



## The Second Vatican Council as object of study: the formation of *conciliar cultures*

O Concílio Vaticano II como objeto de leitura:  
a formação das *culturas conciliares*

Rodrigo Coppe Caldeira\*

### Abstract

Discussions about the reception of the Second Vatican Council have intensified over the past two decades. In the context of historiography, the reflection on the place of this council in the history of contemporary Catholicism and the discussion on the sources and ways of capturing its reception are taking their first steps. We move from the concern to construct a history of the council itself, for the later moment, that is, of its reception. In addition to a hermeneutic concern linked to theological concerns, the historians of the conciliar reception open new theoretical paths of analysis, but also methodological ones, looking for new ways to approach the phenomenon. In this way, we come across new sources that could collaborate in its understanding. This article has as its central objective to discuss the theoretical possibility that takes the council as an object of study by certain actors, thus developing what we have called the conciliar culture: representations about the event built by certain groups and that bear their own characteristics. We developed the concept from an approximation with Cultural History, particularly the one that was developed by Roger Chartier, and we offer, at the end of the text, a brief example of how this perspective can be used, that is, in the study of theological journals.

**Keywords:** Second Vatican Council. Reception. Conciliar cultures.

### Resumo

Os debates sobre a recepção do Concílio Vaticano II se adensaram nas últimas duas décadas. No âmbito da historiografia, a reflexão sobre o lugar desse concílio na história do catolicismo contemporâneo e a discussão sobre as fontes e formas de captar a sua recepção dão seus primeiros passos. Passa-se da preocupação de se construir uma história do concílio propriamente dita, para o momento posterior, ou seja, a sua recepção. Para além de uma preocupação hermenêutica ligada às preocupações teológicas, os historiadores da recepção conciliar abrem novos caminhos teóricos de análise, mas também metodológicos, buscando novas formas de abordar o fenômeno. Dessa forma, se deparam com novas fontes que podem colaborar em sua compreensão. Esse artigo tem como objetivo central discutir a possibilidade teórica que toma o concílio como um objeto de leitura por parte de certos atores, desenvolvendo assim o que chamamos de *cultura conciliar*: representações sobre o evento construídas por certos grupos e que trazem suas características próprias. Desenvolvemos o conceito a partir de uma aproximação com a História Cultural, particularmente aquela desenvolvida por Roger Chartier e oferecemos, no final do texto, um breve exemplo de como essa perspectiva pode ser utilizada, qual seja, no estudo das revistas teológicas.

**Palavras-chave:** Concílio Vaticano II. Recepção. Culturas conciliares.

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\* Doctor in Religious Studies from UFJF. Professor in the PPGCR PUC-Minas. Country of origin: Brazil. E-mail: rodrigocoppe@me.com

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The epistemological question has become a central issue in the theoretical reflection of historians over the past forty years. Along with it, the theme of sources and their possibilities has also emerged. Regarding the study of the history of the reception of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in Brazil, a reasonable number of unanalyzed sources that collaborate to understand the process in new perspectives is still open to be explored. One of them refers to the wide collection of national theological journals that can offer us clarifying elements about the *conciliar cultures* that have been created in the spaces and times in which the conciliar reception takes place. As Routhier (2004, p. 9) points out, the study of conciliar reception is strictly interested in two perspectives: to study the effect of the council on ecclesial life and try to raise mediations (actors, groups, networks or institutions) and / or the factors that have contributed to the production of such an effect. If the studies of the effects of the event within the scope of the institution's hierarchical power (reception in the code of canon law, in episcopal conferences, in pastoral practices, etc.) have taken long steps, historiographic researches whose object is mediations advance, but not with the same vigor as the first ones, and also without a more comprehensive theoretical reflection about the act of making history.

With regard to sources, theological journals can be taken as important mediations in this process of reception whereas, for example, they became resources so that the readings on the council could deepen and advance in ecclesial spaces, particularly those of formation. In addition, they are promising sources to clarify also the sociability networks that are constituted and have emerged in importance from religious but also political interests.

This article proposes to carry out a theoretical reflection on the proposed concept of conciliar cultures and to point to the possibilities offered by this type of document for reception studies, focusing our analysis on a specific Brazilian

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example in order to demonstrate how it can become an important section of a research program<sup>2</sup> regarding the reception of the council.

