

**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**

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Being incomprehensible, He wished to be comprehended.

Pope Leo I, *Epistola ad Flavianum*

Progress [*profectus*] requires that the subject be enlarged in itself; whereas alteration [*permutatio*] implies that it is transformed into something else. The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of the ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.

—St. Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*¹

¹ “Incomprehensibilis, voluit comprehendi” (Pope Leo I, *Epistola ad Flavianum*, ch. 4; DH 294). “Siquidem ad profectum pertinent ut in semetipsum unaquaeque res amplificetur; ad permutationem vero, ut aliquid ex alio in aliud transvertatur. Crescat igitur oportet et multum vehementerque proficiat tam singulorum quam omnium, tam unius hominis quam totius Ecclesiae, aetatum et saeculorum gradibus, intelligentia, scientia, sapientia, sed in suo duntaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia” (Saint Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium against Heresies*, trans. C. A. Heurtley, Latin-English Bilingual Edition [Mounet Sud, France: Tradibooks, 2008], 110–11 [ch. 23: “On Development in Religious Knowledge”]).

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Introduction

THIS ESSAY is a theological exercise of being “deep in history,” yet without being historical in the conventional modern sense, that is, without presupposing the normative framework of historicism. It is, rather, an exercise of “Tradition in act,” a contemporary theological consideration from within the doctrinal Tradition of the Catholic faith. “Contemporary” means that it unfolds conscientiously and explicitly in the theological horizon of the Second Vatican Council and its contentious reception in the two generations since its official conclusion on December 7, 1965. “Theological” means that the normative framework of the following considerations is the surpassing and definitive revelation of the triune God in the Incarnation, life, Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Logos incarnate, the normative source and subject of Catholic theology as conveyed by the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and as articulated by the Fathers and ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church up to and including most recently the Second Vatican Council.² The title of the essay—progress, not alteration of the faith—states what I take “Tradition in act” to entail.

There are three questions that drive these considerations: (1) What is an authentic development of doctrine, an articulation of progress of the faith? (2) How is it discerned and distinguished from the corruption of doctrine? (3) How is the intelligibility of such an authentic development—it being a progress and not an alteration of the faith—established in correlation to antecedent doctrines?

These questions inform the goal, the subject matter, and the mode of argumentation of the essay. *First*, its goal: instead of advancing yet another theory of the development of doctrine, it aims at contributing to the recovery of the very meaning of an authentic development of doctrine in light of a powerful two-pronged rejection of the reality of Tradition that is living, normed as well as norming, and ongoingly unfolding.

sive queries, productive disagreements, and instructive engagements.

² In his address during the last session of Vatican II, on December 7, 1965, Pope Paul VI refers back to the original mandate that Pope John XXIII gave the council fathers: “The greatest concern of the ecumenical council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine be guarded and taught more effectively. . . .” (Discorsi, 1962, p. 583). His great purpose has now been achieved” (English from the Vatican website’s page for Paul VI, speeches, December 7, 1965). In the following, I take the Second Vatican Council to be an authentic development of the prior doctrinal tradition. For one of the best recent cases made for what I take here as a supposition, see Thomas G. Guarino, *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II: Continuity and Reversal in Catholic Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

Second, its subject matter: because “Tradition in act” cannot be exercised in abstraction from what is informed by the Tradition (and thus “traditioned”) and in turn is informing the Tradition (and thus “traditioning”), two eminently traditioned and traditioning theological figures—the one drawing upon the other in significant ways—are playing a central role in this essay. The one is the late fourth- and early fifth-century monk and theologian Saint Vincent of Lérins, and the other the influential nineteenth-century theologian Saint John Henry Newman, just recently canonized, who by broad consensus is understood to have had a profound influence on the Second Vatican Council. It is the theological interpretation of both in their correlation as traditioned and traditioning theological voices that the argument advances.

