

## Newman on Consulting the Faithful: Context, Content, and Consequences

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### Abstract

Newman's article, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', which appeared in the *Rambler* in July 1859, has become a natural reference point when people consider the *sensus fidelium*. It is helpful, therefore, to know how the article came to be written and important to be clear about what it actually said. Newman was not supporting some loose exercise in democracy, but was pointing to a vital process for the health of the Church, and encouraging the lay faithful and their pastors to work together. There are lessons too to be learnt from the way people behaved in the aftermath of the controversy. The episode may also be seen as illustrating Newman's life in a nutshell.

### Keywords

Newman, *Rambler*, Lay Faithful, consultation, *Sensus Fidelium*, Giovanni Perrone

When people speak about the *sensus fidei*, they appeal regularly to the article written by John Henry Newman for the periodical the *Rambler* in July 1859, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine'.<sup>1</sup> It has become a kind of *locus classicus*. Indeed the appeal can be so automatic that those making it may sometimes have lost sight of what Newman actually said. It may, therefore, be helpful to recall the context, what caused him to write the piece in the first place, the content, the essential points he wished to establish, and the consequences, the response his idea received.

<sup>1</sup> 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', *Rambler*, vol.1, n.s., Part II, (July 1859) pp.198-230; cf. John Coulson (ed.), *On Consulting the faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, (London, 1986).

## Context

There is a line in Newman's Journal for 21 January 1863 that declares: 'Now from first to last, education, in this large sense of the word, has been my line.' It is the conclusion to a passage in which he has been reflecting ruefully on the blindness of English Catholics to their own needs. Their very blindness, he remarks, means they fail to see that they are blind. He is wanting to improve their condition by offering them better arguments for their position, 'a survey of their argumentative basis', a better awareness of contemporary culture, alerting them to 'their position relatively to the philosophy and the character of the day', supplying them with ideas more finely attuned to their purpose, 'giving them juster views', and so maturing their cast of mind, 'enlarging and refining their minds'. This is the education in the 'large sense of the word' that from first to last he had had in view, that had been his line.<sup>2</sup>

It had prompted his readiness to found a university in Dublin in 1851 at the invitation of Archbishop Paul Cullen. As the years passed, he came to feel frustrated by Cullen who, he observed to one friend, had treated him as 'a scrub'.<sup>3</sup> Finally back in England in 1858 he was keen to start a new school based at the Oratory in Birmingham. But then he found himself drawn into a crisis concerning the *Rambler*.

The *Rambler* was a well-regarded Catholic periodical that was being edited by Richard Simpson. Simpson was a committed Catholic convert, but he had ruffled episcopal feathers by publishing views critical of the bishops, especially with regard to education. Nasmyth Scott Stokes who was on the Catholic Poor-Schools Committee and himself a Government Schools Inspector, had written an article, regretting the bishops' refusal to cooperate with the Royal Commission on education. The bishops were fearful that the commissioners would be seen as inspectors (although they were not), and that their own authority would thereby be compromised.<sup>4</sup> There were some bishops who planned to censure the *Rambler* in their pastoral letters. Others, however, notably William Ullathorne, the Bishop of Birmingham, wanted to avoid that action which they thought would create a scandal. So Newman was drawn in. As a friend of Simpson's, he was

<sup>2</sup> Henry Tristram, (ed.), *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, (London, 1956), p.259.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Dessain et al (eds.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* xviii, (London, 1968), p.487; volumes cited hereafter as *L.D.*

<sup>4</sup> It may be worth remembering that the Catholic hierarchy had only been restored in 1850. These were early days. The bishops already recognized the importance of education and, even if mistaken in this case, were perhaps understandably anxious to safeguard their control.

asked to encourage Simpson to resign as editor which he managed to do. In return it was agreed that the threat of censure would be withdrawn. But in fact it was not, because Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, the Archbishop of Westminster, suddenly became anxious about the identity of Simpson's successor. Might it be the young Sir John Acton, for example, who would have been as obnoxious to the Cardinal as Simpson? As the situation developed, Newman came to see that in the circumstances he was the only person who would be acceptable to both the bishops and the *Rambler's* proprietors. He was appalled. On 31 March he wrote to Henry Wilberforce, 'I have the extreme mortification of being the Editor of the Rambler. I have never had in my life (in its time) so great a one. It is like a bad dream, and oppresses me at times inconceivably . . . I take it in an extremely ill humour.'<sup>5</sup>

Newman was not an unqualified supporter of the *Rambler's* tone and style; there were times when he thought it injudicious, intemperate, and erroneous; but he was a supporter nevertheless, because its intention was precisely to raise the status of Catholics by educating them and offering that better philosophical basis of argument that was so close to his heart.<sup>6</sup> In spite of his misgivings, therefore, he had accepted the position.

