

## “Karl Rahner and the Bible” – Symposium (25.–26. Feb. 2022)

### **Fri 25.02.**

9.00 Opening

#### *Sources*

9.15-10.00 Philip Endean SJ, Paris, Centre Sèvres: “Ignatius, the Bible, and Karl Rahner's Theology”

10.00-10.45 Michael Pfister, WWU Münster: „Die Freundschaft von Thomas und Bonaventura ist ein schönes Symbol für das, was sein sollte“ – Karl Rahner, Augustin Bea und die Inspirationslehre“

*Coffee Break (15min)*

#### *The Bible in Rahner's Lectures*

11.00-11.45 Ursula Schumacher, PH Karlsruhe: „Der Schriftgebrauch in Karl Rahners Gnadentheologie“

11.45-12.30 Roman Siebenrock, LFU Innsbruck: „Welche Schrift hört der Hörer Karl Rahner? Zum Verhältnis von Schrift und Dogmatik in Rahners Gnadentraktat“

*Lunch-Break (2h)*

14.30-15.15 Dorothea Sattler, WWU Münster: „Versöhnt leben. Eine bibeltheologische Spurensuche in den bußtheologischen Schriften von Karl Rahner“

15.15-16.00 Peter Fritz, Holy Cross (Worcester, MA): “Distracted by 'Transcendental': For a Biblical Reorientation of English-Language Rahner Reception”

*Coffee Break (30min)*

#### *Rahner and the HB/OT*

16.30-17.15 Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Univ. Wien: „Das Alte Testament in Ratzingers „Einführung in das Christentum“, Küngs „Christ sein“ und Rahners „Grundkurs des Glaubens“

17.15-18.00 Georg Fischer SJ, LFU Innsbruck: Aufbruch mit Hindernissen - Karl Rahners Positionen zum Alten Testament

*18.00-20.00 Dinner*

20.00 Keynote Speech Karl-Heinz Neufeld SJ, Osnabrück

„Karl Rahner, die Bibel und das II. Vatikanische Konzil“

**Sat 26.02.**

*Rahner and the New Testament*

9.00-9.45 Ansgar Wucherpfennig SJ, Frankfurt St. Georgen: „Rahner zur Nächsten- und Gottesliebe in der Schrift“

9.45-10.30 Hildegard Scherer, TH Chur: „Rahner und die Spannung. Zum Umgang Karl Rahners mit divergierenden Aussagen im Corpus Paulinum“

*Coffee Break (30min)*

*Living the Bible*

11.00-11.45 Anni Findl-Ludescher, LFU Innsbruck: „Den Glauben erklären – den Glauben verkünden. Überlegungen zu den Predigten Karl Rahners.“

11.45-12.30 Benedikt J. Collinet, LFU Innsbruck: „Rahners Sprachstil und seine Bibelverwendung im Dialog mit verschiedenen Menschen und Gruppierungen in Auswahl.“

12.30-13.00 Final Discussion

*13.00 Lunch*

# Ignatius, the Bible, and Karl Rahner's Theology

Philip Endean SJ

## *Theses*

1. Standard treatments of the Ignatian background to Karl Rahner's theology focus on the experience of grace, on finding God in all things, and on the logic of existential ethics. Of course, prayer with the Bible, at least as mediated through Ludolf of Saxony, is an important element in the Exercises; of course, Rahner's theology presupposes biblical revelation.

But Rahner does not focus on Ignatius's use of biblical tradition. In a 1965 preface to a collection of his retreat conferences, largely biblical meditations, he stressed that a satisfactory theological account of the Ignatian Exercises would depend primarily on other sources. Text A)

2. There are, however, substantive (*inhaltliche*) parallels between Ignatius's use of gospel prayer and how Rahner connects Christology to a general Christian anthropology. Ignatius encourages us to pray with a 'history' that has a 'true foundation' that we can 'declare or sense a little more' (*ein wenig mehr erläutern oder verspüren*) (Exx 2). Our free responses in discerned consolation – encouraged by Ignatian 'reflecting and drawing profit', 'repetition', 'colloquy', and interview with the retreat-giver – continue in a strong theological sense the encounter of creator and creature manifest in Jesus.

Rahner's theology well expresses the theological dynamics here, and alerts us to the significance of Ignatius's methods. (Texte B-D)

3. But was Ignatius's use of the Bible itself a *source*, biographically, for Rahner's theological creativity? Perhaps. One retreat conference, '*Nachfolge Christi*' – not directly written by Rahner and never developed by him – gives some evidence for saying yes. (Text E) More generally, we might reasonably speculate that Rahner's theology was influenced by his life in a community where Ignatian gospel prayer was regular practice, often mandated by rule and custom.

He himself seems to have become aware of Ignatius's centrality to his thought through the observations of commentators. The biblical aspects of this influence went largely unremarked, both by those commentators and by Rahner himself. But they could have been real, nevertheless.

## *Texts*

A) ... solche gedruckten Erwägungen, die das Exerzitienbuch selbst zu Wort kommen lassen wollen, bedeuten keine Exerzitien und, so wie sie hier vorliegen, bilden sie auch keinen genügenden Kommentar zum Exerzitienbuch. Ein wirklicher Kommentar dürfte sich ja, schon von allem andern abgesehen, nicht auf die Darlegung von Betrachtungsthemen beschränken, die Ignatius in seinen Exerzitien vorsieht ... Ein Kommentar müsste sehr genau auf die Anweisungen eingehen, die Ignatius gibt für die Methode des Gebetes, der Meditation und des ganzen Ganges wirklicher Exerzitien überhaupt. Ferner darf nie vergessen werden, dass wirkliche Exerzitien, so wie sie Ignatius beabsichtigt, von vornherein keine Reihe frommer Betrachtungen sind, die man bei gutem Willen immer und überall mit Nutzen anstellen und darum auch einem größeren Kreis von Menschen gemeinsam vortragen kann. Wirkliche Exerzitien sind vielmehr der, wenn auch in einer gewissen methodischen Weise, unternommene Versuch, in einer entscheidenden Lebenssituation vor Gott eine Entscheidung, eine „Wahl“ zu treffen. ... Solche Exerzitien, wie sie eigentlich gemeint sind, können darum in Exerzitienkursen von vielen nicht gemacht werden; sie können noch viel weniger durch gedruckte Betrachtungen von allgemeinem theologischem Inhalt vermittelt werden.

