

Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church

by

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Synopsis

The enduring influence of the Catholic Church has many sources—its spiritual and intellectual appeal, missionary achievements, wealth, diplomatic effectiveness, and stable hierarchy. But in the first half of the nineteenth century, the foundations upon which the church had rested for centuries were shaken. In the eyes of many thoughtful people, liberalism in the guise of liberty, equality, and fraternity was the quintessence of the evils that shook those foundations. At the Vatican Council of 1869–1870, the church made a dramatic effort to set things right by defining the doctrine of papal infallibility. In *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church*, John W. O'Malley draws us into the bitter controversies over papal infallibility that at one point seemed destined to rend the church in two. Archbishop Henry Manning was the principal driving force for the definition, and Lord Acton was his brilliant counterpart on the other side. But they shrink in significance alongside Pope Pius IX, whose zeal for the definition was so notable that it raised questions about the very legitimacy of the council. Entering the fray were politicians such as Gladstone and Bismarck. The growing tension in the council played out within the larger drama of the seizure of the Papal States by Italian forces and its seemingly inevitable consequence, the conquest of Rome itself. Largely as a result of the council and its aftermath, the Catholic Church became more pope-centered than ever before. In the terminology of the period, it became ultramontane.

Sort review

With *Vatican I*...O'Malley completes his masterclass in church history and ecclesiology of the last five hundred years, telling us as much about the church now as then.-- "America" A fascinating and dispassionate glimpse into a pivotal and dramatic period of Catholic Church history.-- "Library Journal" Possesses the lucidity, insight, and erudition we associate with one of the world's leading historians of Catholicism.-- "John McGreevy, University of Notre Dame" Provides an elegant historical narrative.-- "Times Higher Education (London)" --This text refers to the audioCD edition. About the Author Matthew McAuliffe is a voice talent and audiobook narrator.--This text refers to the audioCD edition.

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What people say about this book

Dr. Terrence McGarty, "Papal Infallibility?. Vatican I by O'Malley is a short but superbly written summary of the issue of Papal Infallibility and Vatican I in 1870. The author is a well known Jesuit, and one will see the influence and pervasiveness of the Jesuits throughout. This book does not seem to be a polemic for one side or the other on first reading. It does show how some limitations on the proposed position of Pius IX was attained, namely that he wanted unlimited infallibility and the best the Council could delimit is infallibility on matters stated ex cathedra, namely limited to things the Pope would pronounce as coming from the successor of Peter. The book is divided into five sections and a conclusion. The author goes back and forth between the issues at the time and those proximate to the Council and integrates them into the decision process. The issues driving Pius IX were the development of nationalism, liberalism, freedom of religion, Protestantism, freedom of the press, and the development of citizens as compared to subjects. Pius IX was one of the last hold outs of the days of divine rights of rulers. As forms of democracy were developing, challenges from socialism and communism were being addressed, Pius IX saw a need to strengthen the papacy. The author does a reasonably good task at showing the counter efforts such as Gallicanism which was the French approach of running the Church the way the French wanted to. Strangely Gallicanism was present before the Avignon papacy and was intensified during the 14th century when the Pope was in Avignon. Although not officially part of France at the time the popes then followed the French crown in many ways. Pius IX saw this as an anathema. Thus any extension to the 19th century would have to be wiped out and Pius did this via his call for infallibility. Even more compelling was the fact that when all of the issues started with Pius he was also a head of state with his dominion over the Papal States, the central lands of what was becoming Italy. The Pope owned and controlled most of central Italy and as nationalism was evolving his control was under attack. Eventually just months after the Council declared his infallibility Rome was invaded and taken over by the Italian nationalists, thus Italy was effectively formed as a nation. The author blends these facts in a well presented narrative. He also brings to the fore the opposition of many of the theologians, often non-clerical and German, who opposed this infallibility dicta. Key amongst them would be Dollinger, a Bavarian theologian strongly opposed to this new idea. In fact many of the best theologians were opposed since there was no basis and furthermore the Conciliar theories dominated, namely such decisions were made by Church Councils, bishops in concert, and not singularly by a Pope. Overall the book is superb. However one can raise a few issues: 1. The Jesuits played a key role in supporting Pius. The author's document is replete with references and the author himself is a Jesuit. The role of the Jesuits frankly should have been more detailed, for their role was to support the Pope and as such infallibility would logically strengthen their positions, somewhat. 2. Infallibility took almost two millennia to be stated. As such one would wonder why no one ever thought of this before? The Councils were always a way to reach doctrinal decisions. But now one ascribes such a singular power to a singular man. This is certainly

