

THE VATICAN COUNCIL*

ONCE more Abbot Butler has put us in his debt. It was not to be wondered at that the work involved in compiling his fascinating *Life of Archbishop Ullathorne* should have focussed his attention on the story of the unfinished Council in which Archbishop Ullathorne took so real a part though hardly one of the great protagonists in those immortal scenes.

Though the Council is famous for its definition of Papal Infallibility, curiously enough this was not one of the subjects marked for discussion, even though everybody knew long beforehand that it was to prove the great feature of the meetings. Quite rightly then does Abbot Butler present us with a history of the Council in which the Dogma of Infallibility is the key to all the discussions, even to those which preceded the gathering of the bishops. That the doctrine should ultimately be defined was not only a logical necessity but an historical one, for it is enshrined in the doctrine of the Primacy already defined at Florence. Moreover, as it were unconsciously, the Christian 'sense' of the truth of this doctrine lay at the back of all the disputes between the Papacy and the Christian kings which are so marked a feature of European history. Hence in his opening pages the Abbot gives us a really masterly survey of such thorny questions as that of the deposing power claimed by the Popes, and of the effort—began at Constance and perpetuated in Gallicanism—to make the Pope in some way or other subordinate to an Oecumenical Council. Incidentally we are shown how consistently the Church down the ages has taught that Primacy involves Infallibility

*THE VATICAN COUNCIL. The Story told from inside in Bishop Ullathorne's Letters. By Dom Cuthbert Butler, O.S.B. (Longmans, 1930; pp. 300 and 308; 25/- Two volumes.)

and how the best Anglican and even German rationalistic scholars have felt compelled in the interests of historical truth to acknowledge this. Gallicanism, of course, provoked a reaction in Ultramontanism or the Italian insistence on the true position of the Papacy; this in its turn affected the upholders of Gallican views so that we have a modified form of Gallicanism presented in a peculiarly seductive form by the Benedictine, Jamin, towards the close of the eighteenth century.

How strange it is to learn that Döllinger himself held Ultramontane views up till about 1860, after which period he drifted further and further away. And conversely, that Ullathorne himself was brought up on Gallican views, from which the influence of De Maistre extricated him. Interesting, too, to learn that the Eastern Churches refused even to read the Pope's invitation to the Council because, forsooth, it had accidentally appeared in the newspapers before it reached them officially; also that the Anglican bishops were not invited on the ground that their Orders were invalid, in other words that they were not bishops at all! But most interesting of all are the 'inopportunist' who, while wholeheartedly accepting the doctrine, yet felt it unwise to define it at this juncture. What drove them to this position? Louis Veuil- lot and his disciple W. G. Ward. Indeed, the fulminations of the former—a journalist and no theologian—and the extravagances of the latter were enough to make anybody an 'inopportunist.' Not, of course, that there were not other less personal and petty motives. The English and the American 'inopportunist' and those bishops who were in most direct contact with the Eastern Churches feared—and events justified them—lest such a definition should retard that reunion of the Christian peoples for which men yearned as ardently then as now.

Blackfriars

Abbot Butler has with great skill delineated all the forces thus at work on the eve of the Council; his 'thumb-nail sketches' as well as the photographs of the principal actors give us a vivid picture of men like Dupanloup—convinced of the doctrine yet fighting to the last against its definition, despite the fact that thirty years previously he had taken for his doctorate thesis in Rome the subject of Papal Infallibility and defended it warmly; of Döllinger, with his bitter attacks entitled 'Janus' and 'Quirinus'; of Hergenrother, with his 'Anti-Janus'; of Hefele, the historian of the Councils and now made responsible for the immensely intricate machinery which so vast an assemblage demanded, and for long unable to accept the decision on the Infallibility; of Strossmayer, deeply interested in the Eastern Churches and consequently an 'inopportunist'; of the Americans, Spalding, Kenrick, McClosky and Purcell, all of them 'inopportunist' through fear lest the work of conversion in the States should be jeopardised by a gesture not absolutely necessary. From Germany came such heroic figures as Rauscher of Vienna, Schwarzenberg of Prague, and Melchers of Cologne, apostolic bishops in the truest sense of the term, real pillars of the Church, convinced 'Infallibilists' all of them, yet equally convinced 'Inopportunist.' The last-named had been Bismarck's chief antagonist over the Falk Laws and had paid for it by imprisonment and exile. He was one of the first of the 'Inopportunist' to accept the decree.

