

BISHOP B C BUTLER OSB CENTENARY REFLECTIONS ¹

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IT IS A PRIVILEGE to be invited to give a paper at Downside to this distinguished Benedictine audience. Being of the same vintage as the late Cardinal Hume - but an engineer in industry - almost certainly gives me a different background from most people here, both in generation and in experience.

However, I will attempt to set out my perspective on some recent history - as I see it - to this group of historians. Had it not been for Hitler, I might have become a historian myself, but fell into engineering at the start of the war in 1939. I've no time for that other engineer's: "History is bunk". Rather, my sympathies on many counts are with Blessed Pope John who said simply: "History is our teacher."

The flexible title: "Reflections" given me by Fr Aidan offers almost too much freedom to choose from a mass of material, much of it unpublished. Necessarily one must range across various issues with a possible unevenness in narrative, but I hope that you will discern an overall focus on the importance of Vatican II, which, in my opinion, has been either badly neglected in essentials, or misunderstood. I also stress the unique value of Bishop Butler as a major player and the best guide in English concerning the Council's signposts to renewal. Individual renewal was always needed; Vatican II showed that renewal must also involve a new understanding of "Church".

The barest details of Bishop Butler's remarkable life are that he was born on 7 May 1902 and died on 20 September 1986. A mature convert from the Anglican tradition, he entered Downside Abbey in 1929, was headmaster from 1940 to 1946, then abbot from 1946 to 1966. Perhaps the one date on which this talk might be said to turn is 1961, when he was elected Abbot-President of the English Benedictine Congregation; it was in this capacity that he was called to Rome for The Second Vatican Council in 1962. He was both a full member and a polymath expert (*peritus*); it was a rare combination and the man met his hour.

The Downside series of lectures culminating in Butler's centenary on 7 May, are indeed welcome. My personal debt to Downside for generous help with my work is considerable. With the planned Symposium on 12 October at Heythrop College, it is hoped that the lectures here will all act as catalyst for renewal of interest in Abbot BC Butler -- that exceptional son of Downside and distinguished Father of Vatican II.

¹ The paper delivered on 4 April was accompanied by an extensive handout to which brief references were made at the relevant points in the talk. That format is inappropriate for publishing with the History Symposium proceedings, so that certain relevant aspects from the handout are transferred into the following text.

Perhaps there is some benefit today in my *not* being a historian, but rather representative, so to speak, of the man on the Clapham omnibus or, perhaps more appropriately in present company, the man in the pew at St Mary's Clapham.

The current scene considered.

These reflections are mainly mine. Some experience is borrowed; occasionally Bishop Butler is quoted. Many direct quotations by him from hitherto unpublished sources appear in the April 2002 issue of the *Downside Review* and in *The Month* of August 2000. The reader does not have the advantage of a seven page handout available at the talk; some of it concerned significant attitudes to the Council. Samples from 'progressive' Catholics accorded 100% approval to the proposition: 'The last 25 years have seen a negation, or at the very least a neglect of the renewal, or reforming mode of Vatican II'. Other opinions gathered: 'conservative'?, 'traditionalist'?, 'Anti-Vatican II'?, were more varied, but the worst - spoken in my hearing - was from a youngish priest: "Vatican II is liberal crap." Since committing my personal surveys to paper (1998/99) the polarisation within the Church seems to me to have worsened.

An obvious weakness of my 'progressive' survey was that it was an amateur straw poll, albeit from a score of serious Catholics. The rest were random, but comments were noted as nearly as possible on the spot. However, just last year an article in the Newman Journal (circa 1998) by the President of the Newman Association came my way. The 1000 word article -- given entire in the handout -- was produced at about the same time as my surveys, but completely independently. Coming to conclusions strikingly similar to mine, the article ended:

