"THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN ENGLAND"

Newman & the Laity

PAUL SHRIMPTON

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To the students at Oxford University who have attended
my Newman reading group:

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Gideon De Jong, Ariel Dempsey, Lucy Denly, James Fulcher,
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Remi Visser, Hannah Wilkinson, and Victoria Xiao.

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.

—John Henry Newman, *The Present Position of Catholics*

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Abbreviations

Unless otherwise noted, references to Newman's works are to the uniform edition of 1868–81, 36 vols., which was published by Longmans, Green and Co., London, most of which can be found on the Newman Reader website (https://www.newmanreader.org/).

Addresses	*Addresses to Cardinal Newman with His Replies, 1879–82*, ed. W. P. Neville (Longmans, Green, 1905)
Apologia	*Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1865; 1873)
Arians	*The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833; 1871)
Athanasius	*Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*, 2 vols. (1842–44; 1881)
AW	*John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. H. Tristram (Sheed & Ward, 1956)
Callista	*Callista, a Tale of the Third Century* (1855; 1888)
Campaign I	*My Campaign in Ireland, Part I*, ed. W. P. Neville (privately printed, 1896); ed. Paul Shrimpton (Gracewing, 2021)
Campaign II	*My Campaign in Ireland, Part II*, ed. Paul Shrimpton (Gracewing, 2022)
Catholic Sermons	*Catholic Sermons of Cardinal Newman* (Burns & Oates, 1957)
Consulting	*On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. John Coulson (1859; G. Chapman, 1961)
Development	*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845; 1878)
Difficulties	*Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, vol. 1 (1850; 1872); vol. 2 (1866 and 1875; 1876)
Discourses	*Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education* (James Duffy, 1852)

Discussions	*Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (various; 1872)
Essays	*Essays Critical and Historical*, 2 vols. (1828–46; 1871)
Grammar	*An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870)
HS	*Historical Sketches*, 3 vols. (1872–73)
Idea	*The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated* (1852 and 1858; 1873)
Justification	*Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (1838; 1874)
LD	*Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, 32 vols., ed. C. S. Dessain *et al.* (T. Nelson, 1961–72; Clarendon, 1973–2008)
Loss and Gain	*Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert* (1848; 1874)
Meditations	*Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman*, ed. W. P. Neville (Longmans, Green, 1893)
Miracles	*Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles* (1870)
Mixed Congregations	*Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (1849; 1871)
Oratorian	*Newman the Oratorian: His Unpublished Oratory Papers*, ed. Placid Murray (Gill & Macmillan, 1969)
Parochial and Plain	*Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8 vols. (1834–43; 1869)
Philosophical Notebook	*The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman*, 2 vols., ed. E. Sillem (Nauwelaerts, 1969–70)
Present Position	*Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851; 1872)
Sermon Notes	*Sermon Notes of John Henry Newman, 1849–78* (Longmans, Green, 1914)
Sermons	*John Henry Newman: Sermons 1824–1843*, 5 vols., ed. F. J. McGrath, Placid Murray and Vincent Ferrer Blehl (Oxford University Press, 1991–2012)
Subjects	*Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day* (1843; 1869)

"Tamworth"	"The Tamworth Reading Room," in *Discussions*
Theological Papers	*Theological Papers of Newman*, ed. J. D. Holmes (Clarendon, 1979)
Tracts	*Tracts for the Times* (1833–41)
University Sermons	*Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford* (1826–43; 1871)
Various Occasions	*Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* (1857; 1874)
Via Media	*The Via Media of The Anglican Church*, 2 vols. (1837 and 1830–41; 1877 and 1883)
Verses	*Verses on Various Occasions* (1867)

BOA	Birmingham Oratory Archives
CUG	*Catholic University Gazette* (1854–56)
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
DIB	*Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 9 vols., ed. J. McGuire and J. Quinn (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
Newman: Biography	Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1988)
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Colin Matthew, Brian Harrison, Lawrence Goldman, and David Cannadine (Oxford University Press, 2004–)
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives

I

Introduction

In a private letter from George Talbot* to Henry Edward Manning† dated April 25, 1867, the papal chamberlain warned the archbishop of Westminster that "if a check be not placed on the laity in England they will be rulers of the Catholic Church in England instead of the Holy See and the Episcopate."[1] Writing from the Vatican, Monsignor Talbot was reacting to the public address of prominent Catholic laymen of the Stafford Club, which declared that "every blow that touches Dr. Newman is a wound inflicted on the Catholic Church in England."[2] Talbot denounced the address as a manifestation of the absence of Catholic instincts in the English laity, of their insubordination and disloyalty to the Holy See, and of a dangerous spirit to be put down.