(Vorwort, *Betrachtungen zum ignatianischen Exerzitienbuch*, 1965 – SW 13, 38)

B) Gnade in uns allen und unio hypostatica in dem einen Jesus Christus können nur zusammen gedacht werden und bedeuten als eine Einheit den einen freien Entschluss Gottes zur übernatürlichen Heilsordnung, zu seiner Selbstmitteilung.

(*Grundkurs* – SW 26, 195)

C) ... die Betrachtung des Lebens Jesu wird nie darauf verzichten können, „Anwendungen“ der betrachteten Ereignisse des Lebens Jesu zu machen. Eine neutestamentliche Typenlehre könnte nun „Anwendungen“ bieten, die wirklich von vornherein zum Sinn der erzählten Ereignisse selbst gehören, Gottes Gedanken sind, nicht bloß eine „*pia meditatio*“.

(*E latere Christi* – SW 3, 83)

D) (Die ignatianische Wahl in Trost hängt von einer Einheit von Transzendenz und konkreter Freiheit, die uns nach Ignatius öffnet,) ... einen Ansatzpunkt in unserer eigenen Erfahrung für das Verständnis dessen, was in der Geburt, dem Leben und dem geglückten Tod Jesu von Nazareth für den christlichen Glauben geschehen ist. ... Ganz sicher aber liegt hier ein besonderer Zugang zum Weihnachtsgeheimnis im Licht der Spiritualität des Ignatius. Im Bekenntnis der Inkarnation des ewigen Logos Gottes in unserem Fleisch wird doch gewiss gläubig von der «ontologischen», der «substantiellen» Einheit des Wortes Gottes und der vollen Menschlichkeit Jesu in Einheit und Differenz gesprochen. Hier darf nichts geleugnet und unterschlagen werden, aber diese Einheit von Gott und Mensch erreicht doch nur ihr eigenes Ziel und ihre Wesensvollendung, wenn sie im *Vollzug* gedacht wird, wenn also die göttlich herabsteigende und das einzelne in seiner Endlichkeit wollende Freiheit Gottes der von ihr getragenen Freiheit des Menschen begegnet und diese auf die Unbedingtheit Gottes hin und zur gehorsamen Annahme dieser Unbedingtheit befreit, die mithin der einmaligen Existenz des Einzelmenschen die Freiheit Gottes verleiht.

(Weihnachtshomilie 1974 – STh 12, 332f.)

E) Nachfolge Christi ist nicht die Beobachtung moralischer Maximen, die in Jesus vielleicht exemplarisch verwirklicht wären, die aber grundsätzlich auch unabhängig von ihm Geltung haben und erkannt werden können. Vielmehr ist sie das mitvollziehende Einschwingen in gerade sein Leben und *darin* in das uns geschenkte innergöttliche Leben. ... Die echte Nachfolge Christi im Mit-Leben mit ihm besteht also darin, die innere Gesetzmäßigkeit seines Lebens in je neuer und persönlich anderer Situation sich auswirken zu lassen ... muss ihre konkret für mich geltende Form jeweils von mir neu gefunden werden.

(*Betrachtungen*, veröffentlicht 1965 – SW 13, 119f.)

# **“The friendship between Thomas and Bonaventure is a beautiful symbol for what ought to be” -Karl Rahner, Augustin Bea and the Doctrine of Inspiration**

Michael Pfister, Westfälische Wilhelms University Münster

## *1. Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Augustin Bea (1881-1968) - two generations of Jesuits conversing about Bible and theology*

The dogmatist Rahner and the Old Testament-Scholar Bea represent not only two generations of Jesuits, but also two ways of practicing theology. Both dealt differently with the modern area and were considered reformers in account of the Second Vatican Council due to their variant points of view. Their correspondence from the 1950s displays their effort to enter into dialogue despite their disagreements on various theological issues. From the perspective of the former rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and Roman “chief exegete” Bea, Rahner’s unconventional reflections sometimes went too far.

## *2. Bea’s dispute with Rahner’s Writing “On the Inspiration of Scripture” (1958).*

Their struggle is exemplified by Bea’s discussion of Rahner’s treatise “Über die Schriftinspiration”, which was published in 1958 as the first volume of the series “Quaestiones Disputatae”. Bea wrote a review of the volume in which he critically reflected Rahner’s main theories on inspiration from a more traditional perspective. According to Rahner, one may find certainty about the question of inspiration through the Scripture and its canon in the life of the early Christian Community. He based his explanations and the various aspects of inspiration, which was critically challenged by the modern era, on this hypothesis. On the other hand, he was not able to convince Bea by this new interpretation. The Old-Testament-Scholar considered many things as „gar nicht so schwierig oder unlösbar, wie der Verfasser es darstellt“. Above all, Bea criticized Rahner’s narrow concept of inspiration, missing of consideration of the Old Testament and the fixation on the Early Church. Bea, however, refrained from publishing the article in order to protect Rahner from the clutches of ecclesiastical censorship.

## *3. An unequal dialogue? - Bea’s involvement in the process of censorship regarding several of Rahner’s publications from 1955 onwards.*

As a consultant of the mighty catholic authority, Bea was involved in the censorship proceedings opened against Rahner in 1955. Even if Bea did not write the decisive expert opinions on Rahner’s writings, the Roman Jesuit was an important link between the Holy Office and the Order. A letter written by general of the Jesuits, Jean Baptiste Janssens, led to strict measures, which the Order’s leadership took against Rahner. However, Rahner was able to keep his teaching position in Innsbruck.



