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The Defense of Religious Freedom in the Catholic Magazine *Vida Nueva* during a Catholic Confessional Dictatorship

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Abstract: After the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, and during a National Catholic dictatorship in Spain, the religious magazine *Vida Nueva* tried to support the principles of religious freedom promoted by the conciliar assembly. This study focuses on the promotion of liberties during a regime in which political power was not separated from religious power. The study conducts a quantitative and qualitative content analysis to explore the editorials published by the *Vida Nueva* weekly between 1968 and 1975. The results show the impact of the Second Vatican Council on the editorial approach of a journal constrained by Franco's Regime. I show that the weekly reflected the thinking of a significant number of Spanish Catholic readers; it was deeply democratic and promoted the freedom of religion, press, political thought, and association. Consequently, *Vida Nueva* opposed the repression of the Regime and aimed for a separation of powers between Church and State, mainly so that the Church could preach and promote its social thought in public life.

Keywords: journalism; freedom of religion; dictatorship; Church and State; Second Vatican Council



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1. Introductions

The Catholic Church experienced profound changes during the 20th century. Hence, the theology and pastoral care of the ecclesiastic community underwent a process of renewal (Gibellini 1998), which reached its culmination at the [Second Vatican Council \(1966\)](#) and its subsequent reception. However, the evolution of the Church in Spain was different from that in the rest of Europe, due to the religious persecution during the Second Republic (1931–1936) and the Civil War (1936–1939) and the protection of the Church by the winning side in the conflict, from which emerged the Regime of Francisco Franco Bahamonde, who became head of state until his death on 20 November 1975 ([Montero 1961](#), pp. 52–81). From that point onwards, the links between ecclesiastic and civil power were articulated through a nexus known as National Catholicism ([Álvarez Bolado 1976](#), pp. 34–35).

The transformation of the Spanish Church began to take place gradually after the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, when a number of bishops put into practice the decisions of the conciliar assembly ([Ortega 1979](#), pp. 687–88). In fact, more and more members of the Church hierarchy welcomed the principle of religious freedom and created the Spanish Episcopal Conference in 1966; this was the body responsible for taking decisive initiatives to accomplish the renewal ([Martín de Santa Olalla and Serrano Oceja 2016](#), pp. 19–36). In that context, *Vida Nueva* [*New Life*] was a magazine that aimed to independently cover ecclesiastical information, which showed the diversity of Catholicism in Spain ([Martínez Hernando 1973](#), p. 8). For this reason, the analysis of this magazine is relevant not only for the study of the post-conciliar Catholic press in Spain, but also for the concerns of the members of the Church in times of a National Catholic dictatorship. Firstly, the transformation of the Church and the role of the Catholic press during Francisco Franco's dictatorship are contextualized. Subsequently, the objective, methodology, and research questions are presented.

1.1. The Spanish Church in the Last Period of Franco's Dictatorship

As soon as Francisco Franco won the Civil War (1939), he became head of state until his death on 20 November 1975. The Regime was called Francoism because the dictator concentrated all power in his hands (Tusell 1989, p. 32). Beyond that, the Regime was founded on three pillars: the army, which constituted the military institution; the FET y de las JONS [Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx of the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive], which was formed by a single political party known as the National Movement; and the Catholic Church, which was linked to political power through the Concordat (*Concordato entre la Santa Sede y España* 1953), and represented the religious values of the nation (Tusell 1990, vol. 2, pp. 568–70). However, the three institutions were not following the same direction. One sign of this divergence was that members of the National Movement expressed attitudes which opposed the Church hierarchy during the late dictatorship (Callahan 2002, p. 307).

Spain went through different stages during the three and a half decades of the dictatorship (1939–1975). In the beginning, the country experienced periods with significant Fascist influence, while the last period of decline was characterized by decreased repression (Tusell 1990, vol. 2, pp. 587–793). The last period of Franco's dictatorship was marked by slight measures to reduce the lack of freedoms: the passing of the Press and Printing Press Act, which, despite ending the previous censorship, allowed administrative confiscation and sanctions (Ley 14/1966 1966); the Religious Freedom Act, which continued to officially recognize the Catholic denominational character of the state (Ley 44/1967 1967); the proclamation of King Juan Carlos de Borbón as the successor of Francisco Franco (RTVE 1969); the education reform, which attempted to introduce increased access to schooling (Ley 14/1970 1970); the Preferential Economic Agreement between the Spanish state and the European Economic Community (Payne 1987, p. 600); the Trade Union Act, which only incorporated administrative novelties and failed to respect freedom of association (Ley Sindical 2/1971 1971); and the Right to Political Association, which continued to restrain freedom of participation in politics (Decreto ley 7/1974 1974).

These minor achievements did not appease the Spanish people in the late 1960s: street protests and the conflict with the Basque nationalists became more intense (Tusell 1990, pp. 769–70); strikes in the coal and construction industries intensified; protests by citizens, university students, clergy, and priests were staged in search of greater justice and freedom (Tusell 1989, pp. 199–202); the Regime reinforced its reactions by declaring a state of emergency on two occasions (Decreto-ley 1/1969 1969); and radical far-right groups, such as *Fuerza Nueva* [New Force], FET y de las JONS, and *Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey* [Warriors of Christ the King], expressed hostility towards the Church by violent means (Payne 1987, p. 586).

