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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND PEACE

Modern Catholic Perspectives and Contemporary Taiwan Society[1]

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Abstract. After a brief review of the Biblical background of peace, this presentation will address the theme of religion and peace from the perspective of modern Catholic principles, especially with guidance from the Second Vatican Council's *Dignitatis Humanae* and John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris*, both of which affirm the primacy of conscience in a personalist conception of society where the role of government is to provide for the common welfare, including the right to religious freedom. Such a social order is instrumental to establishing peace on earth.

Taiwan offers an Asian example of a democratic society in which the state does not intervene in religious affairs and religions participate in public affairs without actively seeking to control the state. Religious groups enjoy freedom within Taiwan society, which in turn enjoys the benefits of religions contributing to the common good.

[1] An abridged version of this paper was presented at "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures," a joint project of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) and Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) (online, March 2, 2022). An earlier version of this paper was originally prepared for and presented at "Peace and Religion in East Asia—International Academic Conference commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the March First Independence Movement" by the Korean Religious Education Association and Institute for Life and Culture (Sogang University, Seoul: November 23, 2018).

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Nearly seventy-five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaimed that the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."[2] *That* religious freedom and peace in the world are inextricably related is not widely controverted; *what* that relationship may be, however, remains a matter of some dispute.

In the popular imagination, much of human history seems to highlight wars in which religions played no small part—for example, from Constantine to the Crusades, the Medieval Inquisition and Northern Ireland, the War of the Three Henrys[3] and the Thirty Years War,[4] World War II with the Jewish genocide, Israel and Islamic extremists in the Middle East, the Sri Lankan civil war between Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils in South Asia, and Muslim separatist movements in the predominantly-Catholic Philippines in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that religion is a primary cause of war has been, hopefully by now, sufficiently repudiated. The sweeping three-volume study *Encyclopedia of Wars* chronicled 1,763 wars in human history and concluded that less than seven percent of them were religious in nature.[5] Nonetheless, there still seems to be some need to elaborate upon the relationship between religion and peace.

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[2] United Nations General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Paris: 1948), Preamble.

[3] The War of the Three Henrys in France (1587–1589) involved King Henry III, the Huguenot leader Henry of Navarre, and Henri de Guise as the leader of the Catholic League. See R. Knecht, *The French Religious Wars 1562–1598* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002).

[4] The Thirty Years War in central Europe (1618–1648) started as a conflict among the Catholic and Protestant states that formed the Holy Roman Empire.

[5] C. Phillips & A. Axelrod, *Encyclopedia of Wars*, 3 vols. (New York: Infobase, 2004–2005). An evaluation of the methodology and statistical specificity of that

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After a brief review of the Biblical background for conceiving peace, this study will address the theme of religion and peace from the perspective of modern Catholic principles. Regarding *human dignity*, one of the decisive documents for Roman Catholicism is *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom), issued in 1965 out of the Second Vatican Council.[6] On *peace in the world*, an essential contribution is to be found in *Pacem in Terris* (On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty), the 1963 papal encyclical of John XXIII.[7] Along these lines, modern Catholic thought affirms the primacy of conscience in a personalist conception of society where the role of government is to provide for the common welfare, including the right to religious freedom. Such a social order is instrumental to establishing peace on earth.

After revisiting these universal Catholic principles of religious freedom and peace in the modern world, this study will consider the example of contemporary Taiwan society, where a relatively high level of religious freedom and peace prevails. Public policy regarding the relationship between religion and society depends upon a particular set of historical and cultural influences, as well as upon the specific political organization that governs the respective society. Taiwan offers an East Asian example of a democratic society in which the state does not intervene in religious affairs, and where religions participate in public affairs but do not actively seek to control the state. In this context, diverse religious groups enjoy freedom within society, and society enjoys the benefits of religions that contribute to the common good.

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study is beyond the scope of this present treatment. For present purposes, it is sufficient to observe that at least some scholarly analysis concludes that religion—at least religion alone or primarily—is not a widespread primary cause of war. Such observations, however, do not deny that there are widespread appeals to religion as a mask for ethnic, political, or other motives in waging war.

[6] Paul VI, "Dignitatis Humanae" (1965), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 929–941. Hereafter cited in-text as DH with paragraph numbers.