> They are beginning to show the cloven foot, which I have seen the existence of for some time. They are only putting into practice the doctrine taught by Dr. Newman in his article in the *Rambler*. They wish to govern the Church in England by public opinion. . . . What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain? These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have

* George Talbot (1816–86) was the fifth son of the third Baron Talbot. He was educated at Eton and St. Mary's Hall, Oxford; became a Catholic in 1842; was ordained a priest in 1846; and tried to join the Oratory the following year but was politely refused. He was appointed a canon of Saint Peter's, Rome, in 1849, and a papal chamberlain.

† Henry Edward Manning (1808–92) was educated at Harrow School and Balliol College, Oxford, and became a fellow of Merton College. He resigned his position as archdeacon of Chichester to become a Catholic in 1851. After serving as provost of Westminster Cathedral, he became archbishop of Westminster in 1865 and a cardinal ten years later.

> no right at all, and this affair of Newman is a matter purely ecclesiastical.[3]

The two matters Talbot refers to—Newman's article in *The Rambler* ("Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," which was delated to Rome for heresy by one of the English bishops), and Newman's attempt to establish an oratory in Oxford (the "ecclesiastical matter")—are both complicated episodes in Newman's life and will be dealt with at length in chapters 7 and 9, respectively. In his letter to Manning, Talbot urged him to stand up to the "laity of England":

> Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your Grace. You must not be afraid of him. It will require much prudence, but you must be firm, as the Holy Father still places his confidence in you; but if you yield and do not fight the battle of the Holy See against the detestable spirit growing up in England, he will begin to regret Cardinal Wiseman,* who knew how to keep the laity in order.[4]

The likes of Talbot did not have a monopoly on exaggerated views. In an article entitled "The Catholic Church in England in 1859," the Catholic journalist Richard Simpson† declared that as a result of the bishops' policy, "religion is turned into administration, the clergy into theological police, and the body of thinking laymen into a mass of *suspects*, supposed to be brooding on nothing but revolution, and only kept together by motives of fear, and by external pressure of a clerical organisation."

* Nicholas Wiseman (1802–65) was rector of the English College in Rome from 1828 to 1840, then president of Oscott College. He became the first cardinal-archbishop of Westminster in 1850.

† Richard Simpson (1820–76) studied at Oriel College, Oxford. He resigned the living of Mitcham to become a Catholic in 1846. He was an able linguist and a Shakespearean scholar with interests in philosophy, theology, history, literature, and music. In 1858, he became editor and a proprietor of *The Rambler*.

He quoted from a leading 'old Catholic,'* Charles Weld,† who had complained to Simpson that

> there is no limit now to the clerical ambition in England to ignore the laity altogether with their services and their sufferings, and to reduce their flocks to a condition utterly exposed to absolute authority without any of the safeguards for individual liberty which elsewhere have been carefully protected. . . . The Bishops want to sit among us as Schoolmasters to dictate our political and social as well as ecclesiastical rules.[5]

The views of Simpson and Talbot—both converts to Catholicism—convey how polarized and highly charged the atmosphere was in the 1860s, when ecclesiastics blocked lay participation in educational ventures and laymen retaliated with exaggerated expressions of independence from the hierarchy and trespassed in matters that were strictly ecclesiastical. The consequence was that it was difficult to form a consensus on issues—such as education—that involved partnership between Church leaders and the laity.

We might well ask, How did we get there? And have matters resolved themselves since then? Both Simpson and Talbot were expressing deeply-held convictions. They were articulating something of vital importance about their own lives and that of others in the Church that they had joined. Their colorful comments provide clear evidence of a sharp lay-clerical divide at the time and of the antagonism and distrust between the two sides, all the more colorful for their being the expressions of highly educated converts who were used to speaking their minds; they provide a snapshot of a situation when matters had risen to a head. Within

* The 'old Catholics' were the remnant of those who had survived penal times and remained true to the 'old Faith.' At the start of the nineteenth century, they numbered around 25,000 and were led by a titled aristocracy.

† The Weld family was one of the wealthiest Catholic families at the time, with lands in Devon and Lancashire.

the ecclesial landscape at the time, there was one man who bestrode the divide between the parties and whose every word and deed was watched with interest or trepidation. That man was John Henry Newman. Everyone, whether cleric or lay, convert or cradle Catholic, by tendency an Ultramontane* or a Cisalpine,† all were mindful of the extraordinary influence of the most prominent Oxford convert.

So, what was Newman saying and doing, and why was he considered so dangerous? Did Talbot speak for the authorities at Rome or just for an influential clique there and among the higher clergy in England? Were Newman's ideas about the laity novel or just a revival of Christian attitudes from former times? Were they baggage he brought over from his Anglican days, or were they genuine Christian insights? The (extended) answer to these questions is the subject matter of this book.

