Newman on Doctrinal Corruption

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen the appearance of major studies of Newmanian doctrinal development from various perspectives by such scholars as Andrew Meszaros, Christopher Cimorelli, Stephen Morgan, and Reinhard Hütter, responding in part to current historicist theological trends.[1] In this book, I aim to complement such books from a new angle by highlighting Newman's concerns about doctrinal corruption.[2]

1. See Andrew Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Meszaros, "John Henry Newman and the Thomistic Tradition: Convergences in Contributions to Development Theory," *Nova et Vetera* 19, no. 2 (2021): 423–468; Christopher Cimorelli, *John Henry Newman's Theology of History: Historical Consciousness, Theological 'Imaginaries,' and the Development of Tradition* (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 2017); Stephen Morgan, *John Henry Newman and the Development of Doctrine: Encountering Change, Looking for Continuity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021); and Reinhard Hütter, "Progress, Not Alteration of the Faith: Beyond Antiquarianism and Presentism. John Henry Newman, Vincent of Lérins, and the Criterion of Identity of the Development of Doctrine," *Nova et Vetera* 19, no. 2 (2021): 333–391. See also Tracey Rowland's forthcoming "John Henry Newman on the Development of Doctrine: A Via Media between Intellectualism and a Voluntarist-Historicism," in a volume edited by Juan Velez (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2022); as well as my chapter on Newmanian doctrinal development—responding to challenges posed by John T. Noonan and others—in my *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 175–216. In his essay, Meszaros shows both the strengths and the weaknesses of Francisco Marín-Sola's neo-scholastic approach, naming among the strengths the fact that Marín-Sola "affirms without reservation the role that affectivity and connatural knowledge play in the actual development of doctrine" ("John Henry Newman and the Thomistic Tradition," 462). The main weakness is that Marín-Sola exaggerates the logical demonstrability of *every* dogmatic development, not perceiving how much the premises have been shaped in ways that exceed the rules of strict logical demonstration. For her part, Rowland draws heavily upon two insightful essays by Heinrich Fries: "Die Dogmengeschichte des fünften Jahrhunderts im theologischen Werdegang von John Henry Newman," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3, ed. Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954), 421–454; and "Newmans Bedeutung für die Theologie," *Newman-Studien* 1 (Nüremberg: Glock und Lutz Verlag, 1948), 181–199.

2. Jan Hendrik Walgrave holds that councils and popes cannot err in solemn teaching, but he also admits that "the Spirit does not destroy the natural tendencies to deviate in the Christian community as a whole" (Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal*

In his famous Tract 90, which brought the Tracts to a rather sudden end in 1841 (due to the Anglican bishops' condemnation of the Tract), Newman begins by affirming that an ecclesial "change in theological teaching involves either the commission or the confession of sin; it is either the profession or renunciation of erroneous doctrine, and if it does not succeed in proving the fact of past guilt, it, *ipso facto*, implies present."[3] Newman does not here mean any kind of change. Rather, he means a rupture with solemn doctrine. It is this kind of change that is "either the profession or the renunciation of erroneous doctrine." If the Church were to repudiate one of its solemnly taught doctrines, this would entail that the Church either *has corrupted* or *is now corrupting* the apostolic deposit of faith, a sin indeed.[4]

Today, however, some Catholic theologians toss around the term "development" with little concern about doctrinal corruption. In some circles, the term "development" has come to function like a magician's hat that can unproblematically contain almost anything, even including the occasional (or constant!) rupture of solemnly taught doctrine. In such cases, the notion of an apostolic deposit of faith has faded into the mists, to be replaced by the notion that the Church "develops" doctrine by changing its doctrines to promote a universal religious experience that is expressed differently in every era.

Nothing could be further from Newman's own perspective on

Development [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], 383). This point was never far from Newman's mind. See also Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian: The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works*, trans. A. Littledale (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960). Here Walgrave argues, with religious liberalism in view, that Newman achieved a powerful synthesis: "In avoiding both Scylla and Charybdis, in rejecting neither the logical structure of development nor its vital connection with the whole person, he proved most convincingly the balance and force of his genius" (Walgrave, 299).

3. John Henry Newman, "Tract 90: Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles," in *Tracts for the Times*, ed. James Tolhurst (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 383–475, at 384.

4. See Terrence Merrigan, "Newman and Theological Liberalism," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 3 (2005): 605–621; Edward Short, "Newman and the Liberals," in *Newman and History* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2017), 135–202. See also David Newsome, "Newman and Oxford," in *Newman: A Man for Our Time*, ed. David Brown (London: SCK, 1990), 35–51, at 41.

doctrinal development and the "dogmatic principle," which entails that divine truths are necessarily and adequately, even if imperfectly, expressible in human words.[5] Throughout his career, Newman passionately engaged with questions regarding the doctrinal corruption of the apostolic deposit of faith. Indeed, Newmanian doctrinal development cannot be understood outside this context, so caught up was Newman in responding to concerns about doctrinal corruption brought by some of the preeminent Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, and secular thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Bishop Robert Barron aptly associates Newman with the view that "one of the surest signs that the faith is developing properly is that Catholics stubbornly think about the data of revelation."[6] To think in faith about the revealed mysteries is to treasure them as true. When Christians make ontological truth-claims about the revealed mysteries, it follows that these truths can be denied or misunderstood—as happens in doctrinal corruption. It should not surprise us that Newman fully grasped "the difficulty . . . and hazard of developing doctrines" in the above truth-bearing sense, and therefore he applauded the "strong feelings and energetic acts and severe sufferings which age after age have been involved in the maintenance of the Catholic dogmas" against the danger of doctrinal corruption.[7]

Nevertheless, in 1847 Newman's own brother-in-law, James Mozley, published a scathing book-length review of *An Essay on the Development of*

5. See Andrew Meszaros, "Cardinals Newman and Scheffczyk on the Development of Dogma," *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 25 (2020): 411–437.

6. Robert Barron, *Renewing Our Hope: Essays for the New Evangelization* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 17. Barron is broadly referencing Sermon 15 in John Henry Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843,* ed. Mary Katherine Tillman, 3rd. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

7. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, 327–328. Newman preached this sermon, of course, as an Anglican (or Anglo-Catholic). As Barron observes, "Newman contended that ideas don't exist on the printed page but rather in the play of lively minds, which is to say, in the give-and-take of question, analysis, judgment, and debate" (Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007], 50).

Christian Doctrine. Mozley's concerns merit our attention at the outset. He argues that Newman has failed to acquaint himself sufficiently with the danger of doctrinal corruption. As a result, Newman has in consequence fallen into the deceitful embrace of Roman Catholicism. According to Mozley, the Anglican Newman rightly valued the development that was characteristic of the earliest Church. What the Catholic Newman fails to see is that, in Roman Catholicism, such "development goes on farther" and engenders a poisonous brew of doctrinal corruption.[8] In Mozley's view, despite Newman's best intentions, his theory amounts to a repurposing of the old religious liberal idea that Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation and the Trinity developed progressively over time—as for religious liberals such doctrines did, namely, out of the original experience of Jesus as a very good man.[9] Even if Newman has in fact not fallen into religious liberalism, Mozley deems that Newman's post-1845 view of Roman Catholic doctrinal development could be plausible only if one ignored the problem of "corruption by excess"—that is, doctrinal corruption by exaggeration within the same "type."[10]

8. J.B. Mozley, *The Theory of Development: A Criticism of Dr. Newman's* Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (London: Rivington, 1878), 26. This edition is a reprint of Mozley's review, published originally in the *Christian Remembrancer*. Mozley argues that Newman's position runs counter not only to that of Newman's Catholic critic Orestes Brownson but also to that of eminent Catholics such as Nicholas Wiseman and Giovanni Perrone. Mozley sums up the problem with Newman's theory: "It has to convert explanation into growth, new expression into new substance; to raise the definition of a truth,—because it moulds it into mere verbal accuracy,—into truth's rising manhood compared with former infancy, into the plant compared with the seed; it is to be obviously hollow and bombastic. Nor is this all which the new hypothesis [doctrinal development of Roman Catholic doctrine] has to do, for it has to explain away the loud, clear, unanimous assertion of the whole Nicene Church that its doctrine was not a development" (Mozley, 217). The solution, says Mozley, is to follow the Anglican approach of distinguishing between "Nicene doctrines and Roman, between primitive and later" (Mozley, 218). Like other commentators, Mozley also presses the question of what, if anything, Newman deems to belong explicitly to the original apostolic deposit of faith. Newman tried to make this aspect clearer in his 1878 edition.

9. Mozley devotes many pages to challenging Newman's claim that most pre-Nicene Fathers were subordinationists in Christology, a claim that the Anglican Newman had denied.

10. Mozley, 34. Thus, Mozley responds to Newman's discussion of "preservative additions" by remarking, "Whereas then the ordinary charge maintained by English divines against the Roman system is, as we have said, that of exaggeration and abuse in exaggeration, we

I think Newman addresses such concerns about doctrinal corruption far more successfully than Mozley supposes. But the aim of the present book is to place front and center the issue of doctrinal corruption that Mozley identifies and that Newman equally recognizes to be decisive. I explore Newman's responses to five challenges regarding doctrinal corruption, articulated respectively by Edward Gibbon, Richard Hurrell Froude, Francis Newman, Edward Bouverie Pusey, and Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger. Whenever Newman thinks about doctrinal development, he always has the threat of doctrinal corruption in view. This enables his approach to doctrinal development to measure up to the seriousness of the Gospel promise regarding "the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever" (2 John 2).

In our day, as already indicated above, widespread religious liberalism often makes Newmanian doctrinal development seem passé: Newman's claims now appear "conservative." Much theological effort today goes into supporting the secular movement du jour, whether it be sexual, ecological, or socioeconomic; and the notion of enduringly true Catholic doctrine is frequently dismissed as naïve. Andrew Meszaros observes in his study of Newman and Yves Congar, "Contemporary Christian theology—of whatever tradition—is increasingly subject to a relativization of doctrine."[11]

Although the present book will focus with a firmly historical eye on

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have here a definition of corruption which excludes exaggeration from its meaning. With such a definition, an arguer of course proceeds with considerable advantage to vindicate the Roman system from all corruption" (Mozley, 36). Mozley's list of exaggerations or corruptions accords with that described by Peter B. Nockles (and thus accords with Newman's own earlier charges against Rome): "In High Church rhetoric, Rome may have been a true church but she was deemed to have abandoned Antiquity by adding to as well as corrupting the Faith with tenets such as Transubstantiation, Purgatory, the Invocation of Saints, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Indulgences, and obligatory private confession. The necessity of the Reformation, defined as conservative restoration rather than radical departure, was deemed self-evident" (Nockles, "Sources of English Conversions to Roman Catholicism in the Era of the Oxford Movement," in *By Whose Authority? Newman, Manning and the Magisterium*, ed. V. Alan McClelland [Bath: Downside Abbey, 1996], 1–40, at 9–10).

11. Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church*, 240.