In this political and social background, the Church in Spain gradually adapted to the principles of the Second Vatican Council, which produced confusion within the Franco Regime and the Catholic Church. There were three groups of Spanish believers: those who opposed the Second Vatican Council, rejected all that was new, and defended the National Catholic State; those who promoted the theological novelties and remained hostile towards the past and the lack of freedom at that time; and those who integrated the new theological knowledge into the classical training they had received and looked to the future with a yearning for freedom (González de Cardedal 2010, pp. 247–48).

In that political and ecclesiastic context, there was an intense crisis between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the Catholic Action movement; so, many of its members left the Church and joined political organizations (Montero 2009, pp. 207–37). There were also controversial events such as the Assembly of Bishops and Priests, which was called to apply the Second Vatican Council to the social, economic, cultural, political, and religious fields (Laboa 2017, pp. 191–215), and the Vallecas Christian Assembly, which was banned by the government (Iniesta 2002, pp. 83–116). More importantly, a major crisis arose between the Catholic Church and the Regime because of Bishop Antonio Añoveros's preaching, in which he defended the social and cultural pluralism of the Basque people (Añoveros 1974). While

the Regime planned the deportation of the prelate, Cardinal Tarancón drafted Franco's excommunication, intending to make it public if the bishop was eventually exiled, which did not happen (Infiesta 1995, pp. 148–50). Franco died on 20 November 1975. Seven days later, at the coronation of Juan Carlos de Borbón as King of Spain, Cardinal Vicente Enrique y Tarancón announced a new era for the Spanish people and called for the Church's independence from political power (Ortega 1979, pp. 706–7).

1.2. *The Catholic Press in the Context of a National Catholic Dictatorship*

During a large part of Franco's dictatorship, the Press Law in force was understood as a uniform instrument at the service of political power (Ley de Prensa 1938). At that time, there was a proliferation of parish bulletins and publications on popular religiosity (Montero 2005, p. 26) which, because of their lack of quality, received criticism from the Information Office of the Church in Spain (Orbegozo 1957, pp. 43–48). At the beginning of the late Francoist and post-conciliar period, a new Press Law was published which put an end to prior censorship and allowed administrative confiscation and sanctions (Ley 14/1966 1966). However, the religious publications of the Church hierarchy were exempted from the rules of the Press Law (Decreto 2246/1966 1966).

This legal background allows us to identify three types of religious publications in the late Francoist period: the magazines of ecclesial movements dependent on the Church hierarchy, such as *Ecclesia*, *Signo*, *Juventud Obrera*, and *Boletín de la HOAC*; the Christian general press and magazines such as *El Ciervo*, *Cuadernos para el diálogo*, *La Familia Cristiana*, *Mundo Cristiano*, and *Familia Nueva*; and the magazines specializing in religious or theological information, such as *Serra d'Or*, *Razón y Fe*, *Ilustración del Clero*, *Hechos y Dichos*, *Mundo Social*, *El Mensajero del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, *Palabra*, *Iglesia Viva*, *Pastoral Misionera*, *Madre y Maestra*, *Iglesia-Mundo*, and *Vida Nueva* (Barrera 2001, pp. 122–47; Callahan 2002, pp. 353–54). However, most of these publications were not intended to cover religious information, but rather some specific topics that the editor had decided to explore. The only two magazines in the post-conciliar period that attempted to cover the whole spectrum of ecclesial information were *Ecclesia* and *Vida Nueva*. However, while the first one was an official Church magazine, intended to issue pontifical and episcopal documents, the second one was an independent publication that covered the plurality of information from the Spanish ecclesiastical community (Martínez Hernando 1973, pp. 7–8).

Vida Nueva was first published on 1 June 1958 (Watt 2008, pp. 188–91). This weekly underwent a significant transformation, specializing in religious information in the post-conciliar period and producing more rigorous journalism through genres such as news, chronicle, interview, and editorial and opinion (Vida Nueva 1967, pp. 1, 3). The magazine took this decision because it was necessary to put into context all the information that was issued in fragments in the daily press, and "there was no publication in our country engaged in this important task" (Editorial 1975d, pp. 4–9). This project was undertaken by the priest, journalist, and writer José Luis Martín Descalzo, who edited the magazine for more than seven years (Editorial 1968, p. 5). The publication, in addition to encouraging the reform of the Second Vatican Council (Sánchez-Camacho 2020), also promoted social advances in the political field, protecting rights such as workers' rights (Sánchez-Camacho et al. 2021) and access to education (Sánchez-Camacho et al. 2022). This is why the weekly was confiscated twice and sanctioned three times, one of them after an editorial that urged citizens to celebrate International Workers' Day (Editorial 1970a, p. 5).

1.3. *Methodology and Research Questions*

This paper aims to study the editorials of *Vida Nueva* magazine in relation to the defense of liberties. It expands previous research on the editorial content of *Vida Nueva* (Sánchez-Camacho 2018), in which I analyzed the editorial line of the magazine by studying other social and ecclesiastic issues. Previously, another research work studied this magazine and its impact on the life of the Church and Spanish society in the late Franco era (Cagigas Oejo 2007). However, that research did not analyze the editorial genre to know the

precise thinking of the editorial board. It reviewed the main events of the post-conciliar period through some informative pieces of different journalistic genres. Moreover, another research work analyzed the content of this magazine's editorials, but during a different period to that of this study (Watt et al. 2010).