For this purpose we will be listing the *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* (REB) as an example of a source with the aim of pointing to clues that could be followed by other historians in order to verticalize their research related to conciliar cultures, thus observing their representations, practices, shocks and competitions in specific spaces and times.

### **1 *Conciliar cultures: reception, beliefs and representations***

The reception of an ecumenical council within the Catholic Church presents us with some historiographic approaches that need to be taken into account. The history of the Church carried out in Brazil has taken important steps, in general, from the 1970s under the influence of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) to the social and human sciences<sup>3</sup>. The Church understood that the instruments of research and analysis of these fields of knowledge could also collaborate with their pastoral practices. It is noted that the historiography that was built was markedly carried out by agents inside the ecclesial apparatus, influenced by specific theological perspectives that have further developed and consolidated from then on.

However, important theoretical perspectives, particularly those that revolve around epistemological problems about the construction of historical knowledge, and the actual history of the conciliar event, which has taken long strides in the last decades of the 20th century, have not progressed at the same speed and depth of the historiographic realization that had this council for its object.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a historiographical critique of the Catholic Church in Brazil has not yet been carried out in a vertical way. To speak of a research program on conciliar reception in the country is to necessarily assume this historiography.

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<sup>2</sup> On the characteristics of a research program on conciliar reception, see Routhier (2004, p. 5-18).

<sup>3</sup> In one of its most central documents, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the council stated: "In pastoral care, not only the theological principles should be sufficiently known and used, but also the discoveries of profane sciences, especially psychology and sociology". (GS 406).

<sup>4</sup> I made some mentions regarding this issue in Caldeira (2011, p. 211-226). A reflective overview of the council's historiography can be read in Schickendantz (2014, p. 105-141).

Having made the invitation to pay attention to the epistemological and historiographical problems for which we are submerged when making the history of the council, we will then point to one of the possibilities that has yet to be realized in the historiography of Vatican II, which should not be restricted to solely organize the path taken by its main actors in the struggle over the drafting of the documents promulgated by the Council. This type of history, initiated by Giuseppe Alberigo and his followers, provided us with fundamental works to understand the context of those who played central roles in the achievement of the conciliar work, the textual corpus.<sup>5</sup> Without these procedural elements, there is no possible theological hermeneutics of the council. Until recently, the council's researchers focused their efforts on finding what was experienced, on getting to know it. The challenge that opens up when we use these new sources as an object and way of understanding the reception of the council - the theological Journals - is the one that was summed up in Certeau's phrase: "about what is thinkable and about the conditions of understanding". (CERTEAU, 2014, p. 26). "The history of the council includes the history of its reception," says Ormond Rush (2004, p. 52). Looking at the field of research around the conciliar reception, both the historiography of the event in these fifty years of its conclusion can be studied and analyzed as part of this conciliar history, as well as the representations of the event forged by the many social actors who interpreted it in the most diverse circumstances. The council's historiography is part of its reception process, and is thus also an object of scholars who wish to apprehend it, covering fields that are still little or almost unexplored. Several theoretical and methodological possibilities are open to those who seek to understand the event and its reception in new Keys.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> We can quote as its main examples the five volumes of the History of the Second Vatican Council, written by a team of international researchers. In Brazil, unfortunately only the first two volumes were translated by Editora Vozes. See also Faggioli (2005), Scatena (2003), Velati (1996). See a comprehensive review of the work as a whole: Vallin (2005, p. 215-245).

<sup>6</sup> Some of them: what was said about the council? What did those priests and faithful in parishes spread across Brazil, with different dilemmas, horizons and backgrounds, who lived in those years between 1959 and 1965, used to understand about what was happening at that event? Conflicts, disagreements, antagonisms, the images produced; the council that takes place in the midst of those who experience their religiosity in an ordinary way, still far from the perception and analysis of researchers, the daily experience of the faith of ordinary people, the blessed, the youth, the priest, the faithful - a history of everyday life conciliar reception. This story remains to be made and can help us to understand more fully the effects of the council on the lives of people who profess the Catholic creed; A "historical psychology" of the council and its reception is also a possible field, which would aim to reconstruct the behaviors, expressions and silences that would translate the worldviews, the collective sensibilities; images, representations and values recognized and supported by groups or by global society, and which constitute the contents of collective psychology, provide the fundamental elements of this investigation (MANDROU apud RICOEUR, 2007, p. 205).

From these broader questions, we come to our specific object which is to reflect on the phenomenon of the reception of the council from specific sources, namely, the Brazilian theological journals, and thus, to glimpse the conciliar cultures that emerge from these publications and their representatives.