.....Responses received by the Newman to the Bishops' questionnaire in preparation for the next European Synod of Bishops (Spring 1999) revealed deep concern at polarisation and fundamentalism within the Church, at entrenched positions which would brook no dialogue. Indeed, it is the "death of dialogue" and strictures from Rome that most betray the ideals of Vatican II, bypassing the collegiality of the bishops, ignoring the co-responsibility of The People of God and damaging the credibility of the Church.[having given concrete examples of actual praxis, the president's final comments were:] We seem to be witnessing a loss of nerve when faced with change, and a fear of the modern world, a gulf [polarisation] opening amidst us. This appears a depressing vision of the Church today, but to paraphrase Chesterton, maybe it is not that the Vatican II ideal has been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried. [Judith Bennett, President]

Untried certainly, it seems that the Council is also misunderstood, or is being forgotten, except as a historical event in the past. This is not only a lay perception; one priestly view was encapsulated in the headline to the *Tablet* 'Pastor Ignotus' column in Summer 2000: "Vatican II? Remind me now....". However, historically, Councils have taken time to digest, or have re-emerged. So to contrast with the anti-Vatican II priest quoted earlier, Pope John Paul II suggested that the Church examine its conscience. He spoke of Vatican II as we enter the 21st century (N.M. I. No 57) in terms, which encourage fresh effort:

What a treasure there is dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council! ...there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.

Although for many Vatican II is gathering dust as ‘mere’ history -- even for some an event to be regretted -- to relate key aspects of that history as seen by a prime contributor and subsequent exponent is the core of these reflections. Therefore we note that early in October 1962, the then auxiliary bishop of Krakow and the Abbot of Downside set off for one of Christian history’s greatest events, in company with some 5,000 others: Council Fathers, *periti*, observers, journalists etc.- all bound for Rome.

Rome, *Sant’Anselmo*, and the *Venerabile*

Abbot Butler did not like Rome. In his “apologia” of 1972: “*A Time to Speak*”, he wrote openly:

....I did not like Rome, or enjoy my visits there. I could have echoed Ronald Knox’s explanation of his avoidance of that city: that a bad sailor keeps clear of the engine room.the Vatican bestrode the narrow world like a colossus, I could see little for us but to walk under its huge legs and hope for a not too dishonourable grave. While men like de Lubac and Congar in France & Rahner in Germany were coming under ecclesiastical censure or being reduced to silence, anyone like myself who, while not a professional theologian, had an interest in the intellectual element of religion, had strong arguments for keeping quiet. (p.141)

That Shakespearian “colossus” reference should perhaps be balanced for anyone not acquainted with Butler’s life and work by the certain assurance that his dogmatic orthodoxy was unimpeachable. He knew exactly what he was doing when he became a Catholic; albeit for him it was a painful and costly decision. This is clear from his own account in *A Time to Speak*, which elsewhere illustrates the climate in the Church that he joined in 1928. Actual experience of the times would correct any false nostalgia that some golden age for English Catholicism existed between the wars. In his book, having explained his difficulties, Butler then explains his choice of vocation:

One of the reasons why Benedictinism appealed to me was that at least within its own limits, it clung stubbornly to the principle of local autonomy; each Benedictine abbey is a whole in itself...

And of course, other powerful factors for him in favour of the monastery were the twin possibilities of prayer and scholarship. While in Rome, Butler was happily lodged at Sant’ Anselmo where he made a strong impression on the students, one of whom was Dom Daniel Rees, to whom I am indebted for the eyewitness account recorded in the Downside Review article mentioned above; Abbot Butler’s fidelity both to his Council work and to his prayer regime were admired. Prayer is a major omission from these reflection; others are more able to comment on that vital aspect of Butler’s life.

The rest of the English Vatican II contingent at the Council --housed at the *Venerabile* -- were largely of a different intellectual and scholarly pedigree from Butler. The diaries of the secretary to the English and Welsh hierarchy form the basis of Clifford Longley's: "The Worlock Archive". The book underlines the limitations of the then English Catholic shepherds who formed us limited English sheep. The lack of perception about the issues at stake in the Council -- by the diarist himself and the men he served -- is breathtaking. But everybody I've met who has read the book and who knew Archbishop Worlock - as I did - seems to have retained a regard for the man, as I did. Amusingly and memorably his diary describes the future Paul VI as "one of the leftist gentry".

