

Is the Pope Infallible?

Our Catholic Heritage

The Vatican Council Faces Many Challenges

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

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Fifteen years after he had proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) convoked the First Vatican Council (Dec. 8, 1869-1870).

Charles Darwin (d.1892) had published his "On the Origin of Species" (1859) and his evolutionary ideas were becoming popular as the council met. But there were other problems: liberal rationalism, socialism, communism, materialism, pantheism, atheism, the relations between faith and reason; and the teaching authority of the bishops and the Holy Father. The Council could not discuss all of them, because the Franco-Prussian War forced its adjournment in 1870.

Of the more than 150 schema which were to be discussed at the Council only two were officially de-

bated and promulgated. The "Constitution on the Faith" (April 24, 1870) dogmatically stated the relationship between faith and reason, the two-fold method which God has given us to know Him and His mysteries. The "Constitution on the Church" (July 18, 1870) was the second and most important teaching of the Council.

The majority of the Council Fathers favored the definition of the infallibility of the pope. Some few thought that any such definition was not based on Scripture or on historical precedent. A larger number of the minority thought that any definition of papal infallibility was inopportune at that moment in history. Some of the bishops, therefore, left Rome before the final vote on the definition because they did not want to cast a qualified "yes" or "no" before the Holy Father. Of the 533 Fathers of the Council who voted, only two voted "no" to the definition. Those two, the Bishops of Cajazzo, Italy, and of Little Rock, Arkansas,

went on their knees before the Holy Father and consented, after the vote in favor of the infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff was announced.

The faithful of the world accepted the decision of the Council as divinely inspired, but some Catholics in Germany refused to accept the definition and formed a schismatic group called the "Old Catholics" who still continue today in very small numbers.

The Church, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, taught at the First Vatican Council: 1) that Jesus Christ made Peter the visible head of the Church with real, proper, and supreme jurisdiction over the Church; 2) the primacy of Peter's office, which was instituted for the constant protection of the Church, is continued in the office of Peter's properly elected successor; 3) the Pope is the successor of Peter and has supreme authority over the entire Church in matters of faith and morals, as well

as in all matters pertaining to the discipline, ruling and government of the Church; 4) that the Pope is infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is "when, in the discharge of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, and by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines that a doctrine concerning faith or morals must be held by the whole Church, he possesses through the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining a doctrine concerning faith or morals; and that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, not from the consent of the Church."

This truly precise dogma of the Holy Father's infallibility avoided any extreme views concerning papal infallibility and was but the culmination of the development of the traditional faith in the prerogatives of the Holy Father through the centuries. It is a dogmatic definition which must be held by every Catholic.

Cardinal Newman — Journey to Catholicism

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

The Anglican Church of 19th century England with its deep internal divisions of belief and ineffectual organization was faced with the prospect of having unwelcome reforms forced on it by either the secular Parliament or by liberal theologians, who proposed a renewal of Anglicanism by stressing humanitarian social works over the liturgy, worship and faith of the church which Henry VIII had founded.

Fears of such a renewal persuaded conservative Anglicans to investigate the foundations of their beliefs and to renew Anglicanism in the spirit of its traditions. Men such as John Keble, Richard Froude, Edward Pusey and John Henry Newman formed a religious group of Anglicans at Oxford College to pursue those investigations. Thus began the Oxford Movement, which Newman dated from July 14, 1833. Many of the members of this group, such as Robert Wilberforce, Ambrose St. John and William Ward eventually followed John Newman, their leader, into the Catholic Church.

John Newman, the oldest of six children of an unsuccessful London banker and his Calvinist wife, was born on Feb. 21, 1801. After a brilliant career at Oxford as a student at Trinity College, and a fellow of Oriol College, he was ordained an Anglican minister (1825) and given the vicarage of St. Mary, the University Church (1828).

In search of arguments to preserve the traditions of the Anglican Church, he turned to a study of the Fathers of the Church and began to publish his findings on patristics, the sacramental system, and apostolic succession in the "Tracts of the Times," a series of pamphlets which were edited by members

of the Oxford Movement as apologies for the position of the Anglican Church. Newman's researches

at length convinced him of the truth of the Church of Rome and the errors of the Anglican Church. On Oct. 8, 1845 he was received into the Catholic Church and ordained a priest two years later. In 1848 he was appointed head of the Oratory at Birmingham.



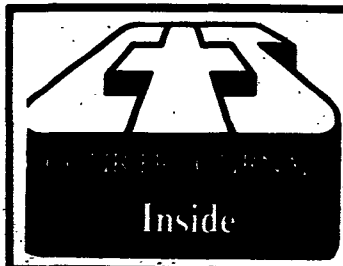
John Henry Cardinal Newman

(Art by Robert McGovern)

John Newman was one of the greatest intellects and convincing apologists of the Catholic Church. His writings are literary and theological classics. His essay on the "Development of Christian Doctrine" appealed to those still hesitating at Oxford and produced a wave of converts. Other great works followed: his memorable sermon on the "Second Spring" of Catholicity in England; his "Apologia pro Vita Sua;" and his "Grammar of Assent," which was planned to justify the faith of ordinary people who were unable to formulate their beliefs for themselves.

John Newman failed in his attempt to establish The Catholic University of Dublin, but his apologetical successes continued. He became editor of the influential Catholic periodical, "The Rambler" (1858). He declined an invitation to be a consultant at the First Vatican Council, because he thought that the definition of papal infallibility was inopportune. However, he unhesitatingly accepted the dogma as soon as it was promulgated.

Pope Leo XIII created John Henry Newman a cardinal in 1879. He was 78 years old then and in the twilight of his life. Before he died in 1890, John Henry Newman, Catholic convert, Roman cardinal, revered intellectual, brilliant writer and Christian gentleman wrote his own epitaph: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* (Out of shadows and symbols unto the truth).



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