

INTRODUCTION

Charles de Gaulle famously called the Second Vatican Council the most important event in modern history.¹ Many commentators at the time saw the Council as nothing short of revolutionary, and the later judgements of historians have upheld this view. The astonishing enterprise of a man who became, quite unexpectedly, Pope John XXIII in 1958, this purposeful *aggiornamento* of the Roman Catholic Church was almost at once a leviathan of papers, committees, commissions, and meetings. Scholars have been left to confront no less than twelve volumes of ‘ante-preparatory’ papers, seven volumes of preparatory papers, and thirty-two volumes of documents generated by the Council itself. A lasting impression of the impressiveness of the affair is often conveyed by photographs of the 2,200-odd bishops of the Church, drawn from around the world, sitting in the basilica of St Peter, a vast, orchestrated theatre of ecclesiastical intent. For this was the council to bring the Church into a new relationship with the modern world, one that was more creative and less defiant; a council to reconsider much – if not quite all – of the theological, liturgical, and ethical infrastructure in which Catholicism lived and breathed and had its being.

Integral to these ecclesiological reconsiderations was the question of how Rome should begin to acknowledge the new realities of the ecumenical age and the possibilities of open, even official, relationships with other churches. A defining dimension of Vatican II was the presence of a number of Observers invited by John XXIII to represent other traditions and to report the workings of the Council to their own leaders. As the Council unfolded, however, it was perceived that those who came simply to ‘observe’ eventually came to exert at least a modest influence, too. Vatican II was not merely a succession of formal sessions which occurred to revise and adopt a series of statements: it

¹Books on Vatican II are not difficult to come by but, for a solid historical overview, John O’Malley’s *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA, 2008) currently leads the field. See, too, Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: the battle for meaning* (Mahwah, NJ, 2012). Peter Hebblethwaite’s fine *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984) is followed by his equally imposing *Paul VI: the first modern Pope* (London, 1993).

was an immense conversation, of which the Observers were clearly a significant part.

Between 1961 and 1964 the Archbishop of Canterbury – first Geoffrey Fisher, then Arthur Michael Ramsey – employed a representative in Rome at the Vatican Council. This was Bernard Pawley. During the Council itself Pawley was joined by other Anglican Observers, particularly the Bishop of Ripon, John Moorman. Pawley's achievement was to open a regular channel of information and opinion which created an important new dimension in the long, and often difficult, history of the relations of the two communions. This soon found a striking place in the new age of ecumenical diplomacy which the twentieth century brought, first to the Protestant world and then, by degrees, to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches too. But Pawley also created a vivid record of the Council at large as he watched and interpreted it from his own particular position. He certainly had his own view and he was unafraid to indulge it. Accordingly, he teaches us almost as much about the attitudes of his own Church as he does about those of Rome in the days of the Council. He also shows the extent to which Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Protestantism at large continued to negotiate with the claims of a disputatious history.

Long after the tumult of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the place of Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom remained a question of public politics across national society. In 1701 the Act of Settlement not only precluded a Catholic from becoming king of England but also effectively ended any hope of a reunion of Rome and Canterbury. Although there were stray encounters, eloquent friendships, and even committed private exchanges (as took place between Archbishop Wake and the French Church in 1718–1719²), it was not until the middle of the long nineteenth century that both Rome and Canterbury again gave serious thought to a reunion. A number of pivotal events were to mark the relationship between the two and even point towards the coming of the Second Vatican Council. The English Catholic Church experienced a reawakened self-awareness (which was part of a wider Catholic crusade, fought on a number of fronts), while the Anglican Church was in turmoil, not least because of the intellectual challenges issued by strikingly gifted members who it saw defecting to Rome.

In a century of reform in which the British state sought to consolidate its authority by incorporating those hitherto excluded from government, it was the need to conserve the union of Britain

²The most extensive treatment of this remains Norman Sykes, *William Wake: Archbishop of Canterbury 1657–1737* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1957); see esp. vol. 1, chapters 1 and 4.

and Ireland that in 1829 brought the Catholic Emancipation Act. At a stroke this repealed laws that imposed civil disabilities on Catholics and allowed them to hold parliamentary office. Twenty-one years later Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) decided to restore the Catholic hierarchy in England as Rome had become increasingly aware that there was an upsurge in Catholicism in the country, much of it the consequence of a swelling migration across the Irish Sea. On the 29 September 1850 Nicholas Wiseman was appointed Archbishop of Westminster and became the first English cardinal since the Reformation.³ His well-known pastoral letter from October of that year, *Without the Flaminian Gate of Rome*,⁴ signalled the beginnings of a halcyon period for English Catholicism. On the one hand Catholic emancipation and the restoration of the hierarchy showed a degree of tolerance of the foreign Catholic faith; on the other hand it unleashed fierce ‘no popery’ agitation and cries of ‘Papal Aggression’. Evidently, the old fear of this foreign religion was still deeply entrenched in parts of the national psyche. When they looked back upon 400 years of Anglo-Catholic relations Bernard and Margaret Pawley saw the restoration to have had fatal consequences for ecumenical relations as it signalled ‘the triumph in the Roman Catholic community for a policy of dependence on Rome’.⁵

