


**THE SOCIAL ETHICS OF THE CHURCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.008-017>**José Soares das Chagas<sup>1</sup>.****ABSTRACT**

This article addresses the complex relationship between Human Rights and the theoretical perspective of Christianity, with an emphasis on the Roman Catholic bias. It seeks to analyze how Christian culture contributed to the construction and development of the idea of humanity, as well as the rights that derive from it, shedding light on the historical and contemporary influence of this religious tradition. Initially, Human Rights will be discussed from the perspective of their meaning and universalizing character, reflecting on their origins and the way they are conceived as principles that transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. Next, the participation of the Catholic Church in the discourse of these rights will be investigated, especially in the context of the liberal movements that marked modernity. This analysis highlights the challenges faced by the Church in its effort to dialogue with such movements, considering the tensions between secular and religious values. Throughout the text, it seeks to demonstrate how Christianity, while offering ethical and philosophical bases for the development of Human Rights, also faces difficulties in reconciling its doctrine with the demands of a pluralistic society. It is argued that while the Catholic Church has played a significant role in promoting values such as dignity and equality, its dialogue with liberal movements is marked by ideological tensions that reveal deep divergences. In this way, the article proposes a critical reflection on the relationship between faith and universal rights, exploring how the Christian tradition influences, but is also challenged, by the social and cultural transformations that shape contemporary debates on Human Rights.

**Keywords:** Church. Ethics. Human rights.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Western world has been shaped over the centuries by the construction of the notion of humanity, deeply influenced by the values of the Christian religion. According to this tradition, the human being was created "in the image and likeness" of the creator, being, therefore, a being endowed with special importance and considered a divine representative on Earth. Based on this view, the idea that men and women, regardless of their differences, are part of a single human community, conceived as one big family, has been consolidated. This perspective underlies the ethical, moral, juridical and political requirement to guarantee dignified treatment to all people, in line with this ontological status.

This axiological conception necessarily implies that no one should be subjected to conditions that violate the minimum level of dignity, essential to recognize a truly humane treatment. However, the challenge arises to understand, in a concrete way, what Human Rights are and how they are applied. In addition, it is necessary to evaluate whether Christianity, as one of the main sources of inspiration for these rights, maintains coherence between its principles and practices with regard to the promotion of human dignity.

To advance in the analysis of this issue, it is crucial to first understand the concept of Human Rights, its meaning and scope. Thus, we will begin by clarifying the meaning of this term and debating its limits. Next, we will examine the social morality of the Church, investigating how it positions itself in the face of this problem and to what extent its discourses and actions reflect the commitment to the moral condition of the human being.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights<sup>2</sup> are understood to mean all those prerogatives that are born with man and are imprescriptible and inalienable: by the simple fact of belonging to humanity, an

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<sup>2</sup> In everyday life, the discourse of Human Rights is much criticized, especially in police programs in which the fight against crime is made a *reality show*; The erroneous idea is passed that the cause of marginality is merely the character of some who were born for crime and that, therefore, there is no solution for them but cruel repression, perhaps by the death penalty. Parallel to this distorted understanding, it is seen how international bodies often use the discourse of the right to freedom to send troops to regions of the East and promote wars in favor of interests that are not always revealed. Finally, the theme of Ethics within this Human Rights focus is extremely current and necessary to understand the most pressing problems in our society and in the world. Readers will thus be able, at the end of our work, to glimpse the various issues that involve our chosen theme through a rigorous conceptual and historical conception, which will enable them to understand that Human Rights, far from taking away the rights of good people, ensures the survival of society and promotes the dignity of the human being. It is also worth mentioning that, at the level of public policies, there is an important and valuable document (BRASIL-MEC/MINISTRY OF JUSTICE/UNESCO. *National Plan for Education in Human Rights*. Brasilia: National Committee on Human Rights. Available at: [http://www.dhnet.org.br/educar/a\\_pdf/pnedh\\_educacao\\_midia.pdf](http://www.dhnet.org.br/educar/a_pdf/pnedh_educacao_midia.pdf). Accessed on: 07/27/2014) which draws attention to the fact that the mass media are a "social heritage", so that their use takes place through public concession, based on the values and principles present in the Constitution, with emphasis on Human Rights. In

individual can claim for himself a treatment in which freedom, equality and participation in the course of public life are presupposed. Such values are also called *fundamental* because they originate from the person himself and are the point of reference for thinking about all the ethical and social problems we face.