[7] John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris" (1963), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 55 (1963): 257–304. Hereafter cited in-text as PT with paragraph numbers.

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1. A Biblical Vision for Peace

For an examination of modern Catholic principles, at least a brief review of the Biblical vision of peace is indispensable. For Christians, peace is rooted ultimately in relationship with God, the Creator of heaven and earth, source of life for all humanity and well-being for the entirety of creation. The Hebrew concept of *šālôm*, as invoked in the Old Testament, involves wholeness, health, harmony, prosperity, security, and order. God is the source of peace for the community as a whole as well as for the individuals who keep the covenant.[8] In the words of the book of the prophet Ezekiel:

> I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince in their midst. I, the LORD, have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the country of wild beasts so they will dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forests. I will settle them around my hill and send rain in its season, the blessing of abundant rain. The trees of the field shall bear their fruits, and the land its crops, and they shall dwell securely on their own soil. They shall know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from the power of those who enslaved them. (Ez. 34:24–27)[9]

This vision of peace is rooted in right relations—"the work of justice will be peace; the effect of justice, calm and security forever" (Is. 32:17). In the New Testament tradition, Christ himself is peace. The Pauline epistle to the Ephesians declares:

> For [Christ Jesus] is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members

[8] R. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 12–14.

[9] Scripture quotations in this paper are taken from the Revised Edition of the *New American Bible* (NABRE).

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> of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. (Eph. 2:14–20)

Such peace is both an inner disposition and an external ordering, understood in relation to harmony, justice, and the kingdom of God. This Christian vision of peace offers more than the public "peace and quiet" or "law and order" of the *Pax Romana*.[10] Indeed, Jesus challenged accepted norms of security and earthly values (e.g., Lk. 12:49–59) to establish a new order.

This very brief survey of the Biblical vision of peace identifies several important considerations for contemporary peace studies. First, peace involves a holistic appreciation for creation and human life, including innately human religious dimensions. Purely secular notions of public security may not adequately provide for a full appreciation of peace. Second, consistent with the Biblical understanding of the human person, peace has both communal and individual dimensions, and those dimensions are interrelated. Third, the communal character of human life inevitably involves the relationship between Church and State or, to express that issue more explicitly and fundamentally, between Religion and Society. In the Christian claim to citizenship in the household of God, the epistle implicitly acknowledged the civil status of strangers and sojourners who formerly lacked full rights.

2. Modern Catholic Perspectives on Peace on Earth

Pope John XXIII addressed the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* not only to Catholics but also to "all people of good will," with the intention that the purpose and rationale advanced for peace therein would be relevant and comprehensible to everyone, regardless of their faith or lack thereof. The Pope issued this encyclical between the first and second sessions of the Second Vatican Council in which the Catholic Church would make a decisive turn, embracing its place in and solidarity with the modern world. While proceeding from the

[10] Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition*, 20.

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divine order, *Pacem in Terris* endeavors to articulate generally-acceptable principles for ordering human society.

From the outset, *Pacem in Terris* recognizes the fundamental role of human dignity which faith informs as being created by God and experience claims as being endowed with intelligence and freedom (PT 3). Human and social order are imprinted in the human conscience (PT 5). Thus, the fundamental premise for peace in the world is articulated as follows:

> Any human society which is well-regulated and productive demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual is truly a human person. This human nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. As such the person has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from human nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable. (PT 9)

That fundamental principle of order among individuals implies certain rights and duties: "also among human rights is that of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of one's own conscience, and to profess religion both in private and in public" (PT 14). The affirmation of rights also implies duties for protecting such rights:

> in human society one person's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other persons; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right. Every basic human right draws its authoritative force from the natural law, which confers it and attaches to it its respective duty. (PT 30)

Human society and governmental authority mediate those rights and duties. The extent of civil authority is tempered by the priority of conscience. "Authority is before all else a moral force. For this reason, the appeal of rulers should be to the individual conscience, to the duty which everyone has of voluntarily contributing to the common good" (PT 48). While respecting the diversity of forms of political organization, the Catholic Church affirms a limited, constitutional scope of civil authority which is ordered to the common good; indeed, "the attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities" (PT 54). The common good

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is understood holistically as integral human development in which prosperity is not only material but also spiritual.

