Editor's Note: In this new article, CFN contributor Stephen Kokx quotes testimony from several sources which demonstrate that a variety of non-Catholics (mostly Protestants) who were invited to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) as "observers" clearly influenced the discussions—and even the documents—of the Council. As one quoted source reveals, "[A]lthough we had no direct 'voice' on the council floor, we did indeed have an indirect voice through the many contacts that were possible with the Fathers and their indispensable strong arms, the *periti*."

A little less than 100 years prior to Vatican II, Pope Pius IX invited non-Catholics to attend the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), albeit for a much different purpose—namely, to abandon their errors and embrace the Catholic Faith. In the forthcoming April 2019 print edition of CFN (subscribe HERE), we are pleased to reprint a classic article by Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton (1906-1969), longtime editor of the *American Ecclesiastical Review* (1943-1963), entitled, "The Ecumenical Council and Christian Reunion" (first published in AER, July 1959). Therein, Msgr. Fenton provides full English translations of two important letters issued by Pius IX in preparation for Vatican I: *Arcano Divinae Providentiae* (Sept. 8, 1868), addressed "to all the Bishops of the Churches of Oriental Rite not in communion with the Apostolic See", and *Iam Vos Omnes* (Sept. 13, 1868) "to all Protestants and to other non-Catholics." "Both of these letters," Msgr. Fenton explains, "aimed at one ultimate objective, the return of the dissidents to whom they were addressed to the one true Church and company of Jesus Christ."

We look forward to the day when the Barque of Peter is once again guided by such a wise and faithful shepherd, one who fulfills his solemn obligation of "doing the truth in charity" (Eph. 4:15).

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Far too many Catholics today think the Church before Vatican II was desperately in need of an update and that a "deep" rediscovery of "the early Church" was sorely needed. If the Church didn't do this, she would've become obsolete and irrelevant in the modern world.

This is flat out wrong. And un-Catholic.

Firstly, the Council of Trent taught that the Church "was instructed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and that all truth was daily taught it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." No updating, in other words, was needed, at least not the *aggiornamento* sort the liberal *periti* (theological advisors) had in mind.

Second, the duty of the Church is to please God first and preach the truth in season and out,

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not to be paranoid about what the world and its anti-Christian leaders think.

Third, according to the late Ralph McInerney, long-time professor at Notre Dame, the pre-conciliar Church wasn't in need of drastic fixing. "It would be very wrong to imagine that it was something broken and in need of repair," he wrote in his 1998 book *What Went Wrong With Vatican II*. Fr. John W. O'Malley S.J. likewise remarked in a 2007 book on the Council, "in 1959 no obvious crisis was troubling the Catholic Church."

Lastly, Pope Gregory XVI in his 1832 encyclical *Mirari Vos* said it was "absurd and injurious to propose a certain 'restoration and regeneration' for [the Church] as though necessary for her safety and growth, as if she could be considered subject to defect or obscuration or other misfortune" (n. 10). Pius XII also condemned in 1947 what he called an "exaggerated and senseless antiquarianism" (*Mediator Dei*, n. 64).

Progressive Manipulation

Despite the clear wisdom of pre-conciliar popes and the good fruits in the Church before Vatican II, the progressive theologians who attended the Council successfully imposed on the Church their previously censored ideas, ideas which they naively claimed would prevent the Church from becoming irrelevant.

"If we do not take steps to do more about achieving rapprochement between the Church and the modern world, we are in danger of finding ourselves considered unrealistic," Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, Archbishop of Montreal, worried in the 1963 propaganda book *Twelve Council Fathers*.

His liberal fretting was echoed by Canadian Bishop G. Emmett Carter, who, in the same book, said, "Why exacerbate other believers in Christ by insisting upon their removal from us? Why not try and find ground in which we could share a common identity and thereby move a step closer to Christ and to some form of common brotherhood?"

(Maybe because Christ instructed His disciples to teach all nations the Catholic Faith?)

One has to wonder if either of these princes of the Church believed the Gospel they were entrusted to guard and transmit. Christ didn't fret about or soften His teachings on money, for example, when the rich man seeking eternal life walked away from Him (cf. Mark 10:17-25), or on the Holy Eucharist when many of His followers left Him over His teaching on eating His Flesh (cf. John 6:53-69). It seems Cardinal Léger and Bishop Carter would have wanted Jesus to chase after them and beg, "Wait a second, what I, uh, meant to say, was, uh, let's talk about it over dinner…"

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Far from being inspired by the Holy Spirit, the shenanigans that took place at Vatican II were aimed at pleasing non-Catholics rather than pleasing Almighty God. Proof of this can be found in the way the red carpet was rolled out for the so-called "delegate observers" who attended it.

