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Second Vatican Council and Protestantism

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Abstract

The Second Vatican Council and the transformative movement within Protestantism after WWII are each “a child of the times”. They are part of a movement which transcends institutional and confessional borders, a spiritual and theological movement characterized by its openness to discern the spirit of the times, times of crisis and uncertainty which carry within them the seeds of real change. These times provoke a deep spiritual longing and hope, a locus theologicus which is part of the tumultuous of history of this troubled time. A new society and a new church thus emerge from the mutual interchange between the churches and the transformative secular social movements. This is why we find so many similarities between the extraordinary vision and project of the Second Vatican council and the project of a number of the ecumenical and evangelical sectors of Protestantism.

As we know, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), represents a milestone in the history of the Roman Catholic Church of the twentieth century.¹ This year to commemorate the 50 years of so extraordinary event, we can look beyond and say that, that was certainly a fact which impacted, directly or indirectly, on all global Christianity, but had special resonance in Latin American Catholicism.

Surprisingly convened by Pope John XXIII, only three months after his inauguration as Pope, just at the close of the "week of prayer for Christian Unity", showed in him, a deep sensitivity to the challenges and

¹ Floristan, 1999, p.125.

possibilities of the historical context of his time. Certainly, this announcement was received by many sectors of the Church, as a hopeful force, but for others, the announcement was greeted with skepticism.²

The truth is that among Protestant Ecumenical sectors moving around the World Council of Churches (WCC) of the time, they also blew winds of openness and renewal. Especially in environments of the then so-called "third world", in Protestant Ecumenical sectors, Vatican II, was well received because it coincided, in many respects, with efforts at the same time making the ecumenical movement.

In the little space that we have to introduce this approach, a question which suggests the coincidence between the winds of change, both the Vatican and Protestant stands us: what conditions historical, socio-economic existed, which made possible such change in religious movements?

To clear our curiosity about this question, I suggest the following path: 1) the meaning of the proposal of Vatican II. (2) Coincides with the vision of certain sectors of Protestantism. (3) Perspectives and warnings.

1) The meaning of the proposal of Vatican II.

As says CacianoFloristán, the II Vatican Council (SVC), "Occurred at a propitious time social and cultural, in full development of the 1960s and a promising global juncture."³ In addition Floristán, pointed out: "the movements of renewal prior to Vatican II, in fight against immovelist forces, led to its happy realization".⁴

Then, what was the specific proposed the SVC, which raised many expectations and hopes? According to Floristán, the most obvious goal was "the *aggiornamento* of the Church". Quoting g. Gutiérrez, the Conciliar objectives were: "(1) the opening of the Church to the modern world and society, scrutinizing the "signs of the times", to make it intelligible to the proclamation of the Gospel." (2) The unity of Christians or active presence of the Church in ecumenism. "(3) The Church of the poor in strict fidelity to the Gospel."⁵

In the above, there are, among many others, two indications that we should highlight: on the one hand, that this Council, no doubt, is the result of his time, from its context. In other words, the Vatican II came at

² Congar, 1970, pp.11-18.

³ Floristan, op. Cit. p.125.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid,p.2.

a propitious time, a time of search, with an air of change, it is a *kairos*, i.e. came because the signs of the times, revealed a mature and appropriate historical conditions. The Church itself was urgently by properly put in place social and theological, according to the challenges and needs of that historic moment. She needed to speak, behave, and showing a new way, which was already opening in the contemporary world. Would she no longer be more over society, but who intended to walk in, and with the same human, being part of the world history.⁶

On the other hand, according to experts, the Vatican was also motivated by movements of change within the Church itself. I.e., the proposal was not the fruit of the lucidity of an individual, nor was produced by a generation spontaneous. Had an evangelical force renewing *ad intra* in the same church. It happened because the unsettling spirit was moving for a long time now, within sectors of the Church with transformative force. There was even a failed attempt to convene a Council with Pío XII, just immediately after conclusion of the Second World War. Not be denied, that Pope John XXIII was key as a catalyst for the realization of the SVC.

The signs of the times *ad extra* and *ad intra* Church, gave the reasons, indicated, defy, moving the minds and sensitive hearts towards the renewal. But such a transformative force not only occurred in the religious field,⁷ but that it was extremely dynamic in the society as a whole.

If the Vatican II, with the *aggiornamento* was preparing to respond to the transformational challenges both within the Church and in society, how face the Protestantism that same reality at that time? Let's see what we find on the subject.

2) Coincidences between the Vatican II and the vision of sectors of Protestantism.