We then return to the concept brought up in the introduction to this article: conciliar cultures. Analyzing theological journals as historical sources for thinking about the conciliar reception is to open a space for theoretical and methodological reflection, which is to reflect on the conciliar cultures starting from the investigation of the history of theological production in Brazil - authorized narrative - considering that their production is part of a political-religious situation that associates certain practices with social places of production. Such production is, more broadly, immersed in the tensions and dynamics of the reception of Vatican II, the international political situation of the Cold War and, in Brazil, the civil-military coup in 1964 to the period of redemocratization. Therefore, reflecting on the formation and dissemination of these conciliar cultures is seeking to understand the varied interpretations of the conciliar event, how they are produced, in what spaces, through which networks of sociability, and pervaded by which representations. By focusing on the beliefs and representations of these specific groups about the council, that is, the clergy and laity - Brazilian and foreign intellectuals who wrote about the conciliar event -, perspectives are opened to understand a specific facet of the event reception process conciliar: readers and readings of the council. This means focusing methodologically on attention to the council's interpretations, not the council itself as a historical event. It is necessary to pay attention to how the reconciling reality, and its own texts, are possible to be interpreted, and what practices emerge from the readings that are carried out. The focus, therefore, is on the processes of construction of meaning that are triggered by the actors as they start to read the text - “to the practices that, plurally, contradictorily, attribute meaning to the world” (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 27).

We denominate as conciliar cultures, the beliefs, representations, feelings and practices that emerge among the different actors that host Vatican II - interpretations of the council concretized in certain narratives. The concept

makes reference to the expression “culture of war”, forged by historians to designate a set of representations elaborated before, during and after the First World War. At the theological level, the concept was initially proposed, as a conceptual possibility, by Routhier in his work *Vatican II. Herméneutique et réception* (2006). The theologian relates him to media representations of the period. The term was also used by Coutard (2001) in a study on the Catholic press and Vatican II in Québec, Canada. Nevertheless, the initial perspective of using the term go that way, we advocate a conceptual broadening, relating it to the theoretical possibilities of cultural history and the use of new sources, such as theological journals.

The theoretical proposal on the concept of conciliar cultures follows the theological reflection that Routhier presented in his article *La réception d'un concilie* (1993). In the aforementioned article, the theologian mentions two types of reception: kerygmatic reception and practical reception. The kerygmatic reception designates the set of efforts put into work particularly by the bishops to make it possible to know the decisions of a council and to promote them effectively (ROUTHIER, 1993). The legal act of ratification of conciliar documents by the pope is at that moment of reception, which would be characterized as a formal reception, that is to say, within a canonical and legal framework. (ROUTHIER, 1993, p. 88) Papal confirmation does not exhaust kerygmatic reception, but it constitutes a first element, the “legal” condition of such reception; reception as an act of the whole Church presupposes a kerygmatic reception, since it is from the official reception that the pope recognizes the documents as an authentic expression of an apostolic reality.

Along with the kerygmatic reception is the practical reception, which designates the stage of the infiltration of conciliar decisions in the body of the Universal Church and of the particular Churches. The Church renews its understanding of itself, so that this fact appears in three domains of language, that is, the ritual (liturgy), the didactic (catechetical) and the institutional (law). What we need to be aware of is that the reality of the transition from the process of receiving institutions to mentalities, that is, to full reception, occurs only in the long term, and not without competitions and conflicts of narratives.

Reception is not an isolated act, but a process that takes place over a long period of time and has a particular context as well as specific actors who are its agents.

Conciliar cultures are narratives, textual or not, elaborated from specific contexts. Our conception is fundamentally influenced by cultural history as proposed by Chartier, which “has as main object to identify the way in different places and moments a given social reality is constructed, thought, and interpreted” (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 16). Perception and apprehension of the real event that, in turn, generate a whole range of actions and performances.

For Chartier, the concept of representation articulates three modalities of the relationship with the social world:

1. The work of delimiting and classifying the multiple intellectual configurations, ‘through which reality is contradictorily constructed by different groups’.
2. The ‘practices that aim to make a social identity recognized, exhibit their own way of being in the world, symbolically signify a status and a position’.
3. Institutionalized and objective forms thanks to which ‘representatives’ (collective bodies or natural persons) mark so quite visible and perpetuated the existence of the group, class or community. (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 154).

