

*Newman 101* selects key themes from the writings of this important spiritual, philosophical, and ecclesiastical thinker and presents them with clarity. It offers a fine overview for those wishing to have a familiarity with Newman in an easily digestible format.

**Catherine Ryan**  
Assistant Director, The National Institute for Newman Studies

Roderick Strange's *Newman 101* offers an enjoyable and informative intellectual biography of John Henry Newman for readers who would like an accessible overview of the great cardinal's life and thought, particularly his weaving of theology and spirituality with pastoral ministry. Strange deftly highlights the relevance of Newman's historical context for understanding his writings, and, equally important, the relevance of his writings for understanding our own historical context.

**Kevin Mongrain, PhD**  
University of Notre Dame

# NEWMAN 101

An Introduction to  
the Life and Philosophy  
of John Cardinal Newman

**Roderick Strange**

*Christian Classics*



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only our Mother by divine appointment, given us from the Cross; her presence is above, not on earth; her office is external, not within us . . . her power is indirect. It is her prayers that avail, and her prayers are effectual by the *fiat* of Him who is our all in all. (*Diff.* ii, 83–84)

If those words seem restrained, they should not be mistaken for a lack of true devotion.<sup>11</sup> True devotion is warm, generous, and free; it defies criticism (*Diff.* ii, 80). However, it must never become a slave of extravagance. For Newman it never did.

It seems to me that Newman's appeal to the Church fathers, his awareness of the distinction between doctrine and devotion, while recognizing their relationship, his attention to Mary's holiness and dignity, and his hostility to excess are all points of ecumenical significance. Let me return to Archbishop Ramsey.

(vii)

A week after his meeting with Pope Paul VI in 1966, Dr. Ramsey visited Newman's Oxford college, Oriel, to open a symposium in Newman's honor. He suggested that renewal for both Anglicans and Catholics would come from recapturing something of Newman's spirit, which he characterized as the spirit of scriptural holiness. That holiness is the basis of Christian unity.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, its outstanding model, we may add, is the mother of Jesus.

In an early Catholic letter, Newman acknowledged his debt to Mary: "I have ever been under her shadow, if I may say it. My College was St. Mary's, and my Church; and when I went to Littlemore, there, by my previous disposition, our Blessed Lady was waiting for me" (*L.D.* xii, 153–154). And so it was. Oriel is formally St. Mary's College; the University Church where Newman was vicar is the church of St. Mary the Virgin; and his church at Littlemore is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin and St. Nicholas. Shortly after writing this letter, he named his oratory church in Birmingham after her Immaculate Conception. He remained under her shadow to the end.

## 6

### Serving the Laity

(i)

When the Second Vatican Council began on October 11, 1962, there were those who did not expect it to last very long, perhaps no more than a single session. They realized that the documents that had been prepared for the assembled bishops would no doubt be amended, but they were quite confident that they would also be approved. The Council would be over very soon. That expectation, however, was not fulfilled. Many bishops were critical of the documents, their content and their character. And beyond that there was something else. It took almost the full eight weeks of that first session to articulate it: what had been prepared was too diffuse. It needed focus. On December 2, 1962, the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who barely six months later would become Pope Paul VI, wrote to his diocesan newspaper, *L'Italia*, and described this session as a running-in period. Nevertheless, it had served its purpose. These weeks, he concluded,

had helped the Council identify its central theme: "the Church."<sup>1</sup> Three days later he made the same point in the Council chamber.

As the council fathers explored that theme more closely, they came to concentrate less on an approach that understood the Church principally in terms of what distinguished its members from each other—in other words, its hierarchical structure—and gave priority instead to what united them, their common baptism. This was the source from which the revival of the understanding of the Church as *koinonia* (*koinonia* or communion) sprang. Emphasis was placed on the unity of all the faithful, and it meant, therefore, that the lay faithful came into their own. There is a rather clumsy sentence in the eventual Decree on the Lay Apostolate: "Within christian communities [the laity's] activity is so necessary that without it the pastors' apostolate cannot generally (*plernunq̄ue*) attain its full effect" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 10). It may be read in a highly clerical way, as though the poor laity are simply topping up what the clergy have not managed to achieve on their own; in fact, however, it is pointing to the essential need for activity in the Church to be properly integrated.

