



# The Tragedy of Divided Christianity: Diagnosis of Main Problems on the Basis of the *Vota* Sent to the Second Vatican Council

DAMIAN WĄSEK 

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, damian.wasek@upjp2.edu.pl

MAREK GILSKI 

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, marek.gilski@upjp2.edu.pl

**Abstract:** This article addresses diagnosing problems emerging from the existing divisions among Christians. The analysis is based on the *vota* submitted in the preparations for the Second Vatican Council. The voices of bishops, major religious superiors, and Catholic universities reveal four areas where a lack of Christian unity has disastrous consequences. The first area is sociopolitical and shows the problem of marginalization of Christianity, which cannot respond to the challenges the modern world faces. The second area concerns Christ's prayer for his disciples to be one, presenting Christianity as failing to fulfill the Savior's desires. The third, concerning the missionary and apologetic activity of the Church, reveals the incredibility and weakness of divided Christianity. The fourth, presenting the issues of interdenominational marriages, shows the consequences of an overly legalistic approach to sacramental reality. The final part includes conclusions and perspectives emerging from the analyses.

**Keywords:** Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis redintegratio*, Church unity, interdenominational marriage, *vota*

Upon summoning the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII proposed that all episcopates, monastic superiors, Roman Congregations, and Catholic universities write honestly about how to change Catholicism to make it more evangelical and better prepared to respond to the signs of the times. His invitation was received enthusiastically, and numerous responses included not only suggestions for changes but also calls to show the contemporary “face” of the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup> and the image of the world in its various geographical and cultural areas. It can be said that proposals sent to the Vatican also included questions that the world expected Catholics to answer in preparation for the Council. A need to analyze them is the first reason behind this paper, as the results of such an analysis could not only outline the

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “Catholic Church” for the Catholic communities which accept the papal jurisdiction.

sociocultural context of the middle of the 20th century but may also help in an accurate assessment of the documents of Vaticanum II and their later reception.

The second reason is connected with *status quaestionis*. The issue mentioned in the title touches upon ecumenism and, to be more precise, refers to the Decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* announced by the Second Vatican Council on November 21, 1964. Although there are some profound commentaries on this document,<sup>2</sup> none includes a complex analysis of the *vota* submitted in the preparations for the Council. We have filled this lack in source literature with our monograph *Unitatis redintegratio: Sobór Watykański II o ekumenizmie* (Wąsek, Gilski, and Kałużny 2024). However, in that paper, all *vota* referring to ecumenism are presented geographically or institutionally without a division into systematic categories, which would allow for answering more detailed questions.

This article aims to present the most significant challenges resulting from divisions in Christianity, which people and institutions formulating *vota* saw as tasks for the Council Fathers. The problem is comprised of the following question: What key difficulties did the Catholics, experiencing the tragedy of schisms and heresies, face before the Council? Although the presentation sometimes includes potential solutions, we do not focus on their analysis but rather on the areas generating challenges for Vaticanum II. Therefore, we chose only these *vota* that provide such a diagnosis.

The methodology applied is adjusted to the research steps. First, we identified all the spots in the *vota* referring to the problems of divided Christianity. It required a theological and linguistic analysis of texts included in twelve books of *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*. Then, using the comparative method, we created categories that allowed for systematizing selected source material according to the observed similarities. The last step was to formulate conclusions allowing for a better understanding of the pre-Council Church that might also help in a detailed reading of the Decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* and its reception.

## 1. Sociopolitical Problems

A few *vota* mention the involvement of the Catholic Church in solving complicated international social problems. Alfred-Jean-Félix Ancel, auxiliary bishop of Lyon (France), pointed to the need to unify Christians in order to act more effectively in this field (*CVE* Pars 1, 520). Paolo Carta, bishop of Foggia-Bovino (Italy), presented

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<sup>2</sup> The most important commentaries are Becker 1968, 1–56; Feiner 1968, 57–158; Cassidy 2005; Hilberath 2005, 69–223; Gilski and Adam 2013, 105–17; Maffei 2019, 165–414; Kijas 2023, 339–62; Vázquez Jiménez 2024, 63–388.

