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THE VOICE BEYOND US  
J. RATZINGER/BENEDICT XVI'S  
THESES ABOUT CONSCIENCE

**Abstract.** Many times culture and liberal and democratic mentality of post-modern Europe juxtapose individual conscience with objective and commonly valid moral law, treating the former as completely autonomous, while replacing the latter with the law established by majority. J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI reminds that conscience is a subjective norm, but the one that is not deprived of objective reference. As the ability inherent in human nature by God's intention, it corresponds with the order of things, also established by God, and links a will (freedom) of man with the will (freedom) of God. Rationality, characteristic of a man, and expressing through conscience as the ability to get to know the truth of existence and distinguish good from evil, has its roots in obedience, that is the readiness to listen to. Thus, conscience is, in essence, an ability to listen to God and co-knowledge about Him. That is why, prayer and respect for teaching of the Church play crucial role in shaping conscience and neither cognition mistake nor personal ignorance either do not justify or finally release the man's guilt. It is crucified and resurrected Christ who justifies, and requirements of conscience lead to Christ, through remorse.

**Key words:** conscience, mind, freedom, truth, Europe, ethos, morality, prayer, Christ, faith.

“Liberation,” founded on the marginalisation of ethics, and so of responsibility and conscience, involves a perfectionism of an intrinsically immoral kind. Moreover, this attempt to render the ethical dimension of superfluous by resort to a quasi-mechanical guarantee of social justice reflects that truncated concept of reason...<sup>1</sup>

Commenting the European socio-political transformations at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s and discerning a new, hope-raising turn towards religion, Joseph Ratzinger at the same time warned that the “new moral

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<sup>1</sup> Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI* (New York: Burns&Oats, 2005), 265.

impulses” are shaky and endangered, and their “uncovered flank is the lack of individual ethical values.” The lack in question generally boils down to abandoning the work of the individual conscience that no longer protects freedom (“my own freedom”) with moral discipline.<sup>2</sup> In this way, religion readily becomes a drug that not only fails to develop the moral power, but it perversely weakens it, at best driving religious hungers and yearnings back to esotericism and left-wing community work. Ratzinger gives advice: “Just as the spring of water must be contained to prevent it from drying up, so these impulses, too, need to be purified and given structure, so that they can have their true effect.”<sup>3</sup>

The problem of conscience, of what it is, what it is for, of the extent of its responsibilities, its place in the hierarchy of ethical lodestars, is one of the most pressing and lofty debates fraught with consequences for our present and future.

## 1. NO ONE IS GOOD BUT GOD ALONE

Benedict XVI’s most important *lectio* on the relationship between prayer and conscience comes from his greatest encyclical *Spe salvi*. What follows is the appropriate excerpt from its part entitled “Prayer as School of Hope.” The line of thought and argumentation is presented below:

To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness. When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well. In prayer we must learn what we can truly ask of God – what is worthy of God. We must learn that we cannot pray against others. We must learn that we cannot ask for the superficial and comfortable things that we desire at this moment – that meagre, misplaced hope that leads us away from God. We must learn to purify our desires and our hopes. We must free ourselves from the hidden lies with which we deceive ourselves. God sees through them, and when we come before God, we too are forced to recognize them. “But who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults” prays the Psalmist [Ps 19:12]. Failure to recognize my guilt, the illusion of my innocence, does not justify me and does not save me, because I am culpable for the numbness of my conscience and my incapacity to recognize the evil in me for what it is. If God does not exist, perhaps I have to seek refuge in these lies, because there is no one who can forgive me;

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *A Turning Point for Europe?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 33-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

no one who is the true criterion. Yet my encounter with God awakens my conscience in such a way that it no longer aims at self-justification, and is no longer a mere reflection of me and those of my contemporaries who shape my thinking, but it becomes a capacity for listening to the Good itself.<sup>4</sup>

Word after word, sentence after sentence, we see where this exposition leads up to – the proper and full understanding of conscience, which is an ability to listen to God (“Good itself.” “No one is alone but God alone” [Lk 18:19]). This is an ability that is acquired, healed and perfected in real prayer<sup>5</sup>, during which it is best freed from distractions. What we obviously mean here is not a special form of prayer, but its essence – a freely made movement of the heart toward “a participation in God’s knowledge that [is] anchored deeply within us, which we call conscience”<sup>6</sup> is identified with prayer, with its deepest Christian (coming from Christ, filial) core. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” It is this movement, this prayer/conscience that lead us to the truth, to God, His Word and will, that is to the truth of our being, the truth about us. The heart of the matter lies in the fact that conscience protects us from the self-destruction of falsehood.<sup>7</sup> God fights against us for us. Conscience will not leave us at peace, replete with the evil, numb with ignorance, ethical chicanery or oblivion of our own sin.

The goal of the work of conscience is clear, according the *lectio* of the encyclical:

... open ourselves and the world and allow God to enter: we can open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good. ... free our life and the world from the poisons and contaminations that could destroy the present and the future. ... cover the sources of creation and keep them unsullied, and in this way we can make a right use of creation, which comes to us as a gift, according to its intrinsic requirements and ultimate purpose.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi* (November 30, 2007), 33.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Myśli duchowe* (Poznań: W drodze, 2008), 39: It is „possible only when man is able to open up his heart to God, who speaks in the depth of conscience. What is necessary is internal life, quiet, attention.”

<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>8</sup> *Spe salvi*, 35.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING HEART MEANS OBEDIENT HEART

The relation between prayer and conscience, their mutually strengthened truth, was firmly and clearly stressed in the speech at the Bundestag on September 22, 2011. This was the second lesson on this matter by Benedict XVI. On top of that, it was, not only in our opinion, one of the greatest and most important teachings that Europe had heard about herself, her foundations and bases for the laws constituted in her at the beginning of the third millennium AD.