The schema of *Pacem in Terris* begins with order between persons and proceeds to consider, progressively, relations between individuals and the public authorities, relations between the states, and the relationship of persons and political communities within the world community. The encyclical concludes by presenting pastoral exhortations.

On a particular note, *Pacem in Terris*, in acknowledging the increasingly globalized character of the modern world, concludes that national governments are inadequate for protecting the common good globally.

> We are thus driven to the conclusion that the shape and structure of political life in the modern world, and the influence exercised by public authority in all the nations of the world are unequal to the task of promoting the common good of all peoples. (PT 135)

Accordingly, international organizations such as the United Nations are affirmed. While limitations are forthrightly acknowledged, the apostolic encyclical endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a step in the right direction (PT 142–145), and Christians are encouraged to participate actively in public life, cooperating with others in the pursuit of the common good and peace for the whole human race.

In summary, peace on earth is best pursued in the modern world through a society of persons where the primacy of conscience is prized and protected, and where lawful civil government exists to promote the attainment of the common good by all.

3. Modern Catholic Perspectives on Human Dignity and Religious Freedom

While John XXIII passed away less than two months after issuing the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, the Second Vatican Council which he had convoked would continue to develop the Church's stance in the

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modern world. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World declared:

> Peace is more than the absence of war: it cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces nor does it arise out of despotic dominion, but it is appropriately called "the effect of righteousness" (Is. 32:17). It is the fruit of the right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for an ever more perfect reign of justice. But while the common good of humanity ultimately derives from the eternal law, it depends in the concrete upon circumstances which change with time; consequently, peace will never be achieved once and for all, but must be built up continually. Since, moreover, human nature is weak and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant effort to control the passions and unceasing vigilance by lawful authority. (GS 78)[11]

This approach to peace, human society, and civil order for the common good is articulated more specifically in the Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* (human dignity), which proceeds along the basic principles already articulated in *Pacem in Terris* but with further development regarding the protection of religious freedom and the reasons proffered for such duties by civil authorities.

The declaration's purpose is identified as follows: "In dealing with the question of liberty the sacred council intends to develop the teaching of recent popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and on the constitutional order of society" (DH 1). This explicit intention would also bear significant implications for the relationship between religion and society. The thesis is stated forthrightly:

> The right to religious freedom is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right. (DH 2)

[11] Paul VI, "Gaudium et Spes" (1965), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 1025–1115. Hereafter cited in-text as GS with paragraph numbers.

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This claim is rooted in a fundamental principle: "All are bound to follow their conscience faithfully in every sphere of activity so that they may come to God, who is their last end" (DH 3). In human society, the implication for civil authority and respect for conscience is clear:

> Therefore, the civil authority, to which is committed the care of the common good in the temporal order, must recognize and look with favor on the religious life of the citizens. But, if it presumes to control or restrict religious activity it must be judged to have exceeded the limits of its power. (DH 3)

More specifically:

> The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of the human person is an essential duty of every civil authority. The civil authority must therefore undertake effectively to safeguard the religious freedom of all the citizens by just legislation and other appropriate means. (DH 6)

Several developments merit attention. Firstly, religious freedom is claimed on both sacred and secular grounds.[12] For those informed by Christian faith, the theological foundation of the Church's right to freedom is to be found in the revelation of Jesus Christ. This principle is not accessible or subject to secular powers. For secular consideration, the political foundation of the Church's right to freedom is rooted in the dignity of the human person and the necessary freedom of life in society. This principle is attainable through reason which should be the legitimate realm of secular powers. This twin rationale—on the one hand rooted in divine revelation and on the other hand rooted in human dignity as accessible through reason—is utilized by the declaration in claiming religious freedom. While members of society may accept one rationale or the other, depending on their personal faith perspectives, acceptance of the claim would remain intact.

This argumentation also serves as a model for the Church's engagement with secular society in general. While a religion's values

[12] J. Murray, ed., *Religious Liberty: An End and a Beginning—the Declaration on Religious Freedom: An Ecumenical Discussion* (New York: Macmillan, 1966) analyzes accordingly the case for religious freedom as a human right and the case for religious freedom and Christian revelation in separate parts.