This paper, which focuses on the liberties in the editorial line of the magazine, explores the period between 2 November 1968 (issue 650) and 3 January 1976 (issue 1011) as it coincides with José Luis Martín Descalzo as editor of the journal, the post-conciliar period of the Catholic Church, and the last years of the dictatorship, known as the late Francoist period. All the editorials published during this period were used for the analysis: 360 editorials in total. I have chosen only editorial articles as the editorial is the journalistic genre in charge of explaining facts, formulating judgments, and making proposals according to the magazine's own vision (Santamaría 1990, p. 56).

The methodology used to explore the magazine editorials was content analysis, which involved coding the texts, conceptualizing categories, and interpreting the messages (Bardin 2002). The advantage of quantitative content analysis is the numerical quantification of the categories present in the editorials; the disadvantage is the lack of interpretation of complex messages. In this sense, the advantage of qualitative analysis is the deepening of the text; the disadvantage is the absence of statistical data that provide accuracy. For this reason, I have chosen to combine both approaches (Wimmer and Dominick 1996, pp. 49–51, 146). In the quantitative analysis, I have coded the data in Microsoft Excel to save the encoded data. Subsequently, I processed the data through the SPSS statistical software to correlate the categories.

For the content analysis, I conceptualized the following categories of study: *Achievement of Liberties*, which refers to the occasions in which *Vida Nueva* addresses in its editorials the search for freedom in the social, political, or ecclesiastic fields; *Freedom of Religion*, which relates to religious freedom issues addressed in the magazine editorials; *Freedom of the Press*, which focuses on the freedom of expression in the newspapers; *Freedom of Association*, which considers the freedom of organizations and trade unions; and *Freedom of Political Thought*, which refers to the freedom to profess any idea about the governance issues. Furthermore, to measure the proposals of the magazine, the study categories have been correlated with other categories, the most frequent of these being: *Freedom, Social Justice, Spirit of the Gospel, Spirit of Democracy, Political Participation, Citizen Participation, Developments, Human Rights, Dialogue, Spirit of Vatican II, No violence, No Military Solution/Repressive Government, No Confrontation, No Terrorism, and No Politicization*.

Before beginning the study and selecting the categories, specific research questions were raised about the editorial coverage of freedoms in *Vida Nueva*. These are the questions that allowed the research delimitation: what journalistic approach did *Vida Nueva* use in its editorials in relation to the achievement of liberties? How did the editorials address the lack of religious freedom? How did the magazine understand freedom of the press in a country where both censorship and self-censorship were the norm? How did the weekly approach freedom of political thought in a dictatorship formed by a single political party? How did the magazine specifically approach the right of citizens to participate in public life through associations?

This study has the disadvantage that it only offers the official view of *Vida Nueva*. Therefore, further research can amplify this study, exploring other journalistic genre articles, such as opinion or readers letters, to have a broader perspective of the topics covered in this magazine, which was a milestone in the religious journalism of the post-conciliar period.

2. The Defense of Religious Freedom in the Catholic Magazine *Vida Nueva*

In this section, I first introduce the quantitative results related to the thematic categories of the study. Subsequently, in the qualitative analysis, the data are inferred and interpreted in the light of the magazine's editorial content.

2.1. Quantitative Analysis

The editorial content of *Vida Nueva* addressed issues beyond religion as well. Because the Second Vatican Council did not conceive of Church and society as two separate spheres (Gaudium et Spes, 36, 38, 43, 76), the magazine understood that part of its mission was to cover the social, political, economic, and cultural current affairs of late Francoist Spain. Among the 360 editorials analyzed from 2 November 1968 (issue 650) to 3 January 1976 (issue 1011), *Achievement of Liberties* was a category found on 31 occasions (8.6%); *Freedom of Religion* on 16 occasions (4.4%); *Freedom of the Press* on 15 occasions (4.2%); *Freedom of Association* on 14 occasions (3.9%); and *Freedom of Political Thought* on 10 occasions (2.8%).

The journal treated the five categories similarly over the years, except for *Achievement of Liberties* (see Table 1). This category appeared on more occasions and almost every year, especially in 1974 and 1975 when the dictatorship was coming to an end. These data explain that, according to the magazine, an important group of Spanish people and members of the Catholic community supported the achievement of freedoms in the social, political, or ecclesiastic spheres. Only in 1972 did the magazine not address issues related to freedoms. This year was characterized by a predominance of editorials on current ecclesiastical and other social issues. *Freedom of Religion* was also a more frequent topic in the last years of Franco's regime, especially in 1975 and 1974. In its defense of religious freedom, the magazine focused on the lack of guarantees of the independence of the Church in preaching and action, due to the power of the Regime. In the case of *Freedom of the Press*, although it was also more present in the last dictatorial years, this topic was also found in the other analyzed years, such as in 1971. This independent religious weekly did not find itself at ease with legislation that penalized the press for political reasons. *Freedom of Association* was especially addressed by the magazine in the year in which the law on associations was published in 1974. In its defense of social justice, the magazine advocated freedom in the field of trade unions, as the only one was controlled by the Regime. *Freedom of Political Thought* was somewhat more balanced over the years, although the most frequent occurrences were in 1974 and 1975. The magazine focused more on issues of freedom at the end of the dictatorship because the political power was weakened. In those years in particular, the death of the dictator and the beginning of the democratic transition were near.

