



Freedom as a Polyphonic Concept in the *vota* for the Second Vatican Council

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Abstract: This article explores the multifaceted nature of freedom that emerges from the various *vota* sent from around the world in the antepreparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council. The voices of bishops and institutions, each with their unique perspective, are structured into five categories. The first is the foundations and sources of freedom often presented in a polemical aspect. The second category is the issue of free will and freedom of conscience. The third concerns freedom within the Catholic Church. The fourth issue considered is freedom in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The last reflection explores freedom in the area of state governance and its relationship with the Church. The whole is concluded by detailing the tensions in the positions cited above, with a commentary that demonstrates the topicality of the issue addressed.

Keywords: Second Vatican Council, freedom, relationship between state and Church, Christian anthropology, conscience

Freedom is one of the most frequently exposed values today, both in individual and collective life. It serves as the basis of legal norms, declarations, and codes. It is also one of the main criteria for assessing the maturity of political and social systems. For example, one often hears about the upbringing of children in the spirit of freedom, about its limits in interpersonal relationships, *de facto* unions, or the conditions for taking freedom away from criminals and people with various illnesses. One of the main shortcomings of the debates on these and other similar topics is the lack of a precise definition of freedom. The need to build such a semantic foundation is the main reason for the reflection presented here.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the different dimensions of freedom present in the intentions and wishes (*vota*) that were sent by bishops and Catholic circles in the antepreparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council. This choice of sources calls for additional justification. First, it is justified by the range of views presented, which can be seen on at least two interrelated levels. On the one hand, although the vast majority of the speakers were Europeans, the analyzed definitions

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of freedom come from all continents, making it possible to argue that a universal picture is presented. On the other hand, the authors of the *vota* lived in different political systems and religious and social contexts, which helps to understand the relationship between their sensitivities to freedom and local factors. Second, the period analyzed seems to have seen one of the broadest contemporary debates on freedom, in which the Church took an active part. This was certainly influenced by the experience of the Second World War, which was still vivid in people's minds, but also by the risk of the outbreak of another one, linked to the escalating tension between East and West. It was largely for this reason that in the mid-twentieth century, various declarations and charters of rights were advocated in which freedom occupied an important place. Within the Christian community itself, ecumenical and inter-religious movements were also born, which provoked questions about the extent of religious freedom. Migration processes were also of significance, generating conflicts between indigenous and immigrant populations. Third, the reflections of the circles sending their own opinions to the conciliar Preparatory Commission are not only based on factors related to the era, but are so universal that they are still relevant despite the passage of time. Fourth, it is worth examining the antepreparatory phase of the Council from this angle because of the *status quaestionis*. The issue of freedom in the context of the Second Vatican Council appears most frequently in studies on the Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*. Although many publications have been devoted to it, none of the publicly available ones has included such a broad and multifaceted compilation of voices as the one presented in this article.¹

Due to the nature of this study, the methodology adopted here involves several steps. First, the extensive source material contained in the twelve volumes of *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando* was examined with a view to identifying all the material touching on the problem of freedom. Second, a theological-linguistic analysis was conducted of the voices of bishops, religious superiors and Catholic universities on the subject. Third, five categories were created to systematize their presented views. They also provide the framework within which the article is structured. Many of the issues present in the *vota* are repeated, so the selection of the most representative voices was necessary. Not every category contains the same number of texts, hence the lack of symmetry in the volume of individual items. Given the subject matter presented, some of the voices fit into more than one category and, in these cases, the one that seemed more clearly represented

¹ The main books commenting on *Dignitatis humanae* are: Hamer and Congar 1967; Stransky 1967; André-Vincent 1976; Rico 2002; Scatena 2003; Siebenrock 2005, 125–218; Bevans and Gros 2009; Schindler and Healy 2015; Felice and Taiani 2017; Gomez, Albesa, and Sanguinetti 2017; Coda 2018, 571–610; Gamberini 2018, 611–95; Dunnigan 2023. Neither has there been any analysis of the *vota* in articles on specific issues.

was chosen. Fourth, the paper synthetically formulates conclusions that allow for a better understanding of the preconciliar debate and highlight its topicality.

