

Archbishop Viganò to Phil Lawler: Council Fathers “Were the Object of a Sensational Deception”

In response to [questions](#) from Phil Lawler, [book author](#) and news director of CatholicCulture.org, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò has issued yet another [statement](#) (see full text below) clarifying his position concerning the Second Vatican Council, some of whose teachings have recently been [critically examined](#) – especially in light of Pope Francis’ February 4, 2019 Abu Dhabi statement – by Bishop Athanasius Schneider.

Archbishop Viganò, who says publicly he has been [inspired](#) by Bishop Schneider’s critique of certain aspects of the teachings of Vatican II (1962-1965), now describes to Phil Lawler how it could have happened that an entire Council could have been led to accept certain changes that would later be used in order to increase heterodoxy and confusion within the Church. Lawler had reached out to him after reading an earlier [June 9 intervention](#) by Viganò concerning the Council.

In his own [commentary](#) of today, Lawler calls this June 9 intervention “certainly provocative, if not downright prophetic,” and he now endorses that such a discussion take place. “Did the teachings of the Council cause—or at a minimum allow—a break with tradition?” he asks in his commentary, adding: “The question can no longer be avoided, because the break is increasingly apparent.”

Lawler describes how his own attitude toward the Council changed. He went from first blaming the “spirit of the Council” to then following Pope Benedict XVI’s advice to read it in light of Tradition, with the help of the “hermeneutic of continuity,” but then finally, in light of the consequences of some of the teachings of the Council under the current pontificate (e.g., *Amoris Laetitia* and the Abu Dhabi statement), Lawler came to see that something needs to be clarified here.

He concludes his comments with the words: “Some Catholics may find these views unsettling; some may label them as extreme. But an honest debate—one that acknowledges the profound divisions that wrack the Church today—is long overdue.”

In answer to Lawler’s questions, Archbishop Viganò describes how the Council came to contain some erroneous statements that contributed to the confusion in the Church. “The Council Fathers were the object of a sensational deception, of a fraud that was cleverly perpetrated by having recourse to the most subtle means,” he writes to Lawler in this new statement of today, going on to describe these subtle means of manipulation. The well-meaning Council Fathers “found themselves in the minority in the linguistic groups, excluded from meetings convened at the last moment, pressured into giving their *placet* by making them believe that the Holy Father wanted it.” But even if these methods did not work, Viganò explains, the organizers of this revolution had other means:

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“And what the *innovators* did not succeed in obtaining in the Conciliar Aula, they achieved in the Commissions and Committees, thanks also to the activism of theologians and *periti* who were accredited and acclaimed by a powerful media machine.”

The Italian prelate, who lives in hiding after having published, in August of 2018, his [testimony](#) on Pope Francis’ working with McCarrick in spite of Viganò’s warning, points to the “malicious” attitude of these organizers: “There is a vast array of studies and documents that testify to this systematic malicious *mens* of some of the Council Fathers on the one hand, and the naïve optimism or carelessness of other well-intentioned Council Fathers on the other.”

Archbishop Viganò then also quotes one of the key Modernists at the Council, Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens, who explicitly stated that Vatican II is “the 1789 of the Church,” that is to say, comparable to the French Revolution.

On June 9, he had already published an [analysis](#) of the Council, in response to Bishop Schneider’s own statement and critique of the Council’s teaching on religious liberty. In that June 9 text, the former apostolic nuncio pointed out that the false teaching as found in the [Abu Dhabi statement](#) - which claims that the “diversity of religions” is “willed by God” - is going back to the errors in Vatican II documents. “If we do not recognize,” says Viganò, “that the roots of these deviations are found in the principles laid down by the Council, it will be impossible to find a cure: if our diagnosis persists, against all the evidence, in excluding the initial pathology, we cannot prescribe a suitable therapy.”

Further regarding this Council, the archbishop described its program of change as a “*monstrum* generated in modernist circles,” a monstrum which came into being at Vatican II and has a “logical consequent effect in the doctrinal, moral, liturgical, and disciplinary deviations” that have come into being since them. For this Italian prelate, the “hermeneutic of continuity” is not a sufficient instrument to counter it.

But he also reviewed his own attitude toward the Council in a self-critical way. “I confess it with serenity and without controversy: I was one of the many people,” Viganò stated, “who, despite many perplexities and fears which today have proven to be absolutely legitimate, trusted the authority of the Hierarchy with unconditional obedience. In reality, I think that many people, including myself, did not initially consider the possibility that there could be a conflict between obedience to an order of the Hierarchy and fidelity to the Church herself.”

