

Let´s NOT break the unity of the Social Doctrine of the Church
Reflection of Monsignor Giampaolo Crepaldi on the method of the DSI

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ROME, Thursday, September 29, 2011 (ZENIT.org).-I have already had the opportunity to highlight the wrong thing is to continue to insist on the division between the deductive and inductive method in the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC). I would like to return to this subject as I have noticed that, despite the many reflections that make the deduction/induction scheme unlikely, we continue to insist on this. I think they are backward and conservative positions.

In the last issue of the Journal of moral theology (n º 171, July-September 2011), Marciano Vidal returns to the subject in the article of the social question belongs to theology and moral theology (pp.: 343-350). Vidal insists again “on a pre-conciliar or neo-scholastic paradigm” that would have had the following characteristics: the subject of the DSI is the hierarchy, the method is deductive and the social order is submitted to the Christian order.

Still today, in a certain sense, the subject of the DSI is the hierarchy. Certainly, it is necessary to distinguish: Since the DSI is (also) “act of magisterium”, also now it is subject, from this point of view, is the hierarchy. If we consider other points of view, other ecclesial subjects arise and, in the end, the Church emerges as such, as a unitary and organic subject. The DSI belongs to the mission of the Church. But are we sure that these unions were not known to the DSI to reconcile? And above all, are we sure that the last subject is not known to be the Church as such? I'm not sure I'm saying it definitively.

The expression deductive method is very ambiguous and I have already proposed overcoming this terminology. Is there no analysis of historical reality in the Rerum Novarum? Does the res novae of which it is concerned not arise, first of all, from the society of the time, which Leo XIII describes promptly? If deductive means that the DSI projects the light of the Gospel on the social issue, then we can say that the DSI is deductive, but all, also the post-reconcile, because it does exactly that. If deductive means that this deduces the practical performance of abstract and manual concepts, then it has never been deductive because it has never acted like this.

As for the “submission of the social order to the Christian order”, I want to stress that the DSI has never ceased to assert that there is no solution to the social issue but is within the Gospel. Also, Caritas in Veritate says so. I certainly do not deny that there are diversities of emphasis on the DSI of the late nineteenth century and in the last encyclical of the pontiffs of this century, but in none-neither in these nor the others-can diminish the principle of the centrality of Christ in the construction of the society.

I consider that it is not useful to retake the critical notes to the DSI expressed in the years ´60 and ´70 and I wonder that, in spite of the assertion in this respect in Caritas in Veritate, it continues to be said that the social Magisterium of Paul VI was affected by these criticisms and by difficult to talk about DSI. As I cannot find it right to argue that John Paul II's strong commitment to retaking the DSI has been made possible by the criticisms of the ´60 and ´70. I think it was the opposite: John Paul II bonded with the previous magisterium to refute these criticisms and later developing the discourse on the DSI that those criticisms would have wanted to block.

Who at the same time criticized this endeavor of John Paul II, now presents his magisterium as a result of the criticism of those times to the SDC, rather than as the attempt to resume the total history of the SDC and the entirety of its doctrinal corpus.

I remember that the Caritas in Veritate says: “they do not contribute to clarifying certain abstract subdivisions of the Social Doctrine of the Church that apply to the pontifical social education categories strange to the same. There are no two typologies of social doctrine, a reconcile and a post-conciliate, conflicting between them, but a single, coherent and always new teaching”. We should abide by this statement by Benedict XVI.

Marciano Vidal also speaks of the Compendium of Social Doctrine of 2004. He speaks of him as a “turning point in the history more than centennial-of this form of magisterial action of the Church”, implying that the compendium would certify the contrast between the two schemes--pre-reconcile and post-reconcile-proposed by him. I'd like to disprove this interpretation.

The compendium does not represent any “turning point”, because there are none in the Social Doctrine of the Church. Just one example is enough to confirm this. According to Vidal, the new DSI would have abandoned the concept of natural law. However, the concept of natural law is very present in the Compendium, as well as in the Caritas in Veritate and the ordinary Magisterium of Benedict XVI.

[Translation from Italian by Carmen Álvarez]