It was at a meeting of the hierarchy at the *Venerabile* that Heenan who -- more alert to the needs of the times than most of the British -- proposed Butler for the Faith and Morals Commission, being "the only theologian among us". That caused a stir to put it mildly. The hierarchy meetings were not always easy for Butler, although he remains reserved about them in his own records. One evening, however, he was waiting at the street door for a taxi to take him back to Sant' Anselmo, when a young student who knew him asked: "How was the meeting with their lordships, Father Abbot?". It seems that when he was exercised, his upper lip twitched over his front teeth. After a little characteristic twitching, Father Abbot squeezed out: "I could have thrown the furniture!"

It is easy to allow scene-painting to descend into gossip, so I must move on, but first a caveat. We shall be following an exceptionally intelligent man through a complex of issues and diverse personalities. A short paper cannot explain the ups and downs, the light and shade in the four years of the Council. At the end Abbot Butler greatly valued the eventual outcome and Vatican II's blueprint for the resolution of important issues.

Abbot Butler's stature at the Council.

Before reflecting on Council issues, I would like to post up some conclusions concerning Butler - to nail my colours to the mast . But first a conclusion about the event of the Council from Abbot Butler himself. His letter to his sister Mary written from Rome just before the Council ended is a good summary both of the event, and in a way - also of Butler himself; the letter read:

The Roman Catholic people in England have, so far, only a very shadowy and imperfect idea of what it all means -- they are pre-occupied with little changes in Mass ceremonies etc. To me the Council is potentially one of the biggest things that has happened in the Church since 1054. But so many people, even if they have been members of the Council, don't seem to see it. [But]... ..one of my concerns now [is] how far the Council's work is going to be made fruitful in the post conciliar Church....

That extract summed up much about the Council, about many who attended as members, and also illustrates Butler's almost prophetic insight about prospects for actually implementing the Council. We have noted perceptions of failure on this score. As to **Butler himself**, a biography is still awaited, but I preface a personal conclusion about his stature with a comment

from the Times Literary Supplement of 1927:

Were we asked to name the Roman Catholic thinkers who have in modern times left an enduring mark on the religious mind of England, we should mention Newman and we should mention Friedrich von Huegel, but no third without doubts and reservations.

If indeed there is a successor at all, and I believe that there is -- it is Basil Christopher Butler. Butler was the only one of the three to influence a General Council of the Church in his own lifetime and the only Englishman who did so - other than Manning who, while in some ways right for his time, was ultra-ultramontane. Further, if Butler's work is studied and acted upon it could well lead to the badly needed re-think in post-Vatican II Church policy .

But was Butler's influence in the Council widely recognised? --- by whom? --- and how might it be rated?

His recognition came rapidly and in two ways. First, there is ample evidence that on Cardinal Godfrey's death, in January 1963, Butler was a likely choice for Westminster on the strength of his showing throughout the first session. Then in 1965, he was featured in a series of biographical sketches by Notre Dame Press entitled - "Men who Made the Council." Of some 2,400 Council fathers, only 24 were portrayed, which statistically puts Butler in the top 1% - the only non - bishop. Apart from one mere bishop, the other 22 were all Archbishops or Cardinals. Without doubt - Abbot Butler was *the* Anglo-phone member at Vatican II. The fact that memory of him is fading is unjust; so said the aged Augustin Cardinal Mayer OSB. (1999). But worse, neglect of the message he brought us from the Council impoverishes the whole Church. Once again, his interpretation of *aggiornamento* is the best in English, I suggest.

Other crude tools used to deliver provisional evidence of Butler's input to the Council are the indexes of the various reference books and accounts of the Council, both official and unofficial. The really big guns were Presidents or Moderators; Heads of Commissions, or Council officials; naturally *ex officio* men get a large number of index entries. But the number of Butler's entries again puts him among the top 1% or 2% of Council Fathers. Whether - in football terms - Butler was truly in the premier-ship, or right at the top of the first division is in a sense immaterial. Personally - nailing those colours again - I think the former, but we must turn to what he contributed.