**Escaping out of the neo-scholastic methodological paradigm.  
The use of Scripture in Karl Rahner’s “De Gratia Christi” in the horizon of  
contemporary “Gnadenlehre”.**

1. Introduction

2 The Use of Scripture in Karl Rahner's Lecture on the Theology of Grace: Examples

2.1 God's universal will for salvation: Foundation of the theology of grace (th. 1)

2.2 The necessity of grace: Biblical foundation of the entire treatise (th. 8)

2.3 Positioning in the grace controversy: Renunciation of positive argumentation (th. 17–19)

2.4 Priority of uncreated grace: fundamental decision with biblical support (th. 23)

*“It follows, however, that for Paul the inner sanctification of man is first and foremost a communication of this personal Spirit of God, thus scholastically spoken: donum increatum, and all created grace, all πνευματικός-being in him as a consequence, appears as an effect of the possession of this uncreated grace” (Rahner, Begrifflichkeit, 42).*

2.5 On the experience of grace: Biblical impetus in a scholastic controversy

*“[T]he old Thomistic proposition (sc. the assumption of a supernatural formal object) [...] commends itself [...] as a (metaphysical-theological) translation of the conviction expressed in Scripture. For if one honestly and impartially takes the teaching of Scripture as it lies, and fails to correct it in a tacit a priori, which did not imply this as this cannot be, then one will have to say: The communication of the Spirit to Scripture [...] is not only an entitative 'exaltation' of the consciously, existentially unchanging and only through the fides ex auditu from the outside changed moral acts of man, but 'life', 'anointing', 'consolation', 'light', inexpressible supplication of the Spirit, [...] etc. It would be good if once the doctrine of Scripture were closely interrogated in confrontation with this scholastic controversy. For one should gradually free oneself from the tacit opinion that in a factually serious and religiously important question, which is already certain in the a priori approach that no more clarity can be gained from Scripture if this question is controversial in the school, because then it must have been decided long ago” (Rahner, Nature, 124).*

3. Evaluation: The Use of Scripture in Rahner's Early Theology of Grace

*“A preliminary judgement, which admittedly needs even stronger justification, can be advanced that the explicit biblical work and its influence on theological production are still far from representing the 'soul of theology' [...]. The biblical expositions are presented as probation of a thesis already formulated in advance”, and further: “in their structure they [sc. the texts in question] are prisoners of the schema and thematic presupposition of the theological treatises that Rahner so often criticizes” (Schickendantz, exégesis, 138)*

### 3.1 “Steinbruchexegese“?

### 3.2 Observations on the relationship between dogmatics and exegesis based on Rahner's Codex of the Theology of Grace

*“[I]n aspect of these theological virtues, the essence of which is not systematically dealt with in the given [positivis] sources of the Church, in Scripture and in the Fathers of the Church, it is the task of theological reasoning to systematically bring into order those elements which are brought up here and there in this or that way by the present [positivorum] sources” (Rahner, Gratia, 1099)*

*“We now easily tacitly pretend that fixed canon of theses, concepts, etc., which we have made right for ourselves, are the only objects of our theological work, for which the Scriptures have only task is to supply the dicta probantia for this selection which has become canonical. [...] It must be noted, however, that by no means everything that is important in our time and for the vitality of theology has already been expressed reflexively and clearly in councils or papal doctrinal pronouncements. But if Scripture is only used by us in this way, then it cannot unfold its source-like inexhaustible fruitfulness [...]” (Rahner, Schriftbeweis, 147).*

### 3.3 Conclusion: Karl Rahner as a theologian of Scripture?

#### *Literature*

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# **“Which Scripture does the listener hear Karl Rahner? On the Relationship between Scripture and Dogmatics in Rahner's Treatise on Grace”**

Roman A. Siebenrock, Innsbruck

Preliminary remarks: All quotations are SW 5 “de gratia Christi”.

*Thesis 1: The “anthropological turn” is actually a Christological reconsideration, at whose centre is the doctrine of grace.*

Based on this observation, we consider that, regarding the Bible, Rahner thinks in the typological scheme of “promise and fulfilment”, and hence cannot grant the Old Testament any intrinsic value within itself. In this lecture, I will bring Rahner’s thinking and today’s Catholic understanding of the way of salvation for Judaism together.

*Thesis 2: In the treatise on grace, Rahner follows an already familiar textbook, therefore must “fit in” his own exegetical and biblical-theological reflections.*

Structure of the individual sections/theses

- Thesis

- Status quaestionis / the question: I: Introduction, II: Terms (explications), III: Meaning of the thesis, IV. Opponents, V: Qualification.

- Probatio / Proof: I: Church, II: Holy Scripture, III: Church Fathers, IV: Theologians; V: Theological reasoning ('ratio theologica').

*Thesis 3: Rahner thinks based on the NT and interprets Judaism through Paul (especially Rom.). He also attempts a reconciliation between Trent and “sola gratia”.*

*Thesis 4: Rahner is strongly oriented towards Paul and John. He makes use of dogmatic procedures with the Scripture (th. 1-3, yet is by no means a pure "quarry exegete" (th.8).*

Haec Dei voluntas salvifica nos attingit in Christo Jesu et ecclesia. (Lercher N, 1; = Rahner thesis 3)

Ad omnem actum salutarem interna gratia supernaturalis absolute et physice necessaria est.

(Lercher I 1,1; Thesis 14 = Rahner Thesis 8)

*Thesis 5: “Nostra Aetate” goes beyond Rahner’s treatise on grace. This declaratio allows us to elaborate further in dialogue with Judaism based on Rahner.*



# REPENTANT LIFE

## A Biblical-Theological Search for Traces in the Penitential Writings of Karl Rahner

Innsbruck, 25th of February 2022

Dorothea Sattler

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Source references: SW 6/1 and 6/2 as well as SW 11. Bible index in SW 32/2.

