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**Piotr Kostyło's Interview with Leszek Kołakowski**

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## Liberalism and the Church

### Introduction

I met Professor Leszek Kołakowski in person for the first time at the University in Oxford in 1996. At that time, I began my two-year studies there, first as a visiting student, then as a student in the Postgraduate program called Master of Studies (MSt). Professor Kołakowski, permanently residing in Oxford, invited Polish students to regular seminars held every week at *All Souls College*, where he used to work and after retirement was entitled to use the seminar room. The seminars were varied, with students studying various disciplines, some with longer education programs, others with half-year or shorter scholarships. Professor Kołakowski was keenly interested in the work of each person, he willingly entered into discussions, asked questions, invited others to join in, each time presenting his enormous erudition and characteristic attitude of goodwill. Although the place we were in and the person of the Host made us feel a bit intimidated, we all felt like Friends and colleagues meeting an older colleague, to whom we came to share our academic ideas.

In the middle of my second year of studies, I interviewed Professor Kołakowski on the attitude of the Catholic Church to the philosophy of liberalism. I remember that it was not easy to get the Professor to talk. I do not know whether this initial distance resulted from the topic I proposed, or other reasons. Eventually, however,

the professor agreed, to my great joy. I had been preparing for the interview for a long time, working out issues and questions, arranging alternative directions of the interview in my head. Once we started, I realized that on the one hand most of the questions I had prepared earlier could not be asked due to the lack of time, and on the other hand, how little I knew about the issues I wanted to talk about.

Reading the interview shows that Professor Kołakowski treats the philosophy of liberalism and the Church and its doctrine with equal distance and at the same time with equal sympathy. He does not identify with any of the parties and notices the strengths and weaknesses of each of them. It also shows that each of them responds to deep human needs, the need for security and sense, particularly when facing various adversities as well as the need to be free to decide for yourself about your own life. Professor Kołakowski also emphasizes that both in the Catholic Church and among thinkers calling themselves liberals there are many trends, sometimes clearly divergent. As the doctrine of the Church has evolved, so has the doctrine of liberalism. The views of both sides, although at the beginning located almost on opposite poles, over time, in some areas have got closer to each other. In this way, former opponents became allies, not in all the aspects, let us emphasize that, but in some things for sure.

Going back to the interview from over twenty years ago and publishing it under the auspices of the Polish Pedagogical Society, I would like to initiate a lively discussion in the pedagogical community about liberalism and its place in culture, especially in education. It seems to me that for many reasons liberalism does not enjoy the best reputation among educators. The clear orientation of pedagogical research, especially in the field of sociology of education and social pedagogy, on the issues of justice and equal opportunities, i.e. equality issues, makes liberalism the main obstacle in achieving these goals. This can be seen very clearly in the frequent identification of liberalism with contemporary neo-liberalism. But things are much more complex, and the unequivocal condemnation of liberalism by many educators does more harm than good to the discipline itself. The interview with Professor Kołakowski shows how difficult it is to pass unambiguous judgments when assessing liberalism (as well as Church doctrine).

This publication of the interview is its third edition. It was first published in issue 4/1998 of the magazine *Przegląd Powszechny* (pp. 14-30), then it was reprinted by *Gazeta Wyborcza* in issue 108/1998 (pp. 28-29). In the first place it was entitled *On the Art of Taming Liberalism*, and in the second, *Taming Liberalism*. Since both of these sources are difficult to access today, I decided to republish the interview as a brochure. Today, two decades later, both previous titles, while still defensible, do not appeal to me. So I suggest a new title, a more neutral one: *Liberalism and the Church*.

*Piotr Kostyło – Liberalism is discussed mainly in the political and economic sense, but the term also describes the mentality of a modern human and the way they perceive themselves, the world, and also God. In the second half of the 18th century, liberal thought celebrated two great triumphs: the American Revolution led to the creation of the United States, the world's greatest democracy, and the French Revolution overthrew the feudal system in Europe. Both revolutions were prepared and carried out by people guided by liberal principles. How would you describe the mentality of these people? What thought determined their actions in the first place?*

Leszek Kołakowski – I would be afraid to describe the mentality of the people of the 18th century. It is normally assumed that liberal ideas already had their history then, whatever they were called; that the great theorist of liberalism was John Locke, but he also had his predecessors, so it is difficult to say exactly when the liberal idea was born. We can trace some of its seeds in the 16th century, among the dissidents of the Reformation or among the defenders of tolerance. These were, of course, Christian writers who defended tolerance in the name of, and not against, Christian tradition and theology. There weren't many of them, but they were very significant figures. When it started, I don't want to prejudge.

