidariteit dat in het najaar zal verschijnen bij Cambridge University Press. Hierin beschrijft hij gedetailleerd de geschiedenis van beide tradities in verschillende Europese landen. In dit Engelstalige artikel – een voorpublicatie – schrijft hij samenvattend over de ontwikkeling en de betekenis van het christen-democratische begrip ‘solidariteit’. Dat begrip is als seculier begrip voor het eerst tot ontwikkeling gekomen in het negentiende-eeuwse Frankrijk. De stelling van Stjernø is dat het christen-democratische begrip overwegend het product is van een katholieke toeëigening en bewerking daarvan. Die bewerking en toeëigening gebeurde in aanvankelijk vooral in Duitsland waar zich in de eerste decennia van de twintigste eeuw een Duits solidarisme ontwikkelde. Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog werd solidariteit opgenomen in programma’s van christen-democratische partijen. Nog later (1961) werd het begrip ‘solidariteit’ ook geïntegreerd in geschriften van de Rooms-Katholieke kerk. Protestantenvrij zijn veel minder actief geweest in het ontwikkelen van het concept solidariteit. Hun sleutelbegrippen zijn ‘gerechtigheid’ en ‘verantwoordelijkheid’ (niet toevallig waarschijnlijk twee andere kernbegrippen in het CDA).

The concept of solidarity has been given a prominent position in the *Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe*, together with concepts such as *freedom, justice, human dignity, the human person, equality and subsidiarity*. The political language and the political values in the Draft Treaty represent a fusion of the political languages and the political values that we find in two of the main strands of European political thought – social democracy and Christian democracy. In this article, I shall describe how the concept of solidarity developed in the Christian democratic tradition¹.

The political idea of solidarity

Historically speaking, the phenomenon of solidarity existed before the idea was formulated. The idea existed before the term became widespread, and the term was in general use before its modern meaning had developed. A Christian idea of *fraternity* was developed in the early days of the Christian era, and was coined to identify and parallel the close relationships within the family to the development of community between Christian friars. In the sixteenth century, French lawyers used *solidarité*, referring to a common responsibility for debts incurred by one of the members of a group (Hayward, 1959). A political idea of *fraternity* or *brotherhood* developed during the French revolution, and during and after the revolution in 1789 Jacobins like Danton and Mirabeau occasionally used the term *solidarity* as well. In the first part of the nineteenth century, French social philosophers reflected upon the period of social and political unrest in the wake of the revolution. At the same time, they witnessed the early development of capitalism and the increasing influence of liberalism. These experiences prompted French social philosophers to find a way to combine the idea of individual rights and liberties with the idea of social cohesion and community. Charles Fourier introduced a social and political concept of solidarity in his descriptions about his utopia, *the phalanx*, in 1822. The pre-Marxist communist Pierre Leroux used it when he criticised Liberalism and the Christian concept of charity in 1840, and Auguste Comte introduced it in what was to become the new science of sociology in 1852. In the last decades of the century, Emile Durkheim and Léon Bourgeois made it a key concept in *solidarism*, which became some sort of an official ideology for the radical party. For all these, the concept of solidarity was a broad and inclusive one and it aimed at restoring the social integration that had been lost.

In Germany, where Marxism became an early and dominating influence in the labour movement, the concept of solidarity developed later and was adapted to express the need for cohesion and unity in the working class and in the labour movement. This idea was more restricted, since it referred solely to workers, and more inclusive, since workers across national borders were included. It did not aim at integration and it implied conflict and divisiveness (class conflict) as well as unity. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Catholic social teaching, particularly the German *Solidarismus*, inspired a third tradition of solidarity. Within Protestant social ethics, the development of an idea of solidarity did not take place until after World War II.

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A continuous concern about social integration

Thus, the concept of solidarity had been established as a secular concept both in politics and sociology a long time before it was introduced in Christian democratic ideology. More than one hundred years were to pass until the concept of solida-

rity finally was accepted in Christian democratic political theory.