### 1. Preliminary remarks

From the beginning of his theological work to the end, Karl Rahner repeatedly considered individual aspects of the theology to penance. In particular, the study of the history of this sacrament was a matter lying close to his heart. He produced numerous individual studies, especially on the writings of the Church Fathers. Between the academic years 1945/46 and 1959/60, he held the lecture “De Paenitentia”, first in Pullach and later several times in Innsbruck. He considered individual systematic-theological questions in a thematic context.

Within the penitential-theological topics chosen by Karl Rahner, it is evident that his basic theological concern guided his interest: Rahner sought in an unquestionably presupposed ecclesial framework – within the ambience of the church - a connection between sacramental and personal piety in the light of the entanglement of guilt wrought by human beings. Corresponding to this concern, Rahner paid special attention to repentance motivated in love, as well as to the readiness for active conversion within the work of penance. In many places in the biblical writings, in narratives and reflections, he discovered references in particular to the existential consequences of sin in social interaction.

### 2. Outcome

As I perceive it, the Bible index of volume 32/2 of the "Complete Works" compiled by Albert Raffeld lists volumes 6/1 and 6/2 as well as 11, which are more frequently than any other volume devoted to the theme of repentance. With only a few exceptions, all biblical writings - in particular many ancient testimonies - are mentioned in Rahner's penitential theological studies.

The sober findings can be analysed in a more differentiated way in two directions. First, are there biblical passages frequently mentioned in Rahner's contributions? Secondly, does Rahner, by listing many scriptural testimonies on one topic, affirm that in his view this is a universal aspect of repentance, encompassing both Old and New Testament scriptures?

On the first question: Most of the individual scriptural verses are noted only once or a few times by Rahner. This can be interpreted as his willingness to pay careful attention to the respective thematic reference. Rahner referred to individual scriptural testimonies quite frequently. These include, on the one hand, the biblical pericopes which in the doctrinal tradition of the Church are constantly brought into connection with the question of the “institution” of the sacrament of reconciliation (Mt:16 and Mt 18; Jn 20; Jas 5:13-16; 1 Jn 5:16), and on the other hand, narratives and prayers on the theme of the repentance and conversion of people (Ps 51; Jn 2; Acts 8; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 7), thirdly words of judgement (Mt 25; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-9; 2 Pet 2), finally the announcement of reconciled times in a present-eschatological perspective (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 12:12-16; Rev 20).

Among the thematic areas in which Karl Rahner has presented a many Scriptural references of Old and New Testament origin by stringing them together in a small space are the areas of conversion and repentance of individuals (SW 6/1, 23 f), the talk of the “holy” Church (SW 6/1, 25-27), the possibility of forgiveness of sins (SW 6/1, 33) and the personal signs of lived repentance (SW 6/2, 89-113).

The result shows that Karl Rahner had a high readiness to reflect on basic themes of the Bible. He does not refer to individual exegetical studies. The reception of scriptural texts is mostly thematically motivated;

references to contexts of origin in the sense of historical attribution are usually missing. Anthropological, soteriological, ecclesiological and eschatological aspects guide Rahner's thinking: repentance leads to conversion, which is to be examined in the space of the church; eschatological hope exists for sinners who are willing to repent.

In my view, it is striking that Karl Rahner very often referred to works from the Old Testament's wisdom literature. Guiding people in their acts wisely in everyday life was obviously important to him. In general, it was important to him to connect the biblically transmitted Christian message with the existential feelings of people in the present day.

### 3 Critical Appreciation

Even preceding the Second Vatican Council, Karl Rahner held his lecture "De Paenitentia" in the accustomed way, stated by the decree on priestly formation "Optatum totius" in no. 16: Dogmatics must first discuss the themes of Sacred Scripture and only then bring them into conversation with Tradition. In his early individual studies on the penitential doctrine of the Church Fathers, Rahner rather rarely referred to Scriptural references (Rahner's studies on Origen constitute a major exception here).

In the context of penitential theology, Rahner cherished the Old Testament testimonies. This was not difficult for him, because in the writings themes that were interesting to him due to his anthropological orientation of theology are treated narratively and reflexively: above all the aspects of sin, the entanglement of guilt in the social context, repentance and conversion.

In his commentaries on the controversies with Reformation theology of the 16th century on the subject of penance and indulgences, Karl Rahner did not choose the level of argumentation over questions of scriptural hermeneutics. In other places, too, his scriptural references seem more like an effort to find testimonies and proofs, not sources with argumentative force.

Systematic-theological reflection today also faces the challenge of respecting Holy Scripture as the binding norm of all knowledge. The knowledge of preliminary decisions and interests in biblical interpretation diminishes the confidence of arriving at results in consensual processes on the path of methodically responsible interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to me to arrive at proven insights through a conscious spiritual familiarity with the Bible in intellectual approaches and tests of one's own thoughts in exchange with fellow thinkers. In my perception, Karl Rahner recognised that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament want to encourage people to live reconciled with one another in everyday life - despite all remaining temptation to sin.

# Distracted by ‘Transcendental’: For a Biblical Reorientation of English-Language Rahner Reception

Paper Presentation, *Karl Rahner und die Bibel* Symposium

Universität Innsbruck, 25 Feb. 2022

**Peter Joseph FRITZ**

College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

## 1. Introduction

*Thesis:* Proper contextualization of the “transcendental” Rahner can occur once Rahner’s theology is recognized as biblically saturated—not so much for its explicit references, but rather for its opening of the door between twentieth- and twenty-first century theology and deep exegetical traditions, and for its central focus on the incarnate Word who enlivens the Bible.

