

March 9, 2013, Krakow, TV Fides et Ratio. Speech concerning Vatican II by Prof. Roberto de Mattei . In English translated to Polish.

Introduction (0:00 – 5:06 minute mark)

Speech of de Mattei

(5:27) I thank you very much for inviting me to this convention and for giving me the opportunity to present to you some considerations of an historical nature concerning the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II is not a document. It is first of all an event. And from an historical perspective, Vatican Council II is a whole which includes its spirit and its documents, what happened in the Council hall and in the cultural media atmosphere in which its discussions unfolded. It includes its roots and its consequences, its intentions and its result. It is an event.

Perhaps you know this sentence, 'Ideas have consequences.' Ideas inevitably have factual concrete consequences. Behind every historical event there is an idea. But the opposite is also true, events have consequence too. Facts change ideas just as ideas generate events. One recent topical example is the decision by Benedict XVI to renounce the Papacy. This is not an idea, this is an event. But this event is destined to produce consequences in the realm of ideas beyond those which the Pope himself intended. The same was true of the Second Vatican Council.

(9:15) The same Pope, **Benedict XVI, in the last speech which he delivered to the clergy of Rome on the 14th of February [2013] identified the origins of the religious crisis of our time in the Virtual Council which, he said, had superimposed itself over Vatican II. This Council of the Media, according to Benedict XVI, was almost a Council apart, and the world perceived the Council through the Media. Thus, the Council that reached the people with immediate effect was that of the Media, not of the Fathers, says the Pope. And, according to Benedict XVI, therefore the Virtual Council was the dominant one, the more effective one, and it created so many disasters, so many problems, so much suffering, seminaries closed, convents closed, banal liturgy.**

But in the age of social communication in which what is true is what is communicated, this Virtual Council was, however, no less real than the one which took place within St. Peter's Basilica. And also because Vatican II wanted to be a pastoral Council which entrusted its message to new instruments of expression.

Today, more than then, the Mass Media are able to not only represent reality but also to determine it thanks to their force and their power of suggestion. Benedict XVI has frequently spoken of this emphasizing the Media's power to manipulate. And so, an historic act like his decision to renounce the Papacy is inevitably destined to become a Media event. And what other image can be transmitted than that of a man and an institution deprived of the strength to fight advancing evil.

(14:05) So I am speaking not as a theologian but as an historian. And from an historical point of view, it is very important the speech in which John XXIII opened the Council Vatican II. In the address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* through which the Pope opened Vatican II on October 11, 1962, he explains that the relation between the Church and the Modern World was the purpose for which he had convoked the Council. Those who called into question this irenic and optimistic spirit were described by the Pope as 'prophets of gloom.' 'We feel,' John XXIII declares, 'we must disagree with those prophets of gloom who are always forecasting disaster as though the end of the world was at hand.'

What was changing was not the doctrine but the *way* in which it was presented. For this reason, John XXIII wanted a pastoral council devoted to *aggiornamento* (Updating). The pastoral approach was one consequence of the change in the Church's historical evaluation of the modern world. The Church was changing her language because her judgment on the world had changed. And in Paul VI, a pessimist by temperament, the optimistic psychological disposition of John XXIII became a consistent philosophy of history. Pope Montini [Paul VI] set forth this philosophy of history above all in his address on December 7, 1965, at the conclusion of Vatican II, in which he recalled that in the Council an encounter had taken place between the religion of the God who became man, and the religion of man who makes himself God, without the two religions coming into conflict.

(20:50) None of these addresses by John XXIII or Paul VI can be listed among the 16 Constitutions, Declarations and Decrees that make up the so-called Conciliar Magisterium, but they, more than the official documents, provided the key, or if you prefer, the paradigm to the Council which can be summed up by the expression of Paul VI, "boundless sympathy for the world." And how does the Church handle this 'boundless sympathy for the world?' Through a pastoral approach which is the transformation of her language and thereby of her mentality, of her way of being and of thinking.

In all 20 preceding Ecumenical Councils the form was always dogmatic and normative without excluding pastoral concerns. Neither the Council of Trent nor Vatican I was deprived of a pastoral dimension. In Vatican II the pastoral element was not just a fact, in other words a natural explanation of the Council's dogmatic content and ways adapted to the times, as it always had been. The pastoral element was instead raised to the status of a principle; an alternative to the dogmatic element implying the priority of the former over the later. The pastoral dimension which [proceeds?] accidental or secondary with respect with the doctrinal dimension, became in fact the priority. But change the language to express oneself in terms different from those of the past, means to carry out a cultural transformation that is deeper than it may seem. The way which one presents oneself, the style in which one expresses oneself, reveals a way of being and of thinking.

