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Why Praying “Hail, Mary” Does Not Denote to Invade Iraq and to Accept Capitalism? Contemporary Catholicism and Its Relation to Neoconservative Ideology*

MARIÁN SEKERÁK

Introduction

Christianity, and especially its Catholic form, has been considering a more-less conservative concept. At least since the publication of Blessed Paul VI's encyclical letter *Humanae vitae* (1968) re-affirming the orthodox catholic teaching regarding married love, parenthood, and the rejection of all forms of contraception during the years of Western sexual revolution, Catholic Church has being viewed as relatively robust against her own modifications and opposing or at least slowly reflecting those societal changes which are deemed to be progressive and salutary. Despite the fact that this argument cannot be hold longer as entirely true, as I will show later, more and more intensive debate between those who defend “traditional values” and the so-called “modernists” has come on the scene in recent years. This is evident not only at European but also global level. It is not rare to see this debate, sometimes apparently too intense and sharp, to be relocated to the field of dogmatism and “right and proper” explication of religious truths. Mainly in the Euro-Atlantic sphere the debate is being slightly transposed to the political realm as a discussion of the significance and role which Christianity plays in building of the moral foundations of society¹. This is typical particularly for Catholic neoconservatives who usually try to

* This paper came to being within the Development of Scientific Areas Programme at the Charles University in Prague (PRVOUK), P 17 *Sciences of Society, Politics, and Media under the Challenge of the Times* (Vědy o společnosti, politice a médiích ve výzvách doby), carried out at the Institute of Political Science of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague.

¹ See Thomas E. Woods, *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, Regnery Publishing Inc, Washington, DC, 2005.

identify their socio-economic and political visions with religious belief, although it is an undeniable fact that the political ideology and Christianity as a religion are in essence different categories, as I shall try to demonstrate in this paper. Thus, they directly or indirectly suggest that only neoconservative political ideology can offer proper explication of religion in the sense of a universal religion which Christianity aspires to be. They often do so by using a language and expressions which recall “the priestly rhetoric”², and utilizing religious terms and (pseudo)religious reasoning, such as moralizing, appeals to tradition and traditional values of society. In the case of Catholic neoconservatives this has been done by highlighting selected aspects of the Catholic Social Teaching as a bunch of various Papal and Vatican documents on social issues on the one hand, and concealing the critique of capitalism which is inherently contained in the Teaching on the other. This has been done in spite of the fact that the Catholic Social Teaching cannot be considered as an independent economic or political theory of the Catholic Church. Nor does it constitute an autonomous socio-political doctrine of the Church or its political programme. That is why it should be helpful to focus on those aspects of Catholic Social Teaching which are not often accentuated and show their occasional abuse of neoconservative “priestly rhetoric”.

Whilst the former (neoconservative) camp is being identified with “orthodox” and “the most faithful” Christians, the later one, “modernists”, are labelled by their opponents by various titles, for example as liberals, Marxists, pejoratively even as leftists. This ideological struggle has even gone so far that the author of a blog in the prestigious daily *The Economist* stated that Pope Francis “consciously or unconsciously follows Vladimir Lenin in his diagnosis of capitalism and imperialism”³. In the same vein, an influential American conservative political commentator Rush H. Limbaugh condemned Pope Francis’ views on economy and labelled them as Marxist and socialist⁴. I consider both the mentioned simple distinction and criticism not only unsustainable but also false.

² Kenneth S. Zagacki, “The Priestly Rhetoric of Neoconservatism”, *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 60, no. 2, 1996, pp. 168-187.

³ See Erasmus: Religion and Public Policy, “Francis, Capitalism, and War: The Pope’s Divisions”, (20 June 2014) <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2014/06/francis-capitalism-and-war>.

⁴ See Rush H. Limbaugh, “It’s Sad How Wrong Pope Francis is (Unless it’s a deliberate mistranslation by leftists)”, (27 November 2013), http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2013/11/27/it_s_sad_how_wrong_pope_francis_is_unless_it_s_a_deliberate_mistranslation_by_leftists; *Idem*, “Pope Francis Talking Redistribution Again”, (9 May 2014), http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2014/05/09/pope_francis_is_talking_redistribution_again.

In the following sections I aim to (1) describe the main characteristic features of neoconservatism qua political ideology with a specific understanding of economy and politics; (2) sketch out Catholic Church’s views on economy which seem to be contradictory and inconsistent over time as well as incompatible with those which have been promoting by neoconservatives; (3) try to reject reception of the Catholic religion and/or the Catholic Social Teaching as a political ideology; (4) compare U.S. foreign policy doctrines under George W. Bush’s presidency to views of Holy See and traditional Catholic moral teaching. Finally, I present an overview of some turns of the Catholic doctrine related to freedom of conscience and religion, ideal government and Church’s internal system and competencies of her own members. By using of these examples I shall try to point out that the Catholic belief is not identical with neoconservatives’ worldview and that Catholics could neither in their faith nor in their political action be bound by the opinions of their neoconservative co-believers. What is more, I would like to emphasize that the Catholic Church should not be regarded as outdated and conservative institution which is incapable to adapt to new circumstances and changing global trends.

What Is the Point of Neoconservatism?

To begin with, the word “conservatism” as a kernel of the term “neoconservatism” is used in various fashions. Furthermore, the word has acquired more-less negative meaning over time and people use it to describe a type of affection for the old, maintaining backward habits, opinions, theories, morals, etc. In general, it is deemed as a mental rigidity and hostility towards everything new⁵. To be sure, it is not my enterprise here to offer thorough etymological analysis of the word or depict its different shades of meaning. I would like, however, to use these vocabulary-based considerations in order to throw some light on its quite different meaning used by current neoconservatives. They do not deem “conservative values” as outdated, obsolete or inherently unprogressive. For them, an enduring theme of thought and life “is the perception of society as a moral community, held together by

⁵ Karolina Adamová *et al.*, *Politologický slovník*, C.H. Beck, Prague, 2001, pp. 105-106. See also Pavel Kolář, “Geneze novodobého konzervatismu jako problém sociálních věd ve 20. století”, *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1999, pp. 375-395; Robert Nisbet, *Konzervatismus*, Občanský institut, Prague 1993; Jean-François Drolet, *American Neoconservatism: The Politics and Culture of a Reactionary Idealism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2011; Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Origins of a Movement – with a New Foreword From Dissent to Political Power*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2013.

shared values and beliefs, and functioning as an organic whole”⁶. From a theoretical point of view they are grounded on the so-called “organic theory of the state” which was, paradoxically, a feature of a number of totalitarian regimes. This theory holds that the state is not a mere aggregation of individuals but should be viewed as living organism made up of individuals related to one another, as well as human body consists of its parts and individual cells. Human beings exist within the state and the state cannot survive without its parts, i.e. individuals. Both the state and its members, citizens, constitute together an organic unity where a family is the basic cell allowing reproduction of state’s human substrate. In exchange for individuals’ expressions of legitimacy and support, the state provides them a background for peaceful life in according with their own ways of life and life-giving reproduction. The problem arises when peaceful life and necessary material conditions start to be absent. This happens when unsatisfied emotional needs or economic problems, such as income inequality and closely-related social exclusion reach a critical limit. In a belief that they can avoid these difficulties, neoconservatives propose two distinct and contradictory solutions: *social and political conservatism* intertwined with *economic liberalism* or Mont Pelerin style libertarianism which is sometimes called “conservative fusion” or “fusionism”, a term first coined by Frank Meyer in his book *The Conservative Mainstream* (Arlington House, New Rochelle, NY, 1969)⁷.

As social and political conservatives, neoconservatives should not be identified with the so-called “Ultramontanists”, i.e. French traditionalists and theoreticians of counter-revolution from the 18th and 19th century represented, for instance, by Joseph-Marie de Maistre, Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald, Hugues-Félicité Robert de Lamennais, François René de Chateaubriand, Pierre-Simon Ballanche, François Dominique de Reynaud, Louis de Halier, or Honoré de Balzac. All of them could be described as “fideistic conservatives”, as John Kekes calls them⁸. They consciously rejected “reason as a guide to the political arrangements that a good society ought to have”⁹. For them, only the Christian

⁶ Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2004, p. 138.

⁷ This is evident despite the fact that some neoconservatives try ardently to refuse such bonds; see, for example, Adam Wolfson, “Conservatives and Neoconservatives”, in Irwin STELZER (ed.) *Neoconservatism*, Atlantic Books, London, 2004, pp. 215-231. On fusionism see more in Emanuel-Mihail Socaciu, Radu-Bogdan Uszkai, “Fusionsim, Religion, and the Tea Party”, *Journal for the Study of Religion and Ideologies*, vol. 11, no. 33, 2012, pp. 89-106; Peter Kolozi, “The Neoconservative Critiques of and Reconciliation with Capitalism”, *New Political Science*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2013, pp. 44-64.

⁸ John Kekes, *A Case for Conservatism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 1998, p. 30; *Idem*, “Conservative Theories”, in Gerald F. Gaus, Chandran Kukathas (eds.) *Handbook of Political Theory*, Thousand Oaks, London, Sage, New Delhi, 2004, p. 132.