Though the heat generated by the Stafford Club's address dissipated over time and Newman's novel views failed to gain traction during his lifetime, over the succeeding decades they contributed to a new understanding of the laity that achieved full expression a century after the letters of Talbot and Simpson—at the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). It is a commonplace that Newman was a pioneer in the articulation of what we would now call a 'theology of the laity,' though few realize the extent to which he lived this out in practice, especially in the way he dealt with and guided the laity. In fact, his words and deeds reinforce and explain each other in a wonderful way and so should not be viewed apart.

The leading Newman expert Ian Ker argues persuasively that Newman was an 'absent Father' of Vatican II and that he

* Literally "beyond the mountains," Ultramontane denotes a strong emphasis on papal authority and centralization in the Church; it characterizes Catholics in the north of Europe who habitually look southward beyond the Alps to Rome for guidance.

† Derived from "this side of the Alps," Cisalpine describes the attitude of Catholics with a tendency to minimize the authority of Rome and to emphasize regional or national independence and self-sufficiency.

anticipated many of the council's teachings, as well as being an inspiration to the theologians who paved the way for them. In *Newman on Vatican II* (2014), Ker contends that Newman's writings offer an illuminating commentary on the council documents and the way they were interpreted and implemented. He illustrates this with reference to Newman's insights on justification, conscience and the development of doctrine, *inter alia*, as well as Newman's rich ecclesiology, though the references to the laity and their place in the people of God are but brief.

So, what is Newman's idea of the laity? The answer to this question will be developed over the course of this volume, both in terms of his theoretical understanding of the laity and in its manifestation in practice in his writings and actions. It is hoped that the reader will gain not just a *notional* understanding of the place of the laity in the Church but a *real* one—to use two key Newmanian terms from his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870)—and that this rich understanding will contribute to a conviction that leads to deeds.

Newman has his own manner of reaching the truth about key ideas such as those of conscience, a university, or even Christianity. He explains his approach in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845):

> The idea which represents an object or supposed object is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects, however they may vary in the separate consciousness of individuals; and in proportion to the variety of aspects under which it presents itself to various minds is its force and depth, and the argument for its reality. Ordinarily an idea is not brought home to the intellect as objective except through this variety; like bodily substances, which are not apprehended except under the clothing of their properties and results, and which admit of being walked round, and surveyed on opposite sides, and in different perspectives, and in contrary lights, in evidence of

> their reality. And, as views of a material object may be taken from points so remote or so opposed, that they seem at first sight incompatible, and especially as their shadows will be disproportionate, or even monstrous, and yet all these anomalies will disappear and all these contrarieties be adjusted, on ascertaining the point of vision or the surface of projection in each case; so also all the aspects of an idea are capable of coalition, and of a resolution into the object to which it belongs; and the *primâ facie* dissimilitude of its aspects becomes, when explained, an argument for its substantiveness and integrity, and their multiplicity for its originality and power.[6]

Dense though this passage is, it amounts to saying that the greater the number of instances, settings, views, or images of an idea, the more the mind is able to gain a rich and comprehensive grasp of it. This method of reaching truth is clearly distinct from the scientific approach of conveying the essence of something by means of a definition. Newman does not deny the use of definitions, but he is acutely aware of their limitations. So rather than present the reader with a handful of pithy quotations by Newman about the laity, this book presents those living images of his 'idea of the laity' in various episodes of his life, such as his setting up of a Catholic university and the first Catholic public school in England.

For someone whose name will evermore be associated with 'development,' it is natural to inquire about the extent to which Newman's rich understanding of the 'laity' developed: whether he was gifted with a keen intuition from his early years or whether he came to acquire a deep understanding only gradually; and, if the latter, whether he was chiefly influenced by the Church Fathers* of the first millennium, by his reception into full communion

* The Church Fathers are the teachers of the first centuries who teach orthodox doctrine, in agreement with the Church and antiquity, and who have the fame of sanctity. The patristic era came to an end in the East with Saint John Damascene (675–750) and in the West with Saint Isidore of Seville (560–636).

with the Catholic Church, or by certain individuals (such as Saint Philip Neri) and their writings.

By a 'theology of laity' is meant a theological understanding of the lay Christian and his or her place in the Church and in the world *qua* Christian. Some distinctions are useful; others are confusing because used inconsistently. All the faithful by virtue of their baptism and faith are members of the Church and can lay claim to a 'common priesthood' according to the words of Saint Peter to the first Christians: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9). The 'ministerial priesthood,' by contrast, is that exercised by those who are ordained, whether as deacons, priests, or bishops. This separates the faithful into lay and clerical. As regards membership of religious orders or congregations, the faithful can be separated into secular or religious—priests into secular priests and religious priests, and lay Christians into ordinary lay Christians or lay religious—but the terms 'secular' and 'religious' are used with other connotations, and so prove unhelpful.