Behind these fundamental rights, there is a vision of the world and of man, in which the universe is conceived as a great house in which the human being is in a differentiated condition in relation to other beings. Only of him can it be said that he has "dignity"; things are only worth, but they do not have this value in themselves. Having dignity, therefore, means that we can never take this privileged creature as a means, but only as an end in itself. From this principle follows a moral imperative in favor of human life, very well expressed by Immanuel Kant: "always act in such a way that humanity, both in your person and in that of your neighbor, is always taken as an end and never as a means" (KANT, 2005, p. 59).

Things and beings in general are the target of *(a)price*, but only man is the subject and object of respect. In fact, it carries within itself an intrinsic value that is independent of positive norms and laws and that even gives it the right to oppose them. The first literary formulation of this possible conscientious objection, based on "eternal, universal and unwritten laws" is found in Sophocles' Greek tragedy, the "Antigone", in which the character who gives the work its name opposes a royal order to guarantee the right to bury his brother with dignity; and, when he is asked by the sovereign of the polis, he replies by saying that there is a law prior to and superior to those of the city. As the words of Greek tragedy are of great importance because they are the first literary manifestation of the subject in question, we quote the justification for disobedience to the orders of Creon, the king:

Creon: And yet have you had the audacity to disobey this command? [Not to bury his brother].

ANTIGONE: Yes, because it was not Jupiter who promulgated it, and Justice, the goddess who dwells with the subterranean divinities, has never established such a decree among humans; nor do I believe that your edict is strong enough to confer on a mortal the power to infringe the *divine laws, which have never been written*, but are *irrevocable*; they do not exist since yesterday, or today; they are *eternal*, yes! and no one knows how long they have been in force! [...] Thus, the fate that has in store for me [death] is an evil that should not be taken into account; Much more serious would have been to admit that my mother's son lay without a grave; everything else is indifferent to me! If it seemed to you that I had committed an act of dementia, perhaps the craziest person would be the one who accuses me of madness! (SOPHOCLES, n.d., p. 86. Emphasis added).

addition, highlight valuable principles to guide public policies related to the media, such as respect for cultural diversity and freedom of expression; also programmatic directions such as the need to include Human Rights and Media in the curriculum of the Social Communication course and government sponsorship for advertising that highlight this theme, either by financing or rewarding advertising agencies that stand out in this area.

From the earliest formulations, such as that of Antigone, or that of Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, and others,<sup>3</sup> human rights are justified in order to protect people from the abuse of those who formulate and apply laws. In the case of Doctor Angelicus, for example, fundamental rights could serve as sufficient reason to declare a "just war",<sup>4</sup> without ceasing to be ethical or becoming a sinner, since it would be a "holy war", or a fight in favor of the sacredness of human life against tyranny and oppression. But what would actually guarantee the legitimacy and universality of such laws?

In the first formulations, the objectivity of fundamental rights in nature was justified.<sup>5</sup> The realization that man is a unique and irreplaceable being led the thinkers of antiquity to assume that everything is a natural order and that the place and function of each entity would be written in the cosmos itself. It would be enough, therefore, to contemplate and deduce from nature the laws, which should serve both as a normative reference and for the formulation of positive laws. In the Middle Ages, the same theoretical stance was continued, according to which fundamental rights would be objective, but with the addition that everything would be pre-ordained according to the will and intelligence of the Creator, God, who made man in his "image and likeness" (Gen 1: 27).<sup>6</sup>

It is a well-known fact that at the center of the discussion of Human Rights is the individual. The latter can even complain against the State, when it is not fulfilling its role as promoter of commutative justice, since it is the bearer of the highest value that is ontologically conferred on it by the simple fact of belonging to human nature (therefore, before the State legislative positivity). This means, obviously, that it will be, above all, in modernity, where such discourse will have greater development. The anthropocentric

<sup>3</sup> Although the term does not appear explicitly in the Bible, many scholars claim that it is implicit in Paul's speech in which he concludes that pagans who did not know Christ were guilty. With fact, she speaks of a *law inscribed on the heart* and says that nature reveals the greatness of the one who created it: "When Pagans, without having law, naturally do what the law commands, they themselves sometimes do the law. They show that the work required by the Church is inscribed in my heart; their conscience bears witness to this, as do their interior judgments, which continually accuse and defend them" (Rom 2:14-15). TEB).