⁹ John Kekes, *A Case for Conservatism*, cit., p. 30.

belief was guidance for both private and political life. In their theoretical works they fiercely supported monarchical or aristocratic government as the ideal political regime based on religious doctrines¹⁰. Sovereignty, they claimed, did not belong to the people but only to God. Especially de Maistre in his book *Du Pape* (“On the Pope”) asserted an authoritarian conception of politics built upon the strong theocratic political system in which the Pope was considered a major driving force of education. Catholic Church was seen as the most perfect institution, combining in itself infallibility in spiritual matters and sovereignty in earthly matters. Societal changes were considered unnecessary and undesirable forces that should be eliminated forever. He held that individual’s call for freedom was pure egoism; it was a revolt of a part against the whole body of the people. De Maistre rejected both constitutionalism as well as parliamentary form of government and resisted any changes and revolutions, attacking the individualism and human freedom. According to him, the best government should be concentrated in a person of absolute and authoritarian ruler¹¹. Despite of supporting monarchy and papal authority, Ultramontanism had become neither popular, nor appraised by the Catholic Church. It is, then, not surprising that Gregory XVI in his encyclical letter *Singulari nos* of 1834 strongly condemned the errors of Félicité de Lammenais, one of the adherents of Ultramontanism.

Indeed, neoconservatives cannot be identified with French traditionalists. Nevertheless, their support for “traditional (Western) values” (marriages between a man and a woman, role of the religion in society, morality, etc.) and deprecation of liberalism, the so-called moral relativism, and cultural heterogeneity is obvious¹². As Wendy Brown ironically states, neoconservatives of various shades are bound together “primarily by shared objects of loathing: the United Nations, Amnesty International, and the World Court; latte liberals, redistributive welfarists, godless libertines, and flag burners; Muslims, European cosmopolitanism, critical intellectuals, Jane Fonda,

¹⁰ See Richard F. Costigan, “Tradition and the Beginning of the Ultramontane Movement”, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 1-2, 1981, pp. 27-46; Ulrich Wollner, “Vybrané aspekty myslenia hlavných predstaviteľov francúzskeho tradicionalizmu 19. storočia”, *Filozofia*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2002, pp. 259-274; *Idem*, “Francúzski tradicionalisti”, in František Novosád, Dagmar Smreková (eds.) *Dejiny sociálneho a politického myslenia*, Kalligram, Bratislava, 2013, pp. 328-339; Adam Wielomski, “Ultramontanizm wczoraj i dziś”, *Teologia Polityczna*, vol. 2004/2005, no. 2, 2004/2005, pp. 303-311.

¹¹ See Joseph de Maistre, *The Pope; Considered in his Relation with the Church, Temporal Sovereignities, Separated Churches, and the Cause of Civilization*, C. Dolman, London, 1850.

¹² David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*. 3rd ed., Routledge, London, New York, 2004, pp. 339-340. More about differences between “traditional kinds of conservatism” and neoconservatism see, e.g., Tibor Mándi, “Ideology and Tradition. An Epistemological View of Neoconservatism”, *World Political Science Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2014, pp. 147-162; Kenneth S. Zagacki, “The Priestly Rhetoric...cit.”, pp. 180-182.

San Francisco, and ethics committees...”¹³. In accordance with some past conservatives, such as Edmund Burke, they deem tradition as “a set of customary beliefs, practices, and actions that has endured from the past to the present and attracted the allegiance of people so that they wish to perpetuate it”¹⁴. This is manifested in continental Europe not only by opposing same-sex marriages but in some extreme cases also by calling for a restoration of the “unity of throne and altar”, i.e. resurrection of the royalist ideas as well as rejection of both democracy and republicanism, for example in France, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and in some other previously monarchic states. Moderate neoconservatives by arguing for a restoration of authority and social discipline, however, plead for an elitist or a limited model of democracy with the smallest possible governmental interventions in economy on the one hand and the broadest possible market freedom on the other¹⁵. They accept governmental interference and some changes in political arrangements with protecting traditional values while a government should “keep these changes as small and specific as possible”¹⁶. Neoconservatives are hostile to utopias and any attempts to promote broad visions of equality, particularly those which could be labelled as socialist or social-democratic. They never question profits, accumulation, or wealth inequality. Nor do they conceive capitalism as inherently exploitative economic system¹⁷. They believe that capitalism is “the only economic system consistent with human freedom and with economic growth”¹⁸, and hail its “bourgeois” virtues and values as “hard work, thrift, frugality, moderation, and self-discipline”¹⁹. Therefore, as put by Andrew Heywood, neoconservative political thought “has always been open to the charge that it amounts to ruling-class ideology. In proclaiming the need to resist change, it legitimizes the *status quo* and defends the interests of dominant or elite groups”²⁰. Using Wendy Brown’s sharp words, neoconservatism “is born out of a literally unholy alliance, one that is only unevenly and opportunistically religious”²¹.

¹³ Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratisation”, *Political Theory*, vol. 34, no. 6, 2006, p. 697.

¹⁴ John Kekes, *A Case for Conservatism*, cit., p. 38.

¹⁵ Cf. Daniela Ježovicová, “Konzervatizmus v dejinách politického myslenia”, *Politické vedy*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1998, p. 104.

¹⁶ John Kekes, *A Case for Conservatism*, cit., p. 47.

¹⁷ Peter Kolozsi, “The Neoconservative Critiques...cit.”, p. 45.

¹⁸ David J. Hoeveler, Jr., “Conservative Intellectuals and the Reagan Ascendancy”, *The History Teacher*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1990, p. 313.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory...cit.*, pp. 138-139.

²¹ Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare...cit.”, p. 696. It is surely no coincidence that one of the representatives of this stream was Otto von Habsburg, a descendant of the noblest European family and a member of the libertarian Mont Pelerin Society.

Despite of a vast number of common traits we should distinguish some independent wings of conservatism: French *Nouvelle Droite* and American *Paleoconservatism*. French New Right as a cultural movement represented mainly by philosopher Alain de Benoist can be hardly positioned in the traditional political dichotomy (Left-Right). U.S. paleoconservatives create ideologically more-less coherent political group gathered around the intellectual periodicals, such as *Modern age* (founded in 1957 by the American Catholic intellectual Russel Kirk), *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* (founded in 1976), and *The American Conservative* (founded in 2002). They share some fundamental characteristic with neoconservatives, such as glorification of capitalism qua economic system, accentuating traditional values, rejecting the emphasis on individual rights and democracy, or promoting the elite theory of government. On the contrary, they differ from neoconservatives in some points. First and foremost, paleoconservatives attack capitalism from the cultural point of view. They unanimously agree with neoliberal theoreticians, such as Friedrich A. Hayek or Milton Friedman that capitalism denotes the basis of individual freedom, political liberty, and individual self-realization. But they believe that “by privileging individual liberty over the formation of character, that is, bourgeois virtues, libertarian thinkers failed to appreciate the cultural bulwarks of capitalism”²². According to them, neoconservatives promote capitalist amorality, cultural nihilism and devalue classical “protestant” ethics of capitalism by undermining the moral character of the citizenship and threatening “the social, cultural, and political institutions of Western civilization itself”²³. In their worldview, “the acids of modernity have left us entirely disinherited from old customs and ways, and conservatism’s project of conservation is but a glittering illusion”²⁴.

Paleoconservatism should also be distinguished from American “religious right” represented by neoconservatives²⁵. However “there are some points of association, and paleoconservatives see Christianity as a critical component of American ethnicity, their thinking is derived [...] from secular rather than Biblical premises”²⁶. Religion, they believe, has “an indispensable role to play in fostering public discipline, preserving social stability, and acting as a vehicle of moral tradition”²⁷. True religion, furthermore, has stoical impact. It is “a consolation to the soul despairing of the world’s injustices and the corrective to the impossible schemes that project a cure to those injustices into

²² Peter Kolozi, “The Neoconservative Critiques...cit.”, p. 51.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

²⁴ Adam Wolfson, “Conservatives...cit.”, p. 219.

²⁵ See Paulina Napierała, “The Strategy of the Religious Right: Christian Fiction or Political Agitation?”, *Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies*, vol. 2012, no. 13, 2012, pp. 45-65.

²⁶ Edward Ashbee, “Politics of Paleoconservatism”, *Society*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2000, p. 80.

²⁷ David J. Hoeveler, Jr., “Conservative Intellectuals...cit.”, p. 314.

the reforming zeal to transform the world”²⁸. Moreover, paleoconservatives differ from neoconservatives in their foreign policy attitudes and the assessment of cultural-political message of the American Revolution and American political institutions²⁹. As the main representatives of the Catholic paleoconservative wing in the U.S.A. are deemed Brent Bozell, Robert A. Sirico, Michael Novak, Warren H. Carroll, Patrick Joseph Buchanan, Richard John Neuhaus, William McGurn, George Weigel, as well as the aforementioned Russel Kirk³⁰. We should also mention the fellows of the neoconservative Acton Institute or the libertarian Cato Institute and Competitive Enterprise Institute. The supporters of traditional Catholicism who could be more-less deemed as paleoconservatives in continental Europe are, for instance, Italian politician Rocco Buttiglione and recently deceased lawyer Mario Palmaro (who verbally criticized Pope Francis several times), Czech political scientist and politician Petr Fiala, or French economist Jean-Yves Naudet. The youngest generation of Catholic paleoconservatives is represented by Thomas E. Woods, Jr., an American historian, writer and political analyst. Almost all of the aforementioned intellectuals can be viewed as the proponents of fusionism. Especially in the works of M. Novak³¹ or T. E. Woods, Jr.³² we can find typical features of both political Catholicism and economic libertarianism/neoliberalism. They are both strongly influenced by the Austrian school of economics. It seems, then, that “[m]uch of what is wrong about libertarianism from the Catholic perspective has been integrated into purportedly Catholic ethical reflection on the economy”³³.

