

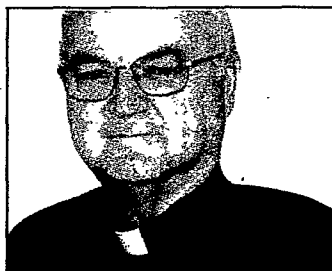
# Cardinal König, 97, reflects on Vatican II

Franz König served as the archbishop of Vienna for nearly 30 years, from 1956 until 1985. Now 97 years of age, he has been a cardinal for more than 44 years.

A leading figure at the Second Vatican Council and head of the Secretariat (now Council) for Dialogue with Non-Believers from 1965 until 1980, Cardinal König was also a "grand elector" (one who exercises a major influence in the selection of a new pope) in the second conclave of 1978 — the one that brought about the election of Karol Wojtyla as John Paul II.

König believed that the election of Cardinal Wojtyla would be of immense value to the so-called silent church behind the Iron Curtain. As archbishop of Krakow, Wojtyla had been remarkably successful in various negotiations with the Communist government of Poland over the freedom of the church to function in an officially anti-religious environment. He would surely understand the plight of Catholics trying to eke out an existence in what President Ronald Reagan once called "the Soviet Empire."

König later admitted, however, that at the time he had not detected in Cardinal Wojtyla's pastoral background and theological orientation his implicit support to church governance — centralized in Rome and rooted in the presumption of the pope's nearly absolute authority over the universal



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

church.

For Cardinal König, this style of governance as well as the theology upon which it is based are inconsistent with the council's doctrine of collegiality, which stipulates, in effect, that bishops are true collaborators with the pope and not simply conduits for the implementation of papal teaching and policy at the diocesan level.

The December 21/28 issue of *The Tablet* of London contains an article by Cardinal König, which is part of a *Tablet* series on "How Vatican II changed the Church."

He pays tribute not only to John XXIII, but also to Cardinal Augustine Bea, who almost single-handedly set the Catholic Church on its new ecumenical course. The first head of the Vatican's Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity, Bea was the prime mover in having non-Catholic observers invited to the council.

König also has special praise for Pope Paul VI, who succeeded John XXIII between the first and second sessions of the council. The cardinal refers to Paul VI as

"the martyr of Vatican II."

Without the charm of John XXIII, Paul VI nonetheless displayed a "tenacity, perseverance and willpower to soldier on. And he also had that strength which comes from great humility to step back and make himself small when faced with an overwhelming task."

The cardinal says that he will never forget the solemn service on December 7, 1965, marking the formal end of the council. He was one of a small group at the altar with the pope.

After asking the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to join him there, Paul VI announced the formal repeal of the papal bull of 1054, which had declared the then-Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated and which effectively inaugurated the East-West Schism that persists to this very day.

"I can still hear the thundering burst of spontaneous applause with which this announcement was greeted," Cardinal König writes. "For me this highlight signalled that the impulses set off by the council were already at work."

"The crucial process of reception, that all-important part of any church council, which can take several generations, had begun. It continues today."

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## LETTERS

### Thank media for exposing sex scandal

To the editor:

Cardinal Ratzinger (*Catholic Courier* news brief, Dec. 12: "Cardinal says media discredits church") blames the media for the clerical sex abuse scandal in the church. I disagree. We need to thank the media for exposing the cover-up which is the real scandal. Had they not exposed it, the cover-up would have continued and children, youth and women including nuns would have continued to be victimized.

At a synod of bishops in the Vatican (1971) our present Pope, then Archbishop of Krakow, was one of several bishops warned of a potential "psychosexual" time bomb in the priesthood that has since come to pass. They took no action other than continuing the policy of providing cover for offenders. Those who knew and did nothing to stop this abuse need to be held accountable for the systemic evil and structural sin that has pervaded our church.

The Jesus I encounter in Scripture was deeply concerned with systemic evil and structural sin which were found in the Roman system, the Jewish priesthood and Pharisaic mindset of his day. He had great compassion for the individual sinner but vehemently opposed structural sin and the Pharisaic culture that held people in their sin. Jesus opposed all domination systems.

In the most important areas of human behavior there are only two emotions, love and fear. When persons, countries or churches act out of love good things will happen. When they act out of fear bad things often happen. Many of our bishops, acting out of fear, more concerned with protecting the institution than innocent victims, allowed those victims to be sacrificed on the altar of institutional idolatry. This is not the church. The church is Christ living in time; his body, his people, priests and laity alike. We are church and we matter. Hugo Röhner's words are truer today than ever, "The Church is God's strength in human weakness. This church of weakness is not only a fact of faith. It is a test of faith."

Emmett Neary  
Bakerdale Road  
Rochester

### Letter forgot key points in column

To the editor:

Regarding Robert Sturgeon's response about Catholics not being obligated to boycott non-union or anti-union companies such as Wal-Mart (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 9: "Faults logic about unions"):

Father McBrien stated in his column that some Wal-Marts in Texas and another Southern state were harassing, firing and threatening to fire employees who attempted to organize a union at their store. The writer omitted this seemingly important point. While the writer did point out that companies have no obligation to endorse a union and that employees are free not to join a union, he also mentioned that workers do have a right to organize. It is this right that is being violated by Wal-Mart with their union-busting tactics.

Further, Catholic social teaching has consistently been on the side of organized labor. Beginning with Pope Leo XIII's 1890 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*,

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