a similar view. He observed that while the whole world strives for unity, divided Christianity plays an ever smaller role despite having great human potential (CVE Pars 3, 289–92). Another Italian hierarch, the archbishop of Naples, Alfonso Castaldo, called for prayer for unity in the context of advanced works on nuclear weapons of devastating potential. Unity in Truth and Love is a chance to save the world from destruction (CVE Pars 3, 417–18). Antonio Santin, bishop of Trieste and Koper (Italy), wrote, “The more terrifying the conditions in which mankind is currently leading an uncertain and dangerous life, the stronger the sense of need and desire for the unity of those who proudly bear the Christian name in the Christian world.” The unification movement, therefore, has the potential to overcome and conquer fears and mistrust (CVE Pars 3, 697). Apostolic vicar for the Diocese of Zamora (Ecuador) Jorge Francisco Mosquera Barreiro called for the building of Christian unity in response to social problems in Latin America. According to him, this is so vital and pressing that much attention should not be paid to ritual differences but rather to agreement on fundamental dogmas in the unifying process (CVE Pars 7, 36).

On a side note, the potential conditions for such unification are worth noting, as they indirectly point to the problems the Catholic Church was struggling with. Archbishop Marcel-Marie Dubois of Besançon (France) pointed out that it will be hard to achieve this goal if we do not take care of unity within the Church itself (*oportet unitatem internam Ecclesiae ipsius facere*) (CVE Pars 1, 227). Similarly, the Algerian archbishop Léon-Etienne Duval suggested that better internal cooperation among Catholics would be the most attractive invitation for other Christian denominations to build unity. He also postulated joint initiatives with other Christians and adherents of different religions to promote peace and protect human dignity. Justice, ethics, works of mercy, and belief in God are the fields in which, in his opinion, such cooperation is possible (CVE Pars 5, 101–2). As we can see, not only the division into different Christian denominations but also a lack of unity within the Catholic Church itself was a problem.

Some *vota* also referred to specific local issues. One of the more interesting opinions referred to the participation of Catholic officials in non-Catholic religious ceremonies related to significant state events in the British Isles. According to the canon law of that time, the presence of Catholics in Anglican churches was not permitted. According to the bishop of Lancaster (England), Thomas Edward Flynn, Catholic mayors should not be required to refrain from participating in Protestant ceremonies, as this would prevent them from fulfilling their official duties (CVE Pars 1, 16).

Concluding this thread, it is worth noting that not all authors of the *vota* saw value in the Catholic Church imitating international unification movements. The bishop of Campos in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Antônio de Castro Mayer, presented a different point of view. In the unifying efforts of various organizations, he saw

the blurring of all differences in order to ensure happiness resulting from living in one great nation and culture. In his view, acting in this spirit in the realm of religion would lead to syncretism, which would be detrimental to the salvation of non-Catholics (*CVE* Pars 7, 156–58).

## 2. Problem with Fulfilling the Will of Christ (John 17:21)

Many bishops and theologians expected the Second Vatican Council to implement reforms that would make the Catholic Church more evangelical. In the context of the division among Christians, a credible interpretation of a passage from Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in the Gospel of John was particularly problematic: ". . .that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). In *vota*, we can find a few voices calling for unity, as their authors see Catholicism moving away from the quoted words of Jesus.

Archbishop Hermann Josef Schaufele of Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany) called the cited appeal of Jesus His greatest wish (*summum votum*). He postulated rejecting imprudent irenicism and seeking means that would help fulfill the Lord's desire (*CVE* Pars 1, 603).

The aforementioned bishop of Strasbourg (France), Jean-Julien Weber, emphasized that even non-Catholics, of whom there are 250,000 in his diocese, recognize that Jesus' appeal is urgent. They hoped the Council would respond to it and bring Christians closer to unity, though they knew it would not solve all problems. As he pointed out, he counted on the Council's courage in fulfilling the unifying mission entrusted to the Church by Christ (*CVE* Pars 1, 409–11).

Bishop Joseph Schroffer of Eichstatt (Germany) described Jesus' expressed desire for unity as imperative. In this context, he shared his hope that Protestants would soon return to the Church, healing the wound of division and removing scandal. However, he was aware that among dissenters, there were many prejudices and hostilities toward the Roman Church, which they regarded as having deviated from the authentic spirit of Christ. At the same time, he observed trends that softened this perception and created a growing expectation of unity (*CVE* Pars 1, 595–96). A similar issue regarding conflicts among Christians of different denominations was highlighted by the bishop of Sanyuan (China), Ferdinando Fulgencio Pasini. He noted that mutual animosity was marginal among the laity, but inflexibility and stubbornness were often prevalent among the clergy, sometimes reaching outright hostility. In his view, the greatest obstacle to unity was, therefore, the clergy, and it was their minds that required transformation. Otherwise, unity would remain fictitious and unstable (*unio ficta et instabilis*).

