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Karl Rahner's Role in Shaping the Decisions of Vatican Council II on Dialogue With Other Religions (A Historical, Theological and Analytical Study)

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Abstract:

Karl Rahner has arguably been the most famous influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He won the repute of being among the pioneers of the Second Vatican Council. He added new lenses to the Christian telescope which meant to detect active presence of God in all human beings. As a result of this, the Catholic community made a leap forward. It took new ways to understand other religions and relate to non-Christians. This was crystallized in Rahner's writings. There is found congruence between Rahner's theologizing style and the spirit of Vatican II. It was his theory of anonymous Christians which got Vatican II out of the dilemma of having relations with the non-Christians. Around the 1960s, Rahner turned the Christian telescope to the people of other religions. This aimed at finding common ground with the followers of other religions. Rahner emphasized the positive appraisal of the great world religions and the universal saving will of God. This optimistic view about salvation had been the clearest theme to Rahner. He also points out to the transcendental nature of human personality which means that 'a person's whole spiritual and intellectual existence is orientated towards a holy mystery which is the basis of their being'. Rahner's subtle understanding of faith profoundly preoccupied him with three topics particularly in his final writings: (i) the reform of the teaching office of the Church; (ii) the future of Catholicism in a world-Church; and (iii) the future of Christianity among world religions and new humanism. With this, he played an important role in bringing the Vatican

Council to a theological and historical turning point. To him, the Christian faith carried two tenets in its very basis: the universal salvific will of God, and that this salvation comes through God in Christ alone. This led Catholicism to take the former as universal and the latter as particular. For Catholics, however, a real and full encounter with Jesus can be had only in Church.

Historical Background

Christianity has adopted different models to come to a balanced understanding of other religions. However, it continues to give equal weight to its two foundational beliefs: firstly God's love is universal, and secondly, it is particular i.e. made real in Christ. For this, there are found two models adopted by Christians. These are the Replacement Model and the Fulfillment Model. The former held sway over most of Christian history whereas the latter embodies the majority opinion of the present-day Christianity. It also describes what most of the Christian theologians view about other religions. They emphasized that the non-Christians are not only to be preached but there should also be a dialogue with them because all the religions are of value as God is found in them. It is the Fulfillment model which represents the new theology based on the developing attitudes after new experiences. However, this model also marks a limit i.e. God's special presence in Jesus. This indicates that the theologians here seem to say,

“We can't stretch things any further without losing the uniqueness of Jesus. To venture beyond it may mean losing one's Christian identity.”

After this, the Church has been at the forefront of new theological thinking about other religions. In the past, the catholic attitudes had been a kind of teeter-totter carrying up and down movement between the universal and particular presence of God. There continued shifts from universal to particular and vice versa dominating the Church thinking. For Catholics, the particular presence of God along with Jesus also included the Church. This meant to have greater belief in God's universal love for all.

In the beginning, the theologians did not have to deal much with other religions. As the communities of Jesus went deeper, there is found a quick change in their attitudes. Christians had been a minority and had to explain their relation to different cultures as Jesus followers. The early Fathers emphasized the Word of God and that all the Christians experienced that “the Word of God was “made flesh” in Jesus”. This is the Word of Whom all humankind partakes. The earlier theologians strongly pointed out that because of God's universal presence and call, the spirit of every human (man or woman) is naturally Christian”. This strongly affirmed God's saving presence beyond the Church weighing the universal side of the teeter-totter.

This weight changed, in the following centuries to the stress on the particular importance of the Church. The bishop of Rome then enjoyed the high spiritual political power. So, the enemies of the state were also considered the enemies of the Church. This unfolds how attitudes towards non-Christians started changing particularly influenced by Augustine-the theologian of his time. He emphasized that men were saved “only by grace” without which there is only damnation. Such saving grace, preached Augustine, is not found beyond the

Church. His chief concern in his teaching had been “double predestination: God from all eternity predestines some to salvation within the Church; the rest-‘damned masses’-end in perdition”. He meant to state that all the people outside the Church will go into the everlasting fire. This thought, prevailing till the sixteenth century, was encapsulated in the famous dictum “Outside the Church no salvation”. This at the initial stage aimed at those within the Church. It was a warning for them if they thought of leaving it. This was at their eternal risk. During the middle ages, this proclamation was also directed to the non-Christians. This instead of having dialogue led to wars like Crusades. In the thirteenth century, the dictum got addition and became “Outside the Church, no salvation at all”. It was in 1442 that the council of Florence thus states, “No persons, whatever almsgiving they have practiced even if they have shed blood for Christ, can be saved unless they have remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church”.