The context in which the actors are inserted, crossed by political sensitivities as well as by economic and cultural dynamics, is the ground through which the representations emerge.

Thus, the perceptions of the social world cannot be neutral, but produce strategies and practices “that tend to impose an authority at the expense of others, whom they despise, to legitimize a reform project or to justify, for the individuals themselves, their choices and conduct”. By doing the representations, a field opens up, “whose challenges are enunciated in terms of power and domination” (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 17). In this way, it is a “social history of interpretations” that emerges as a possibility, in which attention to appropriations and the narratives that emerge from them are at the center of its methodological perspective. Hence the emergence of new objects, such as beliefs, behaviors, emotions, feelings, desire, ideas, customs. (REIS, 2000, p. 135).

The theme of reception and conciliar cultures as representations built by certain groups of the council's meanings seems to be related in some way to what Rush (2005) calls *hermeneutics of the receivers*. To analyze and understand the formation of conciliar cultures is to perform what he calls the *hermeneutics of the receptors*. Thus, the methodological set that is aimed at locating and apprehending these cultures is concentrated on the path of building a history of the council's interpretations, of the interpretative pluralities, of their appropriations, paying particular attention to the processes in which they are built and to its main actors.

We pay attention to the fact that in the same time and space we can find the coexistence of different conciliar cultures. Taking Brazil as a national space, for example, we observe a Christianity of liberation, which had wide dissemination and capillarity in the 1970s and 1980s, a reformist conciliar culture, which sought fidelity to Rome and its norms, and a third one, what we could call anti-reconciliation, with the traditionalists of Campos, led by Castro Mayer, a close friend of de Marcel Lefebvre, marked by a growing anti-Roman discourse.

There is also an issue regarding the variation of the scales when it comes to the readings of the council. By undertaking the task of reading the event, the agents construct not only an understanding of that moment, but also constitute and narrate their own condition, providing elements for future scholars about how they understand the event. When taking readers into their historicity and the appropriations they make of the text, we should first of all, as Chartier states, the reading

as a concrete act requires that any process of construction of meaning, therefore of interpretation, be seen as being situated at the intersection between, on the one hand, readers with specific skills, identified by their positions and dispositions, characterized by their practice of reading, and, on the other hand, texts whose meaning is always dependent on discursive and formal devices - let us call them 'typographic' in the case of printed texts - which are yours". (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 25-26).



## 2 Theological journals: conciliar cultural representations and practices

Specialized journals, as a tool that takes the voices of intellectuals out of their own microcosm, are important sources for studies on the representations of certain social groups. As historian Jean-François Sirinelli (2003, p. 249) asserts, journals are

an observatory of the foreground of the sociability of intellectual microcosms, they are, moreover, a precious place for the analysis of the movement of ideas [...] a journal is above all a place of intellectual fermentation and of affective relationship, at the same time a nursery and space for sociability [...]. (SIRINELLI, 2003, p. 249).

Catholic theological journals will have a prominent role in the reception process, since they will publicize, for a specialized audience, the interpretations of the council that will be built over the years. Remember that at that time the main vehicles for the transmission of knowledge are journals and specialized books, which make them an important object and source for scholars. Furthermore, these journals congregate in their editorial boards, and also among their collaborators, a wide range of agents and actors who are intimately involved with the ecclesiastical structure, thus functioning as sounding boards of sensibilities and theoretical-theological perspectives that emanate from within the institution. The journals are spaces for the formation of associative networks, bringing together theologians and agents who will move in the construction of the different conciliar cultures that emerge in the reception process. Thus, journals are the privileged locus through which these cultures emerge and are transmitted.

From the above, Brazilian theological journals present themselves as an object of fundamental research for those who seek to understand the facets of conciliar reception in Brazil and the nascent conciliar cultures. The articles produced and published in these journals are rich sources for understanding the post-council, particularly the readings of the event and its resonance in the country. We can say that the texts published in its various issues translate the council to a larger group of people and that carry out the practical reception of the council. Through their articles, we can visualize the representations and

horizons of expectation that mark those specific actors, who are particularly involved with the translation of the conciliar corpus to the different realities of the local Church.