To these we must add Scherr of Munich, an 'Inopportunist'; later on it fell to him to excommunicate Döllinger, also Friedrich, who, however, administered the last Sacraments to the unhappy Döllinger when unconscious. And last, but not least, Simor, the Primate of Hungary, who, despite his energetic efforts to prevent the definition of a doctrine in which

he whole-heartedly believed, resisted the later efforts of his own Government to prohibit the promulgation of the decree.

Over against these were the bishops who were not only convinced 'Infallibilists'—for the 'Inopportunist' were that, too—but who were also determined to get the doctrine defined; nay, who were so certain of success that they even entertained a hope that it would be defined: 'by acclamation'! Then the French: Ultramontanes like Mgr. Pie, afterwards Cardinal; de Bonnechose, Guibert and Lavigerie, all of them Cardinals then or later, men who held a middle position; wanting the definition, they yet hoped for a conciliatory formula which should alienate none; and the 'Inopportunist,' Darboy, afterwards the Martyr of the Commune, Dupanloup, who feared lest the 'temperate' Papal Monarchy should become an absolute one, Matthieu and Meignan, great names all of them, and most of them afterwards raised to the Cardinalate. Then, too, Dechamps of Malines, no 'Neo-Ultramontane' yet perhaps the driving force of the Ultramontane party—his hand can be seen in the final formulation of the decree; Fessler, who was made Secretary of the Council, and who could, and did, work sixteen hours a day; Gasser, of Brixen, who gave such remarkably clear expositions of the definition; Martin of Paderborn; Cullen of Dublin, to whom was due the actual formula ultimately employed.

Then the English-speaking bishops. These, including forty from America, numbered one hundred and forty-six. On the side of the minority were most of the Americans; while on the side of the majority Spalding would have avoided the term 'infallible,' MacHale of Tuam, Clifford of Clifton, Moriarty of Kerry, Vaughan of Plymouth, Amherst of Northampton, Leahy of Dromore. Yet all these, though opponents of the definition of the doctrine, held it from

Blackfriars

conviction. Even the Bishop of Little Rock, who gave one of the two 'non-placets' in the final Session, assented to the doctrinal definition immediately on its pronouncement, crying out 'Modo credo, sancte Pater!' Nor were the English-speaking bishops merely voters. They took an active part in the discussions, and rare testimony to the esteem in which they were held appears in the fact that for the first three places on the Deputation on Discipline the votes of the Fathers fell on McClosky of New York, Ullathorne of Birmingham, and MacHale of Tuam. Bishop Grant of Southwark was put forward as the English representative on the Deputation de Fide, but ultimately he and Ullathorne divided votes, with the result that Manning was chosen by a small majority.

Of Dr. Clifford, Bishop Moriarty of Kerry writes to Newman: 'the very soul of chivalry—no braver bishop in Rome.' He made a speech of nearly an hour on 'The Life of the Clergy' which seems to have electrified the Council; he was, too, the only bishop from England or Ireland to sign the last petition of the 'Inopportunist.' Bishop Moriarty himself spoke but once, and then to point out that the whole trouble over the proposed decree of Infallibility lay in the three words 'personal, separate, absolute'; his letters to Newman afford us a real insight into the feelings and true motives of the minority party. Of Dr. Leahy, Ullathorne writes, 'To-day the Archbishop of Cashel made one of the most clear, solid and luminous speeches heard in the Council,' while Cardinal Cullen's speech—'one of the great speeches of the Council' and filling no less than thirteen columns in Mansi's *Concilia*—had the merit of introducing a new formula which was in effect ultimately embodied in the decree; this formula he seems to have derived from Cardinal Bilio.