Benedict XVI commenced by making reference to the prayer of the young king Solomon, “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong” [1 Kings 3:9].<sup>9</sup>

The bridge that is closely connected to the subject and main message of the papal *lectio* at the Bundestag is “an understanding heart,” which was translated from the German “ein hörendes Herz” (“a listening heart”), after the German translation of the Bible. In French the expression takes on the form “intelligent heart,” and Polish translations vary from “a reasonable heart,” to “a clever heart,” or simply “reason.” The idea behind the multitude of translations, however, is (and owing to the context) lucid and unambiguous – intelligence (cleverness, reason) of the personal centre of man stems from the ability to listen (to ob-serve, to ob-ey) to the voice beyond us, voice of the being, voice from above, from God. Heart is listening when it is obedient to the *Logos*.

At any rate and apropos of the “voice from above,” how do we recognise what is right? In other words, according to what, as the Pope asks on the basis of Solomon’s prayer, do we govern people and discern between good and evil?<sup>10</sup> Christianity has never imposed any kind of “revealed law” on countries and societies, but it has always referred to “reason and nature in their interrelation as the universally valid source of law ... to the harmony of objective and subjective reason,” the harmony which presupposes their (nature and reason) existence, “rooted in the creative reason of God.”<sup>11</sup> Following nature, pagans follow the law, because in this way (from nature alone, “naturally”) “what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness ” [Rom 2:14f.], as the Pope states, recalling the

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Listening Heart. Reflections on the Foundations of Law*, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20110922\\_reichstag-berlin.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

words of St Paul.<sup>12</sup> During this meeting of Solomon with Paul, it turns out that “conscience” is nothing else than “an understanding heart,” as seen in the king’s prayer, reason that is open to the language of the being, reason that lets us discern between good and evil<sup>13</sup> in an ambiguous (as we have been taught by the Art, and no less by our experience) entanglement of human life and fate. Therein consists the understanding of the heart – in constant listening (“ein hörenden Herz”). The heart is wise when it obeys the voice of the being, when it observes conscience and “identifies” itself with it.

For conscience turns out to be what it actually is precisely through the fact that it speaks the same things as God says in His Law/word of the Covenant.<sup>14</sup> In this way, conscience discovers what is lasting and what ought to be heard, observed, obeyed; only then do we obey the Creator. Indeed, the Christian God is the God of conscience.<sup>15</sup> However, He, in His complete internality, absolute universality, is none other than the Creator of man, all people and the world. It is in conscience, this quiet participation in the knowledge of “how things are” and “how they should be so that it may be good” (in our lives and those of the neighbour), the participation in the knowledge of the deepest foundation of our created being, that we encounter Him *tête-à-tête*. He is present there.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. CONSCIENCE AS THE MEETING PLACE OF GOD’S FREEDOM AND MAN’S FREEDOM

Now it seems due to recall the third of the great *lectio*, following the encyclical *Spe salvi* and the “ein hörendes Herz” speech at the Bundestag, by J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI concerning prayer and conscience. What we have in mind is the conclusion of the lecture in Freiburg im Breisgau, delivered in November 1980 during the Fourth International Congress of Canon Law. The lecture was called “Freedom and Constraint in the Church”<sup>17</sup> (*Freiheit und Bindung in der Kirche*) and its final paragraph we are interested in

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, Heinz Schürmann, Hans U. von Balthasar, *Principles of Christian Morality* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 100.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Kirche-Ökumene-Politik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987), 165-82.

presents the issue in a clear-cut perspective of freedom, which is consistent with the rest of the speech. Prayer is the truth (just as love and obedience, as dedication and surrender; such prayer in its fullness is the truth about ourselves and sheds the light of truth upon us). The truth, in turn, frees [cf. Jn 8:32], liberates, unchains the shackle of the evil. It is in conscience where God's freedom and man's freedom, God's will and man's will, meet, with no antinomy whatsoever. It is the Church that administers this meeting. Ratzinger puts these threads together in the following way:

Conscience – properly understood – is not a paean of unquestionable subjectivism. It is a realisation of each person that in his or her being they are dependent on God. Therefore, conscience, on the one hand, is an important organ of man's freedom, because it contains the direct tie between man and God and, through being bound to the idea of the creation of man by God, to God's will that grants being; it marks the limits of all external authorities. At the same time, however, it is a manifestation of a particular role of created freedom, an expression of the fact that human existence is not random, nor are random the constraints imposed on it. Here, in the depths of the human being, freedom and constraints become one thing. The ultimate task of the Church lies in nothing else than serving the vigilant choice to do God's will by conscience, making conscience obedient, clear and free, and leading man within himself to meet God. If the authority of the Church carries out his task and conscience is clear, an antinomy between freedom and constraints disappears.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. THE ONTOLOGY OF CONSCIENCE

“Conscience and Truth”<sup>19</sup> is possibly the most profound and insightful (also in erudite sense) dissertation by J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI on conscience. The central and systematic part thereof is dedicated to the so-called two layers of conscience, a distinction that dates back to the medieval scholasticism, but which Ratzinger reconstructs and carefully develops.