As this awareness of the lay apostolate emerged, there were those who saw Newman as one of its pioneers. They pointed in particular to an article he had written for the *Rambler* in 1859, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine." It had caused him trouble then; now it was being recognized as prophetic.<sup>2</sup> We must consider it. But it would be a mistake to see that one article as somehow an isolated instance in Newman's life and work. His commitment to the laity and the service he gave them were profound and lifelong.

(ii)

Newman's Oxford, of course, was predominantly clerical. The university he knew both as an undergraduate and as a don was largely in the charge of unmarried clergymen. Only the heads of the colleges could be married. When a young don, who would usually have been ordained, decided to marry, he had to resign

his fellowship and seek a parish living. There were many in the gift of the colleges.

As we have noticed already, however, even at an early age, Newman's pastoral instinct made him sensitive to the influence of those among whom he found himself.<sup>3</sup> He went to his first curacy at St. Clement's as an earnest evangelical Anglican, but his stern viewpoint was softened by the sheer goodness of the people he met there. It was not possible for him to believe that most of them would be damned. He was attentive to his parishioners as they really were. Then, as a tutor at Oriel, he saw his duty as extending beyond intellectual instruction; there was a moral dimension as well. Those who were hostile viewed this approach as theological indoctrination, but others compared it to the attention given to pupils by only the very best private tutors.<sup>4</sup> Afterward, when the Oxford Movement was at its height while he was vicar of St. Mary the Virgin, the University Church, he delivered his *Lectures on the Prophetic Office* and afterward his *Lectures on Justification*. These were not formal university lectures but were given in the Adam de Brome Chapel in St. Mary's to deepen the understanding of those who attended them. And then again the scope and style of his *Parochial Sermons* should not be forgotten. Moreover, while vicar of St. Mary's, he had the parish church built at Littlemore, the place that was to become so important to him, as he struggled to determine his future between Canterbury and Rome and where he wrote his *Essay on Development*. On my first visit there in 1966, I was shown around by a woman whose grandfather as a young boy had heard Newman preach his last Anglican sermon there in 1843. He had moved those who heard him by speaking about "The Parting of Friends" (*S.D.*, 395–409). All these activities, integral to his Anglican life, point to his commitment to serving lay people. They also bear witness to his later assertion—one of those recurring themes or preoccupations that shaped his life—that education had always been his line (*A.W.*, 259).

Then, besides these features of his Anglican life, the vocation he chose as a Catholic priest also had a bearing on his approach to the laity. When he was sent to Rome to prepare for ordination, he

was unsure what kind of priest he should be. He wondered about becoming a Jesuit or a Dominican, a Vincentian or a Redemptorist, but he found himself drawn in fact by the person of St. Philip Neri.

Philip was born in Florence in 1515, but he came to Rome as a young man. He lived simply and helped people generously. They were attracted by the warmth and gentleness of his personality. His ministry became so effective that he was recognized as the apostle of Rome for his own time. Some of those who were influenced by him gathered to join him in prayer in the small oratory in the Church of San Girolamo della Carità. These, of course, were largely lay people. When these meetings began, Philip was still a layman himself. When he was ordained eventually in 1551, he and those who had gathered with him who were also priests became known as Oratorians. Although they lived in community, they were secular priests. They took no vows and were able to keep their own possessions. Philip was not interested in eye-catching display. His ideal was "to love to be unknown" (O.S., 241). This was the model of priestly life and ministry that caught Newman's heart and imagination. In many ways it reflected and re-created for him as a Catholic priest the life in community with unmarried clergymen that he had cherished as a fellow of Oriel. And the Oratorian parish in Birmingham also meant that he continued the ministry he had exercised in Oxford and at Littlemore.

The bond that bound Oratorians together was one of love and a sense of family, rather than the rule of authority and obedience. That aspect also was in tune with Newman's capacity for friendship.

There is a kind of paradox here. Newman was sometimes described as a man who was never less alone than when alone; there was something reserved and solitary about him. All the same, he had an extraordinary gift for friendship. His many letters bear witness to that, and those, for example, to the women who were his friends illustrate the fact beyond dispute.<sup>5</sup> Then in his poem "A Thanksgiving," written in October 1829, he spoke of "Blessings of friends, which to my door/ Unask'd, unhoped, have come"

(V.V., 46). Newman saw in friendship love made real. He was not persuaded that it is better to love everyone in general. When he preached about the beloved disciple two years later, he saw in the friendship between Jesus and John an example to follow. He stated his conviction that "the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us" (P.S., ii, 52-53).