<sup>4</sup> The condition for declaring a "just war" in Thomas Aquinas is that it be initiated by public authority against a truly deserving enemy and with the aim of re-establishing peace (rectitude of intention): Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologica*. 40 (II-IIae). In Arab culture, there is also talk of a justified war. For Islam, it would be better not to fight, but there are situations in which to stop fighting means to assume a greater evil, as can be deduced from verse 216 of sura 2 of the Quran: "War has been prescribed for you, and you detest it. But how many things do you have that end up benefiting you [...]. To wage war in this [sacred] month is a huge transgression [...]. But to expel their inhabitants from the holy places is a transgression still greater, for error is worse than slaughter. But they will not cease to fight you until they lead you, if they can, to renounce your religion."

<sup>5</sup> A very interesting reflection on the history of the concept of Human Rights can be found in DURAND, Guy. *General Introduction to Bioethics*. History, concepts and instruments. São Paulo: Loyola, 2003, pp. 249-261.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent summary of the history of Christian thought, presented almost schematically, can be found in: LIMA, Máriton Silva. The law and the Christian social ethics. *Jus Navigandi*. Teresina, year 12, n. 1418, 20 May 2007. Available at: <<http://jus.com.br/artigos/9904>>. Accessed on: 07/27/2014. In this same article, you will find the themes and sources of Christian Ethics: Stylists; Alliance; Kingdom of God; Conscience; and grace and freedom.

turnaround places man as the subject of everything; and, thus, the justification of such "unwritten laws" becomes about the capacity of reason<sup>7</sup> to establish universal principles.

Today, the alleged universality of Human Rights is called into question. Precisely, due to the growing historical awareness of people, questions are asked about the mutability of discourse and what is conceived as being concretely the social realization of dignity.<sup>8</sup> Some abandon the problem of reasoning precisely at this point, because they do not find a theoretical basis that objectively supports the need for principles; on the other hand, they throw this problem into a practical order, legitimizing them as favorable to people and subjectively acceptable, because they see in Democracy the formal place of respect for individualities.

This solution is correct and intelligent. However, it seems to me essential to continue inquiring about the "critical" foundation of its universality. A foundation of this nature, "as solid as possible, would justify that all peoples should assume human rights among their cultural values, not only as useful conventions, but as a normative reference of a universal, inalienable and legally and politically enforceable character (CALLEJA, 2006-2009, p. 81).

The problem raised by those who question universality (on the basis of historical mutability) is reinforced by the growing awareness of cultural plurality and a weakening of the Eurocentric mentality. In view of this, one wonders if Human Rights taken to a planetary level would not be a way to supplant national borders and impose a Western way of life on the entire globe. In this same sense, the role of the media around these issues is questioned because it approaches the theme in question as if it were only a legal-normative issue, totally unrelated to the existing contradictions of ideological and counter-ideological discourses. As a result, the media end up disseminating and forming an opinion based on a white European model, the result of an *ahistorical* view of the "natural man" and his

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<sup>7</sup> For the ancients, such as Cicero, the Natural Law is universal and innate to the nature of man, in which it is called *right reason*. "Upright reason, according to nature, engraved in all hearts, immutable, eternal, whose voice teaches and prescribes good, keeps away from the evil it forbids, and now with its commands, now with its prohibitions, never addresses itself uselessly to the good, nor is it powerless before the wicked. [...] it is not a law in Rome and another in Athens, one before and one after, but one, everlasting and immutable, among all peoples and at all times; one will always be its emperor and master, who is God, its inventor, sanctioner and publisher, and man cannot ignore it without denying himself, without divesting himself of his human character [...]": CICERO. *Da República*. 3rd ed. Translation and notes by Amador Cisneiros. São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1985, Liv. III, § XVII, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> "The values that religions and churches have been bearers, even the most universal of religions, the Christian, have in *fact*, that is, historically, until today, involved only a part of humanity. Only after the Universal Declaration can we have the historical certainty that humanity – all humanity – shares some common values; and we can, finally, believe in the universality of values, in the only sense in which such a belief is historically legitimate, that is, in the sense that universal does not mean something objectively given, but something subjectively accepted by the universe of men": BOBBIO, Norberto. *The era of rights*. Trad. Carlos Nelson Coutinho, Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1992, p.28. In this work by Bobbio, one can read an excellent description of the theory of the generations of rights, namely: **1-individual rights; 2-social rights; 3-diffuse rights; 4-rights related to genetic heritage.**

"natural rights", forgetting that this discourse ends up justifying social contradictions and cementing transcultural neoliberalism.<sup>9</sup>

Now, crossing cultural boundaries is exactly the nature of this discourse. However, this does not mean canceling the particularities; on the contrary, it reinforces the reason to fight so that there is no imposing order in which the most powerful annul the others. What is required in this transculturation is a critical attitude of each particularity and individuality about its own reality of being in diversity (or before the "other"), with equal basic rights. This perspective, in a plural world, is very favorable to the various groups and institutions, including the Church.