To conclude this section, it will be appropriate to deal with one more political movement which must be distinguished from neoconservatism, although it may resemble it in relying on Christianity as one of its main inspirations. It is the Christian Democracy, whose origins date back to the 19th century. The largest expansion of the Christian Democratic political parties

²⁸ *Ibidem*. It is without any doubts that their views on the role of religion in society are quite different from those of classical conservatives such as Michael Oakeshott. See Michael Oakeshott, *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life*; Timothy Fuller, ed., Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993.

²⁹ See Roman Míčka, “Dějinný kontext a současné podoby amerického politického katolicismu”, *Studia theologica*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2013, pp. 91-98.

³⁰ More about his philosophy see, for example Gerald J. Russello, “Russell Kirk and Territorial Democracy”, *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2004, pp. 109-124.

³¹ See Michael Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, The Free Press, New York, 1993.

³² See Thomas E. Woods, *The Church and the Market: A Catholic Defense of the Free Economy*, Regnery Publishing Inc, Washington, DC, 2005.

³³ Daniel K. Finn, “Nine Libertarian Heresies Tempting Neoconservative Catholics to Stray from Catholic Social Thought”, *Journal of Markets & Morality*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2011, p. 488.

occurred in the interwar period and after World War 2, especially in the former Italy, Germany and the Fourth French Republic. At that time, this type of political parties resigned on a purely confessional orientation and altered their previous stance on the economy. Nowadays, such parties usually tend to be placed in the centre-right of the political spectrum, and are characterized by moderate conservatism and social liberalism, mainly in Western Europe. Contrary to the neoconservatives, Christian Democrats usually support the principle of social partnership, the welfare state and a mixed type of economy. Although they draw from religious belief as a source of understanding a man and his political dimension, this type of parties should not be viewed as clerical. Their connectivity to the Church structures is predominantly low. They pay lower attention to the societal elites and present themselves mainly as folk-type political parties. In spite of continuing popularity of neoconservative parties (not only in the U.S.A.), the era of the greatest success of Christian Democratic parties in Europe culminated between the 1970s and 1990s³⁴.

Catholic Social Teaching: An Illusion of Economic Neoliberalism

It is undisputable that the Catholic doctrine resembles conservatism in many ways. By refusing contraception, same-sex marriages and upholding of the priests' celibacy the Church “still insists on the crucial function of the value framework which has an interesting parallel with conservatism”³⁵. One of the evident examples is St. John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus annus* (1991). Reading § 49 of the document where the Polish Pope writes on the strengthening of intergenerational bounds, we can find some parallels with Edmund Burke's *locus classicus* from his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, that society is indeed a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Amongst the other papal statements resembling conservative

³⁴ See more in David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*, cit., 2004, pp. 62-63; Roberto Papini, “Christianity and Democracy in Europe: The Christian Democratic Movement”, in John Witte, Jr. (ed.) *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1993, pp. 47-64; Thomas Albert Kselman, Joseph A. Buttigieg, *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives*, Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 2003; John Bruton, “The Influence of the Economic Crisis on Centre-Right Values: A Christian Democratic Perspective”, *European View*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2012, p. 182; Alexandru Gabor, “Christian Democracy and Welfare”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vol. 8, no. Suppl. 1, 2012, pp. 313-320.

³⁵ Pavel Pšeja, “Sociální encyklika Jana Pavla II. a jejich politické aspekty”, in Petr Fiala, Jiří Hanuš, Jan Vybíral (eds.) *Katolická sociální nauka a současná věda*, CDK, Vyšehrad, Brno, Prague, 2004, p. 153.

political ideology (and concurrently opposing the economic neoliberalism) those of Benedict XVI seem to be exemplary. In his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* of 2009 the Pope pleads for strengthening of the role of a state in economy and highlights that “the state’s role seems destined to grow, as it regains many of its competences”³⁶. In the same document the Pope emphasizes that any economic activity should “be directed towards the pursuit of the common good, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility”³⁷. This statement is congruent with traditional conservative calls for strong political institutions and paternalism which is, however, ambivalent with economic neoliberalism.

Some other affiliations with conservatism could be found in papal teaching on the issue of socialism. As I tried to point out earlier, neoconservatives unanimously reject any left economic programmes, including the social-democratic or socialist ones. In the same way, many popes throughout the history condemned socialist political ideology. Blessed Pius IX labelled socialism and communism (particularly because of their atheistic stance) as “the wicked theories” in the encyclical *Nostis et Nobiscum*³⁸. In another encyclical *Quanta cura* (1864) he criticized both ideologies because of requesting to build the existence of the families and households solely on the principles of civil (i.e. not canon) law. “A plague of socialism” was considered to threaten the whole society, natural bond between a man and a woman and the divine law also by Leo XIII in many of his encyclicals (*Quod apostolici muneris*, 1878; *Diuturnum*, 1881; *Humanum genus*, 1884; *Libertas*, 1888; *Graves de communi re*, 1901). Similarly, the popes Benedict XV (*Ad beatissimi apostolorum*, 1914) and Pius XI (*Quadragesimo anno*, 1931) deemed socialism as incongruent with the Catholic teaching. Later in the early 1970s, Paul VI lamented in his apostolic letter *Octogesima adveniens* (1971) that Christians felt too often “attracted by socialism” and “tend to idealize it in terms which, apart from anything else, are very general: a will for justice, solidarity and equality. They refuse to recognize the limitations of the historical socialist movements, which remain conditioned by the ideologies from which they originated”³⁹. St. John Paul II was another supporter of anti-socialist stance. His statements are congruent with his predecessor Leo XIII in accentuating the danger of viewing socialism as “simple and radical solution”⁴⁰.

At first sight, it might seem that the popes condemned any socially-oriented economic programmes and, therefore, propagated capitalist economy

³⁶ Benedict XVI, “Caritas in veritate”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 101, no. 8, 2009, § 41.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, § 36, italics in original.

³⁸ Pius IX, “Nostis et Nobiscum” (8 December 1864), § 6, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9nostis.htm>

³⁹ Paul VI, “Octogesima adveniens”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 62, no. 6, 1971, § 31.

⁴⁰ John Paul II, “Centessimus annus”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 83, no. 10, 1991, § 12.

and pro-market measures. This is what many current scholars interpreting the Catholic Social Teaching try to promote in their works⁴¹. There are, however, a lot of papal statements and documents proving that the opposite is true. One of the clearest pronouncements is that of John Paul II made in his little known interview with Jas Gawronski, an Italian journalist and politician in 1993 for Italian daily *La Stampa*. Citing Leo XIII he claimed that some “seeds of truth” can be found even in a socialist political program⁴². Pope reminded that “in communism there has been a concern for the social issues, while capitalism is quite individualistic”⁴³. Moreover, in one of his books then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and later Pope Benedict XVI admitted that “[i]n many respects, democratic socialism was and is close to Catholic Social Doctrine, and has in any case made a remarkable contribution to the formation of a social consciousness”⁴⁴.

Both popes elaborated similar thoughts in their social encyclicals. John Paul II wrote, for example, in his encyclical *Laborem exercens* of 1981 on the topic of human labour in terms of “exploitation of the workers” while confronting it with “the growing areas of poverty and even hunger”⁴⁵. “The Church is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the ‘Church of the poor’”⁴⁶. Thus, the social teaching of St. John Paul II went clearly closer “into a bit of a schizophrenic situation”⁴⁷. On the one hand, the Pope rejected Marxism although this rejection went out of the anthropological understanding of a man. On the other hand, the issue of ownership and the associated problems, such as exploitation of workers and low wages can be found on the same platform as Marxism. However, some scholars insist, congruently with the

⁴¹ See, e.g., Philip Booth, “Christianity, the Market Economy and the Limits to Human Knowledge”, *Economic Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2005, pp. 44-45; *Idem*, “Catholicism and Capitalism”, *Economic Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2009, pp. 63-67; Roman Míčka, “Církev a její potíže s liberalismem a kapitalismem”, *Studia theologica*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2004, pp. 70-83; *Idem*, “Kdo vlastní klíče k interpretaci sociální nauky církve?”, *Studia theologica*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2010, pp. 86-101.

⁴² In the Italian original: “Ma è anche vero quello che dice Leone XIII, cioè che ci sono dei «semi di verità» anche nel programma socialista.”

⁴³ John Paul II, “Intervista concessa da Giovanni Paolo II al giornalista Jas Gawronski e pubblicata dal quotidiano *La Stampa*”, (2 November 1993), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1993/november/documents/hf_jpii_spe_19931102_intervista_it.html.

⁴⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*, Basic Books, New York, 2006, p. 72.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, “*Laborem exercens*”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 73, no. 9, 1981, pp. 597–598, § 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*. More about John Paul II’s views on the “preferential option for the poor” see Gerald S. Twomey, “Pope John Paul II and the ‘Preferential Option for the Poor’”, *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2006, pp. 321-368.