In Catholic social teaching we find a long and enduring concern about social integration. In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas formulated principles that were further developed in later papal writings. Those who have an excess of property and money, should not regard this wealth as something that belongs exclusively to them, but have a responsibility to assist the needy. This is a duty, not of natural law and not of human law, but of Christian charity, according to Thomas. But he also transcended the notion of individual charity and formulated a number of principles that are relevant for the governance of society, too. The individual should be integrated into the social group and society. Society and governments have a responsibility to impose taxes in order to finance those measures that would increase the social integration of society. This concern about social integration may be seen as being one of the origins of the Catholic idea of solidarity. Catholic solidarity particularly denotes attitudes that are necessary for bringing about and enhancing the social integration within society.

German Solidarismus

This concern about social integration was revived when Catholics observed the social effects of industrialisation and class struggle in the nineteenth century. In the second part of the nineteenth century, many Catholics saw with alarm that competitive capitalism uprooted local communities, concentrated workers in miserable conditions in the cities and created richness for the few, and they acknowledged that both increased individualism and the collective response of the working class to socialism threatened the position of Catholicism and the Church. In Germany, the protagonist in developing Catholic social ethics was the Catholic bishop von Ketteler. In 1864 he had published *Die Arbeiterfrage und Christentum*. Here he argued for Christian trade unions, worker-producer co-operatives and assistance for those not able to work and for individual and collective freedom that was 'opposed to the false freedom of absolutism and liberalism that deny the freedom of the individual and the community' (Ketteler 1952 (1864)). A national Catholic party - *das Zentrum* - was established in 1870. The *Zentrum* was unique among German parties in drawing its support from all classes - aristocracy, the middle class, and the working class. The *Zentrum* wanted equalization between capital and landed property on the one hand, and between employers and labour and was eager to protect and develop the *Mittelstand* - the middle class and introduced laws that should remove 'evils that threaten the moral or physical destruction of workers' (Zentrum 1952 (1870)).

In von Ketteler and the program of the *Zentrum* there are four aspects that came to be core elements of Catholic social ethics when Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum* twenty years later. First, a boundary was drawn against liberalism. Second, the worker question was made a key issue. Wages should be raised to the

real value of the labour. Working hours should be reduced. Children should not work, and mothers should not be allowed to work in factories. Third, *justice* was early made a key concept. The fourth aspect was to be a continuous concern of Christian democracy – the preoccupation about the *Mittelstand* and the rejection of class struggle. Political Catholicism should conciliate and integrate, not struggle. This idea became the basis for the development of a Catholic idea of solidarity, and Von Ketteler and the German *Solidarismus* was to influence the ideas that the Pope presented in *Rerum Novarum*.

After the turn of the century, the spiritual father of what was labelled *christlicher Solidarismus*, Heinrich Pesch, developed an extensive theory of how economy could be reconciled with social integration. In the tradition of *Rerum Novarum* his ambition was to develop a doctrine of the middle way, avoiding the weaknesses of both individualism and collectivism and taking into account the interests of both individuals and society. Accepting capitalism, but warning against excesses of liberalism and individualism he wanted to ‘christianise’ economy and society according to the principles of the common good, the provision for needs and a corporate social order based on solidarity between labour and capital, employers and employees. Besides, he integrated other elements of papal teaching as well, as the idea of subsidiarity, a just wage etc. (Pesch).

Inspired by the Zentrum, parties rooted in social Catholicism were established also in other countries in last part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century. In Italy, the PPI – the Italian People’s Party developed a radical view on the social question, was preoccupied with the relationship between the individual and community, the middle class, social reform and social integration across dividing class boundaries. Also in Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium parties inspired by social Catholicism were established (Kalyvas).

Papal social teaching

Paralleling this and partly influenced by German Catholicism the Catholic Church developed its social teaching. Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 signalled a concern about the situation of the workers. It denounced liberalism and socialism, argued for social integration on the basis of justice - which meant a capitalist society with social reforms, just wages and based on family values.

Quadragesimo Anno of Pius XI in 1931 elaborated in more detail on the social issues and emphasised the concept of subsidiarity. The state should feel responsibility for the integration of society, but subsidiarity should mean that the state should not interfere in the activities of the family, voluntary organisations and local community, but support them, and this came to imply a careful balance against what he considered as exaggerated public responsibility. *Quadragesimo Anno* represents a continuation of the Leo XIII’s concern about social integration and interest in how society was organized through public policy. He did not yet, however, intro-

duce the concept of solidarity as a way of emphasising the role of the state when 'lower instances' were not able to fulfil their responsibility for solving social problems.