## THE CHURCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

There is no doubt that reflection on Human Rights is part of Christian thought, which sees man as a created being, in whom a singular dignity rests. In the writings of Christian philosophers, the character of human rationality and its unrepeatability are found as a reference for reflection, placing each individual almost as a species within a species. This is the case in Patristics, as it is also in St. Thomas Aquinas and in scholasticism.

However, historical contexts have led the Church to diverge from what has always been at the center of her reflections. It was thus that in modernity, gradually, the importance of the individual, of his freedom and his moral autonomy, overly emphasized the secular character of the State. And with that, Democracy became the political model most consistent with the ontic relevance of the human being and the one that would best express the unrepeatability and autonomy of each one. On the other hand, the ecclesiastical hierarchy felt excluded and threatened by a project totally devoid of the need for its support, so it went against the declarations of Human Rights, especially the Declaration of Virginia (1776 AD) and the French Declaration of 1789 AD ("Déclaration des droit de l'homme et Du citoyen"), both located in the midst of the Enlightenment.

Behind this opposition and distrust of emancipatory movements was the understanding of the Enlightenment as a threatening and destructive reality of faith and religion. And, in fact, the first manifestation of the new world generated by the new ideas of

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<sup>9</sup> In a "neo-Marxist" reading, CRUZ, Fábio de Souza de ("Media and Human Rights": tensions and problematizations in times of neoliberal globalization. *Katálisis*. Journal of the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Vol. 14, N. 02 (2011). Available at: <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/katalysis/article/view/21957/19928>. Accessed on: 07/27/14) draws attention to the need for an analysis of Human Rights through the media through a concrete analysis committed to social justice. For this, he uses the categories of "social horizon, discursive field and figural action" (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) to understand the political context of which legal expression is only an effect. According to him, the Media is committed to the hegemonic and alienating discourse because it does not fulfill its mission of promoting people's awareness, but only acts in a partial and sensationalist way, talking about "what" and not about "how?" and "why?".



democracy and freedom was persecution and attack on beliefs (use of force and guillotine to condemn religious leaders), usurpation of Church property (several temples, monasteries and schools confiscated), disdain for the sacred (such as the simulation of the enthronement of the goddess reason made with a prostitute inside a cathedral); in short, the liberation of humanity from obscurantism has become a complete justification for persecution and arbitrariness.

However, despite the political differences between the Enlightenment and the Church,<sup>10</sup> it is necessary to ask: would there be a serious ideological divergence about the freedom and dignity of the human being between them? To answer this question, let us see what the Enlightenment is and what marked its theoretical separation from Christian thought.

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND DEMOCRACY AGAINST THE CHURCH

The Enlightenment was a spiritual movement of the eighteenth century, whose main objective was the emancipation of man. The expression, designating the new mentality that emerged, designated a new time, in which Reason would be the great (and only) guide of humanity. It would illuminate life and history, showing the intrinsic order of nature and society. The term also has a pejorative meaning. He refers to the time before Humanism as the "Dark Ages", a time of darkness in which the only light lit was that of the flames produced by the bonfires of the Inquisition.

The Enlightenment envisioned a new world in which intellectuals could think and act in complete freedom, without having to give answers either to the State and, much less, to the Church. Man's limit would be his own freedom. Anyone could and should oppose any form of organization that would hinder human progress, which would come from education based on knowledge of nature. For these men it is possible to think of a revolution, because political power emanates from the "contract", from the consent of the people; or rather, of