1. Towards a Definition of Freedom: Foundations—Sources—Polemical Aspects

The bishops writing the *vota* for the Second Vatican Council were aware of the terminological difficulties in constructing a definition of freedom. It is from the ambiguity of the term that, in their view, erroneous social and philosophical understandings and conceptions arose. Marcel-Marie Dubois (France) argued that the most serious and numerous errors come precisely from a false conception of freedom (“*ex falsa libertatis notione*”). In this regard, Bishop Besançon believed that its true face must be sought in God and His commandments (*CVE* Pars 1, 220). Bishop Gennaro Verolino (Costa Rica) was of a similar opinion. In his opinion, the Council should take up the question of the false and exaggerated conception of freedom (“*concetto di libertà*”), which is currently so popular in the world and which is stirring up a truly revolutionary frenzy in some (*CVE* Pars 6, 532).

The problem of the relationship between freedom and human dignity was highlighted by Giuseppe Siri (Italy), who sought the sources of the undervaluation of the human person (“*personam humanam minuit*”) in the perversions associated with the Protestant view of the question of original sin. The cardinal pointed out that many contemporary Catholics had not correctly understood the Christian doctrine of the person and that this had led to the total destruction of human freedom and dignity (“*ad interuersionem humanae libertatis et personalis dignitatis necessario pervenire debent*”) (*CVE* Pars 3, 304).

Another culprit in the obscuring of the concept in question was pointed out by Luis Alonso Muñoz (Spain). In his view, this is liberalism, which exaggerates the concept of freedom, turning it into an absolute value. According to its representatives, it is a right naturally inherent in the human person, so it cannot be subject to any religious or moral restrictions (“*ut ius inhaerens naturaliter personae humanae, nullis limitibus (vel fere) subiectum in ordine religioso et morali*”). The effect of such an approach, as the Bishop of the Military Services pointed out, is indifferentism (*CVE* Pars 2, 458).

According to José M. Santos Ascarza (Chile), evolutionism also contributes to the misconception of freedom. He therefore postulated that the Council should confront contemporary errors relating to the origin of man, society and personal freedom (“*circa libertatem personalem*”), marriage and the family, as well as the rights of the Church in education and the role of parents, the Church and the State (*CVE* Pars 7, 378).

Another of the consequences of a misconceived freedom was pointed out by Santos Moro Briz (Spain). He postulated the need to counter the prevailing spirit of insubordination and rebellion resulting from an overestimation of one's own freedom ("superaestimationis propriae libertatis"). The response to these tendencies must be to emphasize supernatural obedience to legitimate authority on the model of obedience to God ("oboedientiam supernaturalem, tamquam Deo, legitimae potestati") (CVE Pars 2, 139).

The relationship between truth and freedom was addressed by Ramón Masnou Boixeda (Spain). He believed that the abuses in this area could be countered if Catholics promoted more precisely and explicitly the correct concepts of truth and freedom ("veritatis et libertatis conceptus"), deformed by, among other things, political correctness (CVE Pars 2, 373).

To complete the picture, it is worth noting two voices regarding the sources of the definition of freedom. The first belongs to the Patriarch of Venice, Giovanni Urbani (Italy). He argued that the right way is to tie the definition to the achievements of modern disciplines of knowledge, including psychology, sociology and psychoanalysis (CVE Pars 3, 719). A reflection going in a different direction was proposed by the bishops' meeting in Fulda. In their view, the difference between a purely philosophical notion of free will and the Christian freedom given by Christ and referred to by St. Paul should be clearly exposed. Such an approach demands a presentation of the dignity of man as created in the image of God. They considered the positive proclamation of Catholic anthropology to be a better tool against materialism than the refutation of erroneous theses. In their view, in responding to the "diabolical distortions," it should be emphasized that the dignity of man consists in his exaltation and redemption (CVE Pars 1, 755).