Developing the Documents of Vatican II

Of the 16 documents resulting from Vatican II, there were the four, of course, whose importance was greater than any others; Abbot Butler made distinctive marks on three of the four: initially on 'Divine Revelation', on 'The Church' and later on 'The Church in the Modern World'. A book is needed to record the extent of each of Butler's contributions to *Lumen Gentium* and to *Dei Verbum* alone; and so it is a travesty to speak for only a few minutes on

his contributions both before, during and after the Council. The alternative today is to refer to already available accounts of his input. He features strongly in the “instant”, very readable accounts by Robert Kaiser and Xavier Rynne, in the later, more studied accounts from the Alberigo team based in Bologna and in the massive 45 volumes of the *Acta*. They are valuable for comparing his input with inputs from other Fathers.

Another way of reflecting on Butler’s stature is to point to work already done on Butler both at the Council and on his remarkable earlier work at Downside, before he went to Rome.

There is an excellent study of Butler’s contribution to *Dei Verbum* in the Downside Library by a *Venerabile* seminarian: Doctor, the Reverend Christopher Thomas, now a priest on the staff of Nottingham Cathedral. Thomas’s book utilises Butler’s pre-conciliar: “The Church and the Bible” (1960) and shows its remarkable similarity with the final Council document - *Dei Verbum*. Waiting to be done by somebody is a similar study on another pre-conciliar book by Butler: “The Idea of the Church.” (1962). The elements of coincidence with *Lumen Gentium* seem remarkable. The similarities between Butler’s early thinking and the end result in those two key Council documents are of the utmost importance in assessing him.

A remarkable piece of work for her doctorate was done by an American Sacred Heart nun - Sr. Anne Flood in 1981. She entitled it: “B C Butler’s Developing understanding of Church: An Intellectual Biography”

But required most of all is the full biography. If there is a biographer present - anxious to work on a prophet ahead of his time - before you stands a willing (if elderly) research assistant. But now we need to consider aspects of the actual study, implementation and reception of the Council since it closed in 1965, and about which Butler was rightly so concerned.

Reception and Implementation Issues

Bishop Lang’s talk here on 13 March in the Butler Centenary series was on : “Vatican II”. Happily for the occasion, Bishop Lang had known Bishop Butler when he was President of St Edmund’s, so that we had the benefit of first hand impressions of the elder statesman from the then young seminarian. Both the talk, and the lively question session cheered me greatly, prompting a change of approach to my reflection on: the “Reception of the Council”. This section now begins by centring round Bishop Lang’s talk and the discussion afterwards. Some emphasis was placed that evening on the lay state and its relevance in the Church; Butler wrote:

The question is not: What is a layman? but: What is a Christian? A different image of the Church results”

In Bishop Lang’s talk, and during the discussion -- while the term “The Reception Of Vatican II” was not used -- many questions were related to that issue and included:

“Communications” - Do bishops know what people need?; Do people know what is going on at the top? Why so little “consultation” or “collaborative ministry”. Was Rome

“clawing back” certain reforms? Did not some documents from Cardinal Ratzinger seriously affect ecumenical efforts? (e.g. new interpretations of the “subsistit” clause - No 8 - which, with No 16 in *Lumen Gentium*, are foundational to much ecumenism.). Was actual “resistance by priests as well as people to Vatican II”, due to lack of instruction?; (The inevitable implication is who failed?) “Were the new ecclesial movements a major expression of Vatican II?”; “Should the hierarchy *do* more about adult education?” To this last Bishop Lang warmly agreed.

Most of the answers given by the bishop were direct and helpful, but some questions inevitably had to be circumnavigated and people understand this. In all the foregoing I am relying on my notes; the recollections of others may be different. But what struck me - pleurably - was that the questions surfaced at all, because I have been concerned that many people who adhere seriously to the faith, have - to a degree - stopped questioning, because so many areas needing discussion are unhappily “capped” as it were. Additionally, the fact that questions came mainly from people of roughly my own age group has a certain significance, because those questioners - of my vintage - had been witnesses to the Council. Might contemporary witness and our memory function be a way of partaking in tradition, and help to form the process of historical development of the *sensus fidelium* in a Church historically *semper reformanda*? Tempting though it is, that subject must be set aside here.

