Last week Monday (Aug. 3, 2020), the *National Catholic Reporter* informed the world that "Bishop Robert Barron hosted an invite-only meeting of Catholic media professionals last week to discuss 'disturbing trends in the online Catholic world,' including the rise of 'radical Traditionalist' movements that are often marked by personal attacks and vitriolic commentary."

"The private meeting," reports NCR's Christopher White, "took place July 29 via Zoom and was confirmed to NCR by Brandon Vogt, content director for Word on Fire Catholic Ministries." According to White, "Vogt said the meeting of Catholic media professionals discussed the online behavior of traditionalists who 'ruthlessly criticize the pope and bishops, and question the authority of the Second Vatican Council, often to the point of repudiation.'"

Although White states that "neither Barron nor Vogt specifically identified individuals or organizations responsible for targeted online attacks," he opines that "much of the criticism directed at Barron has been fueled by fringe right-wing sites such as LifeSiteNews and Church Militant."

And herein lies the irony — that NCR chose to list *Church Militant*, a decidedly non-Traditionalist outlet led by Michael Voris, as representative of "the rise of 'radical Traditionalist' movements" (Voris himself refers to Traditionalist apostolates like CFN, *The Remnant*, and Angelus Press as "Reactionary Catholic Media" — see here and here for John Vennari's excellent rebuttals).

To be clear, Voris' commentary regularly contains personal attacks and vitriol, especially against Catholic bishops; but ultimately, Voris is in substantial agreement with those same bishops, including Bishop Barron, that the Second Vatican Council (i.e., its actual documents) has nothing to do with the doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual, and moral crisis that has ensued in its wake.[1]

Voris himself makes this clear in two editions of his "Vortex" show released last week following NCR's report. What he fails to make clear for his viewers, however, is that his position necessarily involves an implicit accusation of *infidelity* against two of the Church's most faithful prelates alive today: Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and Bishop Athanasius Schneider.

## Voris on Vatican II: *Apparent* Opposition

Let's begin by surveying Voris' commentary in "Vatican II: A Second Round" (Aug. 5, 2020). He begins by observing:

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> "Talk about what's old is new again. No matter what is happening in the Church these days, much of it seems to go back to Vatican II — the 21st ecumenical council (held from 1962–1965) — supposedly to equip the Church to deal more effectively in evangelizing the modern world.
>
> If that was the goal (and we say 'if' at least as it relates to some council participants), the only thing that can be said is that the council was a total flop, failing spectacularly on every score. Post Vatican II, the Church is in full-blown retreat and in many cases has been subverted all over the West by the heresy of modernism.
>
> Whether this can be pinned directly on Vatican II or simply the oft-mentioned 'spirit of Vatican II' is still hotly debated. But we do know that you would have to search high and low to find a greater collapse of the Church — in such a short period of time — anywhere in history."

Some readers might be thinking, "This sounds accurate to me," and it is overall, but this is likely part of a rhetorical tactic to draw in traditional Catholics and make them think Voris is on our side. As we shall see, however, his apparent opposition to the Council is just that —*apparent*, not actual.

## Lip Service to St. Pius X, Denial of Conciliar Modernism

Voris continues:

> "At the beginning of the 20th century, Pope Pius X warned of what he properly saw as an invasion of the Church by the spirit of modernism (what he correctly defined as the 'synthesis of all heresies' — the saint's own words [1907 Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, n. 39]). The Church had weathered centuries of assorted heresies, dissent, schisms and so forth.
>
> But this one, warned the great pope, was a Category 5 hurricane of heresy the likes of which the Church had never seen before. He was spot on. What this heresy claimed was the clergy — but not just claimed them. It claimed them on such a scale as to boggle the mind.[2]
>
> The treachery on the part of heretic bishops and priests in numerous countries has become full-blown in the decades since Vatican II, establishing what amounts

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> to a parallel Church among the faithful. More and more Catholics are coming to realize this as they look around the destruction and are sick to death of hearing all about a 'new springtime' of the Church."

