

[This is an excerpt from my book, *Church History: Twenty Centuries of Catholic Christianity*, Paulist Press, 1985. (A new edition is forthcoming.)]

## 1 From the First Vatican Council to World War I

After the Congress of Vienna, the ultramontane movement gained strength in the various European countries for quite different reasons. As it did, many French Catholics began to argue that the time had come to make the old teaching on papal infallibility into a matter of formally defined Catholic faith. These suggestions were not at all unwelcome to Pius IX, who was quite convinced of his infallibility (and not only in matters of faith!). In 1854 he had, on his own authority, defined the Immaculate Conception as a doctrine to be held by all Catholics, and when, in 1867, he announced that he was summoning a council to meet in 1869, it seemed certain that the question of papal infallibility would be on the agenda.

The First Vatican Council is one of those great paradoxes of church history. In 1820, fifty years before it occurred, no one would have dared to predict that in that same century, an overwhelming majority of the bishops of the world would solemnly declare that the Pope was, at least under certain conditions, infallible. But in another sense, Vatican I was the natural, even inevitable result of the ultramontane movement. And yet, when the Council met and made its decision, the decree *limited* papal infallibility far more than most of the ultramontanes wanted, and the Pope himself was probably quite disappointed.

The definition of infallibility at Vatican I has become a serious *ecumenical* problem, and both Catholics and Protestants have felt that it is the single most serious obstacle in the way of Christian unity. It was for this reason that Hans Küng's book, *Infallible? An Inquiry*, which was published in 1970, and which questioned the doctrine, created such a stir at the time, and it is for this reason that Rome has tried to discipline Küng in the intervening years.

### 1.1 Preparing for Infallibility

The progress of the ultramontane movement from the 1830's on led inexorably toward a pronouncement on papal infallibility. Even in Germany there were some developments which favored such a course. The bishops there had already learned how useful it was to be able to rely on Rome when the Prussian government tried to meddle in church affairs. Furthermore, during the course of the nineteenth century, German Jesuits and their former students at the Gregorian University in Rome did everything to impress their particular view of papal primacy on the laity in Germany. The parish missions conducted by these priests emphasized a Counter-Reformation and even anti-Protestant piety, and instilled a sense of personal loyalty to the Pope in all of the faithful.

In France, Louis Veillot, one of the most radical ultramontanes, used his newspaper, *L'Univers*, as a pulpit from which to preach a type of papolatry which is almost sickening today. In Italy, the Jesuit journal, *Civiltà Cattolica*, followed the same course. And in all countries, the supporters of the ultramontane cause did not hesitate to employ the practice of secret denunciation in order to discredit their opponents and block their advancement in the church.

The dogmatic decision on the Immaculate Conception which Pius IX issued in

1854 should also be seen as part of the preparation for infallibility. It is true that the Pope had asked the bishops of the world for their views in the matter in the years before his decree, but when the decision was made, no allusion was made to his acting in concert with the bishops or as head of the episcopal college. *The Pope* made the decision and then communicated it to the bishops and the Catholic world.

In 1864, Pius IX asked the cardinals what they thought of the idea of calling a council, and, perhaps surprisingly, he did not mention the possibility of including papal infallibility on the agenda. Rather, the council was to be the crowning triumph of the church over liberalism in all of its forms. However, many members of the Curia were quite worried about the coming council. They feared the French bishops, who were no longer openly Gallican, but whom curial officials suspected of lingering anti-Roman sentiments; and even more they feared the German theologians, whose historical studies could easily undermine the ultramontane structure so laboriously assembled during the preceding decades. The Curia did what it could to avert both "dangers", and the Pope cooperated by appointing almost exclusively supporters of the ultramontane cause to the preparatory commissions.

Although many of the laity throughout Europe had been won by the ultramontanes, there were still serious divisions among the bishops and theologians, as well as among the well-educated laity. However, the ultramontane party was convinced that the time had come to settle all problems for the church then and in the future by pronouncing the Pope infallible. The Jesuit periodical *Civiltà Cattolica*, alluding to the situation in France, suggested that what all *real* Catholics wanted was a short council which would affirm the truth of the *Syllabus of Errors* and would then proclaim papal infallibility *by acclamation* (!) Such excesses enraged a number of French and German bishops, as well as almost all of the Catholic theological faculties of the German universities. These men had serious reservations about the doctrine on what they considered to be solid grounds, and they had nothing but contempt for the simplistic adoration of the papacy which they found on the pages of *L'Univers* and of *Civiltà Cattolica*.

The position of these opponents of infallibility was moderate, and really had nothing to do with Gallicanism, Febronianism, or Josephinism. Rather, they felt that the trend toward centralization of all power in Rome was not healthy for the church. In their eyes, the episcopal office was a matter of divine foundation and divine law, and they felt that any move which lessened the power of the bishop to act as a successor of the apostles in his own diocese was an attack on the essential structure of the church. Furthermore, particularly in Germany, they did not like the attempt of Rome to make Catholic piety uniform on the Latin or Italian model. They felt that this model overemphasized external pious practices, "devotions" and the like, at the expense of genuine faith and inner religious depth. Many of these opponents of infallibility (and again, this was true particularly in Germany) also felt that freedom of theological research would benefit the church and they were convinced that Rome was intent on curbing this freedom. They were afraid that an "infallible" Pope would repeat the *Syllabus* and thus demand rejection of the whole modern world as a condition of remaining Catholic. Finally, the historical studies of the university professors had convinced them that there was overwhelming historical evidence against papal infallibility.

Four months before the council was due to meet, Ignaz von Döllinger, a priest at

the University of Munich, began a series of articles in an Augsburg newspaper, in which he accused the Pope and the Jesuits of trying to force both infallibility and the jurisdictional primacy of the papacy on an unwilling church. Döllinger had been driven to distraction by the papolatry of the ultra-ultramontanes, and he used strong language, referring to the attempts of Popes to exercise supreme power in the church as "usurpations ..(and) ..an ulcer which distorts and chokes the church." Needless to say, his words polarized opinion within Germany almost immediately.

In France during the Second Empire (under Louis Napoleon, from 1851 on), the opponents of ultramontanism had been able to undo some of the work of the Nuntius, Fornari. Maret, the rector of the Sorbonne, was on good terms with the Emperor, and he was able to influence the nomination of bishops. By the time of the Council, eighteen of the bishops of France had been chosen this way, and they were almost all opponents of the ultramontane cause. On the very eve of the Council, Maret's book, *On the General Council and on Religious Peace*, was published. In it he affirmed that the Pope, as an individual, isolated person, was not infallible, and that there was no place for despotism in the church. At the same time, Bishop Dupanloup, the respected head of the diocese of Orleans, let it be known that he regarded it as "inopportune" to define papal infallibility at the time.

#### 1.2 The First Vatican Council Begins its Deliberations

Seven hundred bishops assembled on December 8, and many of them came from parts of the world which had never been represented at such a gathering before. However, more than a third were Italians, and, taken together with the French, they constituted an absolute majority. It became clear that there would be two strongly opposed parties represented at the Council.

The ultramontanes were led by the English cardinal, Manning, and by the Superior General of the Jesuits, Beckx. They were firmly convinced that a decree on infallibility would not add anything new to Catholic faith, as it had been traditionally understood. Rather, such a decree would simply take note, at a most appropriate historical moment, of something which had been part of Catholic faith from the beginning and which, in addition, was firmly anchored in scripture. The leaders of the ultramontane faction never tired of pointing out that the scholastic theologians of the middle ages had, almost without exception, accepted the doctrine of papal infallibility and regarded it as part of the faith. However, what seems clear is that the ultramontanes confused the *scholastic tradition*, and, later, the *canon law tradition* from the time of Aegidius Romanus, (Boniface VIII's canonist), with the tradition of the church as such. The ultramontane party was notoriously weak in scholars who were acquainted with the situation of the church and the papacy in the earliest times, and many of them seemed to think that the history of the church had begun with the pontificate of Gregory VII.

The party which opposed the definition of infallibility was smaller, although not numerically insignificant. It included the more liberal members of the French episcopacy, as well as those who, though by no means Gallican, thought that there should be some limit on papal power. This included Dupanloup and those who respected and followed him. There were many German bishops in this opposition party. Some of them had taught in the universities before their consecration, and most of them kept close ties to university theology and were influenced by it. Most of the *Uniate* bishops

of the East (that is, those bishops of the eastern rite churches which recognized the primacy of the Pope in the sense in which one could speak of such primacy prior to 1870) belonged to the opposition party; they were afraid that any further concentration of power in the hands of the Pope would result in increased attempts to Latinize the eastern churches, by imposing changes in ritual, and by inflicting on them a code of Canon Law which was utterly alien to their customs and traditions.

The members of the opposing party did not really question the doctrine of the *primacy* of the Pope as head bishop of the church, but they were convinced that the Pope could only make binding decisions when he acted in concert with his fellow bishops. The real leader of this group turned out to be an English layman, Lord Acton. Acton, of course, could not even be present as an observer at the deliberations of the Council, but he was active in putting the opponents of the definition in contact with each other and in devising effective policy, so that his group, despite its numerical inferiority, might be able to affect the outcome. Acton saw that if the opponents of the definition could win the French Emperor, Napoleon III, to their side, they would have a very strong card to play: everyone, including Pius IX, realized that it was only the presence of French troops in Rome which guaranteed papal sovereignty over what was left of the Papal State (that is, those parts which had not yet been annexed by Piedmont and made part of the new Italian nation).

When the bishops began their deliberations, although the infallibility question was uppermost in everyone's mind, it was not actually on the agenda of the Council. Pius apparently felt that it would be bad form if he forced the question of his own infallibility on the Council fathers. But there is no doubt that he gave his full support to those ultramontanes who circulated a petition at the end of December, requesting that the question of infallibility be put on the agenda. By the end of January, there were already four hundred and fifty signatures on that petition - almost two thirds of those entitled to vote. It is safe to say that practically every one of those signatures represented a vote in favor of the definition of infallibility.

Beginning on December 17, 1869, a series of articles by Döllinger, entitled "Roman Letters", began to appear in some of the German newspapers. Although Pius IX had imposed secrecy on the bishops, it was clear that Döllinger was very well informed about the deliberations at the Council, and his articles were eagerly read, because they contained the only available information about what was happening there. Lord Acton, of course, was at work here. He got his information from bishops who were friends of his and who did not accept the Pope's right to bind them to secrecy, and then he passed the information on to Döllinger.

The Council did not begin with the question of infallibility, but with a proposal which condemned the errors of rationalism. As the meetings dragged on and the speeches became interminable, the ultramontanes began to fear that the Council would never get to the question of infallibility, and in March, some of them began to circulate a petition which asked that the question be moved forward on the agenda, so that it might be treated without further delay. And so it was that on May 13, 1870, discussion opened on the proposed definition of papal infallibility (part of a larger proposal which dealt with the teaching authority of the Pope and with his jurisdictional primacy).

Events at the Council had already convinced opponents of the definition that the

ultramontanes had more than enough support to win, with more than a two-thirds majority, *on the question of infallibility itself*. They saw that their only effective argument was to point out that this was an inopportune time to issue such a decree, because of the harm it would do to the church in the non-Catholic world. Undoubtedly they hoped that if the question could be shelved, the ultramontane movement would lose momentum, and that if the issue ever came up again, it would be settled in a way more to their liking.