It is conjecture, but perhaps that significantly lay audience on 13 March wanted to recall the hope generated by Pope John. They were certainly prepared to contribute, and certainly the questioning seemed concentrated on Vatican II intentions and their realisation. Bishop Lang was also questioned on *Humanae Vitae* -- which was not immediately a Council matter, although marriage was -- but he had little option but to move on and again, people understand. That encyclical must be touched on later.

The occasion of Bishop Lang’s talk leads to Bishop Butler’s often expressed concerns about reception and implementation of the Council. There is one multi-author book entitled precisely: “The Reception of Vatican II”. (Ed. Aberigo/Komonchak 1987) Its publication was delayed pending the outcome of the surprise Extraordinary Synod called in 1985. What had been completed by 1985, however, was “Vatican II - by those who were there” -edited by Dom Alberic Stacpoole OSB - an invaluable record. Sadly it lacked a full contribution from Bishop Butler, who regretted that approaching his mid 80’s he could not: “...recover the situation as you would wish it to be: Vatican II was a turning point in my life....”However, a prefatory letter from Bishop Butler was printed, concluding: “I warmly recommend this book on the Council edited by Dom Alberic Stacpoole. Let us hope that the Extraordinary Synod will confirm the Council’s *Aggiornamento*.” When he wrote that letter, dated 23 July 1985 from St Edmund’s College Ware, Butler’s final illness was beginning, and in September 1986 he died. That his hopes for the 1985 Synod were not fulfilled is an opinion commonly held. In Dom Alberic’s book, we note that Vorgrimler shares Rahner’s conviction: “... the Church must continue further along this path which the Second Vatican Council opened....” but Rahner considered that

a 'wintertime' had fallen on the Church of Rome. (p.46).

The later, Alberigo/Komonchak, book: "The Reception of Vatican II" (English 1987) was also pessimistic; it contains five parts as under and sixteen essays:

- I. The Context of Reception.
- II. Central Themes in Reception.
- III. Themes taken further in the Reception.
- IV. Themes insufficiently received.
- V. Rejections of the Council

The "Foreword" to the English version by Rev. Professor Joseph Komonchak began:

Vatican II has been described as the most important event in the history of the Roman Catholic Church since the Protestant Reformation. [Butler rated it the most important since 1054] This is a judgement shared by those enthusiastic about the Council's effects, by those with very pessimistic assessments of that impact, and by those whose evaluation falls somewhere between those two extremes. [The Introduction ended:] Because the work of the 1985 Synod is so relevant to our theme, we publish as an appendix... an analysis of the Synod by Fr Avery Dulles SJ.

The book is recommended entire, but for present purposes, the assessment of the now Cardinal Dulles is relevant. His reputation is that of a middle-ground, even of a con-servative theologian. Near the beginning of his generally sombre assessment, he writes:

First of all, one must mention the reports of the various episcopal conferences;.... These reports.... represent, on the whole, a very honest and informative self-appraisal of the state of the Catholic Church all over the world in our day. [After commenting on various lacunae and on further centralisation, Dulles concluded :] Much depends on how the Synod proposals are executed. Will there be free and open processes based on a recognition of the desirability of input from below? More specifically, will subsidiarity be utilised or excluded in the conduct of the study of subsidiarity? As this example indicates, it will be difficult to find ways of carrying out the Synod agenda that do not prejudice the solution of the very questions that are to be settled.

Dulles's last Delphic sentence is difficult of interpretation, but is symptomatic of the subsequent 20 years during which genuine implementation of the Council has been hard to discern.

Bishops across the world were given very little time to consult in order to make their submissions to Rome for the 1985 Synod. In the circumstances, our own bishops' submission was very good indeed, but I only learned later that it should not have been published! Rome enforced secrecy when the Synod on the Laity in 1987 followed the 1985 Synod. It happened that I was a volunteer with the Bishops' Conference helping administer the national consultation in 1987. In 1990, I had the opportunity to refer to that unacceptable secrecy in conversation with Cardinal Hume and it was good to know that His Eminence regretted that the bishops had complied with the instruction. He himself consistently promoted the concept of *Koinonia* as a model for the Church. Only a simplistic view - not uncommon, however - will

see *koinonia* as diminishing authority.