## 2. English-language Distraction by “Transcendental”

- a. *Theological Investigations*, v. 1: Cornelius Ernst’s editor’s introduction
- b. Rahner’s North American students: emphasis on philosophy, method
- c. Rahner’s North American lecture tours (1964–1979)
- d. *Foundations of Christian Faith* (ET of *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 1978)

## 3. Rahner as “Türöffner” (Raffelt)

- a. Thomas O’Meara: Rahner and “transcendental primacy” in scriptural interpretation?
- b. Re-reading *Theological Investigations I: Case Studies for a Possible Alternative Reception*
  - i. “Theos im Neuen Testament”
  - ii. “Zur theologischen Begriff der Konkupiszenz”
- c. Rahner’s lectures and splitting from metaphysics (thus, “transcendental”)
  - i. *De Paenitentia*

## 4. *Verbum Abbreviatum*

- a. *Hypothesis:* Rahner’s theology roots itself in pre-modern exegetical traditions
- b. *Verbum abbreviatum* tradition
- c. *Abgekürztes Wort* in Rahner’s texts
  - i. *Worte ins Schweigen*
  - ii. “Zur Theologie des Symbols”; “Zur Theologie der Menschwerdung”
  - iii. *Grundkurs* and creeds
- d. “Die Herausforderung der Theologie durch das II. Vatikanische Konzil”: Christology and biblical sciences ... and the *Verbum abbreviatum*?
  - i. Finer-grained analysis of Jesus of history (e.g., historical Jesus research; postcolonial biblical studies; gender studies)

## 5. Conclusion: Reorienting Rahner Studies toward “Searching the Word”



# **The Old Testament in Ratzinger's "Einführung in das Christentum", Küng's "Christ sein" and Rahner's "Grundkurs des Glaubens"**

*Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Wien*

## **1. Joseph Ratzinger: Einführung in das Christentum (Introduction to Christianity) (1968)**

- Revelation-historical approach: "Whoever wants to understand the faith in the biblical God must follow its historical development, from its origins rooted in the history of the Fathers of Israel up to the last writings of the New Testament" (JRGS, 4, 118).
- Ratzinger sees a continuing development throughout the history of revelation attested in the Old Testament, leading to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which already contains two essential elements of the Christian concept of God, namely personhood and universality: "Christ himself appears, as it were, as the burning bush from which the name of God is revealed to humanity" (132).
- Based on selected texts and motifs (burning bush, God of the Fathers, meaning of the name of God, polytheism - monotheism), Ratzinger shows that within the Old Testament "a quite astonishing parallel of a temporal and factual nature between the philosophical criticism of myths in Greece and the prophetic criticism of gods in Israel" can be found (137).
- Thus, the Church Fathers settled "for the God of the philosophers, against the gods of the religions" (136).
- In doing so, they did not succumb to a falsifying Hellenisation of the biblical faith in God. They opted for truth (of philosophy) and against custom (of ancient religions).
- Granted, the God of the philosophers was thereby transformed fundamentally: "By opting for the God of the philosophers alone and consequently declaring this God to be the God to whom one prays and who speaks to man, the Christian faith bestowed this God of the philosophers with a completely new meaning, liberated him from the merely academic and thus profoundly transformed him" (141).

## **2. Hans Küng: Christ sein (Being a Christian) (1974)**

- Küng sees in the historical Jesus, as he liberates him with the help of the historical-critical method "from the dust and debris of two thousand years of interpretation, the 'authoritative administrator of God'".
- On the one hand, the message of Jesus stands in continuity with the Old Testament: "He proclaims no other God than the rather uncomfortable *God of the Old Testament*. Jesus did not want to establish a new religion, did not want to proclaim a new God" (286).
- On the other hand, it stands in discontinuity with the Old Testament: "the God of the Old Testament - better understood!" (302)
- Jesus is the administrator of God who is formally identical with the one testified within the Old Testament ("no other God"), yet still differentiates from it in some essential content related points ("a truly outrageous revolution in the understanding of God" - 303): "It is not a new God that he proclaims;

it still is the God of the covenant. Yet this old God of the covenant in a decidedly new light. *God is not another, but he is different!* Not a God of law, but a God of grace!” (304).

### **3. Karl Rahner: Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums (Basic Course in Faith. Introduction to the Concept of Christianity) (1976)**

- Rahner's theology is rooted in a mystical experience / intuition.
- Starting point: What is revelation?
- Rahner distinguishes between transcendental revelation and categorical revelation.
- *Transcendental revelation* is identical with the “supernatural existential” and means the one self-communication of God which “every human being is provided with at least in the mode of offering” (133). It is, strictly seen, the actual revelation, the prerequisite for the “special history of revelation” portrayed in the Bible in order to reach men. “In this sense, *every* person, literally every person, must be understood as event of a supernatural self-communication of God, even if not precisely to this end that every person necessarily accepts this self-communication of God to man in freedom” (133).
- *Categorical revelation* is the interpretation of transcendental revelation in the spatiotemporal categories of history. It is history of revelation in the usual sense of the word, as it exists in the Old and New Testaments, however, according to Rahner, is not necessarily limited to it (159): “Every correct historical self-interpretation of man’s supernatural relationship to God, limited in region or time, thus entails an inner dynamic, though perhaps hidden from itself, towards universalism, towards the mediation of an ever more adequate religious self-understanding of all men” (165).
- Question: If God announces Himself to every human being in the transcendental revelation, what else can God communicate about Himself in the categorical revelation if “everything has already been said” in the transcendental revelation? - Specifically: Should I meditate or read the Bible?
- In my view, Rahner has a hard time finding an answer. - Strictly speaking, he leaves the question unanswered (174). My impression: He actually wants to say: Meditation is enough! As a Catholic theologian, however, he cannot and does not want to leave this statement as it is; hence his profound (tortuous?) answers: “In the particular, regional, categorical history of revelation, the first, the general history of revelation of a transcendental and categorical kind comes to its full essence and full historical objectivation, without having to mention that the first history of revelation may be overlooked because the second exists” (165).
- One might say: The transcendental revelation is *awareness*, categorical, historical revelation is knowledge (175). In other parts he speaks of both sides of revelation, the transcendental and the historical, being “necessary for revelation to be par excellence” (174).
- “The prophet, seen theologically correctly, is nothing else than the believer who can properly state his transcendental experience of God” (163). This ought to be a guiding word for the exegesis of the Old Testament.
- Meaning: The exegete ought to meditate *and* read the Bible so that he understands and states his transcendental experience of God (in meditation) correctly in the light of the Bible and at the same time correctly understands and interprets the Bible in the light of transcendental revelation, meaning: not as pure human word, but as God’s word expressed in human word – and to be grateful to Karl Rahner for this synthesis.