If these journals are consulted as important theological sources, they have not yet received more accurate treatment by historians of contemporary Brazilian Catholicism. Thus, for a first approximation, we sought to focus our brief analysis in the *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* (REB, as it became known) between 1959 and 1979. In January 1959 Pope John XXIII announced that an ecumenical council would be held in the coming years - news resounding, particularly for Catholic media, and immediately sparked numerous speculations about the future event. The horizon of expectation of those who receive the news of the council to come is already within the scope of a more widely understood reception. In fact, it is not the reception of the tout court council. However, among the subjects who receive the news, Vatican II had already become the object of their representations, being thought and idealized in different ways. The year chosen to be the limit of the analysis proposed here, refers to a cycle that is complete, that is, twenty years after the announcement of the event, closing a first moment of conciliar reception.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of Latin America, the most elementary representation of the council's kerigmatic reception in Latin America was the Synod of Bishops of Medellín (1968).<sup>8</sup> With Vatican II, the conditions for local actors to think of a continental Church in its originality matured, differing from the European Church model. The very name of the Medellín document wished to show this perspective: "The Church in the current transformation of Latin America in the light of the Council". As can be seen, unlike the other councils received on the Continent - Council of Trent and Vatican Council I - the proposal of Vatican II worked as inspiration and no longer as a standard to be simply followed. The

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<sup>7</sup> The phases that marked the post-council are understood by its main scholars in different ways. Among the renewed hopes that emerged during the event and the limits imposed by the secular ecclesial structures, which pointed to the fact that the reforms would not be so easily assimilated by the curial machine, the years following the council were marked by countless feelings among those who participated directly or indirectly in that moment. Joseph Ratzinger (1982), for example, offered the following post-conciliar periodization: a phase of euphoria, until 1968, followed by a phase of disillusionment, between 1970 and 1980 and, finally, the 1980s, which would represent a phase marked by an effort of synthesis and balance. Floristan (1985), in turn, distinguished four stages: enthusiasm (1965-1971), contestation (1971-1975), transition (1975-1978), involution (1978-1985). Pottmeyer, the first to develop an overall understanding of those years, divided the post-council into three phases: hatching, when experimenting with innovative forces; disappointment or reaction phase.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Scatena (2008).

1968 conference had a profound impact on the minds of engaged Catholics from that period and a range of representations - positive and negative - emerged during and after its achievement. Both on progressive and conservative fronts, Medellín unleashes a whole range of interpretations that will mark generations.<sup>9</sup>

As the Brazilianist Mainwaring (1989) asserts, “the impact of the council on theological thought in Brazil is reflected in a large number of articles in REB” (MAINWARING, 1989, p. 78). Founded in 1941 by the Franciscans of the city of Petrópolis (Rio de Janeiro), REB, at the time we are referring to, became an “organ of the reformist Church” (MAINWARING, 1989, p. 81). Let us also remember that Paul VI granted it an apostolic blessing in 1969, recognizing its importance. The pope confirmed the idea that this journal is a fundamental vehicle at the service of the Church of Brazil (ANDRADE, 2017, p. 76), in addition to being also a source for understanding the history of the Church in the region, mainly from the analysis the transformations of perspectives and content that it has been going through. In the pages of this journal, we can find two conciliar cultures that will be constituted in the immediate post-conciliation (1970 '), being the scene of interpretive conflicts not only regarding Vatican II, but also with respect to the Medellín Conference (1968).

In the horizon of the readings of the council, the Medellín Conference will be taken as a central moment in the construction of the idealizations and representations of a specific conciliar culture, that of an alternative Catholicism. This conciliar culture, in addition to its focus on a very evident social perspective, which aims to respond to the “signs of the times” - one of the key words of the council - will also be understood as a vehicle through which prospects for decentralization, exercise of synodality and collegiate participation of the Church will be legitimized.

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<sup>9</sup> In a December 1968 issue, for example, the journal of the Brazilian Catholic conservative movement Tradition, Family and Property (TFP), features a long article about the Conference, focusing on the work of Dom Geraldo de Proença Sigaud, archbishop of Diamantina (MG) and linked to the group. “Sigaud gave an interview to El Tiempo de Bogotá, which also reverberated in France with an article by Henri Fesquet at Le Monde. At the same time that it echoed in this way in Europe his statements in “El Colombiano”, from Medellín, he published with great prominence the message that forty Brazilian Archbishops and Bishops sent to Emmo. Cardinal D. Agnelo Rossi, President of CNBB, denouncing the erroneous orientation that certain sectors of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil had been printing in their activities [...] Prelate devoted his time to writing articles for the newspaper “El Colombiano”, in Medellín, who offered him a column entitled “Al margen del CELAM” [...] There is no shortage in Brazil - writes D. Sigaud ecclesiastics who “defend a truly socialist and Marxist reform, and demand a change in all social and economic structures. Others speak of structural reform, repeating the communist slogans, as if all the structures of our society should be modified. No, gentlemen! There are untouchable structures! There are structures that are born out of natural law itself! Neither private individuals nor the State can modify them”. (MACHADO, 1968).