Authority and Freedom

Significant progress had been achieved at Vatican II on this core issue of authority: individually through fresh emphasis on conscience; structurally by the “rediscovery” of collegiality, by which many Christians set great store. The need for authority was a major reason for Butler’s own conversion, because he recognised early the pitfalls of unfettered freedom. But how - and by whom - authority should be exercised (see also Pope John Paul’s *Ut Unum Sint*) was a regular preoccupation of the mature bishop.

Vatican II grafted collegial thinking about the governance of the Church onto the monarchical Vatican I. The pope is within the Church and not outside it, nor above it. In that ecclesiology Butler is at one with von Balthasar, who is said to be a favourite theologian of the present pontiff. Butler was concerned about practicalities regarding the Office of Peter and its exercise, but does not seem to have attempted an overall plan. However, he recognised what the Church is liable to face in any era: if the Roman See is vacant, or occupied by a pope who is very sick, incapacitated or - in the extreme case - *mad* - ***then who governs the Church?*** In each diocese, it is the bishop, but in the universal Church it remains unclear. If the Dean of the Sacred College of Cardinals oversees the election of a new Bishop of Rome, that is a different function from governing the Church. Following Vatican II’s recovery of the ancient principle of collegiality, Butler held that an open, collegial re-think on governance was essential. But, come the end of the Council he considered that adequate decisions had been taken and it would fall to the Church as whole to work out methods of implementing the principles established. Late December 1965 found him writing to his brother:

The last session of the Council had its measure of excitements, but the overall result is very good indeed. The Holy Ghost has certainly spoken to us through the Council; I do hope we shall respond as fully as we ought -- though doubtless we shan’t

That final clause is typical of his ongoing worries about implementation.

However, on the 21 December 1966, two notable Catholic things happened in England: Abbot Butler was ordained bishop and the news broke that Fr Charles Davis had left the Church. The new Bishop Butler was immediately drafted to fill his prescribed role as the theological heavyweight in the Hierarchy. He dealt brilliantly with the Davis fall-out, winning high praise from the secular press. He also won gratitude from many Catholic priests and people over his sensitive handling of the *Humanae Vitae* crisis in 1968 on behalf of the bishops. Widely reported, he promoted an understanding of the role of conscience, and avoided commenting on the teaching itself. I know directly from one senior priest in the West Midlands - the late Mgr J D Crichton, that a letter from Butler to him in 1968 - at Crichton’s request - steadied many unhappy priests then under Crichton’s guidance and at first hand I knew of Derek Worlock’s gentle touch as Bishop of Portsmouth.

There had been two potentially explosive issues withdrawn from discussion by the Council: birth control and the celibacy of the priesthood. Both continue to erupt and both were intriguingly linked in 1965 by the *Irish Independent*. Commending: “The experience of marriage” (ed. M. Novak. 1965) a reviewer wrote: “An essential for the celibate cleric who may learn here how married people think and talk, and often suffer.” Similar sentiments were expressed by Rosemary Haughton with her experience as the mother of ten. (The Tablet 6 Mar 1965 pp 382-383).

Then *Humanae Vitae* appeared. With seven offspring - the youngest born in 1961 - perhaps I may be permitted a view on the encyclical. Once convinced by and obedient to the previous teaching for almost three decades, mainly because of its source, now under the burden of experience I believe it to be mistaken (considered here only within the context of honourable marriage; aside also from wider social, population and ecological issues). My reasons are easy to explain in terms of the wholeness of the human individual, body, mind and soul. A further shock was the encyclical’s mode of promulgation, the rejection of clear advice for change by the Pope’s own commission. It was a negation of collegiality, the ink hardly dry on the relevant Council documents.

Only shortly afterwards, Bishop Butler - then at the height of his considerable prestige - gave a talk in 1970 in the Sacred Heart parish hall, Wimbledon, to a packed audience. The title of the lecture was: ‘Authority in the Church Today’ and my complete report was included in the handout; it notes that everybody at the meeting saw the need for the Pope as a centre of unity. Included too was Bishop Butler’s letter to me of 5 March 1970, which is of considerable interest. His central theme was the relationship between Authority and Freedom, and aspects of his talk stuck in my mind:

He could not accept that freedom and authority were in opposition, for authority is not the same as power. Calvary was a supreme moment of authority, but our Lord had no evident power. [and] The ultimate authority is Truth.