⁴⁷ Pavel Pšejda, “Sociální encykliky Jana Pavla II...cit.”, p. 147.

Pope, that neither Marxist account of history, nor its anthropology, are acceptable from the Christian point of view⁴⁸.

It needs to be added that a similar evaluation can be applied to the statements of his successor Benedict XVI. The Pope emeritus condemned Marxism as well as capitalism many times. In his address during the inaugural session of the Fifth general conference of the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida on 13 May 2007 the Pope criticized both capitalist and Marxist economic systems for taking into account only material and economic dimension of the problems of humanity. He labelled this as “the most destructive error” of the systems. Both systems “falsify the notion of reality by detaching it from the foundational and decisive reality which is God”⁴⁹. In the same speech the Pope used even sharper words in order to denounce both Marxist and capitalist economic scheme. It is worth quoting his statement at length:

“Both capitalism and Marxism promised to point out the path for the creation of just structures, and they declared that these, once established, would function by themselves; they declared that not only would they have no need of any prior individual morality, but that they would promote a communal morality. And this ideological promise has been proved false. The facts have clearly demonstrated it. The Marxist system, where it found its way into government, not only left a sad heritage of economic and ecological destruction, but also a painful oppression of souls. And we can also see the same thing happening in the West, where the distance between rich and poor is growing constantly, and giving rise to a worrying degradation of personal dignity through drugs, alcohol and deceptive illusions of happiness”⁵⁰.

In a similar vein the Pope attacked “an unregulated financial capitalism” in his last Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace in January 2013⁵¹, and a “reckless capitalism with its worship of profit that results in crisis, inequality and poverty” which he did few days later in his address to the participants in the plenary meeting of the Pontifical council “*Cor Unum*”⁵². In the social encyclical *Caritas in veritate* the Pope described many of the current features of capitalism, such as mobility of capital and labour, outsourcing of human resources, or liberalization of the capital markets⁵³. Pope emeritus also called for adoption of “new life-styles” in order to preserve

⁴⁸ See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA; Oxford, UK; Carlton, Australia, 2006, pp. 177-205.

⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, “In inaugurationem operum V Coetus Generalis Episcoporum Americae Latinae et regionis Caribicae”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 99, no. 6, 2007, p. 449.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 453-454.

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, “Recurrente Universali XLVI Die precationi pro pace dicato. Beati gli operatori di pace”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 105, no. 1, 2013, p. 63.

⁵² Benedict XVI, “Ad sessionem plenariam Pontificii Consilii ‘Cor Unum’”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 105, no. 2, 2013, p. 166.

⁵³ See Benedict XVI, “*Caritas in veritate*”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 101, no. 8, 2009, § 40.

environment against harmful human influences⁵⁴. This seems to be in contrast with the views of neoliberal economists like former Czech President Václav Klaus, one of the staunchest opponents of environmentalist movement⁵⁵.

Statements of Pope Francis’ post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013) are akin to those of his predecessors. The Bishop of Rome resolutely condemned “the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation”⁵⁶. According to him, people “can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market”⁵⁷. Francis has developed these positions in many of his other speeches, homilies and interviews. For reasons of space, however, I will not pay my attention to all of them. Nevertheless, a short comparison of the views of the three mentioned popes (St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis) could be helpful for us to thoroughly grasp their teachings on capitalism and unregulated market which differ substantially from the stances advocated by neoconservatives.

Although the Pope John Paul II was strongly affected by the consequences of the year 1989 and preferred “healthy” capitalism, including responsible entrepreneurship to any mutation of planned economy, he was aware of the danger of separation of the economy from the ethical principles. This becomes a reality whenever the material well-being and profit are elevated above human dignity. His social doctrine was based on philosophical anthropology. According to this teaching a human being is a centre of economic life; therefore, it should not be treated as a production tool. In particular, in the encyclical *Laborem exercens* he has shown that ownership of the means of production and material goods should be perceived as means for human self-fulfilment. Likewise he criticized unrestrained pursuit of profit, consumerism and consumption slavery, which are typical of capitalist “society of abundance”. A lot of human needs are deeper in their origin and character and have a spiritual basis which cannot be fulfilled merely by market rationality.

Also Benedict XVI has joined and developed socio-theoretical work of his predecessor. He accentuated the need for ethical framing of economy and pointed out to the global dimension of the problems that arise as a by-product of the utilitarian mentality. He also emphasized the need for universal human brotherhood, cooperation and solidarity of nations with poorer countries, as well as corporate social responsibility.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, § 51.

⁵⁵ See Václav Klaus, *Blue Planet in Green Shackles. What Is Endangered: Climate or Freedom?*, Washington: Competitive Enterprise Institute, 2007; James McCarthy, Scott Prudham, “Neoliberal Nature and the Nature of Neoliberalism”, *Geoforum*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2004, pp. 275-283.

⁵⁶ Francis, “*Evangelii gaudium*”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 105, no. 12, 2013, § 202.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, § 204.

It is clear that the distinctions in opinion vis-à-vis a *laissez-faire* market economy preferred by neoconservatives are increasingly becoming explicit in the works and speeches by Pope Francis, especially in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*. According to him the economic disparities between people and nations have been increasingly deepening and poverty is a reality that has not avoided people from the most developed countries. Non-payment of wages, degrading evaluation of the work and a high rate of unemployment become a reality in countries that have not significantly felt an impact of the economy based on belief in the “invisible hand of the market”. The hypothesis according to which the wealth of an individual helps to increase welfare of the whole society has proved to be wrong⁵⁸. Speculative trading on virtual capital markets allowing a few people to maximize their personal gains is part of an ideology that overlooks the uniqueness of the human being and ignores suffering of those who did not enjoy the favour of “market happiness”. All views of the aforementioned three Popes sharply contrast with the ideas advocated by neoconservatism as a political ideology.

Not only popes are those who strictly oppose the neoliberal, pro-market approach to economy. Similar statements as those made by St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, or Francis can be found in the book of the contemporary German cardinal Reinhard Marx entitled *Das Kapital: Ein Plädoyer für den Menschen* (“Capital: A Plea for the Human Being”). Archbishop of Munich and Freising defends traditional economic system of many of the continental-European states based on a welfare state. He is “firmly convinced that the welfare state is not only morally but also politically and economically necessary condition for the continued existence of a market economy”⁵⁹. His diagnosis of *laissez-faire* capitalism (more market freedom, less governmental regulations) is identical with that of his namesake Karl Marx. Both prominent Germans see capitalism as a threat to society, blaming it for the increase of poverty, violation of the social peace, and loss of the moral and political freedom. Cardinal Marx, in contrast to the author of the “first” *Das Capital*, rejects the abolition of private property. He identifies the solution of the contemporary economic problems with state’s regulation of the economy. German prelate assumes that “the state is not a potential threat to freedom, but that freedom and market can be secured only by state’s authority”⁶⁰.

As radical as possible are the words of the official Vatican documents issued by the Pontifical council for Justice and Peace: The Note “Towards reforming the international financial and monetary systems in the context of global public authority” (2011) and “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the

⁵⁸ Cf. Francis, “*Evangelii gaudium*”, cit., pp. 1042-1043, § 54.

⁵⁹ Reinhard Marx, *Kapital. Plädoyer pro člověka*, Prague: Academia, 2013, p. 198.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

Church” (originally published in 2004). The (anonymous) authors of the later, for example, remark the problem of exploitation and alienation of labour in capitalist economies in this way:

“One must not fall into the error of thinking that the process of overcoming the dependence of work on material is of itself capable of overcoming alienation in the workplace or the alienation of labour. The reference here is not only to the many pockets of non-work, concealed work, child labour, underpaid work, exploitation of workers — all of which still persist today — but also to new, much more subtle forms of exploitation of new sources of work, to over-working, to work-as-career that often takes on more importance than other human and necessary aspects, to excessive demands of work that makes family life unstable and sometimes impossible, to a modular structure of work that entails the risk of serious repercussions on the unitary perception of one's own existence and the stability of family relationships. If people are alienated when means and ends are inverted, elements of alienation can also be found in the new contexts of work that is immaterial, light, qualitative more than quantitative”⁶¹.

As I tried to show in this section, Catholic Social Teaching can hardly be identified with neoliberal approach to the economy preferred by many neoconservatives and (Catholic) paleoconservatives, not only those in U.S.A. On the one hand, a strong condemnation of Marxist and socialist political ideologies is present in various Catholic documents, especially in the papal encyclicals from the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century when Marxian theorists had been viewed as atheistic enemies of the Church, trying to destroy religious fundamentals of society. After passing of several decades, however, the Church's view has been gradually changing. This happens particularly in relation to the appearance of the ideas of liberation theology and Christian socialism. It is without any doubts that Pope Francis as the first Latin American head of the Church is under strong influence of the former. It should be remembered that many Christian Democratic parties in Europe, especially after World War II, have adopted and promoted the welfare state economy. On the other hand, the popes and the competent Vatican authorities have strongly condemned the dangers of capitalism and free market economy which causes widening of economic disparities and social exclusion. Therefore, neoconservative support of *laissez-faire* capitalism overtly contradicts the official Catholic Social Teaching. In this way, Catholic acceptance of libertarian economic ideas could be labelled as “heretic” as it was done by Daniel K. Finn⁶². It seems obvious, then, that Catholic Social Teaching should be viewed neither as “a political programme”, nor as “a coherent doctrine about society”; it is rooted in the tradition of Christian morality, Christian anthropology and philosophy, as well as “on the long-lasting experience with

⁶¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 2005, § 208.