This falsely indicated that the boundless love of God for all people was bounded by the borders of the Church. When Christopher Columbus landed in America, a lot of efforts were made to preach Christian beliefs there. The missionaries could not imagine anyone could not see the overwhelming truth and beauty of the Christian faith. Many of the Americans preferred their previous ways of living. This led the Council of Trent (1545-63) to come up with the formula of love of God without denying the necessity of the Church. This formula meant that moral values in all people were an implicit expression of the desire to join the Church thus getting through the doors of heaven.

After this, towards the modern age, there was a shift from “Outside the Church, no salvation” to “Without Church, no salvation”. It meant that those outside the Church may have some relation to it when they follow God’s voice in their conscience. The postmodern scenario carries the preaching of this attitude by the Popes. To them, if followers of any religion loved and served the creature, this meant that they belonged to the “soul” of the Church. This indicated their relation and attachment to the Church, thus becoming its potential members. This Christian attitude meant to affirm God’s love for everyone. This teeter-totter seemed to get balanced in this era. Painfully, all these efforts for propagating a better attitude to those outside the Church never had positive attitude toward their religions. The theologians avoided mentioning that other religions did offer grace, revelation, and salvation. Till the 1960s it was taken for granted that no religion other than Christianity could be considered by God.

Rahner’s Theological Impact on Vatican II

In its very essence, the relation between Rahner and Vatican II is quite inseparable. Rahner’s best part of life has been devoted to working against the backdrop of change in the Church. His services meant to promote the reception of Vatican II. To Rahner, the Church now was turning to be the World Church. The concern of Vatican II also added in it the adoption of a more missionary style in order to get closer to the non-Christian population. The common grounds in different cultures around the globe were found for a positive attitude towards others. Furthermore, the great world religions were also appraised with an emphasis on the universal saving will of God. This was the dearest theme to Karl Rahner; as he taught that the true God wills all to be saved.

In a pluralistic setup, Rahner focused on the need for structural change in the Church in order to have better balance in the official teaching authority and legitimate academic freedom. These efforts led him to develop the theory of the relationship between anonymous and explicit Christianity. The real basis for all this, according to Rahner has been the transcendental nature of human personality. Rahner points out that it is not the human who makes efforts to reach God; rather, it is the Divinity seeking out human spirit with the offer of grace which is universal. These were the teachings of the early Church, says Rahner and his efforts meant to revive the real Christian traditions in the postmodern world. For this, the council carried a specific method of “Ressourcement and Aggiornamento” which “advocated shipping over what was currently in place to retrieve from the past something more appropriate or more authentic”. In his work, Rahner retrieved to certain forgotten truths with a view to injecting new life into the sacrament.

He searched for new ways of formulating Christian faith as the traditional dogmatic language of the Church was no longer intelligible to many Christians. Rahner always welcomed religious pluralism. He emphasized that the Church was to deal with the changes. However, the core of Rahnerian Christian faith, never to be neglected, was the universal will of God for salvation which comes only through Christ. This, according to Rahner is a theological rather than the dogmatic approach.

As far as the attitude of the Council was concerned, its style was less autocratic and more collaborative whereby there was an inclination to reconcile with human cultures; to see goodness instead of sin, and to look for the elements of friendship instead of hatred. In such an atmosphere, Rahner's whole energies were devoted to the structural, spiritual and theological renewal of the Church. To him, faith meant a person's proper and free conviction. He thus states: “Faith implies an existential, practical, and theoretical relationship to the truth of faith itself and may not be reduced to mere obedience to the formal teaching authority of the Church.”

In this context, Rahner argues for the anthropological aspect of the Christian faith. This is the influence of Enlightenment modernity on Rahner which along with other elements had a specific focus on rationality and anthropoid centrism. In his affirmations, Rahner continued to explain that Christianity definitely meant the Church despite different forms of tension. He kept on seeking for a via media between different dimensions of the Church. The perception of growing restorations mentality within the Church kept Rahner increasingly pessimistic. This resulted in a more authentic interpretation of the Council.