Once again appealing to Traditionalists by invoking St. Pius X and *Pascendi*, he also mentions "a parallel Church", a phrase found in Archbishop Viganò's historic June 9 statement in which His Excellency blasts Vatican II and repudiates Benedict XVI's failed "hermeneutic of continuity" in no uncertain terms:

> "… despite all the efforts of the *hermeneutic of continuity* which shipwrecked miserably at the first confrontation with the reality of the present crisis, it is undeniable that from Vatican II onwards a *parallel church* was built, superimposed over and diametrically opposed to the true Church of Christ. This parallel church progressively obscured the divine institution founded by Our Lord in order to replace it with a spurious entity, corresponding to the desired *universal religion* that was first theorized by Masonry." (Emphasis in original)

Note the archbishop's firm stance that "*from Vatican II onwards* a parallel church was built" — not after the Council, not in spite of the Council, but precisely *because of Conciliar teaching*, as he observes elsewhere in his statement (links added):

> "… it is surprising that people persist in not wanting to investigate the *root causes* of the present crisis, limiting themselves to deploring the present excesses as if they were not the logical and inevitable consequence of a plan orchestrated decades ago. If the Pachamama could be adored in a church, we owe it to *Dignitatis Humanae* [Conciliar Declaration on Religious Liberty]. If we have a liturgy that is Protestantized and at times even paganized, we owe it to the revolutionary action of Msgr. Annibale Bugnini and to the post-conciliar reforms. If the Abu Dhabi Declaration was signed, we owe it to *Nostra Aetate* [Conciliar Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions]. If we have come to the point of delegating decisions to the Bishops' Conferences — even in grave violation of the Concordat, as happened in Italy — we owe it to *collegiality*, and to its updated version, *synodality*. Thanks to *synodality*, we found ourselves with *Amoris Laetitia* having to look for a way to prevent what was obvious to everyone from appearing: that this document, prepared by an

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> impressive organizational machine, intended to legitimize Communion for the divorced and cohabiting [see here for details], just as *Querida Amazonia* will be used to legitimize women priests (as in the recent case of an 'episcopal vicaress' in Freiburg) and the abolition of sacred celibacy [see here for details]." (Emphasis in original)

Perhaps this stark assessment is why Voris hasn't much discussed the former apostolic nuncio during his "Vortex" show since May 11, shortly after the release of Viganò's anti-globalist "Appeal for the Church and the World" but before this anti-Vatican II bombshell.

Bishop Schneider, for his part, concurs with the retired Vatican diplomat in "Some Reflections on the Second Vatican Council and the Current Crisis in the Church" published by *The Remnant* and based on his book *Christus Vincit* (Angelico Press, 2019). In this June 24 text, Bishop Schneider notes:

> "In recent decades, not only declared modernists, but also *theologians and faithful who love the Church*, have displayed *an attitude that resembles a kind of blind defense of everything said by the Second Vatican Council*. Such an attitude seemed sometimes to require real mental acrobatics and a 'squaring of the circle.' Even now, the general mentality of good Catholics corresponds with *a de facto total infallibilization of everything that the Second Vatican Council said, or that the current Pontiff says or does*. This kind of unhealthy papal-centralism had already been present for several generations in Catholics over the last two centuries. *And yet respectful criticism and serene theological debate have always been present and allowed within the Church's great tradition*, since it is truth and faithfulness to divine revelation and to the constant tradition of the Church that we should seek, which in itself implies the use of reason and rationality, and avoiding mental acrobatics. *Some explanations of certain obviously ambiguous and misleading expressions contained in the Council's texts seem artificial and unconvincing, especially when one reflects upon them in a more intellectually honest manner, in the light of the unbroken and constant doctrine of the Church*." (Emphasis added)

Although Voris recognizes "the clamor of the faithful" for orthodoxy, he refuses to "investigate the *root causes* of the present crisis" (Viganò) in favor of an attempted "squaring of the circle" (Schneider), assuring his audience at the end of his Aug. 5 "Vortex": "**The debate over Vatican II, as warranted as it may be, is not the real debate.**

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The *real* debate is the lack of supernatural faith among the bishops and their attempts to tell you there's nothing to be worried about" (emphasis in original) — as if the Council itself has nothing to do with the bishops' "lack of supernatural faith". He seems to ignore the close connection between "heresy, sodomy, and corruption" recently mentioned by Archbishop Viganò to Marco Tosatti, despite *Church Militant* having reprinted Tosatti's interview of Viganò.

"Vatican II may have slowly begun to bring all of this [rot] out into the public view, but *it did not cause it*," Voris says, "even though some of the ambiguity of the documents *may have been* easily weaponized by heretics, schismatics and dissenters" (emphasis added).