The expression 'world' is also used in different ways, and the tension between the different meanings is linked to the various ways the laity are defined. One of the defining biblical texts comes from the discourse at the Last Supper, where Jesus prays to his heavenly Father:

> I am no more in the world, but they are in the world . . . I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (John 17:11, 14–16, 18)

Christians have grappled with the priestly prayer of Jesus Christ for two thousand years as they have sought to live out the implications of their faith in so many different circumstances and settings. In order to situate and thereby assess the novelty of Newman's approach to the laity, it would be wonderful to have access to a reliable history of the laity over the last twenty centuries, but, alas, no such historical sweep exists.[7] It would be immensely difficult to compose, not least because at any one time in salvation history, a host of attitudes to the world have existed—one only has to think of our own times. But this does not mean that certain dominant attitudes were not prevalent at any one time, nor that they have changed over time. For our purposes, it will be useful to reflect very briefly on the age of the early Church and then to pick up the story at the start of the nineteenth century, bypassing the centuries in between, which saw the growth of the monastic orders and rise of medieval Christendom, the schism with the Eastern Church, the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and the age of the Enlightenment. Throughout these centuries, ideas about the laity were shifting, developing—and receding.

The early or primitive Church is one that Newman became very familiar with, not least because for many years he sought to determine which of the churches in his own day the early Christians would have recognized as the successor to the original church, the Church founded by Jesus Christ. As a means of conveying succinctly attitudes to the world in the second century, it is hard to better the "Letter to Diognetus," written around AD 166:

> Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. . . . With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labour under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven.* Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonour, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. . . .

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body.[8] As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on

* Newman quotes this passage up to this point in "The Church of the Fathers," *British Magazine* (1836); *HS* 2:94–5. Introducing this quotation, he writes, "It would be a great mistake for us to suppose that we need quit our temporal calling, and go into retirement, in order to serve God acceptably. Christianity is a religion for this world, for the busy and influential, for the rich and powerful, as well as for the poor."

its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself.[9]

The confident tone of the unknown author of this letter would not have typified the attitude of many writers in later epochs, other than those familiar with the early Christians and their writings. The first Christians are unlikely to have had any use for the term 'laity,' as the distinction between lay and clerical only arose and gained sway over time. With the growth of the monastic orders, many people came to view the religious vocation and its attendant vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as the supreme form of Christian living. Separation from the world came to be considered necessary for those aspiring to a high degree of holiness. As a consequence, the laity, in practice, came to be regarded as second-class citizens in the Church, with no special calling to a life of holiness. Outside conventual forms of living, the clergy have at times taken such a dominant role in the Church as to leave the laity in a state of passivity with little scope for initiative. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the void left was filled by Church government, which ushered in an era in which the authority of bishops extended to temporal as well

as ecclesiastical matters. Various other forms of clericalization—a loaded word that can take on different meanings—have distorted the role of the laity too. (The reverse is also true.) Spiritualities for the laity have often been spiritualities adapted—and watered down—from the religious or the priestly life. Models for the lay Christian to imitate have predominantly come from those multitudes of non-lay saints.

These very sketchy comments are evidently over-generalizations that come with attendant shortcomings, but they do serve to prime the reader for what is to follow. One highly instructive way of grappling with the Church's understanding of the laity in modern times is to observe the contrast between the way the laity were defined in the Codes of Canon Law of 1917 and 1983. The *Codex Iuris Canonici* of 1917 was the first official systematic codification of canon law for the Latin Church—that is, for Latin-rite Catholics. It defined the laity in a negative fashion as those who were *not* clergy or religious; in other words, it recognized the clerical and religious state but not the lay state. The 1983 Code, on the other hand, presented the Church as the people of God and began by considering what all its members had in common. After setting out general norms, part 1 deals with, first, the faithful (or *Christifideles*) in general (can. 208–23), then with the rights and duties of the lay faithful (can. 224–31), before moving on to the sacred ministries and clerics (can. 232–93). The hierarchical constitution of the Church is covered in part 2, and the various forms of consecrated and apostolic life in part 3. The change in the structure of the Code reflects the development of ecclesiology that had taken place during the intervening seven decades, and the results are worth spelling out.

The section in the 1983 Code on the people of God begins by stating that all the faithful "participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ" according to their condition (can. 204). There is a "genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ's faithful," each of whom

contribute in their own way "to the building up of the Body of Christ" (can. 208). All the faithful "must make a wholehearted effort to lead a holy life" (can. 210), and they have both a right and duty to carry out a Christian apostolate (can. 211). The obligation of the lay faithful to carry out this apostolate "is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ" (can. 225 §1); "They have also . . . the special obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, particularly in conducting secular business and exercising secular functions, they are to give witness to Christ" (can. 225 §2). Other canons speak of the special role of married people and their rights and duties with respect to the education of their children (can. 226); the freedom of lay people in temporal matters, while heeding the teaching of the Church (can. 227); and the right and duty of lay people "to acquire the knowledge of Christian teaching which is appropriate to each one's capacity and condition, so that they may be able to live according to this teaching, to proclaim it, and if necessary to defend it" (can. 229). Associations of the faithful were also given special prominence (can. 298–329).

