



Newman, Vatican II, and the Triple Office

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Abstract

Although not directly quoted in the documents of Vatican II, Newman should be regarded as an ‘invisible Father’ of the Council. This is evident the Council Fathers’ recognition of the importance of the historical situation as the place for practicing theology, a recognition of ‘the signs of the times’. We encounter revelation as fact rather than a set of hand-me-down propositions. Both Newman and Vatican II appreciated the role that the whole community of the Church plays in the articulation of doctrine. Newman invoked the model of the priestly, prophetic and regal office conferred on the Church by her Lord to challenge the increasing polarization between teachers and taught in the church and the damaging centralism that ensued. In a similar way the Council wished to restore a fruitful interplay between periphery and centre by acknowledging the collegiality of the bishops, and calling for a full involvement of laity in the life of the Church.

Keywords

Newman, Vatican II, Historical Mindedness, Triple Office, Consulting The Faithful

It was Paul VI who suggested that Newman was the ‘invisible Father’ of Vatican II, and many other have echoed this. Yet the Council texts contain no references to Newman’s work, nor any direct mention of him.¹ The origin of this claim can be identified in Newman’s passionate insistence on the need to understand revelation as a historical event, encountered first and foremost in the person of Jesus Christ, and subsequently in his indwelling presence, through the medium of the Holy Spirit, in the living communion of the Church. Revelation is encountered as fact rather than as a set of hand-me-down

¹ One exception might be provided by Andrew Meszaros’ suggestion that Yves Congar in drafting key passages of section 8 of *Dei Verbum* might well have had the work of Newman very much in mind (Andrew Meszaros, “*Haec Traditio proficit*”: Congar’s Reception of Newman in *Dei Verbum*, Section 8”, *New Blackfriars*, 92, (March 2011), pp. 247–254).

propositions. It is the difference between those who claim they possess a truth to be defended and preserved, and those who acknowledge that we are only time-conditioned pilgrims, struggling onwards with foot-sore and weary companions towards that fullness of truth which is found in faithful service of the Church's Lord. As such the task of theology is therapeutic,² or as Nicholas Lash would have it, interrogative: a consistent probing and challenging of that dangerous tendency so evident in certain schools of doctrine 'inexorably to absolutize the particular linguistic, ritual and institutional forms in which truth has found expression in the past'.³

I want to tease out two interrelated aspects of this theme: in the first place the recognition of 'the signs of the times', the point where we stand in history becoming the necessary place for doing theology; secondly, the role which the whole community of the Church is called upon to play in articulating the expression of belief. Newman spelt this out in a set of lectures delivered in the Catholic Institute in Liverpool during October 1853:

In that earliest age, it as simply the living spirit of the myriads of the faithful, none of them known to fame, who received from the disciples of the 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 most brilliant intellects, when they would lead them out of the narrow way.⁴

For Newman, Revelation, the Johannine Word, is, as it were, incarnate in history. George Tyrrell pointed out that the Church repudiates 'the notion of a sort of direct "telegraphic" communication between Heaven and the rulers of the Church'.⁵ In the sparkling irony of *Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine*, Newman himself opted for the metaphor of the faithful as mirror 'in which the bishops see themselves'; adding, as an aside, 'Well, I suppose a person may *consult* his glass, and in a way may know things about himself which he can learn in no other way'.⁶ The activity of theology is thus to be understood as a process of collective reflection going on within the

² The 'wounded surgeon' of T. S. Elliot's *East Coker* comes to mind.

³ Nicholas Lash, *A Matter of Hope*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), p. 150.

⁴ John Henry Newman, *Historical Sketches*, vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1906), pp. 209–10.

⁵ George Tyrrell, *Through Scylla and Charybdis*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1907), p. 360.