It can be seen that the context in which the Medellín Conference is taking place is the immediate post-Vatican II with all its outcomes<sup>10</sup> in addition to a new and significant factor: the impacts arising from May 1968, or, as Eric Zolov calls it, “The global sixties”. We believe that we still need to look more closely at the sources and influences of the events of 68 on Catholicism, particularly the Latin American one. How, for example, was the idea of “Catholic activism”, in many of its facets, influenced by May 1968?<sup>11</sup> Wouldn't the criticisms of the institution's core from this “activism”, which became more profound in this period, be heirs to the criticisms of young people of that period to traditional institutions?

As Chaouch (2005, p. 128) points out, it was around 1968 that two currents of thought came into violent conflict within the so-called Catholic Third World. The conflict revolves around two political options, particularly: reformism or revolution. These two options will present two different understandings about the relations of faith and politics, with theological consequences, of course: independence or integration. In turn, it will pose yet another question: how is it possible to conceive ecclesiastical authority: adaptation or transformation?

The motto of the “preferential option for the poor”, which will rock a whole generation of theologians in Latin America, thus forming a hegemonic conciliar culture in the subcontinent between the 1970s and 1980s - including the historiography of the local Church in that period - nevertheless it will be the target of deep criticism and cause for division among Catholics in the region.

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<sup>10</sup> The Cum Cumcumenicum epistle sent to the presidents of the episcopal conferences in 1966 by Alfredo Ottaviani, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, dealt with the multiplication of abuses in the interpretation of the council. There is no response from the Brazilian episcopate. According to a CNBB note, there were “other more serious problems” to worry about. CNBB monthly release, Aug./Set. 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Among these influences, we can quote, as an example to be studied, is the French Échanges et Dialogues movement, linked to the European Assembly of Priests”, which operated in Brussels and will have a short life (1968-1975). Founded in 1968, with the slogan “Tuer le clerc’ [...] drafted the priest's bylaws, which, according to the [traditionalist journal] Iglesia Mundo, consists of three points: the abolition of mandatory celibacy, wage labor, political commitment to the liberating revolution of the oppressed” One of the Échanges et Dialogues group event proceedings held in Valencia (Spain) says the following about its purpose: “Its fundamental aspiration is the death of the clergy, their disappearance as such. They want laypeople to analyze what aspects they feel are constrained in the Church, and together we all make the free man in the Church. The disappearance of the clergy is a necessary condition to make the lay person a free Christian (Acts of Valencia, page 17.) Such a perspective will have resonance in the contesting Catholicism of the popular Church linked to the “Christians for Socialism” movement. The question is about sociability networks and how European movements resonated with their perspectives in Latin America.

The scenes of conflicts among rising conciliar cultures can be seen in REB from the beginning of the 1970s. From an analysis of publications in that period, there is an evident change in theoretical perspectives in a reasonable number of publications of the journal in that period, and this was due, in particular, to the change in its editorial staff.

Andrade (2017) made a first approximation of the problem when analyzing the performance of Boaventura Kloppenburg and Leonardo Boff during the period in which they were editors of the journal. The reformist tendency, embodied by the figure of Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, and that of rising Liberation Theology, of more radical demands, embodied by Leonardo Boff, can be taken as examples of this reconciling culture clash.

Kloppenburg was the second editor of the REB, performing his duties between 1953 and 1972, while the second was between 1972 and 1986. He was the great promoter of Vatican II in Brazil. As a conciliar expert, he also dedicated himself to writing the council's chronicles and, together with the documentation produced by Vatican II, published them in REB as the sections of the assembly unfolded. With Boff becoming the editor-in-chief of the journal in 1972, the same year he published his book *Jesus Cristo Libertador*, there was a growing presence of social themes, such as poverty, marginalization, economic development, among others. There is, we can say, almost a predominance of this theme.