Freedom defined as one aspect of Christian anthropology has implications in various theological fields. Georges-Auguste Louis (France) drew attention to sacramentology when he wrote that a necessary condition for marriage is not only physical and moral freedom, but also psychological freedom (CVE Pars 1, 367). In the field of Catholic social teaching, the importance of freedom was emphasized in the voice sent by the Urbanianum, in a reflection on work. According to the authors, work by its very nature does not depersonalize a person, but leads them precisely to freedom and liberation (SVU Pars 1.1, 526).

2. Free Will and Free Conscience

According to George Patrick Dwyer (England), the Church should stand in opposition to Sigmund Freud and psychoanalytic theories and proclaim anew that man is endowed with free will ("hominem praeditum esse libero arbitrio") and is not

determined by his history. The Bishop of Leeds pointed out that the issues of tolerance of those who err and of error also need attention in the context of the common good (“propter bonum commune”) (CVE Pars 1, 18). This second theme can also be found in the text sent by the theological faculty of the Angelicum. There, the question of the “law of erroneous conscience” (“ius conscientiae erroneae”) was briefly hinted at, reminding that everyone has the right to act according to their own conscience, even an erroneous one (SVU Pars 1.2, 16).

Speaking on the same topic, Jean-Baptiste Mégnin (France) presented arguments against situational morality. He opined against those who judge the moral value of a human act not from the perspective of divine law or legitimate human law, but solely on the basis of conscience (“personalem conscientiam”). In his view, in doing so, they invoke social pressure, psychopathy, the violent nature of certain inclinations present in human nature, and the influence of forces hidden in the deepest layers of the person, leading to a conviction of moral determinism that is dangerous to the Christian community (CVE Pars 1, 192).

The criticism of freedom-reducing tendencies is only one side of the coin in the *vota*. They also include statements that suggest that too strong an emphasis on freedom can be harmful. For example, according to Guillaume-Marius Sembel (France), it can lead to a weakening of the authority of the Church. The Bishop of Dijon noted that some might understand freedom of conscience as freedom from being guided by the laws and rules of the Church and permission to act according to one’s own will and customs (CVE Pars 1, 278). Similarly, the Antonianum pointed out that the problem is such a moral order which is not based on objective law, but in which everything depends on the individual conscience (“in luce conscientiae tantum”) (SVU Pars 1.2, 88–89). Also the Holy Office drew attention to the contemporary tendency to treat conscience as an autonomous sphere. In the context of the ubiquity of psychoanalysis, the protection of freedom (“tuenda libertas”) and the possibility of overcoming the perverse inclinations of nature with God’s help was postulated (CCR 15).

A corresponding view was sent from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Lateran University. It stated that moral norms can in no way be interpreted as a destruction or even as a limitation of true human freedom (“destructio aut etiam limitatio verae libertatis humanae”), but rather as its perfect actuation (“perfecta actuatío”). This is because freedom does not consist in arbitrariness, but primarily in being in the possession of oneself in relation to the good (“in possessione suiipsius relate ad bonum”). With this approach, the relationship between morality and truth can be better understood. If they are correctly understood, they do not lead to intolerance but provide a foundation and a foothold for true love and understanding even for erring and sinful people. Freedom, truth and love are linked together by an indissoluble knot (SVU Pars 1.1, 437).

3. Freedom Within the Church

In the antepreparatory phase of the Council that is discussed here, voices presenting demands with regard to freedom within the ecclesial community occupy an important place. Some of them concerned monastic life. For example, Jean-Baptiste Musty (Belgium) postulated a greater freedom (“maior libertas”) of choice of confessor by nuns (CVE Pars 1, 130). Geraldo Fernandes Bijos (Brazil) called for greater freedom (“maior libertas”) in the removal from religious orders of those who are unsuitable. He referred primarily, though not exclusively, to candidates for priesthood (CVE Pars 7, 209). The Salesianum addressed the question of exemption and the various degrees of freedom of congregations and orders in relation to the bishop (SVU Pars 1.2, 148–49).