As the restoration gathered formidable momentum, the Established Church in England was dealing with problems of its own. The travails of the Oxford Movement represented something more than a crisis of sensitive consciences. Even before they took off for Rome, Tractarians had begun to envision unity with Rome (or in some cases with Eastern Orthodoxy). The converts themselves were far from easy to dismiss; a vigorous assortment, they included the familiar names of John Henry Newman, one day to be a cardinal, and Henry Edward Manning, later Archbishop of Westminster. Other luminaries such as the theologian and mathematician William George Ward and the co-editor of the *Rambler*, Richard Simpson, now contributed immensely to the richness of the English Roman Catholic tapestry. But if conversion for these individuals possessed the quality of resolution, such a leap of faith had not landed them in a situation in which everything was easy or obvious. The breach with Rome had not quite evaporated. Some English-speaking Catholics sometimes found having to follow Vatican

³Wilfrid Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman* (London, 1897).

⁴Published by Hooker, 7 October 1850.

⁵Bernard Pawley and Margaret Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury through Four Centuries: a study of the relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches, 1530–1981* (London, 1981), p. 203.

directives that bore no direct relevance to their own understandings or circumstances perplexing.

Nobody in the nineteenth century would have allowed that politics and religion were in any way separable matters, least of all when it came to Rome. Nor was the place of Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom simply a matter of constitutional amendments or native prejudice.⁶ Roman policy did not stay still. The question of loyalty – to the Pope or to the Crown – was now perpetuated by the general victory of Ultramontanism in Rome during the lengthy pontificate of Pius IX (1846–1878). In order to compensate for its weakened diplomatic and political position in relation to national governments throughout the nineteenth century, the Holy See began to play a more direct and aggressive role in the political and intellectual life of the individual national churches than it had done under *l'ancien régime*. Rome increasingly became a dominant force in the international direction of Catholic theology, led by a revival of Neo-Thomistic philosophy and theology, and intervened in virtually every theological controversy that arose. The devotion to the Holy See and to the figure of the Pope in particular also grew among ordinary Catholics, who for the first time in history could see depictions of their Pope, thanks to modern mass media. Such popular devotion was cleverly utilized by a resurrected scholastic body. This development of curial bureaucracy and the elevation of the teaching authority, the *Magisterium*, would have consequences for the Second Vatican Council. The increase in papal prestige also caused strong reactions from opponents of papal centralism both within the Church itself and externally, as notable Liberal Catholics and, later, so-called Modernists lamented the lack of such development as seen outside the Church. If anything, a rapprochement with the Anglicans had become more difficult.

On the 8 December 1854 the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was solemnly proclaimed in Rome. Although the observance of the Conception appeared in the Book of Common Prayer for this December day, no provisions were made for its observance. Anglican theologians had long pointed out that the dogma was not contained in scripture, that it was unlikely to be deduced from scripture or defined by an ecumenical council, and that the definition of it as a dogma was unnecessary. But it was the fact that it was the Pope alone who had promulgated the dogma which ruffled Anglican (and some Catholic) feathers. By now, signs of what was to come were clearly discernible. The historian Patrick Allitt has observed, ‘The later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries showed unmistakably

⁶For an extensive recent treatment of this, see Michael Wheeler, *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in nineteenth-century English culture* (Cambridge, 2011).

that the Catholic Church had decided to climb out of the river of contemporary intellectual life rather than swim along in midstream, despite the hopes of Newman, Brownson, Hecker, and many other converts.⁷

Most efforts to 'modernize' Catholic thinking were met with the crushing iron fist of papal power. In 1864 Pius IX issued his *Quanta Cura*, which denounced the separation of church and state, repudiated freedom of religious worship, and decried freedom of expression and the press as false and pernicious ideas. Attached to it was the *Syllabus of Errors*, which listed eighty propositions relating to topics including rationalism, socialism, the abrogation of Church privileges, the supremacy of civil authority over legislation, and the liberties and rights associated with liberalism, as these were considered part of a broad secular attack against the Church. The *Syllabus* condemned many of the principles which contemporary social scientists and biblical critics outside the Catholic Church were by now freely applying in their studies. It concluded by condemning the proposition that 'the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization'.⁸

The *Syllabus* was a heavy blow to both Newman and the Catholic layman John Acton. Although the latter remained within the Catholic fold he increasingly came to see the 'Roman world' through the eyes of the Anglican politician William Gladstone, who published furiously on Roman matters, trying to reconcile what he found to be the best of both the Catholic and the Anglican worlds. But all three of them must have known that they were now swimming against a very stiff tide indeed. In 1870, Ultramontanism reached its zenith with the promulgation of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council. Despite the insistence of such towering figures as Newman and the German church historian Ignaz von Döllinger that the historical evidence supporting the promulgation was insufficient, a majority of the bishops present voted for elevating the Pope's authority. Manning, too, supported papal infallibility: Ultramontanism actually equalled liberty and religious freedom from the civil state. One of the main reasons for his conversion in 1851 had been the *Gorham* case, in which the judgement of the state had overruled the verdict of an Anglican bishop.

The First Vatican Council crushed any ecumenical hopes that might once have been harboured. Already in 1857 a small group

⁷Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American intellectuals turn to Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), p. 8.