In May 1859, the first number he edited, he apologized profusely for any lack of respect that might have been shown on earlier occasions. He wished in particular to counter any offence that Scott Stokes's article had aroused. At the same time he did not wish to sell the pass. He spoke warmly of the bishops wishing naturally to know the views of the laity on matters that concerned them. He referred to the dogmatic definition of the immaculate conception five years earlier. 'If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted,' he noted, 'as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception, it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical questions, out of the condescension which belongs to those who are *forma facti gregis ex animo* [acting as models of their flock].'<sup>7</sup> If the view of the laity was sought on questions of dogma, how much more might it be sought on so practically immediate a question as education? This sentence with its reference to consultation provoked John Gillow to write to Newman on 12 May and protest about 'statements and principles which appear to me very objectionable'.<sup>8</sup> John Gillow was to play a crucial part in this episode.

<sup>5</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.96.

<sup>6</sup> See *Autobiographical Writings*, p.259.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 5.3; *L.D.* xix, p.129, n.3.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from John Gillow, *L.D.* xix, p.129.

He was born in 1814 and died in 1877. He had gone to school at Ushaw College in 1828 and stayed to prepare for ordination as a priest. He was to remain there for the rest of his life, teaching at different times Philosophy and then Dogmatic and Moral Theology. His lectures and replies to questions have been described as having ‘the precision and cogency of a mathematical problem’. He had that cast of mind. He relied on precise evidence, such as the ‘plain words of Scripture, the authoritative teaching of the Church, the infallible decisions of the Holy See, the testimony of reason, the irresistible evidence of physical or mathematical science’. These alone, it was said, ‘satisfied his mind’.<sup>9</sup>

Newman replied the following day, asking what ‘principle’ Gillow considered ‘objectionable’, and in a friendly letter two days afterwards Gillow answered that he found objectionable the reference to the faithful which suggested the laity because, he argued, that would mean in principle that the infallible portion of the Church would be consulting the fallible in order to reach an infallible decision. He described that principle as ‘at least *haeresi proxima*’.<sup>10</sup>

Writing the next day, Newman referred to a difference in usage between English and Latin. In English, he observed, to consult is to determine a fact, not to seek an opinion. And he illustrated his point by quoting Ullathorne’s pastoral letter in 1849 with regard to the immaculate conception. Ullathorne had wanted to know ‘the *feelings* of the laity’. Newman felt that strengthened his case. ‘Feelings’, he commented, ‘implies more than testimony to a fact.’ And he went on to quote Giovanni Perrone (1794-1876), an Italian Jesuit whom he had met while he was in Rome in 1846 and 1847 preparing for ordination as a Catholic priest. Perrone’s teaching qualified Gillow’s view that the Church’s infallibility resides exclusively in the teaching Church. Infallibility resides in both, he observed, *per modum unius*, ‘as a figure is contained both on the seal and on the wax, and primarily in the mind of the engraver’.<sup>11</sup>

Six days later, on 22 May, Newman received a visit from Ullathorne. The reference to consultation had in fact made him uneasy too. This was the memorable occasion, Newman recorded in a memorandum, when Ullathorne asked at one stage, ‘Who are the laity?’ and Newman replied, though not in these words, that ‘the Church would look foolish without them’. They were discussing the controversy surrounding the *Rambler*. In particular Ullathorne argued that the subjects raised were more suitable for books than periodicals. Newman countered by saying that to ignore these issues in periodicals would leave the field open to those who were

<sup>9</sup> See Gillow II, pp.477-8, quoted in *L.D.*xix, p.586.

<sup>10</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.134, n.3.

<sup>11</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.136.

hostile. It would mean leaving periodicals to the enemy. He also mentioned that he would be relieved to give up the editorship. Ullathorne, who had previously urged him to accept the position, then startled him by replying, 'Why not give it up?' And so he agreed to resign.<sup>12</sup> However, he could not leave immediately. There was one more number that he had to edit and he decided to use the opportunity by exploring more precisely how consulting the faithful was to be understood.

