

On Sunday, Sept. 3, 2000, Rome beatified both Pope Pius IX and Pope John XXIII, along with Tommaso Reggio, Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade, and Columba Marmion. At the start of his homily, the Pope told the 100,000 faithful present that, in beatifying her children, “the Church does not celebrate particular historical achievements they may have accomplished, rather it identifies them as examples to be imitated and venerated for their virtues....”

John XXIII, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, elected Pope in 1958, “impressed the world with his affability through which shone the goodness of his soul.... It is well known that John XXIII profoundly venerated Pius IX and wished for his beatification.” He convoked Vatican Council II, “with which he opened a new page in the history of the Church: Christians felt themselves called to announce the Gospel with renewed courage and greater attention to the ‘signs’ of the times.”



Was the “G
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The list of books, studies, and articles extolling the “goodness” of Pope John XXIII is too long to be made here. The culminating point of this eulogizing—and it seems definitive—was the promulgation of the decree (Dec. 29, 1989) concerning the “heroic” virtues of the Servant of God, Pope John XXIII. This would seem to put an end to all discussion. However, other studies or articles published pointing out the defects or weaknesses of the same Pope cannot be overlooked.¹ The very “address of homage” directed to Pope John Paul II by the Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints (Dec. 20, 1989) is astonishing. In fact, if the virtues that are praised in Pope Pius IX are noble Christian virtues, *i.e.*, his indefatigable pastoral zeal, intense life of prayer, and profound interior life, those of Pope John XXIII are strangely new, even unknown, to ascetical or mystical theology:

This Pontiff promoted ecumenism, was preoccupied with fostering fraternal relations with the Orthodox of the Orient whom he had known a long time in Bulgaria and at Istanbul, engaging in more intense relations with the Anglicans and with the kaleidoscopic world of Protestant churches. He endeavored in every way to lay the foundation for a new attitude for the Catholic Church toward the Jewish world, being resolutely amenable to dialogue and collaboration. On June 4, 1960, he created the Secretariat for the Unity of Christians. He promulgated two significant encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* (May 20, 1961) on social evolution in light of Christian doctrine and *Pacem in Terris* (April, 11, 1963) on peace among all nations. He visited hospitals and prisons and was always close at hand with charity for the suffering and the poor of the Church and the world.²

If we suspend his dedication to the corporal works of mercy, all the other virtues of Pope John XXIII are, therefore, *ecumenical* virtues.

It is allowed even now to examine the “goodness” of Pope John, which is alleged to have been his sanctity. It is not a question of denying the possibility that he is today in the glory of God, but as for being beatified, it is a question of his being proposed for the veneration and emulation of Catholics. What is at stake is knowing whether in truth it is licit for us to imitate the “goodness” of Pope John XXIII. This “goodness” has been summarized by the same Pope Angelo Roncalli in his six famous sayings which we find expressed, more or less clearly, in his *Journal of a Soul* and in his discourses and writings, especially in the documents of his pontificate.

We intend to demonstrate that these sayings of Pope John XXIII are nothing but sophisms. They sound good, but they’re really not. They are well-correlated among themselves as to constitute that which is usually referred to as the “goodness” of Pope John. He nurtured these opinions throughout his whole life, in spite of the admonitions and even condemnations of popes which contradict them, from Popes Pius VI to Pius XII. Among them is even Pope Pius IX who was

What follows is the first of a three-part series challenging the life of “heroic virtue” currently ascribed to Pope John XXIII at his recent beatification.

The series focuses on the principles expressed in his own writings by which he lived his life and reigned as pontiff. It originally appeared in the Society of Saint Pius X’s Italian publication, *La Tradizione Cattolica*, and was translated by *The Angelus*.

“Good Pope” Bad Pope?

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beatified with him. Furthermore, these ideas of Pope John XXIII have been the daily bread of the Church as it was reformed by the Second Vatican Council, very often referred to as “Pope John’s Council.” The Council was a reflection of his own attitudes, the first and most important of which was his “opening up” to the “modern” world. In order to identify these sophisms, Italian author G. Alberigo writes that it is enough to read the allocution *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* made by Pope John at the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962.³

The opening speech of the Second Vatican Council constitutes an act of considerable historical significance, definitely the most important of the Pontificate of John XXIII, probably one of the most compelling of the Catholic Church in the contemporary age.⁴

In fact, with his speech of 35 minutes to open the Council, Pope John XXIII gave to it its “authentic charter” by defining its spirit. The words of the “good Pope” are incredibly vehement in rebuking every pessimism and denouncing the men and prelates attached to the Church’s past which he characterized as “prophets of gloom.” It was his plan to neutralize them in his opening speech.