⁸*The Syllabus of Errors Condemned by Pius IX*, available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/pgsyll.htm> (accessed 5 June 2013).

of Anglicans, Catholics, and Orthodox, under the leadership of the prominent convert Ambrose de Lisle, had founded the Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom with Cardinal Wiseman's blessing. The purpose of the Association was to pray and work for the reunion of churches and church bodies in the East as well as in the West. When Manning succeeded Wiseman, the Association found itself condemned by the Holy Office in 1864 and the Catholic participants were forced to withdraw. Without the oxygen of official patronage, other schemes working for partial union, such as the Order of Corporate Re-union, eventually floundered.

Anglicans interpreted all of this with severity. To Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London between 1897 and 1901, the Roman Church was built on an autocratic power of clergy while the English Church was founded upon learning and liberty. He wrote,

The function of the Church of England is to be the Church of free men. [...] Its enemy is the Church of Rome, but it ought not to treat its foe with fear, but with kindly regard. The Church of Rome is the Church of decadent peoples: it lives only on its past, and has no future.⁹

A kindly regard for decadence seldom serves as a very robust basis for a rapprochement.

Though the conversions from the Church of England to Rome were luminous, many who were touched by the Oxford Movement stayed within the Anglican Church. To this they brought a rich vision of the universal Church, a vivid argument of history, a lively neo-Gothic imagination, and a certain amount of local trouble. Ritualism was a problem for those who sought order in the Church of England, at least in part because its rise was a part of that flourishing of Victorian religion which simultaneously saw the emergence of a more vigorously Protestant evangelicalism. Both had their patrons, apologists, activists and campaigners, pamphlets, sermons, and hymns. There was even a broad symmetry in their patterns: the Anglo-Catholic Lord Halifax was nicely matched by the ultra-Protestant Sir William Harcourt. Naturally, neither of these movements had any love for the other. Often they were virtually at war.

A certain amount of this could be tolerated, even smiled upon, without undue fuss. Creighton himself sought to take a large view and to frame a broad policy, though he maintained a firm conviction that Protestantism offered a necessary simplicity in religion. 'The more I see the working of the Church of Rome', he remarked, 'the less I believe in its elaborate machinery. The Anglican plan of laying down a minimum, and leaving room for more as each individual thinks

⁹W.G. Fallows, *Mandell Creighton and the English Church* (Oxford, 1964), p. 45.

fit, is certainly more invigorating.¹⁰ He did not much like incense in church but he would eventually shrug it off: 'If they want to make a smell', he remarked blithely, 'let them.'¹¹ He thought an Italian could carry it off well enough, but not an authentic Englishman. However, even Creighton bristled and fumed at the increasing adoption of the word 'Mass'. He did not want altars washed, crosses adored, or the benediction of paschal candles. Congregations holding palms could properly be blessed, but not the palms themselves. Holy water was, he maintained, something the English Church knew nothing about. When some London clergy began to require personal confession from their parishioners before Communion he drew a line: this intruded on the proper realm of Christian liberty. Then there were new services – benediction, the Rosary of the Virgin, services for the dead – which revolted openly against all the principles of the Church of England. This, in short, was a matter of doctrine – and doctrine was what bishops were meant to defend, not tamely with words but with actual discipline. That Creighton never prosecuted anyone under the Clergy Discipline Measure of 1840 was hardly noticed by Ritualists but deplored by Evangelicals. Little wonder that he should come close to despair; little wonder that his friends saw his life shortened by it all.

For all its querulousness, Anglo-Catholicism created a new basis within the Church of England for Anglican–Roman understanding. Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century a new encyclical by Leo XIII, *Ad Anglos*, seemed to strike a more generous note in Rome. Should an attempt be made to cultivate this? Perhaps it was a territory best navigated not by a senior cleric under authority but a layman free to work under his own steam? Charles Wood, second Viscount Halifax, was rooted firmly in Ritualism. It was at the invitation of Edward Bouverie Pusey, one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, that he had become President of the English Church Union (the Anglo-Catholic lobby), a position which he retained for much of the rest of his life. At least a part of the significance of his new 'Italian Mission' lay in that it showed how direct communication with Rome might circumvent the English Catholics entirely and instead trace an elegant line to Rome through France, for that was where Halifax found his greatest collaborator and ally, in the Abbé Ferdinand Portal.

Halifax had his admirers but he often looked as though he was merely a quixotic enthusiast who could always be devastated by the faint praise that he was, of course, well-meaning. But the little canoe that he so often paddled alone was robust, and Halifax evidently

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

knew the value of persevering. Bishop Creighton was one of those who watched him, not unsympathetically but from a distance. ‘You may go on well enough for a distance’, he mused, ‘and then comes the blank wall of the papal monarchy.’ Anglican Orders were entirely valid. It was not because of a sixteenth-century secession but because the Roman Church had denied them that a breach between them had arisen. Creighton added to this: ‘The restoration of the unity of Christendom will be – not by affirming any one of the existing systems as universal, but by a federation.’¹²