Archbishop Viganò also called upon Catholic thinkers to open their eyes in his June 9

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intervention. He observed, “This operation of intellectual honesty requires a great humility, first of all in recognizing that for decades we have been led into error, in good faith, by people who, established in authority, have not known how to watch over and guard the flock of Christ: some for the sake of living quietly, some because of having too many commitments, some out of convenience, and finally some in bad faith or even malicious intent.”

Following this statement, the Italian prelate released another, lengthier [text on June 15](#), in which he discusses the matter of how to deal with these “heretical propositions or those which favor heresy” of the Second Vatican Council – such as its teaching on religious liberty. He declared that they “should be condemned, and we can only hope that this will happen as soon as possible.” In polite disagreement with Bishop Athanasius Schneider, who proposes to simply correct those erroneous statements while preserving the Council as a whole, the Italian prelate explained that the Council should be “dropped” and “be forgotten.” He added: “If the Council has deviated from the Faith, the Pope has the power to invalidate it. Indeed, it is his duty.” This second text, however, does not seem to be part of the exchange between Phil Lawler and Archbishop Viganò as we publish it here in full.

Earlier this week, Bishop Athanasius Schneider published a [new statement](#) explaining once more his position with regard to the errors of Vatican II. He states now that most of the Council texts “are in organic continuity with the previous Magisterium.” As to the defective ones, Schneider adds: “Ultimately, the papal magisterium has to clarify in a convincing manner the controversial points of some of the expressions in the Council texts. Until now, this has not always been done in an intellectually honest and convincing way. Were it necessary, a pope or future ecumenical Council would have to add explanations (a kind of *‘notae explicativae posteriors’*) or even amendments and corrections of those controversial expressions, since they were not presented by the Council as an infallible and definitive teaching.”

In today’s statement as sent to Phil Lawler, Archbishop Viganò – who was just [praised](#) by President Donald Trump earlier this week as a “highly respected” and “great gentleman” – presents once more the solution to the current crisis in the Catholic Church. That solution, he explains, “lies above all in an act of humility that all of us, beginning with the Hierarchy and the Pope, must carry out: recognizing the infiltration of the enemy into the heart of the Church, the systematic occupation of key posts in the Roman Curia, seminaries, and ecclesiastical schools, the conspiracy of a group of rebels – including, in the front line, the deviated Society of Jesus – which has succeeded in giving the appearance of legitimacy and legality to a subversive and revolutionary act. We should also recognize the inadequacy of the response of the good, the naivety of many, the fearfulness of others, and the interests of

those who have benefited thanks to that conspiracy.”

Please see here the full interview of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò by Phil Lawler as it first appeared at CatholicCulture.org, reprinted here with gracious permission:

Phil Lawler: First, what are you saying about Vatican II? That things have gone downhill fast since then is certainly true. But if the whole Council is a problem, how did that happen? How do we reconcile that with what we believe about the inerrancy of the magisterium? How were all the Council Fathers deceived? Even if only some parts of the Council (e.g. *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*) are problematical, we still face the same questions. Many of us have been saying for years that the “spirit of Vatican II” is in error. Are you now saying that this phony liberal “spirit” does accurately reflect the work of the Council?

Archbishop Viganò: I do not think that it is necessary to demonstrate that the Council represents a problem: the simple fact that we are raising this question about Vatican II and not about Trent or Vatican I seems to me to confirm a fact that is obvious and recognized by everyone. In reality, even those who defend the Council with swords drawn find themselves doing so apart from all the other previous ecumenical councils, of which not even one was ever said to be a *pastoral council*. And note that they call it “*the Council*” *par excellence*, as if it was the one and only council in the entire history of the Church, or at least considering it as an *unicum* whether because of the formulation of its doctrine or for the authority of its magisterium. It is a council that, differently from all those that preceded it, called itself a *pastoral council*, declaring that it did not want to propose any new doctrine, but which in fact created a distinction between *before* and *after*, between a dogmatic council and a pastoral council, between unequivocal canons and empty talk, between anathema sit and winking at the world.

