

CARDINAL MANNING (1808-1892)

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HE Vatican Council is in session at Rome. Venerable prelates from every corner of the world are gravely discussing the advisability of proclaiming the age-old doctrine of Papal Infallibility as a dogma of faith. Their attention is suddenly aroused by a tall ascetic-looking Englishman who has arisen and is telling the assembly that he is proud to call himself a convert to the doctrine. Papal Infallibility, he declares, was responsible for his membership in the Catholic Church. He had known from personal experience the crumbling and confused state of Protestantism. For many years he had been tossed about in the maelstrom of doubt and unbelief until the Bark of Peter led him to the light of truth. His faith and sincerity edify and inspire the audience and for two hours it listens to his defense.

The Englishman was the Archbishop of Westminster, Henry Edward Manning. Twenty years previously all England was startled by his conversion. As Archdeacon of Chichester he had been one of the foremost defendants of the Anglican position, unrivalled in his zeal, loyalty and learning. His loss was a severe blow to the High Church party.

Manning was admirably endowed with those gifts of nature and grace that made him an eminent leader. His early education and training developed in him those sterling qualities of mind and heart that made him the saintly prelate and capable executive of later years. As the descendant of an influential and wealthy family he was able to enjoy all the advantages that culture and education could afford. At an early age he was sent to Harrow where he distinguished himself as a student, as an athlete, and as a genial and witty companion. An evidence of his ability as a sportsman and as a leader is shown in his election to the captaincy of the Harrow Cricket Eleven during his last year at the school. For the average English lad Harrow was a pleasant place, and young Manning being true to type thoroughly enjoyed the years spent there.

Soon after finishing at Harrow the young student entered Oxford. He had the good fortune to be enrolled at Balliol, where the old scholarly traditions were rigidly upheld in an age when most Oxford colleges were at a mediocre level. Here he acquired an enviable

reputation as an orator. Debating was one of his greatest pleasures. Politics also claimed a large share of his interest. Everything pointed to a successful Parliamentary career when the sudden bankruptcy of his father forced him to abandon his plans and to enter the Colonial Office.

Until this time Manning had little faith. Religion and the services of the Anglican Church held no interest for him. An intimate friendship with the pious and talented author, Miss Bevan, led him to study seriously the Scriptures and religion. He was soon converted to his friend's view and became a devout Anglican.

Religion now became an absorbing interest. Manning could not be content with half measures and so it is not surprising to find him devoting his life to the ministry and taking Orders in the Church of England.

An obscure country parish, Lavington in Sussex, was the scene of his first apostolate. His life as a curate was a very happy one. A few months after going to Lavington he married the daughter of the Rector. Their brief but very happy married life lasted for three years, ending tragically in the death of Mrs. Manning. This was a severe blow to the young vicar but it served to detach him more completely from worldly pleasures. All his attention was now devoted to his flock and his church. From a neglected and irreligious village Lavington was soon transformed into a model parish, and Manning was regarded as a model pastor.

It was not long before his zeal and ability were recognized. He was promoted to the rank of Archdeacon of Chichester while still holding the rectorship of Lavington. The study of theology, Church History, and of controversial works occupied much of his leisure at this time. These studies served to clarify his beliefs and to prepare the way for his final acceptance of truth. Sermons and writings of these years show a gradual evolution from a cold Evangelicalism to the heights of Ritualism.

With his friend Gladstone he studied every possible angle of the Protestant position. He was convinced that the Church of Christ must be one, but for several years he was content to hold the "branch theory" of Christian Unity. With much care and labor he had built up an elaborate defense of this position, but the reality was in open contradiction to his theory. One by one his arguments lost all their convincing force. The climax came when Parliament upheld the heretical Gorham as Rector. Gorham denied the fundamental truths of Christianity, and still a temporal power insisted on appointing him as an official teacher of Christian truths. A body of laymen which might include Jews and Atheists was considered the ultimate author-

ity in doctrinal disputes. For Manning Rome was now the only alternative. Like so many other converts his soul was torn between the bonds of affection and the clear light of truth. Truth he would have at any cost; compromise never. It was a desperate struggle between nature and grace. Grace triumphed and God rewarded his efforts with the gift of faith and the courage to follow its inspiration.

The sorrow and anxiety caused by this separation from all he held dear were soon to give way to a deep interior peace and joy following upon his reception into the Church. In Cardinal Wiseman he found a true father and friend. The old Cardinal recognized in him a valuable apostle for the conversion of England. Ten weeks after Manning's reception the Cardinal ordained him to the Catholic priesthood. Soon afterwards Manning set out for Rome where he spent the next few years perfecting his knowledge of Catholic theology and preparing for his apostolate.