Newman and his nineteenth-century context, I am writing as a constructive theologian immersed in today's crisis of doctrine.[12] Rather than distancing me from the historical Newman, this context draws me closer to him and to his view of history. Newman understood that given the active providence of God, human history involves not only "historical depth, change over time, and causal relationships," but also the presence of "a transcendent intelligence that renders historical events as symbols of its will, connecting them according to a system of inner meaning."[13] I share this understanding of history, against the radical historicism that acts like a solvent upon Christian doctrine. Throughout this book, therefore, Newman's theology of history plays a central role.[14]

In notes made while preparing *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman urged that his forthcoming book should be read in conjunction with his Anglican Tract 85, "Letters on the Scripture Proof of the Doctrines of the Church" (1838). The main theme of his *Essay* is that true doctrinal development has been sustained in the (Roman) Catholic Church. But one of the *Essay*'s major subplots has to do with

12. Stephen Morgan points out, "In the last thirty years or so, attitudes toward Newman have often been proxies for other theological controversies" (Morgan, *John Henry Newman and the Development of Doctrine*, 11). I think this is because many of the theological controversies with which Newman engaged are very much alive today, and so to write on Newman is unavoidably to take a position with relation to contemporary controversies. Morgan argues, "Under the papacies of St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, such [Ultramontanist] appeals to authority were deployed in what might be called a more 'conservative' direction, but these appeals were often made without acknowledging the complexity and far-from-univocal voice of tradition. Those whose Ultramontanist instincts served more 'progressive' causes were prone to the same error—especially when claiming the warrant of the early church in support—but did and continue to do so without any serious consideration of the extent to which such innovations and changes are consistent and cohere with the antecedent teaching or practice" (Morgan, 269).

13. James Matthew Wilson, "Doctrinal Development and the Demons of History: The Historiography of John Henry Newman," *Religion and the Arts* 10, no. 4 (2006): 497–523, at 498. I make the same point in my *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

14. See also the three patristic principles shared by Newman and Henri de Lubac and their impact on the theological vocation, as shown in Theresa Marie Chau Nguyen, "Preservation of Type and the Continuity of Patristic Principles in the Legacies of Saint John Henry Newman and Henri de Lubac," *Newman Studies Journal* 17, no. 2 (2020): 22–40.

religious liberalism's impact upon all Christian churches and traditions. In Tract 85, Newman warns that even Christians may soon come to think that the Apostles' proclamation of the Gospel was merely a "historical event occurring eighteen hundred years since, which modified or altered the course of human thought and society"—rather than an event that was "specially divine in its origin, and directly acting upon us."[15] Tract 85 emphasizes that there really has been a divine revelation in Jesus Christ and it is imperative for us to hear and obey its contents. Newman states, "From beginning to end, Scripture implies that God has spoken, and that it is right, our duty, our interest, our safety to believe."[16] No wonder he deems doctrinal corruption of the Gospel to be so serious a threat!

Concerns about doctrinal corruption go back to the New Testament itself. Just to give one example, consider Paul's warning to the Galatians that "there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" by introducing "another gospel" (Gal. 1:7). The same concerns about doctrinal corruption are present in the early patristic writings. For

15. John Henry Newman, "Holy Scripture in Its Relation to the Catholic Creed," in Newman, *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*, ed. Gerard Tracey and James Tolhurst (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 109–235, at 232. Newman adds, "This is what the Age is coming to. . . . We know it denies the existence of the Church as a divine institution: it denies that Christianity has been cast into any particular social mould. Well: but this, I say, is not all; it is rapidly tending to deny the existence of any system of Christianity either; any creed, doctrine, philosophy, or by whatever other name we designate it. Hitherto it has been usual, indeed, to give up the Church, and to speak only of the covenant, religion, creed, matter, or system of the Gospel; to consider the Gospel as a sort of literature or philosophy, open to all to take and appropriate, not confined to any set of men, yet still a real, existing system of religion. This has been the approved line of opinion in our part of the world for the last hundred and fifty years; but now a further step is about to be taken. The view henceforth is to be, that Christianity does not exist in documents, any more than in institutions; in other words, the Bible will be given up as well as the Church. It will be said that the benefit which Christianity has done to the world, and which its Divine Author meant it should do, was to give an impulse to society, to infuse a spirit, to direct, control, purify, enlighten the mass of human thought and action, but not to be a separate and definite something, where doctrine or association, existing objectively, integral, and with an identity, and forever, and with a claim upon our homage and obedience" (Newman, 232–233). See also Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 129.

16. Newman, "Holy Scripture in Its Relation to the Catholic Creed," 233.

instance, Ignatius of Antioch commands the Trallians to "partake of Christian food exclusively; abstain from plants of alien growth, that is, heresy."[17] Ignatius of Antioch was faced with proto-Gnostic Christian thinkers who argued that Jesus' "suffering was but make-believe."[18] Had this error taken hold in the Church, the truth of the Gospel would have been decimated. Similarly, at the end of the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons combated various Gnostic Christian teachings, including the notion that the female deity Achamoth brought forth the Father, who on the Gnostic view is only "God of everything outside of the Pleroma, being the creator of all animal and material substances."[19]

In the tradition of Paul and the early Church Fathers, Newman cares about doctrinal corruption not due to a narrow dogmatism but out of love for the life-giving "gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast" (1 Cor. 15:1–2).[20] In Newman's era, the fundamental question for Christians was whether there has been a

17. Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Trallians," in *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. and ed. James A. Kleist (Westminster, MD: Newman Bookshop, 1946), 75–79, at 77.

18. Ignatius of Antioch, 78.

19. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.5, in *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 1 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 315–567, at 322.

20. Against defensiveness, narrowness, and dogmatism, see John Henry Newman, Sermon 14: "Wisdom, as Contrasted with Faith and with Bigotry," in Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1943*, ed. Mary Katherine Tillman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Press, 1997), 278–311, at 307–308, at 311: "Narrow minds have no power of throwing themselves into the minds of others. They have stiffened in one position, as limbs of the body subjected to confinement, or as our organs of speech, which after a while must learn new tones and affections. They have already parceled out to their own satisfaction the whole world of knowledge; they have drawn their lines, and formed their classes, and have given to each opinion, argument, principle, and purity, its own locality; they profess to know where to find every thing; and they cannot learn any other disposition. . . . They think that any one truth excludes another which is distinct from it, and that every opinion is contrary to their own opinions which is not included in them. . . . Let us ever make it our prayer and our endeavour, that we may know the whole counsel of God, and grow into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that all prejudice, and self-confidence, and hollowness, and unreality, and positiveness, and partisanship, may be put away from us under the light of Wisdom, and the fire of Faith and Love; till we see things as God sees them, with the judgement of His Spirit, and according to the mind of Christ."

divinely given revelation with concrete cognitive content. Believing that God has spoken in Jesus Christ, and believing that this divine revelation has been faithfully taught in Scripture and handed on by the Church, Newman nevertheless affirmed these truths in a manner that was, in Frederick Aquino's words, "profoundly dynamic, multifaceted, contextual, integrative, and existential."[21] It is clear that Newman's complex arguments in favor of Catholic doctrine "polarize[d] the theological landscape" of his day, both during his Anglican years and after his conversion.[22] But his goal was consistently to help the Church avoid the deformation described by Reinhard Hütter: "Without being rooted in the original deposit of faith, without a constant return to revelation received in scripture and in sacred tradition, the church would cease to be apostolic in its doctrinal substance; she would betray the teaching of the Gospel."[23]

For some, like Newman's brother-in-law Mozley, it may seem that Roman Catholic bishops meeting in council, or the (infallible) pope by himself, have the power to contradict the Gospel's contents at will. Are not bishops merely powerful men who often do not include the laity in their deliberations and who may lack biblical erudition? In his study of the Newman brothers (John and Francis), William Robbins sharpens this question. He argues that the dogma of papal infallibility poses "a cruel dilemma for a Church which has for so long justified authoritarian

21. Frederick D. Aquino, *An Integrative Habit of Mind: John Henry Newman on the Path to Wisdom* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 14.

22. Aquino, 14. Aquino is here warning against how "people from various perspectives employ him [Newman] to support their positions and polarize the theological landscape"—whereas I am pointing out that Newman understood that theological strife was necessary and important (with its inevitable polarization), although theologians must proceed—by God's grace—with charity and humility.

23. Reinhard Hütter, *John Henry Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits: A Guide for Our Times* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 129. See also Günter Biemer's emphasis on the subjective dimension of Tradition, in his "Newman on Tradition as a Subjective Process," in *By Whose Authority?*, 149–167, although Biemer's accurate points are diminished by his anti-neo-scholastic polemic; as well as Heinrich Fries, "J.H. Newmans Beitrag zum Verständnis der Tradition," in *Die mündliche Überlieferung*, ed. Michael Schmaus (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1957), 33–122; and Gottlieb Söhngen, *Kardinal Newman: Sein Gottesgedanke und seine Denkergestalt* (Bonn: Götz Schwippert, 1946).

intolerance by claiming unique possession of sacred truth."[24] For Robbins, the only path forward is for a liberal pope to employ solemn papal authority itself to *deny* the truth of the dogma of papal infallibility, thereby bringing to an end all Catholic claims to have faithfully developed doctrine.

While Newman recognizes that authoritarianism can become a temptation for powerful people in the Church, he does not think that the solution is to deny the Church's ability to faithfully hand on divine revelation under the Spirit's guidance. After all, such a solution would only further entrench the notion that Christianity is whatever powerful people make of it. By contrast, Newmanian doctrinal development holds ultimately that not powerful humans but God himself is in charge of the communication of divine revelation. In the course of my study, I will explore Newman's perspective in detail, including Newman's willingness to challenge powerful people both within and outside the Church. His concerns about doctrinal corruption should remind all members of the Church that we are accountable to the Triune God for the way in which we hand on the salvific realities that Jesus Christ wishes his people to know and share in.[25]

The Plan of the Work

My book explores Newman on doctrinal corruption by means of five comparative chapters. Each chapter treats a text from one of Newman's chief dialogue partners and then engages with one or more writings by Newman.

24. William Robbins, *The Newman Brothers: An Essay in Comparative Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 181.

25. I note here that the eminent Anglican convert Robert Hugh Benson was aided by reading Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* not simply by itself, but specifically in conjunction with W.H. Mallock's *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption: Being an Examination of the Intellectual Position of the Church of England* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900)—though Mallock's book was not nearly at the level of Newman's. See Benson, *Confessions of a Convert* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2016), 68.

Without claiming that Newman says everything that needs to be said, I hope to show that his responses to the challenges posed by the threat of doctrinal corruption remain profoundly instructive.

