

different journals which now exist for the expression of theological truth in a way that is relevant to our common need, and may hope that readers of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* in particular, find it of some use to this end.

Cardinal Newman on the Laity

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Newman complains of Catholic preachers that they think it their duty to give a bird's-eye view of Christianity in every sermon, and never to expound one truth without bringing in every counterbalancing consideration and saving clause. To apply such a method to the subject of Newman's influence in the second half of the twentieth century would be fatal! He lived so long, he touched life at so many points, he anticipated so many of the best movements in the Church today, that there would be no ending. The biblical and patristic movement, the ecumenical movement, the Catholic intellectual and university movement, the concrete and real approach in philosophy, the lay movement—all these, and much else owe a debt to Newman. This article will limit itself to Newman's connection with the lay movement, and will outline his views as to the place of the laity in the Church. In this matter, which always interested him, he was a precursor, and it caused him some of his bitterest trials.

In the days before the Oxford Movement, Newman's study of the Fathers taught him the important part played by the laity in the early Church, and he called attention to it in his *Arians of the Fourth Century* (p. 358). He noted how bishops, under pressure from the imperial government would subscribe to unorthodox formularies, and then find themselves abandoned by their flocks. 'Indeed', he adds, 'to many of the Arianizing bishops may be applied the remarks which Hilary makes upon the laity subjected to Arian teaching; that their own piety enabled them to interpret expressions religiously, which were originally invented as evasions of orthodox doctrine. "Sanctiores sunt aures plebis quam corda sacerdotum".' This view of the part played by the laity in

maintaining the true faith was to prove fruitful when Newman came to elaborate that theory of development in doctrine which enabled him to become a Catholic. All the members of the Church had a role to play in the gradual unfolding of the revelation given through the apostles. 'By what channels', he asks, 'had the Divine Philosophy descended down from the Great Teacher through three centuries of persecution? First, through the See and Church of Peter . . . but inter-communion was difficult and comparatively rare in days like those, and of nothing is there less pretence of proof than that the Holy See, while persecution raged, imposed a faith upon the ecumenical body. Rather, in that earliest age, it was simply the living spirit of the myriads of the faithful, none of them known to fame, who received from the disciples of Our Lord, and husbanded so well, and circulated so widely, and transmitted so faithfully, generation after generation, the once delivered apostolic faith; who held it with such sharpness of outline and explicitness of detail, as enabled even the unlearned instinctively to discriminate between truth and error, spontaneously to reject the very shadow of heresy, and to be proof against the fascination of the most brilliant intellects, when they would lead them out of the narrow way'. (*Hist. Sketches*, I, 209-10).

It is not surprising, then, that in the first grave crisis which faced the Church in England, after Newman had become a Catholic, he should have turned to the laity. The restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, announced in Cardinal Wiseman's unfortunate pastoral, let loose a No-Popery agitation, whose violence we have difficulty in realising. 'I dare say', wrote Newman, 'that it may . . . be advisable for our Bishops to do nothing—but for that reason, if for no other, the laity should stir'. He approved strongly of the plan of his friend J. M. Capes for lay lecturers in every large town, to defend the Catholic cause. Of a prelate who objected to the scheme he wrote, 'He has a horror of laymen, and I am sure that they may be made in this day the strength of the Church'. (*W. Ward. Life of Cardinal Newman*, I; 261, 259). Fortunately Wiseman supported Newman, and the lectures were delivered. Newman himself took a hand, and produced what he called his best-written, and what is certainly his most amusing, work, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics*. Chesterton said of it that it was practically preached to a raging mob, and it concludes with a famous appeal to the laity. 'Your strength lies in your God and your conscience; therefore it lies not in your number. It lies not in your number any more than in intrigue, or combination, or worldly wisdom . . . I want you to rouse yourselves

to understand where you are, to know yourselves. I would aim primarily at organisation, edification, cultivation of mind, growth of the reason. It is a moral force, not a material, which will vindicate your profession, and will secure your triumph. It is not giants who do most Grace ever works by few what I desiderate in Catholics is the gift of bringing out what their religion is you must not hide your talent in a napkin, or your light under a bushel. 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. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity; I am not denying you are such already: but I mean to be severe, and, as some would say, exorbitant in my demands. I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism I have no apprehension you will be the worse Catholics for familiarity with these subjects, provided you cherish a vivid sense of God above, and keep in mind that you have souls to be judged and saved. In all times the laity have been the measure of the Catholic spirit; they saved the Irish Church three centuries ago, and they betrayed the Church in England. Our rulers were true, our people were cowards'.