He also shared a rumor that some clergy and patriarchs were members of Freemasonry, though he admitted that he had no further knowledge on the matter. He called for systematic and fervent prayer from Catholics for dissenters so that they might convert and return to the Church, fulfilling Jesus' desire (CVE Pars 4, 546–47).

Michael Buchberger, bishop of Regensburg (Germany), stressed that the evangelical ideal is one Church that gathers all people, forming a single flock around one Shepherd. However, the current state of division should not lead to complaints but rather motivate efforts to realize Jesus' vision. The path to this should be a mutual confession of faults (CVE Pars 1, 656).

The fervent desire of Christ, expressed at the beginning of His redemptive passion in the words “that they may be one,” should, according to Bishop Luciano Marcante of Valva e Sulmona (Italy), increasingly move and inspire the hearts of Christians. The return to unity is so crucial that it must be achieved even at the cost of concessions to dissenters (CVE Pars 3, 712). A similar longing was expressed by Bishop Marian Jankowski of Siedlce (Poland), who expected strong and effective action from the Council to fulfill the desire of the Heart of Jesus (CVE Pars 2, 702).

### 3. Problems in Missionary and Apologetic Work

One of the more serious problems of divided Christianity is the reduced effectiveness of missionary efforts. The bishop of Seckau (Austria), Josef Schoiswohl, pointed out that division undermines the credibility of the evangelical message (CVE Pars 1, 68–69).

The auxiliary bishop of Mainz (Germany), Joseph Maria Reuss, suggested that due to the lack of Christian unity, even atheists, capable of acting together, sometimes achieve greater success in persuading others to their views than the preachers of the Gospel. The condition for success in missionary work is the unification of all Christians (*successus plenus operae missionariae Unionem omnium Christianorum supponit*). To achieve this goal, if unity requires it, Catholics may even renounce certain matters (CVE Pars 1, 724–25). Similar diagnoses and suggestions can be found in the remarks of Maurus Valiyaparampil, Superior General of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CVE Pars 8, 260).

The ordinary of the diocese of Mandalay (Myanmar), Albert-Pierre Falière, and the local auxiliary bishop, John Joseph U Win, emphasized the issue described here even more strongly. In their opinion, the division of Christians is such a great scandal that reconciliation should be a prerequisite for undertaking any missionary activity (CVE Pars 4, 22–23).

The specific dimension of Christian division characteristic of the Eastern Churches was present in the suggestion of the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria (Egypt),

Stephanos I Sidarouss. He pointed to the mutual slandering and competition between representatives of the Orthodox and Catholic hierarchies, which causes such great scandal that it prevents effective apostolate. (*CVE* Pars 5, 375–80). The Coptic bishop of Assiut (Egypt), Alexandros Scandar (*CVE* Pars 5, 380–383), highlighted a similar issue in the confrontation with Islam. The Brazilian bishop José Romão Martenetz, appointed for the faithful of the Eastern rite, also wrote about the scandal of divisions in Christianity, which disedifies pagans (*CVE* Pars 7, 333).

An interesting observation was made by Marius M. Zanelli, the administrator of the Apostolic Vicariate of Aysén (Chile). He pointed out that Catholics and Protestants, carrying out missionary work, accuse each other of unjustified use of the same Gospel, which causes confusion among those being evangelized (*CVE* Pars 7, 387).

Among the *vota* submitted by higher education institutions, this topic is addressed by St. Patrick's University. It states that as human civilization progresses and means of communication improve, the level of unity in political, economic, and social matters increases. Against this backdrop, divided Christianity appears increasingly scandalous, significantly hindering the spread of the Gospel (*SVU* Pars 2, 443–45).

Apart from strictly evangelizing activities, the problem of division is also evident in the confrontation between Catholics and heretical movements or hostile ideologies. The bishop of Dijon (France), Guillaume-Marius Sembel, saw the division of Christians as the main reason for the ineffectiveness of countering doctrines contrary to the faith (*CVE* Pars 1, 283).