It is unlikely that any of these canons would surprise the modern Catholic, but they would have perplexed those living when the 1917 Code was promulgated. What explains the change? Put simply, all that fed into and was taught at the Second Vatican Council. Other than the First Vatican Council (1869–70), which was cut short by the invasion of Rome, there had been no ecumenical council for four centuries—since the Council of Trent (1545–63), which dealt with the turmoil of the Reformation. The Second Vatican Council could be described as a response to all the changes in the intervening years, not least the growth of secularization and other effects of the Enlightenment. In 'updating' its teaching to contend with the modern world, the council produced sixteen major documents. Two of

them in particular pertain to the new understanding of the laity: *Lumen Gentium* (1964), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. It can confidently be argued that Newman influenced both of these major documents; less so, perhaps, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (1965), the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

In *Lumen Gentium*, there are chapters on "The People of God" (ch. 2), "The Laity" (ch. 4), and "The Universal Call to Holiness" (ch. 5). Key passages from these will be cited in the concluding chapters of this book, along with others from *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, so as to ascertain the extent to which Newman did or did not anticipate the teachings within them. Of course, one thing is the written expression of Church teaching, another is how it is put into practice and lived. In this regard, Newman's example is particularly illustrative as it demonstrates a deep intuition of the lay state to an extent that is rarely seen even *after* the council. His deeds also show how it is possible for clergy and laity to work together in a collaborative way. In some respects, Newman's actions speak louder than his words, as his manner of collaborating with the laity in educational or other endeavors betrays an understanding that he did not fully express on paper.

Newman's discussion of the triple office of priest, prophet, and king, whether applied to the faithful in general or to the ministerial priesthood, anticipated Church teaching by a century. But his writings on these offices are not easily understood, because they are imbedded in historical circumstances and require an understanding of times and conflicts as well as a familiarity with his highly rhetorical style and strategic use of hyperbole. Moreover, what he could say in public as a Catholic priest in the 1870s was severely constrained on account of the suspicion he was under at the time for his (seemingly) unorthodox views.

A separate note of caution should be sounded, as there is a danger of reading too much into Newman and making claims for him that are not properly backed up. Certainly, he was a pioneer and ahead of his time, but he did not articulate his ideas fully in the way that the documents of Vatican II do. In their enthusiasm, some Newman commentators succumb to a good deal of 'proof by assertion,' particularly with respect to claims about his *influence* on the council. The fact is that it is almost impossible to trace his influence in a conclusive manner, though there is plenty of scope for sensible speculation.

A proper understanding of the laity is key to the life of the Church. It colors thinking on the family, evangelization, and education. Saint John Paul II viewed the family as the Church in miniature, like a domestic church, and parental homes as seminaries of vocations. Evangelization in the secularized West is simply impossible without the participation of the laity. Education is another vital arena for their activity as Christians. The contribution to education made by the various teaching orders is undisputed, and their absence is felt deeply today. But did their contribution displace lay participation? Can an adequate preparation for the world be given by those who are not fully part of it, not married and without experience of the world of work? In theory, the laity can fill the vacuum left by the demise of the teaching orders, but how many of them are equipped or trained to do so? As for the universal call to holiness and evangelization, it is interesting to reflect on how much impact the teachings of Vatican II have had in these key areas, or whether much of it remains a dead letter.

The contribution this volume makes to the understanding of the laity in the Church is based almost entirely on the ideas of the great Christian humanist Saint John Henry Newman. The main emphasis will be on the practical and the personal rather than on the theoretical. It is about 'Newman in action' rather than an examination of his thought, for his deeds have a capacity

to inspire, along the lines of his famous dictum: "The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us."[10] It is a moot point whether the teachings of Vatican II on the laity are really understood and lived out or whether they simply gather dust and are merely nodded at now and again; whether claims to the 'spirit of the council' do not give rise to exaggerated or distorted expressions of its teachings, evidenced in a clericalized laity or its counterpart in the clergy.

When 'seen' or grasped, the Church's teaching on the laity is truly transformative—and not just for laity. Newman's own life provides a wonderful example of a priest working closely with the laity in pioneering educational ventures, as well as in the world of journalism. Words do not suffice to explain the role of the laity: examples are essential—and Newman's Catholic life is full of rich examples that provide an ideal way of grasping some of the key ideas expressed at the Second Vatican Council. Retelling the story of his life through the prism of the laity brings out this underappreciated dimension of his thought and deeds. This story is told in ten chronological chapters, supplemented by a thematic chapter on his life of service to the laity. The penultimate chapter seeks to ascertain the extent to which his writings and actions, his theological framework and organic view of the Church, anticipate the main teachings of the council. The final chapter draws upon the previous ones to illustrate how Newman's insights are eminently applicable in the Church and world in our times.