Manning, of course, was a central figure not only among the English but in all that was going on. In fact his rooms became what many were inclined to call a centre of intrigue. Certainly the manoeuvring which secured the return of none but pronounced 'Infallibilists' on the Deputation de Fide—the most important of all in this connexion—was open to criticism. Still, every election is a question of tactics, and no one can complain if one party proves better organised than another, or more shrewd in its procedure. The tactics employed, however, very nearly wrecked the measure they were intended to further. For an inevitable reaction set in, and the 'Inopportunist' stiffened in their opposition; Newman's famous and ill-fated letter to Ullathorne is but an isolated instance of this. It seems certain that, had more moderate methods been employed, the decree would have passed far more speedily.

The trouble with Manning was, of course, that, unlike such men as Dechamps and Martin, he was not a trained theologian. His attitude drew a stern rebuke from Cardinal Bilio who said to him, 'That is not the way to deal with the affairs of the Church!' But he had long previously registered a vow to carry through the decree on Infallibility which to his mind was simply 'right'; he seems to have been incapable of appreciating the real difficulties felt by the great minds among the minority. The day when he spoke for almost two hours pleading for the definition was perhaps the greatest of his life. Unfortunately, he maintained that the doctrine was already of divine faith, a mistake which Dr. MacEvilly of Galway corrected. It was the same after the Council, for in his *The Vatican Council and its Definitions* he extended the charisma of Infallibility to dogmatic facts and other points, though the definition as such requires considerable stretching to make it embrace all these.

Blackfriars

Abbot Butler has entitled his book *The Vatican Council, the Story told from inside in Bishop Ullathorne's Letters*. At first sight one might be tempted to quarrel with this title, since letters from other bishops such as Amherst and Moriarty are also given. But as one reads on one feels that the title is justified. For not only are we helped to see the Council and the Fathers through Ullathorne's eyes but we see the doctrine slowly formulating as he—a bishop of immense experience of human nature and himself a counsellor of bishops in many ways—would from the outset have had it formulated. Throughout those long months he studiously kept himself aloof from all parties and intrigues. These had their place, their definite function in clearing the issues, as he himself readily acknowledges; but they were not for him. He watched and weighed, he discussed, and above all he prayed. Over and over again in the course of these letters he insists that nothing but the good of God's Church could ultimately come out of the welter of conflicting opinions. He is immensely impressed by the freedom of discussion, by the outspoken speeches, by the cordiality with which men holding widely differing opinions could meet, chat, laugh and make jokes together. More than this: to Ullathorne we owe much of the clarity of the ultimate form of the decree. He it was who proposed the insertion of the words 'ex cathedra'; he, too, who pointed out that the expression 'Roman Catholic Church' would cause trouble in Protestant lands; he it was who secured the actual form used: 'Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church.' His pen pictures of the personnel and of the majestic scenes in which he moved must be read in Abbot Butler's own pages.

Ullathorne's sense of humour gave zest to the many weary hours of listening to speeches which were nearly always portentous in their length, often not to the

point, and frequently repetitions of what had already been said much better by someone else. Thus he recounts with glee the proposal to fine those guilty of such repetitions, also the story of the bishop who was so lengthy in his plea for brevity in the speeches that he was asked to put his doctrine into practice. He was wickedly amused, too, when the Pope took the portrait of Cardinal Howard in the English College for that of a Benedictine. Even the extravagances of Bishop Verot, known as the 'enfant terrible' of the Council, made him smile, while the Oriental bishop who seemed to have different coloured robes for every day of the Council amused him intensely, just as he was tickled by the 'roaring' of the Swiss bishop.

In a Dominican Review we cannot pass over the attitude of the Dominicans towards the doctrine of Infallibility. Under Cardinal Guidi, the Archbishop of Bologna, they took a prominent part in tearing to pieces the original schema de Fide. Later on Cardinal Guidi himself, in company with Père Jandel, then the Master-General of the Order, and the Dominican bishops, urged the omission of the word 'infallibility' as being too vague and, moreover, not used by St. Thomas. The positive form in which Guidi would have formulated the decree is worth recording: that the Roman Pontiff by the power of the divine assistance is entirely immune from all error when, exercising the office of supreme teacher of all Christians, he defines something to be held or rejected as of faith by the universal Church, and that this prerogative is co-extensive with the infallibility of the Church herself, as it belongs to the authority of Christ's Vicar to determine finally questions of faith. In his speech on June 18th, Guidi strongly urged that it should be made clear in the decree that not the Pope alone issues a definition; but the Pope with the bishops consenting to, or it may be asking for a definition, in such a way that

