

First Part

History, Introduction and Principles of the Social Teachings

ANTONIO MARTÍN PUERTA

1. Introduction

Such a set of social reflections was firstly issued by the Church in modern times embracing different aspects of social life; it formally emerged in 1891 with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII.

Reasons of the shaping of the social doctrine as a moral subject

a) Social Causes

Social divisions and intense confrontation.

Accumulation of abuses suffered by massive defenseless crowds of people.

b) Political Causes

Hostility towards the Catholic Church in different countries:

France: *III Republic* legislation of 1870 against the Catholic Church.

Germany: Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against Catholics since 1871.

Italy: the *Unification* process in 1870 ends with the Pontificate States.

c) Cultural Causes

Dominance of cultural currents of thought against Christian fundamentals.

Fading presence of the Catholic Church in the cultural environment.

2. Main Contemporary Pontiffs

Leo XIII (1878-1903)

a) Historical Framework

Economy: Economic liberalism / Revolutionary socialism.

Politics: Catholic Church's objection to the French Republic / Failure of French Catholic political wing.

Catholic objection to Bismarck / Success of German Catholic political and social wings.

b) Main Messages

- On Liberalism: *Libertas Praestantissimum* (1888), about the correct interpretation of human freedom.
- On the French secular discrimination: *Nobilissima Gallorum Gens* (1884), *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (1892). About the anti-Christian character of the French republican model. About the duty to obey the constituted authority according to St. Paul's doctrine.
- On the Christian constitution of the State: *Immortale Dei* (1885). Critic of the new emergent legislation.
- On the war against the Catholic Church: *Annum Ingressi* (1902), the Church is not an enemy of science nor culture, but a victim of ideological errors. In 1884 the Pope released *Humanum Genus* against the masonry, where he objects against the attempted destruction of Christian civilization by way of relativism and autonomy of reason.

- *Rerum Novarum* (1891): Objections to liberalism and the socialist solution. Defense of workers and criticism of exploitation forms. State duties and demand for workers' support in their rights. Criticism of the revolutionary alternative and defense of the property rights.

Saint Pius X (1903-1914)

a) Historical Framework

- Economy: Economic liberalism / revolutionary Socialism.
- Politics: Opposition to the Church continues from the Third French Republic.
- Culture: Expansion of relativism and rationalism hostile to the Church.

b) Main Messages

- About the situation in France: *Vehementer Nos* (1906) against the Law (1905) which separates the Church and the State in France. *Notre Charge Apostolique* (1910), against the French Catholic liberalism which assumes laicism in its positions.
- On Modernism: *Pascendi* (1907). It critic agnosticism, the opposition to the Revelation by some scientific interpretations; it also rejects the dominance of individual's reason over objective reason and denies the transitory and relative value of the truth. It defends the moral autonomy of the Church and her hierarchy.

Pius XI (1922-1939)

a) Historical Framework

- Economy: 1929 Crisis / Increasing State Interventionism.
- Politics: Fascist regime arrives in Italy, 1922.
Proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1931.
Spanish Civil war in 1936-39.
Hitler reaches the power, Germany 1933.
Proclamation of a corporative Catholic system in Austria in 1934 and its destruction in 1938.
Revolutionary radicalization of socialism and communist menace.

b) Main Messages

- About Christ's actual sovereignty upon the world: *Quas Primas* (1925).
- Rejection of Action Française: *Nous Avons Lu* (1925).
- About Christian education, parents' rights and the Church: *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929).
- Defense of Catholic Action and against the fascist expansion of the State: *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (1931).
- Against the abusive control of the State on social life and in defense of society: *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).
- Against the II Spanish Republic hostility towards the Church: *Dilectissima Nobis* (1933).
- Against the national-socialism: *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937).
- Against communism: *Divini Redemptoris* (1937).