The Protestant world is very diverse denominations and ecclesiastical structures, therefore we cannot here do not even a representative of that body called Protestantism synthesis. Then, propose, simply get some samples of two Protestant sectors who explicitly tried to respond to the historic challenges of their time. Then, we suggest making a fleeting reference to the Ecumenical Protestantism, linked to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and evangelical Protestantism.

a) The World Council of churches and the Ecumenical Protestantism.

⁶ Congar, Op. cit. p.13.

⁷ Cf. La noción "campo religioso" como lo plantea el sociólogo de la religión Otto Maduro, es el espacio social donde se desarrollan y es escenario de las prácticas religiosas en el cual influyen y son influidas por las condiciones sociales y sus conflictos. 1979.

The theme of the first Assembly of the WCC in 1948 Amsterdam, mark the orientation that the delegates, wanted to give to that event and the responsibility of the churches to the world of his time: "Man's Disorder and God's Design". It was like a trial against the Second World War, which had shown the side more violent and sinful of the modern human being. Although fascism had been defeated with the joint action of the allies, immediately the United States assumed world hegemony. Which, gave rise to a new confrontation in the world between the so-called "Christian West", capitalist, led by the USA, and the East "atheist", Communist, led by the now defunct Soviet Union. This doctrine divided the world into economic, military and ideological confrontation that predicted a third world war. There was a demarcation geostrategic as areas of influence of each of the poles between the West and the East.

The concern of the new WCC, was no doubt the Division and the polarization of the world. Which, also divided and polarized the churches. For this reason, the WCC was actually a project of unity, which was due to start by the churches. Thus defined: For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, act, speak, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

- are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship;
- promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism;
- engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and
- foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.⁸

These emphasis were organized into concrete programmers to contribute to the transformation of the world into a place of unity and life according to the Gospel. The second General Assembly of the WCC held in Evanston in 1954, and at the persistence of the polarization and the world crisis, proclaimed the motto: "Christ the Hope of the World." There is no other hope for the world, because human projects had not been able to meet urgent human needs.⁹

Then in 1961, just in full preparation of Vatican II, was the general

⁸ www.oikoumene.org

⁹ CF. "El fin de la era moderna", en el cual se analiza la profunda crisis de la modernidad, y que se manifiesta con las dos Guerras Mundiales, la polarización del mundo, la injusticia como camino para la pobreza etc. Bosch, David, 2000, pp. 427ss.

Assembly III, in New Delhi, with presence of observers sent by Pope John XXIII. Insisting in the lordship of Jesus Christ with the theme: "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World." Then, followed the IV Assembly of the WCC in Uppsala, 1968, when the East-West confrontation was at their worst moments. The invasion of the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia, the Viet Nam war and countless coups in Latin America, justified by the doctrine of National Security.¹⁰

We ended up mentioning that some called Assembly of "decolonization",¹¹ carried out in Nairobi, 1975 with the slogan "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites". As preparation for this Assembly, a select group of theologians and African church leaders proposed a Moratorium,¹² (1973). They rejected the financial aid and missionary personnel from the first world, because this was also a form of colonial domination. This "help" had continued to increase the dependency of the African churches and denied their cultural identity. This debate was one of the most uncomfortable issues for the rich Northern churches, but was inevitable.

Well, this synthetic review, serves as a reference to insinuate that the ecumenical movement, impelled by the challenges of the world historical context, was also proposed guide the churches to serve as integral transformative forces. Thus summarized that effort, "justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation", with which "The WCC appealed to the Churches to make public commitments and undertake common actions on the threats to life in the areas of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, as part of the essence of what it means to be the church."¹³ It was a task within the same churches and the socio-historical context.

b) The Evangelical Protestantism.

We identify this as well because although it is generally identified with the reformation of the 16th century, emphasize not as Ecumenical. This sector, perhaps the most representative, after the Pentecostals, can identify with the 1910 Edinburgh missionary heritage. But its more explicit articulation occurs in what is known as the "Lausanne Movement". This was an evangelical Congress held in 1974 in the aforementioned city.

The following , is the point 5 of the Declaration called "Lausanne Covenant" on social responsibility, which already shows significant changes in the evangelical worldview:

¹⁰ Cf. Dussel, 1995, pp.258ss.

¹¹ Assmann, 1975.

¹² Cf. Van Elderen, 1990, pp.31ss.

¹³ www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/jpc/hist-e.h

*We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.*¹⁴

In the line of the Lausanne movement, known today was formed in Latin America and the Caribbean Theological Latin America Fraternity (TLF), which since the Lausanne Congress is notable for emphasizing "The Integral mission".¹⁵ Today, there is a greater closeness between Ecumenical sectors and FTL. Even, between these and the theology of liberation. It is true that seem to arise as a sign of our time, will be understood as if they work for the same purpose, the overcoming of dualism, personal Holiness and social Holiness as constituent parts of a same piety.¹⁶ The following comment illustrates better what we have tried to show in the change of the vision and mission already manifest at the Lausanne Covenant.