For Rahner, a person with strong conviction possesses spiritual openness to potentially receive the Divine word. On this basis, Philip Endean highlights that reading of Gospel depends upon the state of the self-a change in the self leads to comprehending the text with radically new eyes. Moreover, theocentric and anthropocentricity cannot be radically separated. Many critics of Rahner have complained that Rahner had relativized the radical demands of Christianity. However, a true understanding of Rahner can be had through the study of his own writings instead of his critics'. To Rahner, both the limitations of his theology as

well as the need for other thinkers were important to develop his ideas in new directions. Regarding this, he thus stated:

“When I began my theological studies forty years ago, I was far clever than I am today if I take all the possible branches of knowledge and intellectual problems as my criterion of measurement. For today there is such a vast number of questions and areas of knowledge of a historical, metaphysical, philosophical, linguistic, sociological and religious kind that in the face of this mass of theological material I feel much stupider than I did then”.

Here, there is found a similarity in Rahner and Aquinas i.e. both thought on the basis of the whole and in relation to the whole. Regarding the attitude of Vatican II, there had been different opinions. Some thought that it had gone too far, becoming too progressive and surrendered too much for modernity. On the other hand, some theologians including Rahner felt the need of the Council to be worked out. This indicates how the council was comprehended. However, it is significant to note that among all, Rahner's method was welcomed by the Second Vatican Council. The basis for its popularity was Rahner's emphasis on anthropology and an endeavor to bring Thomism into modern philosophy and interfaith dialogue. Rahner advocated the freedom of speech within the Church which meant to let modernity be the part of theological traditions. In the post-modern context today, Rahner's approach has got a lot of criticism. His existential orientation is attached as privatizing of religion that lacks social and political force.

A view of Rahner's ecclesiology in condition with the renewal inaugurated by Vatican II and its openness to the world highlights that he was not to purchase particularity of Christian identity at the cost of the public character of theology. He discouraged the Christians who stayed isolated from their cultural atmospheres. The dividing line between Christians and non-Christians was presented by Rahner in a fluid manner. This indicates that he strived to work out the full implications of his convictions for the universality of grace. In the neo-scholastic environment when grace was seen as scarce, Rahner's theological services had been an effort for a more integrated vision of Christianity with more optimism for the post-Vatican II generation.

The Grace and the Nature in Rahner's Theology

Rahner's theological case is carefully crafted involving standard Catholic doctrines for a truly revolutionary theology of religions. The centerpiece of Christian faith i.e. God is love, became the focal point of Rahner's theology. This meant that God is to embrace all people and wants to save them. Rahner's emphasis has been to realize the very truth that God does what He wants. God in His love for the creature reveals Himself to every human being. This, in fact, is the grace given to all by God. The love of God for His people, according to Rahner has got a lot of meaning. Human nature is not just 'natural'. It is much more than that and carries in it the Divine presence and peace-thus becoming the graced nature. To Rahner, this is the 'supernatural existential' i.e. the human existence is more than nature. His emphasis has been to know the very reality of our existence which makes the human nature a piece of Divine nature. The whole theological career of Rahner proves how grace could be felt within our nature. He explained it as the electricity which lights the bulb to show what it really is, similarly God's love fills us enabling

to live and act differently. Rahner states that “grace informs us something like the way the Spirit informs the body”.

It is through grace that we can know and love in the best ways. Both the acts of knowing and loving have no bounds. These can be satisfying but can never be satisfied. For this, Rahner's conclusion is that ‘the humans are the finite beings capable of the infinite’. Being even mortals, they can hear to the word beyond the limits. Therefore, the sinful condition does not harm this grace. If a man falls into a deep ditch, there are several means to get out of it. If sin is a part of human nature, the ability to love and care about others is a more powerful part of human nature. Rahner means to say that in human nature good and evil do not have a fifty-fifty chance i.e. good is stronger. On this basis, human potential to be saved is far more than to befall. The very human nature carrying God's presence and His love can experience God and final salvation even outside the Church. This was Rahner's chief concern throughout his theological career (Malley & John, 2002).

Rahner's Concept of Salvation in Other Religions

Rahner remained firm in his claim that God's grace is active in all religions. The beliefs and practices of all religions carried in them the offer of God's Self. The basis for this claim by Rahner is the key ingredient of Catholic experience and theology i.e. the human beings are embodied and social beings. This means that every action comes through our bodies and through other people. Similarly knowledge and beliefs are not the spiritual transfusions rather these are the outcome of some material form. That led Rahner to state that “grace must be embodied and God's presence has to take some kind of material shape” (Karl Rahner, 1990).