The first chapter compares Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* with Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Notwithstanding their sharp disagreement over Christianity, Gibbon was a major influence on Newman. The second chapter compares a seminal 1833 essay by Richard Hurrell Froude to two works by Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* and *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Froude's anti-Erastian theorizing was crucial in inaugurating the Oxford Movement—even if, going beyond Newman's and Keble's perspective, "Froude advocated the actual supremacy of the Church over the state in a truly theocratic manner."[26] As Newman remarked in looking back upon the Oxford Movement in 1850, the first principle of the Oxford Movement "was ecclesiastical liberty; the doctrine which [the Oxford Movement] especially opposed was, in ecclesiastical language, the heresy of Erastus."[27] Froude

26. J.H.L. Rowlands, *Church, State and Society: The Attitudes of John Keble, Richard Hurrell Froude and John Henry Newman, 1827–1845* (Worthing, UK: Churchman Publishing, 1989), 229. Edward Short observes more broadly regarding English Erastianism, "The Erastian nature of English Christianity was important because it was out of the National Church's subordination to the State that the Broad Church arose, and, in turn, it was out of the non-dogmatical accommodation of the Broad Church that liberalism in religion arose—the conviction, as Newman famously wrote, that 'No theological doctrine is any thing more than an opinion which happens to be held by bodies of men' and 'Therefore . . . no creed, as such, is necessary for salvation'" (Short, "Newman and the Liberals," 142–143, citing Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua and Six Sermons*, ed. Frank Turner [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008], 260).

27. John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching Considered*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, 1897), 101. Newman explains along lines that identify Froude's position with that of the Movement: "The writers of the Apostolical party of 1833 were earnest and copious in their enforcement of the high doctrines of the faith, of dogmatism, of the sacramental principle, of the sacraments (as far as the Anglican Prayer Book admitted them), of ceremonial observances, of practical duties, and of the counsels of perfection; but, considering all those great articles of teaching to be protected and guaranteed by the independence of the Church, and in that way alone, they viewed sanctity, and sacramental grace, and dogmatic fidelity, merely as subordinate to the mystical body of Christ, and made them minister to her sovereignty, that she might in turn protect them in their prerogatives. Dogma would be maintained, sacraments would be administered,

could be a difficult person to deal with, but Newman benefited from his keen intellectual and spiritual perception.[28]

Third, I compare Edward Pusey's 1865 *Eirenicon* with Newman's book-length response, not least because Pusey was one of the most important interlocutors that Newman had in the course of his lifetime. Fourth, I compare Francis Newman's 1850 autobiographical *Phases of Faith* with Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. The impact of Newman's family upon his life and career is something that deserves more attention, building upon such studies as Robbins' *The Newman Brothers* and Edward Short's *Newman and His Family*.[29] Fifth and finally, I compare Johann Joseph Ignaz von

religious perfection would be venerated and attempted, if the Church were supreme in her spiritual power; dogma would be sacrificed to expedience, sacraments would be rationalized, perfection would be ridiculed if she was made the slave of the State. Erastianism, then, was the one heresy which practically cut at the root of all revealed truth. . . . Such was the teaching of the movement of 1833. The whole system of revealed truth was, according to it, to be carried out upon the anti-Erastian or Apostolical basis. The independence of the Church is almost the one subject of three out of four volumes of Mr. Froude's Remains; it is, in one shape or other, the prevailing subject of the early numbers of the *Tracts for the Times*, as well as of other publications which might be named. It was for this that the writers of whom I speak had recourse to Antiquity, insisted upon the Apostolical Succession, exalted the Episcopate, and appealed to the people, not only because these things were true and right, but in order to shake off the State" (Newman, 102–103).

28. Sheridan Gilley describes Froude as "arguably the nearest thing that the Oxford Movement possessed to a continental radical of the right, and with his affection for the theocratic medieval Church, [he] could be called the Anglican de Maistre or founder of Anglican Ultramontanism" (Gilley, "The Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement: A Reconsideration," in *From Oxford to the People: Reconsidering Newman and the Oxford Movement*, ed. Paul Vaiss [Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 1996], 60–75, at 62). For Froude's bullying of his much younger brother James Anthony Froude—in addition to Hurrell Froude's sincere efforts to assist his brother—see Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude: An Intellectual Biography of a Victorian Prophet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). In Hurrell Froude's favor, however, stands "the manner in which he bore his sufferings in his last years" (Brady, 67). James Anthony Froude became a strong opponent of Tractarianism in particular and Christianity in general, and Brady cautions that the portraits of Newman found in James Anthony Froude's "Reminiscences of the High Church Revival: Six Letters," *Good Words* 22, nos. 1–6 (January–July 1880), 18–23, 98–102, 162–167, 306–312, and 409–415 are based on little personal contact with Newman, despite Froude's giving the opposite impression.

29. See Robbins, *The Newman Brothers*; and Edward Short, *Newman and His Family* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), especially chapter 4: "Frank Newman and the Search for Truth." What Short elsewhere says of James Fitzjames Stephen also applies fully to Francis: "For Fitzjames Stephen and so many men like him, the only acceptable course for [John

Döllinger's writings about papal infallibility with Newman's response in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* and its Postscript. Döllinger's depth of engagement with the historical issues involved in the dogma of papal infallibility is second to none. So far as I can tell, scholars have not yet sufficiently addressed the significance of Newman's engagement with Döllinger.[30]

The five chapters span Newman's career. His encounter with Gibbon comes first because he read Gibbon as a young man and continually returned to Gibbon's work over the ensuing decades. Thomas Parker comments, "Together with Locke, Gibbon was Newman's reading during the long vacation of 1818. . . . At first sight so incongruous, the influence of Gibbon upon Newman is often underrated. Yet it was considerable."[31] Gibbon interprets the history of the early Church as a history of doctrinal

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Henry] Newman after he found the Anglican Church untenable would have been to join Fitzjames Stephen and his friends in honest, foursquare skepticism. In their eyes, that Newman persevered in what they could only regard as groundless credulity was proof of his dishonesty" (Short, "Newman and the Liberals," 143; cf. Newman's brilliant sketch in "Faith and Doubt," in *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, ed. James Tolhurst [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002], 214–237, at 221–222, ending with the line: "When it [the world] sees a Catholic Priest, it looks hard at him, to make out how much there is of folly in his composition, and how much of hypocrisy").

30. Lawrence Poston makes an accurate offhand comment but does not expand upon it: "Here [in *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*] Newman's rhetorical task was even more complicated than in his response to Pusey, and much more hung on the result. He had to address Gladstone and the Protestants, Manning and the Ultras, and Döllinger and the liberal Catholic adherents on the Continent who still looked to Newman as a potential ally" (Poston, *The Antagonist Principle: John Henry Newman and the Paradox of Personality* [Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014], 218). Poston is similarly insightful, though brief, with regard to Newman's work in relation to Francis Newman. His remarks are worth quoting: "As Newman was closing his Anglican accounts in *Loss and Gain*, his brother Francis Newman was about to raise dust in another quarter. Both Newman's secession and the irritating air of certainty that pervaded his novel [*Loss and Gain*] had much to do with Frank's timing of his two works, *The Soul, Her Sorrow and Her Aspirations* (1849) and the autobiographical *Phases of Faith* (1850)" (Poston, 152). In a nutshell, Francis is writing against John. Poston suggests that John's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* is written (in part) against Francis: see Poston, 191–192.

31. Thomas M. Parker, "The Rediscovery of the Fathers in the Seventeenth-Century Anglican Tradition," in *The Rediscovery of Newman: An Oxford Symposium*, ed. John Coulson and A.M. Allchin (London: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 31–49, at 38. See also Edward Short's "Newman, Gibbon and God's Particular Providence," in *Newman and History*, 3–80. Short points out correctly that "for Newman, Gibbon's rationalist history adumbrates the liberalism that he spent so much of his long life opposing. Indeed, in many critical ways, Gibbon helped

corruption, whereas Newman, by 1845, interprets it as a history of doctrinal development. Second comes his encounter with Froude, whom he first met in 1826, and who, more than anyone else, moved Newman in the direction that produced the Oxford Movement. In my view, J.H.L. Rowlands is correct to esteem Froude as "politically and socially the most advanced, sophisticated and penetrating" of the Tractarians.[32] If Newman's friendship with Froude was particularly important in Newman's late twenties and early thirties, then arguably his interactions with his brother Francis grew increasingly important for Newman as his thirties progressed. As Francis was losing his dogmatic faith step by step, Newman was reassessing the Anglican Church but holding ever more firmly to dogmatic Christianity.

When in the early 1840s he began to break with his friend and collaborator in the Oxford Movement, Edward Pusey, Newman underwent the most decisive crisis of his life. After Newman's entrance into the Catholic Church, and especially after the definition of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX, Pusey challenged Newman to explain why this papal action was not clear proof that the case for doctrinal development that Newman had laid out in *An Essay in the Development of Christian Doctrine* was false. In the 1850s and 1860s, Pusey urged Newman to reconsider whether the Catholic Church to which he had converted was, in fact, a blatant corruptor of doctrine.[33] Lastly, in the early 1870s, Döllinger

to refine Newman's understanding of the errors of liberalism, which had their roots in the rationalist zeal of the Enlightenment" (Short, 6).

32. Rowlands, *Church, State and Society*, 78. Rowlands points out that "Froude, along with Keble, Newman and Pusey thought that ecclesiastical purity was essential. This does not, however, preclude an acute consciousness, for instance, of the Church's mission to society. Froude, like Pusey, was very aware of the need to Christianise the large industrial towns" (Rowlands, 78). As Rowlands goes on to say, Froude "realised in 1831 that the Church needed a blow-up. Without such a happening it could never right itself. In less emotive language, Froude realised that the position of the Establishment was certainly anomalous. Her rights were there by divine permission alone, as the state had secured by law the endowments which it could not have seized without sacrilege and had encumbered the rightful possession of them by various conditions calculated to bring the Church into bondage" (Rowlands, 79).

33. Newman, of course, had held precisely this viewpoint as an Anglo-Catholic, and so Pusey's concerns would have been no surprise to him.

demanded that Newman draw the line at Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility, since, for Döllinger, this was an evident instance of doctrinal corruption, grounded in historical falsehoods, theological overreach, and sheer power-mongering with no real regard for Scripture or the patristic Church.

In sum, my book follows Newman from his early reading of Gibbon, through the Oxford Movement which for Newman was rooted in his friendship with Froude, to his disagreements with his anti-dogmatic brother Francis, to his break with Pusey and the Anglican Church, and to the ecclesiastical and theological crises surrounding the Catholic Church's dogmatic definitions of Mary's Immaculate Conception in 1854 and papal infallibility in 1870.

Let me now describe the chapters a bit more fully. The first chapter shows that Gibbon presents an idealized portrait of pagan religious toleration. In Gibbon's view, Christianity both extends and worsens Judaism. It worsens Judaism because, despite the (supposed) fact that Jewish Christianity did not at first consider Jesus to be God, Christians soon proclaimed him to be divine in order to attract Gentile converts. Gibbon deems almost all Christian doctrinal disputes to be conflicts over unrealities. Just as Gibbon (having rejected the Catholicism to which he briefly converted as a young man) begins with the hypothesis that the Church has corrupted its doctrine from the outset, so Newman (on the path to embracing Catholicism) begins with the hypothesis that the Church develops but does not corrupt revealed truth.