Throughout the rest of May, through June and the early days of July, discussion continued and the debate was thorough. Although the opposing party had been excluded from the work of practically all of the preparatory commissions, at the Council they were given the full opportunity to present their case - something that was done in a particularly cogent and effective way by Hefele, Bishop of Rottenburg, in Southwest Germany, and himself an accomplished church historian.

It seems clear that in the course of these discussions, all but the most extreme members of the ultramontane party came to see that their own position needed some clarification. They saw that some limitations had to be imposed on papal infallibility and that some way had to be found of insuring that infallibility would not be claimed for every statement of every Pope on every topic. On the other hand, the opponents of the definition came to see that the principle of divine guidance for papal teaching, in at least some circumstances, was not simply an invention of the Jesuits, but was a widely accepted part of church tradition. They came to understand that the point which they really wanted to make was that, regardless of the role which the Pope should play, he is not to be *identified* with the church.

Still, no resolution of the disagreements was in sight. The opponents of the definition had, despite their numerical inferiority, made a number of good points, and on June 18, Guidi, the Superior General of the Dominicans, proposed a compromise formula. He suggested that what should be debated was not the infallibility of the *Pope*, but rather the infallibility of his *doctrinal decisions*. In Guidi's view, these decisions were infallible, precisely because they were made by the Pope, *acting in concert with the other bishops* and not independently of them; the Pope could only teach infallibly when he acted in union with his fellow bishops and when he respected the tradition of the church. Pius IX reacted angrily to Guidi's intervention, and reminded him, in a personal confrontation, that "La tradizione son' io! - I am the tradition!". But it was actually Guidi's suggestion which appeared in the title of the fourth chapter of this new constitution, which was *not called* "On the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff" *but rather* "On the Infallible Teaching Authority of the Roman Pontiff" - an apparently small but actually very significant difference. It was the Irish bishop, Cullen, a strong supporter of the definition, who then proposed that infallibility be limited to the *doctrinal* decisions of the Pope. This was the intervention which broke the log jam.

Although the interventions of Guidi and Cullen had imposed limits on infallibility which were very unpalatable to extreme ultramontanes and to Pius IX himself, it was evident that the Council was moving quickly in the direction which these interventions suggested, and the members of the opposing party saw this clearly. As the time for a vote approached, fifty five of the bishops who opposed the definition left the Council and returned to their homes, in order to avoid angering the Pope even more by voting

against the decree. On July 18, the Constitution on the Infallible Teaching Authority of the Roman Pontiff (it bore the Latin title *Pastor Aeternus*) was formally read and approved by an overwhelming majority of the assembled bishops. The key statement in this document is that the Pope teaches infallibly when he speaks *ex cathedra* (literally "from the papal throne"), in a matter of faith or morals. The bishops at the Council seem to have understood the phrase *ex cathedra* as describing the Pope's words when he speaks precisely as supreme pastor and teacher, with the professed purpose of affirming a doctrine which is a matter of Catholic faith, which is binding on all who wish to profess that faith.

In August, the Council recessed, in order to give everyone a chance to recover from the heat. Before the Council could reassemble, the Franco-Prussian War had begun, and the bishops of France and Germany had to return to their own countries. The German bishops took the opportunity to meet in Fulda. Many of them had opposed the definition, arguing that it was at least inopportune, but now they realized that the decision was one which they could live with, and they recommended it to their people. With the outbreak of the war, the French contingent which was protecting the city of Rome and its suburbs returned to the homeland, and the Piedmontese forces marched on Rome and took the city on September 20. One month later, the Council was adjourned indefinitely by the Pope. It was never reconvened, although Vatican II might be thought of as its continuation, in a totally different situation and in a wholly new world. Vatican II did take up questions which were scheduled for discussion at the First Vatican Council, and there is no doubt that in its own way, Vatican II tried to redress the balance of power, which had shifted dangerously in the direction of papal absolutism.

### 1.3 After the Council

In France, attention centered on the war with Prussia, and this hastened the acceptance of the definition of papal infallibility. Furthermore, those who had originally opposed the definition realized that Veuillot and his party had not gotten what they wanted, and the opponents of the definition were pleasantly surprised by this. They began to see how strict the limits were which had been imposed on papal infallibility by the Council, and they felt, not incorrectly, that they had gotten away relatively unscathed.

In Germany, on the other hand, there were serious difficulties. The bishop of Rottenburg (near Tübingen), the respected church historian mentioned above, not only felt that the decision was inopportune; even more, he was convinced that there were serious theological and historical arguments against it. After a lengthy struggle with his conscience, he finally promulgated the decree in his diocese in April 1871. The opposition in the Universities was more serious. The Catholic professors who opposed the definition held meetings throughout the spring and summer of 1871 to stir up opposition and to try to win the German bishops to their cause. Rome promptly excommunicated the leaders of the movement, but this simply drove them into schism. At a congress in Munich in September 1871, some of the dissident professors and their followers proclaimed the existence of an "Old Catholic Church" - that is, a church which would be true to the traditional teaching on the relationship of Pope and Council, and would reject what they regarded as the innovations of the Vatican Council which had just ended.

By 1873 the Old Catholics had their own bishop (consecrated by the Jansenist

bishop of Utrecht, in order to secure a valid claim to apostolic succession) and from then on, the church has gone its own way. It was used by Bismarck during the Kulturkampf, in order to divide Catholics and in order to further the Chancellor's dream of a German national church, independent of Rome (and which could probably be coaxed into some kind of ecumenical union with the Lutheran Church of Prussia). The Old Catholics were often criticized for some of the reforms which they adopted during the 1870's, such as the abrogation of the laws of fasting and abstinence and the simplification of the liturgical calendar. Oddly enough, some of these same reforms were undertaken by the Second Vatican Council, and other reforms of the Old Catholics have remained on the agenda after Vatican II, and are still debated in the Catholic church today. (Vatican II also dealt with the relation of the Pope to the bishops in a way which considerably mitigated the one-sided papalism of the Council of 1869-1870. It is not too unlikely that many of those who were upset by the decree on infallibility would be able to find a quite comfortable home in the Post-Vatican II church of today.)

Vatican I created some major problems for ecumenical theology, and the infallibility decree of Vatican I is the neuralgic point in the search for Christian unity today. It is certain that if we contrast the way in which Catholics affirmed infallibility and jurisdictional primacy from 1870 until the late 1950's, with the way Protestants rejected it during the same period, the doctrine would present an insurmountable obstacle to Christian unity. However, there is an understanding of papal primacy which has been spreading in Catholic theology since even before Vatican II (and which to some degree was part of the hidden agenda of a number of bishops at that Council). Those who hold this view feel that the *term* "infallibility" and the whole conceptual apparatus used to promote and defend it have been unfortunate developments, not only from the standpoint of Christian unity, but in terms of the Catholic faith itself. Both the *term* infallibility, and the apparatus used to defend it reflect a proposition-centered view of faith which is alien to the New Testament, but which was the perfect expression of the papal church of the nineteenth century, particularly at the time of Pius IX. However, once this is admitted, there is another question which has to be raised: if the church has the task of speaking the message of its Lord into the ever-changing present situation, how is this message to be preserved from distortion and dilution? Christian tradition has insisted from very early times that the Bishop of Rome plays an important role in discharging precisely this task. It has affirmed that it is he who is called to do for the whole church what each bishop is called to do in his own diocese - namely, to preserve the ancient teaching intact and to pass it on to his successors, who will continue to fulfill this task as long as the church endures.

In the course of history, the Bishop of Rome has fulfilled this task in union with the other bishops, and he often did it precisely because other bishops asked him to formulate this traditional teaching. If the phrase *ex cathedra* of the Vatican I decree on infallibility is interpreted as involving just this kind of cooperation, then papal teaching would be infallible precisely when the Pope speaks as head of, and in concert with, the college of bishops - that body which has the responsibility of preserving and articulating the original message. Such an interpretation has a very good New Testament pedigree, and it would put an end to the one-sided papalism which peaked, at least in recent times, during the reign of Pius XII.

#### 1.4 The Closing Years of the Reign of Pius IX

The opposition to the First Vatican Council's Decree on infallibility came almost exclusively from university circles and from a very small sector of the educated laity in Germany. The last of the bishops to hold out finally accepted the decree in December 1872. Strangely enough, at the very moment when the temporal power of the papacy had reached the vanishing point, Pius IX was able to exert more power *within the church* than had any Pope since the High Middle Ages.

Even before the Piedmontese army had taken the city of Rome, the King of Italy had offered the Pope a small piece of territory within the city of Rome which would be completely under papal sovereignty, and which would therefore be a guarantee of papal independence. (What he offered was something very much like what Vatican City became after the Lateran Treaties of 1929.) But Pius IX refused, and in November of that same year, he excommunicated everyone who was involved in the Piedmontese takeover. This accomplished nothing other than the strengthening of those anti-clerical tendencies which were already quite evident in Italian public life. It was not until 1929 that this so-called *Roman Question* was settled to the satisfaction both of the papacy and of the kingdom of Italy.

At the same time, trouble was brewing for the church in Germany. Bismarck had been irritated by the Syllabus of Errors as well as by the infallibility decree of Vatican I, and he began to look on the delegates of the Center Party (the Catholic political group in the Prussian parliament) as a kind of papal fifth column, inimical to the best interests of Germany. Beginning in 1873, a number of laws hostile to the Catholic church were enacted. The first, in 1873, interfered with the bishops' exercise of jurisdiction in their dioceses. In 1874 some bishops who strongly resisted Bismarck's policy were arrested. In 1875 obligatory civil marriage was introduced, and in that same year, all payments to the Catholic clergy on the part of the Prussian state were suspended. Bismarck's policy was intended to Germanize the Catholic church in Prussia, and to pry it away from union with Rome; he thought of it as the struggle of German culture against Mediterranean or Latin culture, and hence the name, *Kulturkampf*. Bismarck's policy was misguided, and it was based on a thorough misunderstanding of the import both of the Syllabus and of Vatican I. But Pius IX's reaction was equally imprudent. In 1873 in a letter to Kaiser Wilhelm I, he asserted his pastoral supremacy and jurisdiction not only over Catholics, but over all of the baptized (including, of course, Bismarck and the Kaiser himself!). Although quite in accord with the teaching of Canon Law, this approach was not calculated to calm the rising storm. Furthermore, in 1875, Pius IX declared that all of the legislation of the *Kulturkampf* was null and void, thereby making it practically impossible for Bismarck to back away from his program without losing face.

#### 1.5 Leo XIII (1878 to 1903)

Rarely has a new Pope been faced with problems as complex and as apparently insoluble as those which confronted Leo XIII on his election in 1878. Pius IX had painted himself into a corner with his hard line on the Roman Question, and his imprudent handling of the *Kulturkampf* had virtually ruled out the possibility of a face-saving compromise. European liberals were still irritated by the Syllabus, and in France, the Third Republic was about to banish all vestiges of France's Catholic past from the public life of the country. Republican forces had come to power in 1879, and over the

next twenty five years, a good deal of anti-Catholic legislations was passed. The new laws aimed at excluding the church from education and expelling the religious orders from French soil, and finally, at the elimination of the church as a factor in the public life of the country. Ever since this time, the phrase "separation of church and state" has had extremely negative connotations for French Catholics. Leo XIII urged French Catholics to make their peace with the Revolution, but they had not been able to do it, and the hostility of the Third Republic was to some degree the result of this boycotting of the republican cause by Catholics.