questionable give the cast of characters who have occupied the seat of Peter over the ages.³ As with many such efforts one should be drawn back to the 14th century and the battles between John XXII and Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham. Ockham went as far in his *Work of Ninety Days* to claim John a heretic. His contention has merit. Marsilius predated Montesquieu in the ideas of representative governments and the fact that divine rights had no basis. The 14th century players frankly should be mentioned in many of these discussions. Overall O'Malley provides a timely, well written, and balanced presentation of Vatican I, a Council whose closure never occurred due to the capture of Rome by the Italian forces. O'Malley in the conclusion makes reference to the impact of this dictum, such as the problems Kennedy had running for President, for the dictum was interpreted as making Catholics citizens of a foreign lord and master and demanded fealty to their assertions."

Thomas J. Burns, "How the pope became The Pope. When did the pope become "The Pope?" Catholics since biblical times have carried the image of Peter's unique role as leader and unifier of those awaiting the Second Coming in glory. The precise nature of the authority and legitimacy of the Bishop of Rome has varied over time. In his classic *"Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages"* [1970] R.W. Southern describes the eighth century's interlocking of the pope's authority to the very bones of Peter interred in Rome. Six centuries later, Boniface VIII would decree in *"Unam Sanctam"* [1302] that "every living creature be under submission to the Roman pontiff," both the most drastic claim of papal authority ever made and perhaps the fastest one to be rejected. John W. O'Malley's *"Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church"* [2018] describes the Catholic effort to formulate a precise understanding of papal authority. Over a roughly seven-month period [1869-1870] the world's bishops, at the invite of Pope Pius IX [r. 1846-1878], came together in Rome to discuss and formulate the ultimate authority of the office of Bishop of Rome. This is the council remembered for the formal declaration of the doctrine of papal infallibility, and this is the council's signal achievement, though it had hoped to address a broader agenda. The author sets the table for the Council's work with two fine introductory essays. *"Catholicism and the Century of Lights"* describes developments in Western European Catholicism in the era of the Enlightenment, or roughly from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the French Revolution in 1789. In a Europe exhausted by 150 years of religious wars, the peace treaty of Westphalia for all purposes left stand a continent of coexistence among the various post-Reformation churches. As O'Malley puts it, many Catholic rulers and churchmen alike "wanted to put dogmatism, fanaticism, and religious wars behind them." [p. 38] The restored authority of bishops and a renewed interest in art and literature refreshed the Church, as did the Enlightenment thought of Newton and Locke, among others. The parallel development of church and state did not sit well in Rome, and in the chapter *"The Ultramontane Movement"* O'Malley describes the profound dismay over developments between church and states. The French Revolution and the era of Napoleon were pronouncedly anti-Catholic, and the wave of populist revolutions across Europe, including Italy itself, led Pope