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and views may well be based on religious revelation which satisfies the faith of adherents, such grounds are not accessible to or subject to evaluation by secular authorities. While a religious community has the right to promote its own values and views freely in the larger society, the reasons they offer ought to be rooted in human dignity, the common good, and reason itself which are accessible and attractive to that society which may not accept that same agenda's faith-based grounds. Religious freedom, of course, admits to a religious community's right to evangelize and attract others to faith adherence, although that is a separate matter from organized religion's participation in politics.

Secondly, rights in a personalist society are accorded to the person who is obliged to follow individual conscience, even if conscience may err. Whereas classical political thought would have denied that error has any right to exist, modern personalist society affirms the person's right to exist.

> Therefore, the right to religious freedom is based not on subjective attitude but on the very nature of the individual person. For this reason, the right to such immunity [from external coercion] continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it. The exercise of this right cannot be interfered with as long as the just requirements of public order are observed. (DH 2)

In other words, error does not obviate rights; the Inquisition would be no more. Yet, of course, the important responsibility of forming consciences not only remains but is affirmed even more emphatically. Nevertheless, religious efforts to form the consciences of society members who do not share the same religious convictions are to be rooted accordingly in appeals to human dignity, the common good, and reason. Differences in religious beliefs need not be a reason for disquiet in the broader society; in fact, discourse among members with different religious beliefs may contribute peacefully to society's pursuit of the common good and respect for human dignity.

Thirdly, religious freedom is thus seen as a secular good, one to be protected, even promoted, by the state, regardless of the respective society's religious or secular persuasion. The Church in the modern world relinquishes traditional notions regarding a sacral function

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for government. In a personalist conception of society, the human person is seen as the foundation, goal, and primary actor in society. Accordingly, political doctrine embraces the juridical state in which government is constitutional and limited in function, protecting and promoting human rights and facilitating the performance of human duties.[13] Acceptance of the secular state implies agreement that government has no reason to protect or promote any religious truth. Rather, the primary function of the state is the protection of human rights and promotion of human dignity. Religion is a social good, not merely a matter of private conscience; thus, the state has an obligation to protect and promote religious freedom as a fundamental human right. "This is a secular function, since freedom in society—notably religious freedom—is a secular value."[14] Civil authorities, therefore, regardless of their respective religious affiliation or even lack of any religious beliefs, have an obligation to promote the common good and protect fundamental human dignity, including the right to religious freedom.

These modern Catholic principles were discerned and articulated in keeping with an increasingly secular and globalized world. Acceptance of religious pluralism and secularism is seen not only as unavoidable but also as an affirmation of the primacy of conscience. Rejection of a sacral function for the state facilitates a juridical conception of government that protects the rights of individuals and promotes the common good, including religious freedom and peace. The Church may therefore accept a diversity of forms of political organization that may reasonably serve these objectives.

While the theory seems reasonable, peace is to be found in practice. Modern Catholic principles of social order emerged mostly in the context of Western European societies that had legacies of strong Church-State coordination giving way to liberal democracies. Yet the "American experiment" of how to separate Church and State is not the

[13] J. Murray, "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II," *Theological Studies* 27:4 (1966): 586.

[14] Murray, "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II," 587.

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only pattern for organizing religion and society. Moreover, American experiences of difficulties in peacefully navigating Church-State relations counsel against other countries uncritically and automatically accepting such a model as the standard system. If such principles are to be genuinely universal, which is one of the root meanings of "Catholic," examples and studies should extend across the human world, including Asia.

4. Contemporary Taiwan Society, Religious Freedom, and Peace

Human society throughout history and in the present day has and continues to witness to a rich range of religious institutions as well as diverse systems of political organization, including various models for modern democracies. It is not surprising, therefore, that there may not be any single ideal arrangement for the relationship between religion and society or for public policy regarding religion. Particular historical and cultural influences, prevailing religious attitudes, and specific forms of political organization all affect the role of religion in society and the relationship between civil order and religious expression. In short, human rights, religious freedom, the common good, and peace need to be discussed in specific circumstances, even while acknowledging that what works in one set of circumstances may not be similarly suitable for a different place or period.

