

## THE ECUMENICAL DIMENSION OF *VATICAN II*

**Słowa kluczowe:** Sobór Watykański II, odnowa, ekumenizm

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**Schlüsselwörter:** Zweites Vatikanisches Konzil, Erneuerung, Ökumenismus

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council”. In these words, the Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* (no. 1) gave expression to the ecumenical intentions that had been in John XXIII’s mind from the moment that he announced that the Council would be held.

Christian unity had been the object of earlier councils, such as the Councils of Lyons and Florence with regard to the Eastern Church, although the results had proved ephemeral. In later centuries, the concern with unity was always alive in one way or another among Catholics.<sup>1</sup> However, the way that unity was to be achieved was understood to be simply through the return of the so-called “dissidents” to the Catholic Church from which they had separated.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of a form of union with Churches and communities that were separated from Rome was barely considered, since these were not recognized as having any status whatsoever.<sup>3</sup>

The theologian Martin Jugie summed up the basic position held by Catholic theology in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “All the dissident Churches [the author refers to the Orthodox Churches], insofar as they are religious bodies, are totally useless in the order of salvation; indeed, they should be regarded as grave obstacles

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<sup>1</sup> See G. Thils, *Historia doctrinal del movimiento ecuménico*, Rialp, Madrid 1965; Idem, *El Decreto de Ecumenismo*, Desclee, Bilbao 1968.

<sup>2</sup> The climate in the years before the Council can be perceived in R. Aubert, *La Santa Sede y la Unión de las Iglesias*, Estela, Barcelona 1959. See also A. Bea, *Pour l’unité des chrétiens. Problèmes et principes, obstacles et moyens, réalisations et perspectives*, Cerf, Paris 1963.

<sup>3</sup> One exception to this is the unofficial rapprochement in the *Malines Conversations* (1921–1927), aimed at moving towards a “corporate” union between the Catholic Church and the Anglican communion. As we know, these conversations broke down as a result of the mistrust that arose among both Catholics and Anglicans.

to salvation and instruments of death, in that they keep men away from the true ark of salvation. Although they may be beneficial for those among their faithful who are well disposed and have accepted their errors in good faith, and they may communicate the divine life to them, this happens *per accidens*, that is, insofar as, through the dispositions of divine providence or by the positive will of the true Church, they are sometimes able to act as a mere instrument or channel to provide spiritual gifts. For in themselves (*ex se*) they lack all spiritual grace to convey to souls; and all that they have preserved from the treasures of the Redemption proceeds from the true Church, and belongs to Her by right".<sup>4</sup>

This author's reasoning is quite clear: individual salvation is, of course, possible in the Churches and communities that are separated from Rome; but this happens *per accidens*, and in reality, *despite* them, because they themselves (*ex se*) lack spiritual efficacy.

In short, the Catholic Church, settled in the peaceful possession of the truth, hardly feels the need to respond to the possible motivations and legitimate expectations of separated Christians. These were mainly considered in terms of their errors, which had to be refuted. Faced with divisions among Christians, the proper attitude was to work and pray for the return of the separated brethren so that they, individually or in groups, would be moved by divine grace to take stock of their situation, and return to the fold that they had left.

This concept of unity, often known as "unionism", was an idea that was held in good will. However, in the context of progress towards visible unity, its limitations soon became apparent. With the underlying assumptions mentioned above, it would be difficult to come closer to other Christian communities and Churches. Moreover, it is very important to note that the Catholic theology that was most deeply involved in the ecumenical movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought out the need to honour the whole truth about separated Christians, not just one part of this.<sup>5</sup> This meant that two major issues needed to be addressed.

## I

First, it was necessary to define the position of separated Christians in the Church, and the theological value of their Churches and communities, an issue which earlier theologians had pronounced upon in an entirely negative spirit, as we

<sup>4</sup> M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium*, Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1926, vol. I, 39. A good account of the theological approaches prior to the Council can be found in P.L. Carle, *L'oecuménisme de Vatican I à Vatican II: ou le passage des critères subjectifs (ignorantia invincibilis) aux critères objectifs (semina aut vestigia ecclesiae) d'appartenance imparfaite à l'Église*, in „Divinitas” 21 (1977) 133–190; 22 (1978) 5–40.