Pius XII (1939-1958)

a) Historical Framework

- Economy: Crisis after II World war / Consolidation of the State interventionism
- Politics: Second World War (1939-1945).
Division of the World in two blocks since 1945. Cold War.
Beginning of the European Unification: Treaty of Rome (1957).

b) Main Messages

- Against agnosticism and against the totalitarian concept of the State: *Summi Pontificatus* (1939).
- Against the lack of moral principles at personal and international levels: *Nell'alba* (1942).
- On the foundations of the true order of the State: *Con sempre* (1942).
- On the right interpretation of democracy: *Benignitas et Humanitas* (1944).
- About the false interpretations of the Catholic doctrine: *Humani Generis* (1950), against the dogmatism generated by relativism; against the submission of Church's criteria under scientific cosmo-visions where the man and the truth of things are nothing but transitional phases of evolution; against the idea which eliminates God's intervention in man's origin; against relativism in the Catholic faith.

St. John XXIII (1958-1963)

a) Historical Framework

- Religion: II Vatican Council development between 1962 y 1965.
- Politics: Appearance of numerous new countries after the decolonization process.
Strong contrast between rich and poor countries, especially the former colonies.
Conflicts in decolonized areas.
- Economy: Population increase / Critical situations of poverty.
- Culture: Major influence of ideologies / World dimension of social issues.

b) Main Messages

- *Mater et Magistra* (1961). *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* commemoration. It notes the changes in the world and the need for a new vision. The Church cooperates with the global common good. It emphasizes the rights of workers and the right to private property. Call for solidarity and for the study Catholic Social Teaching (perennial efficacy). The document calls for global collaboration towards the international common good.
- *Pacem in Terris* (1963). Chart of natural rights and duties of men. It notes the increasing emancipation of peoples and a stronger female presence in the public arena. Universal vision calls for universal subsidiary authority. It claims for the need of Christians intervening in temporal social activities and contributing to the universal common good.

Paul VI (1963-1978)

a) Historical Framework

- Religion: II Vatican Council ends in 1965 followed by its application.
Ecumenism and new forms of Church presence in the world.
- Politics: Internal conflicts in former decolonized areas.
Insurrect movements.
Increasing separation and differences between rich and poor countries. World division in two blocks.
- Economy: Western prosperity versus huge underdevelopment in the Third World.
- Culture: Broad influence of a hypercritical and authoritarian vision of 1968 events.

b) Main Messages

- *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964). Church renovation, dialog and approach to the world while maintaining the integrity of Church's doctrine.
- *Populorum Progressio* (1967). Universal solidarity, humankind development and world justice.
- *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Human life transmission according to the Church criteria.
- *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971). Apostolic letter calling for universal justice in the anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Consideration of human problems worldwide. Warning against a critical and idealistic assumption of liberalism and socialism (their excesses had been formerly rejected by Leo XIII). Warning call against scientific reductionisms and ideological prejudices in sciences.

II Vatican Council. Texts of Reference (1962-1965)

Constitutions

- *Lumen Gentium* (1964): Dogmatic constitution about the Church.
- *Dei Verbum* (1965): Dogmatic constitution about Divine Revelation.
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963): Pastoral constitution about Sacred Liturgy.
- *Gaudium et Spes* (1965): Pastoral constitution about the Church in the current world.

Declarations

- *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965): Declaration about Christian education of the youth.
- *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965): Declaration about religious freedom.
- *Nostra Aetate* (1965): Declaration about the relations between the Catholic Church and other non Christian religions.

St. John Paul II (1978-2005)

a) Historical Framework

- Religion: Need of consolidation between renovation and tradition.
- Politics: 1989 crisis and fall of communist systems.
- Economy: Economic liberalism becomes the only functioning system.
- Culture: Globalization expands and relativism increases.

b) Main Messages

- *Laborem Exercens* (1981). About human work and man; work dignity and capital-work conflict 90 years after *Rerum Novarum*. Spirituality of human work.
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987). *Populorum Progressio* commemoration. Definition of authentic human development. Theological view of modern problems.
- *Centesimus Annus* (1991). *Rerum Novarum* centenary. Today's "new things" remark. Reflection about the meaning of 1989 events. Peace and development. Man and the Church.
- *Fides et Ratio* (1989). Reflection about faith and reason relations. Contributions of Christianity in cultural processes along History. Update of this cultural process.
- *Veritatis Splendor* (1993). About the fundamentals of the moral teachings of the Church.