Seeking to transcend - and not to supplant - personal and private charity, he applied the notions of *justice* and of *social charity*. Because market economy was a 'blind force and a violent energy, it had to be restrained and guided wisely to be useful to man' (Pius XI). Society needs more noble principles than a totally free market economy can offer as guidance. *Social charity* should be the spirit of this order, guarded and maintained by public authority. This combination of justice, social charity and public authority is very close to the modern concept of Catholic solidarity.

Modern Christian democracy

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A modern Christian ideology and concept of *solidarity* was, however, not definitively established until the new Christian democratic parties were established after World War II. Whereas social Catholicism had had a rather unsettled relationship with liberal democracy, the new Christian democratic parties were firmly consolidated on a defence of liberal democracy. The most important of these parties was the *Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) which was established in 1945 as an inter-confessional party, but strongly influenced by Catholic social teaching. As the Italian party *Democrazia Cristiana* and other Christian democratic parties, the CDU sought to define a third way between laissez-faire capitalism and socialist collectivism. It launched the concept of a 'social market economy', which meant that the economy should be based on capitalism, market and competition, combined with a conscious social policy that offered social protection and security against negative side effects on social integration. Public intervention and the social security system should be closely linked to labour market participation with a strong correlation between personal contribution and benefits. In this way an optimal balance of economic utility and social justice could be achieved (Buchaas).

In Italy, De Gasperi and others who had been PPI-members founded *Democrazia Cristiana*, DC, in 1942. De Gasperi, who became the first Catholic Prime Minister in Italy, was strongly entrenched in Catholic social teaching. He emphasised the need for mediation and integration and argued that the new DC should address the whole society and mediate between all classes and social categories. Social solidarity should make both employers and employees feel responsible for production and welfare. DC was to be the dominating government party in Italy for almost half a century. In other countries as the Netherlands and Norway, Protestant parties increased their influence.

However, in terms of the concept of solidarity, it was the tradition from the German *solidarismus* that was developed further. In the tradition of Pesch, German

Catholic theologians continued to be preoccupied with solidarity during the 1950s. Oscar von Nell-Breuning argued in his *Zur Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre, On Christian Teaching about Society*, that 'The basic law of Christian solidarity is opposed to individual and group egoism' which makes people place self-interest above the common good, and blocks social commitments (Nell-Breuning and Sacher). The extensive Herder's *Social Catechism* declared *solidarity* to be a basic law (Herder). Franz Klüber, a professor of Christian sociology, listed three basic principles of Catholic social teaching: the principle of the *person* (distinct from that of the *individual*), the principle of solidarity, and the principle of subsidiarity (Klüber). These concepts were to constitute core elements of papal teaching on social ethics in the following decades.

At the end of the 1950s, the CDU initiated a programmatic discussion between Catholics and Protestants about the Christian identity of the party. In the *Berliner programme* in 1971, most key concepts of the modern Christian democratic ideology were finally introduced. The programme stated that CDU politics were based on the principles of Christian responsibility. The aim, it was declared, was *the freedom of the individual*, recognition of the commitment to society, and *justice, equal opportunity* for everybody, the *solidarity between all citizens* and the *responsibility of the person*. Social market economy should be based on the contribution of the individual and social justice, competition and solidarity, personal responsibility and social security, the programme stated.