## Content

### a) *Clearing the Ground*

Newman began his article with the statement from his editorial in the previous issue: 'In the preparation of a dogmatic statement, the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception.'<sup>13</sup> That raises two questions, he noted: whether, in the circumstances, an appeal has been made to the faithful, and, if they have been taken into account, whether this was in fact consultation. So he started by clearing the ground.

'Consult', he argued, as he had explained to Gillow, does not mean take counsel or consult with, as it would in formal Latin, but rather to discover the fact of the matter, like consulting a barometer. A barometer is checked to know what the temperature is in fact; it is not being asked to offer an opinion. And he brought out the distinction with a neat example: 'A physician consults the pulse of his patient; but not in the same sense that his patient consults *him*.' The pulse is an index of the patient's state of health, and so that initial sentence could have stated, 'in the preparation of a dogmatic decree, *regard* is had to the sense of the faithful'.<sup>14</sup>

### b) *Perrone on 'conspiratio'*

Shortly after, Newman goes on to speak of his experience while he was in Rome, appealing to Perrone on *conspiratio*. While another Jesuit, Carlo Passaglia (1794-1876), had followed the rather static, ahistorical line championed by the Anglican Bishop George Bull (1634-1710), arguing that the Ante-Nicene writers were clear in their account of Trinitarian and Christological doctrines, already

<sup>12</sup> *L.D.* xix, pp.140-1, 150.

<sup>13</sup> 'On Consulting the Faithful', Coulson (ed.), p.53. Subsequent references are to this edition.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.54, 56.

affirming in effect the teaching of Nicaea, Perrone had been more hesitant and had seemed to Newman to say *transeat*. When asked about the difficulties surrounding the complex way in which these doctrines came to be affirmed, he had seemed rather to ‘lay a great stress on what he considered to be the *sensus* and *consensus fidelium*, as a compensation for whatever deficiencies there might be of patristical testimony in behalf of various points of the Catholic dogma’.<sup>15</sup> Perrone joined the pastors and faithful together, while also contrasting them. In this context, the faithful did not include the pastors: ‘Ex duplici fonte eum colligi posse arbitramur, tum scilicet ex pastorum, tum ex fidelium sese gerendi ratione’<sup>16</sup>

According to Perrone, to find the sense of the Church, what was believed in fact, it was necessary to investigate a range of evidence and so to discover what emerges from the *conspiratio* of pastors and faithful. This evidence, these *indicia*, he described as instruments of tradition. As the circumstances vary, so one may make up for the deficiencies of the other, as, for example, ‘the strength of the “sensus communis fidelium” can make up for the silence of the Fathers.’<sup>17</sup> And he went on, Newman observed, ‘to speak directly of the force of the “sensus fidelium,” as distinct (not separate) from the teaching of their pastors’, quoting Gregory the Great. And Newman concluded, ‘Thus Gregory says that, in controversy about a matter of faith, the consent of all the faithful has such a force in the proof of this side or that, that the Supreme Pontiff *is able and ought to rest* upon it, as being the *judgment or sentiment* of the *infallible Church*.’ Then he commented, ‘These are surely exceedingly strong words; not that I take them to mean that infallibility is in the “consensus fidelium,” but that that “consensus” is an *indicium* or *instrumentum* to us of the judgement of that Church which *is* infallible.’<sup>18</sup>

Newman went on to notice Perrone’s appeal to the French Jesuit, Dionysius Petavius (1583-1652), who quoted St Paulinus speaking of the Holy Spirit, breathing into all the faithful: ‘in omnem fidelem Spiritus Dei spirat’.<sup>19</sup> The Spirit does not merely breathe in the faithful, but breathes into them.