Leo was a forceful personality and a realist. He did not want to condemn the modern world; he wanted to reach an understanding with it, and one of the first signals of this new openness on the part of the papacy was Leo's appointment of Newman to the college of Cardinals in 1879. Leo was the first Pope to concern himself with the social problems which had resulted from the rapid industrialization of Europe in the nineteenth century, and in this respect as in all others, he broke with the reactionary policies of his predecessor. He was also a very successful diplomat and his intelligence and tact led to the termination of the Kulturkampf in Germany. In the years that followed it was obvious that he had won the respect of both Bismarck and the Kaiser. In 1888 Kaiser Wilhelm II visited the Pope in Rome, and in 1902 the Prussian regime gave its approval to the founding of a faculty of Catholic theology at the University of Strasbourg.

Leo never made use of the infallibility which had been defined at the Vatican Council - a very wise move which contributed to the prestige of the papacy. He was the first "encyclical Pope" and he issued a number of these general letters to the whole church. They dealt with the pressing problems of the day, and in most of them both his concern for the church and his realism were evident. Unfortunately, however, one of these letters led to the isolation of Catholic theology from modern thought for almost seventy years. In 1879 he strongly reaffirmed the support of the church for the theology of Thomas Aquinas and made him something like the official theologian of the church. This led quickly to a revival of the scholasticism of the thirteenth century in Catholic centers outside Germany - most notably in France, Canada, and the United States. This *Neo-Thomism*, as it was usually called, was by no means an intellectually sterile exercise in nostalgia; it rather attempted to use the method and the fundamental insights of Thomas Aquinas to deal with philosophical, theological, social, and political problems of the day. At its best it demonstrated a kind of intellectual discipline and care for the definition of terms which are a permanent necessity for all who try to think seriously. But like all styles which incorporate the word "neo-" in their names - (Neo-Gothic, Neo-Romanesque, etc.), its achievements remained magnificent *tours de force* and did not offer creative solutions to the problems of the day. The subjection of man to history is the insight which, more than any other, characterizes the modern age, but neo-scholasticism, with its concept of static truth, had no sympathy with or understanding of the category of history. It was because of this weakness that neo-scholasticism had such destructive repercussions on biblical scholarship in the Catholic church.

There is no doubt that Leo's own strong personality and the requests for his intervention in national church affairs throughout Europe brought about an ever-greater centralization of power in the church. Under later pontificates, particularly that of Pius

XII, this led to the practical supremacy of the Curia over the world-wide episcopate - an unfortunate development which would not be corrected until the time of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council.

Leo XIII is sometimes faulted for his founding of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1903. It is true that the Commission itself (discussed below under another heading) was a serious mistake, which delayed the acceptance of modern biblical scholarship in the Catholic church for about forty years, and which made those Catholic exegetes who accepted its decrees the laughing stock of their Protestant confreres. However, Leo was ninety-three years old at the time, and the Biblical Commission and its outdated decrees should be blamed on arch-conservative officials of the Curia, who were eager to bring back the reactionary intransigence of Pius IX.

The same Curial conservatives were responsible for the condemnation of the movement in Germany, known as *Reform Catholicism*. The major work produced by the movement was a book by Hermann Schell, of the Catholic faculty at the University of Würzburg, published in 1897 under the title, *Catholicism as the Principle of Progress*. In it, Schell broke no new dogmatic ground, but he did urge that political and cultural «Romanism» not be confused with either Christianity or Catholicism, and he pleaded for a broader view of the meaning of the word «Catholic,» pointing out that its proper meaning was not «uniform» but «universal.» Reform Catholicism was a healthy reaction to the centralizing and uniformizing tendencies that were dominant in the church at the time, but no bishops were won for the cause, and it remained a phenomenon of university theology. Schell's works were put on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1899.

#### 1.6 Americanism

An event which took place in the same year - Leo XIII's condemnation of «Americanism» - makes this an appropriate place to review the history of the church in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The growth of the church had been enormous, particularly since the late 1840's with the influx of Catholic immigrants from Ireland, and from Catholic countries of southern and eastern Europe, even though by 1880 Catholics formed only about ten percent of the population. The development of a Catholic elementary school system, supported by the donations of the laity and staffed, in the main, by sisters, had done more than anything (except, perhaps, the hostility of the overwhelmingly Protestant environment) to preserve the faith of the Catholic immigrants. As the years passed, the Irish element in the American church became ever more dominant, and it was partially because of this that there was never any serious opposition of the working classes to the church. Most of the bishops had themselves come from working class families, and the parish priests were wholly involved in the lives of their flocks. Toward the end of the century, the Knights of Labor, a society founded by an Irish Catholic and supported by Catholic working men, attracted Rome's unfavorable attention, and it was finally placed on the list of forbidden societies, despite the attempt of Cardinal Gibbons and others to prevent this unnecessary irritation. But the harm done was minimal. Although the need clearly existed, the union movement's time had not yet come, and the papal condemnation did little to disturb the loyalty of Catholic working men to their church.

There were, of course, problems for the church in the late nineteenth century - some of them caused by the ethnic mixture in American Catholicism, and others

caused by the strong and at times abrasive characters of the leading American bishops of the period. Unsettled conditions in Europe had brought millions of immigrants, many of them Catholic, to the United States throughout the nineteenth century. From the 1840's to the 1870's the Irish were the largest group; in the 1870's the Germans passed the Irish in the number of annual immigrants; and from the 1890's on, the overwhelming number of new arrivals were Italian.

The city parishes were largely in the hands of priests of Irish origin (frequently Irish born), and they had no way of offering the German and Italian immigrants either pastoral care in their own language or the style of church life to which they had been accustomed in the old country.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, when the immigrants (especially the Germans) did not remain in the cities but settled in rural areas, there were few parishes and there was little opportunity to practice the faith. Inevitably, a number drifted away and were lost to the church.

In 1874 a wealthy Catholic member of the German parliament, Peter Paul Cahensly, made a trip to the United States and became alarmed at the widespread loss of faith among his countrymen. Back in Germany, he founded a society which was dedicated to promoting the spiritual welfare of German immigrants by sending them priests who spoke their language. At one of the meetings of this society in Lucerne in 1890, Cahensly made the quite unrealistic assertion that over ten million Catholics had already been lost to the church in the United States because of the inadequacy of the pastoral care available to them. He later upped the figure to sixteen million, and suggested that the only way of coping with this problem was to put those areas of the United States which were populated by European Catholics (he meant "non-Irish" Catholics) under the direct jurisdiction of bishops of those countries from which they came. The American bishops (by this time the overwhelming majority were first or second generation Irish) resented deeply this assault on their jurisdiction in their own country, and Leo XIII prudently rejected the proposal, although he urged that, where they were needed, national parishes which catered to the religious needs of the ethnic minorities should be established or continued. Some of these national parishes have continued to the present day, although as the children of the immigrants learned English, they were often, at least by the third generation, more comfortable in the English-speaking churches, particularly if the latter were not too aggressively Irish in custom and style.

The Irish-American bishops were pursuing a "melting-pot" policy from the 1860's on. They themselves, as well as their flocks, had arrived in the New World already speaking English, and their sound instincts told them that unless the Catholic church here looked and sounded like an American institution, there would be no hope, either of breaking down the anti-Catholic prejudice which was a fact of American life well into the twentieth century, or of winning any significant number of converts.

The principal architect of this policy was the future cardinal - James Gibbons (1834 - 1921), who was already a bishop in 1868 (and in the following year was the

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<sup>1</sup> And they were not inclined to make the attempt. As we have seen, the Irish-American bishops often seemed to feel that only Irish Catholics could be true Americans.

youngest bishop at the First Vatican Council). Without being offensively political, he was thoroughly American, and he won a great deal of respect for the Catholic church among non-Catholics. Some of his statements sound quite chauvinistic to us today, but in the framework of the world in which he lived, they made good sense. Gibbons was respected in Rome, and although the Pope and the Curia did not always follow his sound advice, he was able to ward off some of Rome's more imprudent initiatives. Even the one area in which he failed (Rome's condemnation of "Americanism" - see the section below) was a sudden (if very unfortunate) storm which did a limited amount of damage.

John Ireland (1838 - 1918) was a man of quite different temperament, although he and Gibbons agreed on most of the issues which were important for the church in the United States. Ireland had received his seminary training in France, and this contact with the church in Europe, together with his native shrewdness, made him a much more clever tactician in dealing with the Curia. He was a bit of a super-patriot and his commitment to the American principles of freedom of religion and the separation of church and state proved irritating in the extreme to conservative French Catholics who were shivering in the chill winds which blew in the Third Republic in the 1890's.

But even the Irish majority among the American bishops were not united. Gibbons and Ireland formed a liberal, Americanizing wing, but John Corrigan (1839 - 1902) and James McQuaid were the leaders of a more conservative group. Corrigan was archbishop of New York from 1885, and he had little sympathy for Gibbons and for the latter's enthusiastic support of the American way of life. Of course even a Pope who was as much of a realist as Leo XIII found it difficult to share the enthusiasm of Gibbons and Ireland for freedom of conscience and for the separation of church and state, and in a generally laudatory letter which he wrote to the American hierarchy in 1895, Leo intimated that a situation in which the government positively favored the church was really the best solution of all. Things probably would have not gone beyond this mild disapproval, had it not been for the publication of a biography of Isaac Hecker (in 1891 in the United States and 1897 in France).

Hecker was a convert who entered the Redemptorist order and was ordained to the priesthood. After a while, he found that he was unable to pursue the apostolate to which he felt he had been called, and he obtained papal permission to found a new order, the Paulists. Hecker and his order distinguished themselves in the development of new forms of apostolic activity which were geared to American conditions and which respected the American character. However, despite this fact, the appearance of the biography of Hecker in 1891 was not really a major event in the American church.

Unfortunately, the French translation of 1897 was a major event - for the American church. A priest named Klein, who was teaching at the Institut Catholique in Paris, translated and edited the biography, and was imprudent enough to present Hecker as a model to French Catholics. Klein also suggested that the American approach to democracy and toleration should be accepted by French Catholics. This infuriated the ultra-conservatives there, and one of them wrote a book which questioned the orthodoxy of the American approach. The dispute was soon reported to Rome, and Leo XIII appointed a commission to investigate the problem. Significantly (and typically) no American bishops were invited to Rome to give their views. The papal letter which dealt

with the problem was written, in the main, by an Italian Jesuit, Mazzella, whose knowledge of the American scene was limited to what he had gathered while teaching at Woodstock - a Jesuit seminary near Baltimore, which was hermetically sealed off from the realities of American life.