From John XXIII to John Paul II

The term solidarity was introduced in Papal teaching in John XXIII's encyclical of 1961 'Mater et Magistra'

When a Christian democratic concept of solidarity was in the process of developing, this happened through a reciprocal influence between social Catholicism and the Christian democratic movement on the one hand and Papal teaching on the other hand. The term solidarity was introduced in Papal teaching in John XXIII's encyclical of 1961 *Mater et Magistra*. Here he called for government action to assist people in need by abolishing or reducing economic inequalities that 'are due to the fact that they live in less economically developed areas' and to help to bring about economic development. First, it implied that rich nations should feel obliged to support the poor nations of the world. We find, however, also a second reference to solidarity. This is that 'workers and employers should respect the principles of human solidarity in organizing their mutual relations and live together as befits Christians and brothers', repeating in the tradition from *Rerum Novarum* that 'both unlimited competition which is preached by liberals and the class struggle which is a dogma of Marxists, are plainly no less contrary to Christian teaching than they are to human nature itself' (John). In these short sentences, we see the essence of the Catholic concept of solidarity: on the one hand it implies compassion and action to help the poor and underprivileged, on the other it conceives of solidarity as mediation between classes and groups that might be

poised against each other as adversaries in economic life.

During the 1960s and 1970s, papal encyclicals were increasingly more preoccupied about solidarity with the Third World. The present pope John Paul II made *solidarity* a key concept in papal social teaching with the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1989. Finally, with the publication of *Centesimus Annus* in 1991, John Paul authorised a complete language of solidarity in Catholic social teachings, and defined solidarity's relationships to other key concepts such as *the person, the common good, justice, and subsidiarity*.

As we have seen, the concept of solidarity has emerged and developed in Catholicism from two very different sources. The first is the preoccupation with social integration, with its origins in the works of Thomas Aquinas. In this tradition, the emphasis is upon a universal understanding of solidarity, stressing consensus and the community between all human beings. The second source is found in the concern for the suffering people of the Third World. The urgent problems of the poor nations and the Vatican's increased understanding of those problems and the influence of the Catholic churches of the Third World, especially in Latin America, paved the way for the introduction of the concept of solidarity into encyclicals and other ecclesiastical texts. With the confluence of these two strands a Catholic concept of solidarity was established and later adopted as an integrated concept in Christian democracy as well.

Protestants have not been as active as Catholics to develop a concept of solidarity.

What then about the influence of Protestantism in Christian democracy? Today, the Christian democratic family includes both parties with Catholic and Protestant historical roots. Although Protestantism has brought ideas to Christian democracy and to the umbrella organisation *European People's Party*, a study of documents from the *Lutheran World Federation* and the *World Council of Churches* and protagonists of Protestant social ethics, indicates that Protestants have not been as active as Catholics to develop a concept of solidarity. Their key concepts have been *justice* and *responsibility*, which seems to reflect the more important role of individualism in Protestantism.

Conclusion

The Christian democratic concept of solidarity that today is found in the programme of these parties has been developed through several phases. First, a political and secular concept of solidarity was implanted and integrated in Catholic social teaching. Second, this concept was imported into Christian democratic political theory from Catholic social teaching. Today the concept of solidarity is a common property of social democracy and Christian democracy. Their concepts of solidarity share many characteristics. Both refer to a general feeling of togetherness and willingness to share resources. Both are broad and including concepts, not restricted to people 'like us' or to a certain class. Thus, both imply some sort of altruism. Both are included in a discourse where freedom and justice are other and associa-

ted key concepts.

Naturally, there are some differences. In most social democratic parties, equality is emphasized more than in Christian democratic parties. In Christian democracy the concept of the person is emphasized, whereas social democratic parties in general have been more reluctant to introduce the notion of the individual in their programmatic ideology. The social democratic idea of solidarity implies a stronger preparedness to resort to state or public initiatives and programs, whereas in Christian democratic theory this is balanced against the principle of subsidiarity. As this principle may be interpreted in various ways, the difference in political practice may be considerable both within the two political camps and between Christian democracy and social democracy.

However, despite the prominence of *solidarity* in party programmes and in the Draft Treaty of the EU, both the social democratic and the Christian democratic idea of solidarity are confronted with difficult challenges. The increasing individualisation of modern society has tilted the weight in favour of individual autonomy and right to choose in the market at the expense of collective solidarity. Increased affluence and consumerism have reinforced individualism.

Globalisation challenges an idea of solidarity confined to the nation. Finally, contrary to what we have witnessed in the US and other parts of the world, in Europe increasing secularisation has made religion loose much of its ability to influence the political behaviour of citizens and voters. But this is another story that not can be told here.

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