*Anamnesis* (Greek: “reminiscence”), the first of the levels, an ontic level of the phenomenon of conscience, is a unique original memory of good and truth (which are identical in their divine source and essence), which is characteristic of man.<sup>20</sup> *Anamnesis* is a *habitus* – a lasting ontic quality of man.<sup>21</sup> Ratzinger claims that this term derives from Plato's philosophy<sup>22</sup> and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth” in *Crisis of Conscience*, ed. John M. Haas (New York: Crossroads, 1996), 1ff.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

makes it theological thanks to Paul (the excerpt from the Letter to the Romans, quoted above: “What the law requires is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness” [Rom 2:15])<sup>23</sup>, Basil the Great (the spark of divine love is innate in man so that love of God and – consequently! – disposition for observing all divine commandments are not something imposed from without, but the capacity and necessity of our rational nature)<sup>24</sup> and Augustine (a basic understanding of the good has been instilled in man).<sup>25</sup> What we have in mind here is, therefore, an *anamnesis* (=reminiscence, reminder) of the Source, an internal sense identical both to the ability of openness to the voice reaching from the Source (from the Creator)<sup>26</sup> and to the ability of recognising it along with a desire to follow it, go towards it, towards Him... Ratzinger explains that *anamnesis*, which is present in us, “needs ... assistance from without so that it can become aware of itself.”<sup>27</sup> This in fact is the function of the Church, whose external assistance does not act against *anamnesis*, but has maieutic function; it is correlated with *anamnesis* (the Saviour, Lord of the Church is the Creator of man!), bringing to fruition its internal openness to the truth.<sup>28</sup> The Church is not omniscient and keeps learning, but it possesses “the sureness of the Christian memory”<sup>29</sup> (the *anamnesis* of faith) and “from its sacramental identity, it also distinguishes from within between what is a genuine unrevelling of its recollection and what is its destruction or falsification.”<sup>30</sup>

*Conscientia* (Latin: “shared knowledge”), the second level, a functional level of the phenomenon of conscience is “a conscience in execution.” This is an act of conscience that consists of a few stages: recognising, bearing

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “Reinhold Schneider has said: ‘What is conscience if not the knowledge of one’s responsibility for all of creation before him who created it? Put it quite simple, conscience means acknowledging that man – oneself and the other – is a creation and respecting the Creator in him.’” Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics*, 164.

<sup>27</sup> Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth.”

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. “The true sense of this teaching authority of the Pope consists in his being the advocate of the Christian memory. The Pope does not impose from without. Rather, he elucidates the Christian memory and defends it. For this reason the toast to conscience indeed must precede the toast to the Pope because without conscience there would not be a papacy. All power that the papacy has is power of conscience.”

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

witness<sup>31</sup> and judging, which in its final stage changes into selection, decision and act (or desisting from it). *Conscientia* is an *actus*, an act executed by man. This act cooperates closely with will, which is responsible for either opening or closing the way to recognition.<sup>32</sup> The integrity of the processes in question depends largely on an already formed moral character. Ratzinger elaborates on the issue of *conscientia*, drawing from Thomas Aquinas (an Aristotelian tradition that sees here a kind of active knowledge, based on deduction)<sup>33</sup> and Augustine (complex relationships between freedom and moral decisions, and cognition, will, emotions, habits)<sup>34</sup>. At the same time, he clearly emphasises an etymologically in-built (*con-scientia*, “co-knowledge”) necessary anteriority of *anamnesis* with regard to the acts of conscience, i.e. openness to the voice of the being itself, God’s voice, which is crucial for the decisions of conscience. On the level of conscience, man shares the knowledge of truth with God, he recognises it (the truth) and knows it from Him. It is not the subject alone (based on the changing criteria, feelings, relativity of existence) that judges *conscientia*, but the subject that shares the knowledge with God (owing to *anamnesis*) is obedient to His voice – a rock of the truth.<sup>35</sup>

##### 5. NOT TO SEE THE TRUTH IS GUILT

It is precisely during one of the stages that constitute the act of *conscientia* (namely, the stage of judgement) that a difficult problem of erring conscience<sup>36</sup> crops up, which Ratzinger uses as a background and opportunity to express the proposition of great significance to the relationship between *anamnesis* and *conscientia*, or essentially to the heart of the matter of the contemporary problem of conscience. In a nutshell, it is as follows:

It is not man’s guilt to act in accordance with his or her beliefs, even if they are wrong. But that is not all: one must not act against his or her

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Learning to Believe* (London: St Pauls, 2014); Paweł Lisicki, Grzegorz Górny, Rafał Smoczyński, „O nihilizmie, piekle i kryzysie w Kościele,” interview with Benedict XVI, *Fronda* 15-16 (1999): 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth.”



convictions [cf. Rom 14:23]<sup>37</sup>. This claim cannot be taken as a canonization of subjectivism, and the subject of guilt does not exhaust here, just the opposite, it begins here. The guilt of man lies in the fact that he or she has reached those distorted convictions<sup>38</sup>, which result in objective evil. The guilt lies in efficient drowning out of the objection of the *anamnesis* of our being, crossing out of “what the law requires [that] is written on [the] hearts” [Rom 2:15]. The guilt, as a result, does not consist in the present and wrong judgement of conscience, but it lies much deeper: in letting weeds grow in life and the understanding that has dulled our sensitivity to the voice of the Truth resounding within man.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, hardened criminals remain guilty. This is the heart of the matter. The Nuremberg trial is a sign of the conviction of a civilization that has been led out of Christianity, of the conviction that the destruction of *anamnesis* does not acquit conscience. It seems that this is the meaning of the two famous Pauline phrases about conscience. The first one, taken from the Letter to the Ephesians [4:18-19], speaks of men “darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance, because of their hardness of heart, [who] have become callous [of conscience] and have handed themselves over to...” There Paul goes on to enumerate the sins. The second one is found in the Letter to the Corinthians [1 Cor 4:4], where he writes, “I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord.” As in Paul’s case, we are all left with the most appropriate plea from the Psalms, “Wash away my hidden faults” [Ps 19:13]<sup>40</sup>.