The religions say, Rahner, are the ways where humans search for deeper meaning. In their every essence, these carry the clues to the Divine Spirit. Rahner is against those Catholics who insist on the necessity of the Church just because they believe that God meets them in physical and social forms (Maurice Boutin, 1983).. To him, all other religions are necessarily the embodiments of God's grace. So he firmly stated that “religions can be ways of salvation. Through their rituals, all the believers are drawn by God to His self. In Rahner's words, the statement runs as:

“The non-Christian religions can be a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation”.

With this new theological understanding, Rahner did not mean to approve all religions. He just wanted to open a possibility never open to non-Christians before. Rahner establishes a probability that God is speaking non-Christian languages also. The errors in other faiths do not weaken this probability (Rahner Karl, 1966). If error and corruption was a gauge for how much God can make use of religion, Christianity might rank lower than many others. Rahner meant to state that religion with errors does not mean that it carries no good. So he invited Christians to a new way of approaching the non-Christians. Instead of beginning with the Divine message, the missionary should start with non-Christians in some other ways as God has been present in them long before the missionaries arrived. There may be certain elements which other faiths have to teach to missionaries. So,

Rahner's theology calls for such a relationship between Christianity and other faiths which includes give and take on both sides.

Rahner's Notion of Anonymous Christians

To Rahner, grace present in all humans is in fact, the grace of Christ. By this, he provides further depth and new horizons. God's grace pervading all humans is because of Jesus Christ. This is the concept central to Christianity. Christ is the healing spirit in the universe. To Rahner, Jesus Christ is not an efficient cause of salvation but he is its final cause. God's saving love has always been there as His very nature. The final cause of this love is Jesus because there is in him "What God is up to, what intends to bring about in giving the Divine spirit to all people". The message of Christ is love, peace, and justice representing the intent and direction of every breath of God's spirit that blows within humankind. To Rahner, it was Jesus Christ who could satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart which continue waiting for an absolute savior. Jesus in him carries the clearest and final Word of God that God is truly with us. So he is the greatest source to live worthy like him. He is to guide and help all in this world and the Hereafter.

This highlights the importance of Jesus Christ in Rahner's Fulfillment Model and the Replacement Model. They affirmed the necessity of knowing Jesus to really experience God's saving love. However, Rahner further advocates that without knowing Jesus, God's love can be experienced but it will be not clear what its true purpose is. The experience of God's grace and love by non-Christians, added Rahner, is already oriented toward Jesus as he represents the ultimate goal of God's grace. So all graced through their faiths are also orientated towards Christian Church. They are in fact the Christians directed toward Jesus but they do not realize it. To Rahner, they are anonymous Christians. His concern here is to liberate Christians from having negative views of the ones outside the Church. He addresses them to realize that God is much greater than they are. This was how he strived to develop a positive view of his colleagues about non-Christians.

Rahner's View of Church

Rahner's understanding of how God saves through Christ has given way to new insights. The Christians by this have got inspired as well as frightened regarding the Church mission which now no longer could be considered the only island for salvation. Rahner puts it thus:

"The Church should consider itself the historically tangible vanguard and the historically and the socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christ hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church".

Rahner also calls the Church as a sacrament which does not mean to rescue the people and put them on new roads. It aims to enable people see more clearly and move more securely. A key objection to this view of Rahner was that it would burn away the missionary zeal. His response, however, was that the Christians must share good news of living with love and justice seen in Jesus. He maintained that becoming a Christian offered a greater chance for salvation. A true follower of Jesus carries greater responsibility for others rather than a greater advantage for oneself.

This leads to comprehending Rahner's view about others as the persons not knowing their destination as to him, only Jesus Christ is the final cause of salvation. Only here is God's goal of creation. Christ is, says Rahner, the absolute savior. All the non-Christian religions with elements of goodness are to serve and to prepare the way for the people to take last step to get into the Christian community. In this way, Rahner's new ideas have facilitated the catholic theologians to develop a new theology of religions. His revolutionary approach has officially been affirmed as Rahner's Catholicism in the form of Second Vatican Council.

Rahner's View Before Vatican II

The positive Catholic theology of religions in the twentieth century has been the outcome of the theologians' strivings to find theologically sound and positive interpretations of the axiom. Some of the theologians were marginalized as having ideas outside the official view. However, towards the second half of the twentieth century, the official Catholic teachings were indirectly influenced by them. Karl Rahner an influential dogmatic theologian dealt with the question of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions before Vatican II. He developed a phrase concerning the position of non-Christians (the trademark of his views and the focus of Catholic "inclusivism" since the 1960s). The Second Vatican Council carries his enormous influence on the final shape of its documents. He is regarded as the official theologian at the council.