In the context of the necessity to defend Christianity, communism is often mentioned as an enemy. Bishop Pablo Barrachina Estevan of the diocese of Orihuela (Spain) warned against excessive leniency toward communism, which, in his view, could be observed in certain circles of the faithful. The lack of unity in this area can be highly destructive both socially and spiritually (*CVE* Pars 2, 243). The pursuit of unity as a means of defense against modern materialism and the communist occupation (*obsidio*) was also present in the *vota* of Guido Maria Mazzocco, bishop of Adria (Italy) (*CVE* Pars 3, 25). Ralph Leo Hayes, the ordinary of the diocese of Davenport (USA), stressed that in the face of attacks from a common communist enemy, the Catholic Church could serve as a refuge for some Christians from the Eastern Churches, should they choose to unite (*CVE* Pars 6, 307–8).

The bishop of Castellammare di Stabia (Italy), Agostino D'Arco, pointed out that the fight against Marxist atheism should unite all those who call themselves Christians. If they stand together under the banner of Christ, they have a chance to defeat the system that he called the modern Antichrist (*CVE* Pars 3, 173–74). Similarly, the apostolic administrator in Nicotera and Tropea (Italy), Vincenzo De Chiara, added nationalism to the list of anti-Christian ideological currents (*CVE* Pars 3, 382).

Numerous *vota* concerned the need for the unification of Christians in the face of atheism in general. The necessity of creating a common bastion of Christians

against such currents was emphasized by the archbishop of Tortona (Italy), Egisto Domenico Melchiori (*CVE* Pars 3, 679–80). Similarly, a group of nine Indian bishops, led by Archbishop Joseph Attipetty, called on Catholics to cooperate with non-Catholics in this field of apologetics (*CVE* Pars 4, 217). The same approach in response to this threat was proposed by the Pontifical Gregorian University (*SVU* Pars 1.1, 16).

Venezuelan archbishop Rafael Ignacio Arias Blanco of the diocese of Caracas noted that modern atheism fights not only against religion but also against civil society and Western institutions. Therefore, the legitimacy of the Church's efforts toward unity in the face of this threat should raise no doubts (*CVE* Pars 7, 555).

The archbishop of Belgrade (Yugoslavia), Josip Antun Ujčić, wrote about many Orthodox clergy who were open to a path on which the Church could join hands (*manus iungere possent*) in defense of Christian principles against the atheist movement (*CVE* Pars 2, 533).

#### 4. The Problem of Marriages Between People of Different Religious Affiliations

The authors of the *vota* saw not only the problems of the Church as a whole but also devoted considerable attention to marriages and families. Within the thematic scope of our interest, the issue of marriages between people of different religious affiliations—referred to by the Council Fathers as mixed marriages—came to the forefront. Some voices merely indicated that problems existed in this area and suggested that the Council should address this issue. This was recommended, among others, by the bishop of Austin, Louis Joseph Reicher (*CVE* Pars 6, 272). The ordinary of the diocese of Yakima (USA), Joseph Patrick Dougherty, observing the current difficulties in the legal approach, wanted to link the sacramentality of marriage with the validity of baptism (*CVE* Pars 6, 469). There were also *vota* that analyzed the discussed problem in more detail and several aspects.

The first dimension concerned the rituals and laws related to the solemnization of such marriages. The archbishop of Nice (France), Paul-Jules-Narcisse Rémond, saw the cause of numerous problems and scandals in the fact that, in the absence of a dispensation, the marriage ceremonies of persons of different religious affiliations could only be celebrated by non-Catholic ministers. As a result, Catholic priests, although they do not administer the sacrament, sometimes bless the wedding rings and even celebrate Mass, which causes much confusion. Rectifying the situation requires changes in law and liturgical rites (*CVE* Pars 1, 348). A similar concern and a call for easing the rigor regarding the celebration of marriages between people of different religious affiliations can also be found in the statement of the archbishop



of Reims (France), Louis-Augustin Marmottin (*CVE* Pars 1, 379). The ordinary of the diocese of Strasbourg (France), Weber, wrote that the prohibition of celebrating Mass at the marriage of persons of different religious affiliations is repulsive (*odibilis*) to the spouse who professes the Catholic faith and does not want to lose the spiritual benefits of the Church (*CVE* Pars 1, 419).