Let us have a one more look at other wordings and shades of this thesis that seems extremely important. I daresay that it is one of the central front-lines of a great battle that is underway, in which *Christianity* grapples with a malicious spirit of perverse lie that has taken on the (temporary, as this deceitful and malicious spirit changes outfits every age) form of a left-wing liberal spirit of the times. This is the issue (not the only one, though) which made J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI an exceptionally inconvenient opponent of the replete and self-satisfied (after all, never has anyone created a better system for us – liberated and enlightened) army of the civilisation of death and its henchmen. It was then that he had the courage to say, looking in the eyes

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

of those that pride themselves on their education and peace of mind: “Not to see [the truth] is guilt. It is not seen because man does not want to see it.”<sup>41</sup> This is when the warning light goes out, because the power has been cut off.

This is the essence of, so to say, “original” guilt, which is fundamental to this issue – to refuse to get to know the truth. In other words, in lieu of containing the spring, we contaminate it. While the sound conscience that has not been poisoned (and is not being poisoned) serves as a window that faces the common truth as a base and support, as a foundation of each and every one, the contaminated conscience turns out to be nothing else than justification for subjectivity.<sup>42</sup> This is what the “liberalism’s idea of conscience”<sup>43</sup> is. The salvation here does not block the way toward the truth (such does not exist or is “inhumanly” demanding), but subjectivism that “should not like to have itself called into question” (as it is identical to conscience), and eventually social conformism (as mediating value between conformisms).<sup>44</sup> This is precisely the moment when, through the back door, quietly, the most revolting criminals are acquitted (which is a creeping tendency in the liberal [anti]culture of today).<sup>45</sup> Besides, man becomes “reduced to his superficial conviction and the less depth he has, the better for him”<sup>46</sup> – social conformism between the superficial is far easier to achieve (“after all, everyone who has class thinks so”). Those, for the sake of peace and quiet, will turn a blind eye to the question about the truth. They will be fully satisfied

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> “The common assumption that everyone must live in accordance with his or her own convictions and will be saved owing to his thereby proved ‘conscientiousness’ is wrong. How so?

For instance, can the heroism of a member of the SS, a wicked meticulousness of his distorted conscience be a kind of *votum ecclesiae*? Never!

This perspicuous example shows clearly the controversiality of this statement and its premises. For the identification of the voice of conscience with such and such convictions that a given social and political status gives rise to leads to the belief that man saves himself by means of conscience according to the mentioned system it is found at or has somehow joined. Conscience becomes subject to degeneration and takes on the form of scrupulosity, and the given system is turned to a ‘way of salvation.’ It does sound human and noble, when in this vain we claim that a Muslim who wants to be saved must be a ‘good Muslim’ (what does it even mean?), a Hindu – a ‘good Hindu’, etc. Is it not fitting to say then that a cannibal must also be a ‘good cannibal,’ and a zealous member of the SS a member through and through? It transpires that something is wrong here.” Cf. J. Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Kościół – znak wśród narodów. Pisma ekslezyjologiczne i ekumeniczne*, vol. 8/2 of “Opera omnia” (Lublin: KUL, 2013), 993-994.

<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth.”

with a compromise (even if a rotten one, as long as it does set Poland and the world “on fire”). Procedures will take over the Decalogue.

Summing it all up, “no longer seeing one’s guilt, the falling silent of conscience ... is an even more dangerous sickness of the soul than the guilt which one still recognizes as such.”<sup>47</sup> A pious Pharisee does not know (or want to know) that he is guilty too; he has no problems with conscience, is incapable of changing, “impervious” to the word of conversion. Jesus, on the other hand, is listened to willingly by sinners who are not “protected” by the screen of erring conscience.<sup>48</sup> They are capable of changing and desire it. Real piety does not consist in sinlessness, but openness to the Voice of *anamnesis* that *conscientia* hears and obeys. For the sake of moral and salvific good (of all), one has to approach with great (if not the greatest) mistrust the attempts of a straightforward identification of conscience with self-awareness of the *I*, with a subjective certainty about one’s own moral character.<sup>49</sup>

Erring conscience (moral self-righteousness) is only initially convenient. Later on, it becomes worse and worse, until we arrive at enslavement and destruction.<sup>50</sup>

## 6. ABSOLUTISATION OF CONSCIENCE EQUALS ABSOLUTISATION OF MAN

J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI would frequently take part in disputes about the relationship between the conscience of an individual and official teaching of the Church (the Magisterium). It is worth recalling here, even if briefly, at least two of these debates.

The first one deals with the Conciliar constitution on the Church in the modern world, and being more exact, a popular post-Vatican II stance that *Gaudium et spes* supposedly supported, in a explicit way, the conviction that the conscience of an individual is, in the ethical judgement of his or her own acts, superior to the teaching of the Church. This assertion was placed along the same lines as the impervious to debates and shades of meaning view of St Thomas Aquinas on the binding power of erring conscience. Ratzinger’s

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Cf. Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 255-64.

standpoint radically questions both these views.<sup>51</sup> He believes that despite liberal theologians' inclinations and interpretations, the Conciliar fathers "were in fact anxious not to allow an ethics of conscience to be transformed into the domination of subjectivism, and not to canonise a limitless situation-driven ethics under the guise of conscience,"<sup>52</sup> and any kind of (post-)modern theories of the extreme autonomy of conscience may, indeed, refer to the thought of Abelard, but not Aquinas, whose views were far more intricate.<sup>53</sup>

His argument is that it cannot be that one's own conviction is simply equated with the voice of conscience, and we are thus claimed to be the ultimate criterion of behaviour. God (through the voice of conscience) demands something precisely opposite – internal attention to His quiet orders and promises that are found deep within us (for we are His children) and rid us of false convictions, dulling habits and blind (and deaf) trust in our own *ego*.<sup>54</sup> As for the problem of conscience, Christian faith is, as usually, an opposition of *hybris* and negation of uncritical self-satisfaction.<sup>55</sup> Conscience is an echo of the voice of the Other, and not a reflection of our own.