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<sup>10</sup> Our approach to the relationship between Human Rights and the Church that we have been doing here has focused on the Catholic aspect. However, the Protestant world played an important role in defining the idea of freedom of expression and worship, property, etc. It even represents a renaissance in the Reformation by bringing the studies of classical languages, translations of the Bible into the vernacular and above all the modern ethical spirit of capitalism. centered on the ideas of work as a vocation, economy and honesty. "This frugal conduct would become one of the historical foundations of the capitalist peoples, along with the adoption of interest-bearing loans (with interest, without demonizing them), enabling the emergence of banks and a financial system, paving the way for personal enrichment. Finally, honesty in business, as a very important element of the work ethic in the Calvinist conception; this important principle would be the filter that each one would seek not to deceive others for their own benefit.": GARCEZ, Robson da Boa Morte. *Human and Fundamental Rights* – ethical foundations for their exercise, from a Christian perspective. Mackenzie University School of Law. Available at: [http://www.mackenzie.br/fileadmin/Graduacao/FDir/2011/artigos/robson\\_garcez.pdf](http://www.mackenzie.br/fileadmin/Graduacao/FDir/2011/artigos/robson_garcez.pdf). Accessed on: 07/27/2014. In this same article, a reflection similar to the one we made can be made, but focused on the Reformed Protestant world, especially with a Calvinist bias.

popular sovereignty (Rousseau) in the name of which laws would be justified (principle of legality), the division of powers (Montesquieu's "checks and balances") and the exercise of state power as a duty to meet the needs of individuals.

Now, the democratic sense of the Enlightenment movement clashed with the political and gnosiological posture of the Church, since it was, for a long time, associated with monarchical power, legitimizing authority based on the Will of God (in exchange for its position of influence guaranteed by the Court). In this sense, the worldview spread by the clerics was that everything would be God's creation and the fruit of his design. To know, for this way of understanding the universe, is simply to speculate about the action and will of God. And governing is only a way of putting into practice the known (revealed) truth. The Church, therefore, as the holder of Revelation, was the only one who could speak with certainty about the truth, and as such, she was the one who legitimized the political system.

With the advancement of the sciences and the acceptance of a new method of research (the empirical and analytical), the theoretical foundations of the old world were undermined. Little by little, the awareness was created that absolute power was tyrannical and contrary to common sense. It was then that the foundations of absolutist society began to be attacked and a new type of political organization was proposed in which power would be in the hands of "the people". God, the principle of ancient science, thus ceased to be the simple Christian divinity and came to be conceived as a totally transcendent being, who does not intervene in the community of men (theism). That is, no institution could set itself up as the bearer of the principle of Everything. Whoever thought or acted contrary to this conviction would be against Reason and, therefore, obsolete. This is how the Church was conceived, being attacked for representing the world already in decline.

## THE RECONCILIATION OF THE CHURCH WITH DEMOCRACY

From what has been said about the Enlightenment and the political movements resulting from it, it can be said that the fact that the Church is in opposition to emancipatory movements and assumes an antagonistic stance in relation to Democracy is not (if we take into account the time and the context) entirely unreasonable. Now, by proclaiming individual freedoms, the Christian religion was initially fought as responsible for cultural obscurantism and the backwardness of the sciences and technology, so that it was sought to purge it from society as much as possible. Add to this the fact that the revolutions and declarations took place within the scope of liberalism, which preached a formal freedom in which the right to private property was enough to guarantee the dignity of the individual, forgetting that



without creating material situations<sup>11</sup> this would lead to a mechanism in which most of society is thrown into misery.

All these considerations about the Enlightenment lead us to understand the position (or opposition) of the Church. However, it should not be forgotten that even in this excluding environment, Christians have realized that Democracy is a regime that favored them more than oppressed them. After the heat of the open confrontations between faith and reason, within the liberal-democratic movements, the Church began to align itself with the new political regime and to agree to the declarations on Human Rights, which became (again!) an indissoluble part of its doctrine. We can synthesize this relationship in three stages:

[...] a climate of great distrust of human rights, which begins in the eighteenth century, with the experience of the French Revolution (1789) at its center, and continues to the nineteenth century, culminating in the *Syllabus* of Pius IX in 1864; a second period of rapprochement, more concentrated on the positive elements of the human rights worldview, which elapses between the pontificates of Leo XIII and Pius XII, placing the emphasis on a "Christian conception of freedom" and, consequently, being the period of foundation of human rights; and a third period of collaboration with political and cultural movements, which the Church began with Pius XII and had a decisive impulse from John XXIII, to reach our days as one of the most prominent defenders of the ethical, political and even religious meanings of human rights (CALLEJA, 2006-2009, p. 95).