In this sense, I believe that the problem of the infallibility of the Magisterium (the inerrancy you mention is properly a quality of Sacred Scripture) does not even arise, because the Legislator, that is, the Roman Pontiff around whom the Council was convened, solemnly and clearly affirmed that he did not want to use the doctrinal authority which he could have exercised if he wanted. I would like to make the observation that nothing is more pastoral than what is proposed as dogmatic, because the exercise of the *munus docendi* in its highest form coincides with the order that the Lord gave to Peter to feed his sheep and lambs. And yet this opposition between *dogmatic* and *pastoral* was made precisely by the one who, in his discourse opening the Council, sought to give a severe meaning to dogma and a softer, more conciliatory meaning to pastoral care. We also find the same setting in the interventions of Bergoglio, where he identifies “*pastoralism [pastoralità]*” as a *soft* version

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of *rigid* Catholic teaching in matters of Faith and Morals, in the name of *discernment*. It is painful to recognize that the practice of having recourse to an equivocal lexicon, using Catholic terms understood in an improper way, invaded the Church starting with Vatican II, which is the first and most emblematic example of the so-called “*circiterism*,” the equivocating and intentionally imprecise use of the language. This happened because the *Aggiornamento*, a term in itself ideologically promoted by the Council as an *absolute*, held dialogue with the world to be its priority above all else.

There is another equivocation that must be clarified. If on the one hand John XXIII and Paul VI declared that they did not want to commit the Council to the definition of new doctrines and wanted it to limit itself to being only *pastoral*, on the other hand it is true that externally – *mediatically* or *in the media*, we would say today – the emphasis given to its acts was enormous. This emphasis served to convey the idea of a *presumed* doctrinal authority, of an *implicit* magisterial infallibility, even though these were clearly excluded right from the beginning. If this emphasis occurred, it was in order to allow the more or less heterodox instances to be perceived as authoritative and thus to be accepted by the clergy and the faithful. But this would be enough to discredit those authors of a similar deception, who still cry out today if anyone touches *Nostra Aetate*, while they are silent even if someone denies the divinity of Our Lord or the perpetual virginity of Mary Most Holy. Let us recall that Catholics do not worship a Council, neither Vatican II nor Trent, but rather the Most Holy Trinity, the One True God; they do not venerate a conciliar declaration or a post-synodal exhortation, but rather the Truth that these acts of the Magisterium convey.

You ask me: “*How were all the Council fathers deceived?*” I reply by drawing on my experience of those years and the words of my brothers with whom I engaged in discussion at that time. No one could have imagined that right in the heart of the ecclesial body there were hostile forces so powerful and organized that they could succeed in rejecting the perfectly orthodox preparatory schemas that had been prepared by Cardinals and Prelates with a reliable fidelity to the Church, replacing them with a bundle of cleverly disguised errors behind long-winded and deliberately equivocal speeches. No one could have believed that, right under the vaults of the Vatican Basilica, the estates-general could be convoked that would decree the abdication of the Catholic Church and the inauguration of the Revolution. (As I have already mentioned in a previous article, Cardinal Suenens called Vatican II “*the 1789 of the Church*”). The Council Fathers were the object of a sensational deception, of a fraud that was cleverly perpetrated by having recourse to the most subtle means: they found themselves in the minority in the linguistic groups, excluded from meetings convened at the last moment, pressured into giving their *placet* by making them believe that the Holy Father wanted it. And what the *innovators* did not succeed in obtaining in the Conciliar Aula, they achieved in the Commissions and Committees, thanks also to the

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activism of theologians and *periti* who were accredited and acclaimed by a powerful media machine. There is a vast array of studies and documents that testify to this systematic malicious mens of some of the Council Fathers on the one hand, and the naïve optimism or carelessness of other well-intentioned Council Fathers on the other. The activity of the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* [opposing the innovators] could do little or nothing, when the violations of the rules by the progressives were ratified at the Sacred Table itself [by the Pope].

Those who have maintained that the “*spirit of the Council*” represented a heterodox or erroneous interpretation of Vatican II engaged in an unnecessary and harmful operation, even if they were driven to do so in good faith. It is understandable that a Cardinal or Bishop would want to defend the honor of the Church and desire that she would not be discredited before the faithful and the world, and so it was thought that what the progressives attributed to the Council was in reality an undue misrepresentation, an arbitrary forcing. But if at the time it could be difficult to think that a religious liberty condemned by Pius XI (*Mortalium Animos*) could be affirmed by *Dignitatis Humanae*, or that the Roman Pontiff could see his authority usurped by a phantom *episcopal college*, today we understand that what was cleverly concealed in Vatican II is today affirmed *ore rotundo* in papal documents precisely in the name of the coherent application of the Council.