Leo's letter condemned, as he said, "what some have called 'Americanism'", but, as is evident from the content of the letter, this "Americanism" was of French provenance, and was an invention of ultra-conservative Catholics who despised democracy with all its works and pomps. The Pope condemned all those who asserted that those dogmas which are not readily intelligible should be downplayed in preaching, and that it would be better if church authorities refrained from making authoritative statements in matters of faith and morals. Also condemned were those who emphasized the natural virtues (of value for practical life) at the expense of the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as well as those who questioned the appropriateness of perpetual vows for members of religious orders, or who doubted the value of religious vocations to the contemplative life.

Gibbons, Ireland, and their supporters had gotten wind of the letter too late to do anything to stop its publication, and they were shocked by it. Both of them were convinced that there were no bishops or priests, no theologians or laymen in the United States who held any of these positions. Ireland was shrewd enough to thank the Pope for the letter and for the clarity which it brought, pointing out that it distinguished between a false Americanism and the genuine Americanism (which he and Gibbons embraced). Corrigan (the archbishop of New York) and McQuaid (bishop of Rochester) were pleased by the letter, and regarded it as the confirmation of their own position.

Largely because of Ireland's clever response and because of Gibbons' prestige, both in the United States and in Rome, the storm blew over rather quickly. But there were some lasting bad effects, and one of them was a kind of nervous conservatism in dealing with the Curia which characterized the American hierarchy for many years. In addition, Jesuit participation in framing the letter, and widespread Jesuit support of Bishops Corrigan and McQuaid also led to troubled relations between the diocesan clergy and the Jesuits in the United States through the early decades of the twentieth century. (Symptomatic of this was Jesuit opposition to Catholic University, from before its opening in 1889 until almost the time of the Second World War.) This imposed a degree of isolation on the American Jesuits which was unfortunate, precisely because of the contribution the order could have made to the intellectual life of the American Catholic church.

### 1.7 Pius X (1903 - 1914) and Religious Reform

During his long reign, Leo had increased the prestige of both the church and the papacy. He was a skillful diplomat, and he used his sound political judgment to solve most of the problems he had inherited from Pius IX. When Leo died in 1903, his Cardinal Secretary of State, Rampolla, was regarded by many as a leading candidate, although there were many who felt that what the church needed was a Pope who would be more concerned with inner church life and less with the political impact of the papacy. However, at the conclave, these disagreements became quite irrelevant. When it appeared that Rampolla might be elected, the Archbishop of Krakow rose, and in an echo from the imperial past, announced that the Austro-Hungarian Empire would veto

the election of Rampolla. The cardinals then quickly agreed on Giuseppe Sarto, the Patriarch of Venice, who took the name Pius X and reigned as Pope from 1903 to 1914. It is possible that the desire of many of the cardinals for a less political and more "religious" Pope was even more effective in denying Rampolla the papacy than the Archbishop's veto had been.

Pius X was, in this sense of the word, a religious Pope, and at least at the beginning of his reign, he did not disappoint the hopes of those who voted for him. In a series of decrees which revealed the hand of the skilled administrator, he initiated reforms in seminary training and in priestly life in Italy, and he reorganized the curial bureaucracy in a way which made it a much more effective tool of papal policy. He then set up a commission to revise Canon Law, and even though the new Code of Canon Law which was the result of this commission's work was to take effect only in 1918, it remained Pius' achievement and was in the hands of his appointee, Cardinal Gasparri, up to the time of the publication of the new Code.

But it was in the area of liturgy and sacramental life that Pius' reforms touched the lives of most people in the church. He was intrigued by the work on liturgy and Gregorian chant which had been done by the monks at Solesmes, and from the year of his election, he issued a series of decrees on church music, which were designed to make the Mass more of a liturgical act and less of an operatic spectacle. Later decrees simplified the liturgical calendar, lessening the role of the saints, and making the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection much more prominent and central to Catholic worship.

Most important were Pius' decrees on frequent communion and early communion for children. In his day there were still serious disagreements on the role of the Eucharist in Catholic life. Many saw it as a reward for those who had achieved a relatively high degree of sanctity, and they demanded a level of theological awareness and moral purity from those who approached the altar which kept down the number of communicants and made daily communion extremely rare. Pius X belonged to another school, which saw the Eucharist not as a reward for the saintly, but as nourishment for those who were struggling to lead a Christian life. Between 1905 and 1910 he issued decrees which urged frequent communion, and established the principle that the basic requirement was freedom from mortal sin and the desire to receive the grace of the sacrament in order to live a full Christian life. These decrees further urged the lowering of the age at which children began to receive the Eucharist, and asserted that as long as they knew the difference between the Eucharistic bread and ordinary bread, and desired to receive the former, they should be admitted to the sacrament. The Jesuits put themselves at the forefront of the new movement and campaigned for frequent and even daily communion in a way which was perfectly in accord with the wishes of Ignatius Loyola himself.

### 1.8 The Church in France

Pius X inherited a bad situation in France, but he did not handle it adroitly. The position of the church in France at the end of the nineteenth century was largely a result of the passionate hostility of the majority of French Catholics to the ideals of the French Revolution. Since before the time of Lamennais, Catholics had been split into two very unequal groups - a small group of liberal intellectuals, almost without influence in the

official church, and a far larger group of arch-conservatives, who looked with horror on the Revolution and on the notions of toleration and freedom of conscience which it represented.

Since before the Revolution, many in the middle class and most of the intelligentsia had been estranged from the church, which they regarded as a relic of the unenlightened medieval past. Both the Bourbon monarchy of the Restoration (1815 to 1830) and the monarchy of the "July Revolution" (1830 to 1848) had restored the French church to its position of privilege, if not of power, and this policy continued with the creation of the Second Empire in 1851. In most parts of the country, the peasantry remained loyal to the church, and the nobility, consciously or unconsciously, made use of the church, because it was one of the most reliable props of the old social order. But the urban proletariat had been won to the slogans, if not the ideals, of the Revolution, and the upper middle classes, especially those in the professions, the government bureaucracy, and the arts, were increasingly alienated from the church, from Christianity (which they unfortunately identified with the church as they saw it), and from the "God" for whom conservative churchmen claimed to speak.

The defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War brought the Second Empire to an end, and the Third Republic was born on a wave of revulsion against the shallowness, the injustice, and the clericalism of a social order with which the church seemed to be inextricably involved. From 1876 on, the leaders of the Third Republic were, in the main, hostile to the church, and they were bent on eradicating its influence from, and even its presence in, the public life of the country. In 1886 the teaching of religion in the schools was banned, and from that moment on, Catholics turned even more resolutely against the Republic. Finally, in 1905 and 1906, legislation was passed which separated church and state. This brought to an end the public celebration of church holidays and suspended all government support of the church. It now became clear that churchmen had been living in a dream world through much of the nineteenth century and had felt that that century's slightly modernized version of the *ancien regime* would last forever. Pius X reacted with futile protests and with condemnations of the separation of church and state and of all of those responsible for it. To underline his dissatisfaction with affairs in France, he went on to condemn, in 1910, a Christian youth movement, known as "le Sillon", which he suspected of being too sympathetic to the ideals of the Revolution. As in other questions touching the French church, he was woefully misinformed in this matter. In the face of this type of papal policy, it is not surprising that relations between church and state in France remained thoroughly unpleasant until the time of the First World War.

It would be impossible to turn from France at this moment in its history without mentioning one of the most remarkable figures which the piety of that country has produced - Theresa of Lisieux (also known as Theresa of the Child Jesus). Very few seem to realize, even now, that Theresa's approach to spirituality represented a sharp break with the devotional tradition of the Catholic church in the Latin countries. In the century in which Marian devotion was on the rise, and in the very country in which Marian apparitions multiplied throughout the nineteenth century, Theresa's piety was centered on Jesus and on him alone. Departing from the post-Tridentine emphasis on devotion to the saints, Theresa turned directly to God, precisely as he was present in

the weakness and powerlessness of his son. And in a period in which Catholic piety was always in danger of finding, in external religious practice, a way of self-salvation, Theresa emphasized the absolute impossibility of saving oneself and the absolute necessity of throwing oneself on the mercy of God, and she did this in a language which was, at times, almost reminiscent of Luther.

### 1.9 The Modernist Crisis

Pius X's efforts to renew the interior life of the church were quite successful, but his defense of what he regarded as theological orthodoxy was nothing less than a scandal, and it delayed for more than fifty years the rapprochement of Catholic thought with that of the modern world. The "Modernist" crisis was the result of Pius' meddling in areas in which he was totally incompetent.

In the course of the nineteenth century, historical studies, both of scripture and of the development of doctrine, had made great progress in the German universities. Much of the work had been done in the Protestant faculties, but in Tübingen, exceptionally good work had been done by Catholic theologians as well. These studies made it clear that there was much in the doctrine and dogma of the Christian churches which had not existed unchanged from the beginning, but which had assumed its present form as a result of slow evolution over the years. These studies also made it clear that scripture was totally misunderstood if it was read as a naively literal account of events which were historical in the modern sense of the word. This new appreciation of the role of history began to win adherents among Catholics even outside Germany at the very end of the nineteenth century, and a collision with those elements which were committed to the scholastic concept of supra-historical and unchanging truth was inevitable.

In France, the priest and scholar, Alfred Loisy (1857 - 1940) used this new approach to help in the understanding of both scripture and church. He found no sympathy in Rome, either for his radical biblical criticism, or for his assertion that the church had not been immediately founded by Jesus, but was rather the result (and the quite *appropriate* result) of what Jesus had said and done. Loisy's books were placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1903. At about the same time, the English convert and later Jesuit, George Tyrrell (1861 - 1909) developed a notion of church which distinguished it from both papacy and hierarchy, and understood it as the community of those who hearkened to the presence of God, and who, in this process, achieved a deeper understanding of themselves and their task. To the Pope and to the curial officials who had been trained in textbook neo-scholasticism, such ideas were not only incomprehensible but extremely dangerous as well. (Strangely enough, no one seemed to notice at the time that the works of these so-called "Modernists" had been written, not with the purpose of changing Catholic dogma, but rather with the intention of refuting many of the positions of late nineteenth century liberal Protestantism.)

In 1907, Pius X published what might be called a new "Syllabus of Errors" - sixty five theses which rejected the positions of Loisy, Tyrrell, and a number of Italian theologians, concerning the role played by history in the writing of the bible, in the development of dogma, and in the life of the church. Later that same year, in the encyclical letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, the Pope condemned what he called "Modernism". According to Pius, Modernists questioned the possibility of rational proofs for the existence of God, and argued that religious truth was nothing more than a response to

human psychological needs. He claimed that the Modernists found in the dogmas of the church nothing more than the result of viewing changing human experience in the light of faith, and that they traced the origin of the sacraments to the human need for a concrete embodiment of faith.

From reading the letter, one could conclude that the "Modernist" theologians had a clearly defined theological program, and that they had devised a diabolically clever plan to foist this program on the church, by writing works which destroyed the foundations of the faith, and by insinuating themselves into key positions in the seminaries and the Catholic universities. Over the years it has become evident that "Modernism", in this sense, never existed outside of the minds of Pius X and his curial advisors. Modernism, as a theological program, was the invention of the Holy Office (successor to the Roman Inquisition).