Both Gibbon and Newman require Christians to confront the available historical facts. Though not philologists themselves, they both show "esteem for hard-core philological scholarship, as well as for the thorough documentation long typical of ecclesiastical history."[34] What differentiates

34. James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 110. Turner is here discussing Gibbon, not Newman. See also Turner's high praise for Barthold Niebuhr's "revolutionary" philological labor (in his historical research), notable perhaps since Newman drew upon Niebuhr: Turner, 169–170.

them is the way they link the historical facts together and the conclusions they draw. They both set forth hypotheses to account for how the available facts cohere. Their hypotheses are grounded, in part, upon what they deem to be antecedent probabilities. They exemplify the ways in which historical conclusions are affected by the historian's philosophy of history.

In the original 1845 edition of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman provides a lengthy excerpt from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, showing how Gibbon organizes his historical data and remarking that while Gibbon's hypothesis is plausible, Gibbon "has not mentioned its hypothetical character" and thereby gives the impression of more historical certitude than is possible.[35] Since Newman was in constant dialogue with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, it is appropriate that my first chapter examines Gibbon's and Newman's divergent hypotheses about the early Church, the former favoring corruption, the latter development.

The second chapter has Froude at its center. Due to a series of bills passed by Parliament in the late 1820s and early 1830s, the question arose as to whether a Parliament whose legislators include non-Anglicans can legitimately determine Anglican episcopal appointments or exert influence in any way over intra-Anglican disputes, including doctrinal ones. Once being an Anglican no longer is required for governmental office, it seems that doctrinal indifferentism has been inscribed into the way in which the British government perceives its established Church. On this basis, Froude and Newman feared that Erastianism and Latitudinarianism (or religious liberalism) were coming together in a manner that would result in the doctrinal corruption of the Church.[36] As Richard Hutton remarked in 1891,

35. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine [1845]*, ed. Stanley L. Jaki (Pinckney, MI: Real View Books, 2003), 181.

36. Of course, as Kenneth L. Parker et al. point out, "Erastianism—state intervention in ecclesiastical affairs—had been a source of tension in the Church of England since the sixteenth century," and so Froude and Newman were not the first to discover a problem, even if the situation was new in the sense that now "non-Anglican politicians in parliament exercised authority over the affairs of the Church of England" (Parker and the Contributors, "The Converts and the Council," In *Authority, Dogma, and History: The Role of Oxford Movement Converts in the Papal Infallibility Debates*, ed. Kenneth L. Parker and Michael J. Pahls, [Bethesda,

"Newman's wrath against 'Liberalism,' as for many years afterwards he always called it—identifying as he did Liberalism with Latitudinarianism—was to a very considerable extent a moral contagion caught from Hurrell Froude."[37]

My chapter shows that Newman, in *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, echoes concerns raised by Froude in 1833.[38] Unlike Froude, however, Newman in the *Via Media* argues that the Roman Catholic Church has fallen into doctrinal corruption by making determinations where none are warranted by Scripture or the Fathers.[39] In *An Essay on the Development*

MD: Academica, 2009], 1–9, at 4). Or as Benjamin O'Connor puts the concerns of Froude, Keble, and Newman: "If parliament was now legislating against Anglican tradition on ecclesiastical and juridical matters, they asked, how long until it voted similarly on doctrinal matters?" (O'Connor, "The Oxford Movement," in *Authority, Dogma, and History*, 9–43, at 13).

37. Richard H. Hutton, *Cardinal Newman* (London: Methuen, 1891), 36; cf. 104–105). Hutton, a theologian, mathematician, professor, journalist, and longtime editor of the *Spectator* who began as a Unitarian and died as a High-Church Anglican (under the influence especially of F.D. Maurice), knew and corresponded with Newman over many years. On their relationship, see Edward Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries* (London: T.&T. Clark International, 2011), 303–334.

38. Yngve Brilioth has shown that Alexander Knox, among others, influenced the Tractarian view of the "via media" between Protestantism and (Roman) Catholicism: see Brilioth, *The Anglican Revival: Studies in the Oxford Movement* (London: Longmans, Green, 1933), 47–53. More recently, this point has been contextualized by David McCready, *The Life and Theology of Alexander Knox: Anglicanism in the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2020). Knox collaborated with Bishop John Jebb, most importantly on an Appendix to Jebb's *Sermons on Subjects Chiefly Practical, with Illustrative Notes and an Appendix, Relating to the Character of the Church of England as Distinguished from Other Branches of the Reformation and from the Modern Church of Rome* (London: T. Cadell, 1815). For further discussion of Knox and Jebb, noting the often-critical assessment of their writings that one finds in Newman, Froude, Keble, and Pusey, see Geoffrey Rowell, "'Church Principles' and 'Protestant Kempism,' Some Theological Forerunners of the Tractarians," in *From Oxford to the People*, 17–59, at 38–54. For the important role of Jebb's thought in the controversies of Abbé Jager with the Tractarian Benjamin Harrison and later with Newman, see Louis Allen, "Introduction," in *John Henry Newman and the Abbé Jager: A Controversy on Scripture and Tradition*, ed. Louis Allen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1–32, at 20–29.

39. His trip to Italy and Sicily, however, did persuade Froude that Catholic countries, too, were beleaguered by Erastian troubles, in addition to general immorality and laxity: see *Remains of the Late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude*, vol. 1, ed. John Keble and John Henry Newman (London: J.G. & F. Rivington, 1838), 293–294. Froude concludes that "the whole

of Christian Doctrine, then, Newman has to defend Roman Catholicism against the charges of doctrinal corruption that he himself put forward only a few years earlier. As a Catholic, Newman also was concerned about maximalist claims regarding papal power.[40] I argue that Newman consistently reminded his fellow Christians that the Gospel must be defended from becoming the toy of powerful people inside or outside the Church.

The third chapter begins with Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith*, which describes his gradual loss of dogmatic faith (he ended up believing only that God exists and loves us). In their teens, both Francis and John Henry Newman converted to Evangelical Anglicanism.[41] Francis, however, came increasingly to connect Christian dogma with biblical literalism, fanatical dogmatism, and scientific and historical absurdity. Francis also experienced painful ill-treatment from John, and in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, John grants the truth of Francis' charges in this regard. The argument of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* is that dogmatic faith need not lead to dogmatism, and that a sincere quest for truth—which Francis asserts will inevitably culminate in religious skepticism or liberalism—is fully compatible with arriving at a firm dogmatic faith. I note that for the quest for truth to have this outcome, it is necessary that the "sacramental principle" be affirmed.[42] This

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Christian system all over Europe 'tendit visibiliter ad non esse.' The same process which is going on in England and France is taking its course everywhere else, and the clergy in these Catholic countries seem as completely to have lost their influence, and to submit as tamely to the state, as ever we can do in England" (Froude, 296).

40. For the diversity of "Ultramontanist" viewpoints in different nations, see *Varieties of Ultramontanism*, ed. Jeffrey von Arx (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998).

41. For background, see David Newsome, "The Evangelical Sources of Newman's Power," in *The Rediscovery of Newman*, 11–30, at 11–20.

42. James Pereiro helpfully describes what Newman means by a "principle": "Newman's use of the term 'principle' combined both the intellectual and moral dimensions. He conceived principles, within the general literature of the time [Pereiro cites a similar understanding found in contemporaneous books by Christopher Wordsworth and Joseph Fletcher], as the fundamental inner laws ruling the thought and activity of a particular person or institution, growing from deep moral roots and endowed with moral content. Principles lay deeper than doctrines; they are fundamental assumptions or general approaches to reality. They are abstract, general, permanent, more immediately ethical and practical than doctrines. . . . An idea has

principle holds that behind earthly realities stands the presence and causality of God: real history is never separated from God's presence and action.

Against dogmatism, John grants that scientific and historical challenges to Christian beliefs are not easily answered. But he urges all the more that, given the natural skepticism of the human mind, God in giving a revelation would have ensured the presence of an interpreter able to hand on the revealed truth without corrupting it. Toward the end of the *Apologia*, John depicts human rationality as neither frozen nor impeded by a dogmatic Church—as Francis had concluded—but rather as functioning vigorously and creatively due to having an authority (bearing authoritative truths) as a partner. Under the watchful eye of the Church's teaching office, "doctrines must expand, must become explicit where they had been only implicit, must assert themselves under new conditions which shed new light upon them"—and in fact "without such a developing power as this, the primitive teaching, the deposit given once for all, would be a dead formula, and not a living power."[43]

The fourth chapter treats Pusey's *Eirenicon* and Newman's response. In his *Eirenicon*, as noted above, Pusey argues that the Roman Catholic Church's Mariology is proof that Newmanian "development of doctrine" is a false path. For Pusey, claims about "development of doctrine" inevitably lead to doctrinal corruption because such claims embolden the Church to go beyond the limits of the testimony of the Church Fathers. Pusey deems it to be much better to follow the path of the Oxford Movement, adhering only to the doctrines that can be safely demonstrated from Scripture and the witness of the Fathers. In addition, Pusey argues that where Anglicanism highlights Jesus, Roman Catholicism highlights Mary; and he quotes various exaggerated claims about Mary made by Roman Catholic theologians and saints.

In response, Newman contends that, far from being corruptions,

its own proper principles in which it lives and develops" (Pereiro, *'Ethos' and the Oxford Movement: At the Heart of Tractarianism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 181).

43. Hutton, *Cardinal Newman*, 164.

Mary's Immaculate Conception and bodily Assumption are scriptural, even if to perceive this fact we must learn from the Fathers (or from Tradition) how to read Scripture.[44] Newman also argues that the Catholic Church's Marian doctrines flow from the Fathers' testimony to Mary as Mother of God and the New Eve. While rejecting the exaggerated Marian piety favored by some English Ultramontanists such as Frederick Faber and exemplified by some Catholic saints, Newman emphasizes that in cultures where Mary is praised, Jesus is worshipped.[45] Regarding doctrinal development, he defends Mary's Immaculate Conception on various grounds, including conservative action upon the past.

Lastly, my fifth chapter focuses on the dogma of papal infallibility (1870) as rejected by Döllinger. I first survey Döllinger's writings, which denounce all post-patristic understandings of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. Far too often, according to Döllinger, an expansion of papal power was supported by faked documents passed off as ancient. He charges Newman with cowardice or ignorance for not speaking out more strongly in the period prior to the dogmatic definition and for not rejecting the Vatican Council's dogma. Without mentioning Döllinger's name, Newman responds to him in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* and its Postscript, while also addressing William Gladstone's concerns.

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44. On Newman and the Church Fathers in the context of nineteenth-century (and contemporary) religious liberalism, see the work of the patristics scholar Michael Fiedrowicz, *John Henry Newman und die Kirchenväter: Anti-Liberalismus im Geist der frühen Kirche* (Fohren-Linden, DE: Carthusianus Verlag, 2020).

45. Hutton responds critically: "Surely the real danger of the immense development which the Roman Catholic Church has given to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the saints, is, that it tends to present to us the wills of beings who in knowledge and limitations are like ourselves, and who are supposed, at least by ignorant people, to be more influenced by our pertinacity of entreaty than God would be, as likely to urge upon God what He would otherwise refuse to do, and to try to impose upon Him by their entreaties their weaker forms of good-will; whereas, what ought to be impressed on the ignorant is, that the more completely any finite being has conformed himself to the will of God, the more resolutely would he refuse to intercede for any favour not intrinsically in harmony with the Divine providence" (*Cardinal Newman*, 182). I note that the worship of Christ without a sense of the prayerful presence of Christ's Mystical Body would be inadequate, since God wills to work out his providence not least through the prayers of the members of the Body of Christ.