**Impaired Departure –  
Karl Rahner’s Positions on the Old Testament**  
Georg Fischer SJ, Rahner Conference in Innsbruck, 25.Feb.2022

Preliminary remarks: range of his work; a long life with developments.

1. *The difficult relationship between Church and Bible in the first half of the 20th century*

Magisterial guidelines impeded the interpretation of the Scripture.

Church and dogma were the dominating factors for Rahner, whilst the Bible came in second and the Exegesis in fourth place. However, efforts of mediation are visible.

2. *The core problem: How is God’s revelation in the OT to be interpreted?*

In the encyclopaedic articles, the “*heilsgeschichtliche Perspektive*” can be considered as a track that inevitably leads to an underestimation of the OT. This is put into perspective from the fulfilment in Jesus Christ and constitutes merely the prehistory to the ‘actual’, universal revelation found in him.

Some phrases (e.g. “ist nicht Mose ... naiv konzipiert”?) display a *lack of understanding* regarding the OT, which is almost equated with scriptures of other religions. Rahner’s attitude therefore affects the relationship to Judaism and the relationship between OT and NT.

3. *The Usage of the Bible*

The register in SW 32/2 contains about 1800 references to the OT and 8500 to the NT. If the varying extent is included, it can be estimated that Rahner refers to the NT *about 16 times more*. In the early works clearly more scriptural references can be found than later on.

From the OT, Psalms, Genesis and Isaiah are used most frequently, after them Jeremiah, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, Wisdom, Job, Ben Sira, Exodus follow. The *focus* thus lies on the Wisdom writings, the Torah and the Major Prophets. Rahner has a sense for important texts (Gen 1–3; Deut 30 ...), but other ones are lacking (e.g. Exod 34; Job 19 ...).

There are *missed opportunities*, especially in regard to the OT. For significant topics, Rahner does not or only rather late mention biblical key texts (Lev 25; Gen 15:6; Exod 19:6). The fact that God himself suffers and finds himself involved in an enduring struggle with the community that grows in faith, would also deserve more attention.

4. *Understanding biblical texts*

Based on his education in the Order and his spiritual life, Rahner was *inwardly familiar* with the Bible. Therefore, he often grasped its meaning and interpreted passages correctly (Psa 23; Deut 18). Occasionally he made misinterpretations (Gen 1–2).

However, the fundamental problem at that time can be found in the lack of a secure methodology: How can a text be interpreted *both scientifically and appropriate for faith*? The difficulties shown here explain the preference for biblical theology over exegesis.

5. *Retrospect and yield*

The Bible was *very important* to Karl Rahner. In his time, its reception was ‘impeded’ by the conditions and possibilities of the time, as well as personally influenced by his strong philosophical and systematic character. Nevertheless, he embraced it, changed in the process and mediated between the subjects. Rahner is an example, which shows how the OT plays a decisive role for the relationship to God and for faith.



## **Karl Rahner – Bible and Council**

Karl-Heinz Neufeld, keynote speech

### *Preliminary note*

At the Second Vatican Council the criterion of the “biblical” was important and decisive for both criticism, as well as for the acceptance of proposals. Many reasons can be concluded as to where this all originated from, especially when the exact content intended to convey remains uncertain. Karl Rahner set to his preparation rather casually, using upper criterion even preceding the church assemblage and was rather successful with this approach in his circle. The reason why he made use of this approach may be found in Rahner’s confrontation with the biblical justification of the more recent “Mariendogmen” (1854 and 1950). His commitment to the dogma of 1950, especially when taking an ecumenical view on Protestants, is to be found in Paul’s principle: „wir wurden mit ihm begraben durch die Taufe auf den Tod und wie Christus ... von den Toten auferweckt wurde, so sollen auch wir als neue Menschen leben“ (Rom 6:4). This was brought forward by Rahner in „Zur Theologie des Todes“ (QD 2), Freiburg 1958.

#### *1. Personal remembrance*

The QD 1 “Über die Schriftinspiration”, Freiburg 1958, with which the series founded and edited by K. Rahner, and Heinrich Schlier started; here the “Introduction” (p. 5–10) to the QD project and then Rahner’s explanations is to be found.

#### *2. Experiences of a problem*

QD 2 “Zur Theologie des Todes”, Freiburg 1958 (cf. the references above and the contribution “Biblische Theologie” in collaboration with Schlier for the LThK II [1958], [SW 17/1, 145–147])

#### *3. The logic of finding*

„Überlegungen zur Dogmenentwicklung“, 1957 (SW 9, 442–471) with the introduction „Dogmenentwicklung innerhalb der Schrift“ 444–446

#### *4. Preparation of the Council*

In 1962 K. R. prepared seven reports for Card. König and Döpfner regarding the preparatory text sent from Rome for the coming Council (SW 21/1, 37–214), in which the criterion of the “biblical” appears repeatedly. We analyze this material here.

#### *5. The criterion of the “biblical” according to K. Rahner*

Summary and references to possible further investigations and immersions regarding „Die Schrift als das Buch der Kirche“ (SW 26,350–357)



## **Rahner on compassion and divine love in the Scripture**

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Wucherpennig SJ, PTH Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt/Main, 26.Feb. 2022

Basic text:

Rahner, Karl (1965): Über die Einheit von Nächsten- und Gottesliebe. In: Karl Rahner: Schriften zur Theologie. Band VI: Neuere Schriften, S. 277–298.