⁶² Daniel K. Finn, “Nine Libertarian Heresies...cit.”, pp. 487-503.

the moral evaluation of social reality”⁶³. Moreover, the Catholic doctrine “does not constitute a third path between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism. It is by no means a new ideology, but a moral-theological reflection on human existence in society”⁶⁴.

Described in this way, the Catholic Social Teaching “presents itself as a peculiar body of thought that not only should be associated with any political ideologies but which is, moreover, qualitatively different from them”⁶⁵. When it comes to content, the Catholic doctrine should not and cannot be identified with ideology in political sense. For purposes of this article, I understand a political ideology as a body of ideas, opinions and theories that creates a social group about itself, about its position in society, about its objectives, which constitutes the program of political activities of that social group leading to the maintenance, modification or a complete change of socio-political order⁶⁶.

Catholic Social Teaching differs from both socialist (Marxist) and neoliberal (neoconservative, paleoconservative) political ideologies. It is critical and hostile towards almost all of the major rigid ideologies and concepts that are typical for modern age⁶⁷. We must take into account that all papal and Vatican documents are addressed “to the largest possible number of people; this is the reason for the absence of unambiguous and decisive ideological opinions”⁶⁸. Thus, neither Catholicism, nor Christianity as such should be defined in terms of political ideologies. The difference is twofold. First, political ideologies representing certain conceptions of good or ideal society are significantly connected with profane sphere. Christianity, on the contrary, is a religious system which does not consist of the body of conceptions of good or ideal society. It targets primary a transcendent dimension of man’s existence overlapping cognitively constructed reality. Second, political ideologies try to reach their aims by social actions. This feature, however, can be found hardly in Christianity. Every religion, of course, has a societal dimension, but Christianity, as well as Catholicism, does not request for social action in order to reach its aims which are transcendent. Thus, while political ideologies, such as neoconservatism or socialism require active social (and political) support, Christianity, in contrast, is immune to any social actions⁶⁹. On the other hand,

⁶³ Roman Míčka, “Kdo vlastní klíče k interpretaci sociální nauky církve?”, cit., p. 100.

⁶⁴ Eugeniusz Górski, “Conservative-Liberal Socialism: The Socio-Economic Views of John Paul II”, *Dialogue and Universalism*, vol. 12, no. 6-7, 2002, p. 37.

⁶⁵ Pavel Pšeja, “Sociální encykliky Jana Pavla II...cit.”, p. 152.

⁶⁶ Cf. Richard GEFFERT, “Ideológia a ich funkcie v politickom živote”, *Politické vedy*, vol. 10, no. 1-2, 2007, p. 39.

⁶⁷ Pavel Pšeja, “Sociální encykliky Jana Pavla II...cit.”, p. 153; Eugeniusz Górski, “Conservative-Liberal Socialism...cit.”, p. 43.

⁶⁸ Eugeniusz Górski, “Conservative-Liberal Socialism...cit.”, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁹ Michal Šabatka, “Křesťanství ve světle teorie ideologie: analýza fenoménu moderní doby”, *Politologická revue*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2009, p. 74.

the Catholic Social Teaching is often interpreted by Neoconservatives as inclined to and supporting *laissez-faire* capitalism. It is for that reason why multiple references to the teaching are helpful in order to contradict such misinterpretations.

Foreign Policy Doctrine of the American “Neocons” and the Catholic Church

In this section, I would like to briefly introduce fundamental differences in perspectives on the issues of international politics between the Catholic Church (represented by the Holy See) on the one hand, and the (U.S.) Neoconservatives on the other. I intent to depict them on the background of the “two Wars in Gulf”: the Gulf War and the war against Iraq. I not aim here to present a detailed analysis of neither historical events, nor diplomatic actions taken by the Holy See as a part of her foreign policy at that time. My brief analysis will cover ideological rather than geo-political or diplomatic issues. Analysing both conflict situations, i.e. both wars directed against Saddam Hussein’s troops, the latter of which ultimately led to his overthrow and execution, it seems clear that the Holy See’s position had not been significantly different. An enduring feature of her diplomacy and foreign policy was emphasizing the need for peaceful dispute resolution stemming from the Catholic doctrine accentuating that “the promotion of peace in the world is an integral part of the Church’s mission”⁷⁰. In addition to this, the Church holds that diplomacy must be “based on the firm and preserving conviction that peace can be won through quiet listening and dialogue”⁷¹. Preference of diplomatic instruments such as shuttle diplomacy provided by Pope’s personal envoys, and accentuating of the need to maintain world peace in view of the serious humanitarian and economic consequences of a war have been undoubtedly meaningful. From the perspective of the U.S. seems to be paradoxical that (especially taking into account the position of the Realist school of IR) in the war against Iraq had suffered by massive demonstration of its power. It is obvious that the restoration of American soft power could be one of the solutions of the situation. On the other hand, this aspect of U.S. foreign policy should not be overvalued especially when American unilateralism still persists. Thus, the United States “will never ask for permission to defend their own security: they will not hesitate to act unilaterally and pre-emptively. Although the States would seek for support of the international community, the right to

⁷⁰ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, cit., § 516.

⁷¹ Francis, “Ad Publicas Auctoritates Coreae Meridionalis apud Aedes Praesidiales”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 106, no. 9, 2014, p. 693.

self-defense will still remain their vital interest in spite of being in conflict with other [international] treaties”⁷².

Some analysts assume that U.S. foreign policy doctrine under Bush, Jr.’s presidency, based on spreading of the freedom and democracy with a privileged utilization of pre-emptive attack and humanitarian intervention means clear rejection of the post-World War II international consensus and adoption of the neoconservative imperial vision accompanied with the above mentioned unilateralism⁷³. Such unilateralism, or unilateral militarism conducted under the aegis of “democracy promotion”⁷⁴, however, can be hardly deemed as a way of fighting international terrorism, or dealing with issues such as “weapons of mass destruction” but “is rather the road to an Orwellian nightmare and era of perpetual war in which democracy and freedom will be in dire peril and the future of the human species will be in question”⁷⁵. Other scholars admit that is possible to talk about certain neoconservative-based values of G.H.W. Bush’s foreign policy but it would be a mistake, on the other hand, to argue that his case was a “pure neoconservative” policy⁷⁶. In any case, it is evident that a space for the neoconservative ideological concepts had been clearly opened thanks to Bush’s managerial style and because of continuing uncertainty about the means and intentions of Hussein’s (i)rational political calculations⁷⁷. Finally, the third type of interpretation suggests that although the invasion of Iraq was a product of Bush’s neoconservative values and a vector of

⁷² Jaroslav Ušiak, Jana Lasicová, “Strategická a bezpečnostná kultúra Spojených štátov amerických”, *Politické vedy*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2013, p. 88.

⁷³ Peter Kolozi, “The Neoconservative Critiques...cit.”, p. 63. See also Jana Tůmová, “The Ways of American Unilateralism: Core and Development of the Concept”, *Politické vedy*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2012, pp. 8–35.

⁷⁴ More about the idea of “democracy promotion” see, for example, Maria Ryan, “Exporting Democracy? Neoconservatism and the Limits of Military Intervention, 1989-2008”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2010, pp. 491-515; Mark J.L. McClelland, “Exporting Virtue: Neoconservatism, Democracy Promotion and the End of History”, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2011, pp. 520-531; Beate Jahn, “Rethinking Democracy Promotion”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2012, pp. 685-705.

⁷⁵ Douglas Kellner, “Preemptive Strikes and the War on Iraq: A Critique of Bush Administration Unilateralism and Militarism”, *New Political Science*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2004, p. 440.

⁷⁶ Lukáš Hoder, “Architekti Bushovy doktríny. Vliv neokonzervativců na vytváření zahraničně politické strategie George W. Bushe”, *Mezinárodní vztahy*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2009, p. 38.

⁷⁷ Lukáš Hoder, Petr Suchý, “Bushova doktrína na Blízkém východě: Zahraniční politika USA vůči Blízkému východu v období administrativy George W. Bushe”, *Obrana a strategie*, vol. 2011, no. 1, 2011, pp. 72, 74. More about Bush’s doctrine see Robert Jervis, “Explaining the Bush Doctrine”, in Robert J. Art, Robert Jervis (eds.) *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*. 7th ed., Longman, London, 2005, pp. 439-453.

the impact of his closest collaborators, it meant a definitive (?) end of neoconservative hegemony in the White House and the failure of the “New American Century” concept promoted by the representatives of this school of thought, such as D. Rumsfeld, P. Wolfowitz, N. Podhoretz, I.L. Libby, R. Perle, R.B. Cheney, J. Bush and others. This assumption can be simply repulsed in confrontation with the aforementioned militarism. It could be hardly imagined that U.S. will give up their unilateral actions in foreign policy. As we have seen, such unilateralism is closely intertwined with the American domestic doctrine which appears to be inherently neoconservative. It is sometimes believed that the neoconservative chapter in the US foreign policy should not be viewed definitely closed even under Barack Obama’s administration⁷⁸. This is so, because neoconservatism, as Brian C. Rathbun reminds us, is marked “by a high degree of voluntarism, a belief that the United States can remake the international environment”⁷⁹.