(25:15) I give you an example, the example of Hell. For example, declaring that Hell is empty, something the Council did not do, is certainly reckless if not an heretical proposition. Omitting or limiting as much as possible any reference to Hell as the Council did, does not formulate any erroneous proposition but constitutes an omission that paves the way for an even more serious error than an empty hell – the idea that hell does not exist, because it is not spoken about, and something ignored is as though non-existent. During the years of the Council and those that followed there were many theologians, from Hans Kung to Karl Rahner, from Hans Urs von Balthasar to Edward Schillebeeckx, who reduced Hell to a

mythological description, or while considering its reality, considered it empty. The negation or the resizing of Hell was moreover the result of an idea implicit in *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* which claimed that 'at the present time the spouse of Christ prefers to use the medicine of mercy rather than to take up the arms of severity.'

There is an even more momentous example of omission, that of Communism. Communism was the criminal idea, *par excellence* of the 20th century. Until the Second Vatican Council, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church had spoken out repeatedly against Communism in words of clear condemnation. The sessions of the Council would have been the perfect place to start a trial against Communism similar to the Nuremberg trial against Nazism. Not a criminal trial, penal trial, but a cultural, religious, and moral trial by victims confronting their persecutors. But the progressive minority of the Council Fathers demanded a dialogical approach open to the modern world of which, they thought, Communism was the ultimate expression. And a petition to condemn communism presented on October 9, 1965, by 454 Council Fathers, from 86 different countries, was not even sent to the Commission that were working on the Schema, causing an enormous scandal. Cardinal Oddi in his memoirs said that it was a disconcerting fact. He writes, "An assembly that had been called in order to discuss problems of the Church in the modern world, did not have the courage to condemn Communism, the great adversary of the Faith then, history will judge us. I am sure of that."

(32:22)The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which was the 16th and last document promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, tried to be a completely new description of the relations between the Church and the world. But it lacked any sort of condemnation of Communism whatsoever. And this period, saw the rise of the Ostpolitik, the Vatican's policy of openness to the Communist countries of the East which was symbolized by then Mgr. Agostino Casaroli. The architects of the Vatican Ostpolitik were convinced that there was no sense in fighting Communism. Today however we must ask: Were the prophets those who, like the architects of the Ostpolitik, maintained that it was necessary to reach a compromise with Soviet Russia because Communism interpreted humanities anxieties about justice and would bring the project of modernity to its completion? Or, were the prophets those who at the Council denounced the brutal oppression of Communism and called for a solemn condemnation of it. The fall of the Berlin Wall is the answer to this question. And I agree with the judgment of Plinio Correa de Oliveira on the missing condemnation of communism. And the factual evidence points in this sense – to Vatican Council II was one of the greatest calamities, if not the greatest in the history of the Church.

I think that the [widest?] Heritage that the Second Vatican Council left to us is, in my opinion, the loss of the militant spirit. And I think that the rediscovery of this spirit seems to me to be one of the urgent priorities of the Church of our time. My book was also to give voice to those who during the Council fight against the Progressive minority. I mean conservative voice of the conservative minority.

(37:33) Today, these defenders of Tradition in the Assembly have to be considered as prophets. Today we need defenders of Tradition, and we need patron saints of Tradition. And among these possible patron saints, I would like to quote St. Theresa of Avila. St. Theresa wrote words that should comfort us in the difficult days of our lives and of our history. Perhaps you know this sentence of St. Theresa. "Let nothing trouble you. Let nothing frighten you. Everything passes. God never changes." These words are I

think a manifesto of Tradition. Tradition is not only the rule of Faith of the Church, it is also the foundation of society. The morality of society is expressed in its usages, customs, habits, in a concrete historical tradition that reflects the divine and natural tradition. This Tradition is preserved by families, by social elites, by whoever has its voice [recalling?] in his heart. And so St. Theresa's expression, 'God alone, God alone never changes,' means that only what reflects the natural and divine love is alive and at the service [to life in?] history.

And I think that it is good to remember this. The fact that what is unnatural - not natural - is doomed and destined to fall and decay. It is good to remember this at a moment in which Europe is [enshrined?] in laws called homosexual marriage, which is radically contrary to the natural and divine order of society. In this world, whether you are dealing with moral life or physical life there are things that pass away and things that last. Tradition is what does not pass away. Tradition is that part of the past which lives in the present which must live in order for our present to have a future. And I know this, that in our future, thanks to God's intervention, there is bound to be a restoration of the Church, and of Christian Civilization. Our presence, our voice, our witness, it is I think proof of this. Thank you. (43:55)

Questions and Answers.