Table 1. Frequency data of categories.

| | | 1968 ¹ | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 ² | Total |
|------------------------------|-----|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|-------|
| Achievement of Liberties | No. | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 10 | 0 | 31 |
| Freedom of Religion | No. | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 16 |
| Freedom of the Press | No. | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 15 |
| Freedom of Association | No. | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 14 |
| Freedom of Political Thought | No. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 10 |

¹ In 1968, only the editorial contents of November and December are measured. ² In 1976, only the editorial content of 3 January is analyzed.

Achievement of Liberties co-occurs with the editorials, 74% of which called for *Freedom*; 42% for *Social Justice* and *Spirit of the Gospel*; 35% for *Political Participation*; and 29% for *Developments*, and *No violence* (see Table 2). These results show that, according to the magazine's vision, the attainment of freedoms was primarily a matter of the achievement of social justice and the practice of the Christian message. *Freedom of Political Thought* co-occurs with *Freedom* 60% of the time; 50% with *Political Participation* and *Citizen Participation*; 40% with *Dialogue*, *Spirit of the Gospel*, *No Military Solution/Repressive Government*, and *No Confrontation*; and 30% with *Social Justice*, *Spirit of Democracy*, *Human Rights*, *No Terrorism*, and *No Violence*. In fact, freedom of political thought was related to the participation of other political options and the involvement of citizens. To this end, dialogue was a key

element to put aside hostilities and impositions. *Freedom of the Press* co-occurs 73% of the time with *Freedom*; 47% with *Social Justice* and *Political Participation*; 40% with *Spirit of the Gospel*; and 33% with *Citizen Participation*, *Developments*, *No Military Solution/Repressive Government*, and *No violence*. The magazine supported the freedom of the media and public opinion in a journalistic context in which self-censorship prevailed to avoid sanctions from the Regime. *Freedom of Religion* co-occurs 53% of the time with *Freedom* and *Spirit of the Gospel*; 40% with *Political Participation* and *Developments*; 33% with *Social Justice*; and 27% with *Citizen Participation*, *Human Rights*, *Spirit of Vatican II*, *No Military Solution/Repressive Government*, and *No Violence*. For the magazine, religious freedom was another fundamental task for the citizens of a country that had not reached liberties. In this sense, the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which called for separation and cooperation with the state, was embraced by the weekly. *Freedom of Association* co-occurs 57% of the time with *Spirit of the Gospel*; 50% with *Social Justice*, *Political Participation*, and *Developments*; 43% with *Freedom* and *Human Rights*; 36% with *No Violence*; and 29% with *No Politicization*, *Citizen Participation*, *No Military Solution/Repressive Government*, and *No confrontation*. This is why, in order to achieve the *Freedom of Association* that guaranteed political and citizen participation and aspired to greater social justice, according to the magazine, trade unions were organizations that had to be present in the political and social life of the country.

Table 2. Co-occurring percentages of categories with editorial content proposals.

| | Achievement of Liberties | Freedom of Religion | Freedom of the Press | Freedom of Association | Freedom of Political Thought |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Freedom | 74% | 53% | 73% | 43% | 60% |
| Social Justice | 42% | 33% | 47% | 50% | 30% |
| Spirit of the Gospel | 42% | 53% | 40% | 57% | 40% |
| Spirit of Democracy | 10% | 7% | 20% | 14% | 30% |
| Political Participation | 35% | 40% | 47% | 50% | 50% |
| Citizen Participation | 26% | 27% | 33% | 29% | 50% |
| Developments | 29% | 40% | 33% | 50% | 20% |
| Human Rights | 19% | 27% | 20% | 43% | 30% |
| Dialogue | 13% | 13% | 20% | 7% | 40% |
| Spirit of Vatican II | 10% | 27% | 20% | 14% | 0% |
| No Violence | 29% | 27% | 33% | 36% | 30% |
| No Military Solution/Repressive Government | 19% | 27% | 33% | 29% | 40% |
| No Confrontation | 13% | 13% | 20% | 29% | 40% |
| No Terrorism | 6% | 13% | 7% | 0% | 30% |
| No Politicization | 10% | 20% | 13% | 29% | 0% |

In the following section, these findings from the quantitative analysis are supported by observing the magazine’s approach to these categories in the texts examined.

2.2. Qualitative Analysis

As the quantitative results of the previous section show, the magazine *Vida Nueva* addressed the defense of freedoms during the National Catholic dictatorship. The following is a qualitative analysis of the most significant texts that explores and interprets the quantitative analysis.