Pius IX to sour on modern development and to reinforce the ultimate authority over Church and society in the person of the pope. His supporters became known as “Ultramontanists,” from the Latin “beyond the mountains,” specifically the land beyond the Alps, the Italian peninsula. The term carried double meanings, referring to the literal protection of the Papal States from Italian nationalists and to Catholics around the world sympathetic to the strengthening of the Office of Peter to protect the Catholic faith. Pius, in summoning a council in 1869, did not do so without risk. One risk was the very real military intervention of the seizing of Rome, a factor which later did play a role in the council’s proceedings. Politically and theologically speaking, while a clear majority of bishops supported the definition of infallibility, there were many who called for precision in speaking of the nature and exercise of such power. Not everyone defined the doctrine as did the lay editor of the Dublin Review, William Ward, who famously declared his desire to have an infallible papal encyclical delivered to him at breakfast every morning along with the Times. There was also a sizeable block of bishops, between a quarter and a third, with significant reservations or even opposition to infallibility. By far the most famous opponent not a bishop, but rather the Munich Professor Ignaz von Dollinger, with his brilliant student Lord Acton, the latter famous for his dictum “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Most moderates at the Council embraced one form or other of Dollinger’s concerns: [1] loss of freedom of thought and expression within the Church; [2] isolation from much of the intellectual world; [3] damage to ecumenical relations, particularly with the Episcopal and Orthodox Churches, [4] fear of schism, and [5] fear of the impact of absolutism upon Church reform. Although he did not invite Dollinger, Pius IX brought together a broad range of theologians to Vatican I and allowed for considerable discussion. Infallibility and the structure of the Church was one of six major issues prepared for discussion; other topics included issues of church and state, the sacrament of Matrimony, and Faith and Revelation. Primitive acoustics, summer heat, poor command of Latin, and an open-ended agenda with no set conclusion contributed to the restlessness of bishops, as did the sound of canons surrounding the city. Pius thus ordered the vote on infallibility, his primary agenda, moved to the top of the list, and on July 18, 1870, only two bishops voted against the definition, one from the United States. Many with reservations left before the vote in deference to the pope, who then adjourned the Council until safer circumstances might prevail, which never did in his lifetime. O’Malley’s summary of the Council highlights its blessings and failures. Whatever their sentiments, most of the world’s bishops honored and supported the newly declared doctrine. One of the few major opponents, Dollinger, came to a sad end. When Otto von Bismarck declared that bishops would be little more than puppets, the German conference of bishops provided a rebuttal that Pius approved as an official interpretation of the relationship of pope and bishops. The Council enabled the pope to appoint the world’s bishops, something that secular rulers had previously controlled. Perhaps most significantly, Vatican I made the office of the papacy a visible, meaningful factor in the lives of everyday Catholics. However, Lord Acton’s words about the corruption of power had not been considered; the Church of 2019 labors with the conundrum of defensive authority in the

face of its own dramatic administrative sins.”

Jerry Ahearn, “Just bought Vatican II as well!. During the last several years, as a 72-year old retiree, I have easily read over 125 books on world history, 2nd Temple Judaism, Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Christian and Catholic Church History, Roman Empire, Constantine, the various doctrinal Councils, rise of Islam, Renaissance Popes, Protestantism, the Enlightenment, etc. and, in my opinion, Father O'Malley's work is in a class by itself. As a result, I have already purchased his work on Vatican II -- stayed up last night reading it until 3 A.M. -- and will also buy his treatise on the Council of Trent! I have separate Master's degrees in both Comparative Religion and British Poetry and feel that Father O'Malley really knows how to write professionally on Church-related matters in a clear, informative, well-organized, balanced and perceptive manner.”

Arthur Sippo, “The best treatment of Vatican Council I to date. An absolute tour de force! There have been hatchet jobs attacking Vatican I by those who wish to denigrate Papal Primacy and Infallibility such as the works of Hasler and Kung. Fr. O'Malley masterfully demonstrates what really happened and makes it clear that God was able to use the factions in the Catholic Church in the 19th Century to demonstrate the legitimacy of papal authority both theologically and juridically while allowing for some leeway which Vatican II was able to use to explain the collegial role of the bishops and their responsibility for the for both the local and universal church. I cannot recommend this book more highly! Anyone interested in the real story of Vatican I needs to read this book.”

Suzette A. Hill, “Clear and meticulous. I am delighted with this book: scholarly, lucid, eloquent and – most importantly – objective. This is a fascinating analysis of the theological and political complexities governing the Council's agenda and the shifting and conflicting allegiances of its participants. It is an engrossing historical study with surely a universal appeal: to priest and layman, Catholic and non-Catholic. A bonus is the stylish format and clear print: a nice product.”

Lux In Domino, “Great product.. The book arrived on time. It is as it was described. Thank you.”

Damian Furlong, “The imperial papacy. Well worth the read. You'll appreciate Vatican II much better if you understand Vatican I.”

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