Blackfriars

they merely propose it, but he, by his authority received from Christ, defines. Guidi would therefore have a clause inserted pointing out that, previous to defining, the Pope must have made investigations and taken episcopal counsel, and he proposed a Canon embodying this. While many dissented from Guidi's views there were many who welcomed them. It is hard to see what there was in these proposals to give offence. In private Pius scolded Guidi, and when the latter replied that he had only maintained that the bishops were witnesses to tradition, Pius IX exclaimed, 'Witnesses to tradition? There's only one; that's me.'

As a matter of fact, Guidi's proposal was accepted as the basis of the actual definition, and he himself, with Jandel, voted 'placet' at the final session.

After no less than eighty-six General Congregations, which had each been attended by at least five hundred to six hundred bishops, came the closing scenes of the Council. These are historical, though they have hitherto been presented in anything but a satisfactory fashion. In what may be called 'the trial-ballot' six hundred and one Conciliar Fathers voted. Of these four hundred and eighty-one said 'placet,' eighty-eight said 'non placet,' sixty-two said 'placet juxta modum,' that is with a qualification expressed in remarks sent in at the time. A fair number had gone home owing to various reasons, while seventy-six, though still in the city, refrained from voting. Then came the last scene of all, on July 18th, 1870, when by five hundred and fifty-three 'placets' to two 'non-placets' the decree was passed and immediately confirmed by the Holy Father amidst as terrific a storm of thunder and lightning as Rome had perhaps ever witnessed. All those without exception who had voted against the decision at once gave in their allegiance. But there remained the minority party which had de-

terminated not to put in an appearance. Some of the most remarkable pages in these two volumes are those which deal with these great men, most of them giants intellectually and morally, all of them convinced that the doctrine was true, yet for a variety of reasons fearing the ill effects of its definition; all of them ultimately giving in their adhesion to what they felt was 'the mind of the Church of God.'

Here we must leave these fascinating volumes. No one who takes them up will readily drop them. For it is a pageant that is described, a pageant which Ullathorne's simple narrative of events enables us to see with our own eyes. When in St. Peter's, you will be shown the transept where the Council was staged; but when you read the story told with an artless, effortless, simplicity by one who realised to the full the historic character of the scenes he was witnessing, the famous transept seems to burst into life. One seems to see Pius IX seated on his throne, wondering, perhaps, as he so naively said, whether the Conciliar Fathers would pronounce him 'infallible' or 'fallito,' *viz.*, 'bankrupt,' for the Council was costing him personally some £200 a day; warning the assembled bishops, too, with his winning smile, that they 'would find the Holy Spirit inside, not outside the Council.' One seems to see, too, those serried ranks of cardinals and bishops, the latter all in white copes and wearing plain white mitres, and all the faces turned towards the rostrum when some eloquent speaker forced their attention. One wanders along it now, but only the 'Sanpietrini' are at work, and it is hard to believe that once some 1,400 men sat there—for that, including the mighty army of officials—seems to have been the number. It is silent now, but once it echoed to the 'placets' of a host of prelates who have one and all gone to their rest. It echoed, too, as Ullathorne said in one of those charming little notes which he sent

Blackfriars

home, to the Homeric voice of a Swiss bishop, who spoke for an hour, and roared as if he were talking from one mountain to another against wind and thunder!'

Will that famous transept echo once more to the voices of bishops assembled in a re-opened Vatican Council?

HUGH POPE, O.P.

LOVE'S VICTORY SHOUT

(. . . ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ).—Mk. XV, 84).

FAINT cry God's Mother heard
From God's earth-spoken Word.
Upon her lap He lay
Still, with no word to say.
Yet every feeblest breath
Was love's accost of death.

* * * * *

He took another way
On death's desired day,
When as from love's full choir
He uttered His desire;
And with loud hero cry
Taught love God's way to die
Yea, with love's victory shout
Dying, put death to rout.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.