It would be helpful to remember the views of Bush, Jr.’s predecessor Ronald Reagan who has become an icon in the gallery of prominent neoconservative politicians. Like Bush, Jr., he had promoted democracy spreading to other countries. In his foreign political steps, however, Reagan largely followed the line of democratic restoration in those states where such tradition had been historically existed and was only “interrupted” with the arrival of (real or supposed-to-be) communist governments. Drawing from the fact of Reagan’s tolerance for some authoritarian regimes and moderate absolute monarchies some scholars assume, that “Reagan was not a neoconservative and that he would probably not have been agreed with the neoconservative democracy promotion in the countries without such tradition”⁸⁰. On the contrary, in terms of domestic politics, it is thought that

⁷⁸ See Alexandra Homolar-Reichmann, “The Moral Purpose of US Power: Neoconservatism in the Age of Obama”, *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2009, pp. 179-196.

⁷⁹ Brian C. Rathbun, “Does One Right Make a Realist? Conservatism, Neoconservatism, and Isolationism in the Foreign Policy Ideology of American Elites”, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 123, no. 2, 2008, p. 299. See also Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, in Ann G. Serow, Everett C. Ladd (eds.) *The Lanham Readings in the American Policy*, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York, 1997, pp. 619-628; William Kristol, Robert Kagan, “National Interest and Global Responsibility”, in Irwin Stelzer (ed.) *Neoconservatism*, Atlantic Books, London, 2004, pp. 57-74; Aaron Rapport, “Unexpected Affinities? Neoconservatism’s Place in IR Theory”, *Security Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2008, pp. 257-293; Petar Kurečić, “Geopolitičke i geostrateške ideje i suvremenom neokonzervativizmu”, *Politička Misao: Croatian Political Science Review*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2010, pp. 203-219; Jean-François Drolet, “A Liberalism Betrayed? American Neoconservatism and the Theory of International Relations”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2010, pp. 89-118; Ty Solomon, “Resonances of neoconservatism”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2013, pp. 107-112.

⁸⁰ Lukáš Petřík, *Fenomén konzervativní revoluce Margaret Thatcherové a Ronalda Reagana a její ideové základy*. Unpublished rigorous thesis, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Arts, Institute of World History, Modern History Seminar, Prague, 2008, p. 227.

since his presidency the period of popularity of the New Right had been occurred in the country; it was a conservative turn going hand in hand with strengthening of the Republican Party and its ideological alliances with various domestic religious movements⁸¹. An outlined perception of Reagan's foreign policy steps appears to be more interesting in comparison with those of Bush, Jr. Both politicians affiliated to the protestant Christianity (Reagan as a Presbyterian, G.W. Bush as a Methodist) are usually considered as politicians who had relentlessly followed neoconservative ideological line in their foreign policy. However, with the passage of time we can notice an endeavour of some political theorist "to cleanse" them of the epithet "neoconservative". In my opinion it is so due to a number of negative connotations of the term which have begun to join it during recent years. Such well-intended attempts seem to be vain when challenging classical neoconservative axioms, for example a notion of the national interest which is defined in the widest possible way as "a belief in American moral authority" over the world and "as the primary instrument for realizing international outcomes"⁸². It seems that both Reagan's and G. H. W. Bush's policies towards states which were supposed to threaten American sovereignty show a lot of similarities with the mentioned description of the national interest.

The previous discussion on the interpretation of undisputed influence of neoconservative ideology on G.H.W. Bush's foreign policy should be added some important notes. First and foremost, the intellectuals of the neoconservative camp usually identify themselves with Christianity, whether Evangelical or Catholic. Religious faith constitutes a substantial and even necessary element of conservative thought in general, although theism or belief in a personal God Almighty is not necessary. Religious faith is especially important for the neoconservatives because providing a value basis relying on the truth revealed by God. Moreover, Christian belief provides protection against any ideological absolutism: Left one or Right one⁸³. By criticizing political liberalism as well as by reference to the (Christian) religious ideals, many neoconservatives have sought to identify automatically their worldview with the Catholic Church's teaching. They publicly declare that a true Catholic must not support any other policies than neoconservative ones. It is evident from the fundamental opinion shift of Michael Novak, one of the leading American Catholic neoconservatives, from the radical Left in 1960s and early

⁸¹ Roman Míčka, *Michael Novak a jeho projekt teologie demokratického kapitalismu. Dissertation thesis*, University of South Bohemia, Faculty of Theology, České Budějovice, 2007, p. 26.

⁸² Brian C. Rathbun, "Does One Right Make a Realist?...cit.", p. 273.

⁸³ Daniela Ježovicová, "Objekty konzervatívnej analýzy", in Michal Dobřík, Dagmar Hoscheková (eds.) *Aktuálne problémy politiky. Zborník príspevkov z I. teoretického seminára doktorandov v Banskej Bystrici 28. septembra 2004*, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Banská Bystrica, 2004, p. 13.

1970s to his public support for Reagan’s presidential candidacy in 1980. This ideological shift has been considered as “sobering up”, i.e. the adoption of “the only correct” Catholic worldview⁸⁴.

To consider the current neoconservative ideology as a monolith of opinions would be a serious methodological and interpretive mistake. Conservatives in the U.S.A. are broken into several directions while the neoconservatives consider themselves as “modernized conservatives” who promote expansive, interventionist and activist models of foreign policy associated with pro-Israel demeanour and global spreading of the western-type democracy. As it was mentioned earlier, American neoconservatism “is based on the superiority of American ideals and values”⁸⁵. Military power is deemed as unique tool for promoting American superiority⁸⁶. Catholic Social Teaching strictly opposes such an approach. A war of aggression is always considered “intrinsically immoral”⁸⁷. In the case where such a war breaks out, “leaders of the State that has been attacked have the right and the duty to organize a defence even using the force of arms. To be licit, the use of force must correspond to certain strict conditions”⁸⁸. In this cases the Church follows her traditional just war doctrine. Unfortunately, the concept is viewed by neoconservatives differently. They deem it rather as “a surgical procedure in which multiple technological superiority over the enemy allows his total defeat while minimizing own losses”⁸⁹. Therefore, it could be hardly imaginable that the political views of American neoconservatives reflect pacifist Catholic Church’s doctrine on international conflicts and the proper way of their resolving.

Some Changes of the Catholic Doctrine

As I mentioned earlier, Catholicism is being identified with rigid traditionalism and conservatism. On the contrary, throughout the history we have been witnessed many larger or smaller changes of Catholic Church’s views on some key societal and political issues. Church’s (in)consistency of opinions is not so apparent as it might seem at first glance. Catholic doctrine’s turnover, often substantial, have been recorded more than once in history. And it seems to be evident that some other changes would not be excluded in future.

⁸⁴ Roman Míčka, *Michael Novak...cit.* pp. 13-15.

⁸⁵ Brian C. Rathbun, “Does One Right Make a Realist?...cit.”, p. 283.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 284.

⁸⁷ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, cit., § 500.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁹ Pavel Barša, “Zdroje amerického chování. K diskuzi o transatlantické diferenci”, *Mezinárodní vztahy*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2003, p. 18.

On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Freedom

The question of freedom of conscience and its range have been widely discussed for several centuries and it is obvious that this debate has not stopped until today. Christian democratic political parties adapted as their agenda the so-called “reservation in conscience”, for example, in the exercise of medical profession and especially in providing contraception or abortion. Paradoxically, the consensus on the issue can be found by Christians with liberals who by the very nature of liberalism support the free choice of man and the freedom to choose her worldview and a way of life under condition that it does not threaten freedom and life of another human being. It does not seem to be strange that Saint John Paul II highly appreciated the value of the freedom of conscience. His various speeches and documents can help us as proofs. One of the most beautiful examples is his message on the value of the freedom of conscience and religious freedom which was addressed in November 1980 to those heads of states which had signed the Helsinki Final Act of The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in 1975. In his letter Pope explicitly states that “freedom of conscience and of religion [...] is a primary and inalienable right of the human person”⁹⁰. Such a statement seems to be in a sharp contrast with the previous Catholic teaching represented by Gregory XVI’s encyclical letter *Mirari vos* of 1832. At that time the Holy Father flatly rejected the idea of the freedom of conscience and religion freedom. He thundered that the infamous source of religious indifference is the mistaken belief that “liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone”⁹¹. Furthermore, the Pope strongly criticized the other “errors” of that time: “Experience shows, even from earliest times, that cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty”⁹². Certainly, Pope’s inordinate statements were written as a reaction to than situation in the Papal States but “it set tone for papal statements for much of the rest of the century”, as Paul E. Sigmund reminds us⁹³. This is obvious in his successor’s encyclical letter *Quanta cura* of 1864, accompanied with infamous *Syllabus errorum* (The Syllabus of Errors). Citing St. Leo’s epistle, blessed Pius IX, who had been previously hailed as a Liberal Pope by many revolutionaries, described freedom of discussion as the “most injurious

⁹⁰ John Paul II, “Message of John Paul II on the Value and Content of Freedom of conscience and of Religion”; (1 September 1980), *L’Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, no. 3, 1981, § 5.