Pope John with a determined hand stripped them of the banner of the Council and entrusted it to the forces ready to open themselves to novelty, to rejuvenating the Church, to attempting a radical *aggiornamento* [*i.e.*, updating-*Ed.*] of evangelization and an open dialogue with the world without constraints.⁵

The tone of the speech is surprisingly strong in affirming the necessity of turning over a new leaf. Pope John XXIII advocated total acceptance of the “new order” which was then being established with “new conditions and forms of life introduced into the modern world” and the “wonderful progress of the discovery of the human genius” in order to launch a dialogue between the Church and the world that would ensure the unity of the “whole Christian family,” indeed of the “human race,” a unity that would seem to be “the great mystery that Jesus Christ invoked from the Heavenly Father with His ardent prayer at the approach of His sacrifice.”

This, therefore, was the “fresh air” Pope John XXIII expected to breeze through the Catholic Church by opening wide her windows, by opening the doors to all those who had separated themselves from her or whom his predecessors had previously condemned: the Orthodox, the Protestants, the Jews, the freemasons, the communists, the liberals, the Sillonists, and the modernists.

In anticipation of our deeper treatment, we can summarize the sophisms of “Good Pope John” by saying that, for him, it was necessary to read the “signs of the times,” to recognize that the world had changed for the better, that it was necessary for the Church to conform to the “modern” world while always searching for what united humankind, to employ mercy rather than

severity, and to adopt the language of men of the day. In doing these, the Church would re-establish among all people the unity willed by Christ.

Let us start to examine the individual sophisms. Our treatment will be first to expose each of the six of them and reply with what the Church had said up until that time in a section of excerpts subtitled, “On the Contrary.” The treatment will be concluded with some philosophical observations or common-sense principles.

Ist Sophism: A New Order in Human Relations

This thinking of Pope John XXIII included two important premises with which we will deal separately: **1)** Today everything is better than ever, and **2)** Today the Catholic Church no longer encounters obstacles.

Regarding the *first* of Pope Roncalli’s premises, we read some of his own words with which he opened the Second Vatican Council:

[I]n order to render our joy more complete, we wish to narrate before this great assembly our assessment of the happy circumstances under which the Ecumenical Council commences.

In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse....

We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand.

In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by men’s own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God’s superior and inscrutable designs. And everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church (Pope John XXIII, Inaugural Allocution of the Council, Oct. 11, 1962).

Earlier in his pontificate, in his Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* (Dec. 25, 1961), Pope John had said:

[I]n making our own the recommendation of Jesus of knowing how to discern the “signs of the times,” We seem to perceive, amidst so many trends, not a few indications which give rise to great expectations for the destinies of the Church and of humanity.⁶

In the General Audience of September 19, 1962, he had said that “today divine grace and assistance are manifested in a way even more evident than in the past,”⁷ and in a handwritten draft of the Allocution one reads: “Thanks to our Lord we are not at the end of the world.”⁸

On the contrary, Pope John XXIII’s several recent predecessors of the papal throne spoke in opposition:

[W]e condemned the monstrous portents of opinion which prevail especially in this age, bringing with them the greatest loss of souls and detriment of civil society itself; which are grievously opposed also, not only to the Catholic Church and her salutary doctrine and venerable rights, but also to the eternal natural law engraven by God in all men's hearts, and to right reason; and from which almost all other errors have their origin (Pope Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*, Dec. 8, 1864).

At this moment the obvious goal of the enemies of the Church of waging the fiercest war against Catholic institutions stands out; and for this end it could be said that they have formed among themselves one domestic league. The numerous facts that are springing up from many regions are proof of it....All these are dark indications of the future, nor is the fear that subsequent to the present calamities others even more disastrous may follow far from real (Pope Leo XIII, Consistorial Allocution of April 15, 1901).

For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? You understand, Venerable Brethren, what this disease is—apostasy from God, than which in truth nothing is more allied with ruin, according to the word of the Prophet: “For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish (Ps. 72:27)....”

For in truth, “The nations have raged and the peoples imagined vain things” (Ps. 2:1) against their Creator, so frequent is the cry of the enemies of God: “Depart from us” (Job 21:14). And as might be expected we find extinguished among the majority of men all respect for the Eternal God, and no regard paid in the manifestations of public and private life to the Supreme Will—nay, every effort and every artifice is used to destroy utterly the memory and the knowledge of God.