Newman makes clear, first, that the patristic period cannot be used as an inflexible standard that must be merely replicated by the Church of all later eras: this is the mistake of antiquarianism.[46] In the patristic period, certainly, the bishop of Rome did not exercise universal governance. But, in Newman's view, this does not mean that continuity with the Church Fathers is lacking in the new dogma. On the contrary, the bishop of Rome's universal governance was always part of Christ's plan for the Church, and the prerogatives claimed by the later popes ensured the continuance of the marks of the patristic Church. The patristic Church understood itself to be one, to have universal jurisdiction, and to be able to hold authoritative and binding councils. The only Church that today plausibly lays claim to these crucial patristic elements is the Roman Catholic Church led by the pope. Given the geographical spread of the Church, such elements could not have been retained if a centralizing papacy had not emerged.

Just as importantly, Newman argues that historical research alone, even when practiced by someone as erudite as Döllinger, cannot stand as the sole determinant of whether a true doctrinal development has occurred. He also rejects the maximalist reading of papal infallibility offered by Döllinger and instead advocates the interpretation offered by the German bishop Joseph Fessler, the secretary general of the council. Fessler's *True and False Infallibility* was translated into English by Newman's close friend and fellow Oratorian Ambrose St. John.[47]

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46. See Hütter, *John Henry Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits*, 133–134: "For ecclesial antiquarianism, all developments beyond some allegedly pure origin or some purportedly undistorted temporally limited expression of the origin are nothing but a fall from the original truth, an amassment of both light and grave corruptions that more and more pollute the clear spring water the further it is carried away from its pristine source. Return to and union with this origin, or at least with the latest state of its authentic expression, is the ultimate goal of ecclesial antiquarianism. *Nota bene*: the ecclesial antiquarian does not oppose the authentic development of doctrine, but rather simulates it. Authentic development, for the antiquarian, is nothing but the latest state of the origin's authentic expression. Anything beyond this state is to be rejected as a corruption of doctrine."

47. See Avery Dulles, *Newman* (London: Continuum, 2002), 94; as well as Joseph Fessler, *The True and the False Infallibility of the Popes: A Controversial Reply to Dr. Schulte*, trans. Ambrose St. John (London: Burns and Oates, 1875).

These five chapters show that concerns about doctrinal corruption stand at the heart of a great deal of Newman's work. As noted above, speaking for (and to) the rising class of educated nonbelievers, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* indicts the whole of Christianity and especially Catholicism on a simple charge: historical research proves that Christianity is built upon repeated doctrinal corruptions. For his part, Froude urges that the Anglican bishops must reject the (newly non-Anglican) State's power over ecclesiastical matters, or else an Erastian religious liberalism or Latitudinarianism will negate the Anglican Church's claim to hand on the true teaching of Scripture in light of the patristic witness.

In his formative Oxford years, then, Newman was attentive to charges of doctrinal corruption. His brother Francis' loss of dogmatic faith in the 1830s intensified these charges, since Francis came to believe that no thinking person—no one who is open to truth wherever it be found—can retain belief in dogmatic Christianity. As a Catholic, moreover, Newman had to answer similar charges regarding doctrinal corruption, now from his erstwhile Oxford Movement compatriot Pusey and his erstwhile anti-Ultramontanist compatriot Döllinger.

The Challenge of Religious Liberalism

Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant theologians have long believed that the Catholic Church has corrupted doctrine. Jaroslav Pelikan remarks, "Protestants have usually denied both the theological and the historical implications of the claim that the developments of Roman Catholic Christianity have in fact preserved the type or idea. In various ways and with varying degrees of radicalism, Protestants have asserted 'the fall of the Church'" due to Catholic doctrinal corruption.[48] At various points in his career, Martin Luther gave different dates to this decisive fall, but he

48. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 14.

generally considered it to have taken place in the early medieval period. Other notable Protestant theologians have traced it back to the time of Constantine or even earlier.[49] Similarly, the Orthodox theologian Nikolaos Loudovikos, whose ecumenical erudition and sophistication are exemplary, articulates a standard Orthodox viewpoint when he states (as his own view), "After the great schism, a hierarchic ecclesiological model, clearly prevailing in the West, was gradually invested with the rigid legalistic armor of the Roman spirit, and gave birth to an openly nomocanonical ecclesiology, with the pope as universal jurisdictional monarch on top."[50]

Liberal theology seeks an end to this kind of blame for corrupting doctrine, not however by resolving the issues but by relativizing doctrine itself. In England and the continent, varieties of religious liberalism were already well-known in the eighteenth century. In Germany, Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1799 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* influentially denied that religion is a matter of knowledge. On this view, the Christian religion does not involve the kind of knowledge that can be expressed dogmatically. Dogmas are either "merely abstract expressions of religious

49. For Luther, Pelikan relies upon John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), 187–192. As an example of the case for a Constantian fall, Pelikan points to Gerrit J. Heering's *The Fall of Christianity: A Study of the Relationship between Christianity, the State, and War*, trans. J.W. Thompson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930), but of course many more recent such works could be named. See also the rich discussion of the issues in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 5, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 227–238, 247–281.

50. Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality*, trans. Norman Russell (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2016), 115. He argues that the root of the problem is an inadequate appropriation of the insights of the Greek Fathers: "The deep and absolute ontological identification-through-participation-in-uncreated-grace of the Church with Christ in the Spirit, made by the majority of Greek Fathers, still remains foreign to Roman Catholic ecclesiology" (Loudovikos, 114–115). More boldly, the Orthodox ecclesiologist Cyril Hovorun argues that not only is "primacy" "a matter of convenience and agreement between churches" rather than a divine gift, but also that "the church is not hierarchical in its nature. The hierarchical principle is not even its natural property. It was borrowed from outside the church and remains there as its scaffolding. In application to primacy this means that the assumption that primacy belongs to the nature of the church is not correct" (Loudovikos, 128, 141).

intuitions" or else are second-order "free reflections upon original achievements of the religious sense."[51] The notion that Christianity contains enduringly true revelation about divine realities, as propositionally expressed in the New Testament and in the creeds, is foreign to Schleiermacher's understanding of both religion and revelation, although he thinks that time-bound formulations will inevitably arise from the Christian experience of the feeling of absolute dependence.[52]

The liberal Protestant thinker Ernst Troeltsch, writing in 1913, contends that "the essence of Christianity can be understood only as the new interpretations and new adaptations, corresponding to each new situation," and thus, while there is "development" in a sense, neither the Bible nor the Christian creed provides any enduring or universally binding truth-claims.[53] For the liberal Catholic George Tyrrell, a contemporary of Troeltsch's, dogmatic truth-claims are the root of religious intolerance and persecution. Somewhat like Troeltsch, he proposes that the solution is to perceive that Christian dogmas are ever-developing symbols that fit the experiential "laws of nature and of life" and that can be said to be true not due to any ontological reference to Jesus or God, but due to their reference to ever-developing human life and action.[54] John Coulson sums up Tyrrell's

51. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. and ed. Richard Crouter, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 48.

52. In a Postscript to Tract 73 ("On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion") in Newman, *Tracts for the Times*, 180–243, at 241–243, Newman briefly addresses some points drawn from Schleiermacher's treatise on Sabellianism (*On the Discrepancy between the Sabellian and the Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of the Trinity*), of which Newman possessed a full translation. Newman concludes that Pietism (or "Protestantism") is descending into a rationalistic Sabellianism, but, as Stephen Thomas shows, Newman does not possess a clear understanding of all Schleiermacher's subtleties (see Thomas, *Newman and Heresy: The Anglican Years* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 136).

53. Ernst Troeltsch, "The Dogmatics of the History-of-Religions School," in Troeltsch, *Religion in History*, trans. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 87–108, at 97.

54. George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* (London: Longmans, Green, 1910), 236; cf. 225, 230. Tyrrell comments, "The comparatively modern toleration of other religions is, to a large extent, due to the scepticism suggested by the multiplication of sects each claiming to be the one authentic Christianity; and by an increased experience of other religions making the same claims as the Christian Church. This scepticism has been

position (without agreeing with it): "The language of revelation is poetic and, as such, is neither true or false. . . . Thus Tyrrell comes to deny the possibility of there being a demonstratively and reliably *analogical* relation between the forms in which Revelation has been expressed and the language of interpretation. . . . Tyrrell commits himself to a principle, not of development, but of epigenesis."[55]

More recently, Catholic theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx have sought to measure the truth of Christian dogma in terms of praxis. For Schillebeeckx, "christology derives its authenticity from the concrete praxis of the kingdom of God: the history of Jesus' career must be continued in his disciples; only then is it meaningful to talk of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Christianity."[56] Meaningful and authentic Christology is found not in articulating the unique being of Jesus himself, but in the liberative praxis of his followers. On this view, the thing that is enduringly true in Catholicism—namely, "the insight of Christian faith that God is

systematically deepened by the comparative study of religion, and by all the causes that have brought dogma into disrepute" (Tyrrell, 229). Positively, Tyrrell proposes that Jesus "desired to supplement and fulfil the necessarily ever-imperfect expressions of the spirit [such as the Jewish Torah and Temple]; to push the letter down to its proper place of subordination and instrumentality; to carry religion to its final phase; to deny the static immutability and perpetuity of the external embodiment of the spirit, and to make it a living and growing organism. . . . Jesus Himself was the great sacrament and effectual symbol of the Divine Life and Spirit. He worked on His disciples, not doctrinally as a teacher of the understanding, but with all the force of a divine and mysterious personal ascendancy, transmitted through every word and gesture. . . . The Spirit of Jesus uttered in the Church, in the Gospel, in the sacraments, is apprehended by His followers, not as a doctrine but as a personal influence, fashioning the soul to its own divine nature. . . . The human frame and mind of Jesus, His local and temporal limitations of thought and knowledge, were but the sacramental elements through which the influence of His Divine Spirit was mediated. To our age He would have spoken differently, but the spirit would have been the same" (Tyrrell, 262, 265–266). For the enthusiastic appropriation of Tyrrell today, see Anthony M. Maher, *The Forgotten Jesuit of Catholic Modernism: George Tyrrell's Prophetic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018); David G. Schultenover, *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos, 1981).

55. John Coulson, "Was Newman a Modernist?," in *John Henry Newman and Modernism*, ed. Arthur Hilary Jenkins (Sigmaringendorf, DE: Glock und Lutz, 1990), 74–84, at 76.

56. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 168.

personally involved with men and women and their history"—is expressed politically, through solidarity with the oppressed.[57]

Arguably the most influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century, Karl Rahner, while continuing to speak about the "substance of faith," proposed in 1977 that the era of "an evolutive explication and systematizing differentiation of the basic substance of faith" is over.[58] In other words, development of doctrine as Newman understood it has come to an end. This is because the global Church of the present and future will face an "incommensurable and not adequately synthesizable pluralism of present and future horizons of understanding," which will mean that doctrinal formulations in different contexts within the global Church will appear incommensurable and no longer will be reducible to any one formulation or interpretation.[59] Thus, Catholics can no longer expect to be united explicitly by dogmatic faith, beyond the most basic substance of faith in Christ.

