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THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - A call to Christocentrism

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Emphasis, at times unilateral, on the human element and its centrality, even when “doing theology”, can be traced to a erroneous understanding, almost counterposition, of the relationship between the legitimate aspirations of man which he cannot renounce and the just as legitimate “demands" of God.

Paradoxically, more than two thousand years of Christianity have failed to sufficiently immunise man and his thoughts on God, from the temptation of seeing himself in “opposition” to his Creator, almost as if the full realisation of self, or human fulfilment, could or should happen “against” or “without” God. In Catholic doctrine this temptation has a very old name, perhaps somewhat forgotten by certain preaching, but absolutely central for elaborating any sort of theological, anthropological or moral discourse: the name is original sin.

Reflection on this doctrinal data, amply presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (396-409), impels us to emphasise that any “ anthropological turn”, which claims to re-found theology starting from man alone, or to affirm man and his needs, "against" the presumed "claims" of God, is almost certainly bound to be an “ anthropocentric turn”, which set man, solitary, at the centre of the cosmos, thwarting his natural openness to the infinite Mystery.

On the contrary, Christocentrism as we call it, originates from the one point in history when conflictuality between man and God is completely conquered, both in itself and as the unique and universal salvific effect of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ the Lord, the "fruits" of which are offered in freedom to all men and women and are therefore for all humanity.

It would be most interesting if, so many years after that “ anthropological turn”, we could at last have a new and great, “ Christological ” and even Christocentric turn! The Second Vatican Council certainly called the whole Church to take this path and the recent Magisterium of the Pontiffs, both John Paul II, of venerated memory, and Benedict XVI, never ceases to call the faithful to acknowledge this centrality in thought, life and heart, and make it their own.

To rediscover Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ, as the true centre of the history of humanity, of the life of the Church and, with necessary consequence (and cause), the life of each Christian, would be a real “anthropological turn”. This would illuminate, comfort and liberate mankind: in a word, enable mankind to effectively experience the salvation which Christ has won for us and which is offered to the freedom of every human person and then, at the same time, theology itself could rediscover its original calling, so luminously presented in the Church Fathers, to expose the mysteries of salvation, in an accessible and salutary manner, so as to foster intelligence of life itself. No one has man at heart more than Christ Himself: Christocentrism is history's real “anthropological turn”. Never has man been so “ central”, as with Christ the Lord. (Agenzia Fides 26/6/2008)

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