

## ■ ABSTRACTS

### **Johanna Rahner**, The Second Vatican Council. Interpretation and Meaning – an Introduction

Defining and interpreting Vatican II today is very often a result of very differing illusions and projections, but also of opportunities and disappointed expectations. Often, it is also the experience of a lost identity that influences the memory, thus making it so difficult to comprehend, interpret and carry on the heritage of the Council in an appropriate way. In the wake of the Council, two paradigmatic options were developed and these still dominate the ways of interpretation even up to the present day.

### **Katarzyna Stokłosa**, The Second Vatican Council, Poland and German-Polish Relations

Because of the regime's underlying hostile attitude towards religion, the approach to the Second Vatican Council in Poland, and in the entire Eastern Bloc, was completely different to that in western countries. This article analyses the »dual« reception of this momentous event in Poland. This reception included, on the one hand, the official state response, which was deliberately a non-response to the Catholic reform movement, yet at the same time effectively becoming the opposite – a form of marginalisation. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and sections of the Polish Catholic community most certainly did respond to the impulses from the Vatican. This response was, however, not so much oriented towards the church, but reflected more the social environment among the well-educated and intellectuals – represented politically in the *Znak*-association, which was clearly critical of the regime.

### **Gerhard Besier**, The impact of the Decree on Ecumenism on church relations in Germany

In contrast to the endeavours undertaken by the Protestant and Orthodox Churches, reaching back into the nineteenth century, to overcome the manifold divisions between Christian churches, corresponding efforts on the part of the Roman Catholic Church really only began with the pontificate of Pope John XXIII (1958–1963). The Second Vatican Council, and the Decree on Ecumenism in particular, were aimed at achieving the restoration of church unity.

The reality is that the Second Vatican Council did not change the Roman Catholic Church alone, but also affected its relationship to the other churches and the Christian community as a whole. It emphasised the fact that the unity of the Church, founded by Christ himself, is not lost, and that baptised Christians, who were born into their Christian community, are incorporated into the body of Christ and are, ultimately, children of the Roman Catholic Church. In this way, a »baptismal ecumenism« exists, however the fullness of unity is certainly lacking. In order to overcome the divisions and to incorporate the separated groups into the Catholic ecumenical movement, the Roman Church

is prepared to recognise »the genuine Christianity of the separated groups«, to begin a »dialogue,« and to do these things with »wisdom and patience.« Nonetheless, all serious attempts to reconcile the parties over the past 50 years have come to nothing, as the Roman Catholic Church has consistently maintained an expectation that the Protestant Churches would make a binding commitment to teachings that directly correspond to the current form of Roman Catholic doctrine. As a result of this insistence, the Protestant Churches drew the direct conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of ecumenism was not compatible with the assumptions and the goals of the ecumenical movement within the Protestant Churches. For Protestants, the ecumenical objective implicit in the theological concept of the Church community was of prime importance, as had been decided in the *Leuenberg Agreement* in 1973. Furthermore, there has been a clear shift in the focus of attention in the meantime. The challenge of overcoming the rift within Christianity is no longer considered to be the primary concern. Instead, the issue of how the proclamation of the gospel around the world can credibly be made possible under these circumstances is far more pressing.

A further current-day problem lies in the relationship between the theological unity debates and the sociological-cultural sensitivities of the empirical church. Both theologians and churchmen are being confronted by an increasing lack of understanding within congregations when they seek to articulate the essence of the divisions. This overriding lack of theological education, on the one hand, together with the clear and evident erosion of the church environment, on the other hand, is causing the scandal regarding the divisions within the Church to appear to be mere phantom pains. Moreover, the question is ultimately being asked within tradition-conscious church circles as to whether the reforms instigated by the Second Vatican Council have, realistically, actually been a key contributory factor in the process of secularisation.

### **Mikko Ketola, The Reception of Vatican II in Finland 1959–1967**

This article traces the influence of the Second Vatican Council on relations between churches in Finland. This involved a re-positioning of the majority Lutheran Church in relation to Catholicism, which had traditionally been seen as hostile and not belonging to the ecumenical movement. Generally, the Catholic Church's influence on Finnish society was viewed with suspicion. Seppo A. Teinonen, a Lutheran theologian and ecumenist who was also a participant in the Council assumed a leading role in the mediation and conveyance of Council resolutions. Ketola presents Teinonen's work and role in detail in this contribution.

### **Stanislaw Krajewski, The Reception of Nostra Aetate and Christian Jewish Relations in Poland**

The author examines the question of when and under what circumstances the Conciliar Declaration actually became tangible in Poland. The Declaration was intended to lead to a redefining of relations between Judaism and the Roman Catholic Church. Krajewski sifts through the conflict-ridden developments affecting the Catholic Church in the era of Communist rule in Poland, and in the subsequent period of transformation. Concrete steps in and implementation of Jewish-Christian dialogue can really only be

established from the 1990s, in a time when the pontificate of John Paul II played a contributory role. This article also looks into current societal trends, which are once again straining relations between the churches and Judaism, and posing new challenges on the implementation of dialogue between the parties.