Another issue was the invalidity of marriages contracted before non-Catholic clergy. This matter was analyzed in general terms by Bishop Vincent Gelat of Palestine, although he did not offer any constructive solutions (*CVE* Pars 4, 443). A more detailed contribution came from the bishop of Rottenburg (Germany), Carl Joseph Leiprecht. He provided statistics showing that in his diocese, nearly 4,000 such unions are contracted annually with a dispensation from the impediment of mixed religion; another 4,000 ignore the canonical form and are contracted before a non-Catholic minister; and yet another 4,000 are contracted solely in a civil court. According to canon law, only the marriages in the first group are considered sacramental, which means that spouses in the other two categories are, after divorce, free to enter into new marriages. Therefore, he proposed resigning from the canonical form for every interdenominational marriage (*CVE* Pars 1, 661). According to Bishop John Michael O'Neill of Harbour Grace (Canada), maintaining the current canonical status quo fosters religious indifference among Catholics entering such unions (*CVE* Pars 6, 31). Another Canadian clergyman, auxiliary bishop Laurent Morin of Montréal, criticized the increasingly stringent legal changes. He noted that the need to obtain dispensations and other formal impediments had made the process of entering into interdenominational marriages so long and complicated that many couples abandoned the Catholic path and turned to non-Catholic clergy for the ceremony, resulting in serious spiritual harm. In this context, he proposed granting greater authority to local ordinaries (*CVE* Pars 6, 71–72). Simplification of procedures was also called for by John Hubert Macey Rodgers, apostolic vicar of the Tonga Islands (Oceania) (*CVE* Pars 7, 661–62), as well as by Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger of the diocese of Montréal (Canada), who wrote that the current regulations humiliate non-Catholics and therefore require modification (*CVE* Pars 6, 43–48). Among the *vota* are also voices recognizing institutional shortcomings in the Catholic Church at the time. The ordinary of the diocese of Duluth (USA), Thomas Anthony Welch, along with Laurence Alexander Glenn, auxiliary bishop, suggested that the creation of a papal tribunal for interdenominational marriages could improve the efficiency of the process and relieve the burden on diocesan courts (*CVE* Pars 6, 319).

The validity of marriages between Catholics and Orthodox Christians was addressed primarily by hierarchs from regions where such unions are most common. Bishop Scandar of the Coptic diocese of Assiut (Egypt) emphasized that the current canon law—which considers all marriages contracted before non-Catholic clergy invalid—is one of the most serious problems his local Church needs to face. He noted that Egypt is home to 80,000 Coptic Catholics and three million dissenters. In the



existing regulations, he saw no fostering of an atmosphere of love with non-Catholics, expressing hope that the Council would become an occasion for emphasizing mercy (*CVE* Pars 5, 380–383). The same issue was raised by Bishop Paul Nousseir of the Coptic diocese of Minya (Egypt). In his view, recognizing the validity of interdenominational marriages contracted outside of Catholic churches would have evangelizing potential. Referring to a historical argument, he stated that in the past, when such unions were considered valid, there were more conversions to Catholicism, and children raised in these marriages often grew up to be devout Catholics. At present, Catholics who chose this path rebel against the invalidation of their marriages and leave the Church (*CVE* Pars 5, 384–86). Hope for a return to the regulations recognizing the validity of interdenominational marriages blessed by non-Catholic clergy was also expressed by Youhanna Kabes, auxiliary bishop of the Coptic diocese of Alexandria (Egypt). He viewed the most recent change in these regulations as an attempt to reinforce Roman tendencies to dominate the Eastern Churches and to Latinize the Copts (*CVE* Pars 5, 400–401). A more general statement came from Iraqi bishop Raphaël I Bidawid (*CVE* Pars 4, 361) and Maronite archbishop François Ayoub in Syria, both of whom called for seeking a solution to the validity of at least those marriages contracted in Orthodox churches (*CVE* Pars 4, 450). Similarly, recognition of interdenominational marriages celebrated before Orthodox clergy was proposed by Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh (Syria), along with 19 other bishops from the region (*CVE* Pars 4, 456–57).

Bishop Joseph Grueter of the diocese of Umata (South Africa) drew attention to a specific issue related to interdenominational marriages. He proposed that the Council examine the obligation of abstaining from meat, as it often causes tension in such unions due to the different traditions of the spouses (*CVE* Pars 5, 561).