⁶ John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, edited by John Coulson, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961), p. 72.

community of faith and emerging as an expression of the Church's doctrine. This is set out in a passage from the Constitution on Revelation, which echoes in a remarkable way the passage already quoted above from Newman's, *Historical Sketches*:

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down... For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her.⁷

This historical-mindedness marks a significant change of direction. Newman, and perhaps Johannes Adam Möhler in Germany, were the first representatives of what Bernard Lonergan regards as the transition from a classicist to a historical world view. 'Culture' is now to be understood 'as... an ongoing process of self-realization, as an ongoing process in which the constitutive, the effective, and the cognitive meaning of Christianity is continuously realized in ever changing situations'.⁸ Newman, it will be remembered, took as his text for the sermon on the development of doctrine, the last of the *University Sermons*: 'Mary pondered all these things in her heart' (her *heart*, not her mind, note). Lonergan, who, as a student at Heythrop in the nineteen twenties went through the main parts of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* six times,⁹ explores the difference between the two approaches to doing theology in four important essays published in *A Second Collection*.¹⁰ He well sums up this dynamic turn to the contextualized subject in the third of these pieces:

For classicists the world is a finished product and truth has already been revealed, expressed, taught and known; its logic is deductive, propositional; it conceives itself normatively, not empirically... Historically minded theologians look at the world and at truth as constantly emerging; allow[ing] a much greater role to human experience.¹¹

⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 8.

⁸ Bernard Lonergan, 'Revolution in Catholic Theology', in *A Second Collection*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 234.

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, 'Theories of Enquiry: Responses to a Symposium', *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Bernard Lonergan, 'Transition from a Classicist World View to Historical Mindfulness', *A Second Collection*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 1–9; 'The dehellenization of Dogma', *ibid.*, pp. 11–32; 'Theology in its New Context', *ibid.*, pp. 55–67; 'Revolution in Catholic Theology', *ibid.*, pp. 231–238.

¹¹ Bernard Lonergan, 'Theology in its New Context', *ibid.*, 55–67. For Newman, too, there is a similar turning to the subject: 'self-knowledge is at the root of all real religious knowledge... God speaks to us primarily in our hearts. Self-knowledge is the key to the precepts and the doctrines of Scripture'. (John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1910), p. 42).

Such a position is clearly expressed in John XXIII's opening address to the Council on October 11th 1962. It was also what Newman was trying to tease out in the body of his own writings, already explicit in *The University Sermons* of 1843:

As the world around us varies, so varies also, not the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but the outward shape and colour which they assume... To the narrow minded and the bigoted the history of the Church for eighteen centuries is unintelligible and useless; but where there is Faith, it is full of sacred principles, ever the same in substance, ever varying in accidentals, and is a continual lesson of 'the manifold Wisdom of God'.¹²

For Newman, we come to the truth, in ordinary experience, as well as in religious knowledge, by an engagement of the whole person: by an accumulation of probabilities which gives personal certitude: the many, many fibres which, together, make a rope tougher, yet more supple, than a single steel cable. This is the theme he tackled at length in his phenomenological account of the process of knowing explored in *The Grammar of Assent* (1870) but it underlies all his thinking. This is not an attempt at abstract thought or speculation but, as Aldous Huxley appropriately called the book, 'an analysis of the psychology of thought'.¹³ Newman was attempting to demonstrate that 'faith gives real assent to a concrete reality'.¹⁴ David Pailin spells this out:

The nature of religious apprehension must not be allowed to obscure the fact that whereas a theological position may be reached as a conclusion of certain reasoning, a religious position always comes under the logic of commitment... Newman shows clearly that he is dealing with as it is found in practice, not with assent as it may be rationally justified.¹⁵

This was something he made clear in his early set of letters to *The Times*, the collection of which came to be known as *The Tamworth Reading Room* (1841), in a passage he thought so important that he cites it again at length in *The Grammar of Assent*. Reason might play an important part in our thinking, but there is far more to the mind than mere reasoning. Newman anticipates the approach of later phenomenological analysis:

The heart is commonly reached, not through reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts

¹² John Henry Newman, *University Sermons*, (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1871), XIV, p. 303.

¹³ Cited, C.S. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 148.

¹⁴ C.S. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, p. 149.