⁹¹ Gregory XVI, “Mirari vos”, § 14 (15 August 1832), <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

⁹³ Paul E. Sigmund, “The Catholic Tradition and Modern Democracy”, *The Review of Politics*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1987, p. 536.

babbling”⁹⁴. In the late of the 19th century another Pope, Leo XIII embarked to fight a new enemy of the Catholic Church: liberals. He attacked liberal opinions and views, including the right for the liberty of conscience in his encyclical *Libertas* where he wrote that liberals made “the State absolute and omnipotent”, and had audaciously claimed “that man should live altogether independently of God”⁹⁵. In spite of accepting the idea of republicanism or acknowledging the secular origin of state sovereignty Leo, opposing to modern liberal ideas, remained doctrinaire and reactionary⁹⁶.

The mentioned words appear to be in contrast with later Catholic teaching, mainly with the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In the Declaration on Religious Freedom “*Dignitatis humanae*” of 1965 Council Fathers state that a man “is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience”⁹⁷. Moreover, the authors of the Declaration hold that “the freedom of man is to be respected as far as possible and is not to be curtailed except when and insofar as necessary”⁹⁸. It is no wonder that these radical changes in the Catholic doctrine have been widely appraised by many scholars, for example by the famous political philosopher John Rawls in his last seminal work *The Law of Peoples*⁹⁹. St. John Paul II extended Council teaching on the issue in his encyclical *Centesimus annus*. In the document he applied for a need of full-scale recognizing man’s right to life according to his conscience “which is bound only to the truth, both natural and revealed”¹⁰⁰.

On the Most Appropriate Political Regime

Knowledge of the History of Ideas may be helpful to grasp of what leading Catholic theologians and thinkers of the past thought about the ideal form of political regime. Perhaps the greatest authority amongst them, St. Thomas Aquinas, had proposed one of the most elaborated teachings on the topic. It is worthy to remember that the authority of “*Doctor Angelicus*” in the system of Catholic doctrine was enshrined by Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical letter *Aeterni Patris* (1879). Contrary to this fact it remains true that the rehabilitation of his philosophy and theology “implied no concessions to modern ideas; the

⁹⁴ Pius IX, “*Quanta cura*”, § 3 (8 December 1864) <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanta.htm>

⁹⁵ Leo XIII, “*Libertas*”, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 20, 1887, p. 609.

⁹⁶ Bernard Laurent, “Catholicism and Liberalism: Two Ideologies in Confrontation”, *Theological Studies*, vol. 68, no. 4, 2007, pp. 818-819.

⁹⁷ Second Vatican Council, “*Declaratio de libertate religiosa 'Dignitatis humanae'*”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 58, no. 14, 1966, § 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, § 7.

⁹⁹ See John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.; London, 1999, pp. 21-22, footnote no 15; p. 154, footnote no 52; pp. 166-167, footnote no 75.

¹⁰⁰ John Paul II, “*Centesimus annus*”, cit., § 29.

Tomistic model was helpful in expressing the Church's opposition to modern political theory"¹⁰¹.

Although Aquinas' views on the most proper political regime differ in his various writings they can be reconstructed to some extent. On the one hand, in his notorious seminal work *Summa Theologiae*, he pleads for a "well mixed" government as the best form of political regime¹⁰². But on the other hand, in an unfinished work *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus* (in Latin *De Regno ad Regem Cypri*) the famous Doctor of the Church claims that a peace which is the aim of the state is caused by the unity of the people drawing its legitimacy from *one ruler* not excluding a bad one. It is obvious that he advocates the rule of one man, but "not self-evidently nor on grounds of overriding principle"¹⁰³. In the *Summa Theologiae*, however, he adds another spring of the peace, namely that the access to power is available to the greatest number of people. Therefore, some scholars interpret this contradiction in a way that "*Summa Theologiae* only extends the theory of the work 'On Kingship'"¹⁰⁴. But anyway, according to Aquinas, such regimes as tyranny, oligarchy and democracy should be included into the group of "bad" or unjust governments. An adjective of "fair" should be attributed to politeia, aristocracy and monarchy whilst the latter he considers as optimal for three reasons. In the mentioned work *On Kingship* Aquinas explicitly states that "[g]overnment by one is [...] more advantageous than government by several"¹⁰⁵. An explication of his stance is threefold. First, government by one or monarchy is efficient and it serves as the best tool for providing general interest, the so-called common good. Second, the monarchy has the least tendency to degenerate into tyranny. Third, the monarchy as a governance of a king over his realm is analogous to God's rule over the world¹⁰⁶. On the other hand, Aquinas admits that people living in the kingdom could get the impression that their contribution to the common good will not benefit them but, on the contrary, it will be beneficial only to the king. This may turn into peoples' indifference to the common affairs¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰¹ Bernard Laurent, "Catholicism and Liberalism...cit.", p. 820.

¹⁰² John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, p. 261.

¹⁰³ Jeremy Catto, "Ideas and Experiences in the Political Thought of Aquinas", *Past and Present*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1976, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Matúš Sitár, "K spisu sv. Tomáša Akvinského O kráľovstve", *Filozofia*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2007, p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Political Writings* (Edited by R. W. Dyson), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Lukáš Valeš, *Dějiny politického myšlení od starověku po Machiavelliho*, AgAkcent, Kolinec, 2013, pp. 141-142.

¹⁰⁷ Michal Chabada, "Tomáš Akvinský: kresťanský aristotelizmus", in František Novosád, Dagmar Smreková (eds.) *Dejiny sociálneho a politického myslenia*, Kalligram, Bratislava, 2013, p. 184. See also Ernest L. Fortin, "St. Thomas Aquinas", in Leo Strauss, Joseph Cropsey (eds.) *History of Political Philosophy*. 3rd ed., The Chicago University Press, Chicago and London, 1987, pp. 248-275.

The same Pope, who put Aquinas on the top of the hierarchy of Catholic theologians of all times, admitted that it is not for the Church to decide which political system is optimal. In the 7th chapter of his encyclical *Diuturnum* of 1881 Leo XIII wrote that when justice is being respected people should not be prevented from choosing a form of government which they consider to be the best. Similar views he expressed eleven years later in his encyclical *Au milieu des sollicitudes* focused on the relationship of the Church and the State in then France. Pope assumed that any political regime is good only if leading to the ultimate goal which is the common good (*bonum commune*). He repeated his teaching in the encyclical *Sapientiae christianae* claiming that the Church “holds that it is not her province to decide which is the best amongst many diverse forms of government and the civil institutions”¹⁰⁸. As in many other issues, the Second Vatican Council marked a substantial turn also in Church’s doctrine on the most proper government. In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World “*Gaudium et spes*” we can find following statement:

“It is in full conformity with human nature that there should be juridico-political structures providing all citizens in an ever better fashion and without any discrimination the practical possibility of freely and actively taking part in the establishment of the juridical foundations of the political community and in the direction of public affairs, in fixing the terms of reference of the various public bodies and in the election of political leaders. All citizens, therefore, should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good”¹⁰⁹.

Although still working with the concept of “common good”, Church gave a new content to her teaching on the right form of government by supporting a universal suffrage. She declared by the mouths of the Council Fathers her full support to citizens’ self-governance, namely democracy. Her preference for democracy as the most suitable form of government has definitely reached the Catholic Social Teaching after the “*Annus mirabilis*” 1989. Apparently the bigger appraisal of the democratic form of government is John Paul II’s statement in the *Centesimus annus*. Looking at the changes that had occurred in the Central and Eastern Europe he wrote that

“the Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate”¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁸ Leo XIII, “*Sapientiae christianae*”, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 22, 1890, p. 396.

¹⁰⁹ Second Vatican Council, “*Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis* ‘*Gaudium et spes*’”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 58, no. 15, 1966, § 75.

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, “*Centesimus annus*”, cit., § 46.

What is surely beyond dispute is that such papal statement had been unimaginable at the times of St. Thomas Aquinas or later, even at the beginning of 20th century¹¹¹.

Church's Internal System and Competencies of Her Members

Since Jorge Mario Bergoglio sit on St. Peter's throne, it has been vigorously debated (not only outside the Catholic Church) on the need of fundamental reform of Church's structures, especially the Roman curia. In his first major papal document, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* which has been the subject of controversy among many neoconservatives¹¹², the Pope explicitly calls for "a conversion of the papacy"¹¹³. He appeals the central structures of the Church and the institution of the papacy as such to obey the call for pastoral conversion. "Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach", writes the Pope¹¹⁴.