Some *vota* also highlighted problems requiring a more straightforward process for declaring the sacramental nullity of interdenominational marriages. The bishop of Fort Wayne (USA) suggested that a difference in religious affiliation should be considered a diriment impediment to marriage since it is often the case that the non-Catholic spouse had no intention of fulfilling the promises and obligations made during the wedding ceremony (*CVE* Pars 6, 325). A slightly different problem was raised by Bishop John Patrick Kavanagh of Dunedin (New Zealand). He advocated for the efficient declaration of nullity for marriages between baptized non-Catholics. He observed that, after divorce, when such a person converts to Catholicism and wishes to marry a Catholic, current law prevents it. He emphasized that these initial marriages were often contracted without an intention of permanence and with limited consent, so their nullity should be declared promptly (*CVE* Pars 7, 652). A similar concern was voiced by Richard Henry Ackerman, auxiliary bishop of San Diego (USA). He noted that many non-Catholics are turned away when seeking to convert to Catholicism because of divorce and remarriage. He proposed that the Church recognize the validity of the new

marriage when welcoming converts, as those individuals, when contracting their first marriage within their own Christian community, were unaware of its true nature (*CVE* Pars 6, 503–4).

## Conclusions and Perspectives

In the introduction to this article, we defined its central issue with the question: What key difficulties did the Catholics, experiencing the tragedy of schisms and heresies, face before the Council? The analysis of the *vota* revealed an extensive range of problems.

Firstly, these are theological issues, such as the lack of credibility in the proclaimed Gospel, which weakens faith and hinders missionary and apologetic efforts. However, social arguments are cited much more frequently. These emerge when comparing the state of Christianity to unifying movements in the secular sphere or when analyzing the Church's influence on international political and ideological discourse.

Secondly, we see some voices addressing the Church on a macro scale, but much more frequently, the issues raised concern local contexts. Most of the *vota* from our category of interest focus on the difficulties related to interdenominational marriages.

Thirdly, in some of the submitted diagnoses, we observe a connection between the return to Christian unity and the internal situation of the Catholic Church itself. The authors not only recognize intra-Catholic conflicts but also propose abandoning some aspects of Catholic teaching. In doing so, they implicitly suggest that not all doctrinal beliefs should be considered untouchable. A significant element of the discussion is the call for mutual confession of guilt, which was not a commonly held conviction within the Catholic Church.

It is worth stressing once again that, in portraying the problems of a divided Christianity, the Catholic hierarchs submitting the *vota* most often addressed social and juridical issues, while strictly theological themes remained on the margins of their reflection. Their approach in this area can be regarded as mainly pragmatic and pastoral. The diagnoses presented were primarily concerned with problems arising in regions with a significant population of non-Catholic Christians and, to a lesser extent, with the unifying mission of the universal Church. Taking this into account, one may hypothesize that the *vota* reflect more the personal experiences of their authors than a thorough study of theological matters.

An interesting conclusion from the analysis of the source material is the observation of elements that one might expect to find but which were absent from the submitted proposals. The first of these is the accusation of non-Catholics for causing divisions. It appears that in most local Churches, there was a desire to seek

common ground among Christians without pointing out erroneous views or making accusations of heresy. In this context, it is worth noting that the authors rarely referred to the history of divisions, the search for those to blame, or the complexity of the religious and social circumstances at the time of the schisms. These themes occasionally appear in the debates surrounding the drafts of *Unitatis redintegratio*. Still, they become most prominent only in the documents of joint ecumenical commissions produced after the Second Vatican Council. It is likely that the pastoral and pragmatic attitude of those writing the *vota* also contributed to the absence of theological characterizations of separated Christians in the submitted reports.

On the basis of the presented diagnoses of divided Christianity, several perspectives and open questions can be formulated.

Firstly, although both the *vota* and the conciliar debates—as well as the initial phase of the reception of the Decree on Ecumenism—expressed hope for rapid unification, this process has not yet been successfully completed. One of the reasons for this is a shift in the Catholic Church's approach to ecumenism: from a primarily pragmatic stance, open to far-reaching compromises, toward more in-depth theological analyses that highlight doctrinal differences and diverse approaches to many moral issues.

Secondly, in close reference to the first point, the reception of *Unitatis redintegratio* was expressed primarily through the establishment of commissions in which representatives of various Christian denominations analyzed key areas of disagreement. It appears that, at the level of the submitted *vota*, the authors were not fully aware of many significant issues that hinder full unification. Only the detailed analysis of specific matters revealed the true extent of the discrepancies. Another problem was the Council's failure to define a clear framework for the model of future unity. The general statement that unity should not be uniformity but rather unity in diversity proved insufficient.

Thirdly, a key factor in the later successes of unity was the change in the language used to speak about non-Catholics, both in the *vota* and during the conciliar debates. Moving away from accusations of heresy and the shift in terminology toward emphasizing brotherhood not only helped soften the image of other Christians among Catholics but, more importantly, opened the door to dialogue.

*Translated by Marta Pająk-Szewczyk*

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