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<sup>51</sup> Tracey Rowland [*Ratzinger's Faith. The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: OUP, 2008)] thus summarises this approach: "Ratzinger has pointed out that *Gaudium et spes* never set out to offer anything more than the most general outline of a Christian doctrine of conscience. He notes that all manner of epistemological, psychological and sociological factors relevant to this topic are left untreated, and in particular the issue of how conscience can err if God's call is directly to be heard in it is unexplained. He also notes that highly popularised teaching of a fellow German theologian Johann Baptist Metz that Thomas Aquinas was the first to teach the obligatory force of an erroneous conscience, but he argues that this is historically and objectively the case only to a certain extent and with considerable qualifications. In practice, Aquinas's thesis is nullified by the fact that he is convinced that error is culpable. Guilt lies not so much in the will which has to carry out the precept laid down upon it by the intellect, but in the intellect itself. According to Ratzinger the doctrine of the binding force of an erroneous conscience in the form in which it is propounded by Metz and a whole raft of contemporary Catholic ethicists belongs entirely to the thought of modern times not to Thomas Aquinas."

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "The Dignity of the Human Person" in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 136 after: Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 75-6.

<sup>53</sup> Ratzinger, "Conscience and Truth." Theo G. Belmans ["Le paradoxe de la conscience erronée d'Abélard à Karl Rahner," *Revue Thomiste* 90 (1990): 570-86]: shows in what way the book by Sertillanges on Aquinas from 1943 gave rise to falsification of his theory of conscience that consisted in, to put it simply, citing selectively from his *Summa theologica* (I-II q. 19) article 5 and omitting 6. As a result, Abelard's theory is attributed to Thomas, whose main goal was to overcome it. Abelard taught that those who crucified Christ did not sin, because they were unaware. According to this idea, sin would be committed only by the one who sins against his own conscience."

<sup>54</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, 117.

<sup>55</sup> J. Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Kościół – znak wśród narodów. Pisma ekslezyjologiczne i ekumeniczne*, vol. 8/2, 993.

Absolutising conscience is in fact absolutising man<sup>56</sup> and overthrowing God. As anywhere else, the matter comes down to the fundamental issue: “Does man seek himself, or give himself up”<sup>57</sup> to the Other and really seeks Him, and thereby the truth and good?

Another debate – perhaps the most heated among the post-Conciliar ones, and for sure fraught with the most severe consequences – pertains to *Humanae vitae*, the encyclical by Paul VI from July 25, 1968 “on the regulation of birth.” J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI voiced his opinion about it on numerous occasions. Here we present an excerpt from a homily – closely related to “the voice of conscience vs. teaching of the Church” – delivered in the *Liebfrauenkirche* in Munich on July 2, 1978 (i.e. before he began working in Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and while Paul VI was still alive). Cardinal Ratzinger said, quoting in the first sentence a personal claim of Paul VI:

“It was a very difficult decision, about which I had known that was against the expectations of Christendom [*der Christenheit*<sup>58</sup> meaning the Christian world, the majority of Christians, rather than Christianity – *das Christentum*] that I took *coram Domino*, before the face God.” What is brought to light here is something we call “binding.” The Pope is not an absolute sovereign and it is exactly where another solution seems almost obvious: a binding voice of conscience is at work, which is stronger than any kind of authority. My conviction is that it alone is a sign that our world is in need of – man, following the voice of conscience, challenges our enlightened century and goes against its opinions that are perceived as most obvious.<sup>59</sup>

Also, as happened to a great extent in the case of *Humanae vitae*, to “*die Christenheit*,” the Christian world, it was “the most obvious” to think and act against the papal encyclical. Public opinion, the new oracle of our age<sup>60</sup>, favours the conceptions we have already mentioned that treat conscience as a subjectivity raised to the level of an ultimate criterion. It is to serve as *roche de bronze*, a rock the Magisterium crashes against.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1203.

<sup>57</sup> Yves Congar, *Außer der Kirche kein Heil. Wahrheit und Dimensionen des Heils* (Essen: Driewer, 1961), 154.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Kirche – Zeiten unter den Völkern. Schriften zur Ekklesiologie und Ökumene*, vol. 8/1 of “Gesamelte Schriften” (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2010), 1683.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Kościół – znak wśród narodów. Pisma eklesjologiczne i ekumeniczne*, vol. 8/1 of “Opera omnia” (Lublin: KUL, 2013), 629.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 628.

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Głosiciele Słowa i służby Waszej radości. Teologia i duchowość sakramentu święceń*, vol. 12 of “Opera omnia” (Lublin: KUL, 2012), 271-2. Andrea Torielli, *Ratzinger. Strażnik wiary* (Kraków: Salwator, 2005), 96-7.

In a dispute with this kind of “opinions,” J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, defending the necessary and deepest tie between an individual conscience and teaching of the Church (not only in the context of *Humanae vitae*), resorts to the definition of conscience coined by Robert Spaemann: it is “an organ, and not an oracle” (*Das Gewissen ist ein Organ, kein Orakel*<sup>62</sup>) and as such requires growth, formation and exercise.<sup>63</sup> In that it is similar to language, which we use indeed “from ourselves,” but which we have learnt from others, which is formed “from within.”<sup>64</sup> Here the situation is alike: conscience requires formation and education, and the Magisterium bears responsibility for the proper formation of conscience.<sup>65</sup> Whence come all these arguments, whence resistance to the Magisterium, whence (so much) defence of “mine” (view, stance, lifestyle, sin that is to be called virtue)? Ratzinger puts forward a few questions to the examination of – unsurprisingly – conscience:

Whatever in me opposes this word of the Magisterium? Is it not but my own love of comfort? My obstinacy? Or perhaps a kind of external domination of a way of life that allows me to do what the Magisterium prohibits and which seems to me better-founded and compatible solely because it is approved by society?<sup>66</sup>

And the main point:

If I believe that the Church comes from the Lord, the Magisterium has the right to be accepted as a factor of utmost importance of forming my conscience, or its true education.<sup>67</sup>

All the propositions pertaining to the significance and functionality of conscience essentially refer to the Church, its being, existence and “administration.” What it stands for is that the Church must in essence be faithful to the teaching of conscience. We must not forget this dogmatic and moral priority, even for a second, if we do not wish to expose the whole theological reflection on conscience to the danger of hypocrisy. The principle is as follows: as faith dwells in conscience, what is truthfully ecclesial is best

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Künder des Wortes und Deinder eueuer Freude*, vol. 12 of “Gesammelte Schriften” (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2010), 296.

<sup>63</sup> J. Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Głosiciele Słowa*, 277-8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-9.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

represented by the obedience to conscience, or by those who observe their conscience<sup>68</sup>. This way, the primacy of God is protected in the sphere of faith and the Church. Obviously in the Church, as anywhere else, they “observe their conscience,” meaning “not an absolutised *I*, but an internally open, vigilant and attentive conscience of faith.”<sup>69</sup> Hence, as J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI stresses, in the context of the issues of synodality and particular synods, observing conscience is more representative for real ecclesiasticity than the decision of the majority, “often prepared by a minority and accepted afterwards by many for the sake of peace and quiet more than a deep internal conviction”<sup>70</sup>, as he seems to note with the great knowledge of human nature and psychology. Ultimately, it is Christ the Truth, as we believe, that governs through the Church. The more efficiently He guides the Church, the more open, clear and as such “decisively deciding” are the singular consciences of the sheep, especially those who have been given care of the whole flock<sup>71</sup>.

The principle of the primacy of conscience, and thereby God, concerns not only the Church, but equally all kinds of social, political and national bodies, led by the state as such, independently of its system. Yet, we by no means have in mind a sort of “manipulative” entry of theocracy through the back door (nor a traditionalist resentments, fundamentalist inclinations, etc. from a litany of all that the contemporary liberal democracy is not fond of or cannot stand). The priority of conscience in the sphere of a state (or laws it is governed with) in no way indicates that politicians are to run to churches (which is the fear of all those post-Enlightenment systems that frequently understand the neutrality of worldview of a state in an extremely secular or atheistic manner). Not at all. Suffice that a state renounces the role of god-educator of the highest standing. It is enough for its officers to look further than reaches their own *ego*, the *hybris* of power, polls and elections at hand. Let them at least (or at most) look at the depth of the mystery of thoroughly examined manhood, and thereby at the mystery of being... With humility and will to look for a common truth. This will be nothing less than serving conscience, and for believers opening to the “rule of God.”

With all the unquestionable merits of democracy, with its basic principle of majority, an even more fundamental issue of ethical foundations of the

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<sup>68</sup> J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 63.

law remains to be answered. Are such principles which constitute an irrefutable law by virtue of their essence non-existent and no decision of “a majority” may change them, because it has got to obey them? And would other laws not stay unlawful, even if a lawfully chosen parliament affirmed them?<sup>72</sup> Who lays them down, who is behind them? It is not science, technology, or tradition alone, not even an autonomous ethics of an individual, or the sovereign wisdom of a state<sup>73</sup>. This “legislative” potential and incontrovertible power may belong to one power alone, to human conscience.

#### 7. EFFORT OF MEETING THE DEMANDS OF CONSCIENCE AS THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

A reliable theology must add here: provided that it retains the life-giving tie with its Source and Principal.<sup>74</sup> Thereby, it remains unchanged and does not turn to a dummy – yet another disguise of narcissism. For the truth about conscience is as follows: the truth of conscience is constantly pilloried of a number of forces both internal and external to man. The attack in this war is launched deceitfully, and the most dangerous one consists in undermining the truth about conscience and cutting it off from its root; nonetheless, the allies of this battle for the truth of conscience and conscience itself do not cease to be just as mighty. The conviction is still present in man that the battle in question is simultaneously a battle for one’s own identity, happiness, and oneself.

J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s works are full of examples of such struggles, from both the past and present. He illustrates, for instance, to the young an “attack” of a “flank” of feelings (these may suggest the false path – unlike the one shown to the “Magi” by a star shining in conscience).<sup>75</sup> The attack being mounted today, on a large scale, with the waysides and illusions of materialism that downplays the ethos, “oversimplifies” reality and tries to get rid of conscience from the indispensable furnishing of the human being.<sup>76</sup> The attack on the part of public opinion that exerts pressure on those who believe in Christ so that they may not tarnish their reputation of being

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Wykłady bawarskie z lat 1963-2004* (Warszawa: PAX, 2009), 222.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Benedict XVI, *John Paul II: My Beloved Predecessor* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007), 68.

<sup>76</sup> J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics*, 221.



“modern,” “progressive” and make effort to, as von Hildebrand put it brilliantly in as soon as 1950, “withstand the look of the world” and evade the label of “Christ’s fools.”<sup>77</sup> A lot of other attacks take place.

Allies, who are, as we have said, “mighty” are also susceptible to attacks. For instance, an ever so strong conviction (present in everyone, anywhere in the world, except maybe those few ones “deprived of conscience”) that there is a judgement over our actions, “in particular those dark issues we deftly endeavour to drive out of our conscience.”<sup>78</sup> We know at the core of our awareness that it is futile, that an incomprehensible supreme tribunal awaits. What we also know, which constitutes yet another advantage in the battle for conscience, is that there is the deepest and closest possible connection between our personal happiness and obedience to the voice of conscience; that the effort of meeting the demands of conscience (morality) is at the same time the way to real happiness.<sup>79</sup> We realize as well that a sinner runs away, even though no one, as it were, chases him [cf. Prov 28:1]...