Third, its mode of proceeding: what follows is a cumulative argument for the recovery of an indispensable aspect of Catholic theology that fell largely into disuse after the Second Vatican Council—a mode of argumentation that establishes, case by case and in the way and to the degree possible in each case, the intelligibility of the logical connection between previously defined and subsequently defined doctrines. Establishing such intelligibility is at the heart of the theological labor of the *intellectus fidei*.³

To jettison the aim of intelligibility in matters of doctrinal development is to jettison the distinction between progress and alteration of the faith as a meaningful one, and this is to jettison the very notion of an authentic development of doctrine. Yet the Catholic Tradition prevents such a relinquishment by the repeated magisterial insistence on what I call Vincent’s “criterion of identity,” stated at the very end of the second epigraph: “. . . yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.” This criterion, I argue, can only be fulfilled by establishing the intelligibility of the logical connection between doctrines that distinguishes progress from alteration of faith, an authentic development from a corruption of doctrine. It is the *intellectus fidei* that fulfills the criterion of identity discursively, and it can only fulfill it discursively. To think that the discursive labor of the *intellectus fidei* has become passé in light of the recently discovered “law of historicity” is to commit the historicist fallacy—that the discovery of the radical contingency, that is, historicity of truth claims in their distinct socio-linguistic and socio-cul-

³ For those familiar with the following distinction, it is obvious that this essay follows the *via inventionis* and not the *via doctrinae*. It moves from effects to causes, so to speak; my overall approach is inductive, not deductive. It advances an argument for a recovery of an understanding of theology in which this argument participates only in a preliminary and preparatory way.

tural contexts implies per se the contingency or relativity of the truth claims themselves—and thereby to reduce theology to the hermeneutical explication of contemporaneous religious self-consciousness, on the one hand, and to the historical-critical study of facts and artifacts (texts, rites, symbols, and archaeological remains in their respective historical and socio-cultural configurations), on the other hand.

The Living Idea of Christianity and Its Two Counterfeits— Antiquarianism and Presentism

In the opening pages of his seminal *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Newman states: “To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.”⁴ Transposed from what at present will be regarded as ecumenically offensive into a positive statement, Newman’s adage might best be put thus: *To be Catholic is to be deep in history*. Lest we misunderstand Newman’s statement, we must immediately realize that the history Newman refers to with his evocative expression “to be deep in history” is the Spirit-guided and Spirit-filled history of salvation that the Church holds in her living memory. It is the central act of the Church’s living faith, the ongoing anamnesis of the risen Christ, the Bridegroom, who guides his bride, the Church by means of the Comforter he promised to send. It is the history of the truth of revelation, Christ Himself, given in surpassing and definitive plenitude to the apostles.⁵ The Church receives this fullness of revelation from the apostles as a gift that continues giving, an “active principle”⁶ that unfolds in the mind of the Church. Newman calls it the “idea of Christianity.” This notion plays a pivotal role in Newman’s account of the development of doctrine. Avery Dulles observes that Newman “is using the term ‘idea’ in a rich but fluid sense, somewhat personal to himself.”⁷ It is therefore useful to clarify Newman’s understanding of “idea”

⁴ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* [hereafter, *Dev.*] (London: Longmans, 1908 [originally 1845; revised 1878]), 8. Joseph Rickaby’s index of Newman’s works in the Longmans Uniform Edition, listed by the standard abbreviations in Newman studies, can be found via the link on the search page of the Newman Reader website for the National Institute for Newman Studies (NINS), at newmanreader.org.

⁵ For an instructive account of Newman’s understanding of the Spirit-guided Church in history as received and developed by Yves Congar, see Andrew Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), esp. chs. 4–6.

⁶ Newman, *Dev.*, 36.

⁷ Avery Dulles, S.J., “From Images to Truth: Newman on Revelation and Faith,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 252–67, at 253.

before turning to his notion of the “idea of Christianity.” As part of this clarification, it is necessary to de-synonymize Newman’s use of the notion “idea” from the use of the concept in Kant’s transcendental idealism (ideas as concepts of reason whose object cannot be found in experience) and in Hegel’s absolute idealism (the idea as the objectified unity of the concept with its reality).

Consider what is arguably Newman’s clearest statement of what he takes an idea to be: “a view, an indivisible object, which does not admit of more or less, a form, which cannot coalesce with anything else, an intellectual principle, expanding into a consistent harmonious whole.”⁸ In his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman takes “idea” in precisely this sense—as “an intellectual principle expanding into a consistent harmonious whole”—for the notion of idea and of its development grants intelligibility to the complex dynamic of revelation taking hold of human minds and unfolding over the course of time. In an important passage in the opening section of the *Essay*, Newman articulates the central conceptual role the notion of idea holds in the overall explanatory scheme of the development of doctrine. Moreover, in this passage he clarifies that the idea of Christianity is a “real idea,” that is, an idea that represents an object:

There is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea, no one term or proposition which will serve to define it; though of course one representation of it is more just and exact than another, and though when an idea is very complex, it is allowable, for the sake of convenience, to consider its distinct aspects as if separate ideas.⁹