Benedict XVI (2005-2013)

a) Historical Framework

- Religion: Continuity of John Paul II's pastoral guidance.
- Economy: International economic crisis.
- Culture: Anthropological central challenges.

b) Main Messages

- *Deus Caritas est* (2006): Protagonism of Christian love and its different meanings. Practice of love. The Church as a community of love.
- *Ratisbon University Address* (2006): Permanent validity of Christian synthesis between faith and reason, warning against the rupture of this model without idealizing past times.
- *Spe Salvi* (2007): Hope based on faith. Falsehood of the enlightened idea of progress. Learning of hope.
- *Caritas in Veritate* (2009): Commitment between charity and truth. Reminding and claiming of the content of *Populorum Progressio*. Moral causes of underdevelopment. Need of a new transcendent humanism.

Francis I (2013-)

a) Historical Framework

- Encyclical letter, *Lumen fidei* (2013): About the fullness of Christian faith. Connection between faith and reason. The Church, mother of faith. Unity and integrity of faith. Faith as light for social life.
- Apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013): About the Christian joyful duty of evangelization in the current moment.
- Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si* (2015): About the care of our common home, “integral ecology”.

3. What is the Social Doctrine of the Church?

It is a set of ordinary teachings addressed by the Church since 1891 in regards to social issues.

3.1. What is not the Social Doctrine of the Church

- It is not a mere accumulation of documents meant to be quoted occasionally.
- It is not an uncoordinated set of addresses by the ecclesiastical authority originated as a reactive defense from modern currents of thought.
- It is not the ideology of the Church. The Catholic Church has no particular and it neither seeks to create a theory to gain a situation of power from it.
- It is not a nostalgic declaration of past situations nor a search of utopic situations.
- It is neither traditionalist, nor conservative, nor progressive theory.

The Social Doctrine of the Church is a theological moral model, which pertains to the new evangelization. Its aim is to positively contribute to the common good. There are two central elements, both generated from the Christian cultural model: A particular notion of person and its corresponding notion of society.

4. Sources of the Social Teachings

4.1. Revelation, Tradition and Magisterium

It is the word of God to men, culminating in the Gospel; Christ has entrusted its interpretation to Peter and the apostles' successors. (*Mit brennender Sorge* 20, 27. *Lumen Gentium*, 25). It is at the base of the natural order and enables a full comprehension of the laws regulating the world (*Gaudium et Spes*, 23).

Its background is the Jewish faith (“Do not think that I have come to derogate the Law nor the Prophets”, *Matthew* 5, 17-20), which brings to perfection:

- Universality of the Law: Moses code is not only for Israel but for all men.
- The love Commandment: “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” St. Paul Corinthians 13.

4.2. Reason

Primitive Christianity assimilated and developed the Greek philosophical model:

- St. Paul in Athens, Aeropagus: (“*That whom you worship in ignorance is the One I proclaim to you*” Acts 17,23).
- St. Justin (105-163) who firstly defended the use of Greek philosophy.
- Clement of Alexandria (145-215) (“He would interpret philosophy as the preliminary stage to study the Christian faith”, John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, IV, 38).
- Origenes (185-253) and St. Augustin (354-430) continue the assimilation process from Platonism and St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) with that of Aristotelism.
- “Faith and reason are like the two wings with which the human spirit is lifted up to the contemplation of truth” John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*.

4.3. Social Sciences

They are tools used to analyze social issues. However there is need to detect hostile and non-neutral aspects that could obscure their purpose (epistemologies and anthropological perspectives) in many of them.

The Social Doctrine of the Church also facilitates communication fostering the dialogue between science and faith, between the Church and the world. A correct understanding of Social Doctrine of the Church will enhance this dialogue excluding hostilities or inappropriate subordinations, given its ability to detect other intellectual, political and social patterns.

5. Characteristics of the Social Doctrine of the Church

5.1. Successive Elaboration

Its development is produced at a social pace (when society requires a clarifying message due to some established process or as a consequence of some new developments).

5.2. Continuity and Change

Permanent continuity in their criteria, although it is not unmovable. This strengthens its consistency in all documents. As new developments arise, new messages are issued. It never occurs a contradiction because it is not a reactive position against the world, but a propositional language seeking to contribute to the common good and the defense of human and social rights.