Rolling Out the Red Carpet…for Protestants?

Paul Blanshard (1892-1980) was perhaps the most well-known American critic of Roman Catholicism in the mid-20th century. In his 1966 book on the Council, he wrote that Methodist observer "bishop" Fred Pierce was "given the exceptional distinction of several private papal audiences." Blanshard also revealed that, "the private remarks of some Protestant observers undoubtedly had some effect in shaping Council policy." The "Council's decree on ecumenism actually made a number of important concessions to Protestantism."

In Michael Davies' landmark book *Liturgical Time Bombs in Vatican II*, it's related that an Anglican archdeacon claimed that "the fullest courtesies and opportunities for communication and exchange were allowed to the observers at every stage, and traces of the process can be recognized in the documents themselves."

Davies also recounts the testimony of Robert McAfee Brown, a Presbyterian observer who said, "[A]lthough we had no direct 'voice' on the council floor, we did indeed have an indirect voice through the many contacts that were possible with the Fathers and their indispensable strong arms, the *periti*."

Cardinal Richard Cushing, the Archbishop of Boston, admitted in *Twelve Council Fathers* that this sort of sneaky behavior took place quite regularly. "I envied the help in translation that [the delegate observers] were getting from Father Gustave Weigel.…I met many of the delegate observers, and on one occasion I invited twenty of them to dinner."

Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger confessed in the same book, "The presence of the delegate-observers…was an inspiration for us." "Their presence reminded us to be sure we rid ourselves of historical and psychological prejudices."

Question: Are these the sort of antics which Bishops and Cardinals are supposed to engage in? When has this sort of fraternizing with representatives of anathematized sects ever taken place in Church history? Baptist "bishops" being given papal audiences. Anglicans treated with "the fullest courtesies." And Presbyterians having "an indirect voice" on the Council's documents. Can it not be said that the entire Council is tainted with syncretism?

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Eyewitness Testimony

Aside from that, one "observer" in particular stands out: George Lindbeck, a prominent Lutheran minister at the time who died just this past year.

In the 2012 book *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, Lindbeck lets the cat out of the bag about the influence he and other non-Catholics had on the Council:

> "We would be invited to the most extravagant, exalted kinds of receptions, all the observers…one time an eminent Catholic bishop was asking a young Protestant observer for advice on what he should do for his priests….That kind of thing took place all the time. A Connecticut Bishop and I had lunch together once…on what Hans Küng had written.
>
> The highest peak of the ecumenical movement took place at the Second Vatican Council. I say high peak because, just think of it, invited observers, chosen and sent by other churches, were given entrance into the inner circles of the Roman Catholic Church. Their advice was listened to…"

In a 1994 softball interview with neo-conservative luminary George Weigel, Lindbeck spoke about Pope Pius XII's condemnation in his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis* of the progressive, "new" theology that was embraced at the Council:

> "The Catholic anti-Modernist campaign of the early twentieth century had created a situation in which a very rigid and biased interpretation of Thomas emerged…Humani Generis was intended to say "No" to the sorts of approaches represented by the *nouvelle theologie*…the real problem with *Humani Generis* was the way it reinforced the position of the regnant powers in the congregations and the academy, who used the encyclical to make the *nouvelle theologie* people *personae non gratae*. Which meant that the encyclical reinforced the anti-Modernist style of dealing with exploratory theology."

Weigel himself admits in the interview's introduction to the enormous influence non-Catholics had on the documents. "As Lindbeck has noted on previous occasions, the ecumenical observers…had special access to the Council aula…and were frequently consulted, formally and informally, about the drafts of conciliar texts."

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Accurately Assessing the Council and Its Aftermath

It's high time for Catholics to stop thinking Vatican II was a glorious unleashing of the Holy Spirit. A Council that consecrated Russia and condemned Communism and Modernism would have accomplished a great deal of good for the Mystical Body of Christ and the post-war world. Instead, Vatican II decided to remain a "pastoral" gathering that did not invoke the infallibility most every Council in Church history did. As such, it opened itself up to be tempted by human respect and worldly thinking.

At the end of the day, non-Catholics were invited to Vatican II, given the fullest courtesies, and directly and indirectly shaped the text of the Council's documents, a fact that cannot be said about the non-Catholic observers who attended previous Councils.

It's now been a half-century since the close of the Council and the Church is suffering from what Bishop Athanasius Schneider has called "the fourth great crisis" in Church history. The one Bible passage that perfectly describes the Church in its post-Vatican II years is Isaiah 5:5-6: "And now I will show you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it."

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