Taiwan[15] offers an East Asian example of where a relatively high level of religious freedom and peace prevails. Civil authorities do not intervene significantly in religious affairs. Various religious groups participate in society without substantial efforts to control civil authorities. Currently, there are no significant internal threats to social order and peace within Taiwan society.

[15] While Chinese-language sources have necessarily been part of this research into Taiwan society, citations are limited to English-language or English-translation sources for the convenience of international readers.

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Taiwan society is governed by the "Constitution of the Republic of China," first adopted on December 25, 1946, by the National Assembly which convened in Nanjing.[16] For present purposes, contemporary Taiwan society is understood as being subsequent to the lifting of martial law in 1987 and after the seventh revision of the constitution in 2005.[17]

Taiwan society is organized with a democratic form of government in service of the common good.

- "The Republic of China, founded on the Three Principles of the People, shall be a democratic republic of the people, to be governed by the people and for the people." (Article 1)
- Religious freedom is affirmed: "All citizens of the Republic of China, irrespective of sex, religion, race, class, or party affiliation, shall be equal before the law." (Article 7)
- "The people shall have freedom of religious belief." (Article 13)
- Religious expression and association are protected. (Articles 11 and 14)

[16] An English translation is available from the Office of the President: "Constitution of the Republic of China (Taiwan)" (June 10, 2005), available at https://english.president.gov.tw/Page/94 (accessed October 1, 2018). Hereafter cited in-text by article numbers.

[17] Of course, the restoration of constitutional rights and establishment of the democratic process did not occur immediately or entirely in 1987. Post-martial law parliamentary elections would occur only in 1991 and 1992, and transitional justice remains a social issue even up to the present. Nevertheless, for the present purposes of discussing constitutional law, society, and religion in Taiwan, it is sufficient to restrict the scope of discussion to post-martial law Taiwan, with the 2005 revisions to the Constitution possibly serving as a conservatively late point of demarcation insofar as one may be needed.

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- Government is juridical and limited in favor of the common good: "All other freedoms and rights of the people that are not detrimental to social order or public welfare shall be guaranteed under the Constitution." (Article 22)

As part of other basic human rights, such religious freedom in Taiwan has become substantial rather than merely nominal. When the Republic of China government took refuge in Taiwan, many Catholics and Protestants accompanied this migration after 1949. These Christian minorities maintained relatively good relations with political authorities in Taiwan, who welcomed missionary social assistance to the needy and found common ground in opposition to communism and religious oppression across the Taiwan Strait.[18] With Taiwan's end of martial law in 1987, pragmatic considerations continued to favor the practice of religious freedom in tandem with the development of democratic society—in marked contrast to competing communist developments that threatened Taiwan's autonomy.

Efforts still arise periodically to establish laws regulating religious organizations and activities. Sometimes such efforts are aroused by concern over cases of fraud involving individual religious leaders.[19] At times, some religious organizations even support such legislation. Nonetheless, Taiwan society has thus far not passed any legislation significantly regulating religion. The various religious groups and leaders do not agree on the need for such legislation. Political leaders are also generally reticent in pursuing such legislation as doing so could be interpreted as being authoritarian or opposed to religious freedom.

[18] A. Laliberté, "Irreconcilable Differences: Law, Religion, and Taiwan's Relationship with China," *Canopy Forum* (February 7, 2023), available at https://canopyforum.org/2023/02/07/irreconcilable-differences-law-religion-and-taiwans-relationship-with-China/.

[19] V. Chang, "When Fraud Wears Religious Cassocks," International Conference on the Social Sciences, International Academic Forum (Hawaii: 2017).

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In legal theory and actual practice, Taiwan exercises a separation between religion and state which may be characterized as mutual toleration.

> The Taiwanese government has embraced the principles of freedom of conscience and of separation between religion and state. By doing so, it has adopted the principle of twin toleration, meaning that the state refrains from intervening in religious affairs, while religious organizations refrain from unduly influencing the political process to defend their narrow institutional interests.[20]

This twin toleration does not preclude interaction between religious and civil spheres. Civil authorities welcome the charitable and social services provided by numerous religious groups, in some cases at considerable scale. Political candidates, regardless of party affiliation, are eager to visit temples and churches in hopes of procuring election support. And although appealing to Taiwan religious senses may help candidates, such efforts necessarily reach out simultaneously to a wide range of religions such that the influence of any single religious affiliation remains decidedly limited.