**Hans Hermann Henrix, The significance of the Conciliar Declaration »Nostra Aetate« for relations between the Catholic Church and Judaism in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine**

The 50 year anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the attitude of the Church towards non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate* (NA) dated 28 October, 1965, offered an opportunity for remembrance and examination regarding the Christian-Jewish relationship in Europe. What insight comes then from a look at the East Slavic countries that had previously been a part of the Soviet Union: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine? Reception of the NA was markedly delayed in these countries. Their churches »missed« the Council; to a large extent, they lacked a regular hierarchy and command structure at the time of the Council. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, they were faced with a (re)building of all church structures. It would be years before they were ready to appreciate the reality of the Council and its Declaration NA, and years before the relationship with the Jewish community could be examined. NA was not available in the form of official translations until relatively late in this period: 1996 in Ukrainian translation, 1998 in Russian, and 2009 in Belarusian translation. In conjunction with this new accessibility of NA came an institutional anchoring of efforts with regards to its reception, as well as dealing with the Christian-Jewish relationship. In summary, it can be said that the delayed reception of NA nevertheless created great potential in the three countries, offering the Christian-Jewish relationship unique perspectives into the future.

**Robert P. Ericksen, Jews and »God the Father« after Auschwitz. American Responses to Nostra Aetate**

This article concentrates on the implications in the USA for the relationship between Jews and Christians as a result of the reception of the Council declaration »Nostra Aetate«. In the process, the significance of the Shoah for the dramatic changes and repositioning of the Roman Catholic Church's traditional teachings about Judaism is highlighted. In addition, the author presents a thorough analysis of the text of the Declaration, and enquires into the most sustainable and most influential theological themes. In conclusion, he presents the most significant reactions from the American episcopate, and also explores the institutional application and implementation of the Council's requirements in various committees for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

**Tobias Weger, People's altars and newly built churches – Examples from German and Polish Catholicism**

The central orientation of newly-built churches since the Second Vatican Council encouraged the creation of a »liturgical space« in numerous modern places of worship.

Particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany, liturgical reform could be realized in a short period. In Poland, the Catholic Church competed with the State until 1989 in a struggle which was seen as a fight for national enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

A historical investigation studying this phenomenon in depth, seeking biographical testimonies in view of the acceptance of the reforms, would require an exploration of the »longue durée«. It would have to take liturgical reforms into consideration and the evolution of ecclesiastic architecture prior to Vatican II. Several churches already had a »people's altar« before the Second Vatican Council. From the point of view of everyday history, there is no doubt that Vatican II figures as a »turning point« of liturgical practices and the outer frame created for them.<sup>2</sup>

### **Tomáš Petráček, The First and Second Life of Father Josef Toufar (1902–1950) and Shifts in Interpretations of Modern Czech History. On one Unexpected Phenomenon in Contemporary Czech Society**

There is an interesting paradox whereby contemporary Czech society ranks among the most secularized in the world, and where anti-clericalism – the rejection of Christianity and, first and foremost, the Catholic church – rank as key aspects for the majority of society. Against this background, two completely contradictory trends consequently converged in one society. This involved an enhanced and extremely vocal anti-clericalism, on the one hand, and wide-spread interest in the life story of a Catholic priest martyred by the Communist Regime in 1950, on the other hand. This study is divided into three parts. The first involves a brief biography of Father Josef Toufar (1902–1950), and the so-called second life, the further development in interest in his fate to the present day. The core of the study subsequently answers the question as to the reason behind the intensity of this contemporary interest in his fate.

### **Stefanie Pfister, Messianic-Jewish movement in Germany**

Since the 1990s, the Messianic-Jewish movement has gained increasing traction in Germany. Stefanie Pfister's article offers a brief historical overview of Jewish Christendom, and then introduces the stages of the development for Messianic-Jewish communities, as well as a description of their current community life and religious worship. In addition, areas of conflict with reference to Jewish-Christian dialogue are outlined. In conclusion, the author analyses the conversion process with reference to three case studies. The analysis is presented from a sociology of religion perspective in the context of the period of political transformation following the end of the Soviet Union.

1 Cf. Edward Dolan, Post-War Poland and the Church, in: *The American Slavic and East European Review* 14/1 (1959), 84–92.

2 Cf. for the Dutch – in denominational respects primarily Catholic – province Brabant: J. van Roon, *Aardverschuivingen in een wereld van geloof en moraal*, in: *Het Vrije Volk. Democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 18<sup>th</sup> annual volume, Nr. 5437, 16/2/1963, 3.