When all this is considered there is good reason to fear lest this great perversity may be as it were a foretaste, and perhaps the beginning of those evils which are reserved for the last days; and that there may be already in the world the “Son of Perdition” of whom the Apostle speaks (II Thess. 2:3). Such, in truth, is the audacity and the wrath employed everywhere in persecuting religion, in combating the dogmas of the faith, in brazen effort to uproot and destroy all relations between man and the Divinity! While, on the other hand, and this according to the same apostle is the distinguishing mark of Antichrist, man has with infinite temerity put himself in the place of God, raising himself above all that is called God; in such wise that although he cannot utterly extinguish in himself all knowledge of God, he has condemned God's majesty and, as it were, made of the universe a temple wherein he himself is to be adored. “He sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God (II Thess. 2:2).” (Pope St. Pius X, *E Supremi Apostolatus*, Oct. 4, 1903).

Furthermore—and this may be called the most perilous of all these evils—the enemies of all order, whether they be called Communists or by some other name, exaggerating the very grave straits of the economic crisis, in this great perturbation of morals, with extreme audacity, direct all their efforts to one end, seeking to cast away

every bridle from their necks, and breaking the bonds of all law both human and divine, wage an atrocious war against all religion and against God Himself; in this it is their purpose to uproot utterly all knowledge and sense of religion from the minds of men, even from the tenderest age, for they know well that if once the Divine law and knowledge were blotted out from the minds of men there would now be nothing that they could not arrogate to themselves. And thus we now see with our own eyes—what we have not read of as happening anywhere before—impious men, agitated by unspeakable fury, shamelessly lifting up a banner against God and against all religion throughout the whole world.

It is true, indeed, that wicked men were never wanting, nor men who denied the existence of God; but these last were very few in number, and, being alone and singular....But in this age of ours, this most pernicious error is now propagated far and wide amid the multitude, it is insinuated even in the popular schools, and shows itself openly in the theaters; and in order that it may be spread abroad as far as possible, its advocates seek aid from the latest inventions, from what are called cinematographic scenes, from gramophonic and radiophonic concerts and discourses; and possessed of printing offices of their own, they print books in all languages, and, taking a triumphant course, they publicly display the monuments and documents of their impiety. Nor is this enough; for dispersed among political, economical, and military parties, and closely associated with them, through their heralds, by means of committees, by pictures and leaflets, and all other possible means, they labor diligently in the evil work of spreading their opinions among all classes and societies, and in the public ways; and to carry this further, supported by the authority and work of their universities, they succeed at last by forceful industry in binding fast those who have incautiously allowed themselves to be aggregated to their body....

Moreover, the Secret Societies, which by their nature are ever ready to help the enemies of God and of the Church—be these who they may—are seeking to add fresh fires to this poisonous hatred, from which there comes no peace or happiness of the civil order, but the certain ruin of states.

In this wise, this new form of impiety, while it removes all checks from the most powerful lusts of man, most impudently proclaims that there will be no peace and no happiness on earth until the last vestige of religion has been uprooted, and the last of its followers beheaded—as though they thought that the wondrous concert wherein all created things “show forth the glory of God” (Ps. 18:2) could ever be reduced to everlasting silence....

However, in the face of this satanic hatred of religion, which reminds Us of the “mystery of iniquity” (Thess. 2:7) referred to by St. Paul, mere human means and expedients are not enough, and We should consider ourselves wanting in Our apostolic ministry if We did not point out to mankind those wonderful mysteries of light, that alone contain the hidden strength to subjugate the unchained powers of darkness (Pope Pius XI, *Caritate Christi*, May 3, 1932).

In these times, the evil spirit, which never disarms, is redoubling its forces in the battle against Holy Church

and against every ordered human society, against God Himself and against Christ. And the rage which it raises up against us would seem to have to portend that this battle is near to a decisive conclusion, if we did not know that the Church will last until the end of time, and that it would be transformed into the victory of God and the triumph of His Church. Meanwhile the spirit of evil sows ruin, it takes innumerable victims: victims, those who blindly, let themselves be defeated, deported, made slaves by him, victims also—fortunate yes, but grieving—those who persevere in the holy freedom of sons of God, only at the cost of heroic sacrifices (Pope Pius XII to French youth, April 7, 1947).

It is the whole world that must be rebuilt from the foundations, which must be transformed from untamed into human, from human into divine, that is to say according to the heart of God. By millions of men a change of course is invoked and the Church of Christ is looked to as the authentic and unique pilot, which, with regard to human liberty, is able to be at the head of such a grand undertaking, and Her guidance is implored with candid words, and even more with tears already shed, with wounds still throbbing, while calling attention to immense cemeteries, which organized and armed hatred has laid out upon the continents (Pope Pius XII to the faithful in Rome, Feb. 10, 1952).