*May* have been? It is a matter of historical record that ambiguities *were* exploited after being intentionally inserted by Modernist *periti* (experts)[3] into the new drafts of Conciliar texts following a successful *coup* (i.e., trashing of the original schemas, which were generally quite good).[4] The Modernists themselves have openly admitted this fact. For example, as many have documented over the years and Dr. Taylor Marshall mentions in his book *Infiltration*, "Father [Edward] Schillebeeckx admitted, 'We used ambiguous phrases during the [Second Vatican] Council and we know how we will interpret them afterwards.' The journal *Concilium* [co-founded by Schillebeeckx] would be the means by which they would 'interpret them afterwards.'"[5]

Cardinal Walter Kasper, whose scandalous address to the College of Cardinals (Feb. 2014) marked the unofficial beginning of the rigged Synods on the Family (2014-2015), corroborated the presence of deliberate ambiguity in the Council documents with this bombshell admission published in *L'Osservatore Romano* (Apr. 2013), the Vatican's official newspaper:

> "In many places, [the Council Fathers] had to find compromise formulas, in which, often, the positions of the majority are located immediately next to those of the minority, designed to delimit them. Thus, the conciliar texts themselves have a huge potential for conflict, open [*sic*] the door to a selective reception in either direction."

## Downplaying Problems with Conciliar Texts

Once again, however, Voris downplays the nefarious nature of the Conciliar texts by asserting:

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> "Vatican II never said to have Holy Communion in the hands, dump the organ and bring in guitars, flood the seminaries with perverted men, kill Latin, face the people, hold hands during the Our Father, show up in your flip flops and board shorts and everything that the Church has devolved into.
>
> All of these innovations were injected into the Church by faithless loser bishops like John Dearden here in Detroit (who got the ball rolling) as well as his right-hand man, Chicago cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who was pals with Theodore McCarrick."

Those who have read *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (the only schema that survived the Modernist *coup*),[6] know that while it does not explicitly sanction the abuses mentioned by Voris, it most certainly *does* open a door to such liturgical abuse vis-à-vis the unprecedented power granted to episcopal conferences:

> "22. 1. Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.
>
> 2. In virtue of power conceded by the law, the regulation of the liturgy within certain defined limits belongs also to various kinds of competent territorial bodies of bishops legitimately established." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 22, §1-2)

This power is cited throughout the Constitution as authorization for episcopal conferences to regulate a host of liturgical matters, including use of the vernacular (art. 36) and inculturation (art. 39-40), establishment of liturgical commissions (art. 44), revision of the rite of Matrimony according to local customs (art. 77), use of diverse musical instruments according to local culture (art. 120), and all manner of "material things involved in sacred worship" (e.g. architecture, altars, tabernacles, art, furnishings, vestments) (art. 128).

The document goes so far as to say that "an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed" (art. 40) in mission lands, thus paving the way for "the elaboration of an Amazonian rite that expresses the liturgical, theological, disciplinary and spiritual patrimony of the Amazon" (Amazon Synod Final Document, n. 119) — a project which Pope Francis specifically encourages in *Querida Amazonia* (see n. 82, notes 119 and 120).

In short, the so-called "limits" mentioned in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (art. 22 §22) are incredibly vast! As Christopher Ferrara once wrote, the disastrous document "constitutes a

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'blank check' for liturgical reform [i.e., novelty], with the amount to be filled in depending entirely upon who is wielding the pen."

Regarding Communion in the hand, although it was unlawfully introduced in Europe in the 1960s and illicitly fostered by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin (1928-1996) and other U.S. prelates in the 1970s, it was ultimately Pope Paul VI — the Pontiff who signed the documents of Vatican II — who capitulated and began granting indults (special permission) for the abusive practice beginning in 1969, even after a clear majority of bishops around the world voted to retain the traditional practice of Communion on the tongue (see Instruction *Memoriale Domini*).

## Explicitly Attacking Barron, Implicitly Viganò and Schneider

The other relevant "Vortex" episode from last week, "Barron, Bishops Running Scared" (Aug. 7, 2020), is a direct response to NCR's report on Bishop Barron's private meeting about "rad Trads".

