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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE don Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitiello - "Faith and Reason: doubt which paralyses"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The election of Cardinal Ratzinger to the Pontificate produced many effects, one specifically from the cultural point of view, above all with regard to dialogue between believers and non believers. The then Cardinal theologian's personal interest (at times in solitude, due to the intellectual isolation of certain positions) for intense discussion with non believers with a sincere desire for research and collaboration, now that Benedict XVI guides the universal Church, has become a universal question».

It is no longer possible to remain prisoners of infinite intra-ecclesial dialectics and not breath deeply in dialogue with modernity and with non believers who show ever greater interest for religious questions, seen as possible answers to the fundamental questions of 'I'. It is the duty of the whole Church to enter into dialogue with non believers, overcoming that clerical and short sighted suspicion which leads to mistrust of "fervent non-believers" thought to be motivated by worldly interests rather then sincere existential research, especially when they hold public responsibilities or are personalities from the intellectual point of view. Apart from the moralism underlying this suspicion, it must be reaffirmed that the certainty of Catholics with regard to the mercy of the Lord, cannot have the same limits of human measure and even if the non-believer's initial interest in dialogue were of a worldly nature, this would take nothing from the great challenge to announce the Lord, to which the Church and all churchmen are called.

Paradoxically non believers themselves have reached a point where they say: «We must stop doubting, at least within certain limits. We must begin again, within certain limits, to know in order to believe and to believe in order to know. This path is dangerous, exposed to equivocal 'doctrinarianism' and a reduction of the unhappy complexity of culture to over-happy clarity of the dogma, but it is compulsory. When everything is doubted, the time has come to believe in something » (G. Ferrara, Mettere in dubbio il dubbio).

If, until a few decades ago doubt possessed a rationalist character and with reason, even if misunderstood, dialogue was always possible, today, it must be admitted, doubt has assumed an explicit nihilistic character: doubting is not a way for seeking and finding more certain answers to questions, but rather a way for saying that, in the end, there are no answers except those we arbitrarily choose, after subjectively producing them.

How much «Catholic doubt», more or less unconsciously, is a prisoner of such positions! How much inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, feeds on the nihilist principle of the non existence of Truth.

Dialogue with secular culture helps Catholics overcome nihilist doubt which paralyses thought and action, which prompts action not adequately sustained by convinced thought, and therefore is always exposed to the terrible risk of moralism.

Non believers challenge us to «overcome our doubt», to believe in something: we who believe not only in something, but also in some One, Jesus of Nazareth, Our Lord and Christ, living today in history, need not fear either discussion or proclamation, we are called to live fully this new great season of thought for the Church, inaugurated by Pope Benedict XVI.

«Catholic masters» of doubt, ever ready to query everything and everyone except themselves (and especially the hierarchy and the magisterium), are in danger of being left behind, taken for conservators (of themselves). This is a new season!

The rebirth of certainties is not, as many affirm, the consequence of present day fragility, but rather the dawn of that new season which, conscious of the paralysing effect of doubt, is determined to overcome it, choosing to move on, to walk towards the whole Truth. (Agenzia Fides 31/8/2006; righe 45, parole 595)

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