2.2.1. The Attainment of Liberties

Among the studied categories, *Achievement of Liberties* appears most frequently (31 occasions, 8.6%). There are several *Vida Nueva* editorials which called for freedom, in line with the Second Vatican Council.¹ A significant number of editorials in which *Achievement of liberties* appears were published in 1974 and 1975, when Franco's dictatorship was coming to an end. In fact, citizen protests continued to demand greater justice and freedoms in response to the lack of freedom experienced during the last period of Franco's dictatorship (Tusell 1990, pp. 769–70). An example of the weekly struggle for liberties can be found in the editorial of issue 975, entitled "Easter of conflicts", which refers to the Christian Assembly of Vallecas, cancelled by the civil authorities to avoid disturbances of public order.² The magazine highlighted a conflict between members of the Church and the state, denouncing the suppression of liberties in Spain, as some members of the Church had been "prevented from meeting to find ways of planting the Gospel in the heart of one of Madrid's most painful neighborhoods" (Editorial 1975c, p. 5).

Vida Nueva also reflected on other contexts of authoritarian regimes with the aim of establishing implicit parallels between the Spanish Regime and governments such as those of Paraguay, Chile, and Portugal. In the latter country, on several occasions, the magazine's editorial drew an analogy between the Church in Portugal and the Church in Spain. The weekly even considered that the Portuguese Church had lost its credibility in the social sphere, due to its procrastination in denouncing the Salazar dictatorship (Editorial 1974c, p. 5). However, after the Portuguese dictatorship, the magazine was also critical of the so-called *Processo Revolucionário Em Curso* [Ongoing Revolutionary Process], in which the weekly also noted a lack of freedom. In fact, the editorial in issue 990, entitled "Radio Renascença", reported on the occupation of the Portuguese episcopate's radio station by the Workers' Commission. The magazine took a negative view of the role played in the revolution by the group Christians for Socialism. *Vida Nueva* welcomed the fact that the bishops had issued a statement on the defense of freedoms but regretted that they had not done the same during the previous dictatorship. As a consequence, according to the magazine, the situation in Portugal was as deplorable as it was during the Salazar dictatorship: "Portugal does not seem to have moved from Dictatorship to freedom. It is simply a change of masters. It is a minority as hostile to freedom as the fascism of yesterday" (Editorial 1975e, p. 5).

Another editorial that aimed to defend freedoms was the one in issue 727, entitled "The four faces of a date", which referred to four ways of living the International Workers' Day: "[1 May of] the excursion and the Spanish omelette", "1 May at the Bernabéu", "1 May of the conflict groups", and "1 May of the priests". The text pointed out that while the first two preferred to cater to questions of tourism or culture, the other two opted for the defence of social justice. Furthermore, alluding to the student and university youth movements and the banning of strikes in Spain, the weekly divided "1 May of the conflict groups" into two: "honest people who in their souls sought justice and [into] agitators in favour of revolts" (Editorial 1970a, p. 5). This editorial, which was consequently included in the magazine's first sanction after the publication of the Press and Printing Law, addressed issues related to the labour movement and the involvement of Spaniards in public life, poverty, trade union legislation, the right to strike, equality in education, and the regulation of fiscal policy.³ On freedom of speech, these were the editorialist's wishes for the May Day celebration:

A consistent pursuit of justice without turmoil, a resolute refusal of any triumphalism that hides the problems, a daring to face the problems face to face [...]. And we would be ashamed to see such a serious thing as this festival of labour reduced to a day of excursions and omelettes, feasts and gymnastics, riots and clashes, or even to a beautiful occasion for writing pastorals and preaching sermons with abstract and beautiful words (Editorial 1970a, p. 5).

Consequently, *Vida Nueva* promoted social justice and the attainment of liberties, criticizing the repression of the Franco Regime. For a religious magazine that was committed

to the implementation of Vatican II, it was important that the Church was increasingly free so that it could preach and act in public life with more autonomy.

2.2.2. The Achievement of Freedom of Religion

The category *Freedom of Religion* (16 occasions, 4.4%) shows that *Vida Nueva*'s editorials on this topic were in line with the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (No. 26, 73) and the Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* (No. 1–15), which call for freedom of religion in society (Second Vatican Council 1966). In this sense, it is noteworthy that Spanish Catholics tried to promote in the National Catholic context the principles of religious freedom transmitted by the Council (González de Cardedal 2010, pp. 247–48). The editorial of issue 733 analyzed the canonization of forty Catholics martyred during the religious persecution in England in the 16th century, where Catholic worship was suppressed and persecuted. In criticizing that absence of religious freedom, the magazine denounces “inconsiderate power”. By implicitly mentioning the use of power in an authoritarian regime, the weekly was skeptical of the canonizations, because “the Catholic Church—today less than ever—should not pretend to be a victim and should not respond to past humiliations with present-day canonizations. The Catholic Church should not forget that distinguished members of its history also abused their power” (Editorial 1970b, p. 5).

The editorial of issue 932, entitled “One Hundred Years of Episcopacy”, presented a publication on the collective documents of the Spanish episcopate from 1870 to 1974 (Iribarren 1974). The editorial took this occasion to denounce the lack of religious freedom in Spain, arguing that this absence had even provoked “intra-ecclesial tensions”. In addition, *Vida Nueva* assessed the role played by the Church in the preceding years in moving away from a fundamentalist attitude and towards an evangelical spirit through an increasingly committed participation in the social sphere (Editorial 1974b, p. 5). In this regard, the weekly considers that the history is full of “struggles of the powerful to keep the Church in the sacristy”. However, the magazine believed that the tenacity of the Church throughout history had always ended up discovering “that its evangelical conscience does not allow it to be enclosed” (Editorial 1974b, p. 5).