1. Karl Rahner considers divine love as well as compassion as conveyed by the New Testament to be fundamental for his transcendental approach. He raises the following thesis: „Die kategorial-explizite Nächstenliebe ist der primäre Akt der Gottesliebe, die in der Nächstenliebe als solcher Gott in übernatürlicher Transzendentalität unthematisch, aber wirklich und immer meint, und auch die explizite Gottesliebe ist noch getragen von jener vertrauend-liebenden Öffnung zur Ganzheit der Wirklichkeit hin, die in der Nächstenliebe geschieht“ (S. 295).
2. The oldest written tradition of Jesus conveyed by the New Testament reveals the Jewish root of the unity of divine love and compassion. In conversation with the Jewish scribe, Jesus distinguishes between the first commandment of divine love and the second of compassion. The Jewish scribe combines the two, resulting into double commandment (“Doppelgebot”) as the virtue of love (Mk 12:28-34).
3. Rahner’s justification of the systematic connection between compassion and divine love is strongly supported by the reflection and theological development of the Jesus tradition in the First Letter of John. The fact that God is indeed love and that he loved us first does not mean that we should love him again, but that we should love one another (4:11). Love for God realizes in acting benevolently and beneficently towards each other.
4. In his transcendental phenomenology of love, Rahner takes an anthropocentric view of the personhood of the human being. The biblical view presumably assumes more strongly a God-centered togetherness of the human being with the non-human creature (in the NT cf. for example Rom 8:20-24; Rev 4:7-10), i.e. it goes beyond a purely personal togetherness. Is it possible to integrate this view of the Bible into Rahner’s transcendental approach?



## Rahner und Tension: How Rahner Copes with divergent positions in the Corpus Paulinum

Hildegard Scherer, Chur

1 Eschatology: Scenes in 1 Thess 4:16f. diff. 1 Kor 15:23–28.51f.

	1 Thess 4:16f	1 Kor 15:18.23-25.51–53	Rahner
Parousia events	„Catching” the Lord in the air	---	Assumptio 176f.: inference of Apg 1:9; 1 Kor 15:51–53
Resurrection body	---	Metamorphosis of the living in the Parousia moment (gr. diff. Vulg.)	Assumptio 137.152.180; Theologie des Todes 352: Metamorphosis-/perfection motif: 1 Thess as evidence
Death experience	<i>nekroi/mortui</i>	„Those who passed away in Christ”	Assumptio 139, Theologie 382, christliche Sterben 299: Action motif: 1 Thess as evidence

2 Protology und Anthropology: 1 Kor 11:8f. diff. 11:11f./1 Kor 7:3–5 diff. Kol 3:18f.; Eph 5:21.22–33

	1 Kor 11:8f.	1 Kor 11:11f.	Rahner
Relation of the sexes	Not the man from the woman, but the woman from the man (subordination)	Like the woman from the man, thus the man through the woman, everything from God (reciprocity)	Deo create 167f., cf. E latere 21: Also V. 12 as repetition of Gen 2/woman from man, justification of „gewisse Unterordnung”.
1 Kor 11:4f. right to speak on equal terms in Visionen 52 without reflection on sexes; 1 Kor 14:33–36 not commented, cf. Mann in der Kirche 134; Siebenfältige Gabe 332f.: 1 Petr 3 quoted for subordination, Kol 3:18 und Eph 5 for love commandment for husbands; Ehe als Sakrament 655: Subordination justified, inspite of being culturally limited; 1 Kor 7:3–5: relation on equal terms for couples not mentioned; Eph 5:21: appeal to mutual subordination not mentioned.			

3 Ekklesiology: Leadership groups and -roles: Gal 2:1–10 diff. Apg 15/1 Kor 16:15f.; Röm 16:1 diff. Phil 1,1

	Gal 2:1–10	Apg 15	Rahner
Leadership group Jerusalem	Peter, John, James (Lord’s brother)	Apostles, presbyters Peter, James (Lord’s brother)	Ius divinum 319: Both texts as evidence for apostles who after Pentecost acted «in der Weise einer kollegialen Grösse», Petrus as «Spitze» Different definition of apostles of 1 Kor 15,7 not mentioned
Level of agreement	Human agreement	God’s will	Art. Kirche: pointing to Apg 15:4 (??) Vgl. Art. Trost: Apg 15:31f. as “Trost Gottes” Vgl. Kerygma und Dogma 40: „Gegenwart Christi im Modus des Wortes“ in „Erstverkündigung“ or „Versammlung“ > evidence Apg 15

	1 Kor 1:15; Röm 16:1	Phil 1:1	
Leadership roles	House of Stephanas Phoebe diakonos	<i>episkopoi und diakonoi</i>	Ungläubige Verwandte 276: 1 Kor 16:15 as evidence a. o. for „familienweise christlich” Charismatische 350: Röm 16:1 „nicht nur Amtscharismen” Art. Bischof: „B.samt z. B. Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12“ (u. a.) „sehr deutlich greifbar”





# Declare Faith – Proclaim Faith. Reflections on the Sermons of Karl Rahner

Anni Findl-Ludescher

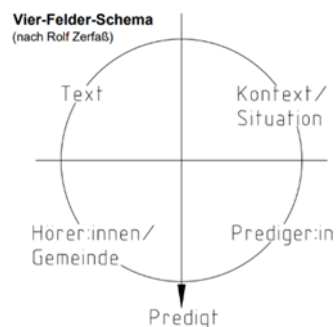
Preliminary remarks: \*I am not an expert on Rahner; approach to person and theology via the sermons.

\* Sermons are always unique, they cannot be forced into a fixed pattern, yet recognizable patterns can be worked out.

## 1. Characterization of Rahner's sermons:

- Outside: a model as a slide<sup>1</sup>

Rahner uses almost exclusively two of these fields as sources "text" and "listeners"



for his sermons:

- Inside: The typical Rahner-Sermon-Scheme has 4 phases: 1. text comprehension 2. text meditation 3. turning to the listeners 4. turning to God.