5.3. Social Sciences Methodology

Since dealing with society, when analyzing the theoretical elaborations that seek to explain the social phenomena SDC uses the same methods: inductive and deductive.

5.4. Not a Theoretical Construction, but a Practical One

Although the Social Doctrine of the Church is indeed a particularly suitable construction to provide evidence about the explanatory theories of social issues (due to its departing point interpreting the notion of person and of society), it is not meant to be a mere doctrinal elaboration.

These social teachings have been a reference by which personalities and active groups in public life have tried to

determine their political, economic, educative or cultural criteria, since the late nineteenth century.

It is not a political program but it also includes numerous guidance elements for the construction of criteria. It is not in itself a political model although it includes numerous orientations and general criteria for politics. Its influence has been relevant reaching many legislative initiatives achieved by Christian social formations and Catholic personalities in the world of politics and economy.

6. First Degree Principles

They are those principles of permanent and universal character that constitute the ultimate basis of the Catholic doctrine. They generate the basis of reasoning and approach to all human and social problems

6.1. Theological Principle

God exists and is the Creator of the universe. He is real, personal, transcendent, First truth and supreme Good (*Pacem in Terris* 38). He is the Lord of the human history and Author of the history of salvation (*Gaudium et Spes*, 41). God is the supreme end of human freedom (*Libertas*, 8). He is at the basis of human dignity and its perfection (*Gaudium et Spes*, 21). He is the ultimate warranty of all human rights (*Nous Sommes*, 11).

It is a principle based in both faith and reason: God's existence and his being Creator can be acknowledged with certainty by his works and through human knowledge (I Vatican Council).

Aquinas uses the following structure for his metaphysical proofs of God's existence: 1. Existence of a universal effect in all beings. 2. Causality principle: everything has a cause. 3. The process has an origin. 4. God exists as first cause.

6.2. Christological Principle

Christ is the Son of God who enters history of humankind to save each man from sin and make us sons of God. He "will save his people from their sins" (*Matthew* 1, 21). Christ's name means "Anointed", "Messiah". Jesus is the one "God anointed and empowered Him with the Holy Spirit" (*Acts* 10, 38). "There is no other name from Heaven by which we could be saved" (*Acts* 4, 12; cf. *Acts* 9, 14; *St. Jacob* 2, 7). He is the Lord of the world and of History (*Apocalipsis* 11, 15). "We don't need to await another public revelation before his glorious demonstration" (Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* II Vatican Council, 4). SDC is based on the royal ministry of Christ (Encyclical *Quas Primas* by Pius XI, 1925).

6.3. The Anthropological Principle

Theological Approach

Man has been created to God's image (*Genesis*, 1,27). God created everything to man's profit (*Gaudium et Spes*, 12,1; 24,3; 39,1), and man was created to love God. That is why he occupies the central place at Creation and has primacy over all creatures (*Gaudium et Spes*, 14). "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (*Genesis*, 2,15). And God said: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (*Genesis*, 1,28).

Philosophical Approach

There are some anthropological consequences which depart from this: All human beings have same ontological dignity as they are sons of God. "The mastery that God gave the man over the earth had taken place first in his heart, by his self-mastery.

The man kept his integrity, mastering his triple concupiscence (cf. *1 John* 2,16), that tempted him to self-surrender to the sensitive pleasures, the attractive of material goods and his self-affirmation beyond the logic of reason” (*Catholic Church Catechism*, num. 377).

6.4. The Iusnaturalist Principle

There is a natural law: it is a set of universal and permanent principles, apprehensible by reason and based in human nature. It becomes explicit in Moses Decalogue (10 Commandments). They express the order that God has established for man and the Universe.