As Arnold Toynbee remarked, the fate of a society always depends on its creative minority.[11] Newman belonged to this minority: his ideas are capable of changing the way we live and think, with important ramifications for the Christian living in the world. The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has commented

that in reading Newman (and studying his life), we are confronted with arguments, engaged with insights, and challenged:

> But a further element to the encounter is Newman himself, who is concerned for his readers and anxious that his words might make them better able to see things as they are. He speaks to us with moral and spiritual urgency, determined that neither habit, familiarity, nor prejudice will prevent us from being open to the truth, including the truth about ourselves. Reading Newman complacently, in order to find only what confirms our existing way of thinking and feeling, is to miss the profoundly interpersonal challenge which he intends. This challenge may influence, surprise, or even upset us. Because he inhabits the same modernity as ourselves, he speaks to our own time in ways which are designed to inform and transform us. This influence unites intellectual, moral and spiritual considerations in ways which are inseparable from the call to conversion.[12]

2

Newman's Anglican Years, 1801–45

"Where did this man get this wisdom?" the Jews of Nazareth asked of Jesus Christ. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?" (Matt 13:54–55). A similar curiosity might cause us to ask how John Henry Newman came to acquire such an extraordinarily rich insight into the condition of the lay Christian, for his early years and education do not provide obvious pointers to what lay ahead. For sure, he was a highly gifted individual, blessed with a precocious intellect and an insatiable appetite for knowledge as well as a hunger for truth. But these and other qualities only provide some of the clues that explain how Newman came by his many insights and was able to make so many contributions to Christian thinking in the fields of theology, philosophy, and education.

Newman became a Catholic halfway through his life, in his forty-fifth year. His conversion in 1845—that is, his entering into full communion with the Catholic Church—was national news and shook the foundations of the Established Church. But his fame at the time did not rest solely on his leadership of that revival of the National Church that has come to be known as the Oxford Movement. He was highly esteemed for his preaching, his powerful prose, his winning personality, and the way he lived out the implications of what he taught—that is, his personal holiness. He also played a leading role in the reform of Oxford University. Indeed, this broader influence helps to explain why he was widely

regarded during these years as "the greatest force both morally and intellectually in the University."[1]

Newman's involvement in and reforming contributions to education, at the level of both practice and theory, explain why, when he became a Catholic, he was the obvious person to approach about pioneering educational ventures in the Catholic Church, particularly for fellow converts from Anglicanism who had passed through Oxford or Cambridge. Much of Newman's involvement with the Catholic laity lies in the field of education: as he himself put it, "From first to last, education, in this large sense of the word, has been my line."[2] To appreciate why his advice and collaboration was so valued, it is necessary to enter into life as an Anglican.

EARLY YEARS, SCHOOLING, AND UNDERGRADUATE LIFE

John Henry Newman was born in the city of London on February 21, 1801, the eldest of six children. His father was a banker, the son of a London grocer who originally came from Cambridgeshire, and his mother was the daughter of a paper maker, whose family were originally French Huguenot refugees. John Henry received a stimulating pre-school education in the secure and happy surroundings of the family home and imbibed a thorough knowledge and love of Scripture from his mother, grandmother, and aunt Elizabeth. His religious upbringing was of a standard non-doctrinal, non-sacramental, Bible-reading Anglicanism. At the age of seven, he was sent to Ealing School, a large, successful private boarding establishment, quite unlike the great public schools of England: it had first-class facilities, a homely atmosphere, a broad curriculum, specialist teachers, and small classes.[3] Newman excelled in his studies and participated enthusiastically in school life, acting in Latin plays, winning prizes for speeches, taking part in debates, learning to play the violin, writing musical

compositions, leading a boys' society, and editing several school magazines. By contrast, he had no interest in outdoor or sporting activities other than walking and horse riding.

At Ealing School, Newman was befriended by Dr. George Nicholas, the scholarly headmaster, and deeply influenced by the sermons, conversations, and suggested reading of the Reverend Walter Mayers,* the senior Classics master and a devout evangelical Christian. In the aftermath of the collapse of his father's bank in March 1816, Newman spent the summer vacation at school, where he was thrown into the company of Mayers. During this time, he fell seriously ill. That autumn, he experienced the religious conversion that he regarded as the most momentous event of his life and from which he emerged as a believing Christian. Although Newman became what might loosely speaking be termed a Calvinistic evangelical, his was "quite unlike the standard form of Evangelical conversion"; he saw it as a personal call to holiness rather than an assurance of salvation and adopted a more doctrinal form of Christianity.[4] Newman interpreted the humiliation and upheaval involved in the loss of the business and family home, as well as their house in the country, as a divine punishment for intellectual pride, as the precocious fifteen-year-old had begun to dabble in the writings of the deists Tom Paine and Voltaire and the religious sceptic David Hume, and to toy with the "arguments for infidelity."[5]