An entire range of voices concerned greater freedom for bishops. Adolfo Ciuchini (Italy) advocated that bishops should be granted greater freedom (“maior libertas”) in the governance of dioceses (CVE Pars 3, 36). Secundo Tagliabue (Italy) wrote in a similar vein (CVE Pars 3, 51). Frans Simons (India) wanted greater freedom and authority (“maior libertas potestasque”) to be granted to the bishops of various countries, especially in Asia and Africa, to develop their own rites, adapted to regional requirements (CVE Pars 4, 140). Custódio Alvim Pereira (Mozambique) advocated greater freedom for bishops (“augeatur libertas Episcoporum”) in the management of material goods. What he meant was the possibility of allocating them to the poor or to various pious causes (CVE Pars 5, 331). According to Jackson Berenguer Prado (Brazil), greater freedom (“maior libertas”) should be granted to the Ordinaries in the organization of seminary studies. They could then be better adapted to the specific needs of local communities (CVE Pars 7, 271). In the view of Silvio Angelo Pio Oddi (Egypt), some decentralization in administrative matters would be desirable, allowing more freedom (“una maggiore libertà”) to bishops (CVE Pars 5, 394).

Among the voices on hierarchy in the Church, two more positions are worth quoting. The first was presented by Giuseppe Pullano (Italy). He believed that modern times are marked by too much freedom (“nimiae libertatis”). He therefore called for the introduction of greater hierarchization, so that the parish priest should have more authority than the vicars and other priests in the parish, the rector of the seminary than the lecturers, and the president of the chapter than the canons and mansionaries (CVE Pars 3, 511). The second voice belonged to Gilla Vincenzo Gremigni (Italy). He suggested that the cult of the individual, leading some priests to conceit, should be condemned. He believed that they insist on freedom and, by exaggerating its rights (“libertatem vindicando eiusque iura exaggerando”), show brazen contempt to the authority of the hierarchy and refuse to obey it. Their attitude is also expressed by their being judgemental of the words and actions of the bishops and showing disrespect to them (CVE Pars 3, 448).

Addressing pastoral issues, Jean-Édouard-Lucien Rupp (France) called for greater freedom in the creation of new forms of apostolate (not only of Catholic Action but also other associations). In his view, this might generate enthusiasm among a significant number of Catholics, stimulate their commitment and restore zeal among the clergy (*CVE* Pars 1, 486–87).

There were also voices regarding freedom in the context of missionary activity. Bishop Johannes Peter Franziskus Ross (Japan) addressed the question why are the effects of the Church's missionary activity so poor. He suggested that missionaries should be given the kind of freedom that early Christian missionaries had (“*eadem libertas qua gaudebant antiqui*”). Then, as he emphasized, one could expect the same results of their missionary activity as those seen in antiquity. He admitted that for 30 years he had been puzzled as to why modern missionaries do not have such freedom. In his view, modern missionaries are most hindered by the positive law of the Church, which did not exist in antiquity. He also proposed greater freedom in adapting the liturgical calendar to local situations (*CVE* Pars 4, 96–97). Similarly, the possibility of adapting certain local traditions to the liturgy, as in China and Japan, was called for by Joseph Gotthardt (Namibia) (*CVE* Pars 5, 36).