Here, too, I gladly and gratefully acknowledge Newman's influence on me. These words struck a chord when I first read them many years ago. And now, looking back, I wonder how I could have survived my long years of celibate priesthood without my friends. There are, of course, those nowadays who can make no sense of such relationships, unduttered by physical sexual activity. They doubt whether they actually exist. But they do. Just as the best marriages are often built as much on friendship as on passion, so many of us who are single, whether by choice or chance or commitment to celibacy, know what it means to delight in our friends. I have paid tribute to mine elsewhere and am happy to do so again. They offer me "a promise of merriment, good talk, wise advice, and generous hospitality. . . . I hold them in love and believe I am loved by them. They do not diminish the ministry I offer. They are pure gift for which I give constant thanks."<sup>6</sup> As well as my own experience, Newman's conviction also underlies these words. We cannot love in general unless we love in particular.

And while he loved his friends, he valued marriage too. On January 12, 1854, preaching at the religious profession as a Visitation nun of Mary Anne Bowden, the daughter of John Bowden, who had died in 1844 but who had been his friend since they were undergraduates together at Trinity College, Oxford, he spoke powerfully of her religious calling, but not before he had spoken also of marriage as the "one central and supreme attachment to which none other can be compared." These words are full of power. Children leave parents, he went on, as Jesus left Mary, but marriage is indestructible and recalls "the everlasting ineffable love with which the Father loves the Son who is in His bosom and the

Son the Father who has from all eternity begotten Him."<sup>7</sup> If these words seem fanciful and unrealistic in a society scarred by marital breakdown, we ought still to be able to recognize the ideal.

His pastoral ministry as an Anglican, his Oratorian vocation, and his valuing of friendship and marriage as paths to fulfilling the great commandment of love all point to the context within which his service of lay people was realized. That service was plain in his Catholic years, in particular during his time as rector of the university he established in Dublin and then afterward during the brief but turbulent period when he was editor of the *Rambler*. In themselves these two episodes are distinct, but they can also be connected.

(iii)

On January 21, 1863, there is an entry in Newman's journal that still makes for somber reading. He was chronicling his life since he had become a Catholic in 1845, and he was perhaps at his lowest point. The mood was dark, even depressive. He acknowledged how little he personally seemed to have done as a Catholic. It was said, for example, that Manning and Faber made converts, but he did not. However, he was reluctant, as he put it, "to make hasty converts of educated men, lest they should not have counted the cost, and should have difficulties after they have entered the Church" (A. W., 257-258). And he went on to lament the condition of Catholics in England, who "from their very blindness, cannot see that they are blind." Newman's wish was to help them assess the arguments they took for granted and examine their position with regard to the culture of the day; then, as their views developed, they would intellectually become more mature. In other words, he wanted to educate them. This was the particular place where he declared that education, that fourth major preoccupation or theme, was his "line": "Now from first to last, education, in this large sense of the word, has been my line" (A. W., 259).

This concern for education was evident most dramatically in his work to found the Catholic University in Dublin. He had been

invited to go there in 1851. Earlier that very year, quite independently, he had articulated his ideal:

I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it.

These words resonate deeply with me. I forced myself to write the text of my book *The Catholic Faith*, which was published in 1986 while I was a chaplain at Oxford, by preparing the chapters first as lectures. The lecture series was called "An Account of Catholicism." And I spoke and wrote for the same purpose as Newman. I can make his words my own: "I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity" (*Prepos*, 390). I was aware of questions raised by students, whether Catholic or not, by an older generation, curious about or bewildered by the Second Vatican Council, and a still older generation who had never been prepared for change at all. Each in their different ways had urgent needs. It was Newman's preoccupation, but in my own setting.

The invitation to go to Dublin had come to Newman from Archbishop Paul Cullen of Armagh, who soon afterward was transferred to Dublin and later made a cardinal. Newman gave himself to the project with great generosity for seven years.

The plan itself had been proposed by the Irish bishops as an alternative to the Queen's Colleges, which Robert Peel had established in Ireland. These colleges were unacceptable to the bishops because they excluded all religious teaching and they were open to the members of any church and to nonbelievers alike. Oxford and Cambridge, on the other hand, still imposed religious tests at that time, which made them at least in principle unavailable to Catholics. Here, then, was an opportunity to create a Catholic university for Catholics from the entire English-speaking world. Newman hoped students would come from America as well as England. He

had in mind a kind of Oxford ideal transposed to the banks of the Liffey. "Curious it will be," as he observed to his friend Catherine Froude, "if Oxford is imported into Ireland" (*L.D.* xiv, 389). He was also keen on having lay professors, and in the event twenty-seven of the thirty-two he appointed were laymen.