Oh, don't ask Us who the "enemy" is, nor what clothes it is wearing. It is found everywhere and in the midst of all; it knows how to be violent and underhanded. In these latest times it has tried to orchestrate the intellectual, moral, and social breakup of the unity in the Mystical Body of Christ. It has opted for nature without grace; reason without faith; liberty without authority; at times authority without liberty. It is an "enemy" having grown always more concrete, with a shamelessness that allows yet more astonishing things: Christ yes, the Church, no. Then: God yes, Christ no. Finally the impious cry: God is dead; nay: God never was. And that is the attempt to build the structure of the world upon foundations that we do not hesitate to point out as the main things responsible for the threat that looms over society: an economy without God, a law without God, a politics without God. The "enemy" has taken great pains and will do its utmost to make sure Christ is a stranger in the universities, in the school, in the family, in the administrations of justice, in legislative activity, in the assembly of nations, there where peace or war is decided upon (Pope Pius XII to the men of Italian Catholic Action, Oct. 12, 1952).

It is useful to recall the Third Secret of Fatima which Pope Roncalli read in 1959 and which he was supposed to have made public in 1960. Nowhere in what has been recently made public by the Vatican does it say that "today everything is better than ever."

I have come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays. If you heed my requests, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, provoking wars and persecutions against the Church; the good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, several nations will be annihilated; in the end,

my Immaculate Heart will triumph, the Holy Father will consecrate Russia, which will be converted, and a time of peace will be granted to the world (Our Lady of Fatima, July 13, 1917).

The *second* premise of Pope John XXIII which he presumed in his first sophism was, "Today the Church no longer encounters obstacles." He says it himself:

It is easy to discern this reality if we consider attentively the world of today, which is so busy with politics and controversies in the economic order that it does not find time to attend to the care of spiritual reality, with which the Church's Magisterium is concerned. Such a way of acting is certainly not right, and must justly be disapproved. It cannot be denied, however, that these new conditions of modern life have at least the advantage of having eliminated those innumerable obstacles by which, at one time, the sons of this world impeded the free action of the Church. In fact, it suffices to leaf even cursorily through the pages of ecclesiastical history to note clearly how the Ecumenical Councils themselves, while constituting a series of true glories for the Catholic Church, were often held to the accompaniment of most serious difficulties and sufferings because of the undue interference of civil authorities....In this regard, we confess to you that we feel most poignant sorrow over the fact that very many bishops, so dear to us are noticeable here today by their absence, because they are imprisoned for their faithfulness to Christ, or impeded by other restraints. The thought of them impels us to raise most fervent prayer to God.

Nevertheless, we see today, not without great hopes and to our immense consolation, that the Church, finally freed from so many obstacles of a profane nature such as trammled her in the past, can from this Vatican Basilica, as if from a second apostolic cenacle, and through your intermediary, raise her voice resonant with majesty and greatness (Pope John XXIII, Inaugural Allocution of the Council, Oct. 11, 1962).

On the contrary, it seems that Pope John XXIII is here praising the separation of Church from the State, a principle condemned by Pope Pius IX as false in the *Syllabus of Errors* (Dec. 8, 1864) nearly a hundred years before Pope John came to the papal throne. In justifying his reasons for establishing the Feast of Christ the King in the Church's liturgical year, Pope Pius XI wrote:

[F]or all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. In him is the salvation of the individual, in him is the salvation of society.... If, therefore, the rulers of nations wish to preserve their authority, to promote and increase the prosperity of their countries, they will not neglect the public duty of reverence and obedience to the rule of Christ (*Quas Primas*, Dec. 11, 1925).

It would appear that Pope John XXIII, after so favorably hailing the order of things, simply rejoices at the thought that no "obstacle of a profane nature" exists any longer to limit the freedom of the Church.

Response to the First and

Second Premises of Pope John's First Sophism

Let us remember that we are in 1962. Communism is ravaging the world. In September of 1961 the Berlin Wall had been constructed. In October 1962, a week after the Inaugural Allocution of Pope John XXIII, the Cuban missile crisis broke out in the Caribbean. During the Council itself hundreds of Council Fathers will recall the communist danger. While the schema *Gaudium et Spes* on the "presence and action of the Church in the modern world" is discussed, they will ask for an official condemnation of communism. For example, the Irish Archbishop, William Conway, declared:

The schema...does not speak of the persecution against the Church in certain countries: it can be objected that this silence is willed in order not to hamper the dialogue with atheism, but truth and sincerity are the elementary condition of any dialogue.