For a time Anglo-Catholics were hopeful, but in 1896 Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) made a categorical declaration in the papal bull *Apostolicae Curae* that Anglican orders were ‘absolutely null and utterly void’.¹³ When this appeared, Creighton pressed that there must be a reply. He, with Bishops Stubbs of Oxford and Wordsworth of Salisbury, was put to work by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Edward Benson, and a predictable defence was mounted. It all came to very little. A modest number of Anglican clergymen who saw themselves as members of the worldwide Catholic communion felt that they had no choice but to resign from their livings and convert to Catholicism. Others merely took a dismal view of the whole business and continued to shelter behind the usual barricades. A leading article in *The Times* announced the publication of the Bull as follows:

The long and exhaustive study under the Pope’s direction declaring the orders conferred by the English Church absolutely invalid, will be a shock to well-meaning members of the Anglican communion and puts an end to all hope that the Pope will smooth the road for reunion of the two churches by at least recognising that the Anglican Church exists as a Church.¹⁴

Creighton had hit a nerve when he wrote of Rome as an oppression to those who cherished liberty. Under Pius X (1903–1914) the Biblical Commission sternly set its face against the discoveries of the historians and exegetes to whom Protestantism turned for new understanding and wisdom. Stray clusters of Catholic Modernists who sought to stir a new openness to critical theological thought at the onset of the twentieth century were cruelly suppressed by papal policy. The reign of Benedict XV saw something of a thaw, and it was indeed in these years that a British Legation to the Vatican was established, in 1915. But the thaw was a very slow one and many sensed no change at all.

It was increasingly the case that Anglican–Roman Catholic discussions would find a new place within the ecumenical movements

¹²Fallows, *Mandell Creighton*, p. 47.

¹³Quoted in Pawley and Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury*, p. 253.

¹⁴See Charles Linley Wood Halifax, *Leo XIII and Anglican Orders* (London, 1912), pp. 355–356.

of the twentieth century. Ecumenism was, by and large, a Protestant enthusiasm but it enjoyed a widening dispensation across all the churches, sometimes in the realms of authority but more often still in the lives of the laity. Under Randall Davidson (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1903–1928) a quiet but increasingly purposeful view of ecumenical possibilities began to emerge across the Church of England. Davidson saw no embarrassment in worshipping with Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, or Presbyterians. For him all of this lay happily under the umbrella of the natural calling of the national Church. He also became cautiously alive to the emerging importance of ecumenical endeavours internationally, while many of his bishops were soon vigorous participants in these enterprises. The most striking innovation came at the 1920 Lambeth Conference, when a bold ‘Appeal to all Christian people’ was issued. With this the Anglican Church at large nailed its colours to the mast of union, albeit according to the terms of what had become known as the Lambeth–Chicago Quadrilateral.¹⁵ Those who led the Free Churches in Britain recognized this to be a defining moment and set about their replies. An unsmiling Roman Catholic hierarchy steadfastly looked the other way.

If anything, English Roman Catholicism looked more intently towards a solid self-establishment on its own high ground than anything involving any other church. The new century had brought a new Archbishop of Westminster: in 1903 the Bishop of Southwark, Francis Bourne, succeeded Herbert Vaughan.¹⁶ Bourne had no intention of maintaining a ghetto; he was resolved to present the Catholic faith openly in public. He defied the law on Eucharistic processions by giving the benediction from the loggia of Westminster Cathedral in 1908. By 1911 he wore a cardinal’s hat. In issues of national politics Bourne was quietly accommodating. However, beyond occasional frigid civilities, in the relations of churches he was resolutely uninterested. Those who longed for some development in Anglican–Roman understanding looked long and hard, and found none.

The 1920 Lambeth Conference Appeal did provoke a gracious telegram from the Primate of Belgium, in May 1921. This was the Archbishop of Mechelen (Malines in French), Cardinal Mercier. Mercier had charm but he was no mere manager of Church affairs; possessed of a rich and generous mind, a Thomist and an intellectual, he knew too much of the world to lock himself away in an ecclesiastical

¹⁵In short, the Holy Scriptures, the Creeds, the two sacraments, and the historic episcopate.

¹⁶Fallows, *Mandell Creighton*, p. 47.

fourth dimension. He had lost much of his cathedral and thirteen priests during the German occupation in the war; after a vigorous pastoral letter in January 1915 he had been duly subjected to house arrest. Mercier was a man on the side of the angels. When the Catholic Modernist George Tyrrell was hounded by the Catholic Church in England, Mercier offered him a job in Belgium. In 1919 the archbishop had visited the United States and proven a palpable hit. To the Episcopal Church he affirmed ‘we are brethren in the Christian faith’, and was cheered to the rafters.¹⁷ On the other hand, Mercier was sufficiently connected to Rome to know how to cultivate Pope Benedict XV and he evidently enjoyed the approval of the Papal Secretary of State, Pietro Gasparri. He was, in short, someone with whom venturesome English Anglicans might hope to do business.