Newman expounded Perrone further and indicated his influence on Pope Pius IX’s preparation for the definition of the immaculate conception. He referred appreciatively also to Ullathorne’s pastoral letter in which he had spoken of pious belief and devotion as ‘the *faithful reflection* of the pastoral teaching’, ‘the people are a

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp.66-7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.68.

mirror, in which the Bishops see themselves'.<sup>20</sup> Then, having explained the basis for his position, he gave his understanding of *consensus*.

c) *The Nature of 'Consensus' and its Implications*

Newman indicated at once five key elements. *Consensus* is to be regarded, he wrote, '1. as a testimony to the fact of the apostolical dogma; 2. as a sort of instinct, or *φρόνημα*, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ; 3. as a direction of the Holy Ghost; 4. as an answer to its prayer; 5. as a jealousy of error, which it at once feels as a scandal.'<sup>21</sup> John Coulson has observed that the second and fifth points 'take us to the heart of Newman's teaching',<sup>22</sup> but it is important to recognize at the same time that what is described is a process: the teaching is recognized (1), because of an instinct within faithful believers (2), an instinct which is the fruit of the action of the Spirit (3), an action which takes effect through prayerful response to the Spirit (4), and is safeguarded by jealousy of error, an instinct which recoils from what does not ring true (5). So while the instinct which recognizes the teaching and the instinct which is sensitive to error are crucial, the forming of *consensus* within the Church is a whole process.

So far, it may be said, so unremarkable. However, in a memorandum he drew up three years later, reflecting on this episode in 1862, Newman commented, 'All would have been well, but for the unlucky paragraph in my July Number on the Arianizing Hierarchy.'<sup>23</sup> After speaking there of the bishops who were orthodox, the clergy who supported and guided the laity, of the fact that the laity had received their faith from the bishops, and that there were nevertheless some laity who were ignorant and others who had been corrupted by Arian clergy, he continued:

but I mean still, that in that time of immense confusion<sup>24</sup> the divine dogma of our Lord's divinity was proclaimed, enforced, maintained, and (humanly speaking) preserved, far more by the 'Ecclesia docta' than by the 'Ecclesia docens;' that the body of the episcopate was unfaithful to its commission, while the body of the laity was faithful to its baptism; that at one time the Pope, at other times the patriarchal, metropolitan, and other great sees, at other times general councils, said

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>22</sup> John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition*, (Oxford, 1970), p.115.

<sup>23</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.151.

<sup>24</sup> It was the time when St Jerome wrote, 'the whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian' (*Dialogue against the Luciferians*, 19).

what they should not have said, or did what obscured and compromised revealed truth; while, on the other hand, it was the Christian people who, under Providence, were the ecclesiastical strength of Athanasius, Hilary, Eusebius of Vercellae, and other great solitary confessors, who would have failed without them.<sup>25</sup>

This description of a time when there was a temporary suspense of the teaching Church, when there were bishops who failed in their confession of the faith, and there were untrustworthy councils, while the laity remained faithful to their baptism, was more than enough to rouse John Gillow again.

He wrote at length on 28 August. If he was right, he declared, in his understanding of the way Newman considered the Church as a whole to be infallible, 'there must exist a material difference between us on an important point of principle'. He criticized the notion that there had been a temporary suspense of the functions of the *Ecclesia docens*, the idea that the body of bishops had failed in their confession of the faith, and the article's final sentence which claimed that, when the laity were neglected, the implicit faith required of them would lead educated people to become indifferent and those who were poorer to become superstitious. And he concluded:

I fear that the tendency of this Article may be to induce speculative minds to think disparagingly of the infallibility of the Church, and to conceive that though the Church as a whole may be infallible, yet either of its parts, the *Ecclesia docens* or the *Ecclesia discens* may fail: or at all events, that if either of these parts be infallible, that infallibility does not reside with the *Ecclesia docens* but the *Ecclesia discens*. Thus they may be led to place the disciple above the Master. The step between this and placing private judgment above the doctrinal authority of the Church is not a wide one.<sup>26</sup>

Newman answered him quite briefly on 2 September. He explained that 'suspense' did not mean failure, and was not even 'suspension', but something far lighter, that the 'body of the Bishops' meant the actual mass of individual bishops at the time, not the formal *Ecclesia docens*, and he further explained the conclusion as meaning that the failure to engage the laity could make possible 'a sort of fides implicita which would terminate in' indifference and superstition. He described these points as 'differences of opinion in matters of interpretation'. What surprised him, however, was the assertion that Gillow and he differed 'materially in an important point of *principle*'.<sup>27</sup> Principles mattered to Newman. He defended

<sup>25</sup> 'On Consulting the Faithful', pp.75-6.

<sup>26</sup> See *L.D.* xix, pp.204-5.