As part of the concern for freedom of theological thinking, it is worth noting the voice of José María Eguino y Trecu (Spain), who advocated moderate and reasonable freedom (“*una moderada y razonable libertad*”) for Catholic theologians within the dogma and Magisterium of the Church, which could produce beneficial results. He cautioned against the limitations of ordering theologians to follow a particular theological school of thought (*CVE* Pars 2, 309). Johannes Baptist Neuhäusler (Germany), noting the outcry signaled by the Eastern and Western Churches against the lack of freedom in the study of Scripture, advocated the abolition of centralism in these matters (*CVE* Pars 1, 692). Bishop Willem Schoemaker (Indonesia) suggested a change in the way the proposals sent to the Council were processed. He proposed a division into thematic working groups, which would be characterized by a certain “informality and freedom” (“*informalitas et libertas*”) in the discussions. This, he was convinced, would affect the peace of mind of the council fathers, would not harm filial obedience, and would ultimately allow a certain compromise to be reached, finding a “middle way” between the progressive and conservative participants in the council (*CVE* Pars 4, 245). The benefits of widening the margin of moderate and rational freedom in the research of Catholic theologians (“*Moderata quaedam et rationabilis libertas*”), while preserving the teaching of the Church, was also pointed out by Zenón Arámburu Urquiola (China). In his view, greater freedom would bring good results in relations with secular intellectuals as well as with Protestants and schismatics (*CVE* Pars 4, 574).

At the same time, there are many texts in the *vota* criticizing too much freedom of theological research. Aimable Chassaigne (France) signaled that writers, both lay and clerical, abuse freedom (“*abutuntur libertate*”) in the books, periodicals or

journals they publish. Under the guise of apostolate, questionable content is then disseminated (*CVE* Pars 1, 437). Gregorio Modrego y Casás (Spain) noted the phenomenon of the abuse of the freedom granted by the Church (“abusus adesse videtur libertatis”) in the space of Bible research, and more precisely in the study of the historical facts of the Old Testament (*CVE* Pars 2, 150). In the conviction of the already quoted Rupp, seminarians and priests studying at universities enjoy too much freedom, which gives rise to dangers in matters of faith, morals and ecclesiastical sense. One must be on guard lest the excessive opening of the mind (“mentis aperturam”) desired for priests leads to the loss of many vocations or the introduction of some form of poison into the clerical milieu (*CVE* Pars 1, 485).

Among the voices, there was also a demand concerning the lay faithful. Neuhausler, already mentioned, saw the need for a clearer presentation of the place and role of the lay faithful as members of the Church, with an emphasis on their freedom (“quanta ratione iidem sint liberi”), since they are endowed with the freedom of God’s children (“cum sint praediti libertate filiorum Dei”) (*CVE* Pars 1, 695). According to Juan José Iriarte (Argentina), it is desirable to have the active participation of all members of the Church in its life and leadership, respecting the hierarchical order. There is a need for greater freedom of opinion (“maior opinionum libertas”), more consultation, and greater participation in works (*CVE* Pars 7, 71). A specific problem was pointed out by Archbishop Yucatán Ferdinando Ruiz y Solózarño (Mexico). He postulated the free and unfettered (“libera ac expedita”) possibility for every Christian to address the Holy See directly and immediately in any case (*CVE* Pars 6, 241–42).

4. Freedom in the Context of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue

On the subject of the Church’s dialogue with other Christian denominations and other religions, there was a very broad debate at the Council. On the topic of interest here, it is worth noting a few voices sent in the antepreparatory phase. The first of these came from India. The already mentioned Bishop Simons drew attention to the fact that in that part of the world Catholicism raises certain concerns. For there is a widespread opinion that not only distances people from the Church but fuels resentment and anger towards it. It is the belief that the Church, with its power, will not respect the freedom of conscience of non-Catholics (“Ecclesiam conscientiae acatholicorum libertatem veritatem non esse”), but will persecute them and deprive them of rights that are inalienable to man. Followers of other religions do not believe the promises aimed to remove these fears. In his view, if, by decree of an ecumenical council, the Church confirms to such non-Catholics that in future these rights will

be considered sacred (“iura sacrosancta”), a great obstacle will be removed. In this context, Simons warns ecclesial structures against behaving like communists using denunciation and violence (*CVE* Pars 4, 137–38).