The old roots set down in 1896 now yielded some new fruits. The friendship of Portal and Halifax was not yet played out. Lord Halifax travelled to Malines for the first time in 1921. Mercier was ready for more of this: friends of Halifax were cordially welcome. In December of the same year, three Catholics met three Anglicans there. None of this had concerned Archbishop Davidson.¹⁸ But the glimmering of momentum in these conversations, and the hope that something of real value might be wrung out of them, began to call upon the sanction of higher authorities. With this came a growing seriousness and a deepening caution. Davidson was careful not to jump: he would acknowledge but not participate – and this, too, only if Rome did the same. On his side Mercier applied for due recognition and got what he wanted. In Westminster even Cardinal Bourne now seemed to Halifax ‘very friendly and generally sympathetic’.¹⁹

The unfolding history of the three Malines Conversations was not without mishaps and melodrama.²⁰ The conferences grew weightier in turn but, however hard they worked, they could not find a way round papal jurisdiction. Though plenty were sketched, no literary formula would do. By now the Bishop of Oxford, Charles Gore, was a part of the enterprise. In Halifax’s opinion, Gore was only a nuisance. Gore thought much the same of Halifax. Others thought that Gore, unlike Halifax, knew how to draw a firm line of principle – and when

¹⁷‘Minutes’, *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S.A.* (1919), pp. 375–378.

¹⁸For a detailed treatment see G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury* (3rd edition, Oxford, 1952), pp. 1254–1302. It is the kind of extensive, intricate treatment that no academic publisher would now allow – and yet indispensable to scholars for all these reasons.

¹⁹G.L. Prestige, *The Life of Charles Gore: a great Englishman* (London, 1935), p. 480.

²⁰See Bernard Barlow, *A brother knocking at the door: the Malines Conversations 1921–1925* (Norwich, 1996).

he did so it was in elegant French. Meanwhile, Davidson did the best he could to keep the powers of the Church of England in the picture, going off to Convocation and giving a statement, which was duly approved. But Evangelicals were clearly twitching that too much was being done, while Anglo-Catholics were beginning to fret that it was not enough, and now the English Roman Catholics were growing restive too. They did not want some gentle scheme of integration. They wanted to see wholesale absorption into the Church of Rome, starting at Westminster itself. Mercier looked over his shoulder to Rome and found Gasparri still smiling at him. A further meeting was put off until May 1925. In this time some grew more eager and others lost all confidence. The gulf between the ardent Halifax and the deflated Gore widened.

Mercier now decided to confront squarely the question of whether there could be reunion without 'absorption'? He looked to the Uniate Church for evidence that there could. Was this the answer and the way forward at last? Might there be a Canterbury patriarchate? A paper by Gore, 'Unity with diversity', now argued that, if they could but distinguish between fundamental doctrines and others, agreeing on the former and allowing difference over the latter, there might yet be the reconciling of unity with order and freedom. Moreover, it was not only a matter of categorizing doctrines. Was there a difference between substance, which did not change, and language – which did? This third meeting at Malines was a landmark. But nothing would follow. Mercier was dead by the following January and with his passing the enemies of the conversations had their chance in Rome. There was a new archbishop at Malines, but the conversations ended.

The silence that followed was a long one, but it was not permanent. All such ventures rely more heavily on the fortunes of context than their advocates often care to admit. In the later 1930s the context altered dramatically. Time, too, brought new leaders into the foreground, some of them surprising. By now the leadership of the English Roman Catholic community had rested for over thirty years in the hands of capable Cardinal Bourne. But the impression left by those decades is something dour, brittle, dry, and introverted. This was a Catholic community still not quite at home in national society, one often defined by a deeply regional character, a particular sociology (Irish, working-class, aristocratic, and rather little in between), a rather petulant striving for legitimation, and a bristling grievance that the Establishment still refused to acknowledge its existence at state occasions. Nor was it a community always at peace with itself. The English bishops were notoriously querulous – and Rome knew about it. In 1935, when Cardinal Bourne died, Pius XI dispatched

the long-term director of the Venerable English College in Rome and Apostolic Delegate in Africa, Arthur Hinsley, to replace him.

Hinsley was devoted to the papacy and this must have been at least one reason why Pius XI wanted him at Westminster. But the perspectives that he brought to his new job were generous ones. He disavowed purely clerical company and his view of the Roman Catholic Church was by conviction a laicizing one. The historian Adrian Hastings has observed, ‘No archiepiscopate was effectively less ultramontane or clericalist.’²¹ Hinsley was ardent in his support for Catholic Action. *The Tablet* had long ago been incarcerated by a defensive clerical caste; now he promptly turned it over to the laity and watched it prosper under Douglas Woodruff. He enjoyed G.K. Chesterton, looked up to Christopher Dawson and Arnold Toynbee, and fostered the work of the young Barbara Ward. A careful observer might have sensed that all of this could yield something significant. It did.

The experience of a desperate war altered almost everything. Hinsley found that he was a patriot and threw himself into the national effort with abandon. This was widely valued, not least by Churchill himself. It also reassured, because some – including the Bishop of Durham, Herbery Hinsley Henson – bristled at the neutrality of the Vatican in a war waged against palpable evil. But one of Hinsley’s greatest gifts lay in the personal rapport that he managed to achieve with the leaders of others churches. He got on well with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, with whom he met regularly to discuss the affairs of the world and the views of the churches. But he also came to admire the man who was by now the leading light of Anglican ecumenism, the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell. Bell was convinced that the churches must sink their differences over doctrines and questions of order and unite urgently against the new foe, dictatorship. Hinsley promptly agreed. For their part, Archbishops Lang and William Temple paraded their support for the Pope’s Five Peace Points in 1939 and built upon them purposefully. Perhaps something of a united Christian front against the powers of totalitarianism was an actual possibility in the world? The British government, meanwhile, was unique in keeping a diplomatic envoy, Sir D’Arcy Osborne, at the Vatican throughout the war.²² This remarkable mission was run on a shoestring from a little annexe attached to the convent of Santa Marta. Osborne found a priest who allowed him to use his bath and store his valuable possessions in his

²¹ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920–1985* (London, 1985), p. 331.