On the other hand, when we commonly speak of the spirit of an event, we mean precisely that it constitutes the soul, the *essence* of that event. We can thus affirm that the spirit of the Council is the Council itself, that the errors of the *post-conciliar period* were contained *in nuce* in the Conciliar Acts, just as it is rightly said that the *Novus Ordo* is the Mass of the Council, even if in the presence of the Council Fathers the Mass was celebrated that the progressives significantly call *pre-conciliar*. And again: if Vatican II truly did not represent a point of rupture, what is the reason for speaking of a *pre-conciliar* Church and a *post-conciliar* church, as if these were two different entities, defined in their essence by the Council itself? And if the Council was truly in line with the uninterrupted infallible Magisterium of the Church, why is it the only Council that poses grave and serious problems of interpretation, demonstrating its ontological heterogeneity with respect to other Councils?

Phil Lawler: Second, what is the solution? Bishop Schneider proposes that a future Pontiff must repudiate errors; Archbishop Viganò finds that inadequate. But then how can the errors be corrected, in a way that maintains the authority of the teaching magisterium?

Archbishop Viganò: The solution, in my opinion, lies above all in an act of humility that all of us, beginning with the Hierarchy and the Pope, must carry out: recognizing the

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infiltration of the enemy into the heart of the Church, the systematic occupation of key posts in the Roman Curia, seminaries, and ecclesiastical schools, the conspiracy of a group of rebels—including, in the front line, the deviated Society of Jesus—which has succeeded in giving the appearance of legitimacy and legality to a subversive and revolutionary act. We should also recognize the inadequacy of the response of the good, the naivety of many, the fearfulness of others, and the interests of those who have benefited thanks to that conspiracy. After his triple denial of Christ in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter “*flevit amare*,” he wept bitterly. Tradition tells us that the Prince of the Apostles had two furrows on his cheeks for the rest of his days, as a result of the tears which he copiously shed, repenting of his betrayal. It will be for one of his Successors, the Vicar of Christ, in the fullness of his apostolic power, to rejoin the thread of Tradition there where it was cut off. This will not be a defeat but an act of truth, humility, and courage. The authority and infallibility of the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles will emerge intact and reconfirmed. In fact, they were not deliberately called into question at Vatican II, but ironically they would be on a future day in which a Pontiff would correct the errors that that Council permitted, playing jests with the equivocation of an authority it officially denied having but that the faithful were surreptitiously allowed to understand that it *did* have by the entire Hierarchy, beginning right with the *Popes of the Council*.

I wish to recall that for some people what is expressed above may sound excessive, because it would seem to call into question the authority of the Church and of the Roman Pontiffs. And yet, no scruple impeded the violation of Saint Pius V’s Bull *Quo Primum Tempore*, abolishing the entire Roman Liturgy from one day to the next, the venerable millenary treasure of the doctrine and spirituality of the traditional Mass, the immense patrimony of Gregorian chant and sacred music, the beauty of the rites and sacred vestments, disfiguring architectural harmony even in the most distinguished basilicas, removing balustrades, monumental altars, and tabernacles: everything was sacrificed on the conciliar renewal’s altar of *coram populo*, with the aggravating circumstance of having done it only because that Liturgy was admirably Catholic and irreconcilable with the *spirit of Vatican II*.

The Church is a divine institution, and everything in her ought to start with God and return to Him. What is at stake is not the prestige of a ruling class, nor the image of a company or a party: what we are dealing with here is the glory of the Majesty of God, of not nullifying the Passion of Our Lord on the Cross, of the sufferings of His Most Holy Mother, of the blood of the Martyrs, of the testimony of the Saints, of the eternal salvation of souls. If out of pride or unfortunate obstinacy we do not know how to recognize the error and deception into which we have fallen, we will have to give an account to God, who is as merciful with his people when they repent as he is implacable in justice when they follow Lucifer in his *non serviam*.

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Dearest Doctor Lawler, to you and to your readers, I cordially send my greetings and the blessing of Our Lord, through the intercession of His and our Most Holy Mother.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò

Arcivescovo, Nunzio Apostolico

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