The Ukrainian Archbishop, Maxim Hermanjuk, echoed him: "It would be deplorable to forget the testimony of the martyrs and of the confessors of the faith."

The German, Joseph Stimpfle, demanded greater courage from the Council and asked:

How is it possible to remain with a peaceful conscience, while refraining from speaking and even from alluding to the phenomenon of Marxism, which constitutes the real and gravest danger to contemporary humanity, about which the Council declares it wants to be pastorally occupied?

There was the Italian prelate, Barbieri:



It would be a scandal for many believers if the Council would give the impression of being fearful of condemning the greatest crime of our era, scientific and practical atheism, worse in itself and for its consequences, on the moral and spiritual plane, than the atomic bomb itself.

The Argentinean cardinal, Bolatti, announced:

The schema, which contains various laudable considerations and deals with notable and important problems, neglects inexplicably the phenomenon of communism. Even if one wanted to prescind from the politico-economic aspects of the system, it is not possible to pass over in silence the ideology that has such grave consequences on the whole of the life of the world. Communism controls almost half of humanity and threatens the other half... It is the gravest danger of the present world...It is necessary to proclaim openly that communism is in absolute opposition to Christianity.

Among the more perceptive interventions was the oral intervention of the Archbishop of Nanking, Monsignor Yu Pin. In the name of 70 Chinese bishops, the Chinese prelate observed that:

...the schema insists a great deal on the signs of the times, but it seems to ignore that communism and Marxist materialism constitute the greatest and the gloomiest characteristic of our times. A declaration on this subject is demanded by the defense of truth, since communism, materialism, militant atheism, constitute the accumulation of every heresy. We must remember as well that where communism is, bloody, or at least destructive, persecution is never lacking; similarly the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, hand shaking politics, the conception of so-called Catholic communism are founts of dangerous confusion. In order to satisfy the expectation of the people, and especially of those who are suffering and groaning under the communist yoke, in order to give the schema a greater balance and a greater adherence to the *de facto* situation in the present world, it would be necessary to complete it with a chapter reserved exclusively to the Marxist ideology and to its political expression, communism, while adding to it their condemnations.

Cardinal Carli, another Italian, expressed it this way:

The silence of the schema about a phenomenon that unfortunately exists in the world of our time is astonishing; a phenomenon that touches intimately on the natural order and at the same time on the supernatural...It will perhaps be said: but communism has already been judged by the Pontifical Magisterium! I reply: I do not deny that, however, so also were all the rest which are treated in this schema, and in some others, pronounced upon by the Supreme Pontiffs, especially by Pius XII of venerable memory, with even greater clarity, abundance and precision; and still our Council deems it good that these things are not repeated solemnly and conciliarly! I ask therefore that this supreme heresy of our time also be treated in an explicit form and with competence, so that posterity

does not have to think that Vatican II was celebrated in an era in which the whole Catholic world was living in peace and calm.

From the Eastern Bloc was Cardinal Rusnak of Czechoslovakia:

In looking at the geographical map, we cannot ignore that half the world is subjected to communism, without speaking of the communists who are found in the other countries. Communism, therefore, is a phenomenon so vast that it would be necessary to speak of it, even if it was not persecuting religion.

That little which is stated in the schema with reference to atheism is not enough to explain the attitude of the Church toward communism, and that is totally ineffectiveReducing communism, then, to the sole problem of atheism would produce a great confusion in the world, seeing that the Church is silent in the presence of this heresy of the 20th century and has nothing to say to enlighten confused minds. It would also be cruel toward our persecuted brothers; it is necessary to speak of it explicitly, truth and charity demanding it....Making known such things is a true act of charity, also because the public opinion of the world and of Catholics, represented by the Council, can infuse responsible and more moderate counsels.

In a later analysis, it was perhaps Cardinal Carli who was most perceptive when he lodged this objection against the schema:

It is true that in the new version [of the schema] atheism is spoken about more abundantly than in the preceding redaction. However, by carefully avoiding the name of communism—more times condemned by the Magisterium under this name—we end up deluding and deceiving our faithful, especially the simple and the unlearned, who in reading this schema will believe that the Church now no longer has anything to object against communism! What will the Italian communists say, for example, who are generally not atheists? They will say: “The Council had condemned atheism, but not communism; therefore, we can be at the same time both believers and communists!”⁹

That such an attitude was adopted by Pope John XXIII and the Council in the face of communism is disturbing, but even more mysterious is that heretofore Pope John XXIII had understood and acted against the communist threat. On March 25, 1959, Pope John confirmed with a decree of condemnation the excommunication of citizens who had given their vote to communist political candidates. In this way, he was continuing the course marked out by Pope Pius XII. Several of Pope Roncalli’s discourses testify to this.