At this point, it is relevant to identify some of the salient characteristics of Taiwan society and religion. In terms of religions, Taiwan is a diverse society.[21] While 44% of the population identifies with folk religions, such affiliation is dispersed among many different temples and religious institutions which, for the most part, rarely act

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[20] A. Laliberté, "The Regulation of Religious Affairs in Taiwan: From State Control to *Laisser-faire*?," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38:2 (2009): 75.

[21] According to an independent study, religious affiliation in Taiwan in 2010 was 21.3% Buddhist, 5.5% Christian (including 1.4% Catholic), 44.2% Folk Religions, <1% Hindu, <1% Jewish, <1% Muslim, 16.2% Other Religions, and 12.7% unaffiliated (the study includes Taoism under "Folk Religions," and many Taiwanese may participate in Taoist, folk religions, and even Buddhist activities at different stages of life). See Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050," Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project (April 2, 2015), available at https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/ (accessed October 31, 2018).

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as a cohesive unified body in political or other activities. Buddhism, the second-largest affiliation with 21% of the population, also includes various sects and a range of commitments to participation and support by religionists. Christians collectively constitute little more than 5% of the populace. The religious diversity of Taiwan ensures that it is practically impossible for any single religion to exercise effective control over government. Mutual respect or social tolerance, at the very least, may be the most pragmatic method for protecting the existence and interests of the respective religious bodies. Religious freedom and separation of religion and state suit this religious context relatively well.

Taiwan is influenced by a Chinese cultural heritage, although the political founding of the republic took place in opposition to the imperial legacy of China. While Japanese colonialism also played a historical role in Taiwan social organization and development, the official Japanese state worship of Shinto never extended beyond the close of that colonial period. The influence of the People's Republic of China, which continues to assert sovereignty over Taiwan with the potential for exercising military force at some future time to enforce said claim, is complicated and goes beyond the scope of this present study. Nonetheless, Taiwan society by and large, at least in contradistinction, is attracted to religious freedom.

Conclusions

Implications for the Church in Taiwan

Although the scope of this study does not permit a comprehensive survey of the Catholic Church and its mission in Taiwan, the preceding analysis of religious freedom and peace does offer some implications for the life and mission of the Catholic Church in the republic.

1) *Civic Participation.* Although no political system *in terris* may ever fully or perfectly fulfill all the aspirations of the Christian faith, the Church is encouraged to participate actively in public life for the pursuit of the common good and peace for the whole human race. In

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Taiwan, Catholicism encounters a society that ranks highly in terms of religious freedom[22] and the upholding of human rights.[23] Insofar as this civic society serves as a foundation for further promoting respect for human dignity, the Church is counseled to engage actively whether at the level of Taiwan civic society or through participation in international forums. Catholic efforts to engage Taiwan in international organizations whenever possible can have positive contributions especially in light of the observation in *Pacem in Terris* that national governments are inadequate for protecting and promoting the common good of all peoples. Efforts for peace in the world would benefit from more successful examples of free societies that uphold respect for the rule of law and the dignity of human life.

2) *Public Advocacy*. Taiwan's democratic society allows for the participation of religious organizations, and the Catholic bishops' conference in Taiwan has expressed interest in advocating for social policy. Disappointingly, though, the Church has met with limited success thus far in political processes.

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[22] See, e.g., S. Majumdar & V. Villa, "Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels," Pew Research Center (September 30, 2021) and Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2021: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). The recognition of the reliability of such indices, especially regarding detailed rankings, is, of course, subject to review. Some indices, moreover, such as those related to United Nations agencies, exclude consideration of Taiwan for political reasons. Nevertheless, practically all scholarly studies affirm a relatively high level of religious freedom in Taiwan.

[23] See, e.g., I. Vásquez, F. McMahon, R. Murphy, & G. Schneider, *The Human Freedom Index 2021: A Global Measurement of Personal, Civil, and Economic Freedom* (Washington, DC & Vancouver, BC: Cato Institute & Fraser Institute, 2021). The recognition of the reliability of such indices, especially regarding detailed rankings, is, of course, subject to review. Some indices, moreover, such as those related to United Nations agencies, exclude consideration of Taiwan for political reasons. Nevertheless, practically all scholarly studies affirm a relatively high level of respect for human rights in Taiwan.