The notion of a real idea has three implications of great pertinence. *First*, this notion does justice to the complex reality of revelation: while remaining an inexhaustible mystery, revelation at the same time conveys truth that can be apprehended, articulated, and assented in such a way that no further unfolding of the idea will ever overturn the truth of a distinct aspect of

⁸ This passage is to be found in the original 1852 Discourse V, “General Knowledge Viewed as One Philosophy,” that Newman decided not to include in the final 1873 edition of *The Idea of a University*. This discourse, and the respective passage can be found in John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* [hereafter, *Idea*], ed. I. T. Ker with introduction and notes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 419–34, at 423. All further citations from *Idea* will be from the 1910 edition by Longmans listed in Rickaby’s index (the particular passage here is absent from the Longmans but provided in the Ker edition).

⁹ Newman, *Dev.*, 35.

revelation once received and articulated definitively by the Church. The notion of a real idea thereby accounts for two indispensable, conjoined principles that Newman takes to be at the very heart of the theology of the Fathers, principles that entered into the Church's explicit awareness fully during the Arian crisis of the fourth century—the *principle of mystery* and the *dogmatic principle*.¹⁰ *Second*, not every person under the influence of a real idea holds this idea in the same way, depth, and extension as others. It is precisely for this reason that through contemplation, investigation, dialogue, and conflict the idea develops, that is, the idea is ever more fully and deeply received in the minds of those over whom it wields its influence. *Third*, revelation understood as mystery means that the idea of Christianity remains essentially impervious to all rationalistic attempts of reducing it to a mere “manifestation” that permits complete conceptual resolution into an exhaustive and comprehensive rational account. Conceivably, a sufficiently complex manifestation might for a while constitute a conceptual and logical quandary, yet is, in principle, susceptible to an eventual rational resolution.¹¹ Revelation, on the contrary, received in the mind as a real idea,

¹⁰ On the principle of mystery and on the dogmatic principle, see John Henry Newman's first monograph, originally published in 1833, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: Longmans, 1908). In his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* Newman understands the dogmatic principle referring to “supernatural truths, irrevocably committed to human language, imperfect because it is human, but definitive and necessary because given from above” (*Dev.*, 325). One of the most important places where Newman articulates the relationship between the principle of mystery and the dogmatic principle is in the last of his *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine” (*Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* [hereafter, *O.S.*] (London: Burns and Lambert, 1908)), 329–35; see appendix 1 below).

¹¹ Newman submits this rationalistic strategy to a still highly relevant analysis and critique in no. 73 of his *Tract for the Times*, “On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion,” reprinted in *Essays Critical and Historical* [hereafter, *Ess.*], 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1910), 1:30–101. Displaying the coherence of the revealed mysteries in themselves and among each other, refuting claims to their logical impossibility and to their incompatibility with naturally known truths is one thing (and indeed an essential part of the work of Catholic theology); yet quite another thing is the attempt to demonstrate the logical necessity of revealed truths, to interpret them as mere accommodations to the human imagination completely susceptible to their rational elevation to full conceptual intelligibility by the effort of the human mind (whether unaided or aided by grace remains irrelevant). The latter (the rationalist fallacy in sacred theology) remains the constant temptation of thinkers overconfident in the encompassing scope of human intelligence and forgetful of the absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility of God—a temptation to which Christian thinkers in antiquity, the middle ages, and modernity proved to be vulnerable. In the wake of the Enlightenment,

while always being conducive to being cast into a definite form (dogmatic principle) that enables and encourages definite acts of assent, never can be conceptualized exhaustively and therefore never grasped comprehensively (principle of mystery).

Divine revelation received in the world as a real idea is indexed by two factors, human reason and time; they together form, so to speak, the coordinates of the reception of revelation as the idea of Christianity. *First*, time is the medium of creation and salvation; hence human existence in the world is unavoidably historical, in the order of nature as well as in the order of grace, such that time is also—by necessity of consequence—the medium of revelation. This is, as will become clearer later, the fundamental historicity of all created reality, of human existence individually and collectively, and of the graced order of salvation. It is what I shall in the following call “theological historicity,” as it is originally and paradigmatically articulated through the medium of divine revelation in the Sacred Scriptures in their canonical order comprising protology and eschatology, the beginning and the end of human history. *Second*, unlike the angelic intellect, human reason is discursive; while certain insights might be instantaneous, their reasoned articulation is unavoidably discursive, characterized by the sequence of before and after and, furthermore, by the defining feature of reasoned consequence or entailment. Accordingly, time is the medium in which not only revelation occurs but in which also its reception occurs—the slow and successive apprehension of a surpassingly complex real idea in its innumerable aspects.