I think that the main thing in the liberal idea was the desire to live without compulsion, especially, but not only, spiritual compulsion. It is thus understandable that liberalism encountered resistance from both the Catholic Church and the initially even more newly created Protestant Churches. It is interesting how the Reformation, which in its origins was anti-rationalist, with actually strong elements of obscurantism, sharply traditional and biblical, eventually turned into the Enlightenment through some totally unusual transformation. This is one of the greatest events in the history of Europe. In the 16th century, the Catholic Church was more tolerant – I'm talking about the pre-Tridentine times. It was corrupt, but it was related to one another: corruption and tolerance. The Council of Trent brought both doctrinal sharpening, more intolerance, and the removal of corruption. It happens. Whatever the case may be, it is understandable that if the French Revolution had taken place under the slogans of the liberal arsenal, it is no wonder that the Church, seeing what was happening, could not have reacted differently, but only by fighting the liberal doctrine very sharply. It fought it for fundamental reasons, not only for historical reasons, because, as it seemed, neither the Church nor any other organized community – as it would seem, I emphasize – could not tolerate indifference to the truth. Whoever is the bearer of the exclusive and absolute truth has a natural instinct to oppose the idea of equal rights for all doctrines and faiths.

*– In 1790, the Catholic author, Disbach, wrote: "It all started with Luther's rebellion so that through Enlightenment and Freemasonry it could end up in 1789, with liberalism and socialism." In this context, the First Vatican Council mentioned Prot-*

*estantism and Jansenism, socialism, communism, German philosophy and Freemasonry. This is a very long list of defendants. Were they all equally guilty?*

– Equally guilty of what? Criticism of the Church? Of course, everywhere, in all these places, you can find criticism of the Church, and sometimes even violent attacks on the Church. It is no wonder. If they had been guilty, then they were of different things. There is no reason to claim that it all comes from a single source, unless – but we cannot know exactly – Satan was at the root of it all, with different tools and used them depending on the circumstances. Of course, the heresies of Luther and Calvin were standard imputed to the act of God. God simply was so indignant with his people and their corruption that allowed the devil to create these heresies. Luther did not start out as a schismatic or a heretic, but his very nature did not allow this to end it differently but in a radical split. Since he began to say to Rome, “you Babylonian red harlot,” it was hard for the Pope to be satisfied with such a dialogue. But of course we can speculate what would have happened if the reform movement had started earlier, what would have happened if Hus had not been burned down? We cannot have any conclusive results on this, but we can speculate.

*– The question that the Church had to answer, apart from pointing to the origins of liberalism, was: what is the nature of this phenomenon? Simply put: is liberalism essentially anti-Christian?*

– It depends what you mean by liberalism. Part of liberalism, but it is debatable to what extent it was permanent part, was the general rationalist principle. And this is incompatible with Christianity in the sense in which it was propagated. Let us analyze the words of Locke, the father of the liberal idea, that we are entitled to accept any truth or any knowledge only with the degree of conviction which is the degree of its justification. This principle, which later triumphed in modern philosophy, says that reason provides us with the criterion of truth, while tradition, authority, Revelation do not provide such criteria. On this assumption, one could of course believe in God, but on the basis of the belief that the existence of God could be proved rationally, just as the existence of an immortal soul, as Descartes himself thought. But the Church, or Christianity in general, could never accept rationalist dogma as its profession of faith. There is no Christianity without trust in history, in tradition, in the authority of Revelation. Rational religion is a square circle, there is not such a thing, and there will not be such a thing

*– Philosophers such as Descartes and Kant, who today are often blamed for contributing to the progress of liberalism, were not at all hostile to religion. Moreover, their intention was to provide such rational arguments in favor of religion that no one could resist. Did they really want to defend religion?*