Let us reconsider the “attack.” A trouble, central point of the frontline of the present-day battle for the conscience is, in J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s opinion, the great issue of the struggle over man’s right to live from the moment of conception. The same problem would trouble his great saintly predecessor at the Holy See. The teachings of the both of them reach to the very roots of the problem, i.e. the cultural, (im)moral sources of killing the unborn, present in our civilisation. Both are critical of the post-Enlightenment heritage in this field. John Paul II accused Enlightenment of “breaching,” or refusing, or ignoring Christ and, therefore, opening a way for “the future destructive experiences of the evil.”<sup>80</sup> In Benedict XVI’s opinion, the classically post-Enlightenment form is unacceptable, because it opts for “such a formation of public life that only moral and religious agnosticism is

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987): “... sideways glances at what *people* think about us maim the Church as usual. Today, however, it may be done more than ever, because *people* have new methods of exerting pressure. It cannot be denied that the people of Church too are not fully driven by what is demanded by the faith in Jesus Christ, but more by what *people* will make of it, as if thereby they could save face. The moment someone has already won himself the reputation of a progressive man, he will quickly become a slave to it. It seemingly serves freedom, but in reality leads to servile vanity, destroying *metanoia*.”

<sup>78</sup> Benedykt XVI, *Radość wiary* (Częstochowa: Edycja, 2012), 189-90.

<sup>79</sup> A. Torielli, *Ratzinger. Strażnik wiary*, 138.

<sup>80</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość. Rozmowy na przelomie tysiącleci* (Kraków: Znak 2005), 103-104. Cf. Jerzy Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 2 (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 2012), s. 190.

deemed politically correct.”<sup>81</sup> The agnosticism in question, perceived as “the only normal one,” has been imposed as a lifestyle on immense parts of the world by a force, whose instruments (of violence) are, above all, the power of money and Euro-American mill of cultural export.<sup>82</sup>

This in turn leads straight to the main issue of modern times, to the disappearance of morality, which is, on the one hand, being privatised (pushed aside to an exclusively personal sphere), and, on the other, reduced to the so-called calculation of success (“what promises better chances of surviving” is ethical). It is accompanied by public derision (which has become global thanks to the media) on the part of the enlightened ones in the face of attempts to revive moral integrity of man (as it would be hypocrisy, regress to the Middle Ages, duplicity, fanaticism and gibberish).<sup>83</sup> “Society which is agnostic and materialistic in its public structure and wants anything else but to exist below it will not get by in the long run,”<sup>84</sup> as Ratzinger forecast 25 years ago (in 1990).

Even if its end is still unnoticeable, though it depends on the acuity and strength of spiritual sight – whoever sees, sees. What ought to be said about an agnostic state that stands before God, which builds its law solely on the opinion of the majority, is that it becomes a “gang of thugs.”<sup>85</sup> Ratzinger cites Augustine, who interpreted the Platonic tradition: exclusion of God produces a gang of thugs in various, stronger or weaker, but still thuggish and vicious, forms<sup>86</sup>. And here we get back to the legalisation of abortion. A thuggish and vicious outline of liberal democracies of today is best visible where systematic homicide of innocent, unborn people is covered up with something that appears to be a law. A gang of thugs. The homicide is protected by the interest of the majority (living and having power). Here it is not even the homicide that shows the viciousness of the gang (even though it is also the case), but the fact that a number of its members (democratic majority?) are capable of creating a pretense of law, thanks to which a systematic homicide is possible and actually “conducted” with a duplicitous cheek in the background – what is at stake here is the protection of the discriminated (women). It is not “unheard of,” as all genocidal and systematic crimes in

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<sup>81</sup> J. Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *A Turning Point for Europe*.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* IV 4, CChr XLVII 101; Joseph Ratzinger, *Die Einheit der Nationen* (Salzburg: Verlag, 1971), 71-103, after: *A Turning Point for Europe*.

history were accounted for by murderers (they, as opposed to their victims, live to account for it) through a form of higher necessity and a dead-end moral dilemma.

Especially in the context of the future of Europe, J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI wrote about this so boldly and shockingly so as to prick, as it were, the conscience of Europe and the entire (post-)modern world. Starting with the reference to the Bible and Levinas (according to whom the face of the other tells me, “Do not let me die”<sup>87</sup>).

The tragic moral situation, deciding between good and evil, begins with a look, with choosing to see or not of the face of the other. Why do we unanimously refuse to kill children today, but are so insensitive to the phenomenon of abortion? Perhaps, because in the latter case we do not see the face of a man who has been sentenced not to see daylight. A lot of psychologists proved that women who plan to get abortion have their maternal feelings dulled – the feelings of a mother who expects a child, gives name, envisions his or her face or future... Those dulled images get back on them as unresolved remorse that haunts conscience.

The face of the other refers me to my freedom of accepting him and take care of him, of affirming his value in himself, and not on the terms of my benefit. Moral truth is full of demands regarding my freedom. The decision to look at the face of the other is a decision about one’s own conversion, permission to demand explanations of me, transcending myself to make room for the other<sup>88</sup>.

Through severe accusation of the dark side of democracy which resorts to violence through allowing “legal” abortion:

The laws of some are created by means of refusing to grant others the right to live. Any kind of legalisation of abortion assumes the idea that it is the power that lays down the law. In this completely unnoticeable way the foundations of real democracy, built in accordance to the rules of justice, have been shaken in their essence<sup>89</sup>.