¹⁵ David A. Pailin, *The Way to Faith*, (London: Epworth Press, 1969), pp. 171–2.

and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us... After all, man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise... Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof.¹⁶

For Newman truth can only be approached with homage, with preparation of the heart. This is what Newman calls certitude as opposed to certainty:

certitude is a mental state: certainty is a quality of propositions. Those propositions I call certain, which are sure that I am certain of them. Certitude is not a passive impression made upon the mind from without, by argumentative compulsion, but in all concrete questions... it is an active recognition of propositions as true... the sole and final judgement on the validity of an inference in concrete matter is committed to the personal action of the ratiocinative faculty – the Illative Sense.¹⁷

Truth for Newman is personal and every person has to come by himself, or herself, to such a recognition. Faith is a principle of action, a risk, a venture. The Church presents its faith not in syllogisms but in the love Christians show for each other, in lives of the saints. Perhaps I have wandered rather from my theme, but it is perhaps significant that many bishops experienced the Council as a new Pentecost, and commented that their renewed discovery of the experience of being Church was more important to them than the documents the Council produced. Newman might well have agreed.

Both Newman and John XXIII regarded themselves as historians, rather than theologians. They turned instinctively to positive rather than speculative theology. Newman had taught himself historical theology through the study of the Fathers and was thus a precursor of the later French *nouvelle théologie* and the *ressourcement* which provided so formative a context for Vatican II.¹⁸ He never found himself at ease with the style of theology represented by the Roman schools of the mid-nineteenth century which was later to develop into neo-scholasticism and the Denzinger-style proof-text, propositional theology of the manuals. The Roman schools were equally

¹⁶ John Henry Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1924), pp. 393–295.

¹⁷ John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1924), pp. 344–5.

¹⁸ As Jürgen Mettepenningen has demonstrated, *nouvelle théologie*, was a phrase coined by Pietro Parente, from 1965 Secretary to the Holy Office, in 1942, and used by those who wished to condemn the movement; those included in this appellation generally disowned the title (Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2010), p. 4).

suspicious of Newman for a considerable period after Bishop T. J. Brown had delated him to Rome for his paper 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine' in 1859, and the muddle caused by Wiseman and Manning in failing to defend Newman when they visited Propaganda.

The young Angelo Roncalli taught Church History and, in 1906, discovered what might have proved to be his life's work, the 39 volumes of St Charles Borromeo's visitation records of the diocese of Bergamo, offering a picture of how the great post-Tridentine Cardinal set about the reform of a diocese, which he set about editing: the work was finished only on the eve of his becoming Pope. Like Newman, Roncalli saw 'history as the great teacher of life' which he spelt out in his opening address to the Council. This was what gave both such a sense of confidence in the face of the so-called prophets of doom and gloom. It was for the same reason that John XXIII insisted that Council should look to the signs of the times and be pre-eminently pastoral in nature. This was not merely a comment about the outcome of the Council texts but about how the bishops and their theologians should prepare the texts themselves. They were to be the product of a process of listening, a dialogue going on within as well as outside the community of the Church.

It is worth reminding ourselves at this point of the concluding sentences of the address which shaped the agenda of the Council:

... Our task is not merely to hoard this precious treasure, as though obsessed with the past, but to give ourselves eagerly and without fear to the task that the present age demands of us – and in so doing we will be faithful to what the Church has done in the last twenty centuries... But this authentic doctrine has to be studied and expounded in the light of the research methods and the language (*formulazione letteraria*) of modern thought. For the substance of the ancient deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another (*Altra e la sostanza dell' antica dottrina del depositum fidei ed altra e formulazione del suo rivestimento*). And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character...¹⁹

This is a fine summary of Newman's idea of the development of doctrine. We are reminded of that sentence from *The Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*: 'In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have

¹⁹ Text and translation in Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), pp. 431–2; see pp. 429–434.

changed often'.²⁰ It is important to remember the context of this, I think, rather misunderstood quotation:

[an idea] remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and fall around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles appear in new forms. It changes with them in order to remain the same.²¹

Newman's view of history is eschatological, not apocalyptic (if one can make such a distinction²²). It is not about end of the world scenarios, the doom and gloom of those John XXIII attacks, nor, it must be said, about mere human, earthly progress, scientific or technological. Newman would certainly have agreed with Joseph Ratzinger's expression of unease over *Gaudium et Spes*, and an 'almost naïve progressivist optimism which seemed unaware of the ambivalence of all external progress'.²³ Newman comments in the *University Sermons*:

It is indeed a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world, taken by themselves, as the doctrine of a creative and governing Power. But, however this be, the practical safeguard against Atheism in the case of scientific enquirers is the inward need and desire, the inward experience of that Power, existing in the mind before and independently of their examination of the natural world.²⁴

As we shall see, Newman certainly appreciated and demanded an educated laity; he was certainly not dismissive of science or any other academic discipline, but these played their part alongside faith, each in its proper place. This was something he made clear in *The Tamworth Reading Room* letters:

to have recourse to physics to *make* men religious is like recommending a canony as a cure for the gout.²⁵

Here he cast not so gentle mockery on Peel and Brougham's suggestion that education, an increase in secular knowledge, progress,

²⁰ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1890), p. 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965²), p. 68.

²³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, (New York & Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2009²), p. 227.

²⁴ John Henry Newman, *University Sermons*, X, 'Faith and Reason, contrasted as habits of Mind', p. 194.

²⁵ John Henry Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, p. 299.

made men better beings: '[knowledge] leaves man where it found him – man, and not an Angel – a sinner, not a Saint; but it tries to make him look as much like he is not as ever it can'.²⁶

Newman had become concerned at the increasing polarization between teachers and taught in the Church. The distinction between the *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and *ecclesia discens* (the learning church), a theme developed by German canonists and popular catechisms from the mid-eighteenth century,²⁷ had been exacerbated in the following century by the destruction of the theological schools across Europe by the devastations of Napoleon. His work on *The Arians of the Fourth Century* had taught Newman that the division between those teaching and those taught was never as clear as later argued: at times those taught were the teachers of faith, and those teaching members of the community of the faithful. In the concluding lines of his *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, Newman could comment:

the *Ecclesia Docens* is more happy when she has such enthusiastic partisans about her as are here represented, than when she cuts off her faithful from the study of her divine contemplations, 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.²⁸

Inevitably Newman could be rather more unbuttoned and forthright in personal correspondence than in his more formal published writings and his letters provide a useful perspective on his views on authority in the Church and its apparent suppressing of legitimate and creative dissent. As will be sensed from his correspondence at this time, 1863 was a particularly difficult time with the dashing of many of his hopes: the affair of the Catholic University; the fiasco over translating the Bible; being delated to Rome for the article in *The Rambler*. He is at his most bitter: 'great minds', he protested his 'need elbow room'.²⁹ Writing in March 1863 to Robert Ornsby, a married Catholic convert, for whom Newman had sought a job at the Catholic University in Ireland, he commented:

Truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely. As far as I can make out, this has ever been the rule of the church until now, when the French Revolution having destroyed the schools of Europe, a sort of centralization has been established at headquarters – and

²⁶ John Henry Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, p. 237.

²⁷ Yves Congar, 'Pour une histoire sémantique du terme "magisterium"', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 60 (1976), pp. 84–97, page cited 119.

²⁸ John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, p. 106.

²⁹ John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1927), p. 476. See also John Henry Newman to Emily Bowles, May 19th 1863, *Letters & Diaries*, vol. 20, p. 447. I am grateful to Dr Michael Sharratt for alerting me to these letters.

the individual thinker in France, England, or Germany is brought into immediate collision with the most sacred authorities of the Divine Polity.³⁰

Emily Bowles, like Ornsby, was one of Newman's closest confidants. She received a similar missive:

If I know myself, no one can have been more loyal to the Holy See than I am. I love the Pope personally into the bargain. But Propaganda is a quasi-military power, extraordinary, for missionary countries, rough and ready. It does not understand an intellectual movement. It likes quick results – scalps from beaten foes by the hundred . . .