<sup>5</sup> One particularly strong voice was that of Y. Congar, *Chrétiens désunis: principes d'un oecuménisme catholique*, Cerf, Paris 1937. Journals such as *Irénikon*, *Istina*, *Catholica*, and the weeks of prayer for Christian unity also drew the attention of the Church towards ecumenical issues (P. Coutourier), as did other initiatives undertaken by individuals or groups. Moreover, we should not forget the experiences of fraternity and mutual understanding that had arisen between Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox during the wars of the 20th century, not to mention periods of exile, etc.

have seen. The Council offered a more positive evaluation of the situation, without renouncing the Catholic Church's self-understanding that the One Church of Christ subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church (LG 8).<sup>6</sup> This point is generally well known, and here it suffices merely to mention it briefly.

The Council tackled the issue of their relationship with the Church in terms of their degrees of sacramental communion from baptism onwards.<sup>7</sup> *Lumen Gentium* stated that "The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter" (no. 15). This is so, according to the Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, because "all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church" (no. 3). Baptism "therefore establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it" (UR, 21), so that "For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect" (UR, 3). Thus there is real communion among all the baptized, but this is not a full communion, since its degree or intensity is greater or lesser according to the condition of the Church or Community to whom the person belongs.

In fact, regarding the theological nature of the Christian Churches or Communities, the Council stated that "some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church" (UR 3). Elsewhere the Council listed some of these *elementa Ecclesiae* or goods of the Church (cf. LG 15). It concluded: "It follows that the separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church" (UR 3).

It should be noted that the Council, in saying that the salvific character derives from the fullness of grace and truth which was entrusted to the Catholic Church, still substantially maintains the Catholic theological thesis outlined at the beginning of this paper. In this view, the saving efficacy of the separated Churches and communities does not derive from these entities themselves, but from "everything that is preserved from the treasures of the Redemption", which "derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church", which the Council sums up in the formula *elementa Ecclesiae*. But the Council also completes this thesis, without contradicting it: if the effective means of salvation deriving from the Catholic Church reaches separated Christians by virtue of "everything that is preserved" by

<sup>6</sup> This is not the place to discuss the formula *subsistit in*; see J.R. Villar, *La Iglesia de Cristo subsistit in la Iglesia Católica (Lumen Gentium, n. 8)*, in „Teocomunicação” 42 (2012) 224–241. See: Cong. for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Respuestas a algunas preguntas acerca de ciertos aspectos de la doctrina sobre la Iglesia* (29–VI–2007).

<sup>7</sup> See: P. Rodríguez, *Ordenación e incorporación a la Iglesia*, in Idem, *Iglesia y Ecumenismo*, Rialp, Madrid 1979.

the community to which they belong, it would not seem to be accurate to say that these communities “lack all spiritual grace”. Of course, the separated elements lack spiritual strength; but insofar as these Churches and Communities conserve elements and goods that are proper to Catholic sacramental life, “the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation”. In these terms, the Council explains the basic thesis reported above with greater clarity, and in Jugie’s words, these communities: “are in some cases acknowledged as instruments or channels to convey spiritual gifts”.

The Council asserted all of this without detracting from the belief in the united nature of the Church, since the text recalls that “it is only through Christ’s Catholic Church, which is ‘the all-embracing means of salvation’, that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God” (UR 3).

## II

In addition to this first issue, there was a second one which the Council addressed concerning the way of promoting visible unity between the Churches. The attitude of simply waiting for the Churches that are separated to return to the fold could not be maintained. The Catholic Church also ought to take steps to seek them out. To embark on this “approach” required internal renewal within the Catholic family itself. This issue is directly related to our subject. The ecumenical dimension of the Second Vatican Council is not only to be found in the principles mentioned above on the theological *status* of separated Christians and their Churches and Communities, even though these are important. The renewal of the Catholic Church undertaken by the Council as a pre-requisite for moving towards unity also has an ecumenical dimension. We do not mean that this renewal was only oriented towards promoting Christian unity. There were also other serious reasons why this was necessary. But the ecumenical motivation undoubtedly had a major impact on Vatican II.<sup>8</sup>

From this ecumenical perspective, the conciliar revolution was inspired by a formal principle that we could call the “principle of Catholicity”. Let us recall that the