Rahner's reflections in his lecture "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" delivered in 1961 before the Council was followed on the same footings even after the Council. This essay produced by Rahner before the Council reflects his main teachings concerning the subject. He intended to speak optimistically of God and His saving will. This new approach to other religions in Catholicism emphasized that divine religions are something more than mere expressions of "natural religions", because of grace as their essential element adding something to man's relation with God. Rahner argues that God presents supernatural instances of grace to man because of Christ.

Christianity's relation to non-Christian religions was well interpreted by Rahner in his four theses. The main objective in developing them stated by him is as follows:

"We simply want to try to describe a few of those basic traits of a Catholic dogmatic interpretation of the non-Christian religions which may help us to come closer to a solution of the question about the Christian position in regard to the religious pluralism in the world today".

His first thesis announces Christianity as the only "absolute religion" intended for all men. There is no other religion as of equal right. Only through Christianity, God provides salvation to all people in Christ. The second thesis explains Rahner's understanding of the relation between nature and grace. According to him, grace is operating anonymously in a person's religion. So the non-Christian religions are "lawful" religions given by God to be the means of salvation. These first two theses led Rahner to develop his third thesis in order to determine the position of non-Christians and their religions in relation to Christianity. In this thesis, Rahner claims that non-Christians religions carrying Jesus Christ anonymously within them become lawful ways of salvation. His fourth and final thesis outlines the Church's

function in light of the logical conclusion of the previous theses. The Church should serve non-Christians in the name of Christ. It should be an example for others.

All grace, says Rahner is the supernatural grace. He thus got a foundation for a new type of theological approach to non-Christian religions which chiefly centered the universal salvific will of God only in Christ. These positive statements laid the foundation for development of positive Catholic teaching on non-Christians.

Rahner's View After Vatican II

Earlier, the Council's teachings focused on the positive relationship that the other religions enjoy in God's universal plan of salvation. Its concern was more pastoral than being doctrinal. It did not affirm explicitly that other religions were ways of salvation. Rahner viewed it as the Council's achievement when it started looking beyond the question of the salvation of non-Christians as a positive relationship of the Church to other religions. There is no doubt in the fact that this change was the outcome of Rahner's four theses mentioned above and discussed at length in the previous chapters. The whole theology of dialogue took new ways to approach the non-Christian communities. The Council viewed salvation optimistically in the actual self-gift of God for all people. Rahner argued that such optimism was not explicitly professed by the believers. Therefore to him, "the essential problem for the theologian has been left open," and "the theological quality of non-Christian religions remains undefined." He asks whether salvation of non-Christians was outside or within the life of their religions. He could find no vivid answer to the question whether the religions were salvific in themselves or not.

The Council of Vatican II and Rahner

At the time of the formation of the Council, Karl Rahner was recognized as the prominent theologian whose theology was taken for granted by the Church. He was also respected by the progressive theologians. He was strongly committed to the renewal of permanent diaconate. He was the only dogmatic theologian having his position defined on the diaconate. He was also well aware of the burning concerns in missionary lawns of the Council. Rahner joined the committee working for the preparations for the Council. He became the private adviser to Cardinal Koenig at the Council in 1961. At his direction, Rahner had already written many articles and a dictionary of religion in 1956. His concern remained the texts from dogmatics and moral theology. Here, he had to cope with the opponents also who urged that the need of time was to give summary and a syllabus of the current theological and philosophical errors. He refused to approve this procedure.

When the Council was solemnly opened on 11 October 1962, the Pope encouraged the forces of renewal and ruled out the condemnations. Karl Rahner was also among the officially nominated Periti and was not allowed to take part in the session of any of the commissions of the Council. However, his activities included interaction with the bishops outside the Council in Germany, South America, and France where were held theological meetings.

When the text of the Council was prepared, discussions began on the sources of revelation. This was the key theme in Church and theology, this first text was rejected by the opponents whereupon on November 21, 1962, John XXII formed a new commission to work out a new text. Besides the Holy Scripture, another source

of revelation was the oral tradition which resulted in the expansion of contents of faith, as new things were easy to be discovered in the oral tradition. With the passage of time, when the new text was ready and discussion on it started on 1st December 1962, Rahner had to give an opinion both in oral and written form. The experts produced a real flood of paper on 5 December 1962. Rahner took part in a session of the mixed commission. Despite having the director's authority, Rahner was not excluded. Rahner did the same in the following session which won him respect by the opponent theologians. His deep knowledge of the tradition, his sovereign command of Latin and his logical acuteness in argument led him to lead others.