²² See Owen Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 1986).

own flat nearby. This was a hard-working member of the Secretariat of State called Giovanni Battista Montini.

In wartime Britain the definition of such hopes came with a new impulse, the Sword of the Spirit movement, and a glimmer of authentic ecumenical progress in wartime. A succession of meetings wore almost the aspect of rallies for idealists who were exhilarated by these new, bracing alliances. When, at a meeting of the movement in May 1941, Bell whispered to Hinsley that perhaps Protestants and Catholics might say the Lord's Prayer together, Hinsley was ready to lead it – a quiet revolution, no doubt, but an authentic one, even so. Hinsley's own bishops disagreed with most of this and yet they never squabbled with him. It was enough, after Hinsley died in 1943, to pretend that it had never happened. Indeed, without Hinsley the Sword of the Spirit had nowhere to go and it was soon only the pious memory of a few stranded progressives who could do nothing but return bleakly to their old bunkers and hope for the wind to change again.

Hinsley's successor was Bernard Griffin, whose qualities appeared solid, rather than inspirational. With Temple's successor at Canterbury, Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, Griffin got along well. Even so, there was more than a whiff of retreat in the early post-war years. Observers may at first have found rather little in Fisher to excite hopes of a new rapprochement with Rome: he was, if anything, a 'broad' churchman who had no instinctive sympathy for Roman Catholicism and was more than faintly suspicious of it. But there were still murmurs of activity on the Continent, in Paris and in Strasbourg in 1950. And there were still figures who were capable of quietly navigating the vast grey area which divided the two churches. One was G.L. Prestige, editor of the *Church Times* and effective general secretary of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Council on Foreign Relations. Another was the approachable Bishop David Mathew, for many years a happy anomaly in English Catholicism. A third, in Italy, was D'Arcy Osborne's old benefactor, Mgr Montini. Both Prestige and Mathew saw clearly that Montini might come to matter a great deal. They were right. In November 1954 Montini became Archbishop of Milan. In the following May he was visited by the pre-eminent Anglican ecumenist and internationalist of his generation, George Bell, who confirmed the perception that Montini was a man who might do much for the cause of church unity.²³ Only two years later Montini played host to a little colloquium of Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Italy. One of

²³See R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester* (London, 1967), pp. 336–337.

his guests was Bernard Pawley. The impression left of the gathering was a wholly happy one.²⁴

Few had foreseen the coming of Angelo Roncalli in 1958. Once he became Pope John XXIII a sense hung in the air that he was already too old to do much of note in the Church. But a declaration of intent came almost at once, with his creation of a new Secretariat for Christian Unity in 1959. Archbishop Fisher met its Secretary, the Dutch Monsignor Jan Willebrands, quietly present as an unofficial observer at a meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. This conversation produced a revelation. On 2 December 1960 the Archbishop of Canterbury went to the Vatican to see the Pope. The Pope's own advisors twitched anxiously in the background; the Catholic press hardly knew what to say. Left to their own devices, Fisher and John settled down to enjoy each other's company. They were together for just over an hour. According to Fisher, John spoke of those 'separated brethren' who might one day 'return to the Church of Rome'. Fisher challenged this: 'Your Holiness, not *return*.' John asked him to elaborate. 'None of us', added Fisher, 'can go backwards, only forwards. Our two churches are advancing on parallel courses and we may look forward to their meeting one day.' John paused, then responded: 'You are quite right.'²⁵ This exchange became famous.

Even the sympathetic Cardinal Bea, President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, was purposefully opaque about this meeting.²⁶ However, it proved sufficiently rich in symbolic power to conjure up a quite new atmosphere. It was now that Fisher took the decisive step of dispatching Bernard Pawley to Rome, to observe the coming of Pope John's great council and to provide information about the Church of England to his Secretariat for Unity.

Pawley was very much a man in Fisher's image. He was wary of the illusions on which enthusiasts thrive; he was proud of being both principled and pragmatic. He was interested in the world and its tumbling affairs. He was not put off by the reading of books, but was in no particular danger of intellectualism. He spoke Italian fluently and read Latin quite well: these may have been the decisive qualifications for the job. In churchmanship he was neither High nor Low. He was sure that the Church of England was neither Roman nor Protestant;

²⁴The gathering is fully described by Peter Hebblethwaite in *Paul VI*, pp. 267–271. Hebblethwaite notes that Montini 'was already well on the way to becoming the Anglicans' favourite archbishop. There was no competition' (p. 270).

²⁵Geoffrey Fisher, *Touching on Christian Truth: the kingdom of God, the Christian Church and the world* (London, 1971), pp. 187–188.

²⁶See Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians* (London, 1963), pp. 64–72.

he would have agreed firmly with Fisher that it was both catholic and reformed. In many ways he was very much an Anglican liberal of his time in disavowing clericalism and wanting to see more power in the hands of the laity. At the same time his outlook was Romano-centric: evidently he had little sense of what the Free Churches were about and the Lutheran World Federation might have been a distant continent to him. He viewed the World Council of Churches from a quizzical distance, anxious that it had turned ecumenical idealism into the unresponsive solidity of the ecclesiastical corporation: at times even its greatest names seemed oddly obscure to him.