– Descartes for sure. Admittedly, I don't think all his apologies are so sincere. When, for example, he argued, in response to allegations that only his physical theory could justify the dogma of transubstantiation, I don't think he really believed it. But there is no doubt that he believed in God and in the immortality of the soul. But everything was supposed to be rationalized in the end; and what Maritain and Gilson accuse him of, in a very sharp criticism, is not only rationalism, but above all starting with cogito, as if with self-perception. First, it is debatable whether there is such a thing as self-perception without an object; but regardless of that, says Gilson, when you start with cogito it will end up with cogito, and he's right. For really all modern idealism is derived from Descartes. Maritain accused him of angelism, that is, the belief that a man can put himself in a situation of a pure, non-incarnate spirit. Of course, Catholic criticism began much earlier, during Descartes' lifetime, and even more so after his death, when some of his books were put on the index. It was justified from the point of view of the Church. Regardless of the intention, it was anti-Christian.

It is different with Kant. Kant really disregarded the Church, rituals and dogmas. He also criticized all the existing evidence for the existence of God. The existence of God can and must be accepted as a postulate of practical reason, not speculative reason. Likewise, the substantiality of the soul cannot be proved – this, too, can only be done within the framework of practical reason. So it is no wonder that he was looked upon with suspicion as a man who preaches just this: the existence of God and the existence of the soul cannot be proved. Indeed, the way he also entered the history of thought did not match his intentions. But in the end, these intentions cannot be guessed from *The Critique of Pure Reason*. They come later. In the preface to the second edition, in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and, of course, in one of his last works, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, which is ambiguous and very difficult to understand. But we are not talking about that. Whatever the case may be, a philosophy which does not want to be confronted with theology, assuming that it is revealed theology or dogmatic content that will be decisive in the event of a conflict, obviously cannot stand in the light of the doctrine of the Church. Philosophy is a challenge to faith, it has always been a challenge. Philosophy arose in our culture as an attempt to solve various puzzles that were previously solved in myths. It was a liberation from myths and an attempt at a purely rational solution to questions about what the world is, what the world is like. There is always a conflict, even though naturally theologians have dealt with it. Or like St. Thomas, who says that reason, which comes to conclusions contrary to Revelation, must have got lost according to its own rules; since reason is a divine gift as well as revelation, there can be no conflict between them; and if there is such a conflict, the mind must have wandered somewhere. Or like Pascal, who argued that if the Scriptures say something that is against reason or scientific thinking, it simply means that it has a different meaning. As he said, the words *sede a dextris meis* (Ps 110) cannot be

literally true, so they must be metaphorically true. Or, according to the idea that there is a permanent conflict here, because reason is inherently corrupt and disfigured by the devil. This idea was rare in the history of theology, but it also existed. On the other hand, to say that reason is to direct theology is already going beyond Christianity. It is unacceptable, of course.

*– The ideas of a life without coercion and the unlimited trust placed in our minds met with radical attack and protest of the Church. Encyclical “Mirari vos” from 1832 condemned, for example, one of the fundamental ideas of liberalism, i.e., the principle of freedom of conscience. Could this irreconcilable attitude lead to victory in this conflict?*

– It is not surprising, of course, that the French Revolution and its results were a terrible shock for the Church; and it took it a long time to recover from that shock. Throughout the 19th century, until the very end of Leo XIII's pontificate, these attacks were repeated in various documents. We have the aforementioned encyclical “Mirari vos”, then, of course, the “Syllabus” from 1864, several other encyclicals by Leo XIII, such as “Libertas praestantissimum” from 1888, etc.

The dilemma was obvious, whatever the judgment of the French Revolution. What does freedom of conscience mean? What does freedom of religion mean? It means freedom to error! That was how it was formulated. But why should we tolerate error and heresy in matters of utmost importance for eternal salvation? It is imperative that the Church not only be able to have a denominational monopoly, but that it can act according to the *compelle intrare* rule, that is, that people have to listen to the Church's teachings, whether they like it or not. This, of course, is radically incompatible with the idea of freedom. The very violent manner in which Pius X dealt with the modernist heresy also contributed to the gap that arose between Christianity and European intelligentsia. It need not have happened. Of course, in these modernist doctrines some things were unacceptable, but I'm sure it could have been dealt differently, not with such a relentless head-on collision.