However, it proved to be a heartbreaking exercise. The Irish bishops had something much less ambitious in view, more of a Catholic training college than a university. And they disagreed among themselves. At the same time, Newman found Cullen more and more difficult to work with. As demands were also increasing in Birmingham, he resigned finally in 1858 and returned to his oratory.

A considerable literature has grown up around this initiative. At the heart of it is what many people have regarded as a masterpiece, Newman's discourses on university education, which he published as *The Idea of a University*. His biographies examine it; there have been specialist studies, discussions, and controversies about it; and in 1976 Ian Ker produced his masterly critical edition. It is not necessary or practicable to examine those matters again here. But there are some points worth considering that have a more immediate bearing on Newman's service of the laity.

It is natural to ask, for example, whether his *Idea of a University* still has something to offer us today. It was the question examined by John Roberts in 1990, the centenary of Newman's death. He revisited Newman's discourses and was ideally equipped to do so.<sup>8</sup> A leading British historian, Roberts, who died in 2003, had also been vice chancellor of Southampton University and then, from 1984 to 1994, he was warden of Merton College, Oxford. He was in the thick of the educational debate in recent times.

So does Newman's *Idea* still have something to offer the modern world? Roberts was not easily persuaded. While he acknowledged the subtlety of Newman's style and carefully qualified arguments, which are often more nuanced than they may seem at first, he felt that our circumstances today are too different, "utterly remote from the academic world taken for granted by Newman" (*Newman After a Hundred Years*, 198). Who could disagree? We

may, for instance, still like to see knowledge as an end in itself, but so much of what goes on in universities now "is consciously a means to useful ends," training for a career (*Newman After a Hundred Years*, 201). Newman was far removed from that attitude and from "the realities of modern universities urged by society to give greater attention to the social utility of their 'outputs'" (*Newman After a Hundred Years*, 202–203). Then again, Newman held that universities should in principle teach all branches of knowledge (*Idea*, 440), yet what he was wanting, Roberts observed, is in practice "impossible" (*Newman After a Hundred Years*, 204–205). And in any case, our fragmented, postmodern society is very different from the integrated vision of society with its unchanging values in which Newman believed. And there is more. We don't need to review it all here. In brief, Roberts was saying, universities nowadays have developed in ways very different from the one Newman envisaged.

So has Newman, therefore, nothing to offer us? But that would not be true either. There is something. Roberts described it as "a vision with which those of us who are concerned with education should from time to time try to refresh ourselves." He noted that, while we should not strive to force Newman's *Idea* to fit our needs, we could still be inspired and stimulated by it. His vision can encourage us "to defend values now under threat." And Roberts went on:

It is helpful to recall that an educated man is not a man who knows certain things, but a man whose mind has been formed in a certain way and who can take up a certain stance when confronted with a new experience. (*Newman After a Hundred Years*, 221–222)

Newman and his contemporaries were often formidably learned; they knew a very great deal. In today's terms, they were strong on content; but beyond content, they excelled at competence.

So if Newman's vision is to be respected, it is also important to recognize it for what it is, to be aware of its limitations, as he was.



Liberal education produces the gentleman. In the *Idea*, Newman offered a description of such a person, a description that has become well-known. There is much to be admired: "a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life." These qualities were the fruit of the liberal education Newman was championing. All the same, he declared, "they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness" (*Idea*, 120–121 [110]). That was his concern. Greater knowledge, deeper learning, admirable in themselves, cannot ensure moral improvement. And he reinforced his point with an unforgettable image: "Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man" (*Idea*, 121 [111]). Newman needed something more for his Catholic university.

What he wanted, in his desire for an education that would be at the service of the laity, was a relationship between intellectual excellence and religious commitment for which they were both truly as one, united, while they still maintained their distinct integrities. He set out this viewpoint in the first of a series of sermons he preached in Dublin in 1856 and 1857.