Pawley was not at all at home with the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England. He did not care for Cardinal Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster from 1956 to 1963; Godfrey's secretary thought Pawley charmless.²⁷ He could be frankly suspicious of Roman propaganda, which later commentators have found embarrassing.²⁸ He resented conversions and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on mixed marriages. He bristled when it canonized its own martyrs and ignored all the others who had died for their faith, often at the hands of Romanism. He cared about religious persecution and also feared the power of the Roman Catholic Church to persecute its own. Yet, like so many of his predecessors, Pawley found that he could view Catholics abroad amiably and even come to enjoy spending time with them.

The Rome to which Pawley came on 13 April 1961 might well have alienated him at once. It did not. Indeed, something in him seemed to relax. His soul did not rebel at the baroque poetry of the Catholic Reformation. He found the people pleasant and, in particular, enjoyed the company of the men who worked at the new Secretariat for Christian Unity. He judged Vatican affairs in the round with sympathetic curiosity but a nice degree of detachment. He also enjoyed being part of something that clearly mattered. Anglicans had recourse to two bastions of their own in Rome: St Paul's Within-the-Walls (consecrated in 1876, an essentially American concern, and the recipient of many benefactions) and All Saints (consecrated in 1887, a little spire which John XXIII used to enjoy viewing through binoculars; always strapped for cash).²⁹ The Pawley family moved into a flat belonging to the first of these.

The personal qualities of the new Pope were sufficiently powerful to eclipse his often conventional ideas. At his first meeting with John XXIII, Pawley was immediately struck by the kindly, pragmatic qualities which Fisher before him had known how to value:

²⁷ See Frederick Bliss, *Anglicans in Rome* (Norwich, 2006), p. 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

²⁹ Frederick Bliss describes both elegantly: *ibid.*, pp. 20–28.

John: Are you married?

Pawley: Yes.

John: Well, that need not divide us. So was St. Peter. Parents still alive?

Pawley: Yes.

John: Are they very old?

Pawley: No, only in their seventies.

John: Are you a theologian? [. . .] Nor am I. It is theologians who have got us into the mess, and we have got to get ourselves out of it; it is practical men like you and me who will deliver us from it.³⁰

This was a bracing presence, a mind in many ways wholly conventional and yet at the same time sharply observant of life at large and open and responsive to it. Anything might come of this.

As he saw the new councils and committees setting to work around him, Pawley rejoiced in the very fact of the new Vatican Council. For him it was undoubtedly an immense contest between liberals, who sought a new generosity which could yield progress in the relations of the different traditions and which could build a new relationship with the modern world at large, and conservatives, who repudiated the cause of change and clung doggedly to what was obsolete, obscurantist, or simply inoperable. His own sympathies were firmly committed to the former. He longed to see ecumenical relationships break out of the old impossibilities: that the Church of Rome was the only universal Church of Christ; that only a return to Rome would signal the achievement of unity. Fisher's insistence in 1961 that the churches must grow out of the rhetoric of return would have been his starting point. Roman Catholics and Anglicans must find a new understanding of one another and a new relationship together. But, above all, they must be honest to each other. When John XXIII was succeeded by the Anglophile Cardinal Montini, who became Pope Paul VI on 23 June 1963, Pawley knew at once that a great moment had come: Montini's claims on Anglican affections had long been unique. But he knew well that a careful Roman progressive was still a particular sort of Catholic and not necessarily one who was more nearly an Anglican like himself. These men were still citizens of a rather different world, grappling with a particular set of issues, a particular set of powers, and a particular vocabulary. At Lambeth Palace the Archbishop's secretary for ecumenical affairs, John Satterthwaite, began to suspect Pawley of something like fraternization. Like his

³⁰Recounted in *ibid.*, p. 44.

Anglican predecessors in these things, Pawley admired and enjoyed the company of Continental Catholics, but he still viewed English ones with some suspicion. In Rome he could not quite conquer his dislike of John Heenan, the Archbishop of Westminster, and at times was almost too ready to indulge it.

Although he was breezily open about his own opinions and commitments, Pawley knew that his first obligation to his masters in London was to provide information while he cultivated connections. However makeshift, the Rome flat became an embassy of a sort. Pawley was fortunate in a supportive and creative marriage: his wife, Margaret, had worked for the Special Operations Executive in Italy during the war and in Rome she proved a superb ally. He was also able to find a highly efficient secretary in a young English woman then living in Rome: Virginia Johnstone. Pawley enjoyed a sense of public history but also relished private conversation. One of his great virtues was that he was ready to be led a good way by personal qualities rather than dogmatic postulations or party lines. In short, all kinds of curious people now turned up for all kinds of reasons in the reports, to make conversation and then disappear back into the hurly-burly of the world. Pawley thoroughly enjoyed meeting the great majority of them and wrote even more vividly of those whom he disliked. There is more than a hint of the manners and mores of the political Cold War in all of this: Anglican priests are 'turned' and converts cross to another side; there is a fear of Roman Catholic propaganda and a suspicion of Roman Catholic motives and manoeuvres.