(47:00) Answer to the 1st Question: Thank you for your question. I agree completely with you about the lack of the militant spirit and I think that today also there is a Pharisaic spirit which, in a certain sense, is more dangerous than the Sadducean spirit. In the epoch of Jesus Christ there were Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Sadducees were today, we can say, the Rationalists line - the line of incredulity, the relativist. The Pharisaic spirit was inside the Church. And it is today inside the Church also among the Conservative Milieu. And the Pharisees of today are that part of the Clergy which says that, vis-à-vis to the terrible crisis of our time, we have only to be silent and to pray without acting. But I think, on the contrary, that the example of Our Lord was an invitation to follow him in the battle against the enemies; enemies which are the devil, the world, and the profound tendencies of ourselves. And I don't know very well the role of Von Hildebrand during the Council, but I know his book "The Trojan Horse in God's Town [the City of God]" and this is a very interesting and prophetic book -this book of Von Hildebrand.

(53:12) Answer to 2nd Question: Yes it is true. Nobody has the courage today to put Communism on trial. This is a serious problem. This means that Communism is still present, is still strong, not as a political system but as a culture. It is present in the Media, in the Universities, in many, many, many, many fields. So, I agree with you. But I remember that in these days, in the years of the Council, there was someone for example, only to give an example, he was not Catholic, Solzhenitsyn wrote books denouncing the Gulag and the Communism, and no Catholic intellectual belonging to the Establishment, of course, or Cardinal or Bishop, spoke so hard, so firmly as for example some dissidents of those years did. And why was this? Because many Progressive Catholics thought, were convinced, that Communism would live for 100 or 150 years. They didn't imagine that in 20 years Communism would have fallen.

(57:10) Answer to 3rd Question: Yes, in the recently published 2nd volume, biography of John Paul II, the American author George Weigel published documents from the archives of the KGB, of the Polish SB,

and the East German Stasi, that confirms that fact that the Communist governments and the Secret Services of these countries, penetrated the Vatican. And he gives this example, here in Poland the director of the Department for the SB, Colonel Stanislaw Morawski, talked with a dozen of collaborators who were theological experts in Mariology. And they were, the secretaries for this Polish service, were to prepare a memorandum for the bishops of the Council criticizing the maximalist position of the Blessed Virgin Mary held by Cardinal Wyszynski and other prelates. So it was an intervention on theological issues.

(107:41) Answer to 4th Question: Yes, and for the first question: What is new in my book? I think that my book is not necessarily new for everyone. Perhaps it would be not new for you or other people. But it is certainly new in that sense that it is different from what we call the Vulgata. I mean the general idea about the Council, about all the idea supported by the Bologna School. Because until today, the only serious history, but ideologically oriented in a Progressive sense, about the Council, was The History of the Council by Giuseppe Alberigo and the Schola de Bologna. So this is a first point. For example, the Vulgata, or the current interpretation of the Council, presents Vatican II as the conflict between a Progressive majority, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and a Conservative minority which was defeated. I tried to show that in reality the Council was a hard struggle between two minorities, the Conservative and Progressive minorities. Between the two minorities there was a big center, and the conquest of this center of the problem of the two minorities. But this is a point that is very important. The fact that, in reality, there were two minorities, because history is always done, made, by the minorities. So it doesn't exist, a majority which makes history.

And it was known, the fact, that in the French town of Metz in August 1962 there was a meeting and a secret agreement had been reached between Cardinal Tisserant, a representative of the Vatican and the Orthodox Archbishop of Yugoslavia Nikodin, the same who was an agent of the KGB, and according to this agreement the Pope guaranteed that the Council would refrain from condemning Communism and the Kremlin would have sent observers to Rome. But what is new from my part I found in the Vatican Secret Archives a hand written note by Paul VI that confirms the existence of this agreement. This is something, for example, new in my book.

114:25 And for the last question. I think that the speech of Benedict XVI I have quoted, his last speech, a speech which was both a manifesto and a retrospective of his life, was coherent with his participation to the Council. This speech of Benedict XVI seems to say, 'the council which was realized, it was not the council we wanted, it was a different council, because the education, the implementation of the Council in the last 30, 40 years, were imposed by the media, and it was not the mind of the Fathers.' It seems to say this.

But what I say is that it is very difficult to have a distinction between the Document and the Spirit, the Real Council and the Mediati Council. As an historian I try to define the very essence of the Council. If I were not an historian, but if I were a theologian, it would be different. Because what characterizes the theologian is to distinguish, it is to articulate his thinking. But this soil has to look for the unifying moment, for the two essences. So what I do in my book is this.

(1:20:21) Answer to One Final Question: There is no scientific proof of a direct action of Freemasonry on, for example, on the death of some Popes or other things, but what is certain is that Freemasonry agreed with some conclusions or some issues, some points of Vatican II. So, what I think it is not so important to demonstrate the presence, for example, of prelates who were Freemasons. It is possible they were or not. What is more interesting is to see to verify if their speech, their way of thinking is pro-Masonic or not. And in this sense we can say that there was a strong cultural influence of Freemasonry.