All, therefore, who wish to remain Christians must be aware of their serious obligation to avoid those false principles, which Our predecessors—especially Popes Pius XI and Pius XII—have condemned in the past, and which We condemn once again. (*Ad Petri Cathedram*, June 29, 1959).

It is a matter of saying no to evil, in all its forms.... In daily life it is often heard: the Church could be more



lenient, could accept some little compromises....This never! The Pope can be good, patient, lenient, as much as he wants, but in the presence of the sad reality, before inadmissible faults his attitude will be, cost what it may, firm, clear, immutable in obedience and homage to the truth [source not referenced in Italian original—Ed.].

Once (August 1959), in order to indicate the firmness of his intention, Pope John had recalled that St. John the Baptist, invincible witness to truth, justice, and freedom, had paid with his own head. Four months later, Pope John XXIII would write in an encyclical:

It must also be remarked that there are current today certain schools of thought and philosophy and certain attitudes toward the practical conduct of life which cannot possibly be reconciled with the teachings of Christianity. This impossibility We shall never cease from asserting in firm and unambiguous, though also calm terms;...the appeasement wished by the Church can in no way be confused with a concession or a relaxation of its firmness in the face of ideologies and systems of life that are in declared and inevitable opposition to Catholic doctrine (*Grata Recordatio*, Dec. 1959).

In *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961) Pope John XXIII wrote that “between communism and Christianity the opposition is fundamental.” Jean Madiran comments: “I think that that happens for the last time in a Pontifical document and of course with a minimizing shrewdness.” In fact, however, Pope Paul VI in *Ecclesiam Suam* (Aug. 6, 1964) would also condemn “the ideological systems unfavorable to God and oppressive to the Church, systems often identified with economic, social, and political regimes, and among these especially atheistic communism.” But this condemnation was made outside of the Vatican Council itself and, frankly, in contradiction to Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem*

in *Terris*, it was totally ignored when he said it.

In any case, Jean Madiran says the statement of Pope John in *Mater et Magistra* (above) was not what it appeared to have been on the surface:

[This] recollection had a tenor intentionally retrospective. It was placed in the preliminary synthesis of the teaching of the preceding popes. It was correctly attributed [in the text—*Ed.*] to Pope Pius XI. Pope John XXIII was not objecting to it, but neither was he making it his own and avoided re-proposing it himself. Furthermore, he was making reference only to the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pope Pius XI and not at all to *Divini Redemptoris* against communism, a significant omission which could not be the result of simple inadvertence.¹⁰

Cardinal Oddi notes that “beginning at a certain point in time, difficult to put one’s finger on, the tone changes; that of dialogue, of trust, of hope becomes emphasized. Rather, it is in fact the note of optimism that prevails and which marks out the transition from severity to mercy, that transformation that goes under the name of “*Giovannea*.”¹¹ Nevertheless, in 1962, communism was unchained, and this silence of the “good” Pope is truly disturbing. Instead of raising the Cross, he only knew how to expose his heart to the enemy.

We know that throughout the Council, Pope John wanted openings to observers from the other Christian confessions, among whom were the Russian Orthodox, who until July 1961 refused the invitations.¹² “It is said that in order to convince Council delegates of some Orthodox Churches to attend, the Holy See had pledged itself not to raise in the ecumenical sessions, in any way, the problem of communism,” writes Cardinal Oddi.¹³ In *The Vatican and Moscow*, Andrea Riccardi points it out:

They spoke in this regard of a “pact” made at Metz between Cardinal Tisserant by mandate of Pope John and Metropolitan Nikodim, who is presumed to have conditioned the participation of the Russian observers in Vatican II by an explicit exclusion of condemnation.¹⁴

The same Riccardi also notes:

There had been a change, even in spite of the unique silence and a different formulation, and it appeared so profound as to confirm the rumor of an explicit accord between the Patriarch of Moscow and the Holy See. Nevertheless, an accord of this kind could have with difficulty bound the freedom of the ecumenical Council.¹⁵

If there is not a relation of cause and effect, the correlation between the change of tone of John XXIII and his contacts with the Russian Orthodox world is at least strange. In reality, there was a Rome–Moscow agreement. The French Communist Party had revealed it at the end of 1963:

The Catholic Church has committed itself, in the dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, to avoiding any direct attacks against the communist regime in the Council.