He dismissed out of hand the charge that by advocating this union between intellect and religion he was countenancing censorship, "ecclesiastical supervision" of intellectual matters. Nor was he interested in compromise, as though each partner had to yield something. "I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, and religion to enjoy an equal freedom," he declared. His driving concern was personal. He wanted what was intellectual and what was religious to be properly integrated within the same individual. "It will not satisfy me, what satisfies so many," he explained, "to have two independent systems, intellectual and religious, going at once side by side, by a sort of division of labor, and only accidentally brought together." He was utterly opposed to any such division. And he summed up his ideal: "I want the

intellectual layman to be religious, and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual" (O.S., 13).

In a later sermon in the same series, Newman took up this theme again. He did so by dividing saints into two categories. There are those, he said, who are "so absorbed in the divine life" that they seem altogether disconnected from human life and its affairs, and then there are others "in whom the supernatural combines with nature, instead of superseding it." In them, grace invigorates, elevates, and ennobles nature. They are "not the less men, because they are saints." And he continued:

The world is to them a book, to which they are drawn for its own sake, which they read fluently, which interests them naturally,—though, by the reason of the grace which dwells within them, they study it and hold converse with it for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. (O.S., 91–93)

Newman certainly admired the first group, but he was inspired by the second.

This is the vision that has also inspired me. It looks to Jesus of Nazareth as the one who was as truly divine as he was truly human, as truly human as he was truly divine. And so, as a university chaplain, I urge members of the university that our share in Christ's life must not be at the expense of our humanity:

Our spirituality and our living witness must engage with our world, our surroundings, our conditions. In that sense, it is not enough to be in the world, but not of it; we have to be both in the world *and* of the world. As aliens, we can never reclaim it. We have to be at home here if we are to bear witness effectively.<sup>9</sup>

And as a seminary rector, I have insisted on the need to discover the identity of those who are ordained through recognizing their place within the community, not by simply setting them apart.<sup>10</sup> I again acknowledge Newman's influence.

In Dublin, therefore, although he spoke of "the idea" of a university, Newman was not simply laying out a master plan, a Platonic ideal of university education at large, but more particularly he was responding to the demands of his own circumstances there and encouraging a vision in which intellectual training, moral discipline, and religious commitment were combined. It was not a vision he found easy to make real. He was constantly frustrated, and eventually he resigned as rector on November 12, 1858.

(iv)

Once he was settled back in Birmingham, however, he was soon disturbed again. He was drawn into the crisis surrounding the *Rambler*, which many people regarded as the finest Catholic periodical of its kind in the English-speaking world. But the bishops were becoming increasingly impatient with its more liberal tone. They were especially irritated by its editor, Richard Simpson, who was a good man and a devoted Catholic, but someone also unafraid of criticizing them. The bishops were not amused. Some of them wanted to censure the paper in their pastoral letters. To avoid that and the scandal it might cause, Newman's bishop, Ullathorne, asked Newman, first of all, to persuade Simpson to resign. And Newman, who was friendly with Simpson, was able to do so. But then the question arose about a successor. Who was to be editor in Simpson's place? It had to be someone acceptable both to the *Rambler's* proprietors and to the bishops. It quickly became clear that Newman was the obvious choice. And his very commitment to serving the laity, to their education in the broad and deep sense, which had also guided his work in Dublin, led him to accept.

Newman too, like Ullathorne, had been critical at times of Simpson's tone. Nevertheless, he liked him and shared his principles. In the first issue for which he was responsible, therefore, in May 1859, Newman wrote positively about the importance of consulting the laity in something that concerned them closely. The issue was the controversy at that time about the lack of Catholic representation on the Royal Commission on Elementary

Education. The Catholic Poor Schools Committee had probably been at fault, but Simpson had seemed critical of the way the bishops had handled the matter. That was a significant feature of the crisis that had prompted his removal. Newman in his first issue dealt with the bishops generously; he made it plain that no disrespect toward them had been intended. But he was not prepared to let the matter pass without comment. He observed: "If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception [in 1854], it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical questions," such as education (*L.D.*, xix, 129, n.3). He apologized if the words used before or their tone seemed disrespectful, but went on to argue that there was no disrespect in assuming that the bishops would want to know the views of the laity on so great a question.

He was wrong. And his carefully chosen words provoked Dr. John Gillow, a priest on the staff of the seminary at Ushaw College, near Durham, to protest. Gillow regarded the notion that the laity might be consulted in matters of doctrine as virtually heresy. He and Newman exchanged courteous letters, and the point at issue between them was settled, although it flared again later. But opposition to the *Rambler* in certain quarters was relentless.