When the little army of Observers from the various churches came to the Council, Pawley remained a representative and guest there, supporting Bishop Moorman, the American Frederick C. Grant, and the Archdeacon of Colombo, Charles Harold de Soysa. He now watched intently both the Council in its sessions and the Observers in theirs. It was Pawley who suggested that the Observers meet together weekly. He remained very much at the heart of these affairs until the end of the third session in November 1964. Perhaps it was as well. Bishop Moorman, who stayed on until the end, later remarked, 'By 1964 the fun of the Council was beginning to wear off'; it was 'the same grind all over again'.³¹ In December 1965 it finally closed with two vast masses in St Peter's. Here, certain Observers were invited to participate in the reading of the lessons. They were publicly acknowledged, and thanked, by Paul VI. 'The work for Christian

³¹ Recounted in Bliss, *Anglicans in Rome*, p. 44.

unity', he pronounced, 'is but beginning.'³² Historians and theologians will continue to tussle with the significance of the Council's many revisions and redefinitions. Few can deny the measure of redefinition which it so purposefully realized.

Bernard Pawley had served the Anglican Church well in Rome, particularly in publishing a succession of little books which brought the importance of the whole occasion home to a Western, Protestant audience.³³ There is at least a sense that Pawley himself knew the value of his work to posterity. His confidential reports to London matter to the historian for a number of reasons. They present a careful record of the actual, painstaking, and even dreary business of church reform as it went on at the Council, day by day. In general, he is a thorough recorder: the essential debates which characterized the three sessions which he attended are captured succinctly, and sometimes suffused with vivid experience. His working methods were themselves observed closely by Virginia Johnstone:

Each morning during the week Canon Pawley set off on the 64 bus to attend the general congregation. [...] He took with him a notebook and sat with other observers in seats reserved for them in the tribunal of S. Longinus that became known as the Observers' Box, writing notes on the more important speeches in English as they were delivered in Latin, a task often made more difficult by the local accent of the speaker. It was not always possible to catch the name of the bishop and so sometimes the notes were preceded by 'German after the South American' or some such description. The next day he took a second notebook while I typed the notes from the first, looking in the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, then the *Annuario Pontificio*, the Vatican Who's Who, in order to check the name and see of the bishop. During the later session [...] more accurate press reports were issued by the Vatican, but to begin with these were inadequate and often edited to suit the official curial view, so there was no short cut to making notes if the Archbishop and his Council on Foreign Relations were to be kept informed.³⁴

The extent to which Pawley invested his own views in his reports reveals not merely a personality engaging with the subject before him but a good deal about the attitudes of his own Church in general. We can understand more clearly how the enduring problems of division continued to work in the mind and see what distinct forms they

³²Quoted by Michael Manktelow, *John Moorman: Anglican, Franciscan, Independent* (Norwich, 1999), p. 107. For much more detail, see John Moorman, *Vatican Observed: an Anglican impression of Vatican II* (London, 1967).

³³Manktelow, *John Moorman*, p. 105. See also Bernard Pawley, *Looking at the Vatican Council* (London, 1962), *An Anglican View of the Vatican Council* (London, 1962), and *Anglican-Roman Relations and the Second Vatican Council* (London, 1964).

³⁴Virginia Johnstone, 'Separated brethren', article for the magazine of St Paul's, Knightsbridge, April 1982. Typescript kindly provided to the editors by Miss Johnstone.

assumed. More than this, the reports allow us to glimpse not simply the great machinery of the Vatican Council but also the eager, busy fringes of the occasion – the intricate connections of ecumenical diplomacy across many quarters of the world. This opens a window onto the world of the later twentieth century, with its political divisions, its fears of totalitarianism and nuclear warfare, the disputes of Church and state in many countries, the waning of the old Eurocentricism, and the gathering confidence of the post-colonial world.

Unlike so many earlier ventures, the Pawley mission did not prove to be an isolated moment. It inaugurated a new era in Anglican–Roman relations, one that was most visibly present in the establishment of a new Anglican Centre in Rome in 1966.³⁵ Although the precariousness of the Centre's history has echoed the fragilities of the Pawleys' own conditions during the Council, it has endured, notched up a string of directors, created a fine library, and made a visible contribution. The relations of the two churches have in the same period been defined by the meetings of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, which was first convened in 1969. Reports on authority and the Virgin Mary have become important to aficionados. Relating these ideals and enterprises to the wider currents of ecclesiastical policy has not always been straightforward. Meanwhile, the international ecumenical movement, in which so many progressive hopes were vested in the middle years of the twentieth century, had by the beginning of the twenty-first lost much of its charismatic force and dwindled. By this time the future of the Roman Catholic Church itself was a much debated theme. Some of the thorny questions unacknowledged, quietly avoided, or buried by Vatican II would come to haunt the Church. Others, new in their way, and unforeseen, would break out and defy the requirements of conventional understanding. It is not difficult to see a great deal of wriggling going on inside the paradigm which Vatican II created. But at some point the adjustment of what was the new wisdom of 1962–1965 will no longer seem to work. Ninety years divided the First Vatican Council from the Second. When will a third follow?

³⁵See Bliss, *Anglicans in Rome*, p. 89.