But it was inevitable in the end. It was natural for the liberal ideas to enter the blood of the societies that grew out of the idea of the French Revolution. With all the conflicts, fights, and clashes, the victory of liberal ideas in Europe and North America it seems inevitable from today's perspective. It is interesting how the post-Conciliar Church assimilated various things that seemed so difficult for assimilation. I understand these traditionalists; I understand that Cardinal Ottaviani, already blind then, said: I am happy that I am already so old and that I will die soon, because maybe I will still die in the Catholic Church. I understand these people, so incredibly attached to the entire tradition of Church, tenacious for heresy and for error, for what is a doctrinal error, error from the point of view of Christian tradition. Yet it turned out that a lot of things are possible. The idea of Human Rights,

for example, never had a good reputation in the church tradition. After all, it was historically associated with the French Revolution, with freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. However, our current Pope is a great advocate of the idea of Human Rights.

*– The fact that the Church has embraced the idea of Human Rights and stands in their defense on various occasions shows that the violation of these rights is considered by the Church to be an anti-Christian act. It seems that thanks to this, the criticism of totalitarian regimes on the part of the Church may refer to the idea of Human Rights ...*

– It can be said that the most blatant violation of this idea was communism; however, it did not renounce it verbally. At one point they started to be talked about in communist slogans – with one glorious exception, the exception being Mao Tse-tung. He did not pretend, he said: this is a bourgeois imperialist doctrine! But this was not said already in Soviet communism; they adopted the Helsinki principles, with more or less unwillingness – verbally, of course. Whatever it was, it was a system of organized violence, not only police, but also economic, both over the physical life and spiritual life of people. Naturally, the idea of Human Rights in the Church was related to the fight against communism. The Church could not fight communism while at the same time demanding a monopoly for itself, proclaiming some totalitarian principles. It was inevitable anymore. This is not to say that it was some political calculation, no, I think that the post-Conciliar Church is a Church that – without concessions of a dogmatic or doctrinal nature – wants to somehow adapt to the existing civilization. As it had adapted before. After all, from this point of view, every theologian says the same: there is an immutable substance of Christianity, there are charismatic gifts, there is a permanent dogmatic resource, and there are changes. There are forms of expression whose variability is not a bad thing by itself. The Church was adapting to various forms of civilization. The problem is how far it is allowed or how safe it is. Let me remind you here of the history of the dispute over Chinese rites and the accusations that the Jesuits drew on themselves for being too flexible and too willing to adapt. This case is always topical. Adapting can lead to concessions that are no longer acceptable to very many people. This is kind of a secondary issue, because it is not dogmatic, but I myself, for example, do not love the post-conciliar liturgical changes very much. This is none of my business, I am naturally not to teach the Church, but I did like the Tridentine ritual, I admit, the concessions can be too far-fetched, but you can't tell in advance. We can only say something very general in advance: it is the core, this unchanging substance, where nothing can be given up, and there are changing forms of expression, such as the ways in which the Church teaches. But where this limit is, it cannot be determined in advance. I also wish we could still use Latin!

*- By referring to Human Rights as its weapon in the fight against communism, the Church made a limited compromise with the idea of liberalism. It was similar in the case of the confrontation of the Church with National Socialism or fascism. Moreover, the Church thus became the protector of the liberal state against the threats of totalitarianism. Was it really the defense of liberal principles?*

- The Church never adopted liberal principles in an economic sense. From this point of view, also John Paul II continues the tradition of the Church, according to which there is the moral side of economic activity, profit alone does not justify everything, economic activity must always keep an eye on human good. I would say that in this respect the Church is closer to Social Democracy, although it does not necessarily follow the same assumptions. But the idea of social justice is, after all, in the Church; it is an idea that liberalism cannot and does not want to digest. This is obviously not an economic concept, it is a moral concept – social justice, and the Church does not want to give it up.

As for the liberal political system, the Church has never adopted liberalism in its radical form, i.e. as it was in the 19th century. Extreme liberalism proclaimed then that the task of the state was to protect security and sovereignty, and therefore the state was actually the police and the army; the rest must be left to private people, including education, health care and, of course, all economic activity. This liberalism has very few defenders today, and liberals have gradually withdrawn from these views. The fact that the state has nothing to do in education is an idea that may still be defended by some lunatics, but perhaps there are few of them. The state is also recognized as having economic functions, which is actually the case. Finally, the central bank and the government set the interest rate and taxes, which are the basic economic levers. Even in a country as liberal as the United Kingdom, the state controls a large proportion of all expenditure.