But if Modernism was a figment of the conservative imagination, the reaction of Pius X was not. In addition to Loisy and Tyrrell, a number of other theologians were excommunicated, and an inquisitorial reign of terror began. A rigid censorship of theological writings was introduced, and spies were everywhere, nostrils aquiver for the slightest scent of the "modernist heresy". Competent theologians were slandered, and the reputations of men who were deeply loyal to the church were ruined. The Pontifical Biblical Commission had been founded under Leo XIII, in 1902, but from 1906 on, it handed down a number of decisions which dealt mainly with the Old Testament. These decisions were an embarrassment to Catholic scholars like the brilliant Dominican, Lagrange, who had been writing scholarly commentaries on the New Testament since 1890 - commentaries which have not lost their value even after almost a century. In 1910 Pius X imposed an "Anti-Modernist Oath" on all seminary teachers and professors of Catholic theology (the oath was to be renewed annually!), on all priests, and on all candidates for the priesthood before their ordination. Although the worst excesses of this witch hunt lasted only until the death of Pius X, it had an unsettling influence on Catholic theology, especially in the twenties and thirties, and it was finally laid to rest only at the Second Vatican Council. (And even today, the Curia tends to deal with theologians in a way which is a mockery of the judicial procedures which are accepted in all of the western democracies as essential for the protection of human rights.) As if this were not enough, Pius X then closed out the year 1910 with an encyclical letter in honor of Charles Borromeo, an Italian bishop of counter-reformation times, which was so naively and offensively anti-Protestant that it caused widespread protest among both Catholics and Protestants in Germany and was not promulgated in the Catholic churches there. The comment of the Jesuit superior general about Pius X was very near the mark: if there was one virtue which he lacked in a heroic degree, it was prudence.

## 2 From World War I to the Eve of World War II

### 2.1 Benedict XVI (1914 to 1922)

The next Pope was a man of intelligence and breadth of view, whose energies were absorbed in trying to prevent the First World War, and then in trying to mitigate the suffering of the innocent, once it had started. From the first year of his pontificate, he did all that he could to put an end to the anti-modernist witch hunt, although here the limits which even a Pope faced when confronted with the intransigence of his Curia became evident. In another area, although the unsettled conditions of war made a

solution of the Roman Question impossible for the moment, he practically terminated the policy which ordered Italians to boycott the public life of their country, and he let it be known that he was not opposed in principle to a "Vatican City-style" solution of the Roman Question (that is, acceptance by the Pope, of a small plot of land in Rome which would belong to him and would guarantee his independence as well as the supra-national character of his office).

France and Italy had opposed Benedict's peace-making efforts just as effectively as had the powerful militarist clique in Germany, but then, when he insisted on remaining neutral during the war, the Pope was roundly criticized in both France and Italy for what the local chauvinists saw as his pro-German stance. His efforts on behalf of civilians and prisoners of war were quietly effective, and without intending it, he won much prestige for the papacy. After the war, the climate in France improved considerably. Catholics had given their total support to the war, and had even interpreted it as a crusade against Protestant Germany, and the canonization, in 1920, of Joan of Arc, France's national heroine, pleased Frenchmen of all religious persuasions and none.

Benedict was one of the first to discern the importance of stripping the church in Asia and Africa of its colonialist image, and he fostered the development of a native clergy in the mission countries. He was in every respect a man of fine character and breadth of vision, and far ahead of his time. It is unfortunate that his pontificate lasted for only eight years and that so many of his initiatives were frustrated by the confusion of war.

## 2.2 Pius XI (1922 to 1939) and the Liturgical Movement

Pius XI was elected in 1922 and he became Pope in a world very different from that which had existed up until 1914. The experiences of the war and of the breakdown of the old European social and political order led many Catholics to see how damaging the papacy's rejection of the modern world during the nineteenth century had been. It also led them to see that it was the alliance of churchmen with political and social conservatism which had brought about the almost total alienation of the urban working classes from the church.

The new Pope was a man of contrasts. A noted mountain climber, he was also a patron of the arts and of ecclesiastical learning. On the one hand, he continued the uniformizing tendencies of his pre-World War I predecessors (his letter *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* of 1931 is a good example - it aimed at securing the uniformity of seminary training throughout the world); but on the other hand, he recognized that there were currents moving in the church which had to be acknowledged, and which it might be possible to domesticate. He had taken note of the prominence of laymen in the Catholic associations of Germany, and he was well aware of the call of "Reform Catholicism" there about 1900 for the recognition of the maturity of the laity and of their need to be liberated from clerical tutelage. His approval, in 1925, of the movement known as *Catholic Action* is an interesting case in point. The definition ("the cooperation of the laity in the work of the hierarchy") was still thoroughly clerical, and yet he did recognize that the laity were claiming an active role in the church, and he decided that, within strict limits, this should be granted to them. His attitude toward the growing liturgical movement was similar - a kind of cautious approval. This movement was so important and it has led to such sweeping changes in recent times, that it is worth taking a brief look at

its history and the way the Popes dealt with the movement.

From the time of the Reformation on, calls for liturgy in the vernacular had never really been stilled in Germany. They were renewed by Wessenberg in the eighteenth century, and by the Tübingen Theologian, Möhler, in the nineteenth century. These proponents of the vernacular saw in it the key to real *participation* by the laity in liturgy. For a long time, this tendency was checked by that drive for uniformity which was a hallmark of the ultramontane movement and which saw in the Latin language the divinely ordained guarantee of loyalty to Rome and to the Pope. It was also checked by the revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes, which, under the cover of liturgical renewal, had not really encouraged lay participation in the liturgy, but rather had made of liturgy a kind of sacred spectacle which worked "ex opere operato" for the good of the church, with or without a lay audience of passive spectators.

The modern liturgical movement really began with the reading of an important paper by a Benedictine, Dom Lambert, at a congress at Mechelen, Belgium, in 1909. The paper pointed out that the Mass should be (and had been, in the early church) the act of the whole Christian people, and that the participation of the laity was vitally important for them and for the whole church. "Romanit`a" was still too firmly in the saddle for the vernacular movement to enjoy quick success, but the new approach led to the introduction of the "dialogue Mass" on some occasions after 1920. (In the dialogue Mass the whole congregation joined in reciting the responses which had previously been muttered almost inaudibly by the altar boy, or even by the priest himself.) Sporadic use of the dialogue Mass led slowly to a new understanding, at least on the part of various "lay elites", of what liturgy was really about; but through the twenties, the movement was largely confined to academic and somewhat esoteric circles. As we will see, it was not until the historical and theological work of scholars like Jungmann, before and after the Second World War, that the liturgical movement achieved a clear understanding of its purpose and possibilities.

### 2.2.1 Problems in France Again

After the First World War, anti-clericalism lessened in France, partly because even the most convinced partisans of the republic could not deny the patriotism of the clergy during the war. A number of Catholic schools were opened and some excellent work was done in speculative theology and biblical studies. Unfortunately, the continued campaign of integralists (arch-conservatives) in the Biblical Commission and the Holy Office (successor to the Roman Inquisition) against a constructive engagement of Catholic thought with the modern world cast a pall over these efforts almost up to the time of the Second Vatican Council.

However, Pius XI had problems of another kind with the French church. He had a good sense of the universality of the church, and he did not hesitate to act when he saw tendencies which threatened that universality. A good example is his condemnation, in 1925, of the French Catholic movement known as *Action Française*. The position of the church in France was much changed by 1920, and as we have seen, the enthusiastic patriotism of French Catholics during the First World War had won much respect for the church and the clergy. However, this patriotism itself was a symptom of the chauvinistic tendencies which were characteristic of French Catholicism; and particularly those with conservative or royalist leanings were given to identifying the French

church with the universal church. All of these tendencies were concretized in a movement known as *Action Française*, which dated back to 1899, but which gained great influence on the resurgent tide of patriotism which followed on France's victory in the First World War. Pius XI's condemnation of the movement caused a crisis in France and made him very unpopular with the conservative wing of the French church, but he saw that the movement was using the faith as a prop for an outdated view of the political and social order, and that such a view would do immense harm to the church in France unless he took a strong position. The trouble which the church in France had during and after the Second World War, as a consequence of the support of the Vichy regime by a number of French bishops, showed that Pius' judgment was correct. French Catholics had, in the main, never accepted Leo XIII's sound advice to make their peace with the Revolution, and Catholic antipathy toward the Popular Front government of the thirties was partly at fault in the debacle of Vichy.

### 2.2.2 The Church in Spain and Portugal

During the papacy of Pius XI there were two violent outbreaks of a kind of anti-clericalism which had become a periodic epidemic in Spain since 1870. Since the Revolution of 1848 Spain had a long history of political instability, and an even longer history of the alliance of the Catholic hierarchy with arch-conservative political and social forces. In 1870 anti-clerical revolutionaries had taken control, but they were incapable of governing the country and in 1875 the monarchy returned and restored Catholicism to its privileged position. In 1909 a workers' revolt flared in Barcelona and one hundred and thirty eight priests were killed by the enraged workers - a clear signal of how the working class in Catalonia felt about the church. The revolt was suppressed and the country returned to the old clerical conservatism, with Spanish Catholicism remaining the most traditional in Europe.

In 1928 a conservative and rather secret society, *Opus Dei*, was founded, and it exists to the present day, as a blend of arch-conservative (if not Fascist) political theory with extremely traditional concepts of religion and Catholic duty. But in other sectors of society, there was much underground opposition to the church, and in 1931 the Socialists were able to win the election and they promptly declared a Spanish republic. They immediately enacted legislation separating church and state and confiscating the property of the religious orders. But in 1933 the Socialists lost the election, and the confusion which followed lasted until 1936, when an army officer, Francisco Franco, crossed from Morocco at the head of an army of Moorish troops and began the Spanish Civil War. The war was fought with unparalleled brutality on both sides, and in those areas which were controlled by Republican and Socialist forces, a large numbers of priests and members of religious orders lost their lives. Franco finally won, with the help of Hitler and Mussolini, and established an extremely conservative dictatorship which recognized Catholicism as the only legitimate faith of the country. As a result of these policies, Franco Spain was largely isolated from the rest of Europe and it was not until his death that Spain began to move into the community of western European nations. It is only in recent years that the government has taken steps to dissociate itself from the antiquated church policy of the Franco regime. Although the overall picture of the church in Spain is very conservative even today, there are a number of younger bishops whose views on political and social questions are progressive and who

have distanced themselves from the semi-feudal society of Spain's past.

The story of the relations of church and state in Portugal is similar to that of Spain. In 1910 a republican regime forced the separation of church and state, and in 1911 it became frankly anti-clerical and dedicated itself to de-christianizing the country; its program was not stemmed even by the conservative revolt of 1918. In 1926 the confusion finally came to an end when Antonio Salazar assumed control. Rather than favoring the church, Salazar used it as a pillar of the archconservative state which he created as he proceeded to hermetically insulate Portugal from the rest of Europe. In general, all of these events on the Iberian peninsula took place without much reference to the papacy, and Pius XI had little influence on the church in either country during the period in which Franco and Salazar were in control.