After receiving the doctorate in theology he returned to his beloved England to begin a life of intense missionary activity in bringing the light of truth to his countrymen. Converts received scant sympathy and encouragement from the old Catholics at that time. Frequently they were looked upon with suspicion and directly opposed in their undertakings. Manning experienced this opposition at its worst when he returned. The Church in England was passing through a great crisis. Three distinct and dissident groups within the Church had to be united in peace and harmony. On all sides there was petty strife. The faithful older Catholics were in opposition to the new groups of Irish emigrants and Anglican converts. Years of isolation and persecution had developed a narrowness of vision that bordered closely upon schism. Cardinal Wiseman had done much to remedy the situation but the issue was far from a settlement.

In spite of opposition Manning kept up with fervor and enthusiasm the work he had begun. Cardinal Wiseman gave him every encouragement. Together they planned the foundation of the Oblates of St. Charles to look after the poor and the various missionary activities in London. These were days of intense activity for Manning. He was instrumental in leading many converts to the Church and in strengthening the faith of others already in the Church.

His election as Provost of the Cathedral Chapter caused a storm of opposition from the old Catholic members of the Chapter. They regarded him as an ambitious schemer working for personal advancement. The strife continued and reached its climax in the famous Errington Dispute over the succession to the See of Westminster. This dispute involving Cardinal Wiseman, Archbishop Errington and

Monsignor Manning is one of the saddest in Church History. It is difficult to lay the real blame to either side; at times both were wanting in prudence and charity. Errington and Manning were totally diverse in character. Both were called upon to work in intimate association with the old Cardinal, and since each represented opposing factions, conflict was inevitable. All involved sincerely believed that they were defending the truth and protecting the best interests of the Church. The case was finally referred to the Holy See and Pius IX decided in favor of Manning. Wiseman and Manning were one in their views regarding Church policy in England. For years they worked together in perfect harmony. Viewed in the light of future events it can be seen that the choice was a happy one. It firmly united English Catholics by abolishing their insular spirit, and it promoted the great revival so well described by Newman in *The Second Spring*.

Old scores were forgotten when Manning succeeded the old Cardinal as Archbishop. He held no grievance against his opponents but by kindness and tact he brought peace to the diocese. It is as Archbishop that he shows himself a true pastor and leader of men. No interest of the people escaped his solicitude. Emigration and the great industrial advancement created new and difficult problems of diocesan administration. Catholic charity must be extended to every form of misfortune, so he was busy founding hospitals, schools and asylums. Education was one of his chief concerns and he labored earnestly to provide every Catholic child in his archdiocese with a thoroughly Catholic training. Hundreds of parochial schools were established during his episcopate. The poor found in him an ardent defender and a sympathetic friend. Catholic charity was brought to every corner of the London slums and many unfortunates were assisted in their struggle to lead a better life.

Working conditions for the large majority of industrial laborers in Nineteenth Century England were unbearable. The workers were scarcely better than the slaves of their capitalist employers. A reaction was inevitable. Strikes arose on all sides, and the sufferings of the poor were intense. To settle these disputes and to bring about an understanding between laborers and employers Manning worked untiringly, writing and lecturing in every part of England and interviewing both factions. It was his sincere conviction that trade unions were best fitted to solve the problem, as they strengthen and protect the rights of Labor and restrict the power of Capital. These efforts of the English Cardinal did much to inspire Leo XIII's Labor encyclical.

Always a devoted and sympathetic friend of the Irish Cause, he had a large share in securing emancipation for Ireland and in settling

the land question. In an age when some Englishmen were using Ireland for their own selfish ends, he championed the poor and the oppressed, and endeavored to arouse England's conscience to cease oppression.

Manning's name will go down in history for the heroic part he took in the Vatican Council. All during the conclave he was untiring in his efforts to remove the obstacles to the Dogma of Infallibility. He took a prominent part in all the sessions and served on the Commission of Faith. Without doubt he was the most ardent defender of the Dogma and his clear, cogent arguments helped to win many to his views.

In the midst of all the labor that his office of Archbishop entailed he found time to write several doctrinal and apologetic treatises. The clear and forceful style of these works had a popular appeal and they helped to increase the faith and piety of the people.

The crowning glory of Manning's apostolate came when Pius IX created him a Cardinal in recognition of his distinguished service to the Church. Since his conversion his life had been one of outward conflict. In the midst of it all he preserved a calm interior peace and used these trials as a means of spiritual progress. Now in his declining years he was glad to see peace returning. The Church had made phenomenal gains in England and Catholics were now taking an active part in the affairs of the nation. The future looked bright, and the old prelate rejoiced to see so many of his cherished ambitions realized.

His zealous labors only ceased when increasing feebleness and the infirmities of age forced him to retire and prepare for the final conflict. The touching description of the death of a fervent priest which he gives in his spiritual classic, *The Eternal Priesthood*, fittingly describes his own last hours: "He has lived by the side of his Divine Master. His whole life is a preparation for death. Such a death cannot be unprepared." Thus ended a long and useful life spent in the service of God and of his fellowmen. Throughout the nation tribute was paid to his memory by people of every rank, but especially by the poor and the laborers whom he had served so loyally. With Leo XIII they were agreed that a great light of the Church had been extinguished and a great leader had gone to his reward.

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