. . . This age of the Church is peculiar – in former times, primitive and mediaeval, there was not the extreme centralization which now is in use. If a private theologian said anything free, another answered him. If the controversy grew, then it went to a Bishop, a theological faculty, or to some foreign University. The Holy See was but the court of ultimate appeal. *Now*, if I as a private priest, put anything into print, *Propaganda* answers me at once. How can I fight with such a chain on my arm? It is like the Persians driven on to fight under the lash. There was true private judgement in the primitive and mediaeval schools – there are no schools now, no private judgement (in the *religious*) sense of the phrase,) no freedom, that is, of opinion. That is no exercise of the intellect. No, the system goes on by the tradition of the intellect of former times.³¹

Newman is concerned here with a vital freedom of discussion within the Church and the legitimacy of different schools of opinion which allow the necessary cut and thrust of opinion as the truth is honed and clarified. He sees the dangers in privileging one particular school of thought: if this becomes the case the magisterium is, in turn, compromised and is in danger of becoming narrowed to a particular theological position rather than accepted as the authentic interpreter of theological opinion.

This was an issue which came to a head in the decades following the definition of infallibility at Vatican I and in the years of the modernist crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century. In their joint pastoral letter of 1900 on *The Church and Liberal Catholicism*, which won the acclaim of Leo XIII,³² the bishops of England and Wales taught a sharp distinction between two orders in the Church:

³⁰ John Henry Newman to Rober Ornsby, March 26th 1863, *Letters & Diaries*, vol. 20, p. 425–426.

³¹ John Henry Newman to Emily Bowles, May 19th 1863, *Letters & Diaries*, vol. 20, p. 447. See also the passage of Newman quoted by Congar in *True and False Reform of the Church*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), p. 205, note 8.

³² Leo XIII to Cardinal Vaughan and Bishops of the Province of Westminster, February 11th 1911.

The small body of chosen men, assisted by the Holy Spirit, who represent the authority of Jesus Christ; and the large body of the faithful taught, guided and guarded by the Divine Teacher, speaking through the audible voice of the smaller body. Theologians call the one the *Ecclesia docens* [i.e. the teaching church] and the other the *Ecclesia discens* [i.e. the learning church].³³

The learning church includes not only the body of the laity, 'but also of Ecclesiastics, and even Bishops in their individual and private capacity'³⁴ with an inevitable narrowing of the teaching church to the Pope and his immediate advisors. It was only a small step to an understanding which regarded the Pope as not speaking as the voice of the Church, but a voice from outside speaking to the Church. The English Jesuit, George Tyrrell, not the least acerbic of critics, wrote of the pastoral:

The bishops have mounted on metaphors as witches on broomsticks and have ridden to the devil. It is 'the sheep & shepherd' metaphor that does the trick. The sheep are brainless, passive; their part is to be led, fled, fleeced & slain for the profit of the shepherd for whose benefit solely they exist. Apply this to the constitution of the Church & where do you stop.³⁵

Tyrrell's is certainly an overstatement, but it is not without point with its emphasis on specialist knowledge as an essential qualification for governing, leaving the governed as mere obedient spectators. Karl Popper, in what he considered to be his war work, exposed in his *The Open Society & Its Enemies*³⁶ the dangers inherent in the insidious power of the notion of guardians/hierarchies developed by Plato in *The Republic* and *Laws*.³⁷

It was not only the eccentric and unfortunately influential papal confidante, Mgr. George Talbot, who could denigrate the laity in his oft-quoted quip to Cardinal Manning: 'What is the province of the

³³ *The Church and Liberal Catholicism*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1900), p. 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 9.

³⁵ George Tyrrell to Friedrich von Hügel, February 20th 1901, BL, Add MSS. 44927.155, cited in Lawrence F Barmann, *Baron Friedrich von Hügel and the Modernist Crisis in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 151. The Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who looked to Newman as his mentor, had no trouble in accepting the same metaphor as perfectly appropriate in his criticism of the Oxford Catholics among whom he had worked: 'I believe that they criticised what went on in our church a great deal too freely, which is d—d impertinence of the sheep towards the shepherd, and if it had come markedly before me I shd. have given them my mind' (Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, Oct 22nd 1879, *Selected Letters*, ed. Catherine Phillips, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 133).

³⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, vol. 1, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

³⁷ Plato *Republic* 376–403, 414–15, 457–461; *Laws* 909a. For a rather different example see W Ullmann, *The Relevance of Medieval Ecclesiastical History: An Inaugural Lecture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain? These matters they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters, they have no right at all'.³⁸ Even as level-headed a man as Bishop Ullathorne adopted a similar position. Newman thought otherwise. For Newman the laity could not be regarded as merely passive recipients of divine teaching: his approach was so much more subtle. He was to challenge Bishop Ullathorne in conversation, revealing that depth of humour sometimes overlooked in his writings, and, commenting to a friend, remarked 'He [Ullathorne] said something like, "Who are the laity?" I answered that the Church would look foolish without them – *not* those words'.³⁹ This was a theme Newman had already explored in his first book *The Arians of the Fourth Century* and was to develop in his important essay *On Consulting the Laity on Matters of Doctrine*: 'In all times the laity has been the measure of the Catholic spirit . . . that is why I am accustomed to lay great stress on the *consensus fidelium* as an important channel of tradition.'⁴⁰

Of course the English hierarchy has been free from the oversight of Propaganda since 1908, but one does not have to look far to see echoes of Newman's comments in even contemporary dealings between the local Churches and Roman authorities. We might think of the process of the implementation of the new text of our liturgy, which leaves many questions unanswered. It is reflected in the recent intervention of the Theological Committee of the American Bishops' Conference in their inappropriate criticisms of Elizabeth Johnson's fine book, *Quest for the Living God*, or the more recent castigations made against the integrity of the journal, *Theological Studies*.

Newman turned from this essentially adversarial metaphor of sheep and shepherd, with the shepherd as gatekeeper and guardian over the truth, to the patristic model of pastors as primarily witnesses to the belief of their churches. His thinking on the ideal functioning of the Church was sketched out in an extended 1877 introduction to the two volume collection of Anglican essays published as *The Via Media*, the first volume containing his essay *On the Prophetical*

³⁸ E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, London, 1895, vol. 2, p. 318.

³⁹ Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, XIX, p. 141

⁴⁰ Newman, *On Consulting the Laity in Matters of Doctrine*, p. 63. Compare the passage in *The Present Position of Catholics in England*: '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 their history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity . . . In all times the laity have been the measure of the Catholic spirit . . . And one immediate effect of your being able to do all this will be your gaining that proper confidence in self which is so necessary for you. You will then not even have the temptation to rely on others, to court political parties or particular men; they will rather have to court you' (*Present Position of Catholics in England*, pp. 390–1).

Office of the Church.⁴¹ Newman grounds his discussion of coming to the truth of faith in the Church as a consensus between pastors and people, ‘the “*pastorum et fidelium conspiratio*” which is not in the pastors alone’.⁴² He fills this out by invoking the model of the *munus triplex*, the triple office of Christ, already touched on in a sermon of his Anglican days, ‘The Three Offices of Christ’.⁴³ This itself is an interesting concept because, although it is a theme which was touched on in the work of Eusebius and St John Chrysostom,⁴⁴ it emerged only with the appearance of the great mediaeval University centres, adding the *Studium* to the previously existing *Sacerdotium* and the *Regnum*,⁴⁵ and owes its development to John Calvin and the Reformed Tradition.⁴⁶ It was a theme which thus came late to Catholic thinking in Newman and von Hügel: it was picked up by the Catechism of the Council of Trent⁴⁷ but only came to the fore – I suspect independently of the thought of Newman – in the writings of Matthias Scheeben.⁴⁸ It appeared for the first time in Papal teaching in Pius’ XII’s *Mystici Corporis Christi* of 1943, drafted of course by the Dutch theologian Sebastian Tromp, as well as in *Lumen gentium* for which Tromp was to play a formative role in initial versions of the text.

Newman pictures the Church as consisting of a threefold inter-related skein of priestly, prophetic and regal offices. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. None can stand alone, and needs completing and complementing by its fellows. The priestly office, which belongs primarily to pastors and their flock, represents the call to holiness in the Church and has as its guiding principle devotion; its instrument emotion; but it can all too easily succumb to the danger of superstition. This is opposed by the regal office which belongs to the papacy and curia. Its task is to preserve the catholicity and

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⁴² John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, p. 104. As Congar points out: ‘this phrase passed (perhaps by way of Perrone) into the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* which defined the Immaculate Conception’ (Yves M-J Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), p. 327.

⁴³ John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1909), pp. 52–62.