And Msgr. Roche, Secretary of Cardinal Tisserant, explicitly confirms this in a letter to the Director

of the review *Itinéraires*:

All know that this agreement was negotiated between the Kremlin and the Vatican at the highest summit. Msgr. Nikodim and Cardinal Tisserant were only the spokesmen, the one for the head of the Kremlin, the other for the Supreme Pontiff then gloriously reigning. But I can assure you, Mr. Director, that the decision to invite the Russian Orthodox observers to the Council was taken personally by His Holiness John XXIII, with the open encouragement of Cardinal Montini, who was the advisor of the Patriarch of Venice at the time when he was Archbishop of Milan. Cardinal Tisserant received formal orders, both to negotiate the agreement and to attend to the exact execution of it during the Council. Therefore every time that a Bishop wished to deal with the question of communism, the Cardinal intervened, from the Council of the Presidency’s table, in order to recall the commitment of silence desired by the Pope.¹⁶

Andrea Riccardi reports:

B. Haring, relying on his personal memory concerning the collaboration with Msgr. Glorieux, speaks about a “promise made upon the invitation of the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church” regarding the exclusion of eventual condemnations of communism.¹⁷

After the negotiations between Tisserant and Nikodim, Msgr. Willebrands made an unexpected and secret plane trip to Moscow between September 27 and October 2 in order to inform the synod of the pastoral orientation of Vatican II and of how the question of communism was treated in the preparatory works.¹⁸ The guarantee that the Russian Church was able to receive from Rome was not only the verbal agreement between the two eminent prelates, but also the fundamental formulation which Pope John XXIII intended to give to Vatican II....A guarantee even more explicit was that which Pope John XXIII gave with *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. He declared that [the new order of the world being most advantageous] the Church was choosing the way of mercy and not that of severity and of condemnation.¹⁹

On the afternoon of October 12, the Russian observers arrived at Rome. They were unhappy.

[T]he Ukrainian Bishops of emigration, having arrived at the Council, drafted a document, afterwards made public by the press, in which they manifested their “bitterness” on account of the absence at Vatican II of the only survivor of all eleven Ukrainian Bishops in the country, Msgr. Slipyi. The presence of the two Russian observers at Vatican II “has perturbed the believers”: an ecumenical act is accomplished and the suffering of the Ukrainian Church is forgotten? Their presence “was not able to be considered a fact of a religious and ecclesiastical character, but an act contaminated by a purpose alien to religion, conducted by the Soviet regime in order to spread confusion....” Pope John XXIII, the “good Pope,” was giving life to a period of diplomatic interventions by the Holy See in an area unexpected and judged, up till then, impracticable.²⁰

At the opening of the Council, Pope John XXIII

ignored the existence of communism, and notwithstanding the formal and written request of 454 Council Fathers [orchestrated in large part by Archbishop Lefebvre-Ed.], not a word was said regarding communism. It is not even mentioned in the texts promulgated by a would-be “pastoral” Council which nevertheless delivered innumerable sheep to the most bloody totalitarianism that has ever existed in the world. In an effort to recover from such shame, Pope Paul VI would be obliged to insert into §21 of *Gaudium et Spes* five [Latin] words and a footnote:

The Church, as given over to the service of both God and man, cannot cease from reproof, with sorrow yet with utmost firmness, *as she has done in the past*,⁽¹⁶⁾ [emphasis added-Ed.] those harmful teachings and ways of acting which are in conflict with reason and with common human experience, and which cast man down from the noble state to which he is born (*Lumen Gentium*, first paragraph of §21 under the subtitle, “The Attitude of the Church Towards Atheism”).

When the original text recalled, “The Church, ...cannot cease from reproof,...those harmful teachings and ways of acting...” Pope Paul VI had the formulation “*as she has done in the past* [highlighted above-Ed.]” added and by inserting footnote 16 [of the approved English translation-Ed.], he recalled texts of the ecclesial Magisterium in which communism was explicitly mentioned and condemned:


⁽¹⁶⁾ Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, 19 March 1937; *AAS* 29 (1937), pp.65-106; Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, 29 June 1958: *AAS* 50 (1958), pp.601-14; John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961: *AAS* 53 (1961), pp.451-3; Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August 1964: *AAS* 56 (1964), pp.651-3.