Observing the doctrinal divisions among postconciliar Catholics,

57. Schillebeeckx, 170; cf. 169. As Schillebeeckx goes on to say, "The thematization of universal meaning can be accomplished meaningfully only with a practical-critical intention, i.e. in a perspective in which a bit of meaninglessness is done away with, step by step, through human action. The thematization or reflection must thus be supported by a praxis of gradual liberation which will prepare and free the way for total meaning. In other words, total meaning can only come about through historical experiences and commitment; it cannot be speculatively thought out in a theoretical anticipation, precisely because concrete history is a mixture of sense and nonsense. . . . The salvation that is founded in Christ as a promise for all becomes universal, not through the mediation of an abstract, universal idea, but by the power of its cognitive, critical and liberating character in and through a consistent praxis of the kingdom of God" (Schillebeeckx, 175–176; cf. 177–178, 182). On Schillebeeckx, see especially Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 470–486. White traces Schillebeeckx's perspective back to the influence of M.-D. Chenu: see Chenu's "La raison psychologique du développement du dogme," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 13, no. 1 (1924): 44–51. Chenu goes further—in full accord with the later Schillebeeckx—in his postconciliar "Vérité évangélique et métaphysique wolffienne à Vatican II," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 57, no. 4 (1973): 632–640.

58. Karl Rahner, "Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 18, *God and Revelation*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 3–34, at 33. See also Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11, *Confrontations 1*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1974), 3–23.

59. Rahner, "Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow," 33.

Rahner called for the immediate unification of the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox communions into a new umbrella Church, sharing faith in Christ and the Trinity while retaining their traditionally distinctive doctrines, without these differences obstructing either ecclesiastical unity or sacramental intercommunion.[60] In this approach to ecumenism, which is essentially the same one that Pope Pius XI condemned in his 1928 encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, the various distinctive doctrines carry so little significance for the new umbrella Church's faith that it hardly matters whether they are true or not. In fact, Rahner makes clear that many solemnly taught Catholic doctrines are now discardable, having served a purpose in the past but no longer meeting a need today. It will be enough for future Christians to be united by "the gracious God and the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ," now expressed in pluralistic ways answering to the diversity of places and times.[61]

Whereas his postconciliar religiously liberal view of doctrine diverges sharply from Newman's, Rahner's 1958 "Considerations on the Development of Dogma" stands much closer to Newman. Here, Rahner not only affirms that "the Church as the hearing Church, and hence also as the authoritatively teaching Church, is and must be infallible," but also asserts that "a new dogma must be in accord with the ancient *depositum fidei* on the conceptual level" and thus "there must be an objective connexion between the ancient *depositum* and a newly defined dogma, on principle, and that this connexion must be demonstrable. To renounce this would be to postulate in fact, even though one avoided saying so, new official revelations

60. See Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility*, trans. Ruth C.L. Gritsch and Eric W. Gritsch (New York: Paulist, 1985), developing ideas found earlier in Rahner's *The Shape of the Church to Come*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury, 1974). See my response—and Joseph Ratzinger's—in my "Introduction: Doctrine and Ecumenism," in *Joseph Ratzinger and the Healing of the Reformation-Era Divisions*, ed. Emery de Gaál and Matthew Levering (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2019), ix–xxvii.

61. Mary E. Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma: An Introduction to Karl Rahner on Doctrine* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1989), 156.

in the Church which would go beyond the apostolic *depositum*."[62] The approach and implications of his 1958 essay could hardly be further from his 1977 essay, just as Schillebeeckx's theology, too, underwent a profound shift in a religiously liberal direction after the Second Vatican Council.[63]

Many Catholic theologians today explicitly reject Newmanian doctrinal development. The Belgian Catholic theologian Lieven Boeve, to take just one example, has offered an influential account of what is outmoded in

62. Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Seabury, 1974), 3–35, at 9, 19. Rahner adds, "Here and there one gets the impression that the search for such rational explanations has been abandoned, wordlessly, and that theologians are ready to renounce such connexions in the theory of dogmatic development. There are various reasons for such defeatism within a rational theology. One proceeds perhaps from the false supposition that such a rationally demonstrable connexion must be able to explain and justify all and everything in dogmatic development. In doing so, one wrongly makes the rational process of explicitation the only element in dogmatic development, which of course it is not. Or one exaggerates the certainty that can be asked of such examples of explicitation" (Rahner, 19–20). Rahner emphasizes, against some of his fellow neo-scholastics (since at this stage he was a neo-scholastic with *Ressourcement* sympathies) but in full accordance with Newman, that there is "a rational certainty which is not properly syllogistic and which cannot be comprised under that head except imperfectly, though no doubt a transposition into such terms is useful and indeed to a certain extent necessary" (Rahner, 21). Rahner concludes his essay with a summation of his purpose that indicates both its boldness and its commitment to the irreversibility (and enduring truth) of Church's solemn doctrinal proclamation of the contents of the apostolic deposit of faith—ending with the sentence "For we know that in such development the faith of the Church remains the same, at one with what it received as the assertion about the absolute revelation of God, which is Jesus Christ our Lord, he who was crucified and rose again" (Rahner, 35).

63. As Mary Hines puts it, Rahner's "thought [on dogma] developed and changed along with the changing church of the volatile period in which he lived and wrote" (Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma*, 1). She concludes her book, "[Rahner] says yes to a future for dogma, but dogma quite differently understood. In fact, because of the past narrow associations of the term dogma, it can be misleading to apply it to faith formulations of the future as Rahner conceives them. It better describes his conception to say that he envisions a continuing and vital role for plural formulations of faith in the contemporary situation. . . . There must continue to be attempts at articulating the experience of God which lies unthematically at the heart of every human existence because that experience bears within itself the dynamism toward articulation. . . . In the world-church of the future we can and should expect no more universal and binding faith articulations. The needs of this church will be better met by provisional and diverse formulations reflecting the concrete situation of a particular place and time. . . . Pastorally speaking the church can no longer expect all its members to appropriate and find helpful all the many and variegated doctrines of the past" (Hines, 155).

Newman's approach. Boeve remarks that in the nineteenth century, "The development of tradition was seen as cumulative, as the elucidation and explication of what was already implicitly known. Confrontations with newness and otherness were considered in this regard to be situations that stimulated further unfolding of the tradition."[64] According to Boeve, after Vatican II, contextualist and historicist Catholic theologians identified the weaknesses of this Newmanian viewpoint. These postconciliar theologians recognized that the "truth" identified in each epoch of the Church's history has been inseparably bound up with its specific context, and also that historically speaking "the idea of a 'Christian Tradition' that had survived unchanged (or 'changed' only in the cumulative sense) down through the centuries was untenable."[65]

For Boeve, then, since each recontextualization changes Tradition and makes it new, one can only speak of a non-cumulative "development" of Tradition. He affirms, of course, that Catholic Christianity has normative texts, longstanding practices, and organizational principles. This history can continue to be affirmed, says Boeve, even while we recognize today that Catholicism has "worked its way through a variety of successive contexts, continually recontextualising along the way. As a result it took on a multitude of different forms that were not always reconcilable with those it had left behind."[66] Boeve suggests that each new context involves doctrinal rupture through a recontextualization that substantially changes the beliefs and practices at the heart of the experience of Catholics.

Since our own era is as historically contextualized as any other era, the result is that what "we encounter in the tradition . . . is always irreducibly encountered within our current frames of interpretation."[67] Do we believe in the same God as did Christians living in the fifth century? Boeve argues

64. Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 2003), 21.

65. Boeve, 22.

66. Boeve, 24. Boeve states, "Theology only exists, therefore, as contextual theology, and the development of tradition only as an ongoing process of recontextualisation" (Boeve, 26).

67. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 32.

that any positive answer to this question requires embracing a version of continuity-as-rupture: "The Christian narrative . . . is to be considered both the same as before and no longer the same. Identity and rupture go hand in hand."[68] But in what does the "identity" consist? Boeve answers that the "inspiration" or "narrative" are the same, as are many of the "images, symbols, rites, narratives, terminology, [and] concepts."[69] What has changed is the way that the community understands these narratives and symbols in the present context.

According to Boeve, the Catholic community now accepts that it is a community of constant doctrinal rupture, even while sharing in the same history as the communities of the past. Today, Catholics perceive that the only way that the "same" Christian community can proceed in time and space is through continual ruptures. Boeve explains, "The discovery of plurality in the Christian tradition (on account of its development) and of the undeniability and indeed legitimacy thereof, is peculiar to our own time."[70] In Boeve's view, we now perceive the irreducible pluralism of Catholic belief, whereas nineteenth-century Catholics such as Newman, working within a different theological paradigm, "only accepted that, at most, *cumulative* development took place, evolution towards more and better."[71] In a nutshell, for Boeve the Church has moved beyond Newman in the sense that Catholics rightly no longer believe in dogmatic judgments that are true in all times and places.

Boeve goes on to fill out his comparison of the pre–Vatican II and post–Vatican II situations. In the nineteenth century and even up to Vatican II, "the Catholic Church formulated its own great anti-modern counter-narrative," which claimed that "the Christian tradition related the

68. Boeve, 34.

69. Boeve, 34.

70. Boeve, 34. He emphasizes "the diverse forms of living and experiencing the Christian tradition (recontextualisations) within the Catholic Church and the multiple contexts in which it finds itself"; and he asserts that "it is often the case that perspectives rejected by one century were valued as orthodox tradition in another" (Boeve, 104–105).

71. Boeve, 35.

true narrative about God, humanity and the world, and this was valid for everyone, past, present and future. This truth was unassailable, revealed and entrusted to humanity in the Bible and the tradition."[72] By contrast, says Boeve, postconciliar theologians sought to integrate the claims of modernity into the received tradition. Boeve compares the two sides: "In the first instance, the tradition as a dynamic process of recontextualisation was abandoned. In the second instance, the tradition as bestower of meaning was neglected."[73]

Boeve's solution consists in rejecting *all* "master narratives," both the anti-modern one and the modern one. Thus he bemoans both "traditionalism" and "*à la carte* religious identity."[74] Against master narratives, he proposes that we Christians should understand ourselves by means of a postmodern "open narrative" which "is conscious of its own historicity, contingency and particularity" and which perceives "its own meaning and truth claims in relation to the claims of other narratives."[75] Against modernity's pure relativism, he holds that an "open narrative" does not require indifference toward the truth-claims of one's own tradition. In his view, one can recognize that one's truth-claims are radically contextualized (i.e., dependent upon one's particular time and place, rather than universalizable as ontologically true) without thereby choosing to distance oneself from these truth-claims.