⁴⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccles.*, 1.3; *Evang. Dem.* IV, 15; VII proem. John Chrysostom, In 2 Cor., hom 3, 7, cited Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1965, p. 205.

⁴⁵ Yves Congar, ‘Bref historique des formes du “magistère et de ses relations avec les docteurs”, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 60 (1976), pp. 98–112, page cited 104.

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Institutio*, Bk 2.15. It came to play a significant part in the shaping of the volumes of Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation in the fourth part of the *Church Dogmatics* (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, part 4, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*).

⁴⁷ See Jerome Hamer, *The Church is a Communion*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), p. 100.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

unity of the Church, with its guiding principle expedience or order; its instrument command, even coercion; its danger tyranny and ambition. A mediating role is provided by the prophetic office which is the function of theologians, 'theology [being] the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system'.⁴⁹ The task of theologians, guided by reason, is to preserve the apostolicity of the Church. Guided by the pursuit of truth, its danger is a fall into rationalism. Newman calls for the creative dynamism of dialogue in the life of the Church, itself a keynote of Vatican II which also put to the fore the idea of collegiality and the appropriate subsidiarity of life and thinking in the local church, a theme still remaining more popular in the realms of moral and social thought within the Church than in that of ecclesiology, and something which pertains particularly to the contribution made by the community of faithful in the life of the Church.

This theme is explored at length in works by both Jerome Hamer, O. P., and Yves Congar, O. P.⁵⁰ The latter's magisterial study of lay people in the Church, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* expounds Congar's rich theology of the laity in terms of the triple office. Hamer is more circumspect following more closely the rather narrow, and primarily juridical emphasis of *Mystici Corporis Christi*, which ties the triple office to the apostolic mandate of the bishops.⁵¹ In his *The Church is a Communion*, while offering a fine exposition of Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* in an appendix, he, too, relates the triple office to what he terms the hierarchical ministry,⁵² which of its nature excludes the laity as such.⁵³ Congar acknowledges this hierarchical principle but goes much farther in his positive evaluation of the function of the laity in the Church, commenting that 'the Church's solid tradition has always to join with the hierarchical principle (structure) that of communal agreement (life)'.⁵⁴ This is consonant with the seeds of development

⁴⁹ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media*, vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1901), p. xlvii.

⁵⁰ Jerome Hamer, *L'Eglise est une communion*, Les éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1962; Eng. Trans *The Church is a Communion*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964; Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat*, (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1953, revised edition 1964), *Lay People in the Church*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965).

⁵¹ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 26, 36.

⁵² Hamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–124.

⁵³ See the extended note which concludes: 'In short, the teaching of the priestly hierarchy is always *immediately related* to the three powers of the Church. It is the teaching of a head, it supervises doctrine, its most immediate aim is Eucharistic. Here again we meet with the power of jurisdiction, the magisterium in its twofold function of transmitting the message and checking on its authenticity, and the power of order. We for our part should incline to say: by virtue of his canonical mission, the lay catechist takes part only in the function of passing on the message. (Hamer, *op. cit.*, p. 147).

⁵⁴ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 247.

to be found in Pius XII's great encyclical on liturgical renewal, *Mediator Dei* (1947) which, referring as many as twenty-five times to *Mystici Corporis Christi*, offers something of a commentary on it. Here the Pope insists on the centrality of baptism for membership of the mystical body and by which 'as by common right . . . they participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ'.⁵⁵ This, in turn, was taken up by the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in firmly rooting the triple office of Christ in the sacrament of baptism,⁵⁶ and confirmed by the beautiful prayer in the new rite of baptism, which echoes the words of St John Chrysostom referred to above.⁵⁷ It is in his master-piece, *True and False Reform in the Church*, that Congar comes nearest to developing this theme, and realizing Newman's attempt to construct what Avery Dulles terms 'the dialectic between structure and life in the church', and in offering the reader a guide to necessary reform in the community of the Church.⁵⁸