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In recent years, Catholics cooperating with other religious and civic groups have advocated against abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender equity education with some symbolic success in general referenda[24] but subsequent setbacks in the substantive legislative arena.[25] As one commentator observed, "Religion-based conservatives were mostly unsuccessful in realizing their main agenda in spite of their activism [for] over a decade, as Taiwan's government and society gradually evolved in a more tolerant and inclusive direction."[26] At the same time,

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[24] In 2018, the following Proposals were adopted by referendum and approved by the Central Election Commission in Taiwan:

- No. 10: "Do you agree that marriage defined in the Civil Code should be restricted to the union between a man and a woman?";
- No. 11: "Do you agree that the Ministry of Education and schools (elementary and junior high schools) should not implement the gender equality education defined by the Enforcement Rules for Gender Equity Education Act [for] students under primary and junior high school education?"; and
- No. 12: "Do you agree to implement the protection of same-sex couples' rights of permanent cohabitation by ways other than amending the marriage definition in the Civil Code?"

The following Proposals, on the other hand, were rejected by referendum:

- No. 14: "Do you agree to implement the protection of same-sex marital rights with the marriage definition in the Civil Code?"; and
- No. 15: "Do you agree that the 'Gender Equality Education Act' should stipulate the implementation of gender equality education in every stage of primary and junior high school education, including relationship education, sex education and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity education?"

See Central Election Commission, "Referendums Profile," available at https://www.cec.gov.tw/english/cms/rProfile (accessed February 2, 2022).

[25] J. Lu, "Shifting Public Opinion in Different Cultural Contexts: Marriage Equality in Taiwan," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 21 (2020): 213.

[26] M. Ho, "The Religion-Based Conservative Countermovement in Taiwan: Origin, Tactics and Impacts," in D. Chiavacci, S. Grano, & J. Obinger, eds., *Civil*

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public attitudes are simultaneously committed to various underlying values which may come into conflict when forming policy.[27] Taiwan society's attitudes toward moral issues in particular reflect both a cultural conservatism, favoring traditional Confucian family values, and a liberal democratic social tolerance, accepting freedom of personal choice. This complexity characterizes not only different sectors within society but also conflicting attitudes within the same sectors and even at the individual level of mixed feelings. Amidst such tensions, the potential results for such public moral policy debates are, at the very least, far from foregone conclusions.

The key to success in public advocacy regarding moral issues may well be found in the twin rationale invoked by Vatican II. While Catholic moral values can—and should—be formed by divine revelation and faith, advocacy in political society should appeal nevertheless to human dignity, the common good, and reasons that are accessible and attractive to a diverse society. The small minority of Catholics may find some common ground and alliance for more effective public advocacy in other religions and in the local culture. In view of the complexity of such social cooperation as well as the intricacies of political processes, the Catholic Church can also benefit from the establishment of a social policy center, including leadership by educated laity, to advocate more effectively on an ongoing basis.

3) *Evangelization*. Any mention of religious freedom in Taiwan would be remiss without some consideration of evangelization, even though that is not the primary focus of this exposition. Taiwan allows great latitude for evangelization by religious groups.

After rapid growth in membership through the 1950s and 1960s,[28] the Catholic Church in Taiwan has struggled to grow in subsequent

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Society and the State in Democratic East Asia: Between Entanglement and Contention in Post High Growth (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 151.

[27] S. Jou & B. Hebenton, "Support for the Death Penalty in Taiwan?: A Study of Value Conflict and Ambivalence," *Asian Journal of Criminology* 15 (2020): 163–183.

[28] Taiwan's small Catholic Church with about 10,000 lay faithful in 1948 grew to over 30,000 by 1954, and over 300,000 in 1969. M. Chang, "The Internal

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decades. That rapid growth had been spurred by a significant influx of ecclesiastical personnel and resources fleeing mainland China. Evangelization gains have slowed alongside an acceleration in economic and social development as well as the attainment of stability and security in a democratic society. While the Catholic Church in Taiwan continues to be recognized for its contributions to social welfare and education, announcing the Gospel in ways that are attractive in modern technological society remains a challenge.