Not long after this, Newman became the first Rector of the Catholic University in Dublin, where his aim was to provide for the higher education and intellectual needs of the Catholic laity of these islands. He was starting, he said, a university where the laity would be taught to reason and pursue knowledge for its own sake. ('It is not a Convent, it is not a Seminary; it is a place to fit men of the world for the world'. 'For why do we educate except to prepare for the world?' (*Idea of a University*, p. 232). One of his great difficulties was the distrust of the Irish gentry, whom he found 'both suspicious and hopeless of episcopal enterprises' such as the university of course was, and into whose hands he wished to put its financial management. He complained that 'they were treated like good little boys—were told to shut their eyes and open their mouths, and take what we gave them—and this they did not relish'. (*Autobiographical Writings*, p. 328). It was a great point with Newman that all the professors, except in such subjects as theology, should be laymen. He expressed a fear that the university might become

priest-ridden, and when he left it, only five out of the thirty-two professors were priests. His first act on being installed as Rector was to invite a number of laymen in England and Ireland to place their names on the university books, as a sign of support, and one of the reasons for his eventual resignation was that he could not obtain from the bishops a measure of lay control.

Newman left Dublin in 1857, and sixteen years later a number of students and ex-students of the university took the bold step of presenting a printed memorial to the Irish bishops, asking that various defects in the university should be remedied. The memorial concluded with the words: 'We have been encouraged to present this Memorial by the remembrance of Dr Newman's words, who many years ago declared that from the co-operation of the Students with the Superiors of the University in shaping its future, he looked forward to the creation of a "permanent community of feelings and interest on educational and religious subjects, which it will doubtless foster among the educated laity of the country in after life".' One of the signatories, George Fottrell, sent a copy of the Memorial to Newman, and received the following reply, marked 'private': 'December 10th 1873. My dear Mr Fottrell, I was very glad to receive your Address, and think it most opportune, and rejoice in the success which, as you tell me, it has already had. One of the chief evils which I deplored in the management of the affairs of the University twenty years ago, when I was in Ireland, was the resolute refusal with which my urgent representations were met, that the Catholic laity should be allowed to co-operate with the Archbishops in the work. As far as I can see, there are ecclesiastics all over Europe whose policy it is to keep the laity at arm's length, and hence the laity have been disgusted and become infidel, and only two parties exist, both ultras, in opposite directions. I came away from Ireland with the distressing fear that in that Catholic country, in like manner, there was to be an antagonism, as time went on, between the hierarchy and the educated classes.

You will be doing the greatest possible benefit to the Catholic cause all over the world, if you succeed in making the University a middle station at which clergy and laity can meet, so as to learn to understand, and to yield to each other—and from which, as from common ground they may act in union upon an age which is running headlong into infidelity. And, however evil in themselves may be the men and the measures which have had of late years so great a measure of success against the Holy See, they will, in the Providence of God, be made the

instruments of good, if they teach us priests that the "obsequium" which the laity owe to religion is "rationabile".' (W. Ward, *op. cit.* II, p. 397).