<sup>27</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.206.



them fiercely. But he also became testy when what were in fact permissible alternative viewpoints, as here, were treated as principles. It was a running bone of contention in his relationship with W. G. Ward.<sup>28</sup>

Gillow's reply on 16 September is friendly, but dissatisfied with Newman's explanation. In particular, he observed, 'I did not assert directly but hypothetically, that we differ "materially in an important point of principle." I said that I *feared* this, and I grounded my fears upon the supposition "that the principle by which you consider the Church as a whole to be infallible is reconcilable with the views developed in the article." Thus the assertion was made to depend upon the nature of those views.' Gillow with his rigid approach exemplifies that cast of mind which tends always to see dangers lurking and so is cautious and defensive. Then he went on, 'the principle by which you consider the Church as a whole to be infallible *per modum unius*, I know not what it is'.<sup>29</sup>

In the light of what followed it is worth noting that on 12 September, so even before receiving Gillow's reply, Newman had in fact drafted for himself a kind of aide-mémoire, setting out his position. He wrote:

I mean

1. not that the (dispersed) body of Bishops were not sound in faith
2. not that they deliberately gave witness to or taught heresy,
3. but that there was a temporary confusion, arising from the number who got puzzled or were deceived or were timid or were heretics such, that, as a cloud obscures the heavens, so the testimony of all was for a time suspended, as being bishop against bishop (the point being the *ἁμοοῦσος*. and the communion with the Arians)
4. Baronius after Sulpicius (363-435) calls it an earthquake
5. St Augustine speaks of a *coeli obnubilatio* or such words – as then the sun does not enlighten when covered with cloud, so the bishops did not actively teach the doctrine of the *ἁμοούσιον*, while this state of things lasted.
6. As there may be gleams of sun during a cloudy day, so then there were gleams of confession in the midst of this confusion

<sup>28</sup> See *L.D.* xx, p.191, xxii, p.157.

<sup>29</sup> *L.D.* xix, p.207.

7. Of course quite enough (Athanasius was enough for this) to keep the people straight.<sup>30</sup>

### Consequences

After 16 September, Newman did not hear from Gillow again. Gillow came to correspond instead with Bishop Thomas Brown of Newport (1798-1880) who had also been disturbed by the article. Some years later Brown was to write to Newman, praising and thanking him for *The Dream of Gerontius*,<sup>31</sup> and later still he wished Newman to accompany him to the Vatican Council as his theologian. Nothing came of that and in the event Brown himself became too unwell to attend the Council. However, at this time he shared Gillow's view of Newman's article, complaining about it to Rome twice in October and later, on request, sending a translation.

Newman heard about the complaint in the November, but only began to respond when Bishop Ullathorne, who had been in Rome, returned and contacted him in the new year. On 19 January he sent a letter to Cardinal Wiseman because he was actually in Rome at that time. He made three requests. He wanted to know which passages in the article were thought to require explanation; he asked for a copy of the translation that had been read;<sup>32</sup> and he asked to be told which dogmatic propositions the passages had been represented as infringing or impairing. He went on to promise his wholehearted acceptance of the dogmatic propositions, to explain the article in strict accordance with them, and to show that the English text and the context of the article were consistent with the propositions. And he concluded in a way that was clipped and characteristic:

I marvel, but I do not complain, that, after many years of patient and self denying labour in the cause of Catholicity, the one appropriate acknowledgment in my old age should be considered to consist in taking advantage against me of what is at worst a slip of the pen in an anonymous un-theological paper. But I suppose it is a law of the world, that those who toil much and say little, are little thought of.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *L.D.* xix, pp.206-7, n.3.

<sup>31</sup> See *L.D.* xxii, p.39.

<sup>32</sup> This was significant. In particular Brown had translated 'general councils' as 'concilia oecumenica', although there were none between 325 and 381, and 'the body of bishops' as 'corpus episcoporum', which gave a formal weight to the expression that Newman had not intended. He came in time to realize, however, that his particular references to suspense, general councils, and the body of bishops could be open to misinterpretation. (See Newman's explanation in the appendix to his later edition of *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, (uniform edition, 1871), pp.466-68).

<sup>33</sup> *L.D.* xix, pp.289-90.