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<sup>8</sup> The *annotatio* of 24 April 1965, from the last phase of the Council, which Paul VI sent to Cardinal Bea, who was then responsible for the Secretariat for Christian Unity, on a certain state of mind among some Fathers of the Council, is significant in this context (the note was entitled: “On the progress of the Council – Things people say”). In this note, the Pope says: “Some people say the Council is being dominated excessively by the presence of the ‘separated brethren’ and by their mentality. The Council has, in their view, had its psychological ‘freedom’ curtailed. It seems more important to please our separated brothers than to attend to the coherence of the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Councils of Trent and Vatican I do not seem to be exercising enough on the Council’s doctrinal orientation. The authority of the magisterium of the Church is being ignored, in favour of ‘progressive’ opinions, which are often protestant or have conciliatory or laicizing tendencies” (*AS*, t. V, *Processus verbales*, pars III, 209). We do not know to what extent Paul VI shared this opinion, although the fact that he sent this to Cardinal Bea shows that at least he thought it was important. It is also reasonable to suppose that this concern underlay his personal interventions

theology of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century reached a deeper understanding of the Church's "Catholic" nature. Catholicity is the capacity to take in everything that is genuinely human in Christ. Catholicity is the Church's capacity to integrate in its life, praxis and doctrine all the genuinely evangelical values that are present in the separated Christian communities, including those that in their day were the cause of doctrinal division because they were expressed unilaterally and in a polemical manner, and where the parties involved cannot be exonerated of guilt.

This capacity to integrate all that is truly Christian within itself has nothing to do with giving up aspects of doctrine or making mere tactical approaches to other Christians. Rather, it meant that the Catholic Church turned its attention to itself to carry out a process of renewal that had to consist, according to the Decree on Ecumenism, in "an increase of fidelity to her own calling" (no. 6). Deeper understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Church would make it possible to overcome Catholic suspicions concerning any attempt at internal reform. The Council understood that the People of God progress as pilgrims towards the fullness of God's promises, and that the Church still does not manifest the entire perfection of her mystery. As the Church advances through history, she is affected by weakness and sin: the Church "at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal" (LG no. 8).

The Catholic family's faithfulness to its vocation required a revitalization of certain elements of Christian life that were somewhat anchored in the past; it meant opening up to a legitimate diversity of ritual, disciplinary and spiritual traditions. In concrete, renewal meant that if, within the Catholic Church, "in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated – to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself – these can and should be set right at the opportune moment. Church renewal has therefore notable ecumenical importance" (UR no. 6).

The route map towards Christian unity required that the Catholic Church, without giving up its own ecclesiological awareness, should favour the *unitatis redintegratio* of Christians through internal renewal. For this reason, many issues handled by the Council touching on the life of the Catholic Church had ecumenical consequences: "Already in various spheres of the Church's life, this renewal is taking place. The Biblical and liturgical movements, the preaching of the word of God and catechetics, the apostolate of the laity, new forms of religious life and the spirituality of married life, and the Church's social teaching and activity – all these should be considered as pledges and signs of the future progress of ecumenism" (UR 6).

Careful readers can identify how these and other themes recur in the conciliar texts. Let us mention just a few of these in the form of a simple list, which is in no sense intended to be comprehensive. For example, the subject of Revelation, Scripture and Tradition; or the role of the Word of God, as shown in *Dei Verbum* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Liturgy, which situated the "table of the Word" next

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in the writing of the Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. Whatever the case, the note shows the Council's "ecumenical" dimension, though considered from the point of view of caution and presuming the existence of risks that, in our view, were fortunately not to be confirmed.

to the eucharistic table (nn. 33, 35, 48, 51), and recognized the presence of Christ in His proclaimed Word, and in the community which praises and prays to God (SC 7). The liturgical reform promoted by the Council also had ecumenical intentions. Let us consider, for example, the emphasis placed on the relationship between faith and the sacraments. In the area of ecclesiology, we must stress the importance of the notion of the People of God, which placed baptismal ontology as the common ground which comes before all the differences resulting from ministry and charismas. The universal calling to sanctity and the mission of all the baptized prevent us from thinking in categories of superiority and inferiority. The responsibility of laypeople in the Church and in the world. The priesthood of all believers, for whose service the ministerial priesthood exists. The hierarchical ministry understood in the heart of the People of God. The infallibility of the magisterium as a manifestation of the infallibility of the Church and the meaning of the faith of the flock who are united with their shepherds. The ministry of Peter's successor within and at the head of the college of his successors. The institutions promoted by the Council, such as the Synod of Bishops and the Bishops' Conferences, as well as the renewal of the episcopal ministry. We should also mention the importance given by the Council to the idea of dialogue, be it between Catholics and non-Catholics, Christians and non-Christians, or believers and non-believers, in a climate of freedom. We know that *Dignitatis humanae* was originally a chapter from the decree on Ecumenism, as the subject of religious freedom was a convincing proof of the Catholic Church's credibility in the minds of other Christians.