Human Rights, by presupposing a fundamental equality of all, became an ideological support for the defense of diversity of worship and expression. It has also become a cry in defense of the most disadvantaged and an instrument of denunciation against a system that preaches freedom, but condemns the vast majority to a situation similar to slavery; which is based on "humanity" and relegates many to an inhuman and deplorable situation. Today, the Church fulfills this critical role within the democratic world, despite her institutionalism, which often prevents her from carrying out this mission better.

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<sup>11</sup> Modern Constitutions (including the Brazilian Constitution of 1988) bring within them the awareness that the individual rights conquered by the liberal revolutions are not enough to guarantee a state of justice among people, since their assumption is negative, imposing on the State a non-doing. With the deplorable situation in which the urban populations of the great industrial centers found themselves in the period of the second industrial revolution, there were many movements that sought to correct this. The most radical was the Russian Revolution, which instituted the Constitution of the Working People, whose fundamental rights were not individual, but collective (social) rights. We could say that these two historical moments represent generations of Human Rights, which, far from excluding each other, complement each other. An indication of this individual-collective consciousness is the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, which combines both types of rights and begins to influence more than a hundred States that subscribe to it. "Alongside individual rights, which have as a fundamental characteristic a non-doing or abstaining from the State, modern constitutions impose on the Public Authorities the provision of various activities, aiming at well-being and full development, in which they are more in need of resources and have less possibility of conquering them through their work" (BASTOS, 1997, p. 259). Our FEDERAL CONSTITUTION of 1988 can be easily read under this reading key: article 5 summarizes the individual achievements of the liberal revolutions; and articles 6 to 11 condense the objectives pursued by socialist revolutions and the organization of workers.

## CONCLUSION

Human Rights are founded on "immutable and eternal laws" according to classical philosophy; derived from man himself, according to modern philosophy. For the ancients, it was enough to contemplate nature in order to deduce from it the universal principles on which positive laws should be founded. Now, being prior to normative prescriptions, natural laws enjoy an ontological primacy, so that it can be resorted to in order to oppose tyranny and injustice. For the moderns, this foundation has another presupposition: the autonomy of the will derived from human reason, an instance capable of guaranteeing the universality of norms. Along with this, Democracy and the protection of the rights of individuals become in the first order.

The Church has always been a great defender of Human Rights, even having them as a principle for thinking about morality. However, the course followed by the reflection on the subject, and the exacerbated secularity in which modernity led, led the hierarchy<sup>12</sup> to take a position initially contrary to the regime that sought to embody it, namely, Democracy. However, this opposition did not last more than two hundred years; and, since the last century, it has been resuming this reflection as an intrinsic part of the Gospel message, in such a way that there is nothing that is reason enough for the Church to be contrary to Democracy and Human Rights.

Indeed, according to the doctrine of the Gospel, the saving message presupposes freedom of conscience and baptism as the theological source of the fundamental equality of Christians. However, we must ask ourselves about the current discourse of the Church that defends diversity, individual freedoms and praises Democracy: will all this, in addition to serving to denounce the inhuman structures in society, not also serve to help it renew itself and become more consistent with the image of God, which is Trinitarian communion and not Trinitarian hierarchy (according to Christian belief)? Well, this is just a small

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<sup>12</sup> In a world in turmoil, certainties dissolve in the heart of man easily. Nineteenth-century society is like this: marked by the thirst for revolutions and novelties, in which there is little room for discourses of faith. This, without a doubt, causes insecurity within the Church.

In times when it is very difficult to situate oneself in the midst of many ideas, sometimes contradictory to each other, it is best to appeal to a secure base, on which to anchor oneself. The centralization of power brings, as one of its consequences, the security of a greater reference. This is what Pope Pius IX sought to do when he declared, in 1870, the dogma of "Papal Infallibility". The content of this truth of faith is the recognition that the pope in certain matters can pronounce himself in the name of the Church, guaranteeing legitimate Christian doctrine. This, at that time, was a relief to many Christians, who, by appealing to the authority of faith, could be sure of their convictions and their way of life; However, for others (non-Christians or Protestants) this conception was considered an attitude of "intransigence" by the Pope, who was incapable of dialoguing with the modern and liberal world. For them, it was as if the supreme pontiff wanted to reconnect the bonds of spiritual and political suzerainty of the Middle Ages. The consequence of all this will be a greater closure of the Church from society.



question that serves us, at the end of this conversation, to provoke us to reflect, not only on Human Rights, but on Human Rights within the Church.

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