To a dramatic interpretation of the description of God’s covenant with Noah:

The blessing which God gives Noah and his children after the flood grants once and for all these laws that after the sin may ensure the continuation of the life of mankind. The creation, which had been created perfect by the hands of God, was dragged into disharmony and degradation after the death of original parents. Violence and countless murders spread across the world, making justice-driven peace of social life unattainable. Now, after the great purification of the flood, God puts

<sup>87</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Duchowość wydarzenia soborowego” in *Ubóstwo*, ed. Gerhard L. Müller (Lublin: KUL, 2014), 104-105.

<sup>88</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Europa Benedykta w kryzysie kultur* (Częstochowa: Edycja, 2005), 85-86.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

aside the blade of His anger and embraces the world with His mercy anew, showing it, anticipating the future redemption, norms key to surviving. “For your own lifeblood, too, I will demand an accounting: from every animal I will demand it, and from man in regard to his fellow man I will demand an accounting for human life. If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; For in the image of God has man been made” [Gen 9:5-6]. With these words God demands human life as His special property; it has remained under His direct and constant protection<sup>90</sup>.

Up until two irrefutable conclusions:

“1. There are no ‘petty murders.’ Therefore, unconditional respect for every life is an essential condition for making possible human social life (on the level of a state, and as well internationally), which is at all worthy of its name.

2. Whenever this respect is missing, man inevitably loses his identity and destroys conscience.”<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, however, “conscience” seems to serve mainstream theoreticians and legislators of the western democracies, as well as the political majority, for something else than unconditional protection of the life of the most defenseless neighbours and care about the real human social life. “Petty murders,” or in fact formidable, monstrous manslaughters of the innocent that cries to Heaven for vengeance, take place in the eyes of law, silence of the media and on a vast scale.

According to this line of logic, conscience is absolutely right, when it goes against the teaching of the Church and her moral principles. Nevertheless, whenever anyone tries to refer to them in order to substantiate the objection to what is inhuman under state law (the case of Prof. Chazan in Poland in 2014<sup>92</sup>, the conscience clause, declaration of conscience, etc.), the principle of its superiority is openly questioned. This is a common duality of standards.

No. It is conscience that must control (any) authority, for “absoluteness” is not its domain. (Any) authority, as anyone and anything on earth, must look forward and upward, beyond itself. “Hence we are in need of people who brazenly” stand by the power of conscience and thus embody the arch-power of powerlessness of the spirit in face of the blatant violence of this

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 76-7.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 78-9.

<sup>92</sup> Prof. Bogdan Chazan found himself running the gauntlet of the left-wing-inclined media in Poland (2014), because he refused to abort a sick child and did not provide the determined mother with the address of another doctor, or clinic, that would perform it. In both cases, he brought up the clause of conscience and Hippocratic oath. On 3 July 2014 Poland’s National Health Fund fined 70k zlotys that was to be paid by the Holy Family Hospital in Warsaw, whose head was Prof. Chazan. Warsaw Mayor, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz dismissed him from the post on 21 July of the same year.

world.<sup>93</sup> Those who “show compassion with the oppressed creature, man,”<sup>94</sup> siding with the suffering conscience. Dictators tremble when they see us, no matter what robes (caesar’s, democrat’s) they wear at the moment. Lawlessness (even if it pretends to be the law) “may be ultimately defeated only with suffering, willing suffering of those who remain faithful to their conscience, bearing real witness to the end of all authority with their suffering and whole existence.”<sup>95</sup>

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This is how man’s salvation came to be – an inhuman authority crashed against the suffering of the Adamant-Crucified. Therefore, from the height of the cross we are given a view of the entirety, and we may see the whole picture of our lives and multitude of its problems, all the way up to the final horizon<sup>96</sup>, to the eternity. In communion with Jesus Christ we may perceive who we are, where we ought to go and what it means to be obedient to Him, or observe the voice beyond us, the voice of conscience.

Christ, as Benedict XVI reminds us referring to a comparison made by Marguerite d’Oingt, prioress of a Carthusian in the Poletains Charterhouse living at the turn of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, is a mirror of our conscience. From Him shines forth the light that brightens and clears conscience, ridding it of rubbish and showing it the right way.<sup>97</sup> In Christ, too, the “burden of the truth” takes on evangelical levity [Mt 11:30]. The final word will be uttered by the Word, the Grace of Christ.<sup>98</sup> Through conscience, he imposes requirements: sticking to our guns conveniently will not save us.<sup>99</sup> However, He is also the one who offers us real redemption that surpasses our own act, the Greek tragedy of our fate<sup>100</sup>, and a curse of inability to find a way out from the evil entanglement [cf. Rom 7:18-25].

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<sup>93</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism & Politics*, 164.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Cf. A. Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*.

<sup>96</sup> J. Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Głosiciele Słowa*, 693.

<sup>97</sup> Benedict XVI, *Mistrzynie duchowe* (Poznań: W drodze, 2012), 69-70.

<sup>98</sup> „With due respect for St. Basil, our innate ability to fulfil God’s orders is not the only richness we are given. The gift of grace brings with itself God’s power of reconciling, cancelling faults and agreeing to the rule of truth.” A. Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 222.

<sup>99</sup> J. Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth.”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

He allows us to recognise our own sin and declare war on it. He frees us from fear and gives the gift of penance.<sup>101</sup> He unties sin and forgives. This is the beauty of Christianity – Jesus Christ.

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<sup>101</sup> Aldo M. Valli, *Ratzinger na celowniku. Dlaczego go atakują? Dlaczego jest słuchany?* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława, 2011), 98-99.

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The preparation of the English version of *Roczniki Teologiczne* (Annals of Theology) nos. 1 and 2 and its publication in electronic databases was financed under contract no. 723/P-DUN/2016 from the resources of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for the popularization of science.