The editorial of issue 982, entitled “The freedom of the Church under threat... and yet joy”, aimed to represent the two faces of the ecclesial community: on the one hand, the reality of a Church whose religious freedom was still restricted but, on the other hand, despite this restriction, the reality in which the Church was still searching for joy. The weekly denounced the administrative violation of the Concordat because of the banning in 1975 by the public authorities of an ecclesiastical assembly in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. For this reason, the weekly discussed the issue of the separation of Church and State:

We take no pleasure in saying all this. But it is our duty to remember that—in the words of the bishop of Las Palmas—decisions like this “go against the independence and freedom of the Church in the exercise of its pastoral ministry”. They are—we will add with a quote from Vatican Radio—“a serious obstacle to the freedom of citizens and the freedom of the Church”. And they are—we will conclude with our own wording—a serious inconsistency with the fundamental principles of our laws which demand respect for that freedom, which in this case is threatened (Editorial 1975b, pp. 4–5).

As a result, *Vida Nueva* rejected the coercion of religious freedom, focusing especially on the independence of the Catholic Church from the Franco Regime, so that the religious institution could freely preach the Gospel.

2.2.3. The Right to Freedom of the Press

The category *Freedom of the Press* (15 occasions, 4.2%) indicates that *Vida Nueva*, in its editorials, defended the right to freedom of the media. Although the new legislation had put an end to prior censorship, it imposed administrative confiscation and sanctions that did not guarantee freedom of information (Ley 14/1966 1966). This support for freedom

of the press is in line with the Second Vatican Council, which not only promotes freedom in relation to religion, but also to culture, the fine arts, and the right to information.⁴ On this point, it is worth noting that in the post-conciliar period in Spain, *Vida Nueva* was the only independent publication which, with the use of journalistic techniques and genres, covered the plurality of information from the Spanish ecclesiastical community (Martínez Hernando 1973, pp. 7–8). That is why this magazine promoted freedom of the press not only as a service to society but also to the Church. This is shown in the editorial of the double issue 734/735 on the XII Episcopal Assembly, where the Spanish Church would examine in depth the issue of poverty in Spain. The magazine stated that while there were those who preferred to wait for the bishops' decision and then express their opinion, *Vida Nueva* chose to express its opinion before the bishops' meeting in case the magazine's reflection could be useful for the gathering (Editorial 1970c, pp. 3–4). In this regard, the magazine believed that within the Spanish Church there should be a reflection on the use of the media, due to the press restrictions in the country and the limitations of public opinion. The editorial of issue 892 focused on the controversy that arose from the study that the Spanish Episcopal Conference was going to carry out on the media as an instrument of evangelization. This was a disturbing issue for a dictatorial regime in which freedom of the press was not guaranteed. The weekly also expressed its indignation at a note issued by the Church group the Hermandad Sacerdotal Española [Spanish Priestly Brotherhood], which maintained its opposition to the project.⁵ Indeed, *Vida Nueva* did not consider positively the "direct attacks on the bishops and the Episcopal Conference" by conservative groups which were trying to stop the social and religious renewal in Spain (Editorial 1973b, p. 5).

In the wake of World Communications Day 1973, the magazine reflected on the intersection between the media and the Church, criticizing self-censorship and calling for the freedom of the press promoted by the Decree on the Media of Social Communications *Inter Mirifica* (Second Vatican Council 1966). Hence, in the editorial of issue 886, entitled "Certain communications companies and certain purposes", the magazine considered that the image of the Church offered by the most influential Spanish radio and television media was "rather short and monochrome". The fault for this, according to the weekly, lay neither with the Episcopal Commission for the Media nor with the scarcity of agency news: "this information is voluntarily cut and scarcely universalist. Asking the reasons would take us too far" (Editorial 1973a, p. 5). On some occasions, the magazine also covers international news to highlight a problematic issue in Spain, such as freedom of the press. The magazine welcomed the decision of the United States Supreme Court to allow the publication of the *Pentagon Papers* in 1971 on the United States' involvement in Vietnam, in which Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defence, was implicated. According to the weekly, transparency was an important value for the press and for a democratic society; so, it asks rhetorically, why not open the doors of information without waiting for the news to appear otherwise? Hence the question: "Why not recognize in practice that the truth is not dangerous, and that what is hidden will one day become manifest?" In the weekly's view, "the story of the McNamara papers is there as a warning, as a hope. For the civilian world and for the Church" (Editorial 1971b, p. 5).

In summary, the magazine encouraged freedom of information and criticized the Spanish general media for offering a distorted image of the Church. It also considered that the Church's media should be an instrument of evangelization, and for this purpose, freedom of the press was necessary.