What happened next is not entirely clear. Wiseman received the letter and either the letter or its requests were forwarded to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to whom the complaint about Newman had been made. There is a minute preserved in Propaganda's archives. Statements were then drawn up by Propaganda and sent to Wiseman on 30 January. But then nothing further was done. Wiseman became unwell at about that time and was also preoccupied. He was wanting to resolve the dispute over Archbishop George Errington and remove him from his position as coadjutor with right of succession. Henry Manning who was in Rome with Wiseman sent Newman a letter, but not until 29 April. He explained that the matter would be dealt with when the Cardinal returned.<sup>34</sup> But after that there was silence. Newman thought that all was, therefore, well, while Propaganda interpreted his silence as recalcitrance or disobedience.

It would be easy to blame Manning for being negligent, as people were to assume later, supposing him to have been content to leave Newman under a cloud in Rome.<sup>35</sup> However, at this time he and Newman, although never the closest of friends, were still on friendly terms. It may also be significant to remember that this year, 1860, was the time when the campaign for Italian unification was building seriously with the threat to the temporal power of the papacy that that entailed. The cause of the Pope's temporal power was one that Manning supported passionately. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the controversy arising from an article in a periodical was not a priority for him.

The matter rested there till 1867. By that time, another issue had arisen. It was being claimed that the Oratory School, which Newman had founded, was preparing its pupils for Oxford entrance, contrary to the wishes of the Roman authorities. So Ambrose St John, Newman's good friend and fellow Oratorian who was the headmaster of the School, went to Rome to settle the question. However, on his arrival he soon discovered that, rather than the school and university issue, there was far more concern about Newman's failure to reply to Propaganda's questions relating to the *Rambler* article. On 12 May Ambrose was finally able to show Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, the Prefect of Propaganda, a copy of Newman's letter to Wiseman. Barnabò was astonished. 'Why, Cardinal Wiseman was at Propaganda,' he declared, perhaps disingenuously, 'and we never heard of this.'<sup>36</sup> And so the matter came to be closed.

<sup>34</sup> See *L.D.* xix, p.333.

<sup>35</sup> See *L.D.* xix, p.333, n.2.

<sup>36</sup> *L.D.* xxiii, p.226, n.1.

## Conclusion

In 1863, thinking over what had happened to him, in other words, between the controversy and its resolution in Rome through St John's visit, Newman reflected on events in a letter to his friend, Emily Bowles, on 19 May. She was wanting him to intervene in contemporary affairs more boldly. He replied:

This age of the Church is peculiar – in former times, primitive and medieval, there was not the extreme centralization which now is in use. If a private theologian said any thing 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 any thing 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 judgment in the primitive and medieval schools – there are no schools now, no private judgment (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. This is a way of things which, in God's own time, will work its own cure, of necessity; nor need we fret under a state of things, much as we may feel it, which is incomparably less painful than the state of the Church before Hildebrand, and again in the fifteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

The contrasting casts of mind were illustrated with some clarity when Ambrose St John was in Rome for that visit in 1867. He met and discussed the *Rambler* affair with Giovanni Perrone to whose work in part Neman had appealed. On one occasion Perrone suggested that Newman should write something further and bring in the controverted matter in order to explain it. St John replied that that would most likely lead only to further misunderstandings. Newman needed to be told what was wrong and needed to be retracted, and what was misleading and needed to be explained. On another visit Perrone would not allow that the teachers might have taught falsely. 'Teachers always taught the truth,' he declared, but then waved his hand in the air, which led St John to understand that 'there were reasons why they did not bring out the whole Catholic doctrine'. This conversation led St John to believe that, although sympathetic personally, Perrone held that Newman's views about the *ecclesia docens* were in fact erroneous. Keeping Newman abreast with events, he quoted him as saying, 'F. Newman when he has written on these questions looks at them not as we who have been brought up in the Catholic faith from our childhood.' St John then commented: 'He meant, I think, you viewed them (though with the best intentions)

<sup>37</sup> *L.D.* xx, p.447.

historically as a person not wholly in the secret would do.’<sup>38</sup> Ambrose St John’s letters capture well the Roman scene and a very Roman way of working.

As a whole, however, the controversy surrounding Newman and the *Rambler* is an episode that brings his life and mission into strikingly sharp focus. It begins with his commitment to education, to evangelizing and catechizing; it continues by illustrating his way of working, exploring the sources, returning to the Fathers; and it ends with his being misunderstood, his attempt to enhance the education of the laity being thwarted. Nevertheless, in due time, he was discovered not to have been so wrong after all.

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<sup>38</sup> *L.D.* xxiii, pp.222, 224-5.