#### 9.55 The Lateran Treaties

In Italy, on the other hand, Pius XI's political initiatives were very successful and in 1929 he brought to an end the confrontation of the papacy and the Italian government which had lasted for fifty nine years. The new Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini had come to power in 1922 and the dictator was eager for a settlement with the church. He was enough of a realist to see that his dreams of glory for himself and for a resurgent Italy which he longed to lead, could not be achieved without at least the passive cooperation of that church to which virtually the entire population nominally belonged. Neither could it be done without the cooperation of the papacy which had been practically an Italian national institution for eighteen centuries. After long negotiations, the Lateran Treaties were signed in 1929. They set up Vatican City as papal territory within the city of Rome and arranged for the one-time payment of a large sum of money to the papacy by the Italian state, in compensation for the loss of the Papal States. In the treaties it was also affirmed that Catholicism was the state religion of Italy. In general, the relations of the church with the Mussolini government were quite good, and most churchmen urged loyalty to the dictator up to the time of his death in 1944.

#### 2.2.3 The Church in Germany in the Twentieth Century

In Germany the situation was far more complicated and troubling. Catholics had been loyal and patriotic during the First World War, but they had never been very enthusiastic about the so-called Weimar Republic which replaced the Second Reich after the German defeat. This was strange, because during the twenties the church in Germany enjoyed more freedom and showed greater vitality than at any time in the past, and the younger clergy and the university chaplains had great success with young people. A Catholic youth movement, embodying strong emotional elements of the Romantic period gripped the imagination of young Germans as never before.

As the Weimar Republic was rent by one economic crisis after another, the National Socialist movement gained strength, and increasing numbers of voters longed for the security which only an authoritarian regime could bring. In the late twenties and early thirties, church authorities resolutely opposed the Nazi movement. However, when Hitler was elected Chancellor in 1933, he arranged for a meeting with high church officials, and he explained his position and program so cleverly and persuasively that in March 1933 the German bishops withdrew all of their prohibitions against the National Socialist movement. In July of that same year, the papacy signed a concordat with Nazi Germany, which regulated the relations of church and state there. In the four

years which followed, it became more and more evident that Hitler had concealed the real nature of the Nazi program from the bishops, and the Pope complained repeatedly about violations of the concordat - finally in the form of an encyclical letter, *Mit Brennender Sorge* in March 1937. Although in this letter the Pope attacked the pagan Nazi mythology in courageous and forceful terms, the strongest passages of the letter were reserved for violations of the concordat by the German government, and the letter had virtually nothing to say about the appalling violation of human rights in the Third Reich (probably because of the conciliatory policy of Pius XI's Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli - the later Pius XII). From 1937 to 1939, relations between church and state in Germany were tense and the Nazi government became increasingly hostile. This situation came to an end only with the outbreak of war in 1939, when the Nazis apparently felt that any further anti-Catholic episodes would hurt national unity.

#### 2.2.4 Pius XI and Internal Church Affairs

On strictly religious terrain, the papacy of Pius XI was less successful. In matters of marital morality he was extremely conservative. He had been much irritated by the action of the assembled bishops of the Anglican church at Lambeth in 1929, in which they gave their approval to contraceptive practice on the part of married people, and in 1930 he issued an encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, which asserted the uncompromising opposition of the papacy to what was referred to as "artificial birth control". It was this letter, reaffirmed again and again by Pius XII almost up to his death in 1958 which constitutes what has become known as "the official Catholic position on birth control" up to the present day, and which no one in the church questioned publicly until the time of the Second Vatican Council. It was Pius XI's hard line position, essentially reaffirmed in a quite different context of questions and problems by Paul VI in 1968 which has precipitated the greatest crisis of authority in the Catholic church in modern times.

Finally, although Pius XI was as interested as his predecessors in restoring and strengthening ties with the Orthodox churches of the east, he really had no grasp whatsoever of what Catholic-Protestant dialogue might mean. He turned a cold shoulder to all requests for Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement which had developed within European Protestantism and which had found expression in the great international conferences on Faith and Order of the opening decades of the twentieth century. Like Popes before and after him, Pius XI found it virtually impossible to apply to his judgments about the world at large any standards less narrow than those he used in dealing with the Italian church.

#### 2.3 Pius XII: (1939 to 1958)

Eugenio Pacelli had been Nuntius in Germany and Secretary of State for Pius XI, and no one was surprised at his election when Pius XI died in 1939. His pontificate will probably always be judged, especially by non-Catholics, on the basis of what he did or did not do to oppose the Nazi campaign of extermination against the Jews. It seems clear that in the mid-thirties he advised Pius XI against any condemnation of the National Socialist Movement as such, because he felt that this would lead to the political isolation of the papacy. This was not an unrealistic assumption, since at the time, Mussolini was forming an alliance with Hitler and England and France were pursuing policies of appeasement. Once the war began, Pius XII's attitude on the Jewish question is more difficult to evaluate (and to defend). In 1943 the Bishop of Berlin made an

urgent request to the Pope to intervene on behalf of the Jews, but Pius apparently felt that such action would constitute violation of the concordat and would expose the church in Germany to reprisals on the part of an enraged dictator. However, it also seems clear that Pius XII's hatred of communism was so obsessive that he was quite careless in welcoming as allies all those who opposed Russian Bolshevism, for whatever reasons.

### 2.3.1 Eastern Europe

Pius' policies toward the communist states of eastern Europe after the Second World War were unrealistic and counterproductive, and they showed that the papacy had not learned its lesson from the loss of the Papal States in 1870 - that it is a good thing to come to terms with the facts, no matter how unpleasant those facts may be.

As a result of allied agreements at Yalta near the end of the war, much of Eastern Europe was given to the Soviet Union as its sphere of influence, and the satellite communist regimes which came to power there in the late forties were uniformly hostile to the church. The church in Poland had suffered appalling losses to both Russia and Germany during the war - twenty six hundred priests had been murdered by the Nazis alone. Then in 1950, the communist government confiscated church lands and did all in its power to hamper the work of the church, particularly among the young. However, Polish nationalism had long been associated with the Catholic faith and it was the loyalty of Poles to the faith of their fathers against the Orthodox Russian east and the Protestant German west which nourished Polish national feeling during the long years when the country as such had disappeared from the map of Europe. The result was that loyalty to the Catholic faith in Poland was a political statement, not unlike loyalty to the Catholic faith in Ireland. But for this same reason, the church in Poland has had a rather conservative appearance up to the present day.

In Czechoslovakia the situation was very different. The Hussite movement of the fifteenth century had smoothed the way for Protestantism in Bohemia and Moravia. Far from being identified with the Catholic faith, Czech nationalism had run its course entirely outside the church's sphere of influence and it had developed its characteristic forms in opposition to the Austro-Hungarian Empire - the leading Catholic power of the day. As a result, the Communist assault on the church in the years after 1948 was incomparably more successful than it was in Poland, and today the church seems to have no influence at all on public life in the country. Judged in purely human terms, its chances of survival seem minimal.

In Hungary, the Communist campaign against the church began in 1948 and peaked in 1952 with the show-trial of the Primate of the Hungarian church, Cardinal Mindszenty. There was a problem in Hungary and in many other parts of Eastern Europe which a number of American Catholics never recognized: some of the very churchmen who were heroic defenders of the rights of the church were committed to an outdated social and economic order, and were archconservative, not only in church matters, but in political matters as well. After the death of Pius XII, Rome's policy toward the Communist east became much more flexible, and Vatican diplomats have been able to secure a measure of toleration for Catholics in most countries outside Czechoslovakia.

### 2.3.2 Pius XII's Earlier Encyclicals

Pius XII was the "Encyclical Pope" par excellence, and although he does not hold the absolute record for the number of these general letters to the church, the forty which were issued in his name sum up the meaning of his papacy and his own understanding of the papal office. As was the case with other Popes, Pius XII did not write these letters himself. Individuals or committees were told, in general terms, what the Pope wanted to say, and they then prepared a draft on which the Pope did varying amounts of editorial work.

Because the Catholic church during the reign of Pius XII remained very much the papal church (to a far greater extent than is the case today), these encyclicals are important historical documents. It is not simply that they indicate which way the winds were blowing, or, even more, who had the Pope's ear at any moment during his pontificate. Viewed in retrospect today, the most important of these letters show that this authoritarian Pope was well aware of powerful centrifugal tendencies which were on the move in his church, and that he did all in his power to bring pastoral innovations and what he regarded as an overly adventurous theology firmly under his control. Four major encyclicals give a clear indication of where the church was moving during the reign of Pius XII, and of what he did to control that movement.

In 1943 Pius issued an encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ (*Mystici Corporis*). During and after the war, it was greeted by many as a bold initiative which broke with the sterile juridicism of Bellarmine's definition of the church as a "perfect society". But the encyclical is better understood as an attempt by Pius to domesticate theological tendencies which he regarded as dangerous. Biblical, patristic, and historical work in France and Germany during the twenties and thirties had already shown that Bellarmine's definition lacked a good scriptural pedigree, and many theologians felt that Paul's image of the church as body or organism might be the key to understanding its mystery. But Paul had asserted that *all* Christians are members of the body, although all are called to play different roles in the body. And there was another point which was calculated to make Rome nervous: the more one based a theology of the church on Paul's writings, the greater would be the emphasis on the universal priesthood of all Christians, and this would lead inevitably to a more egalitarian view of the church. This was inevitable, because in the communities which Paul founded, or to which he wrote, ministerial priesthood (that is, a separate priestly office) had not yet appeared, and the hierarchical and juridical elements of Bellarmine's definition were entirely lacking. In the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, Pius XII dealt with this problem in an interesting way. He asserted that the church was, to be sure, the Mystical Body of Christ (the word "mystical" in this sense was not a Pauline term), but he then asserted that the Mystical Body was to be identified with the hierarchical, juridically organized church. He thus accepted the Pauline image, but firmly subordinated it to another view of the church which was traditional but not biblical. This subordination of scripture to the papal teaching tradition was a characteristic of all of Pius XII's major letters.

In the same year, an even more important letter appeared; it bore the Latin title *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and dealt with the study of the Old and New Testaments. By the time of the Second World War, it had become clear to intelligent Catholic theologians that some way would have to be found to break with the primitivity and naiveté of the

anti-modernist period. Catholic biblical scholars were still officially tied to positions which were hopelessly and even laughably outdated (and which had been articulated in the archconservative decrees of the Biblical Commission during the last decade of Pius X's reign). But the memory of the anti-modernist witch hunts of that same period were still quite fresh in everyone's mind, and no one was willing to commit to writing positions which deviated from those which were officially prescribed. Exegesis and biblical theology in the church (with some exceptions in Germany) still lagged far behind what Lagrange had achieved in the nineties of the last century. Especially in France and Germany, theologians were becoming restive under a policy which rejected views about the character of the biblical writings which had become commonplaces in competent Protestant scholarship of the day.

Pius XII's encyclical in 1943 cautiously made room for scientific exegesis, and admitted that the scriptural writers had used literary forms different from those in use today, and that an understanding of those forms was necessary if the scriptural message was to be heard and understood. Pius clearly preferred evolution to revolution, and in the letter he staked out a moderately progressive position; he set more realistic parameters and then ordered Catholic scholars to remain within those parameters. But responsible scholarship follows its own rules and not those of an authoritarian system. Even more important, scripture follows its own rules; it has a dynamism all its own which will not allow it to be domesticated and put at the service of such a system. The biblical scholarship which had been suppressed in the church after 1910 was now claiming its right to be heard, and Pius XII's attempt to bring it under control was not successful (although this became clear only after almost twenty years).