The sessions of the Council continued and Rahner was officially nominated peritus and member of an expert group of seven theologians in February 1963. They were to work out the new text on the Church in the modern world. In autumn 1963, Rahner worked with theologians like Gerard Philips-a Belgian dogmatic theologian. He developed good terms with them as their collaboration was important with the Council's proceedings. Here the new texts were kept as open as possible avoiding anything leading too quickly to a dogmatic assertion.

The second phase of the Council carries the major role of Karl Rahner to whom the theme of the diaconate was of much concern. Rahner focused on the collegiality of bishops and their relationship to the Pope. He advised them in preparing the Schema on the Church, the new text on Mary and on the members of Orders. This phase of Council proceeded in rational and peaceful climate which was the result of Rahner's active participation. He delivered numerous lectures at various places and also worked on conciliar texts on the relationship of scripture and tradition. The second phase lasted from 29th September to December 4, 1963.

On 14 September 1964 started the third phase of the Council which lasted till 21 November 1964. There were discussed the texts with which Rahner was chiefly concerned. These were on the revelation and on the Church in the modern world. Rahner significantly involved himself in these and set the basic theological trend of Christianity. The third phase was followed by the fourth one which started on 14th September 1965 and lasted till 8th December 1965. On 9th November, Rahner carried out discussion of a new order where his theology of indulgences was represented by Dopfner Konig and others.

The Second Vatican Council passed sixteen texts which definitely carry the influence of Karl Rahner. However, four among them, K.Keufeld pointed out; do not carry traces of Rahner's theology. These are (i) on the means of communication, (ii) on the eastern Churches; (iii) on Christian education, and (iv) on religious freedom. His thought on other issues especially on revelation and tradition had been a great inspiration for conciliar theologians. However, there is essentially major role of Rahner' fellow theologians concerned with the renewal of the Church. Rahner, in 1947 had explained the Church as a sacrament (carrying universal salvation). His incredible persistence for the reward of diaconate makes him among the heroes of the Second Vatican Council. However, Rahner remained active to the point of exhaustion. It was in March 1966 when he saw a 794-page paperback in USA carrying all the texts of the Council. It was edited by Walter Abbott who included in it short introductions and an index. Rahner wrote a general introduction

to the Second Vatican Council whereas introductions to sixteen conciliar texts were written by Herbert Vorgrimler.

Conclusion

The formation of Second Vatican Council in general and theology of interfaith dialogue in the twenty-first century, in particular, are undoubtedly the consequence of Rahner's undaunted efforts throughout his theological career. The key experience on which is based his whole theology is God's self-communication to man. This introduced the Catholic Church to the new ways to approach to the non-Christians. It is formerly a dilemma for the Council which got its way out with Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians which led the European and Western Church to become a world Church. He had to strive hard to reform Catholic teachings in order to make future of Christianity secure. He continued to assert that Christian faith carried the universal salvific will of God which comes only through Christ.

Rahner's services are meant to promote the reception of Vatican II. He also added in it the adoption of a more missionary style in order to get closer to the non-Christians. He focused on the need for structural change in the Church. He always welcomed religious pluralism. He argued for the anthropological aspect of the Christian faith. Like Thomas Aquinas, he thought on the basis of the whole and in relation to the whole. Therefore, among all, his method was welcomed by the Second Vatican Council. He brought Thomism into modern philosophy and interfaith dialogue. He endeavored for a more integrated vision of Christianity with more optimism for the post-Vatican II generation. He called the Church as Sacrament which enables the people to move more securely. His new ideas facilitated the theologians to develop a new theology of religions. His revolutionary approach has officially been affirmed as Rahner's Catholicism in the form of Second Vatican Council.

Towards the last part of his life, he especially emphasized Christians to avoid negative consideration of other religions. For him, the dialogue was a part of broader scheme of engagements. He pushed the theory from ecumenism with Christian traditions to ecumenism with other religions, science, and humanism. He remained dead-earnest about dialogue. He worked out hard to develop a language for the Church to communicate its message in the real sense. Vatican II was influenced by him to such an extent that most of its content carries Rahner's theological understandings. At the time of its formation, his theology was taken as for granted by the Church. He joined the committee working for the preparations for the Council as an advisor. Throughout the proceedings, he continued to advise, discuss and criticize different texts until the Council passed sixteen documents. His thought, especially on revelation and tradition, had been a great inspiration for *conciliar* theologians.

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