2.2.4. The Quest for Freedom in Politics

Not many editorials refer directly to the category *Freedom of Political Thought* (10 occasions, 2.8%), due to the limited scope of freedom that *Vida Nueva* had in this field. However, although the magazine was not very explicit on this issue, the editorials that advocated the conquest of liberties did so for freedom to be achieved in all areas of society, including politics. Moreover, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (Second Vatican Council 1966), which *Vida Nueva* strongly supported, encourages

the exercise of freedom of political thought to achieve the common good (No. 73–76, 79, 88). In Spain, due to the lack of freedoms in the political context, university students and other citizens took the initiative in demonstrations to encourage greater participation in the public sphere (Tusell 1989, pp. 199–202).

The editorial of issue 763 compiled a selection of statements by Spanish bishops who, in their Christmas messages, called for peace in Spain. The magazine highlighted the statements that associated violence with the lack of freedom of political thought and the absence of political participation. It inferred that, by publishing them in an editorial, *Vida Nueva* endorsed the prelates' idea of the lack of freedom of political thought. An example of this is the case of Ireneo García Alonso, Bishop of Albacete, who raised his voice in support of freedom in political matters, believing that it was urgent to awaken consciences on the political level. The prelate believed that it was crucial to “move towards a greater liberalization of political and economic structures, creating the necessary conditions for a constructive dialogue between conflicting interests, opinions and decisions; as well as rejecting extremism, and denouncing its exclusivist intransigence” (Editorial 1971a, p. 5).

In its commitment to freedom of political thought, *Vida Nueva* promoted conscientious objection. The editorial of issue 776 drew a parallel between Franz Jägerstätter, a German who had proclaimed himself a conscientious objector in Hitler's Germany, and José Luis Beunza, who had declared himself a conscientious objector in Spain (Saraiva Martins 2007).⁶ According to the magazine, the Spaniard “knew well that his choice was between six or seven years in prison or a few months of military service”. The weekly therefore advocated a different path to military service: “find ways of civilian work equivalent to military service so that [. . .], not to criminalize what is intended to be a different way of loving one's country, which arises from a clear desire for a more peaceful world” (Editorial 1971c, p. 5). The editorial of issue 798 also defended the conscientious objection of those who reject doing military service. The *Vida Nueva* text criticized the fact that the Franco regime, formed by Catholics, did not accept this right to conscientious objection as “there are more and more Christians who declare themselves conscientious objectors in the name of their Christian faith, and for love of peace preached by Christ” (Editorial 1971d, p. 5).

Consequently, *Vida Nueva* promoted the exercise of freedom of political thought and supported conscientious objection to military service, taking a position against its criminalization.

2.2.5. The Struggle for Freedom of Association

Vida Nueva upheld freedom of association in its editorials, especially in the last two years of Franco's Regime. Throughout the *Freedom of Association* category (14 occasions, 3.9%), it can be noted that the magazine encouraged the involvement of Spanish citizens in public affairs and proposed this same freedom within the Church on the same lines as The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (Second Vatican Council 1966, No. 25, 26, 42, 63, 65, 68, 73, 74, 75, and 82). Importantly, many of the Church members who promoted social justice in the post-conciliar period eventually became involved in different political organizations (Montero 2009, pp. 207–37). Paul VI's visit to the International Labor Organization (ILO) represented the Holy See's recognition and support of associations dealing with labor relations. *Vida Nueva* not only endorsed the Pope's visit in its editorial in issue 681, but also exemplified the ILO as an organization formed by people who believed “in the struggle for justice, [...] without violence” (Editorial 1969, p. 5).

On the eve of the publication of the legislation on the Right of Political Association (Decreto ley 7/1974 1974), the editorial of issue 957 wondered whether this law would really bring this right into being: “Will the associations become what so many honest Spaniards today hope for, or will the law be a beautiful new name for the same old situation?” Indeed, for the magazine, the recognition of associationism was something “as elementary, as radical, and as profound as seeking the implementation of one of the most fundamental rights of the human person”. In fact, in *Vida Nueva's* view, the right of association was “prior

to and higher than all of our political institutions" (Editorial 1974a, pp. 3–5). Furthermore, the weekly stated that this right was a substantial part of the Social Doctrine of the Church:

We will not be the ones to discuss here what the concrete forms of citizens' participation in public life should be, but we will affirm that real and not nominal participation, free and not restricted, autonomous and not controlled, universal and not privileged, effective and not purely legal, is a substantial part of the Church's Social Doctrine, which we have not only the right but the obligation to proclaim (Editorial 1974a, pp. 3–5).

One of the risks of the publication of that legislation was that it would become the same as other Francoist regulations, such as the Trade Union Law, which, according to the editorial of issue 959, had changed "the names, but not the reality" (Editorial 1974d, p. 5). Once the legislation on associations was published (Decreto ley 7/1974 1974), *Vida Nueva* examined it in its editorial of issue 966, defining it as a door that "has been opened with such a number of conditions that those who most believed in and fought for associations do not now seem to have the desire to become associated" (Editorial 1975a, p. 5). Additionally, as a Catholic magazine, *Vida Nueva* noted that the Church defended this right for all citizens without exception:

Today the Church is ready to defend the right of association of all, but not to bless the association of anyone; it is determined to uphold the human rights of all, but not to decorate any political leader with the adjective "Christian"; it sees clearly that it must collaborate -with its prayer or its criticism- with all those who fight for justice, but not decide that the justice is on the right, on the left or in the political center (Editorial 1975a, p. 5).