After unloading a magazine of sarcastic contempt on certain "Catholic media professionals" whose outlets are named in NCR's report, Voris turns his sights on Bishop Barron:

> "Demonstrating a woeful ignorance — not even really understanding the actual issue — Barron pegged his private chitchat as a discussion about 'radical traditionalists' online. He went on to foster a discussion about how so-called rad trads 'ruthlessly criticize the pope and bishops and question the authority of the Second Vatican Council, often to the point of repudiation.'"

But here's the kicker:

> "Barron utterly fails to understand *the necessary distinction between the orthodox* (meaning faithful, practicing Catholics) *and the radical fringe* (like the breakaway SSPX cult). The distinction is meaningful. *Faithful Catholics do not question or repudiate the authority of the Second Vatican Council*.
>
> *However, we certainly do question its implementation* by a group of homosexual bishops who wanted to wreck the Church (which they pulled off in spectacular manner). Likewise, regarding his concern about criticizing the pope and the bishops, a distinction needs to be made: Criticizing about what, over what issues?" (Emphasis added)

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Several things must be said in response. First, the so-called "distinction" between "orthodox" and "radical fringe" is farcical. It is precisely those who hold fast to Tradition (cf. 2 Thess. 2:14) and reject "profane novelties" (1 Tim. 6:20) who are truly orthodox (from the Greek ὀρθοδοξία, "right belief or opinion"). As for the casual insult of the SSPX, Voris has been falsely accusing the Society of being "schismatic" for years (see here for a detailed rebuttal); "cult" is apparently just his new favorite pejorative for them, in connection with *Church Militant*'s ongoing efforts to discredit the Society (including its founder) based on alleged (and some documented) cases of sexual abuse as well as allegations of cover-up. (According to this standard, wouldn't the entire Church be classified as a "cult"?)

Secondly, recall that prior to Archbishop Viganò's testimony about ex-Cardinal McCarrick and Pope Francis' role in covering up McCarrick's crimes (published Aug. 25, 2018), Michael Voris adamantly opposed any criticism of the Pope, period. Then, all of a sudden, he decided such criticism is acceptable after all because "[t]he homosexual clerical sex abuse scandal and resulting cover-up is not theological at its foundation, but moral. And in this arena, the laity are absolutely duty-bound to speak up…." Apparently, Voris is not familiar with St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching that "if the Faith were endangered, a subject ought to rebuke his prelate even publicly" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 33, a. 4, ad. 2).

Third, does Voris mean to imply that the Council's "implementation" has been done exclusively "by a group of homosexual bishops who wanted to wreck the Church"? What about Paul VI, who signed the documents and reigned for nearly 13 years after closing the Council? What about John Paul II, who devoted his 26-year pontificate (the second-longest in history) to further implementing the Council, which he called "a gift of the Spirit to His Church" and "the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 57)? And yet, as Voris himself concedes, "the council was a total flop, failing spectacularly on every score." Does he expect us to believe that this spectacular flop had nothing to do with the Council itself, or are we instead supposed to blame the allegedly saintly men who were its primary implementors? (He can't have it both ways.)

Last, and most significant, is Voris' claim that "[f]aithful Catholics do not question or repudiate the authority of the Second Vatican Council." On what grounds does he base this assertion? Is he aware, for example, that Pope John XXIII described Vatican II as being "predominantly pastoral in character," rather than dogmatic, in his opening address at the Council (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Oct. 11, 1962)?

Perhaps Voris doesn't know that towards the end of the third session, in November of 1964, the Council Fathers asked the Secretary General, Cardinal Pericle Felici, for the "theological qualification" (doctrinal weight) of *Lumen Gentium*. In answer, Cardinal Felici referred back to an earlier pronouncement of the Theological Commission (Mar. 6, 1964) on

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the same question, yet applied to the Council in general: "In view of conciliar practice and the pastoral purpose of the present Council, this sacred Synod defines matters of faith and morals as binding on the Church only when the Synod itself openly declares so."[7] (Hint: It never actually declared so.)

Perhaps Voris isn't aware that Pope Paul VI stated during his closing address at the Council (Dec. 7, 1965), "The magisterium of the Church did not wish to pronounce itself under the form of extraordinary dogmatic pronouncements." And just over a month later (Jan. 12, 1966), the same Pontiff reiterated, "In view of the pastoral nature of the Council, it has avoided proclaiming in an extraordinary manner any dogma carrying the mark of infallibility." Hence, as Dr. Marshall observes in his book concerning these quotes, "Since Vatican II did not bear the mark of infallibility or the extraordinary magisterium, a Catholic can claim without impiety that the Council may have contained mistakes."[8]

This is precisely what Archbishop Viganò and Bishop Schneider maintain, as well, leading the former to say "it is preferable to let the whole [Council] drop and be forgotten," and the latter to call for "amendments and corrections of those controversial expressions [in the Conciliar texts], since they were not presented by the Council as an infallible and definitive teaching."