- Language: Phase 1: teaching/information. Phase 2: between meditation and bibliodrama. Phase 3: Rhetorical questions/ repetitions/ homiletic WE. Phase 4: Prayer

## Analysis of four sermons (two pairs of sermons).

Two different sermons on the same biblical passage, one from the 1950s and one from the post-Vatican II period.)

Luke 16:1-9: "Gleichnis vom ungetreuen Verwalter" (1956<sup>2</sup> and 1968<sup>3</sup>)

John 18:33-38: "Jesus und Pilatus: Pilatusfrage" (1955<sup>4</sup> and 1973<sup>5</sup>)

- Succumbing the Second Vatican Council, Rahner tends to become more concrete in terms of content, yet he also tends to become more individualistic, more freeing, ... and even becomes a cautious "Ich-Sager";

- In the biblical references, he becomes more reserved in his assessment of his exegetical or biblical-theological competence, yet at the same time he becomes more precise and devotes more attention to textual meditation. Sermon parts emerge which are - in the best sense - biographical and biblical theology.

## 3. Conclusion

\*"Mystagogische Predigt" \*Regarding form and language, no significant alterations are visible. \*In terms of content, he deepens and differentiates the approach to "his" two fields: "text" and "listeners"; \*When preaching, Rahner remains oblivious to context.

<sup>1</sup> Rolf Zerfaß, Grundkurs Predigt 1. Spruchpredigt, Düsseldorf 1987, 78-80.

<sup>2</sup> Rahner, SW 14, 248-250.

<sup>3</sup> Rahner, SW 23, 447-451.

<sup>4</sup> Rahner, SW 14, 265-266.

<sup>5</sup> Rahner, SW 23, 470-472.



# **Karl Rahner's Style of Speaking and his Use of the Bible in Dialogue with different People and Situations**

Benedikt J. Collinet, Innsbruck, 26.Feb.2022

Preliminary remarks: Phases (H.Vorgrimler); prejudice of "over-complexity"

*Thesis 1: Rahner adapted to his counterpart.*

Rahner could very well distinguish whether he was speaking to pupils, interview partners or the Sunday sermon audience, or whether he was addressing an educated specialist audience or the intellectually interested public. His style of speech is adapted accordingly, the sentences are shorter and less precise, and the statements more striking while the use of metaphors increases.

*Thesis 2: Research and life go hand in hand.*

Rahner clearly distinguishes between theological speculations and existentially life-relevant statements. These differ in style, but not in statement. His spiritual statements are always in harmony with his theological research, sometimes even seeming slightly ahead of it.

*Thesis 3: For Rahner, criticism is a reflected distinction.*

Repeatedly, Karl Rahner criticises the Church or the Magisterium and dignitaries in his decisions when he feels they fall short of the power of the message. However, he is very loyal and always sees the good, the potential and the hope alongside many criticisms.

*Thesis 4: Two late rhetorical tricks: "concealment" or "self-relativisation"*

When Rahner rejects an older thesis, e.g. in his relationship to Judaism, he simply no longer speaks of it as if it had never existed. The second trick often comes into play from the 1960s onwards when it comes to exegesis. He invokes his right as a dogmatist not to be an exegete and therefore no longer to present any ultimate responsibility for an interpretation or any interpretation at all.

*Thesis 5: Rahner worked - and discussed - with exegetes of all denominations and provenances.*

Ex: H.Haag, N.Lohfink, P.Lapide, H.Schlier, R.Bultmann, R.Schnackenburg, R.Kittel

### Texts Thesis 1

“It is true that God can make the evil of human freedom turn to salvation and grace in others, even for those who seek and love him. Paul already emphasised this (look for the passage in Romans yourself!)” (Letter to Christiane 1970s, SW 28, 38).

“It [celibacy] is not our most central task. It is not the easiest thing, not the most natural thing [...] If we have nothing else left in terms of spiritual strength, because we are just sitting, as it were, on the powder keg of our sexuality and are making every effort not to let it come to an explosion, then we have certainly misunderstood and misrealized the celibacy that God has offered us, as his true grace.” (1950s, SW 13, 354f.)

### Texts Thesis 2

“My faith does not depend on whether exegetically and ecclesiastically the correct interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis has already been found or not, whether a decision of the Bible Commission or the Holy Office is the last word or not.”

“My Christianity is [...] therefore anything but an ‘explanation’ of the world and of my existence, is rather the prohibition of regarding any experience, any understanding (good and enlightening as they may be) as final, as in itself entirely intelligible. The Christian has fewer ‘final’ answers than anyone else, which he is allowed to acknowledge with a ‘now the matter is clear’. His God he cannot put into the reckoning of his life as a single and sussed item, but can only accept the incomprehensible mystery, silently and adoringly.” (Late 1970s, SW 28, 563)

### Texts Thesis 3

“It is not enough, in order to achieve this pastoral character, to cite texts of Sacred Scripture. For these quotations appear rather as those dicta probantia with which a doctrine already known and certain elsewhere tends to be supported in school, not as the source from which the truth to be proclaimed itself first flows forth.” (Expert opinion on “de fontibus revelationis” (1962, SW 21/1, 242).

“The beginning is made, even if it is only a beginning. The pilgrim people of God, which is the Church, could begin this exodus because it believes that the dark cloud of mystery, of redemption, of ineffable freedom has always enveloped the summits of human history and has always dwelt in all the abysses of death, failure and futility. Because [...] it confesses Jesus crucified and risen as the unconditional promise of this God to the world, it has been able to take leave of a tent we have called the Pianic Era and begin an exodus that God meets.” (1971, SW 24/1, 323)

### Texts Thesis 5

“You exegetes sometimes forget that you are Catholic theologians.” (“Exegese und Dogmatik”, SW 12, 173).

“Am I really such a nailed-down systematist who sets aside exegesis that understands itself rightly and does not want to admit that, alongside the philosophical and theological-speculative systematic sciences, there are the historical sciences without which man would not find his being?” (“Exegesis in the Theological Studies” [1968], SW 12, 461)