If Newman's inability to obtain for the laity a voice in the Catholic university was one cause of his departure from Dublin, his failure in the matter of the editorship of the *Rambler* was entirely due to his almost quixotic championship of the laity. The *Rambler* was founded in 1848 by J. M. Capes, already mentioned, one of the married convert clergymen, to cultivate and broaden the minds of the educated laity, and to present to outsiders the Catholic case in a way that would ensure attention. In 1858 Sir John Acton and Richard Simpson became the proprietors, the latter, who had been sub-editor for two years, acting as editor. For ten years, then, a highly successful periodical was produced, of a standard that has hardly been surpassed, and thus an important work of the lay apostolate carried on. The *Rambler*, however, had its defects. Its tone was sometimes ironical and critical, and it dealt with matters of theology, and others too, such as education, which Wiseman considered unnecessary in a lay magazine. The trouble increased under Simpson's editorship. He also was a married convert clergyman, a friend and admirer of Newman, a devout Catholic, extremely generous and at mass every day. But his pen was irreverent, and he could not resist poking fun at Catholic shortcomings, whether in history, theology or the English episcopate. Newman, who fully appreciated the good work of the *Rambler* in improving Catholics intellectually, and in providing a bridge of communication with educated non-Catholics, was very critical of its unpleasant tone and of its superfluous excursions into theology. The crisis was reached early in 1859, and over the very question of the province of the laity.

A Royal Commission on elementary education had just been appointed, without a Catholic representative, the Catholic Poor School Committee having put in a claim for one only when it was too late. Although the Catholic schools received grants from the state, the bishops decided not to co-operate with the Commission, chiefly because it was proposed, among other things, to enquire into the method of religious teaching. In the January number of the *Rambler* there appeared an article on the Royal Commission by Scott Nasmyth Stokes, who had been secretary of the Catholic Poor Schools Committee (the ancestor of our Catholic Education Council) for six years, and was now one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. He was the leading Catholic lay authority on the subject, and he felt it his duty to

give his considered opinion, based on practical experience, and with due submission to ecclesiastical authority, on a matter which touched the religious interests of the bulk of the laity. He disputed the grounds on which co-operation with the Royal Commission had been refused and urged the general principle that a policy of isolation was suicidal. His article was violently attacked in the *Tablet* as disloyal to the bishops. Stokes replied calmly in the February *Rambler* and pointed out that the blame lay rather with the Poor Schools Committee than with the bishops. He claimed however, that no religious principle was involved, and that the question had been neither thoroughly discussed nor properly understood (presumably by the bishops), adding that he would be surprised if the bishops were 'displeased by the loyal expression of opinions entertained by many Catholics, and supported by arguments which cannot be met.' Even though, as Cardinal Gasquet allows in his account, the decision of the bishops had caused dismay among the laity generally, Stokes' articles could hardly fail to raise a storm.

Several bishops met in London and decided that unless Simpson retired from being editor of the *Rambler* and its whole spirit was changed, they would be obliged to censure it in their pastorals. In order to avoid the scandal of a public censure, they begged Newman to intervene with Simpson and persuade him to resign. This Newman succeeded in doing, and there was no direct censure of the *Rambler* in the pastorals. The difficulty, however, was to find another editor acceptable both to the proprietors of the *Rambler* and to the bishops. Only one man fulfilled the requirements, and so Newman, after much hesitation, and at the wish of his bishop, Ullathorne, and of Cardinal Wiseman, accepted the editorship. His aim was to serve the educated and thinking laity, and preserve an organ which was so valuable for them, while at the same time helping the bishops, and keeping the peace among Catholics. Newman objected to the tone, not the principles of the *Rambler*, and now that Simpson had resigned, refused to disown him. His announcement at the beginning of the May number, the first for which he was responsible, ran: 'In commencing a new series of the *Rambler*, its conductors think it right to state that they profess no other object in their labours but that which had been the animating principle of the Magazine hitherto, viz., to co-operate with Catholic periodicals of higher pretensions in a work of especial importance at the present day—the refinement, enlargement and elevation of the intellect in the educated classes.'