When analyzing the first issues published from Boff's editorial board, it can be noted the predominance of these themes. In the first journal published by him as an assistant editor, in December 1970, the trend is already felt: the themes of violence, grassroots communities and a text by Boff that addresses the theme of Jesus' resurrection in a new key, stand out, while a text by Kloppenburg on Vatican II and the nature of religious life seems to be out of step with the rest of that issue.

Kloppenburg joined a reformist conciliar hermeneutics, in which he sought the correctness of the balance of the living tradition, faithful to the *depositum fidei* and attention to the demands of the signs of the times. The

Franciscan priest seemed to be a faithful follower of the conciliar hermeneutics that takes shape particularly with Pope Paul VI, when he spoke of “novelty in the continuity of the work of the Spirit”. (PAOLO VI, 2006, p. 47). It seems to us that Pottmeyer (1985) was able to adequately define this hermeneutic perspective, by understanding that the council sought to combine two requirements: renewal of the Church and safeguarding continuity. According to him, the council used the method of juxtaposition: next to a doctrine or a thesis expressed with a pre-conciliar formulation, a doctrine or a thesis that formulates a complementary aspect is placed.<sup>12</sup>

Boff, on the other hand, understands the council as a new beginning for the Church, and assuming some perspectives of his ideal, aims to go further, understanding it as a starting point.<sup>13</sup> Upon arriving in 1970 from his doctorate in Munich, he took over, in addition to the direction of REB, the Concilium Journal. The theologian himself clarified his strategy when he arrived from Europe and took over from the Journal's editorial staff:

Practically I decided everything that was published in the religious area and I was also involved in the lay area. And I used it, consciously. I used to say: 'we have to - it was an old dream of mine when I went to study in Europe - to conquer the church for the people, liberation will come through here, in Brazil'. And I encouraged everything that went on this liberation line, including sending myself my manuscripts for publication. (BOFF apud ANDRADE, 2017, p. 82).

Kloppenburg, in turn, became himself an antipode of Liberation Theology, making harsh criticisms of some aspects of the new theological current and also writing numerous articles in newspapers criticizing it strongly. The apex comes with the book *Igreja Popular*, from 1983, published by Editora Agir. In that work, the auxiliary bishop of Salvador at that time, attacked some concepts defended by that theology, such as "people", "popular", "option for socialism", "preferential option for the poor" as they were understood by his

<sup>12</sup> Pottmeyer (1985, p. 55) offers three examples of this method of juxtaposition: in the constitution on revelation, next to Trent's thesis on Scripture and tradition, the thesis of the unity of revelation and the task of the teaching profession is placed at the service of God's word. In the constitution on the Church, next to the thesis of Vatican I on the papal primacy, the thesis of the authority of the episcopal college is presented. In the decree on ecumenism, together with the Catholic Church's thesis of truth, the thesis of the elements of truth in the other churches is placed.

<sup>13</sup> “Now it would be possible to implement a creative acceptance of the council from a point of departure different from that of the Council's own conception, realization and development: the point of departure being the viewpoint of the poor”. (BOFF apud RUSH, 2004, p. 57).

theologians, among others. In addition, he carried out an analysis of the “distortion of the spirit of Medellín” and also directed the criticisms, obviously, against Leonardo Boff: “Within the conception of the popular Church”, says Kloppenburg, “to be authentically Catholic it is much better to be socialist”. (KLOPPENBURG, 1983, p. 183).

## Conclusion

The history of the Second Vatican Council and its reception are central objects of scholars who aim to understand the Catholic Church in contemporary times. It is the fundamental reference for understanding the dynamics of the local Churches and also the papacy that followed it.

If conciliar history, in the drafting process of its texts, has already had its first studies carried out vertically, the history of reception and its countless analytical possibilities are still loaded with possibilities. One of them, suggested in this article, was the one that revolves around the concept of conciliar cultures - representations built by actors and social groups, forms of reading of the council that are constituted in particular spaces and times. From an influx of cultural history, particularly from the perspective of Roger Chartier, we sought to outline, in a preliminary way, the characteristics of a historiography of the council that takes into account those interpretations constructed by specific subjects, and the the resulting practices.

From there, new possibilities of sources were pointed out, namely the theological Journals. In these sources we can find a range of interpretations of the conciliar event and, along with that, the emergence and decline of conciliar readings, in addition to the conflicts among them, demonstrating that the ecclesial field, and more specifically the Brazilian case, is permeated by interpretations struggles that grow or weaken as a result of the emergence and decline of certain subjects and groups.

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