*- Although the Church promotes social justice and supports the active role of the state in the care of the common good, it does so in dialogue with liberalism, rather than fighting it. However, it does not appear that such a dialogue is possible on religious matters.*

- The most important thing for the Church is freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. There is no freedom that is not costly. When one talks about freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, it is assumed that some absurd and insane sects, some grotesque pseudo-religions and cults will arise. And it can't be helped, because as long as they don't kill anyone, they can't be prevented from doing so. These are the costs of freedom. For a long time the Church did not want to bear these costs, it did not want to accept the fact that freedom is not for free. I think it is now recognized. We pay for it, that is, not we as the Church but we as a society pay



for it. But the record is that the removal of this freedom is much worse. I think this has been recognized in Christianity. However, this has its other side – tolerance is very often the result of indifference, not of openness. It is not for me to judge these things, but to some extent the tolerance adopted by Christianity may be related to some kind of indifferentism.

*- Indifferentism within Christianity itself.*

- Within Christianity itself, among believers. I don't know how it actually looks like; whether normal Catholics, believing in God and eternal salvation are ready to accept all the dogmatic parts of the teaching of the Magisterium. Very few people know all of this, perhaps only theologians or some priests familiar with history who have read the entire "Bullarium Romanum" etc. The vast majority know only the basic points of the Creed, which is required of everyone – that is, to remember "Credo in Unum Deum". But how far are other parts of Catholic doctrine, dogmatically ennobled, though outside the "Creed", present in the minds of Catholics? To what extent is, for example, the dogma of transubstantiation and all the sacraments received? I mean, is there a common belief in their effectiveness? I do not know. I do not want to say that I know the answer to this question, but it seems to me that it is a rational question.

*- Dogmatic doubts, however important, probably concern today's Catholic less than moral doubts. Here, in turn, the Church accuses the liberal state of giving people false promises. On the one hand, liberalism encourages autonomy in shaping moral life, on the other hand, it does not provide any moral guidelines in a situation of conflict, uncertainty and choice. It wants to be neutral here. Is neutrality an ideal, though?*

- I absolutely do not think that the moral indifferentism of the state is an ideal. I can't even imagine that it could be completely realized. I once wrote an article something like: *Where is the place of children in liberal philosophy?* The state cannot give up certain assumptions of a moral nature. The idea of justice is a moral idea, and it must somehow be inscribed in the legislation and the constitution. Certain things are mandated or prohibited on moral and not other grounds. But there is also another problem. In fact, I have a grudge against the Church for having ceased to emphasize in its teaching what has always been essential: the misery of human existence. We are never removed from the possibility of a catastrophe, it is always possible, an apocalypse is always possible. The Church did not promise happiness on earth and should not, in my opinion. And there will be no happiness on earth, unless happiness is understood as a narcotic state, i.e. the happiness that can be obtained by being fed with drugs. I think that this very important part of the church tradition is forgotten or withdrawn, and I regret it. I think this is a concession made to the idol of modernity, and it is a concession that harms the Church.

*- Happiness on earth was, after all, one of the fundamental promises that liberal thinkers made. Did it not happen that the Church, trying to tame liberalism, took over its false optimism?*

- It is possible. Of course, no one argues that it is most desirable to seek the elimination of hunger and various misfortunes, no one demands that medicine or agricultural progress be eliminated, etc. The point is, however, that human misfortunes do not only come from hunger, wars, physical pain and disease. There is a more fundamental determinant of human poverty and misery. The church has always been aware of this, but has now stopped talking about it. It is very important though; remembering this is not condemning ourselves to greater and greater misfortunes, but maintaining such a distance from the world that is necessary in human life, that counteracts intoxication, that prepares us for the fact that we are mortal, that we will all die. It is such a shameful thing that we will all die.

*- Probably not many people, including Christians, wish to be reminded of it. Some theologians, such as Paul Tillich, even try to change the theological language and not use traditional terms ...*

- There is no penance, there is only reconciliation.