Going up to Trinity College, Oxford, at the tender age of sixteen was a chastening experience for the earnest young man of Calvinist leanings, who found himself among sixty undergraduates who were older than himself, not over-studious, and given to enjoying life. Within a week of arriving, in the summer of 1817, his preconceptions of Oxford were shattered when he attended a

* Walter Mayers (1790–1828) was educated at Pembroke College, Oxford, and took Anglican orders. After teaching at Ealing School, he moved to Bampton briefly, then took over the curacy of Over Worton, where Newman preached his first sermon on June 23, 1824. Newman preached at his funeral: "His was a life of prayer," he said. "The unseen things of the spiritual world were always uppermost in his mind."

wine party and found himself in the company of undergraduates who enthusiastically set about getting drunk. As Newman would later say, it was the support of Walter Mayers that helped him through "the dangerous season of my Undergraduate residence,"[6] by warning him not to associate with those who were dissipated and instead to seek out select friends, and by urging him to face up to the dangers of residence at Oxford and endure the "ridicule of the world."[7] Far from the world of student social gatherings and outdoor pursuits, Newman spent his first year buried in books, lectures, and private devotions. Yet he struck up an intimate friendship with John Bowden,* also an undergraduate at Trinity, and corresponded regularly with several of his school friends.

On entering Trinity, Newman was assigned to the junior of its two tutors, the Reverend Thomas Short,† who, as soon as he realized he had a genuine scholar on his hands, lent Newman a book and invited him to breakfast. Dr. Short was alive to the spirit of reform that was gradually spreading from one reluctant college to another in the wake of Oxford's New Examination Statute (1800), which had introduced the honors degree and given an incentive to both teachers and taught. In a bid to raise academic standards at Trinity, Short oversaw a tightening of discipline and the introduction of open scholarships. By dint of hard reading in term and out, and careful preparation for his college exams, Newman landed one of the new Trinity scholarships in May 1818, toward the end of his first year of residence; it marked a new phase of his undergraduate career.

Buoyed up by his academic successes, Newman began to blossom, and—though he later chided himself for living the life

* John William Bowden (1798–1844) became a fervent Tractarian and wrote five of the *Tracts* and four major articles for the *British Critic*. He died a year before Newman became a Catholic; his widow and her children all became Catholic, the two sons becoming priests of the London Oratory.

† Thomas Short (1789–1879) was educated at Rugby School and Trinity College, Oxford, where he was a fellow until his death. He was a college tutor 1816–56. He met Newman for the first time in several decades when Newman returned to the college in 1878 after he had been named an honorary fellow.

of a dilettante—indulged a broad range of interests. Without stinting on his reading of classical authors—supplemented by the study of mathematical texts, logic, and Scripture—he took up the works of Gibbon and Locke, entered himself for university prizes, attended concerts, studied manuals and tried experiments in chemistry, and attended lectures in the newly emerging science of geology. He also played first violin in a music club at St. John's College and cofounded the Trinity College Book Society for the dissemination of modern novels, such as Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. With John Bowden, his closest friend, he started a periodical called *The Undergraduate*. Appearing just two years after the first truly undergraduate magazine, it ran to six numbers and enjoyed a brief popularity, until their cover of anonymity was blown in March 1819 and the editors abandoned the enterprise. The reason for closing it down was that they had voiced dissatisfaction with academic arrangements, such as the pedantic scholarly concern with detail and the exclusive devotion to ancient authors in the prescribed course of reading.

At the time, the two dozen colleges at Oxford functioned largely as independent mini universities, with their own admissions criteria and rules of discipline, while the university had but a shadowy existence: it oversaw the matriculation of students, the exam system, and discipline outside the confines of the colleges, and had its own court and parliament. (A loose analogy is the United States: the colleges are the equivalent of the states of the Union, and the university the equivalent of the federal government in Washington, DC.)[8] There were a tiny number of professors tasked with giving the occasional lecture that any student could attend, but otherwise there was no university lecture system and teaching took place within each college. Undergraduates were required to attend 'college lectures' (i.e., classes) for two or three hours a day during which a college tutor would typically oversee a group of up to fifteen students translating Latin and Greek texts, to which he might add a commentary of a grammatical,

historical, or philosophical nature. It was an unwieldy system, as the tutors were expected to tackle too many subjects and the pace was reduced by the presence of many backward and idle students. In consequence, a parallel, semi-official system had emerged, in which private tutors were engaged by serious students for individual tuition or else by idle students in a last-minute attempt to salvage a degree. Everyone who aimed at honors was virtually obliged to supplement the regular college instruction with that of a private tutor.