Ullathorne himself had become uncomfortable with the direction affairs were taking and called on Newman at the oratory to discuss the situation. This was the well-known occasion when, according to Newman's memorandum of their meeting, Ullathorne at one point asked him, "Who are the laity?" And Newman answered "that the Church would look foolish without them—not those words" (*L.D.*, xix, 141). During the conversation, he also remarked to Ullathorne that it would in fact be a relief to give up the *Rambler*, and to his surprise, Ullathorne encouraged him to do so. It was not a command, more a suggestion, but one that Ullathorne made eagerly. And so Newman decided he would resign. He could not do so immediately, of course. He had to take responsibility for one more issue, due for July, and he decided to use the opportunity to explore further the issue Gillow had challenged. That was his



reason for writing his article "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine." It is packed with examples about the bishops in the fourth century who had largely caved in to the heresy known as Arianism, while the lay faithful resisted it. In this outstanding instance, their fidelity had safeguarded the faith of the Church.

The immediate consequences for Newman personally were painful. Those who opposed him complained to Rome. He was accused of undermining the teaching authority of the bishops. Rome asked for an explanation, and he offered one, but his offer was not passed on. Silence, therefore, ensued. While he thought all was well, Rome thought he had refused its request. Little by little, Newman became aware that something was amiss. In the midst of the gloom, during that dark period in his life, he composed a memorandum about the *Rambler* affair on November 28, 1862. One sentence reads: "All would have been well, but for the unlucky paragraph in my July Number on the Arianizing Hierarchy" (*L.D.* xix, 151). The matter was not resolved until 1867, when his friend and fellow Oratorian Ambrose St. John visited Rome. The incident was typical of Newman's fortunes at that time. We do not need to discuss it further. It has been examined thoroughly elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> All the same, we should notice the core of Newman's position, what he understood consulting the laity to mean. It may guide us still. He identified five points in particular:<sup>12</sup>

What roused Gillow was Newman's specific reference to consulting the laity in preparing a dogmatic definition. In the panegyric at his funeral, Gillow's lectures and replies to questions were described as having "all the precision and cogency of a mathematical problem."<sup>13</sup> To someone with such a way of thinking, Newman's words, as he told him in a letter, implied that "the infallible portion [of the Church] would consult the fallible with a view to guiding itself to an infallible decision" (*L.D.* xix, 134, n. 3). But Newman in his answer insisted that this view misread his meaning. He was speaking of consulting as it is used in English every day, not principally as asking an opinion but rather to discover a fact. That was the first point he identified. He offered the example of "consulting a barometer about the weather. The barometer

does not give us its opinion, but ascertains for us a fact." And he held his ground, refusing to concede to Gillow that infallibility lies exclusively in the teaching Church. He drew on the authority of the Jesuit theologian Giovanni Perrone, whom he had known in Rome in 1847, to argue that infallibility resides in both those who teach and those who are taught; they are as one, "as a figure is contained both on the seal and on the wax" (*L.D.* xix, 135–136). The laity, according to Newman, ought to be consulted as witnesses so that their mind may be known. He made the same point again years later during the First Vatican Council (*L.D.* xxv, 172).

The second point Newman identified was what he called "a sort of instinct, or *φρονιμα*, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ." This instinct may be hard to define but is not so difficult to recognize. It corresponds with what he referred to as the illative sense in his *Grammar of Assent*.<sup>14</sup> Years earlier, in one of his university sermons, he had referred to it implicitly when he noted how in practical matters, "when their minds are really roused, men commonly are not bad reasoners" (*U.S.*, 211). We have an instinct for the right way to proceed. Whether we are "gifted or not," we have an inward faculty. It inspired another of his unforgettable images. He likened this inward faculty to skillful mountaineering, making progress like "a climber on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another" (*U.S.*, 257). Newman had confidence in human reason.

All the same, there is an obvious question. Such an instinct may be identified in individuals, but can it be found in communities? Many would be skeptical, but I am not. Think of the communities you know, the groups to which you belong. For years while living in Oxford, I would see visitors on guided tours being shown around the university. They would be taken into many colleges and admire them. But by the evening I suspect it had all become a bit of a blur. They could not remember how to distinguish between

Exeter, Lincoln, and Jesus, or Trinity and St. John's, or Corpus and Oriel. They all seemed the same. But to the members of those colleges, their distinctiveness was evident. Each community had its own character, its own identity, and its own self-understanding. And so the Church. The larger the community, the more complex the exercise, investigating and exploring, but the reality is the same. There is a mind that can be determined.