*- Both terms are used in the Catholic Church, although now there is much more emphasis on reconciliation. Perhaps it is also the price of taming liberalism ... Here, however, we recall Maritain, who at the end of his life lamented the state of contemporary Christianity, saying that many Christians, instead of kneeling before God, kneel before the world. Would you agree with him?*

- In this respect, not in all respects, but in this respect - yes. I would share his concerns. I think most of the post-conciliar reforms in the Church were needed and salutary. Most, but not all of them. Adaptation to liberalism in the sense that the Church or priests no longer talk about death, about eternal salvation, about hell and heaven, about sin, about our guilt, the guilt that everyone carries, not necessarily as a result of original sin, but because we are all sinners, this is the concession that ravages Christianity. Yes, I agree with that.

*- In your opinion, has the Church ceased to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world by not preaching these truths? Has it become like the liberal world that it attacked so decisively two hundred years ago?*

- I wouldn't go that far. After all, there are also different tendencies and different people in the Church. Among the advocates of liberation theology there are, for

example, people who do not know what they have in common with Christianity – some Trotskyist priests, Maoist priests, who do not know why they sometimes use Christian phraseology, since they openly and explicitly deprive it of meaning. Why would the Church exist if it was only to be a political party? The same is true of the numerous concessions granted to liberalism, which, as I mentioned, seem ruinous to me. But that's not the only thing in the Church. After all, I think there are priests who remember that tradition. I am on their side, so to speak, although I am not here to judge, I am not in that position. The fact that I am on their side does not mean, however, that I am also on the side of what also exists, and what can be called the Polish Catholic quagmire; on the contrary.

*– The fact that the Church remains a great challenge to the world can be seen, for example, in the understanding of freedom. For liberalism, individual freedom is more important than collective freedom experienced in a group. At the same time, the Church believes that freedom should be experienced in community, always keeping others in mind. Is it possible to reconcile these two visions of freedom: extremely individualistic and communal?*

– I would be afraid of such expressions. Freedom in the community and individual freedom – what does it mean? Liberal freedom is defined as negative freedom. The so-called positive freedom, Augustinian freedom, is, in my opinion, dangerous because it is easily reconciled with the totalitarian idea. If one says: *liberi peccati, servi justitiae* (“free from sin, and servants of justice”), it has already gone a long way in imposing the faith by force. I do not want to and cannot recognize it. I know this is a tradition quite deeply rooted in theology, but I find it dangerous. Freedom from compulsion, that is, freedom to do good and bad. When I do evil, I am free, which is why I am considered responsible for the evil that I do – because when I do evil, I am free. On the other hand, if you speak like St. Augustine, that I am free only when I do good (which from his point of view is not exact anyway, because if I do good, it is not of my own free will, but only on divine inspiration), and I am not free when I do evil this is extremely dangerous for me; even aside from the Augustinian theory of predestination. This is the path to a far-reaching compulsion, which is why I don't like this phraseology. What does collective freedom mean? Nobody claims that we can live in isolation, it is clear that we belong to different human communities, that it is necessary for us to live, that we live as fairly as possible, etc. But I do not know what freedom of the community means. Such a phraseology that collective freedom takes precedence over individual freedom is a Maoist phraseology, and I admit that I dislike it very much.

*– But you will also admit that by becoming members of the Church, adopting Christian doctrine, we cannot fully enjoy religious freedom; you cannot believe in the Last*

*Judgment and reincarnation at the same time. In this dream-community limits our freedom; we must give up some of our freedom for the sake of other values, in our superior conviction ...*

– This is true, but on the assumption that it is voluntary, not compulsory. After all, we put on different occasions different constraints that our instinctive energies oppose. Life without it would be impossible. We accept that we have to limit our various whims, drives, etc. There may be a voluntary restriction of freedom for moral reasons or also for religious reasons. That is, people who are faithful to the Church mostly do not feel the need to constantly study the doctrine, but rather feel safe in the doctrine they have adopted or been brought up in. This is a matter of spiritual security. There's nothing wrong with it. We all accept all sorts of things for our spiritual security. Nobody is ready to revise and analyze everything. This is a normal part of life, but it is good to know that when you live in a community and thus accept the various constraints imposed by it, it is not compulsory, but voluntary; and if there is coercion by state law, it is justified. But in this respect, I would support the liberal idea—coercion should be minimized in the sense that those things are punishable by law, permission for which would be the ruin of any social order. Of course, it is clear that murder and rape must be punishable, and what is considered immoral, but what does not shake the social order, may be allowed. Therefore, it is no longer punishable in civilized countries, e.g. homosexuality, although the Church has the right to say, based on its own tradition and Scripture, as well as its own doctrine of sexuality, that it is immoral—but it does not follow that it is to demand punishments established by law. In this respect, I would defend the liberal principle.