Still, the freedom and social space to evangelize remain as invitation and encouragement for the Catholic Church in Taiwan. In response to divine mission, in the belief that communities of faith contribute to the common good, and in recognition that in far too many lands such religious freedom is far too scarce, the Church is encouraged to enhance and increase evangelization efforts—for the fulfillment of the divine mandate, for the contribution to the common good and human dignity, and also in service of peoples throughout the world.

Issues for Further Reflection

The social structures and values that prevail in other countries obviously differ from those in the contemporary Taiwan context. The inculturation of the Gospel and establishment of local churches necessarily take place in diverse local contexts, each with its own respective social analysis, theological reflection, and consequent implications for apostolic planning. The Catholic Church is called in each respective place and period to read the signs of the times and discern the workings of the Holy Spirit. Conscious of diverse Asian contextual realities, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences recognized that

> the Catholic Church, with its international links, has many opportunities to bring about genuine peace and justice. As the Asian Churches are now detaching themselves from their colonial past, they can contribute to a

Development of the Taiwan Catholic Church: 1950s–1960s," in F. So, B. Leung, & E. Mylod, eds., *The Catholic Church in Taiwan: Problems and Prospects* (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 27–55.

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> universal solidarity, even while being fully inculturated and immersed in the life of their respective nations. They can contribute ideas and experiences which have been tried out in other countries and adapt them to local needs.[29]

The present series of "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures"[30] as well as other exchanges among Asian theological centers offer such an opportunity to learn from what has been tried out in other countries and what may perhaps be adapted to local needs. Moreover, and even more importantly, surveying the experiences of other countries may stimulate more critical and creative reflection on the Church's mission for peace in each of the various local contexts. The Church's prophetic calling counsels against presuming too quickly that there always has been, always is, and always will be only one way of organizing social life in the world. Human flourishing and peace benefit from a deeper appreciation of the dignity and creativity of human life in which the pursuit of the common good depends upon concrete circumstances which change with time. *Pacem in Terris* exhorts everyone to

> take an active part in public life, and to work together for the benefit of the whole human race, as well as for their own political communities. It is vitally necessary for them to endeavor, in the light of Christian faith, and with love as their guide, to ensure that every institution, whether economic, social, cultural or political, be such as not to obstruct but rather to facilitate human self-betterment, both in the natural and in the supernatural order. (PT 146)

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[29] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Theological Advisory Commission, "Asian Theological Perspectives on Church and Politics," *FABC Papers* 63 (1992): no. 4.5.7.

[30] "Conversations on Asian Theologies and Cultures" is a theologico-cultural online "coffee or tea room" where theology students, alumni, and faculty can converse with each other periodically. This virtual space features students, alumni, or faculty sharing their theological reflections on select aspects of their various Asian cultures in the Jesuit Conference of South Asia and the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

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Insofar as Christ's faithful enjoy freedom to participate actively in public life, such ongoing efforts, even despite momentary frustrations and difficulties, are in service of the Kingdom of God and peace on earth.

In place of a univocal final conclusion, the following questions are offered for reflection. Hopefully they will elicit appropriate conclusions that may be offered in different contexts.

1. What is the situation of religious freedom in your country? What is the relationship between Church and State?
2. What are the corresponding implications for the Church and its mission in your country?
3. How does your local church invoke the twin rationale of sacred and secular reasons for pursuing Catholic objectives in relations with the State?
4. Especially if you are in a context where religion is a primary cause of violence and division, what can the Catholic Church do to promote peace and protect human dignity?
5. While this presentation proceeded from universal principles and Catholic perspectives which were then illumined by the experience of contemporary Taiwan society, are there any distinctively Asian elements (from Taiwan or elsewhere) that could enrich Catholic thought on, and the practice of, religious freedom, dialogue, and peace?

About the Author. **Jeffrey G. L. Chang, S.J.,** a native of Hawaii, obtained his Licentiate in Biblical Theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, and Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology at the Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, Taiwan, where he currently serves as President and Dean, as well as director of the graduate school, after having taught previously at Loyola School of Theology, Philippines.

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