

## SILENCE ON THE THRESHOLD ISSUE

What the Church cannot do is to teach one doctrine at an earlier time and an opposite one later. Even less can it consistently condemn a doctrine over a period of time and proceed to teach that doctrine immediately afterwards. This is the position into which the modern Church has fallen in its efforts to woo the contemporary world...

H.J.A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes* (Kettering, Ohio; 2015), p. 215<sup>1</sup>

The many commentators critical of the Second Vatican Council refuse to take the logical step of addressing the question to which their reasonings must compel them: *Was the Council in fact an ecumenical council?* There is a visceral apprehension about putting the question, a fear of belling the cat. Only Professor Roberto de Mattei has come close when, in his paper of July 14<sup>th</sup>, *Fake News? No, Historical Truth*, he asks rhetorically:

“Why exclude... [the possibility] that a day will come when even the Second Vatican Council may be repudiated, in part, or en bloc, as happened with the Council of Constance and its decrees?”<sup>2</sup>

The curse of the age is subjectivism whose mentality holds that truth is determined by assertion. Pope John XXIII said Vatican II was an ecumenical council. Pope Paul VI said it was. Pope John Paul II said it was. Pope Benedict says it was. Pope Francis says it was. How could so many popes be wrong? Let’s compare the issue with less controversial ones. A majority of people think that indulgence in contraceptive behaviour is suitable behaviour. Does that make it so? A majority have allowed politicians to impose compulsory abortion on us. Does their failure render abortion morally right? Collective opinion does not determine truth and that includes the collective opinion that holds that Vatican II was an ecumenical council *no matter how eminent may be those who held, or who hold, that opinion.*

There is a logical problem that accompanies the subjectivist spirit, an inclination to self-contradiction, something found frequently in the Council’s documents. Bishop Athanasius Schneider remarks its presence in n. 2 of *Dignitatis Humanae* in his paper of May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, the problem even afflicts the thinking of the Council’s critics.

Thus Bishop Schneider contends (in the same paper) that—  
[The Council’s] assertion that man has a natural right (positively willed by God) not to be impeded in choosing, exercising and spreading, even publicly, any form of religion according to his conscience... will surely one day be corrected by the Papal Magisterium...  
He ignores the fact that the Church’s Magisterium *has already done so*, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1864, formally and rigorously, in the *Syllabus of Errors* attached to Pius IX’s encyclical *Quanta cura*. The Council’s bishops, at the urging of their *periti* and members of a malevolently inspired dominant faction, elected to ignore what the Church had determined there.

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<sup>1</sup> Sire errs in this passage in attributing to Christ’s Church the errors of her current popes, bishops and theologians. He is not alone. Indulgence in this solecism is almost universal among critics.

<sup>2</sup> <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2020/07/de-mattei-fake-news-no-historical-truth.html#more>

<sup>3</sup> *There is no Divine positive will or natural right to the diversity of religions*, Lifesitenews.com, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

Thus, also, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, in his letter of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, addressing certain queries about his position says—

“Anyone with common sense can see that it is an absurdity to want to *interpret* a Council, since it is and ought to be a clear and unequivocal norm of Faith and Morals. Secondly, if a magisterial act raises serious and reasoned arguments that it may be lacking in doctrinal coherence with magisterial acts that have preceded it, it is evident that the condemnation of a single heterodox point in any case discredits the entire document. If we add to this the fact that the errors formulated or left obliquely to be understood between the lines are not limited to one or two cases, and that the errors affirmed correspond conversely to an enormous mass of truths that are not confirmed, we can ask ourselves whether it may be right to expunge the last assembly from the catalogue of canonical Councils.”

A reasonable man would conclude that it must follow inevitably that Vatican II has no entitlement to be included in that catalogue. In other words, it was not a canonical council. Yet, in the same letter, the Archbishop sees no contradiction in asserting—

“I have never thought and even less have I affirmed that Vatican II was an invalid Ecumenical Council: in fact it was convoked by the supreme authority, by the Supreme Pontiff, and all of the Bishops of the world took part in it. Vatican II is a valid Council, supported by the same authority as Vatican I and Trent”.

But he is not consistent. In his response to Sandro Magister just two days later, he elaborates his attack on the Council:

“The *fairytale* of the hermeneutic—even though an authoritative one because of its Author—nevertheless remains an attempt to want to give the dignity of a Council to a true and proper ambush against the Church, so as not to discredit along with it the Popes who wanted, imposed and re-proposed that Council. So much so that those same Popes, one after the other, rise to the honours of the altar for having been “popes of the Council”.

If the Council was “a true and proper ambush against the Church” how could it possibly be an ecumenical council, an assembly of bishops convened *for the good of the Church*?

None of the Council’s critics, those who write regularly on the topic, will raise the question: not Henry Sire; not Dr Peter Kwasniewski; not Don Pietro Leone; not Dr John R T Lamont; not Dr John Rao; not Bishop Schneider; not Archbishop Viganò; not Fr Thomas G Weinandy OFM, Cap.; not the principals of Roratecaeli.org; not the principals of Onepeterfive.org—none of them. Why? I think the reason is encapsulated in the celebrated aphorism of Sir John Harington uttered four hundred years ago

“Treason doth never prosper, what’s the reason?

For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.”

To deny that Pope John XXIII spoke the truth when he denominated the assembly of bishops gathered at the Vatican in 1962 ‘an ecumenical council’ appears to them a breach of Catholic principle, even where reason leads them to challenge many of the Council’s determinations. In fairness, they would rather follow the Church than where reason would lead them. The philosophical debility of the age hides the truth that if the Council was an ecumenical one it is impossible that its determinations *could* conflict with reason.

Consider the issue addressed by Bishop Schneider. One hundred and one years after the Church had laid down formally her teaching in the serious matter of the assertion of 'a right to religious freedom', but just one day short of its anniversary, the bishops of the Catholic Church in solemn assembly voted to reject that teaching and assert, in lieu, their own magisterium on the issue. In doing so, objectively (if not subjectively) they betrayed their several oaths of fidelity to Christ and to His Church. It is not too strong to say that they committed collective treason.

For more than fifty years now in Christ's Church that treason has not ceased to prosper.

Michael Baker

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020—*St Dominic*