*– Such statements raise the question of the authority of the Church, and more precisely of the infallibility of the pope. De Maistre (1753-1821), a fierce opponent of liberalism, wrote: "There is no order without religion, no religion without Christianity, no Christianity without the Church, no Church without the Pope, no Pope without infallibility." The First Vatican Council adopted the dogmatic of the infallibility of the Pope, and it was certainly not a conciliation gesture towards liberalism ...*

– Once, while talking to Fred Ayer, I don't remember how it happened, I said that I was a firm defender of the dogma of the Pope's infallibility. Ayer was stunned, of course, and immediately demanded that I explain myself. I said something like this: it does not mean that a man, by virtue of his office, has such a privilege that whatever he says is real. But why, I continued, does this dogma not offend me? First, it is an aesthetically perfect vault for the hierarchical structure of the Church. The Church is not a democratic organism and has never pretended to be. It is a monarchical organism, and an infallible pope is its very good doctrinal vault. Secondly, there are

truths and doctrines that cannot be established according to scientifically recognized criteria. They cannot be, there is no need for them to be, and there is nothing to strive for. So what is the procedure for establishing dogmas or correctly interpreting Revelation, because Revelation is not changeable and nothing is added to it according to the Church – it is only interpreted. So it is about the interpretation of Revelation, about the mode of determining the correct interpretation. After all, it cannot be a vote. The old Protestants used to say: everyone has to read the Scriptures for themselves and understand them while inspired by the Holy Spirit – but this is really only to bother us. If taken seriously, it might not be the Church at all. Of course, the Protestants also did not take it so completely, because they have their own formula of faith; a looser one, but they have and have had it all the time. If they say that there is no authority to correctly interpret the content of Revelation, they actually rely on human reason, that is, they make faith dependent on reason. And this is the ruin of Christianity.

I don't see anything glaring about this idea of papal infallibility, assuming that the Pope really consults people. It is not that he fixes anything arbitrarily in the night meditation. There are councils, there are various congregations, consistory and church institutions; the popes consult theologians and all sorts of wise people, argue with them, and finally make a judgment. Not by voting. Why should it not be so? Because what are the other options? Democratic vote by all of God's people? After all, nothing will come of it. The people will be guided by completely different motivations than those that would be acceptable in the Church. I have nothing against this dogma, assuming, however, that no one will shoot me if I do not agree with it. Besides, I also asked theologians, but did not get a clear answer as to when, on what occasions, since Vatican I, the Pope has exercised his infallibility. After all, for example, papal encyclicals are not infallible documents. If a Catholic doubts them, he is not guilty of the error of heresy, but of the error of disobedience. But for example, what it was really like with the anti-modern decree "Lamentabili", I don't know, I'm not sure ...

*- The decree itself is a loose set of 65 sentences attributed to modernists but forbidden and rejected by the Church; it was not declared ex cathedra. Pius XII, on the other hand, in 1950 proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption ex cathedra.*

- This was after some tradition was referred to, but was there any reference to biblical sources? Dogma must have a biblical basis. The dogma of the incarnation is obvious in this sense. Regarding the immaculate conception, however, announced in 1854, I also do not know what biblical text it is based on ...

*- Both Marian dogmas are implicitly, not explicatively, contained in the Scriptures. They are an expression of the development of Christian doctrine. For the doctrine*

*develops, as John Henry Newman wrote in his 1845 essay, according to logical rules. The Scriptures require an interpretation ...*

- Yes. I wondered what it was like with descending into Jesus' hell. And I found something like this indeed; not in the Gospels, but St. Peter's Letter mentioned it. So that this is the scriptural basis.

*- And so we ended our conversation about liberalism and the Church by descending into hell ... The thing, however, will appear in the Easter notebook. Thank you very much.*

- Thank you.