Specifically, Boeve thinks that when initiated by faith and Baptism into the "Christian tradition," believers can experience the transcendent—the divine—giving them a vocation. This vocation should be understood experientially as a response to "the God who made Godself known in Jesus Christ as the God of love."[76] Like the Christians who have gone before us, we who belong to the Christian tradition are called to go in search of the experiential

72. Boeve, 47.
73. Boeve, 49.
74. Boeve, 58, 61.
75. Boeve, 61.
76. Boeve, 62.

and vocation-oriented truth of Christ, even while we do this in a historically contextualized way that, in the future, will be superseded by further historical recontextualizations. The specificity of our personal narrative should be embraced, not within a "master narrative" of either traditionalism or modernity, but as an "open narrative" that accepts radical particularity and plurality as part of the "continuity" of Christian tradition.[77] Boeve contends that even though our narrative and the Christian tradition as we understand it are radically contingent and particular (given our context-specific location), we can still take them seriously as experiential markers.

Yet can we be confident about the value of our Christian truth-claims if we know that ever-changing recontextualizations will result in radically changed truth-claims among Christians in later times and in other places? Boeve attempts to assuage this Newmanian concern by urging, with Tyrrell and others, that truth is not so much a matter of knowledge as it is a matter of life. On this view, we should judge "truth" experientially—namely, by whether our relationships to others (and to the transcendent) are authentic. He argues that this is the lesson of apophatic theology.[78] Indeed, for Boeve, the more we claim to know God in finite propositions, the less we have understood "the God of the interruptive (grace) event, the God who calls us beyond harsh inflexibility and closedness" and who is revealed in Christ.[79] Through the "continuity" found in our recourse to the narrative of the interruptive Christ, we receive the "potential for fertile (discontinuous) experiences of transcendence."[80]

77. Boeve defines an "open narrative" as follows: "a narrative structure that takes the actual situation of plurality seriously, that has the capacity to make critical judgements, and that offers the means to structure our own personal and collective narratives in an 'open' fashion. . . . This implies the recognition of the fact that life is made up of a multiplicity of narratives and that no single narrative has the right to claim that it can transcend this multiplicity" (Boeve, 92–93).

78. For insight into apophatic theology that cuts against Boeve's claim here, see for example Nonna Verna Harrison, "The Relationship between Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 4, no. 3 (1995): 318–332.

79. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 106.

80. Boeve, 107. Most people in Belgium, hearing this kind of thing from theologians, have preferred to renounce Catholicism on the grounds that its core claims are untrue.

By adopting this view of revelation and dogma, Boeve has left far behind Newman's notion of Tradition and doctrinal development, along with Newman's dogmatic principle. Boeve argues that his position is not "relativistic progressivism," because he still grounds himself in a certain kind of continuity—namely, the "Christian open narrative, as a historically and contextually-rooted witness to the ungraspable and unexpected yet hoped-for grace."[81] As we have seen, for Boeve the interruptive grace or fundamental religious experience to which Christianity bears witness in every era cannot be apprehended or articulated in enduringly true propositional judgments. Nor does the Christian tradition unfold, as an ever-growing and secure body of knowledge, the truth of Jesus Christ who reveals the Father by the Holy Spirit. Instead, Catholics must accept that "the ancient words, stories, and deeds that we have inherited require ongoing recontextualisation as the context in which we find ourselves changes."[82] Having chosen to stand in experiential "continuity" with Catholics who have handed on these words and stories before us, we can share their trust in the interruptive grace of Christ in our quest to experience the transcendent.[83]

Boeve concludes that tradition is truly Christian when it testifies to its own rupture, its own inadequacy in the presence of interruptive grace. According to Boeve, this is as it should be, given the fact that "Jesus' indictment of closed narratives and his witness to the God of love have their roots in his *fundamental contemplative attitude*, an openness towards the Other who is revealed in moments of interruption."[84] The key is that Tradition is not "a

81. Boeve, 108, 176.

82. Boeve, 178.

83. Boeve states that Christians, in faith, have made "the explicit choice for the Christian narrative as the interpretative framework of our thoughts, words and deeds and thus the specific option for God who has revealed Godself in history as love, *par excellence*, in Jesus of Nazareth, God's interrupter" (Boeve, 179; cf. 115–116). Yet Boeve insists that truth-claims about this God (as revealed in Jesus) can only be tested practically: see Boeve, 181.

84. Boeve, 131; Boeve is here drawing upon Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury, 1981), 256–268. The disciples' faith-experience is that Jesus has "[shattered] the hegemonic narrative of rejection and death" (Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 134).

unified mass of content" but an experiential journey with and toward the interruptive and unspeakable God. He explains, "Continuity thus takes shape in rupture."[85] Boeve is hardly alone in this view. I could cite many others who make an eloquent case against Newmanian doctrinal development and in favor of something that, they argue, is much more dynamic, historically plausible, and exciting.

In fact, however, once the claim that Christianity is about knowable realities (the real Triune God, Jesus who is the incarnate Son of God, the redemption from sin and death won by Jesus' Paschal Mystery, the transformative power of the seven sacraments, and so on) slips away, Christianity has lost its core and, in hollowed-out form, staggers along attracting little or no interest from our contemporaries. Newmanian doctrinal development, affirmed by Vatican II, is the far better path forward, assuming it remains plausible—as I believe—that Catholicism is not a matrix of doctrinal corruption.

Conclusion

By embracing doctrinal corruption, religious liberalism ultimately leaves little in Christianity worth retaining. Resisting this path, Newman committed himself to defending doctrinal development. Throughout his career, he was concerned about powerful humans—whether politicians or Churchmen—causing "perversions and corruptions of divine truth."[86] As an

85. Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 183, 142. For an analysis of human and Christian speech about God, which is not what Boeve thinks it is, see Thomas Joseph White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2016). For discussion of various historicizing perspectives (including Boeve's), which he ably contrasts with Newman's "dogmatic principle," see Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church*, 2–10. As Meszaros states the problem to which he (and Newman and Congar, among others) are responding, "With the advent of historical consciousness . . . arises the danger of a historicism according to which, in its Christian variant, the contextuality of doctrinal expressions so obscures any enduring content to be had, that any absolute Christian truth is considered entirely eschatological" (Boeve, 10).

86. Newman, "Tract 71," 179. Newman has in view the (Roman) Catholic Church here; see also his remark in Tract 20 (1833) that the Roman Catholic Church is "infected with heterodoxy; we are bound to flee it, as a pestilence. They have established a lie in the

Anglican, the question of State determination of matters of faith and practice worried him, given that Parliament no longer was confessionally Anglican. In defending the Church of England, he strove to "find which among the Churches had preserved incorrupt the inheritance of primitive doctrine."[87] In the chapters that follow, we will see how this quest led him to the Catholic Church, despite the fact that the early Fathers did not speak about such things as Mary's Immaculate Conception or the infallibility of the bishop of Rome.

How did Newman defend the latter teachings as belonging to the apostolic deposit of faith? Working along Newmanian lines, Reinhard Hütter has laid down a point that is fundamental for any answer—namely, for each real doctrinal *development*, two things must be possible retrospectively: "a persuasively argued demonstration of continuity" and the rejection of a "heterogeneous rupture and corruption of doctrine."[88] The alternative is

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place of God's truth; and, by their claim of immutability in doctrine, cannot undo the sin they have committed. They cannot repent. Popery must be destroyed; it cannot be reformed" (Newman, "Tract 20: The Visible Church: Letters to a Friend, No. III," in *Tracts for the Times*, 68–73, at 71).

87. James Pereiro, *'Ethos' and the Oxford Movement*, 183. For Newman, as Pereiro says, "although true developments can be shown to result by logical sequence from given premises, in the majority of cases they are not the fruit of a logical sequence: development follows as a result of the fuller 'realization' of the idea" (Pereiro, 184). This is correct but it does not negate the necessary place of "logical sequence," since divine revelation, assuming it be coherent, cannot ultimately contain both X and its contradictory opposite Y. In the post-1845 editions of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman speaks "of the two fundamental characters of a true development of Christian doctrine: its continuity with previous teaching, and its sharing in the *ethos* of the Primitive or Apostolic Church" (*'Ethos' and the Oxford Movement*, 185). See also Aidan Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 1: "The issue of doctrinal development is vital to the justification of specifically Catholic Christian doctrinal insights, *vis-à-vis* the serious objections to these which other historic Christian communities can lodge. . . . This is a matter of defending the Catholic Church against the claim that it has corrupted the Gospel by adding to it elements which are not divinely revealed, being of merely human devising." See also Jay M. Hammond, "The Interplay of Hermeneutics and Heresy in the Process of Newman's Conversion from 1830 to 1845," in *Authority, Dogma, and History*, 45–75, at 62n93.

88. Hütter, "Progress, Not Alteration of the Faith," 384. For the same point, see Guy Mansini, "Saint Thomas and the Development of Doctrine," *Nova et Vetera* 19, no. 2 (2021): 393–422, at 394, where Mansini emphasizes that Newmanian doctrinal development requires

magisterial voluntarism, as though the Catholic Church could continually revise divine revelation in any way that a present pope deemed suitable. In addition to contradicting everything that Newman sought to uphold, such magisterial voluntarism would confirm Protestant and Eastern Orthodox charges of Roman Catholic rationalism and abuse of power vis-à-vis the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[89] It would lead to a Catholic version of religious liberalism that would be all the worse for claiming the support of papal power, ostensibly in the name of ecclesiastical humility but actually in the name of arbitrary ecclesiastical will, through "an overblown, creeping extension of the dogma of papal infallibility."[90]

Of course, some doctrines can be revised or even discarded. Thomas Guarino speaks for Newman when he observes, "Catholic theology has never considered all Christian doctrine, even positions that have been taught over a considerable period of time, to be irreformable. . . . However, such reversals must be clearly distinguished from the annulment of fundamental dogmatic landmarks."[91] These landmarks include everything that

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that reason, illumined by faith, must be able to "discern and verify that it really is the one, integral cognitive whole that is exfoliated into the many subsequent doctrinal propositions"—given that without "the one perduring whole of revelation, we have not development but transformation, a self-contradictory plurification of Christian discourse where one age says something different from another." Of course, development requires change; development is not mere repetition.

89. Consider the Evangelical theologian Kevin Vanhoozer's response to my *Was the Reformation a Mistake? Why Catholic Doctrine Is Not Unbiblical*, with a Response by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 191–231. In his Response, Vanhoozer maintains that the (Roman) Catholic Church is a false and faulty corrupter of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

90. Morgan, *John Henry Newman and the Development of Doctrine*, 275. Morgan argues further, "The key to understanding the voice of living authority for Newman and, perhaps, for the church at this moment, is to conceive of that living authority operating in its proper context: that is, in relation to the development of the idea of Christianity. The idea of Christian was, in Newman's thinking, Christ Himself: God made Man for our Salvation" (Morgan, 276).