Rediscovering these and other elements in practice meant expressing Catholicity more fully. The importance of this for ecumenism could be seen above all in the way the Council promoted the idea of communion, rooted in the eucharistic mystery, as explained in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC nn. 41 – 42) and in *Lumen gentium* (n. 26). Here we find a major statement on the Orthodox Churches, where the Decree on Ecumenism says that “through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in each of these churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature” (UR 15). An ecclesiology of communion also bears witness to the unity and diversity within the People of God (cf. LG 13). Unity is not the same as uniformity, but is represented by communion within the various local Churches, represented by their bishops who provide “splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church” (LG 23). The Council mentions the Patriarchal Churches which “preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage” (LG 23). The Bishop of Rome “presides over the whole assembly of charity and protects legitimate differences, while at the same time assuring that such differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute toward it” (LG 13). “In virtue of this catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase” (LG 13). The Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* was careful to preserve the heritage of the oriental Church. The Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* stated clearly that: “All this heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in its various traditions, this holy synod declares to belong to the full

catholic and apostolic character of the Church” (n. 17). This was necessary because, as the Decree stated, “The perfect observance of this traditional principle not always indeed carried out in practice, is one of the essential prerequisites for any restoration of unity” (n. 16).

### III

The principle of Catholicity found another important new application in the area of doctrine and theology. From the start of the Council, John XXIII indicated the importance of distinguishing between the deposit of faith and the way in which it is formulated.<sup>9</sup> This distinction was used in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (n. 62), and in various parts of the Decree on Ecumenism (nn. 6, 14, 17). Point no. 17 of the Decree applies it in relation to the theology of the Eastern Churches: “What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine. In the study of revelation East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God’s truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting”.

This integrative Catholicity, in which the different perspectives on the Christian mystery complement each other, should be borne in mind in theological reflection. On occasions, when contemplating different views concerning the Christian mystery, these different perspectives should be borne in mind in the theological discussions. It is sometimes the case that the language, categories and concepts found in each perspective are at variance when it comes to giving expression to our common beliefs. Certain aspects need to be emphasized more, but this does not mean that other, equally genuine aspects have to be excluded. This diversity may give rise to mistakes when it comes to identifying the real reasons underlying the separations that exist. Discernment is needed. For this reason, the Council warns that “the way and method in which the Catholic faith is expressed should never become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren” (UR 11). Naturally the Council does not underestimate the importance of doctrinal differences, which certainly do exist, and decries “false Irenicism” which dilutes such differences to the point at which they seem to disappear altogether (cf. UR 11). But it tells theologians that “when comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith” (UR 11).

It is well known that this statement received a considerable amount of publicity in the ecumenical media.<sup>10</sup> The protestant exegete Oscar Cullmann regarded this paragraph as being “more revolutionary, not only than the *schema de Oecumenismo*,

<sup>9</sup> Juan XXIII, *Alloc. in Concilii Vaticani II inauguratione*, AAS 54 (1962), 792.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. Izquierdo, *La „jerarquía de verdades”: su recepción n el ecumenismo y en la teología*, in „Scripta Theologica” 44 (2012) 433–461.

but also than the schemas of the entire Council itself".<sup>11</sup> In our view, this judgement overstates the case. It would be revolutionary if the Council were stating the existence of fundamental and non-fundamental articles, of some truths that are essential and of primordial importance, and others that are secondary and in some sense accidental. But the Council does not say this, and the formula "hierarchy of truths" has nothing to do with the distinctions that were the cause of disputes between protestant and Catholic theologians in centuries gone by.

Obviously, the Council does not say that some truths are more true than others. In the conciliar text, the word "hierarchy" is placed in inverted commas to indicate that it is not being used in its literal sense of higher or lower rank. As revealed truths are all equally true, there is little sense in talking about hierarchy or gradability in the area of revealed truth. In the period that followed the Council, in the dialogues held within the Ecumenical Council of Churches, it was defined that, for example, "When one fully responds to God's self-evaluation in faith, one accepts that revelation as a whole. There is no picking and choosing of what God has revealed, because there is no picking or choosing of what revelation is – our salvation. Hence, there are no degrees in the obligation to believe all that God has revealed".<sup>12</sup>