Notorious way, firstly, the Covenant eliminates the dichotomy between evangelism and social and political responsibility. Nobody can pretend that the social and political concern has been a new discovery of Evangelicals in Lausanne. The fact is, however, that the social respon-

¹⁴ The Lausanne Covenant, was a evangelical congress, call by Willy Graham, about 2, 700 delegates were present attended the Congress, from 150 Nations. <www.lausanne.org>.

¹⁵ Cf. Segura, Harold "La misión integral 35 años" <www.cempromex.org.mx/revista_ftl/te>

¹⁶ Comentario de David Stoll <www.nodulo.org/bibstoll/alp05j.htm>

sibility of Christians (based on the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the Kingdom) receives a place of prominence that barely could be considered characteristic of the Evangelical statements in the Covenant. Of course, said enough about the topic to clarify that the position is very different from that in which salvation is reduced to the socio-political and economic liberation. However, the recognition that Christians must share God's concern "for Justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men of all kinds of oppression," and that the "evangelization and social and political action are an integral part of our Christian duty" (section 5) leaves no room for a unilateral concept of the Mission of the church based on an unbiblical divorce between the proclamation (kerygma) and the service (diakonia).¹⁷

In the evangelical-protestant environments, it is very significant to note today, interest in overcoming the dualism, because only then the responsibility is assumed for the salvation of the integrity of creation and spirituality it is historical.

3) Perspectives and warnings.

These efforts of switching between Protestant sectors, must be qualified to avoid falling into messianic emphases. Because the religious field is very complex, as well as ambiguous. Albeit with some autonomy, this reproduce, reflected and affect the same trends, conflicts and forces moving in the social context.

The Protestant spirit is a strength of minority movements within the ecclesiastical institutions, sometimes tolerated by sectors of these institutions. They are spiritual and theological movements seeking free spaces to discern the signs of the times and receive light and inspiration of the prophetic, diaconal, biblical and pastoral gifts.

They are minority movements but they have impacted the churches and society, this what can we say about the theology of liberation, of the ecumenical movement, of the Evangelical conferences (CELA) of Church and society (ISAL) of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), TLF, the biblical movement that produces the Journal of Biblical Interpretation in LA (RIBLA). Didn't happen the same with the movement of Jesus?

José Duque, May 2012.

¹⁷ Este es un comentario del teólogo de la FTL René Padilla sobre la transformación de la visión evangélica en Lausanne, www.ftl-al.org.

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XIII Simpósio Internacional IHU: Igreja Cultura e Sociedade

A semântica do Mistério da Igreja no contexto das novas gramáticas da civilização tecnocientífica

De 2 a 5 de outubro de 2012 - Av. Unisinos, 950 - São Leopoldo/RS

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OBJETIVO GERAL: Debater em perspectiva transdisciplinar a semântica do Mistério da Igreja no contexto das novas gramáticas da tecnociência, desenhando possibilidades e perspectivas de interlocução com a nova cultura.

CONVIDADOS JÁ CONFIRMADOS:

• Prof. Dr. Christoph Theobald, Centre Sèvres, Paris; Prof. Dr. George Coyne - Vatican Observatory Foundation - Itália; Prof. Dr. Joe Marçal Gonçalves dos Santos - PUCRS; Prof. Dr. José Maria Vigil - ASETT/AL; Profa. Dra. Lúcia Pedrosa de Pádua - PUC-Rio; Prof. Dr. Manuel Hurtado - FAJE/MG; Prof. Dr. Marcelo Gleiser - Dartmouth College - Estados Unidos; Prof. Dr. Mario de França Miranda - PUC-Rio; Profa. Dra. Mary Ann Hinsdale - Boston College - Estados Unidos; Prof. Dr. Paul Valadier - Centre Sèvres, Paris; Prof. Dr. Peter Phan - Georgetown University - Estados Unidos; Prof. Dr. Roger Haight - Union Theological Seminary - Nova Iorque.

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- Analisar transdisciplinarmente os discursos, as linguagens, os signos e os símbolos teológico-religiosos e seus significados para a cultura e a sociedade atual.
- Refletir sobre as várias formas de interlocução da Igreja com a cultura contemporânea.
- Discernir, dentre o atual pluralismo semântico, vias possíveis para a escritura do Mistério da Igreja que propiciem o diálogo inter-religioso e intercultural que são expressos pelos novos sujeitos socioculturais. Em sua programação, o simpósio, destinado a professores(as), pesquisadores(as), estudantes e comunidade em geral, inclui grandes conferências, minicursos, apresentações de comunicações e pôsteres.

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