In summary, the magazine defended the right of Spanish citizens to associate and participate in public life. *Vida Nueva* criticized the project of the Regime on associations, which continued to place restrictions on the right to associate and allowed only one union, which was the official one protected by the dictatorship.

3. Conclusions

Among the post-conciliar Spanish Catholic press, the social and religious magazine *Vida Nueva* was involved in the social transformation of Spain and the renewal of the Church. The message of the Gospel and the reform of the Church proposed by the Second Vatican Council challenged the magazine to address social issues relating to freedoms at a time of National Catholic dictatorship. The following are some specific conclusions about the promotion of freedom in this Catholic magazine in those times of crisis in the Spanish Church and society:

- *Vida Nueva* advocated freedom in both the social and the ecclesiastical spheres. The weekly took a stand against repression regardless of the ideology from which the coercion originates and defended the conquest of freedoms under Franco's Regime. It also aimed for the Church to be increasingly free so that it could preach and act in public life with greater autonomy.
- In the context of a confessional Catholic country, *Vida Nueva* rejected the coercion of religious freedom, focusing on the lack of guarantees for the independence of the Church in the exercise of its pastoral ministry, highlighting the issues in Church–State relations.
- *Vida Nueva* promoted freedom of information in a context in which the 1966 Press and Printing Press Act was in force. The legislation did not provide sufficient legal protection in the field of freedom and applied sanctions from which the magazine was not exempt. In such circumstances, the weekly even acknowledged the self-censorship imposed by the media itself. As for religious information, the magazine criticized the Spanish generalist media for offering an image of the Church that was too biased. The weekly understood freedom of the press as a service to the Church. It therefore believed that the Church media should be an instrument of evangelization, describing

as a violation of freedom of speech the reaction of those who tried to put obstacles in the way of this approach.

- *Vida Nueva* promoted the exercise of freedom of political thought. This topic was also presented in editorials dealing with issues related to the Regime, democracy, the media, the economy, and education. In addition, the magazine supported conscientious objection to military service, taking a firm stance against its criminalization.
- *Vida Nueva* was a supporter of Church associations and corporations under public or private law. The weekly expressed its sympathy for the ILO as an association concerned with labor issues. The magazine devoted several editorials to the legislation on the Right of Political Association, criticizing the Regime's project. Therefore, appealing to the Social Doctrine of the Church, *Vida Nueva* called for real participation in public life for Spanish citizens.

As a result, *Vida Nueva* was opposed to repression and aspired to the conquest of freedoms wanted by a considerable part of Spanish citizens. The magazine also aimed for this conquest, so that the Church could preach and carry out its pastoral ministry with autonomy in public life. Hence, *Vida Nueva* promoted issues related to freedom of conscience, such as freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of political thought and freedom of association. In addition, the weekly was supportive of political associations and was critical of the legislation on the Right of Political Association, considering that this law did not solve the problems of associations. Future publications could choose one of the categories analyzed and present it in further detail. Moreover, the study could be extended to other journalistic genres of the publication. Other research could also explore newspapers and other religious magazines that were in favor of Franco's Regime and kept their opposition to the renewal proposed by the Second Vatican Council, such as the case of the magazine *Iglesia y Mundo* [Church and World]. These future research could broaden the picture of religious publications during the post-conciliar period.

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- ¹ The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (No. 4, 5, 9, 13, 17, 20, 21, 26, 27, 37, 39, 41, 42, 58, 59, 62, 71) is a cornerstone that addresses issues such as the conquest, meaning, path, exercise, greatness, and limits of human freedom. (Second Vatican Council 1966).
- ² The General Direction of Security prohibited the First Christian Assembly of Vallecas, which was to be presided over by Cardinal Enrique y Tarancón (Enrique y Tarancón 1996, pp. 751–815; Iniesta 1975, pp. 118–40).
- ³ On 6 June 1970, the magazine received its first legal sanction after the publication of the Press and Printing Press Act (Ley 14/1966 1966), which accused this editorial of committing an infringement against article no. 2. The information about this fact appeared in issue 736 (*Vida Nueva* 1970, p. 7). This was the only editorial to receive a sanction, the fine for which amounted to 5000 *pesetas* (old Spanish currency) (Barrera 2001, p. 131). Bernardino Martínez Hernando, editor-in-chief of the magazine in those years, explains that the reason for the sanction “was the belief that *Vida Nueva* was defending the communist party's May Day”. In addition, the former editor-in-chief of the magazine states that “*Vida Nueva* did not have a good reputation in the Ministry of Information” (Martínez Hernando 2017).
- ⁴ The Decree on the Media of Social Communications *Inter Mirifica* (no. 12) calls on the authorities to protect culture and freedom of information (Second Vatican Council 1966).
- ⁵ The Hermandad Sacerdotal Española [Spanish Priestly Brotherhood] was an association of Catholic priests established in Spain during the post-conciliar period to counteract the ecclesiastical movements or assemblies that promoted reforms in the social and religious spheres (Montero 2009, pp. 284–85).
- ⁶ Franz Jägerstätter was a conscientious objector during the Nazi regime. He was declared Blessed during the pontificate of Benedict XVI (Saraiva Martins 2007).

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