Having said this, we must acknowledge that the word „hierarchy” has given rise to unnecessary confusion. In particular, it has distracted people's attention away from the main topic of this text, which is order, *ordo*, which the Council accords the first position: *ordinem seu "hierarchiam" veritatum*. It is the "order of truths" which Vatican II reminds Catholic theologians about, building on the idea of the *nexus mysteriorum* discussed by Vatican I in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* in 1870. The word "hierarchy" is, in fact, a later explanation of the word "order", although we should ask whether using a term in a sense that is not its literal one in any rigorous sense is really useful to shed light on the concept that one is trying to explain. In my opinion, it would be useful now to go back to the idea of "order": there is an "order of truths", that is, some truths are linked to other central truths which illuminate them.<sup>13</sup> The specific aspects of revealed truth are intelligible in the internal articulation of the Christian mystery as a whole. For example, Marian dogmas such as the Immaculate Conception of Mary and her Assumption into heaven are linked to her status as Mother of God, and to the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son. There is nothing revolutionary about this. St Thomas Aquinas distinguished between two categories as far as the truths of faith were concerned: the truths of faith that are true *directe, per se* by virtue of their contents, in concrete, the mystery of God and the Incarnation; and the truths of faith *indirecte, in ordine ad alia*, which are linked to and depend on these fundamental mysteries.

This organic set of links within the Christian mystery which extends from its central truths proved extremely useful as a method for conducting the official dialogues in the decades following the Council. As we know, the programme followed

<sup>11</sup> *Comments on the Decree of Ecumenism*, in „Ecumenical Review” 17 (1965) 93–94.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Notion of "Hierarchy of Truths". An Ecumenical interpretation, "Faith and Order Paper"* n° 150, WCC Publications, Genève, 1990, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. C. Cardona, *La jerarquía de las verdades y el orden de lo real*, in „Scripta Theologica” 4 (1972) 123–144 zu gestrichen.



by ecumenical dialogues generally started from the central mysteries of the faith, in which the roots of different points of agreement or disagreement could usually be identified. These dialogues bore witness to our shared faith.<sup>14</sup> But now, the moment has come to face up to the differences.<sup>15</sup>

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As I have tried to show, the ecumenical dimension of Vatican II did not end with the specific statements made in its documents concerning the separated Christians and their Churches and communities. The entire Council and its task of renewal were intrinsically ecumenical in meaning, and this concern is still very much at the heart of the Church today.

### EKUMENICZNY WYMIAR *VATICANUM II*

#### STRESZCZENIE

Sobór Watykański II określił teologiczny status podzielonych chrześcijan oraz ich Kościołów i wspólnot. Jednakże ekumeniczne znaczenie Soboru przenika całe zadanie odnowy rozpoczęte przez Sobór Watykański II, jako podstawę jedności. Soborowa odnowa była inspirowana „zasadą katolickości” lub zdolnością do zintegrowania wszystkiego, co autentycznie chrześcijańskie, z doktryną i życiem Kościoła katolickiego. Zasada katolickości miała szczególne zastosowanie w obszarach doktrynalnych i teologicznych. Niniejsze opracowanie, opierając się na wypowiedziach soborowych, ukazuje w trzech częściach te wszystkie wymiary ekumenizmu *Vaticanum II*, podkreślając ów podstawowy wymiar nauczania soborowego.

### THE ECUMENICAL DIMENSION OF *VATICAN II*

#### SUMMARY

The council defined the theological condition of separated Christians and of their churches and communities. However, the ecumenical significance of the Council pervades the whole task of renewal begun by *Vatican II*, as the basis for unity. The conciliar renewal was inspired by the “principle of catholicity” or capacity to integrate all that is authentically Christian into the doctrine and life of the Catholic Church. The principle of catholicity had particular application in the doctrinal and theological areas.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. Kasper, *Cosechar los frutos. Aspectos básicos de la fe cristiana en el diálogo ecuménico*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2010. The documents of this dialogue can be found in A. González Montes (ed.), *Enchiridion oecumenicum*, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Salamanca, t. I 1986, t. II 1993.

<sup>15</sup> See the proposals made by W. Kasper in *Caminos de unidad. Perspectivas para el Ecumenismo*, Cristiandad, Madrid 2008.

## DIE ÖKUMENISCHE DIMENSION DES ZWEITEN VATIKANISCHEN KONZILS

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil definierte den theologischen Status der geteilten Christen und ihrer Kirchen und Gemeinschaften. Die ökumenische Bedeutung des Konzils durchdringt jedoch die gesamte vom Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil begonnene Erneuerungsaufgabe als Grundlage der Einheit. Die konziliare Erneuerung wurde vom „Prinzip der Katholizität“ oder der Fähigkeit, alles, was wirklich christlich ist, mit der Lehre und dem Leben der katholischen Kirche zu verbinden, inspiriert. Das Prinzip der Katholizität war besonders in doktrinären und theologischen Bereichen anwendbar. Der vorliegende Artikel basiert auf den konziliaren Erläuterungen und zeigt in drei Teilen alle ökumenischen Dimensionen des *Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*. Dabei wird diese grundlegende Richtung der konziliaren Lehre unterstrichen.

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