It will be their aim, as it has ever been, to combine devotion to the Church with discrimination and candour in the treatment of her opponents; to reconcile freedom of thought with implicit faith; to discountenance what is untenable and unreal, without forgetting the tenderness due to the weak and the reverence rightly claimed for what is sacred; and to encourage a manly investigation of subjects of public interest under a deep sense of the prerogatives of ecclesiastical authority'. Years afterwards Newman noted: 'In the Advertisement not a word was said of any change . . . in the *Rambler*, though my purpose was in fact to change what had in so many ways displeased me. But I had no wish to damage the fair name of men who I believed were at bottom sincere Catholics, and I thought it unfair, ungenerous, impertinent and cowardly to make on their behalf acts of confession and contrition, and to make a display of change of editorship, and (as if) so virtuous a change'.

There still remained the question of the *Rambler* criticisms of the bishops' attitude to the Royal Commission. Newman dealt with that by publishing copious extracts from the Pastorals in which Wiseman and Ullathorne defended themselves and censured the Catholic press, followed by two remarks of his own. The first was to the effect that it had not been realised that the bishops had reached a formal decision at the time the *Rambler* articles appeared. The second ran as follows: 'Acknowledging then, most fully, the prerogatives of the episcopate, we do unfeignedly believe . . . that their Lordships really desire to know the opinion of the laity on subjects in which the laity are especially concerned. If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception, it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical questions, out of the condescension which belongs to those who are *forma facti gregis ex animo*. If our words or tone were disrespectful, we deeply grieve and apologise for such a fault; but surely we are not disrespectful in thinking, and in having thought, that the Bishops would like to know the sentiments of an influential portion of the laity before they took any step which perhaps they could not recall. Surely it was no disrespect towards them to desire that they should have the laity rallying round them on the great question of education . . . We are too fully convinced of the misery of any division between the rulers of the Church and the educated laity . . . to commit ourselves consciously to any act which may tend to so dire a calamity. Let the bishops pardon, then, the incidental hastiness

of manner or want of ceremony of the rude Jack Tars of their vessel, as far as it occurred, in consideration of the zeal and energy with which they haul-to the ropes and man the yards'.

Newman soon began to suffer for his chivalrous act. The Ushaw theologian Dr Gillow wrote to him that it was heresy to say the laity were consulted in doctrinal matters. Newman was able to defend himself and pacify Dr. Gillow, but he sent the latter's letter to Bishop Ullathorne, and asked for a theological censor for the *Rambler*. Ullathorne would not commit himself in writing, but called at the Oratory on 22 May. Newman has preserved a minute of the meeting. 'The Bishop, who called today, began by saying that he could not undertake the revision of the *Rambler* . . . He thought there were remains of the old spirit. It was irritating. Our laity were a *peaceable* set; the Church was *peace*. They had a deep faith; they did not like to hear that anyone doubted . . . I said in answer that he saw one side, I another; that the Bishops, etc., did not see that state of the laity, e.g. in Ireland, how unsettled, yet how docile. He said something like: "who are the laity?" I answered (not those *words*) that the Church would look foolish without them'. Ullathorne then expressed the wish that Newman should give up the *Rambler* editorship — this within a month of the appearance of his first number. Newman, of course, promised to do so, and wrote: 'There was no sort of unpleasantness in our conversation from beginning to end. It is impossible with the principles and feelings on which I have acted all through my life that I could have acted otherwise. I never have resisted nor can resist the voice of a lawful superior speaking in his own province'. (W. Ward. *op. cit.* I. p. 496).

It remains a mystery why Ullathorne stopped Newman's great experiment before it had fairly begun. Abbot Butler suggests that when their first enthusiasms had cooled, the bishops realised that an independent organ backed by Newman's name and prestige might prove more embarrassing even than the old *Rambler*. Newman's comment in a memorandum three years later is as follows: 'It is rather strange the Bishop let me off my engagement so easily, or rather, pressed a release on me, when I had gained his side of the bargain, and had not paid my own. Though I had rescued Simpson, etc., from the Pastorals, I was allowed, or rather urged to give him back the Magazine. Perhaps it was that the Cardinal, etc., were seized with a panic, lest they had got out of the frying pan into the fire . . .'