91. Thomas G. Guarino, *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II: Continuity and Reversal in Catholic Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 193. Guarino attends to "the distinction between a proper *profectus* and a destructive *permutatio*," a distinction that continues to have far more purchase than theologians such as Tyrrell, Schillebeeckx, and Boeve have supposed. Guarino treats *Dignitatis Humanae* in this light. On this topic see also his *Revelation and Truth: Unity and Plurality in Contemporary Theology* (Scranton, PA: University

the Church has solemnly taught as contained in Scripture and Tradition. Since these include things that do not appear in Scripture or Tradition in an evident way, questions arise when Catholics insist upon such matters. Ultimately, the issue is whether the Catholic Church has exceeded the limits of divine revelation, or, what is the same, has corrupted rather than developed the apostolic Gospel.

Newman holds that such questions are best resolved through appreciating the reality of doctrinal development, in accordance with the "notes" or "tests" that shed light on the difference between a true development and a corruption. However, the Orthodox theologian Andrew Louth has pointed out that the notion of "doctrinal development" may appear logically to imply that the truths taught by the Church in the fourth century are not actually present in the revelation given in the first century, but instead are the developmental product of the Church. Emphasizing that divine revelation has its fundamental source in Christ's words and deeds as received by the Apostles, Louth warns against giving "the impression of some kind of evolution, with the Church's faith changing and even getting better, as if we in the twenty-first century know the faith more deeply than St Paul."[92] Louth thinks that due respect to Christ and the Apostles requires

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of Scranton Press, 1993), 158–160. See also Nicholas J. Healy Jr., "*Dignitatis Humanae*," in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 367–392.

92. Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 57; for a more appreciative engagement with Newman's views, see Louth's *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), written while Louth was still an Anglican. For further discussion, drawing attention to the similar argument of Dumitru Staniloae, "The Orthodox Conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine," *Sobornost* 5, no. 9 (1969): 652–662, see Daniel J. Lattier, "The Orthodox Theological Reception of Newman," in *Receptions of Newman*, ed. Frederick D. Aquino and Benjamin J. King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 177–194, at 188–190. Lattier argues that Louth's critique of Newmanian doctrinal development is "not necessarily a function of his [Louth's] Orthodoxy, but of principles present in his Anglican works, as well" (Lattier, 190). See also the observation of Jaroslav Pelikan: "Ironically, one of the most impressive cases of development of doctrine in all of church history had been the Byzantine apologia for images in response to the attacks of iconoclasm" (Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 5, 280).

us to admit that the Church must be bound by the apostolic faith. This content is not ours to reshape or augment, though we can clarify and illuminate it. Louth therefore prefers the word "realization" rather than "development."

Louth's concern is relevant to my purposes. For I seek to show that Newman himself consistently maintained quite similar concerns, even while holding that in a real sense the "stream" of Christian knowledge "is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full" through doctrinal development.[93] The Anglican Newman used the term "realize" to describe the process of development in an idea. It makes sense from a Newmanian perspective to say that the revealed realities expressed in Scripture are "realized" by Christians in light of Tradition.[94] Newmanian doctrinal development does not entail moving

93. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 40. Mansini comments, "This means . . . that we judge the adequacy of *earlier* expressions and the theological success of *earlier* exponents of faith by the measure of the *later* expressions" ("Saint Thomas and the Development of Doctrine," 394). We now know, for instance, that Origen's third-century articulation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while not to be ignored, is less accurate than that of Athanasius in the fourth century. However, both Origen and Athanasius were participating in the source—divine revelation—and so the metaphor of the stream cannot be taken to mean that the apostolic source (let alone Christ Jesus himself!) is lacking by comparison with later Christianity.

94. See the remarks on "realizing divine truth" in James Pereiro, *Theories of Development in the Oxford Movement* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2015), 45–50. Drawing upon Newman's use of the term, Pereiro describes "realizing" as characteristic of "the existence and growth of proper learning in religious matters," and Pereiro explains further: "This realizing . . . might be granted directly by God's illumination; it might take place while meditating or reading the Scriptures, when, its sense suddenly breaks upon the reader as it had never done before; it might be mediated through a person, introducing another to truths he did not know or helping him understand previously half-understood ones; it might result from the application of principles to particular circumstances or problems. The list is not an exhaustive one. God might choose other avenues to bring about the process of realizing. In any of those ways, the individual in question comes to perceive at the appropriate time, and according to his personal dispositions, new dimensions of already held principles, corollaries of known truths, the path he is to follow, and so on. . . . The moment of 'realizing,' therefore, may also cast a light upon the past, enabling the person in question to perceive the development of his previous opinions into the ones he now holds. He may become conscious of the changes he has undergone, perceive that there is a connexion between his former opinions and his later ones. He may discover that the new truths just perceived had perhaps been with him

beyond the apostolic deposit of faith as communicated in Scripture and Tradition, as though new revelation were being received or parts of revelation could now be rejected. Instead, Newmanian doctrinal development involves a dynamic participation in, or "realization" of, the apostolic deposit, just as our predecessors in faith have done, and in such a manner that a true development "is able to be recognized as such" by believers and allows the Church to express or clarify an aspect of the realities of faith.[95] Christopher Cimorelli describes such ongoing Christian knowing: "Development arises out of participation in the covenantal relationship established and fulfilled in Christ, and particularly in the celebration of the liturgy."[96] The result is real communion between the Church today and the apostolic Church, without supposing that Christians in later centuries

long, barely hidden under the surface of his consciousness or the principles he held. Past events are now seen under a new light: some of those not considered relevant at the time may now be perceived as having had a determining influence in leading the person to his present notions; particular decisions which did not seem specially significant when taken now appear as having had momentous consequences" (Pereiro, 48–49). One can see how such "realizing" can be achieved not only by individuals but also by the Church as a whole. Pereiro directs attention to Bernhard Trocholepczy, "Newman's Concept of 'Realizing,'" in *By Whose Authority?*, 136–148. Trocholepczy points out, "Newman included in his fifteenth University Sermon the verse of Luke 2:19: 'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' as a short formula for his theory of *realizing*. Mary in her meditative attitude is not only the ecclesial archetype of the development of doctrine. She is also the perfect exemplification of the realizing process in the Church. The decisive elements are: a) to have a heart open to the reality of the divine message; b) to be rooted in good principles" (Trocholepczy, 144).

95. Mansini, "Saint Thomas and the Development of Doctrine," 394: "It is a condition of the possibility of genuine development of doctrine that it be able to be recognized as such. This recognition, of course, is magisterial, but it also engages the *sensus fidei* of all the faithful. Moreover, this ability, while it requires faith, requires also certain *auxilia*, two *auxilia* in fact, namely, metaphysical skill and historical learning."

96. Christopher Cimorelli, *John Henry Newman's Theology of History*, 299–300. Here may be the place to note that in *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II*, 17—in light of his *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013)—Thomas Guarino shows that as a (Roman) Catholic, Newman accepts Vincent of Lérins' second rule for doctrinal development, whereas in his Anglican writings Newman emphasized Vincent's first rule (*semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*). For the latter, see for instance Newman's "Tract 71: On the Controversy with the Romanists," in *Tracts for the Times*, 140–179. See also the background in C. Stephen Dessain, "The Reception among Catholics of Newman's Doctrine of Development," *Newman-Studien* 6 (Nüremberg: Glock und Lutz, 1964), 179–191.

know a different entity or know more deeply than did the Apostles. Since Christians of every epoch participate in and "realize" the same divine revelation, there can be "a real and unbroken continuity between 'the religion taught by Christ and his apostles'" and the faith taught by the Catholic Church.[97]

In the year after the publication of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman traveled to Rome to study and to arrange for his future. In Rome from October 1846 through December 1847, he was visited at his lodgings by "cardinals, Roman professors, bishops, and on at least one occasion the pope [Pius IX] himself," who extended a warm welcome that delighted Newman.[98] In 1846, the newly elected pontiff, still considered a liberalizing reformer,[99] had published his first encyclical, *Qui Pluribus*, in which he addressed two contrasting but related errors: the rejection of all Christian doctrines as "fictions of human invention," and the embrace of Christian doctrines as merely the high point of human philosophy.[100] The latter error "import[s] the doctrine of human progress into

97. Terrence Merrigan, "Revelation," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, ed. Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47–72, at 47, 63. For concerns about the term "development" similar to Louth's, though more directly focused on the problem of rationalism, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, trans. Andrée Emery (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 323–324.

98. Kenneth L. Parker and C. Michael Shea, "The Roman Catholic Reception of the *Essay on Development*," in *Receptions of Newman*, 30–49, at 37. In summer 1847, Newman reports with delight in a letter to his sister Jemima that Pius IX was addressing him as "mio caro Signore Newman" (cited in Parker and Shea, 41). Parker and Shea go on to say, "Visits from Perrone and [Giacomo] Mazio on 5 August and Pius IX on 9 August—when Wiseman happened to be there—add further confirmation that Newman's place in Rome was secure and his writings respected. While these private visits by two prominent Roman theologians and the pope are compelling evidence of Newman's acceptance in Rome, an article by Mazio and a lecture by Perrone during this period establish unequivocally the Roman reception of Newman's *Essay*" (Parker and Shea, 41). See Giacomo Mazio, "Liturgia Anglicana," *Annali delle scienze religiose*, 2nd series, 5/13 (July/August 1847): 181–292; and the discussion of Perrone and his lecture in C. Michael Shea, *Newman's Early Roman Catholic Legacy 1845–1854* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 163.

99. This perspective would come to an abrupt end after the 1848 revolution and the pope's resultant two-year exile from the Vatican.

100. Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus* 4, papal encyclical, 1846.

the Catholic religion," and this prompts a reply from Pope Pius IX: "Our holy religion was not invented by human reason, but was most mercifully revealed by God; therefore, one can quite easily understand that religion itself acquires all its power from the authority of God who made the revelation, and that it can never be arrived at or perfected by human reason."[101] Pius IX is here responding to the neo-Kantian views of Georg Hermes, not to Newmanian development of doctrine. He adds in his 1856 encyclical *Singulari Quidem*, "We should not conclude that religion does not progress in the Church of Christ. There is great progress! But it is truly the progress of faith, which is not change. The intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge of everybody should grow and progress, like that of the whole Church of the ages."[102]

The question in the mid-nineteenth century was whether not only Catholics, but indeed all Christians have corrupted and distorted the original teaching of Jesus. The dogmas regarding Mary's Immaculate Conception and papal infallibility only intensified this question.[103] The chapters that follow aim to show how seriously Newman took the possibility of doctrinal corruption throughout his career. He recognized that his writings were not the final word on such complex issues, and he recognized that readers working from within a different set of antecedent probabilities will be inclined to deny that he has proven his case. Although I defend Newmanian doctrinal development, my book is not a study of Newman's understanding of development of doctrine per se, since I do not treat issues such as the development of Newman's own theorizing about doctrinal development. My goal instead is simply to reflect with Newman upon the threat of doctrinal corruption as it presented itself to him over the course of his long career of faithful proclamation of the Gospel. In this way, I

101. *Qui Pluribus* 7.

102. Pius IX, *Singulari Quidem* 8, papal encyclical, 1856.

103. See James Gaffney, "Preface," in John Henry Newman, *Roman Catholic Writings on Doctrinal Development*, ed. and trans. James Gaffney (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997), v–xx, at xvi.

hope to share with St. John Henry Newman in obeying the risen Jesus' commandment: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).