Both Newman and Congar agree that the faith of the Christian community is something active 'and not solely in the realm of morals or mysticism but also in the order of thought, for faith itself has an intellectual content'.⁵⁹ The faithful bring their own lives to bear in living out the truths of faith as they pray together, study together, and, above all, engage with the text of the Scriptures. Newman in particular is concerned with regulating the ordinary life of the community of Christians, pastors and faithful, and offers the triple office as a mechanism which provides the checks and balances, the mutual process of listening, which brings harmony to the Church. Sometimes of course the hierarchical magisterium most appropriately performs its task by listening and by affirming what it hears. One thinks of the response of Gregory XI in returning from Avignon to Rome at the behest of St Catherine of Siena in 1377. One thinks of the naming of several women, including Catherine herself, as doctors of the Church, a powerful affirmation of the role of the laity as teachers in the ways of faith. One thinks of Ignatius of Loyola's enjoining a process of '*sentire cum Ecclesia*', which is far from a matter of submissive listening: Congar reminds us that what Ignatius in fact wrote was "*sentire vere in Ecclesia militante*" [Have a sense of the church bravely acting in the world], which restores to the faithful of the church their part in the life of the body'⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 92. For the significance of this theme for ecumenism see Jerome-Michael Vereb, "*Because he was a German!*": Cardinal Bea and the Origins of Roman Catholic Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006, *passim*).

⁵⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 11, 34–36.

⁵⁷ See note 44.

⁵⁸ Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, Translator's Introduction, p. xiii.

⁵⁹ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 291.

⁶⁰ Yves Congar, *True and False Reform*, p. 237.

Although *Lumen gentium* prioritized the theme of the participation of the Christian in the *munus triplex* through her or his baptism, John Mahoney sees teaching of the Constitution on the Church as remaining ‘rather unilateral’ and ‘still reflect[ing] a view of the church as sharply divided between the teachers and the taught’ in contrast to the ‘perhaps more mature Conciliar *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, which recognises . . . a strikingly more than passive role’ exercised by the laity.⁶¹

The laity may expect enlightenment and spiritual help from the clergy. But they should not consider that their pastors always have the expertise needed to provide a concrete and ready answer to every problem which arises, even the most serious ones, or that this is their mission. The laity, as enlightened with Christian wisdom and paying careful attention to the teaching of the magisterium, have their own part to play . . . The laity have an active part to play in the entire life of the church . . .⁶²

In conclusion, it is suggestive to compare Newman’s ecclesiological vision to that of a young theologian, who had in fact studied Newman in seminary. Brought to Vatican II as a *peritus* by Cardinal Frings, he published a series of pamphlets one after each session of the Council which were brought together and republished in 1966. He saw the spiritual awakening of the bishops as Church to be far more important than the texts the Council produced, and, writing strongly in favour of collegiality, claimed that:

the Church was first realized in the individual local Church, which was not merely a separate part of a larger administrative body . . . I believe that this rediscovery of the local Church is one of the most significant and pertinent statements of the doctrine of collegiality, for it again becomes clear that the *one* Church comprises the plurality of Churches, that unity and multiplicity are not contradictions in the Church . . . it is complete only when the bishop does not stand alone, but is himself in communion with other bishops of the other Churches of God’ . . . the individual Church is a self-contained unity fully embodying the essence of the Church of God, but . . . it is open on all sides through the bond of communion, and that it can maintain its essence as church only through this openness.

He pointed to the need for decentralization and looked to the development of what he called a ‘horizontal Catholicity’, emancipating the body of bishops and restoring the fruitful interplay between periphery and centre using the resources of bishops’ conferences to revive the synodal structure of the ancient Church and an Episcopal

⁶¹ John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 164.

⁶² *Gaudium et Spes*, section 43.

council in Rome to provide a counterpart to the Curia together with the rediscovery of the pope's patriarchal role, which would help to reaffirm the normal situations of the Church's life as the proper domain of the working out of collegial responsibility. He found what he felt to be the most significant example of what was to come in the first document to be promulgated by the Council, the document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which handed over to the local bishops' conferences the right to make decisions relating to the liturgy, seeking only a *recognitio* from the Holy See for its work. And the name of this radical and far-seeing *peritus*? – Joseph Ratzinger.⁶³ Following in Newman's steps, he sets us an exciting agenda. We live in hope.

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⁶³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, (New York & Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2009², pages cited pp. 179–80, 79–84, 34–5.