“The true law is the right reason, according to human nature, and common to all men; it is constant, permanent, and everlasting. It strengthens us to fulfil our duties and takes us apart from evil with its prohibitions; but although it orders or prohibits in benefit of the good people, it doesn’t completely persuade the evil with its commandments nor prohibitions. That law cannot be licitly suppressed nor partially or totally repealed; neither senate nor people’s will could exempt us of its duties. We shouldn’t look for its interpreter Sixtus Elio, neither can it be different in Rome or in Athens, today or tomorrow. There will be always the same law for everyone, for peoples and always, enduring and unchanging; there will be an only god for all, a teacher and a master, author of the law, judge and legislator; someone whom, if disobeyed, will flee from his very self and will suffer the maximum punishments for having overlooked human nature, and this even in the case that this disgraceful man could avoid what we consider penalties”. Cicero, 106-43 bC. (*Republic, Book III, 22, 33*, quoted in the *Catholic Church Catechism*, num. 1956).

7. The Human Person

7.1. Protagonism of the Anthropological Principle

The Social Doctrine of the Church is based on a specific concept of person and society; and has been developed from a specific cultural model. Those fundamentals (notion of person, notion of society) seldom appear in explicitly, but they always exist at the bottom of all kind of political, economic, cultural or social constructs. The social teachings are quite suitable in helping to detect those anthropological and social notions implicit in all sciences, especially in the social ones.

The anthropological question remains as a central issue. “A just notion of society is inferred from the Christian notion of person” (St. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, num. 14).

7.2. Origin of the Christian Notion of Person

There is an expanded misbelief about the notion of personhood, to think that it is universally accepted. The Christian notion of person is originated from the historical reflection about an specific theological fact which does not exist in other religions: Personhood is the presupposition of Christ’s natures: divine and human. He is an only Person with two natures, divine as He is God (2nd Person of the Trinity) and human, as He is true Man. “The mystery of man’s existence can be only understood at the light of the Incarnate Word” (II Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, num. 22,1). “The Son of God... truly became one of us, identical to us with exception of sin” (II Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, num. 22,2).

7.3. Description of the Human Person

Boetius' classic definition, individual substance of rational nature. (Boetius, *De duabus naturis et una persona Christi*, Ch. 3). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, num. 1730, reminds us: "The man is rational, hence similar to God; he was created free and author of his actions" (St. Ireneus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses*, 4,4,3).

Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, num. 2 points out that the human being is a compound of "soul and body, intelligence and will". The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, num. 3 mentions: "body and soul, heart and conscience, intelligence and will". The Book of Genesis 1,27 reads: "God created man in His own resemblance, in God's image he created him, male and female He created them".

Again it is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, num. 356, which points out: "Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 12,3). He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (*Gaudium et Spes*,. 24, 3) and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity: What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good".

7.4. Specific Human Features / Natural Reason

Early Christianity gradually absorbed the main philosophical elements of the Greek philosophy, being human reason the basic one. There are two meanings for "reason" that can be inferred from the Platonic model:

- a) Universal reason (logos): It controls the world, it is an order. "True wisdom consists of knowing the reason which governs all things" (Heraclitus of Ephesus). This one, according to Plato exists in a superior world. The supreme essences exist there, they are the ideas: the idea of good, the idea of truth, the idea of beauty.
- b) Individual reason, limited and partial in each man: it allows him to understand that superior order (Timeus, 28 a-29 a), but the access from the sensitive world to the intelligible one is never total; it is partially achieved in spite of many difficulties: "You won't be wrong if you compare the climb to the upper world and the contemplation of its Ideas, with the ascent of the human soul to the intelligible region. This is my thought, that you were eager to listen. Only God knows if it is accurate to reality. However, I will continue explaining it: the last thing to be perceived, not without great difficulty, is the idea of good..." (*Republic*, Book VII, III b). In the sensitive world we only perceive some partial aspects of their respective Ideas; those are limited perceptions that enable the individual reason to reach the intuition of the existence of such perfect elements in another superior world. Let us take, for instance, the case of Beauty: "We begin to perceive the beautiful things here, and their beauty serves us as steps towards the Idea of Beauty". *Discourse by Diotimus, The Banquet* 208 c, 211 e).

7.5. Christian Assumption of the Greek Model

The Platonic model was taken in its essential elements in a process of integration:

"All what has been said by them (Greek philosophers) and is true, belongs to us, Christians" (St. Justine, *Apologetics*, 13, 4). "An Idea is a notion of God" (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*