Something quite similar happened with respect to the liturgical movement. During the twenties and thirties, developments in scripture and in the history of liturgy had taken place, and they brought in their train a new appreciation of the universal priesthood of the laity and a new sense of the importance of the participation of the laity in the liturgy. The word «liturgy» itself underwent a change in meaning. Formerly it had meant «the rules for performing an act of worship with ritual perfection» but now it came to mean «the public act of worship of the entire Christian community.» By the early forties, liturgical experiments were taking place in France and Germany, and many observers felt that it was only a matter of time before they were sharply censured by Rome. But in his Encyclical of 1947, *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII gave a cautiously positive welcome to some of these experiments, and even allowed the use of the vernacular, not for Mass, but for the administration of some of the sacraments. In the years that followed the Encyclical, the ancient liturgy of Holy Week was restored. Pius had staked out so liberal a position that his attempt to get control of the liturgical movement appeared, for the moment, to be quite successful. It was not until the early sixties that it became clear that this Encyclical, too, had been a defensive, holding action on the part of the Pope.

### 2.3.3 The Encyclical «*Humani Generis*» and Pius' Final Years

The most significant event in the church in 1950 was the publication of the papal Encyclical *Humani Generis*. To understand this strange document, we will have to look briefly at developments in theology in the thirty years which preceded the publication of the encyclical. In the twenties, theological leadership had passed to Germany. Romano

Guardini's popular writings and lectures on scripture and liturgy advocated a return to those sources of Christian life which antedated the scholastic period by many centuries. In Tübingen, Karl Adam was developing an understanding of the church as a living and organic unity - an understanding which was a great improvement on the counterreformation's emphasis on the hierarchical and juridical elements in the church. But when Hitler came to power in Germany, this meant the end of the influence of the church in university circles and the youth movement, and for a time theological initiative passed to France.

In France, neo-scholasticism was so strong that it was evident that changes in Catholic theology would have to originate within the neo-scholastic movement itself, and this is precisely what happened. During the thirties and forties and especially after World War II, a number of Dominican and Jesuit scholars led a movement back to the sources - biblical, liturgical, and patristic - in the attempt to enrich the scholastic synthesis. The Dominicans Chenu and Congar, the Jesuits Danielou and de Lubac, were the leading figures of this revival. They developed a view of theology and life which was later to be called «la nouvelle theologie» (the «new theology»). All of these theologians had a good sense of history and of the extent to which history conditions our understanding of God, of our world, and of ourselves, and of the way we speak about all three. These theologians felt a deep respect for the biblical and patristic sources of Christian faith, and they urged a return to these sources in order to avoid the sterility into which Catholic theology had fallen again and again since the scholastic period. Their interest in the sources led them to see the chasm which separated the thought of Thomas Aquinas from that of his so-called interpreters. Finally, these theologians saw that divine grace was not something added to human nature from the outside, as though it were a piece of clothing, or even a foreign body, but that it was the fulfillment of everything for which human nature was always longing in a silent and inarticulate way.

These theological theses were not without influence on church life, because they made people aware of how far the institutional church of their day had moved from the church of earlier periods. In France, this led to the honest admission on the part of even some bishops that the country had become largely unchristian. It was this awareness which led to the «priest worker» movement, in which priests went into the factories to share fully the lives of the workers, so that they might bring them a Christian faith which had never really been offered to them. (This priest worker movement which began in 1941 and received official approval in 1943 as the «Mission de France», functioned effectively during the latter years of the war and for about seven years after it. But conservative French Catholics were infuriated by the radical positions taken by many of the priests in the movement. Conservative influence was strong in Rome at the time, and in 1953 severe restrictions were imposed on the activities of the worker priests and the movement was crippled. In 1965 the restrictions were largely removed.)

The movement back to the sources led to the insight that Protestantism had taken with it much of the Christian patrimony at the time of the Reformation, and therefore it led to a new understanding of the ecumenical task. Further, it led some French Catholics to suspect that the opposition between Marxism and Christianity was not fundamental, but was rather the result of social conditions peculiar to the nineteenth

century, particularly the involvement of the church with the bourgeois social order. Some people even began to suggest that Christian Marxism was a possibility. All of these events provide the background for the Encyclical *Humani Generis* of 1950.

By the time the Encyclical was published, the final, quite conservative period of Pius' reign had begun, and the influence of curial reactionaries on the Pope was strong. Pius probably sensed that his efforts to control what were, to him, dangerous movements in the church were failing, and he became very critical of those who wanted to break out of the rigid patterns of scholastic thought. When he condemned what he called «the new theology», he did so because he thought that the commitment of the leaders of this movement to scholasticism was only lukewarm, and he was very troubled by their desire to return to the biblical and patristic sources. He sensed that such a return to the sources would threaten the teaching authority of the church, as it was understood in his time (that is, as virtually identified with the teaching authority of the papacy!), and this led to what is undoubtedly the most remarkable statement of the Encyclical. Pius actually asserted that it was the task of the Catholic biblical scholar, when he writes on any biblical teaching, to take as his point of departure the most recent statement of the teaching authority of the church (that is, of the Pope!), and then to show that the content of that statement is *already* contained in scripture and that it is contained there *with the same meaning and the same sense*. This attempt to make scripture itself a tool of the teaching authority of the papacy represented the very summit of papal claims to absolute authority in the church.

It is not at all surprising that Pius XII was the first Pope after Vatican I to make use of the infallibility granted there. This was the second major event of the year 1950, and at the time many theologians felt that it had dealt a death blow to Catholic/Protestant ecumenism, although it merely climaxed a process which had been underway for some time. We have already seen how Marian piety developed during the nineteenth century. This development continued into the twentieth century and peaked in 1917 with the reputed apparition of the Blessed Virgin at Fatima in Portugal. The revelations at Fatima were in many respects a typical manifestation of rural, Latin piety, but in time, the Fatima movement took on many of the trappings of an anti-communist crusade, which may have been a major factor in its winning the support of Pius XII. In any case, he felt that early in 1950, while walking in the Vatican gardens, he had experienced a rerun of the Fatima apparition, and this may have inclined him to promulgate the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin - that is, to demand of all who wish to remain Catholic that they accept the fact that after Mary's death she was taken directly into heaven, body and soul. This definition showed to how great a degree Pius was living in another world and how little sympathy or understanding he had for the ecumenical movement.

It was not until twelve years later that it became evident that the Encyclical *Humani Generis* was simply the final salvo of an integralist, anti-modernist movement, whose day had come and gone. In the fifties, partly as a result of this letter, theological initiative in the Catholic church passed to Germany again. In 1939 the Jesuit, Karl Rahner (1904-1984), had published a brilliant reinterpretation of Thomas Aquinas' theory of knowledge, and on the basis of that reinterpretation, a seemingly endless series of essays had proceeded from Rahner's typewriter, criticizing those elements of

church life, from indulgences to private Masses, which lacked a firm basis in the public revelation of the church. Rahner has been extremely effective, because he never demanded that any practice be abolished outright. He simply reinterpreted the practices, isolated those elements in them which were genuine, and then suggested that these elements might be better preserved in another context and in different terms. Furthermore, Rahner was a Jesuit and therefore not suspect to Rome as he would have been if he had a chair of theology at one of the German universities (he was offered one in Munich rather late in life and accepted it). In addition, he was well-versed in the methods of neo-scholasticism, and he was able to make use of them in a very subtle way to topple the sterile edifice which had been the inevitable result of Leo XIII's attempt in 1879 to make Thomas Aquinas the court philosopher and theologian of the Catholic church (certainly an insult to a man of Thomas' depth and brilliance!).

Other factors worked to the advantage of German theology during this decade as well; Catholic exegetes there continued to do good work; neo-scholasticism had never been strong in Germany and it was virtually absent from the universities; in Tübingen, Geiselman was reevaluating the post-Tridentine notion of tradition as a separate and competing source of faith and was suggesting that there was nothing contained in genuine tradition which was not already present in scripture. Finally, the Curia (central administration of the church) at the time was much less international in make-up than it is today - in fact, it was almost exclusively Italian. The work of these German theologians was not being translated into Italian, and although the Pope could read German (and occasionally did become quite irate at some of the things Karl Rahner wrote), the conservatives in the Curia who would have been interested in stamping out these trends were quite unaware of their existence for a number of years.

Pius XII had made a valiant attempt to hold the line, but he seemed to sense that control was slipping from his hands. But when he died in 1958, no one seemed to realize that the church was on the brink of a new epoch which would bring changes more profound than any that had occurred in more than a thousand years. The Second Vatican Council, which the new Pope announced less than a year after Pius' death, was an event of epoch-making importance in the life of the church, and it shook the foundations of Catholic life. Surprisingly, it was an event for which the church had been preparing, quite unconsciously, at least since the apparent triumph of ultramontanist in 1870.

### 3 John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council

Pius XII's successor took the name John XXIII, and reigned from 1958 to 1963. It would be hard to imagine anyone more different from his predecessor. Most of the cardinals who chose Angelo Roncalli as Pope probably thought that they were electing what is euphemistically called «a transition Pope» - a man of advanced age who would occupy the papal throne for a few years without rocking the boat. The real function of such a figure is to hold the papal office open for another cardinal, who needs a little more time to become better known, to gain support, or, simply, to age, so that he will be eligible in the next election, which will presumably take place in the not-too-distant future. In this sense, Roncalli, who took the name John XXIII, may have been the candidate of the Curia (even though Curial cardinals were outnumbered in the College of Cardinals by 1958). The cardinals in the papal bureaucracy had felt somewhat

slighted during the later years of Pius XII, because he had kept the reins of power firmly in his own hands and delegated little of importance to the Curia. The Curia was now ready to reassert its power, but its leading candidates needed a few more years of aging before they could be considered «papabili» - capable of being elected Pope.

If this surmise is correct, then never in history did the Curia make a more serious error in judgment (from its own point of view). The new Pope was a man of engaging manner and simple piety, a man of peasant origins - shrewd, observant, and, although trained in the stifling atmosphere of an Italian seminary, nevertheless the beneficiary of years of experience which had broadened his perspective and given him a deep understanding of the real world and its needs. In the twenties and thirties he had worked in the papal diplomatic service, in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey - countries in which non-Roman Catholics, and, in the latter case, non-Christians, were in the majority. (He had apparently been relegated to what the Vatican diplomatic service regarded as relatively unimportant backwaters because the Vatican nobility did not feel that this rotund peasant would cut a proper figure in the centers of European power.) However, in 1944 he had been sent to Paris to deal with the delicate question of the «Vichy bishops» - that is, the French bishops who had supported the policies of the puppet regime at Vichy during the Second World War. The new French government wanted them removed, but Roncalli charmed the authorities into allowing a few bishops to resign «for reasons of health», while the others, whose support of Vichy had been less whole-hearted, would be allowed to remain.