The issue of the freedom of conscience of non-Catholics was also included in a text by Lorenz Jäger (Germany). He demanded the tolerance of the state (“tolerantia civilis”) towards non-Catholics and the protection of their freedom of conscience (“libertas conscientiae”) according to the norm set out in canon law. He noted that no one should be forced to accept the Catholic faith against their will (“nemo invitus ad suscipiendam Catholicam Fidem cogatur”). In the Archbishop of Paderborn’s conviction, the doctrine of freedom of conscience is of great importance in modern times, since under many regimes the Catholic faith is also persecuted and the freedom of conscience of Catholics (“catholicorum conscientiae libertas”) is rejected and brutally suppressed (*CVE* Pars 1, 652).

A very interesting theme was highlighted by Vincent Gelat (Palestine). He pointed out that the fear of ecclesiastical discipline and, above all, the spirit of liberty and independence (“necnon e spiritu libertatis et independentiae”) prevailing in the East are a considerable impediment to Christian unity (*CVE* Pars 4, 443–44).

The bishops also saw a threat in opening the doors of freedom too wide to other religions. Emile M. Schot, Superior General of the Barnabites, proposed emphasizing the uniqueness of the Catholic religion in opposition to indifferentism and so-called religious tolerance (“sic dictam religiosam tolerantiam”) (*CVE* Pars 8, 123). François Charrière (France) warned that too much freedom to preach a false religion could be harmful. According to the Bishop of Lausanne, Geneva, and Fribourg, a distinction must be made between the calm and peaceful interpretation of a certain doctrine and the unbridled, wild, slanderous propagation of it, attempting to deceive simple souls. In civil societies, which include adherents of various religious cults, state constitutions allow religious freedom (“constitutiones rei publicae admittunt libertatem religiosam”), but always under certain conditions (“sed semper cum moderamine”), within the limits of public order and good morals (“intra limites ordinis publici et morum bonorum”). Unlimited religious freedom does not exist even in the most liberal constitutions (“Libertas religiosa illimitata nullibi, ne in constitutionibus liberalissimis existit”). Therefore,

to those among us who, blinded by a false idealism, believe that in our time, different from the Middle Ages, not only must the Church never use coercion, but that coercion must never be tolerated under any circumstances, it must be affirmed that Christian public authority can use coercion to protect the faith.² (*CVE* Pars 2, 35)

² “Id affirmandum est contra eos inter nos, qui falso idealismo obcaecati putant, nostris temporibus, cum differant a medio aevo, Ecclesiae non solum nunquam licere coercionem uti, sed nullo modo tolerari posse, quod publica potestas Christiana coercionem adhibeat ad fidem tuendam.”

Angelin Maurice Lovey, abbot, canon regular, expressed a different view. Addressing the unity of the Churches, he advocated a limitation to a common faith and worship and to subordination to the Holy See. In other matters, the Churches should be left free (*"libertatem relinquendo"*). This referred to the freedom to maintain their own rites and traditions, as to language and liturgical ceremonies, fasting and abstinence, liturgical vestments or sacred objects, the dress of priests and clerical marriages (CVE Pars 8, 11).

The sixth voice cited here belongs to Bishop John Baptist Apcar (Iran). He drew attention to the role of the Bishop of Rome in the ecumenical process. In his view, the council should take concrete steps to show non-Catholics the pope as a person whose task is to care for the safety of the entire Church, without harming anyone's liberty (*"afferre detrimentum civili eorum libertati"*) or using power to resort to coercion (*"coercitionem"*) (CVE Pars 4, 351–52).

5. Governance of the State and Respect for the Freedom of the Church and of Man

Before the Council, the Vatican received numerous voices related to the relationship between the State and the Church. Many of them touched on the problem of freedom. A general perspective on this issue was outlined by Sebastiano Baggio (Canada). In his view, some countries do not deserve to be called Catholic, even though they claim to be. Indeed, their constitutions and laws are ungodly, which is why they grant all religions the same rights as the Church, without any distinction. Hence the issues to be debated are: religion identified with the state, the confessional state and tolerance and pluralism; the lawful union of church and state or agreement, separation of the two or their friendly coexistence; democratic or absolute system of government or dictatorship (CVE Pars 6, 142).