Newman could not afford to engage a private tutor in his first year, but, on winning the Trinity scholarship, he was able to. So, in his second year, he and Bowden engaged the services of James Ogle, who had recently graduated from Trinity with a first-class degree in mathematics and, like other private coaches, was combining tutoring with his own reading until he succeeded in gaining a fellowship.* Not being *au fait* with the private-tutor system, Newman did not continue the extra tuition into his third year.

The third and final period of Newman's undergraduate existence began in April 1819 when he set himself the ambitious goal of seeking honors in both classics and mathematics and, as a consequence, dropped his unrelated studies to focus on his exams. Hard reading became the order of the day, and in the six-month approach to final exams, he was averaging twelve hours of study a day. He teamed up with Bowden to establish a study regime that ensured that exam preparation was never passive. But as December 1820 approached, he became unnerved by the thought that an academic triumph would pave the way for pride, and weakened by mental exhaustion, he began to panic, so much so that when the (public and essentially oral) exams began, he was nervous in the extreme and broke down. Instead of the double first predicted

* Fellows are the senior members of an Oxford college who, together with the college head, constitute its governing body. Two, three, or four of their number were elected as college tutors, and others could occupy positions such as junior or senior treasurer (i.e., bursar).

for him, the outcome was a bare pass in classics and not even that in mathematics.

Newman later attributed his failure to a lack of tutorial guidance, which left him, young and inexperienced as he was, almost entirely to his own devices. Years later, he came to realize that "at that time the very idea of study was new" and that just a handful of colleges—but not Trinity—had adjusted to the demands of the honors system; only they possessed the real tutors, shared the tradition, and—crucially—supplied the examiners.[9] But as it turned out, Newman's "toilsome years" were not without profit. In April 1822, against all odds, his talents were recognized by Oriel, the leading college of its day, which awarded him one of its coveted fellowships. Back in November 1819, he had become a member of Lincoln's Inn with a view to a career in law, but six months after winning the fellowship at Oriel, he decided to abandon his legal aspirations.*

FELLOW, CLERGYMAN, AND TUTOR AT ORIEL

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the common room of Oriel College was home to the academic talent of the day. The dominating tone was set by a group known as the Noetics, who sought to provide a defense of Christianity against Deists and rationalist Unitarians, and to shore up the Anglican Church against intellectual assaults by raising academic standards at Oxford, which together with Cambridge functioned as a national seminary. Drawing heavily on the works of Aristotle, the Noetics contended that truth should be pursued by means of reasoned argument, fearless commentary on all aspects of society, and a dialectical style of argument that manifested itself in constant cross-questioning. The Oriel common room created a new conception of academic life in Oxford; it was said to have "*stunk*

* Lincoln's Inn is one of the four Inns of Court (professional associations for barristers and judges) in London.

of logic."[10] Newman was entranced by the scholarship he found there and the daily interaction of mind with mind, and saw in it a pattern of university life that he was later to idealize in prose.

Newman arrived at Oriel during the college's golden years, when the provost* was Edward Copleston,† widely regarded as "the representative man of university culture,"[11] who had defended Oxford to brilliant effect in 1810 against attacks from the *Edinburgh Review* and over the following two decades inspired an intellectual renaissance in Oriel, and Oxford in general. The great teacher of his day, Copleston had developed a rigorous catechetical style of teaching and was the first to live out what became the Oxford ideal: *Multum*, *non multa*.‡ His abiding claim that "to *exercise* the mind of the student is the business of education, rather than to pour in knowledge"[12] influenced Newman profoundly, as it did countless others. Copleston entrusted the task of drawing the timid young graduate out of his shell to Richard Whately,§ who took Newman walking and riding over the summer of 1822 and conversed with him at length. As Newman recounts, Whately "was the first person who opened my mind, that is, who gave it ideas and principles to cogitate on"[13] and taught him to think for himself. Whately enlisted Newman's assistance in rewriting his textbook *Elements of Logic* (1826), which became the standard work on logic for the next two decades.

In June 1824, Newman was ordained a deacon of the Church of England and took up the curacy of St. Clement's, a rapidly growing working-class parish adjoining the university, and a year later, he was ordained an Anglican priest. As a result, Newman came under the influence of another Oriel fellow, Edward

* Heads of Oxford colleges go by the names of president, master, warden, dean, principal, rector—and provost.

† Edward Copleston (1776–1849) was provost of Oriel 1814–28 and in 1827 was made bishop of Llandaff.

‡ One meaning of the Latin (often given in the form *Non multa, sed multum*) is "Much, not many," though the looser translation "Depth, not breadth" gives the sense better.

§ Richard Whately (1787–1863) had been an undergraduate at Oriel before becoming a fellow. In 1831, he became archbishop of Dublin.