Pope Paul VI had therefore recognized, at least in part, the legitimacy of the petition of the Council Fathers, and by good diplomacy, had found a solution by a compromise that simultaneously respected three conflicting demands: to have the Council closed without delay, to condemn communism, and never to mention it.²¹

In their initial “Message to the World” (Oct. 20, 1962), the Council Fathers solemnly affirmed that “the Church is today more than ever necessary to the world, in order to denounce the injustices and the contemptible inequalities.” But how was the Church going to be able to do this after the Inaugural Allocution and strategy of silence of Pope John XXIII? How could it do so if it was silent on the most bloody injustice of the modern world? If it was silent on communism, that is, the exploitation of man by man, then it is being silent on the most perfected exploitation which has ever existed! Jean Madiran writes:

The pledge made and maintained by the Holy See has been the renunciation of the mission of the Church, a betrayal of God, of the Church itself and of humanity; this page in the history of the Church will remain dark, the shame of the Holy See in the 20th century.²²

Moreover, how could “good Pope John” speak of the Catholic Church being “...finally freed from so many obstacles of a profane nature such as trammelled her in the past (Inaugural Allocution, *cit.*),” when afterwards he submitted it to the “veto” of Moscow? In his comprehensive work, *Iota Unum*, Romano Amerio writes:

The opening speech of the Council lauds the freedom of the contemporary Church at a time when, as the speech itself recognizes, many bishops are in prison for their faithfulness to Christ and when, thanks to an agreement sought by the Pope the Council finds itself bound by a commitment not to condemn communism. This contradiction, although important, remains nonetheless secondary in comparison to that fundamental contradiction by which the renewal of the Church is based on an opening to the world, while the most important, essential and decisive of the world’s problems, namely communism, is left out of account.²³ 

Rev. Fr. Michel Simoulin, a Frenchman, is a priest of the Society of Saint Pius X. He is currently District Superior of Italy.

¹ For example “*Nichita Roncalli Controvita di un Papa*” of Franco Bellegrandi, Eiles, 1994, may be seen. Also, many studies published by *SiSiNoNo* [Italian edition] may be consulted (Jan. 1976, Sept. 1984, July 1987, Feb. 1997, May 1998, April 1998).

² *L’Osservatore Romano* 20-21, XII, 1999.

³ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Nov. 26, 1962, pp.786-795.

⁴ G. Alberigo, “*Formazione, contenuto e fortuna dell’allocuzione*” in *Fede, Tradizione, Pofezia*, Padeia Editrice, Brescia, 1984, pp.1987-222.

⁵ Carlo Falconi, “*Vu et entendu au Concile*,” ed. of *Rocher*, 1964, p.121.

⁶ *Giovanni XXIII, I Concilio della speranza*, Ed. Messaggero, Padova, 1985, p.176.

⁷ G. Alberigo, *op. cit.*, p.197, no.21.

⁸ Jean Madiran, *Itinéraires*, no.280, Feb. 1984, p.13.

⁹ See “*Quella ‘Svista’ del Concilio*” of Tommaso Ricci in *30 Giorni*. August-September 1989, pp.56-63.

¹⁰ Jean Madiran, *Itinéraires*, no.280, February 1984, p.13.

¹¹ Card. Silvio Oddi, “*Giovanni del Mito, Giovanni della Storia*” in *30 Days*, no.5, May 1988, p.59.

¹² G. Alberigo, *op. cit.*, pp.427, 428.

¹³ *Loc. cit.*, p.59.

¹⁴ Andrea Riccardi, *Il Vaticano a Mosca*, Laterza ed. 1993, Chap. VII, “*Fine della Condanna, Inizio del Dialogo*,” p.278.

¹⁵ Andrea Riccardi, *loc. cit.*, p.281.

¹⁶ See *Itinéraires*, no.70, Feb. 1963; no.72, April 1963; no.84, June 1964; no.280, Feb. 1984; no.285, July 1984. See also *SiSiNoNo* [Italian edition], Sept. 15, 1984.

¹⁷ Andrea Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca*, *op. cit.*, p.279, no.35.

¹⁸ S. Schmidt, *Agostino Bea, il Cardinale dell’unita*, Rome, 1987, p.381. See also E. Hales: *La Rivoluzione di Papa Giovanni*, Mondadori, 1968, p.199: “Therefore, at the end of September, Msgr. Willebrands took the plane for the Soviet capital where he assisted at a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Nikodim (head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Patriarch of Moscow) and formulated the clear-cut assurances that the Council would not give cause for polemics on communism which could sound offensive to sensitive Soviet ears.”

¹⁹ Andrea Riccardi, *op. cit.*, pp.281,182.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.240,241.

²¹ *La Petizione scomparsa in 30 Giorni*, Sept., 1989, pp.62,63.

²² *SiSiNoNo* [Italian edition], Sept. 15, 1984.

²³ Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum* [English edition] Sarto House, Kansas City, MO, p.77 [available from Angelus Press. Price: \$24.95].