Butler saw *Humanae Vitae* as lacking the marks of infallibility and this is hardly surprising; on behalf of Pope Paul, Mgr Lambruschini at a press conference had said the teaching was not infallible. However, Pope Paul was influenced by a small group of Roman curial conservatives to maintain continuity with *Casti Connubii* (1930). With hindsight and knowledge, it is difficult to credit that the inadequate scriptural basis for Pius XI was “Increase and Multiply” and the equivocal “Onan” from Genesis. Following that thread, Paul VI’s encyclical unhappily remains the official norm, albeit widely ignored and the disquiet surfaces regularly as at Bishop Lang’s talk.

The juridical *Casti Connubii* era was grimly harsh. A significant factor was the relative lack of education among a faithful untutored to distinguish discipline from dogma, or more generally, essentials from superficial customs. Strictures on mixed marriages and on birth control were extreme with clergy pro-active on both. The point is underlined by some official advice for clergy from the then moral theologian to the English bishops. One extract from *Cooperatio in Copula Condomistica*, gives the flavour; noting also that moral responsibility seems to be placed squarely on the wife:

If the husband uses a condom..... it is ordinarily the duty of a wife to refuse the petition of the husband, even to the extent of using physical resistance. Only when it is truly probable that some grave injury will be inflicted on her by her husband if she resists (such as a severe beating) may the wife in such a case passively allow him to perform the act...(Clergy Review Feb '63 pp.114-120)

The concept of marriage evident there is lamentable, *Humanae Vitae* is heir to it; both are some distance removed from the fully human ideal proposed for spouses by *Gaudium et Spes*. That Pastoral Constitution was unavoidably ambiguous in places, but who can quarrel with its description of the family as a: “community of love“? Today, the unhappy questions are: has Rome’s narrow view of responsible parenthood become a touchstone in the Church by which ones Catholicity is judged? Was it an apocryphal Irish bishop who quipped: “To be considered for a bishopric, you have to test H V positive!” A teaching widely ignored results in a climate of dishonesty and a weakening of the Church’s moral witness just at a time when that witness is badly needed. It is a reflection raised necessarily, because of its wide ramifications, but is referred to with some irritation. It is best left in favour of working to re-invoke the positive thought, openness and hope of the Council. We may take heart from Pope John Paul’s recommendation that Vatican II is: “A sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”

Conclusions

Clearly, many of my “Reflections” are not reassuring to me, but there are critical exceptions, which outweigh the rest: Bishop Butler is a good man to hang on to: forward-looking, but solidly orthodox.. To quote Dom Daniel Rees: “[He] was very hopeful about the Church’s future, heart and soul in proclaiming the teaching of the Council.....” And Vatican II - the latest teaching of the universal Church - is on-the-statute-books and Butler is a good guide to those statutes. Both man and Council lead directly to the Gospel and Butler felt that one of the great achievements of Vatican II was the reinstatement of Scripture more firmly into the wider life of the Church.

Finally, as to the Council overall, and at the risk of repetition, it will not be a good compass, unless it is studied dispassionately as to both spirit and letter - neither one without the other. As to the letter, there are two streams, as it were, the ‘papal’ and the ‘collegial’. Neither must be quoted selectively, but in balance. Yet again, there are themes which interlink between documents, so that one document may need another for completeness. As to the spirit of the Council, that too requires study, but it must be obvious that my personal conviction is that the

spirit of the Council is conveyed in the life and writings of Bishop Butler, so that Vatican II is balanced when seen (of course not exclusively) through his eyes.

My final reflection is on the benefit to me of this privileged insight into the life of so great a man as Bishop Butler - a second Newman, I believe. That is my conclusion about the man. My conclusion about the Council is that many of our present troubles arise not from too much Vatican II as some allege, but too little.