## Conclusion

Why, then, does Voris defend the Council documents as beyond scrutiny and shamefully insult anyone who calls them into question? Why does he attribute to them a higher authority than even notable Vatican prelates do?[9] Why does he cling to the Council as "almost an untouchable idol," in the words of Archbishop Viganò (July 3 response to Sandro Magister)?

Only God and Michael Voris know the real answer to these questions, but it seems to me that Voris is motivated at least partially by a deep-seated contempt for Traditionalists (see here, for example), as well as an unhealthy pride in his own media kingdom — "Catholic FOX News," as he has dubbed it.[10]

For my part, I stand with Archbishop Vigano and Bishop Schneider, whom Our Lord has clearly raised up "for such a time as this" (Esth. 4:14) to defend the Faith *eodem sensu eademque sententia* ("with the same sense and the same judgment" the Church has always held).[11] May all of us who "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) strive to do so with humility and charity, in the spirit of the publican who "would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

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[1] In reality, there is a direct connection between the Council documents and several post-conciliar errors. A perfect case in point is the heterodox "Document on Human Fraternity" signed in Abu Dhabi last year, which Pope Francis says "does not move one millimeter away from the Second Vatican Council." See here for more examples.

[2] For a fuller treatment of this crucial pre-conciliar history, see John Vennari's booklet *The Permanent Instruction of the Alta Vendita* (TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1999) and Dr. Taylor Marshall's book *Infiltration*.

[3] As Catholic historian and author Robert de Mattei notes in his masterful work, *The Second Vatican Council: An Unwritten Story* (Fitzwilliam: Loreto Publications, 2012), "On the eve of the opening of the council, John XXIII had appointed 201 *periti*; at the end of the council, counting also private experts, their number exceeded five hundred. Many of these theologians had been suspected of heterodoxy during the pontificate of Pius XII, such as Fathers Congar, Daniélou, de Lubac, Häring, Küng, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx. All would have great influence during the years of the council and of the post-conciliar period." (p. 188).

[4] For an account of what transpired on the first working day of the Council (Oct. 13, 1962), see Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum: A Study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the XXth Century* (Kansas City: Sarto House, 1996), pp. 84-89.

[5] Taylor Marshall, *Infiltration: The Plot to Destroy the Church from Within* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2019), p. 144; cf. Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 107. Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009), a Dominican from Belgium who served as a *peritus* for the Dutch bishops during Vatican II, was closely monitored by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith after the Council for propagating several heterodox opinions involving such fundamental dogmas as the Virgin Birth of Christ, the Resurrection, and the nature/conferral of Holy Orders (see here, here, and here).

[6] See de Mattei, *The Second Vatican Council*, pp. 213-214.

[7] Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (Gen. Ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 98.

[8] Marshall, *Infiltration*, p. 240.

[9] For example, during a 2016 interview Archbishop Guido Pozzo, former secretary of the

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now-defunct Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* (PCED), stated, "*Nostrae Aetate* does not have any dogmatic authority, and thus one cannot demand from anyone to recognize this declaration as being dogmatic."

[10] For example, Voris addresses the following rhetorical question and answer to Bishop Barron in his Aug. 7 "Vortex": "Why do you think Church Militant and others have gained such traction? Simple — we were (and remain) accurate in everything we report [that is certainly debatable]. We [meaning CM] were the only outfit continually reporting on the invasion of homosexuals into the seminaries and hierarchy." Does Voris really believe that *Church Militant* is the only organization exposing the sodomitical rot within the Church? If so, he's apparently never heard of Traditionalist author Randy Engel and her five-volume work, *The Rite of Sodomy: Homosexuality and the Roman Catholic Church* (first edition published in 2006).

[11] First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* on the Catholic Faith (Apr. 24, 1870), Ch. 4 (Denzinger-Hünermann 3020); Pope St. Pius X, *Oath Against Modernism* (Sept. 1, 1910) (D.H. 3541).

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