Newman had unwillingly taken on the *Rambler*, because he thought that was God's will, and now for the same reason he relinquished it. To

his friend Henry Wilberforce he wrote: 'If you attempt at a *wrong* time what in itself is *right*, you perhaps become a heretic or schismatic when I am gone, it will be seen perhaps that persons stopped me from doing a work which I might have done. God over-rules all things—Of course it is discouraging to be out of joint with the time, and to be snubbed and stopped as soon as I begin to act'. Wilberforce replied: 'I have not often been more vexed than I am by what you tell me, and which was quite new to me. Of course I cannot but admire and acquiesce in your spirit, but I deeply feel that our Bishops do not understand England and the English I feel indeed that this is rather their misfortune (and ours) than their fault; for how should they from the mode of their education. But the result will I fear be very serious, for either the Catholic laity will kick or what I rather fear they will more and more fall below Protestants in intellectual training and have no influence on the public mind. But God understands all this better than we and will set all right I trust, in His own way'. (17 and 19 July, 1859).

Newman's troubles were not over. He still had to bring out the July *Rambler*. He decided to defend his remarks in the May number on the part played by the laity in the Church, to which Dr Gillow had taken exception. This Newman did in a long article, harmful to him at the time, but most fruitful for the future, *On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine*. He showed conclusively that the belief of the ordinary faithful had always been one of the recognized sources of doctrine, one of the witnesses of tradition—and great stress was laid on this only the other day, by Pius XII, when he defined the Assumption of our Lady. Newman rehearsed once more the story he had discussed as a young man, in his *Arians of the Fourth Century*, when 'the divine dogma of Our Lord's divinity was proclaimed, enforced, maintained, and (humanly speaking) preserved, far more by the "Ecclesia docens" than by the "Ecclesia docens", and when the body of the episcopate was unfaithful to its commission, while the body of the laity was faithful to its baptism'. He then gave a long array of testimonies to the fidelity of the laity, and to what he called a temporary suspense of the functions of the *ecclesia docens*, when 'the body of the bishops failed in their confession of the faith' and 'the comparatively few who remained faithful were discredited and driven into exile.' Newman concluded by urging that the teaching Church is more happy when she is surrounded by enthusiastic partisans who appreciate their faith 'than when she cuts off the faithful from the study of her divine doctrines and the sympathy of her divine contemplation, and requires from them a *fides implicita*

in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition'.

He had been careful to explain that 'if ever there was an age which might dispense with the testimony of the faithful, and leave the maintenance of the truth to the pastors of the Church it was the age in which we live'. For 'never was the Episcopate of Christendom so devoted to the Holy See, so religious, so earnest in the discharge of its special duties'. But this was not sufficient to prevent what Abbot Butler calls 'much fluttering in theological dovecotes', all the worse because 'the array of facts could not be controverted'. Bishop Brown of Newport delated the article to Rome, without telling Newman he had done so, in spite of our Lord's words that if our brother is at fault we should remonstrate with him privately before we tell the Church. But as soon as this delation was brought to Newman's notice he offered to make all necessary explanations and withdrawals. Newman's case was put in Wiseman's hands in Rome, but he, for reasons that have never been discovered failed to present it. Thus it was that for many years Newman was under a cloud in Rome, with consequences little short of disastrous.

However, Newman was not the man to be idle while there were needs to be met, and he was allowed to work. The converts complained of the low standard of the Catholic schools, and as early as 1848 Capes was writing in the *Rambler* about 'the wretched apathy on the part of the Catholic laity on the subject of education, producing in them an unwillingness to pay as they ought for their children's instruction, and a notion that a liberal education can be completed when a boy is but fifteen or sixteen years of age'. Newman founded the Oratory School, with an almost entirely lay staff, to remedy this deficiency in 1859, the very year of the *Rambler* trouble; and five years later he was prepared to open an Oratory at Oxford, in order that there might be at least one place of higher education to which the Catholic laity could send their sons. In spite of strong lay support this was prohibited. The story need not be repeated here—it is to be found in Newman's biographies. It was at this time that the famous set of tendentious questions was circulated (though not to Newman) the answers to which were intended for Rome, concerning the university question. One of them ran 'Ought the principle to be admitted that the laity should be more highly educated than their clergy . . .?' One layman replied, 'I give no opinion on education of the clergy, but if it be thought inexpedient that they should go to Oxford and that *therefore* their education may be inferior, I don't see why the laity should be under-educated because the