And the witness of the laity that consultation determines and the instinctive, inward faculty that articulates that witness emerges Newman explained, in part under the direction of the Holy Spirit and partly as an answer to prayer. These are the third and fourth points he identified. The authentic life of the community derives from the Spirit dwelling within believers, who are sensitive to and respond to what they have received. This is not cheap grace but the fruit of costly commitment. Then what they perceive becomes known in their prayer, not as the canonizing of casual whims, but the result of painstaking discernment.

Such authentic life in the community displays one further characteristic, the fifth point in the process Newman outlined. He called it "jealousy of error." Put simply, we may say that, where life is authentic, it realizes very soon when something has gone wrong. We see it sometimes physically in surgery, to use an example that could never have occurred to Newman during his time: when an organ has been transplanted, heart or kidney, there is the danger of rejection. And in general, when opinions or decisions are proposed to it as its own, a community will recognize almost at once when they are not. The discord will be evident.

That in brief was what Newman meant by consulting the laity. It was a process designed to determine what the community believed in fact, based on the confidence that it knew its own mind. That confidence was all the more secure because the lay faithful lived a life rooted in the Spirit, to whom they were responsive in prayer. And such a spiritual life was impatient of error; it would recognize very soon what did not ring true.

Newman then went on to illustrate the part played by lay witness in the history of the Church, and at the end of his article, he

concluded, "each constituent portion of the Church has its proper functions, and no portion can be safely neglected . . . there is something in the 'pastorum et fidelium conspiratio,' which is not in the pastors alone."<sup>15</sup> He was emphasizing the value of what was done in common, and he argued that the clergy should seek to encourage the lay faithful; otherwise, he observed, if they cut them off from the study of doctrine and from contemplation, and required from them only "a *fides implicita*," then that unthinking acceptance "in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition."<sup>16</sup> People need to be involved, to contribute, to recognize the part they have to play.

It was the natural conclusion from what he had just illustrated, but it was a startling conclusion for those days, when the laity were regarded as "boys eternal,"<sup>17</sup> and the accepted atmosphere breathed of clericalism and condensation. We, however, can see in it a modest anticipation of that emphasis on the unity of all the baptized that was to gain recognition at Vatican II.

(v)

Newman's entire life, both Anglican and Catholic, was devoted to the service of the lay faithful. And during his Catholic life, he tried to serve the laity in many ways besides his work in Dublin and his editing of the *Rambler*. He founded, for example, the Oratory School, which was a great labor and also caused him much heartache at times; and his attempt also to establish an oratory in Oxford was driven by the same concern, to be of service to Catholics there. However, I have concentrated here on these two episodes in particular, his work for the Catholic University in Dublin, where he tried to establish a way of offering the lay faithful a deeper, fuller education, and his experience as editor of the *Rambler*, where he championed and tried to defend their role. Both episodes caused him great sorrow. Neither can be regarded as a clear success at the time. But let me leave the final word to Newman scholar John Coulson:

Newman's abiding vision was that, in the dark days that were approaching and have now inevitably come upon us, the fullness of the Catholic idea demanded that the intellectual layman become religious and the devout ecclesiastic intellectual. He had hoped that it was his vocation to bring about the means by which this might be achieved—by his University, his school, his house at Oxford, and his support for the work of *The Rambler*. But it was not to be so. His was that greater vocation still: to witness, by the way in which he met and mastered the indifference, hostility, persecution, and tardy recognition of his Catholic life to the very embodiment of that ideal he had devoted his life to foster: the practice of the saintly intellect.<sup>18</sup>

## 7

### Seeking Church Unity

(i)

In the library of the Venerable English College, Rome, there is a scrapbook filled with articles cut out of newspapers that feature former members of the college. Many have become bishops or held other responsible positions in the Church. As a student there in the 1960s, I used to enjoy browsing through it. The earlier pieces, going back decades, frequently told stories of clashes between these former students and their Anglican or Free Church counterparts. The tone was combative, often abrasive. But then there was a change. Soon after the election of Pope John XXIII in October 1958, the mood became quite different. There was a move away from conflict in favor of greater understanding; controversy gave way to dialogue; and dialogue became discussion and conversation, so that friendships began to be formed. The shift was unmistakable. The desire for Christian unity was gathering momentum.

It may seem natural to assume that Newman would have little to offer in these matters. That someone who was for long an