Émile Maurice Guerry (France) advocated the condemnation of the doctrine of total (*"sane"*) secularity of the state. This is because it has duties towards God by virtue of natural law. Hence, the philosophical doctrine of secularism, resulting in a formal negation of God and his moral law, up to and including an open war against the Church, which the State wants to impose on consciences in schools, administration, and public services, should be condemned. In his view, what is acceptable is the autonomy of the two orders in question, in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, and a positive understanding of the term *"laicity,"* which includes respect for freedom of conscience and forms of faith in the name of the common good (*"reverensque conscientiarum et fidei formarum libertatem, in nomine boni communis"*). It is not, however, a separation (*"separatio"*) of Church and State (CVE Pars 1, 256–57).

The bishops gathered in Fulda made general reference to the philosophical ideas behind political systems. They wrote that any ideology or course of action that questions or destroys the dignity of the person, freedom, social bonds, the right to free association, the free practice of religion, the right to individual development and private property is unlawful (*CVE* Pars 1, 742–43).

There were also demands with regard to specific systems of state governance. Claude-Constant-Marie Flusin (France) proposed to reiterate the doctrine of social justice. He suggested the rejection of socialism as a system that deprives man of his freedom (“*humanam libertatem tollentis*”) (*CVE* Pars 1, 390). Aloisius Joseph Muench (Germany) made similar remarks. He saw a threat from communism and dialectical materialism, which strikes at the foundation of human dignity, freedom, and rights (*CVE* Pars 1, 676). The Apostolic Nuncio to Germany saw a lot of confusion in the relationship between Church and state and therefore advocated clarification of the origin, nature and purpose of both. In his view, the state should recognize the rights and liberties of the Church (“*iura et libertates Ecclesiae agnoscere*”) and honor the agreements between them (*CVE* Pars 1, 678).

A very interesting voice came from Bishop John M. Collins (Liberia). He condemned the entry of the Church into too close a relationship with the state. He warned against financial dependence on the state, which, in his view, leads to anticlericalism. Therefore, the Church should take steps to become self-sufficient and financially independent of the state (*CVE* Pars 5, 271).

In the *vota*, in addition to issues touching on the place of the Church in the state, there are also demands relating to the freedom of societies and individuals not only in the sense of religious liberties. According to Dino Luigi Romoli (Italy), the optimal time had come to proclaim anew the full right of nations to freedom (“*plenum ad libertatem ius*”). He had in mind nations oppressed by communist governments and also by various forms of colonialism (*CVE* Pars 3, 534). Giuseppe d’Avack (Italy) demanded freedom of speech and the possibility of using more effective means of propagating independent ideas (newspapers, radio, television) as they affect the minds of the public (*CVE* Pars 3, 145). Bertrand Lacaste (Algeria) pointed out that man’s God-given dignity requires that he have a minimum of private property and a minimum of free initiative. To the extent that society provides this dual good for all, it fulfills God’s will; but if, as a system, it abundantly grants to some what it denies to others, it adds to the inevitable natural inequalities which are an injustice (*CVE* Pars 5, 113). The voice of Owen McCann (South Africa) also seems significant. He postulated the necessity of a declaration against racism in order to defend the dignity of every human being as a child of God and a brother of Christ (“*dignitas uniuscuiusque hominis tamquam filii Dei et fratris Christi*”) (*CVE* Pars 5, 536). A similar problem was pointed out by Henri-Marie-François Varin de la Brunelière (Martinique). He devoted considerable space to the issue of discrimination and drew attention to the denial of the fundamental rights of the human person (“*denegantur*

ei iura fundamentalia personae humanae”) to the black population. In his view, such totally unjust legislation is presented as a means of protecting Christian civilization (“modus tuendi christianam civilisationem”), which is, in fact, nothing but a contradiction (*CVE* Pars 5, 614–15).

