

## Reviews

THE VATICAN COUNCIL 1869-70, by Dom Cuthbert Butler; Collins' Fontana Library, 10s. 6d.

Butler's book, published in 1930, has become a classic, and this one-volume paper-back reprint, edited in a slightly shortened form by the present Abbot of Downside is most welcome. Butler, who had an eye for what mattered, picked out the central points from the vast amount of source material available, then brought it all to life by adding relevant passages from the letters of blunt old cabin-boy Archbishop Ullathorne. The result is a theology of infallibility that is intelligible because we watch it growing under the hammer blows of the men who shaped it; a book produced, like so much of the best theological writing, with the needs of the laity in view.

The limited objective of the Vatican definition comes out very clearly from this glimpse behind the scenes at those who wanted it far wider in scope—rather as we have come to understand the meaning of the definition of scripture and tradition at Trent since learning what was there rejected. In the important speech of Gasser, giving the official explanation of the final infallibility formula, and quoted at length by Butler, there was no comfort for extremists such as Manning and Ward: 'Just as it would be heretical to deny the Church's infallibility in defining dogmas of faith, so by this Vatican decree it will be no less heretical to deny the infallibility of the Pope himself in definitions of dogmas of faith. But in those things in which it is theologically certain, though not yet certain by faith, that the Church is infallible, by this decree of the Council the Pope's infallibility similarly is not defined to be of faith' (p. 394). However far theological speculation may push the matter, he is saying, all that we are bound *in faith* to believe is the infallibility of the Church, and hence of the Pope, in matters of *doctrinal definition*. The definition was in fact a defeat rather than a victory for what Newman called (p. 182) the 'aggressive insolent faction'. The minority of Inopportunist, though they turned out to be wrong, prevented the fashionable Neo-ultramontanism of the extremists from winning the day against the wishes of the majority who, like Ullathorne, held traditional and moderate Ultramontane views (Gallicanism, to which their position was originally opposed, was by now, it should be explained, quite dead).

All this, needless to say, presents a striking parallel to the events of the Council now in progress, and makes Butler's book compelling reading. Much remains the same. The prepared schemata, then as now, could not long survive the onslaught of pastoral common-sense, and Ullathorne's remark (p. 163) might well have been taken notice of by modern officialdom: 'it is not the first time that I have seen the work of the ablest theologians, when the episcopate brings their deeper instinct and keener experience upon it, go to pieces like chaff.' How

applicable, too, his observation that it is 'the great men, of great sees, who are the first in taking large and comprehensive views, and who give up contracted views with the least sparing hand' (p. 201). His sketch of the Spanish mentality (p. 368) is, unfortunately, too long to quote.

Yet some alignments have subtly changed, as the reader will soon see who tries to compare majority and minority, progressive and reactionary, Northern and Latin, at the two councils. A remark of Butler's, that before the Council those who wanted definition at all costs came from 'Catholic countries in which there was no other strongly organized religion' (p. 174) gives a clue to the change of temper. There are fewer places now where it is still possible to ignore the belief of our separated brethren, or refuse it any place in the development of the Church's understanding of the truth she guards. The ecumenical movement has brought about profound changes in the years between the councils. 'There is good reason for thinking that the suspension of the Council, when it had achieved just so much as it had, was an ordering of Providence', says Butler (p. 486). Thirty years later we can agree even more whole-heartedly with his dry conclusion.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS, A THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY, edited by Robert W. Gleason, S.J.; Newman Press, \$3.

The essays in this book – originally papers read at Fordham in the School of General Studies – are written to persuade Catholics that a fully Christian attitude involves a commitment to human society, to natural communities. Love is a task as well as a gift, as Fr Gleason expresses the dominant theme.

The papers cover a multitude of subjects from advice to American Presidential candidates to information for the use of Spiritual Directors on how to distinguish genuine stigmata from the psychosomatic symptoms of hysteria. In general they have a relevance to the modern world in that they make a much-needed attempt at incorporating the results of contemporary psychology within the Christian understanding of man.

The assumptions of the writers are somewhat right-wing and they tend to simplify complex problems. There is a paper on mass media, especially television, which works towards the conclusion that 'we wish to see lists of the approved and disapproved programs multiplied' in an effort to ensure the right use of the new means of communication. Difficult subjects like that of Natural Law theory are wielded a little too easily by some of the contributors – notably in the discussion of the rights of the State and the individual, of psychoanalysis and Christianity, and of evolutionary hypotheses.

The essay on 'Evolution and Catholic Theology' by Fr J. Franklin Ewing is perhaps the most blatant example of an essay which not only fails to 'clean the ground of a number of widely accepted myths' but gives further currency to a