clergy can't have equal advantages'. When after Cardinal Manning's death the universities were opened to Catholics, the clergy were among the first to flock there. Meanwhile, for thirty years the prohibition remained. Newman wrote: 'I never saw the questions until afterwards; few did; and what questions—leading questions and worse The laity told nothing about it. The laity go to Propaganda. Cardinal Barnabo talks by the half-hour, not letting anyone else speak, and saying he knows all about it already for Mgr Talbot has told him' (W. Ward *Life of Cardinal Newman*, II, p. 69). The failure to meet the needs of the laity in the matter of higher education greatly distressed Newman, and we can better appreciate his feelings if we remember that this was the period during which Mgr Talbot was defining the province of the laity as 'to hunt, to shoot, to entertain'.

The laity showed their gratitude to Newman during his lifetime for championing their cause, which, indeed, was also that of the Church as a whole. During the Oxford University struggle they presented him with an address which said: 'we feel that every blow that touches you inflicts a wound upon the Catholic Church in this country', and it was laymen who insisted that he should be made a Cardinal.

It is perhaps worth noting, in view of the caricature sometimes drawn of Newman as a hypersensitive recluse, that he had a host of lay friends, not only men, but whole families, and ladies. How many people realise that in spite of what one of them has described as his 'singular chivalrous courtesy mingled with an indescribable reserve' towards women, he was on close terms of friendship and corresponded confidentially with a dozen and more of them, about equally divided between married and single?

There is much to be learned from Newman as to the position of the laity in the Church, and if things are improved today, we owe him gratitude. He did not live to see the change, which has been most rapid under those admirers of Newman, Popes Pius XII and John XXIII. He saw the deficiencies. In 1863 he wrote: 'To aim . . . at improving the condition, the status of the Catholic body, by a careful survey of their argumentative basis, of their position relative to the philosophy of the day, by giving them juster views, by enlarging and refining their minds, in one word, by education, is (in their view) more than a superfluity or a hobby, it is an insult'. (*Autobiographical Writings*, p. 259).

In his last considerable work, in 1877, he confessed sadly: 'It is so ordered on high that in our day Holy Church should present just that aspect to my countrymen which is most consonant with their ingrained

prejudices against her, most unpromising for their conversion'. (*Via Media*. I. xxxvii). Mr. Watkin has pointed out in his *Roman Catholicism in England* what opportunities were missed in Newman's time. Today, in the age of laity, with the new movements and the greater freedom and confidence within the Church, and the friendliness and appreciation shown among those outside it, surely we must take Newman's lessons to heart.

Less than Catholic

NEIL MIDDLETON

We are known as an organization holding an easily definable body of ideas as indisputable, ideas, which, on the whole, are unacceptable to many intelligent people. We are also seen as something like a series of pressure groups in trade union, political and social spheres; but it is felt that our pressure is just to get something or other stopped. Where people are aware of the existence of educated and intelligent Catholics, their Catholicism is regarded as an aberration that can be discounted. If it is remarked upon at all, it is seen as a matter for surprise that X is a Catholic. This is such a universal state of affairs, that a consideration of why this should be the case is not utterly out of place. One does in fact often come across appeals to make some sort of self-examination, and having done it to go out and become a better Catholic cricketer. What I want to try and show is that the very way we put the matter is an indication that our thinking about the Church is far from what it should be, and I hope that I will be forgiven if my approach should be rather oblique.

A very queer separation is made in some Catholic writing, between love and knowledge. We tend to be rather proud of our simple believer, knowing little or no doctrine, who has a great love of God and says his rosary. We almost feel that to inject a little knowledge would be to spoil an idyllic relationship. The absurdity of our picture is plain when we complete the phrase and see that the knowledge which we failed to inject for fear of destroying that simple faith was know-