In the context of threats to freedom in the states, there were calls to define and promulgate the human rights of all people as free human persons (“iura hominis ut liberae personae humanae”). Such a voice was received from the Catholic University of Lublin. Behind the approach proposed by Lublin was the conviction that these rights are often violated (“violatis saepe hisce temporibus iuribus personae humanae”) (*SVU* Pars 2, 250). This is done by those exercising absolute state power (“plenissima absolutaue auctoritate publicam rem administrant”), arresting and even exterminating citizens. According to the Lublin thinkers, where everything is in the hands of state power, the human person is merely a tool and a means (“instrumentum et adiumentum”) for the governing apparatus (*SVU* Pars 2, 250).

A similar proposal was made by Ivan Bučko, Apostolic Visitor for Greek Catholics in Western Europe. He suggested a solemn proclamation of the Declaration on the Freedom of People, Classes, Nations and Peoples (“de libertate hominum, classium, populorum gentiumque”), adding that every unjust restriction (“iniustam limitationem”), and even more so the deprivation of the freedom of people and nations (“privationem hominum, populorumque libertatis”), is opposed to Christian doctrine. The bishop suggested condemning not only any violation of freedom, but even the desire for such behaviour (“damnanda est quaecumque oppressio vel etiam sola cupiditas opprimendi quocumque modo singulos homines, classes, populos, seu gentes”) (*CVE* Pars 2, 730).

Conclusions

Analyzing the above and similar voices from the Council’s antepreparatory phase, various types of tensions can be discerned. As a conclusion, looking from the perspective of the contemporary Church and the world, it is worth highlighting a few of them.

The first tension arises already at the level of the sources of the definition of freedom. Some authors advocated an interdisciplinary view, while others sought answers exclusively in the theological space. It seems that this discourse has not lost its topicality and has even gained in relevance. For example, in the science-religion debate, the question of human freedom in the context of the achievements of neuroscience resonates strongly today. The determinism suggested by some contemporary thinkers is still the subject of theological and philosophical reflection.³

³ For examples of publications on this topic, see Bremer 2013; Słowiński 2015; Grygiel and Wąsek 2022.

It would seem that an easier solution would be to ignore the results of empirical research and focus solely on theological sources, but this would risk losing the credibility of Christianity.

Second, the tension between the need to respect the freedom of the conscience (even if erroneous) of individuals and the need to respect the objective moral law can be seen in the voices quoted. This issue returned strongly in Pope Francis' promulgated exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, especially in its section on non-sacramental unions. The ongoing debate on the papal proposals testifies to the timeliness and still lack of an unequivocal solution to an issue vigorously debated in the middle of the last century.

The third type of tension concerns the extent of the theologian's freedom in the Church. Some bishops have proposed limiting it, while others have called for greater freedom. Although theologians have gained greater freedom in post-conciliar history, the question of the extent of the theological hypotheses they put forward is still open. The status of theology as a science is sometimes made dependent on the answer to that question.

The fourth group of tensions concerns the level of freedom of the bishop in diocesan governance. Although the dominant view in the voices quoted is that it should be increased, in view of the contemporary turn towards synodality, the question rather arises about the decentralization of powers and the democratization of certain ecclesial processes.

Another issue is the rights of religious associations in the state. Based on the submitted *vota*, one can see that especially from churches persecuted by the government there have been postulates of respect for the religious freedom of citizens. Although the number of socialist countries has decisively decreased since the Second Vatican Council, the problem of defining the religious neutrality of the state has remained. The question of the appropriate level of safeguarding the interests of religious associations in legal systems still seems to be unanswered. The debate includes religious instruction in public schools, the presence of religious symbols in government offices and state funding of religious initiatives.

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