While current Pope calls for "a sound decentralization"¹¹⁵, his predecessor before more than one century did not permit such a possibility. St. Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* (1907) questioned the requirements of "modernists" who had claimed that "a share in ecclesiastical government should [...] be given to the lower ranks of the clergy, and even to the laity, and authority should be decentralised"¹¹⁶. In the list of "the errors of the modernists" called *Lamentabili sane* (1907) he denounced by his full doctrinal authority the modernistic claim that "the organic constitution of the Church is not immutable. Like human society, Christian society is subject to a perpetual evolution"¹¹⁷. In the encyclical *Pascendi* the Pope expressed his

¹¹¹ A brief sketch of the current Church's views on democracy is offered by (the paleoconservative Canadian writer) George Weigel, *The Truth of Catholicism: Inside the Essential Teachings and Controversies of the Church Today*, PerfectBound, London, 2001, pp. 150-167. See also Paul E. Sigmund, "The Catholic Tradition...cit."; J. Bryan Hehir, "Catholicism and Democracy: Conflict, Change, and Collaboration", in John Witte, Jr. (ed.) *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1993, pp. 15-30.

¹¹² See Thomas E. Eddlem, "Has the Pope Gone Socialist?", *The New American*, January 6, 2014, pp. 20-21; Leah Mickens, "Papal Economics", *The Humanist*, May-June 2014, pp. 22-25; Michael Sean Winters, "Libertarians Become Vocal Critics of Exhortation", *National Catholic Reporter*, January 31-February 13, 2014, p. 23.

¹¹³ Francis, "Evangelii gaudium", cit., § 32.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, § 16.

¹¹⁶ Pius X, "Pascendi Dominici gregis", *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 40, 1907, § 38.

¹¹⁷ *Idem*, "Lamentabili sane", *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. 40, 1907, error No 53.

wondering how modernists had been dare to ask to adjust the Index of the Holy Office (List of Prohibited Books) and the Roman congregations. Apart from the fact that infamous *Index librorum prohibitorum* was formally abolished in the late 1960s by blessed Paul VI we should label Pope Francis at least as a modernist if not a heretic, using the words of his predecessor. Indeed, for St. Pius X, as he wrote in *Notre charge apostolique*, the true friends of the Church and people were neither revolutionaries, nor innovators: they were “traditionalists”¹¹⁸.

Some Other Changes in Church’s Teaching

It seems to be evident from the previous examples that the Church could change her opinion over time and flexibly adapt her teaching on a number of key issues. It is salutary to note that many other changes have not yet been mentioned. What I bear in mind are following instances: changed Church’s position in learning about the position of the Earth as the centre of the Universe, an accessibility of the Holy Scripture to all believers and using of the historical-critical exegetical method which was allowed by Pius XII by his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943), burning of heretics as those who expressed disagreement with the official teaching of the Church in medieval times, Church’s attitude to Darwin’s theory of evolution which has been, after its initial rejection, officially accepted as a scientific theory by Pius XII in his encyclical *Humani generis* (1950), the possibility of liturgical celebration in vernacular languages which was authorized by the Second Vatican Council in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (§§ 36 and 54). A few years back, however, the Pope Pius XII wrote to the bishops in his encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) that it had pained him grievously to listen about using “of the vernacular in the celebration of the august Eucharistic sacrifice”¹¹⁹. Moreover, the Bishop of Rome strictly protested against the translation of some feasts outside their normal day of celebration which is now common practice, for example, in case of the feast of Corpus Christi which was in some countries translated to the nearest Sunday.

Furthermore, it is worthy to compare Church’s past and present attitudes to the problem of the so-called animation of a human body. In accordance with Aquinas’ theological opinion the soul connects to body tens of days later after the act of conception while the number of souls varies depending on the sex of the fetus. More precisely, the man encompasses his/her soul from the act of conception but firstly he/she acquires just a vegetative soul.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, “Notre charge apostolique”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 2, no. 16, 1910, p. 631.

¹¹⁹ Pius XII, “Mediator Dei”, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 39, no. 12, 1947, p. 544.

Consequently, a vegetative soul is replaced by a sensitive one and, later, rational soul replaces a sensitive one. A few centuries later the Church through the instruction *Donum vitae* (1987) issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith thought about the “animation” that human being from the very moment of its conception is immediately endowed with a soul. It was confirmed by St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium vitae* of 1995 (§§ 60 and 61).

These and many other circumstances affecting man’s life have underwent a thorough re-consideration and confirm that the Catholic Church today could not be viewed as (too) conservative institution as it might appears at first glance. Therefore, it is not appropriate to exclude completely any possibility that some other issues in which Church takes a strict approach today will not be revised in a foreseeable future. Some signs have already been evident as a shift in the question of Eucharistic communion of divorced Catholics who have entered into a new civil marriage. Church’s doctrinal position on homosexual persons also remains a great challenge. In spite of referring homosexuality as a “grave depravity” and homosexual intercourse as “intrinsically disordered and contrary to natural law”¹²⁰, the Church at the same time warns against unjust discrimination towards homosexual persons¹²¹. Such a quite friendly approach of the Church was completely unimaginable few decades ago. On the contrary, only “thanks” to several sentences in the Catechism a vast number of people are forbade loving and they are recommended to live “in chastity”, i.e. to choose involuntarily exactly the same state of life which has been chosen voluntarily by the priests and friars. It is possible that this unpleasant situation of many Catholics might one day become an impetus for the revision of the Church’s view to this topic. As it has been proven many times before, the Church herself is always capable of internal reforms.

Conclusion

What are we to conclude, then, from our debate of the relation of the Catholicism and Neoconservatism? The Catholic Church is undoubtedly a long-lasting and honourable institution with a significant moral and political impact. It consists of a varied group of people with different ethnic and social origin. Even more importantly, the political views of her members are not homogenous. It is said that only the Holy Spirit knows the exact number of Church’s religious

¹²⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church with Modifications from the Editio Typica*, Doubleday, New York, 2003, § 2537.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, § 2538.

orders. The same is true, apparently, when we talk about political and ideological orientation of the Catholics.

It has been proven in the paper that the Church should not be viewed as a monolith of unchangeable opinions. It means that its own views concerning various issues have been evolving over times. Take, for example, an issue of the freedom of conscience and religion, or ideal type of government. Church's own views on divorced Catholics and homosexuals have been slowly changing as well. In all these cases it has been shown that the Church is capable of self-reflection and can change its own doctrine face to face of the global societal progress. This is one of the main reasons why it would not be considered a conservative institution. Moreover, the Church has very different views than the neoconservatives, many of whom consider themselves as “orthodox Catholics”. It is well evident in her views on the economy or foreign policy. These are fundamentally different from those held by neoconservatives. While the Church fence against both capitalism and socialism and the statements of recent Popes are closer to the social-democratic or Keynesian economic views, neoconservatives prefer a neoliberal approach of the free market and minimal governmental intrusions. In its foreign policy doctrine, the Church gives priority to peace, international institutions, international law and diplomatic way of the conflict resolution. Neoconservatives, on the contrary, prefer power solutions, pre-emptive attacks, militarism and unilateralism. Any diplomatic negotiations are considered by them as a sign of weakness. Therefore, we can hardly identify individual opinions of neoconservative believers with the views of the Catholic Church. Accordingly, the Church does not identify itself with any political ideology. In addition, neither Catholicism, nor Christianity as such is political ideology, as it has been shown. It is worthy to note that Christianity as such is a religion and differs significantly from neoconservatism which does not address theological issues at all, despite occasional using of special “priestly rhetoric”.

At the end of the paper it should be reminded that Church's doctrine forbids any fundamentalist interconnections of the Catholicism with a political ideology. It was long-reigning Leo XIII who wrote in his encyclical *Sapientiae christianae* that the Church “resolutely refuses, promoted alike by right and by duty, to link herself to any mere party and to subject herself to the fleeting exigencies of politics”¹²². In like manner, the Pope refused any attempts “to involve the Church in party strife”¹²³. More than century later the Church reiterated this teaching in other words:

“It is difficult for the concerns of the Christian faith to be adequately met in one sole political entity; to claim that one party or political coalition responds completely to the demands of faith or of Christian life would give rise to dangerous errors. Christians

¹²² Leo XIII, “*Sapientiae christianae*”, cit. p. 396.

¹²³ *Ibidem*.

cannot find one party that fully corresponds to the ethical demands arising from faith and from membership in the Church. Their adherence to a political alliance will never be ideological but always critical”¹²⁴.

Some years ago Max Boot concluded in his chapter concerning the “myths of neoconservatism” that the representatives of this school of thought have not been relatively influential because of their connections with then ruling elites but “because of the strength of their arguments”¹²⁵. A critique could say, on the contrary, that their voice is so strength and influential because it is too loud. In other words, neoconservatives shout loudly enough to be heard by politicians all over the world. Nevertheless, irrespective of the high frequency or plausibility and credibility of their arguments, Catholics’ voice aspires to be taken seriously in world politics. That voice, however, cannot be deemed congruent with any political ideology, including the neoconservative one. In this paper I have tried to prove that some of the “myths of neoconservatism” are not in fact myths, but true grounded principles of this political theory. Neoconservatives’ preference of unilateralism in international politics, reduction of the importance of international political institutions or support of *laissez-faire* capitalism have proved to be inconsistent with Catholic Church’s teaching. For that reason, we cannot deem neoconservatism a political theory that would publicly act as “spokesman” of Catholicism or Christianity as a religion, despite occasional (pseudo)religious rhetoric used by the proponents of the theory.

¹²⁴ Compendium, § 573.

¹²⁵ Max Boot, “Myths about Neoconservatism”, in Irwin Stelzer (ed.) *Neoconservatism*, Atlantic Books, London, 2004, p. 48.