### 3.1 The Coming Council

On January 25, 1959, John announced that an Ecumenical Council would meet in the not too distant future. In June, 1960, the Curia was told to begin preparatory work for the Council, which would be called the «Second Vatican Council». Even at this early stage, many members of the Curia were frankly worried about the coming council, and some were beginning to wonder if they had not made a serious mistake in electing John XXIII. Actually, no one knew just what to make of the coming meeting; even some leading Catholic theologians had been sure that Vatican I would prove to be the last ecumenical council; once the Pope had been declared infallible, it seemed difficult to find any role for such a council to play in the life of the church. Furthermore, those parts of Canon Law which dealt with councils (canons 222 to 229) made it clear that such gatherings were merely consultative bodies. They were to so great an extent tools of papal policy, that on the death of the Pope who summoned it, a council automatically ceased to meet and juridically ceased to exist. The general feeling in much of the church in early 1959 was that the Second Vatican Council would be a largely ceremonial demonstration of unity in the church and of support for one or two pet projects of the Pope. However, before the end of the year, the coming council had gripped the popular imagination, triggered wide-ranging discussion, and awakened hopes, in a way which indicated that powerful forces had been latent in Catholicism and were now ready to break out into the open.

### 3.2 The First Session

On October 11, 1962, twenty five hundred bishops came to Rome for the first session of the Council. They heard the Pope give an opening address which emphasized the pastoral character of the Council and clearly indicated that, in his view, the

church needed to be brought up to date. John's opening address also implied that a rerun of the old condemnations of the modern world was not the result which he wished from his Council. Curial officials were most troubled by John's obvious willingness to allow the bishops full freedom of discussion and to welcome their initiatives.

But the Curia still held what looked like a strong card. The direction which the Council would take depended very much on the *Commissions* - that is, committees of twenty four members each which were to prepare the outlines which would serve as a basis for discussion and debate. The Curial party already had lists of candidates for these positions prepared and hoped to have them rubber-stamped by the bishops. But when they met, the bishops demanded time to prepare their own lists. More than anything else, this set the tone for the Council. In addition, the Curia had already prepared initial *schemata* - outlines of decrees which it wanted the bishops to approve. These documents were extremely conservative and amounted to a rehashing of Vatican I, differing only in the fact that they reproved and condemned developments in theology, church life, and the world at large, which had come into being since 1870. These schemata were very much in the spirit of Pius IX and Pius X, and eventually *all but one* were rejected by the bishops at the Council.

The first thing that the bishops did, taking their cue from the Pope, was to vote a group of moderate and even progressive bishops into power in the commissions which were to prepare the outlines for discussion. It soon became evident that the Pope was behind this new coalition of moderate and progressive bishops, and this was the first time in many centuries that the Pope and Curia were not united in taking a common stand in the face of, if not against, the world-wide episcopacy. John XXIII was apparently the first Pope since the fifteenth century who did not fear the specter of Conciliarism.

At the first series of meetings in the fall of 1962 the bishops held long discussions on the question of liturgy - the only one of the prepared schemata which they allowed to stand as written. For years, although the Mass was theoretically the center of Catholic piety, it was actually the Eucharist, *considered as an object of adoration* which played this role. The liturgical movement in France and Germany from the twenties on had made a number of bishops aware of this dangerous imbalance in Eucharistic piety. Many of them apparently saw that the ceremonies of this piety, with some vernacular hymns and devotions, were able to engage the laity, to involve them, in a way in which the celebration of liturgy did not. It was probably this insight which generated strong support for the use of the vernacular languages in the celebration of the liturgy itself, and which has led to the greatest visible change in Catholic life in modern times.

On November 14, 1962 the bishops began discussion of a document on the sources of revelation - one of those schemata which had been prepared by a commission of Curial theologians. It immediately became clear that a number of the council fathers were very dissatisfied with the negative tone of the document, with its outdated scholastic terminology, and with its resolute rejection of recent theological work on the relation of scripture and tradition. When a vote was taken on what to do about the outline, just short of the required two thirds majority of the bishops wanted to reject it outright and to send it back for fundamental revision. Very significantly, at this point the

Pope cast the deciding vote on the side of the majority and ordered the document returned to its authors for revision. This was merely a face-saving formula for the Curia - the document was rejected and it was to be replaced with an entirely new one.

When the bishops adjourned on December 8, planning to meet again the following fall, they did not know that their deliberations would continue under a new Pope. John XXIII died before they were to meet again, mourned by a larger percentage of the population of the world - Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Moslem, Agnostic, and Atheist - than any Pope in the entire history of the church. He was a thoroughly engaging individual, and a truly humble man who was able to move with equal ease among the mighty and the lowly. He was a man of simple piety and of great trust in God, and a man free of all dogmatic narrowness and defensive anxiety. His approach to ecumenism placed strong emphasis on the practical rather than the theoretical. He realized that the church was in many ways out of date and incapable of dealing with the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. But he also felt that in an atmosphere of free and open discussion, God would move him and his brother bishops in the right direction, if they gave the Holy Spirit sufficient elbow room.

In his rather short pontificate, John XXIII gave the modern world a totally new definition of the word *Pope*. His notion of papacy was not authoritarian but pastoral. He emphasized that he himself was a bishop, and he did all that he could to associate the other bishops with himself in the leadership of the worldwide church. He decentralized church administration and insisted that bishops be recognized and treated as successors of the Apostles and not merely as local ambassadors or representatives of the curial bureaucracy. Finally, he brought an entirely new approach to ecumenism, and suggested that separated Christians should not be asked to return as penitents to Catholic unity, but that all Christians, including, first and foremost, Catholics, should put their own affairs in order and should atone for their past arrogance and bigotry. He seemed to feel that if Christians did this, they would find out that they were far closer to each other than they had realized. When he died on June 3, 1963, he had already been able to put the stamp of his humble but powerful personality on the Council and its work.

#### 4 Paul VI

##### 4.1 The Second Session of the Council

Cardinal Montini, the Archbishop of Milan, succeeded John XXIII, and took the name, Paul VI. He had worked in the papal Secretariat of State under Eugenio Pacelli (the later Pius XII) in his earlier years. But as a result of a dispute within the Curia, and involving Pius XII, he had been sent to Milan, somewhat pointedly without the cardinal's hat, and his curial career was obviously at an end. Montini was the first cardinal chosen by John XXIII - just in time, as it turned out, for him to be at the conclave which followed John's death. Paul was sincerely committed to continuing the Council - and in any case by this time it had gathered such momentum that any attempt to terminate it would have caused havoc in the church. At the same time, it is likely that the new Pope was already beginning to worry about what the Council was up to, and to wonder if the bishops might not be making too great use of the freedom of discussion which John XXIII had urged on them.

The second period of discussion and debate took place from September 29 to

December 4, 1963, and centered on three important questions. The first was a new understanding of the church as the *people of God* - a concept which had strong biblical support but which had been neglected during the entire counterreformation period. This new notion implied a very different view of the role of the hierarchy in the church: they were not a privileged caste, endowed with the God-given role of ordering the laity about, but were a group called to serve the people of God while remaining, themselves, a part of that people. The second question discussed was that of *collegiality* - the theory that the bishops, together with the Pope, formed a group like that which was constituted by Peter and the other Apostles in the early church. This theory also implied that leadership and decision-making in the church should be the work of this body, this corporate group, and not simply the work of an isolated individual. The bishops were beginning to balance Vatican I's extreme emphasis on papal authority by pointing out that the Pope ordinarily should not act in isolation, but should act as the leader (and a member of) the college of bishops. In the third place, at these meetings in the fall of 1963, the bishops also decided on the renewal of the *diaconate* - that form of the sacrament of orders which endowed its recipients with virtually all priestly functions short of the authorization to celebrate Mass and to grant sacramental absolution. In an important move, they recommended that this form of the sacrament might, under the proper circumstances, be granted to mature married men. Finally, during this same period there was much discussion on the question of ecumenism. It seems certain that it was during this second series of meetings that Paul VI began to fear the direction that the Council was taking; and in the interim between the second session in the fall of 1963 and the third in the fall of 1964, curial conservatives apparently worked on the Pope's fears and won him to their way of thinking.

#### 4.2 The Third Session

The third session of the Council took place from September 14 to November 21, 1964. This session saw the important discussion of the Constitution on Divine Revelation, which led to a strong assertion of the primacy of scripture as a source of Christian faith - an assertion not readily reconcilable with the views of Pius XII in his Encyclical of 1950, *Humani Generis*. During this series of meetings, the bishops began to search for compromise formulas which would express the results of their discussions in a mildly progressive form, but one temperate enough to win the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the bishops of the world. They wanted to insure that at the final meetings of the Council there would be no winners and no losers (something extremely important for the unity of the church).

When the document on the church (which had been discussed during the second session) was presented in reworked form (which supposedly reflected the earlier discussions), a number of bishops were irritated to find that the Pope himself had made changes without consulting them - changes which lessened the significance of collegiality and strongly reemphasized papal primacy. Changes had also been made in the proposed decree on ecumenism which had the effect of weakening it, and this also annoyed many of the bishops of France, and even more, those of Holland and Germany. During this third session, some leading churchmen (among them, Cardinals Alfrink, Suenens, and Leger) asked publicly for a discussion of the so-called «official» position on birth control. At this juncture, Paul VI showed how different his approach

was from that of John XXIII: he simply removed the question from the agenda and ordered the assembled bishops not to discuss it. He announced that he would appoint a commission of his own to examine the question and report directly to him (after the Council was over!). Although these papal initiatives created some resentment, there was little the bishops could do. The Catholic church was still the papal church, and the bishops at the Council had too deep a sense of their common responsibility for the unity of the church to take any action which might compromise that unity.

#### 4.3 The Fourth Session

When the bishops met in the fall of 1965 for the fourth and final series of meetings (September 14 to December 8), their task was largely that of editorial work - that is, the preparation of the documents for the final voting (although they did manage to give their approval to a strong statement on religious liberty). It is clear that by this time the Council had lost both its elan and its momentum, and it is significant that in the final document on the church, less emphasis is given to the church as people of God, and more to the church as sacrament - that is, as the effective sign of the presence of God on earth. Although this change was unfortunate, the new understanding was still far better than Bellarmine's approach, which had dominated the counterreformation era. It also became clear in this fourth session, both from the form and content of the decrees, that the era of neo-scholasticism in the church had come to an end. Finally, and this could be of considerable importance in coming years, it was evident that a new era of international cooperation among Catholic theologians had dawned. For the first time, theologians began to feel that they constituted a body with a recognized task in the church. And they began to feel that they had a divine commission to fulfill that task in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual cooperation similar to that which characterizes scholarly work in all other areas of human endeavor.

The Council had shown that many bishops were aware that the church had lost contact with the modern world. The first two sessions had given the bishops a deep sense of their own collegiality, and of their common responsibility, with the Bishop of Rome, for the universal church. The meetings themselves had provided the format for such cooperation, while John XXIII had provided (for the first session) the papal stimulus, encouragement, and approval. But it became evident in the later sessions of the Council and in the years which followed it, that without the proper format and forum, and when papal encouragement was withdrawn, the bishops were unable to act as a body, and collegiality retreated to the realm of theological theory.