Revelation received as idea has therefore three central characteristics: it is *comprehensive*, *living*, and *real*.¹² It is *comprehensive*, that is, it underlies all of its various expressions: “Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary only because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea, except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entirety, nor without

this temptation began to have an ever-deeper impact on Catholics—educated lay persons, as well as philosophers, and even theologians—such that the magisterium of the Church had to clarify this matter normatively in Vatican I’s *Dei Filius*, which remains the Church’s most authoritative and extensive teaching on the relationship of faith and reason, the range of reason, and the nature of the mystery of revelation. Contemporary Catholic theologians who think they can safely leave *Dei Filius* behind as a magisterial signpost that purportedly has long lost its relevance only open the door again to irrationalism and emotivism on the one side and hyperrationalism on the other.

¹² Dulles, “From Images to Truth,” 254.

resolving it into a series of aspects and relations.”¹³ It is *living*, because “the great idea takes hold of a thousand minds by its living force,” so that it “may rather be said to use the minds of Christians, than to be used by them.”¹⁴ It is *real* because it “represents an object” and “is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects.”¹⁵ The idea of Christianity is not a mental construct but rather an idea that preexists before it enters the individual mind; this idea is “one truth” and “the mind is below truth, not above it, and is bound not to descant upon it.”¹⁶

As comprehensive, living, and real, the idea of Christianity—informed by the principle of mystery and the dogmatic principle—has a single constitutive center, “the image or idea of Christ, which Christ himself, through his preachers and witnesses, imprints on the minds of the faithful.”¹⁷ According to Newman, Jesus Christ—during his earthly ministry up to his Passion and death on the Cross as well as after his resurrection—aroused in the apostles’ consciousness of faith a comprehensive intuition of the fullness of revelation. It is this comprehensive idea of Christianity that the Church received from the apostles and that the Church continues to pass on first with many aspects of it remaining implicit, aspects that will only later in face of external pressure, internal disagreement, and ever-deeper contemplation of the mystery of faith become explicit in the mind of the Church. Such explication, importantly, does not negate the mystery; on the contrary, the mystery of faith is made explicit *qua* mystery.

By passing from implicit to explicit in mind of the Church, these hitherto implicit aspects of the idea of Christianity enter into the Church’s knowledge of faith. The knowledge of faith is nothing but the *cognitive* apprehension (not exhaustive conceptual penetration, control, or owner-

¹³ Newman, *O.S.*, 331–32.

¹⁴ Newman, *O.S.*, 316–17.

¹⁵ Newman, *Dev.*, 34. While the “representationalism” in this phrase is distinctly Lockean, it is far from clear whether Newman has any attachment to Lockean Empiricism and is affected by the problems that plague Locke’s representationalism. While Newman’s language is at points Lockean, the source of his epistemological realism seems ultimately to be Aristotle, whose empiricism is free from the problems characteristic of Locke’s representationalism. While these matters were never fully clarified by Newman—not even in his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*—there is a strong consensus among Newman scholars that Newman was never committed conceptually to any of the central tenets of modern empiricism, be it that of Locke or Hume. For a good introduction to this complex matter, see Laurence Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge* (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2007), 19–66.

¹⁶ Newman, *Dev.*, 357.

¹⁷ Dulles, “From Images to Truth,” 254.

ship, but simply holding in the mind) of the various explicit aspects of the idea of Christianity, and such cognitive apprehension can only come about by way of concepts, propositions, and judgments. Any kind of knowledge, even the most basic, is a cognitive apprehension of the real. This is true of ordinary knowledge, of scientific knowledge, and of the knowledge of faith. And it is by way of concepts, propositions, and judgments that human cognitive apprehension of the real occurs. Assents of common sense, of science, and of faith do not terminate in the propositions themselves to which assent is given; rather, such assents terminate in the real—as apprehended by way of concepts, propositions, and judgments. Hence, for assents of faith to terminate in the reality that is revealed, propositions are the indispensable instrument for forming apprehensions to which assents can be made and therefore also for the reception and ever-deeper and more explicit understanding of the idea of Christianity.¹⁸ And a syllogism is for Newman nothing but coming to see two propositions as actually one: Mary is the mother of Jesus. Jesus is the Word made flesh, that is, God. Mary is the Mother of God. This means two things: *first*, there is an irreducible difference between the idea of Christianity itself in its inexhaustible plenitude and the propositions that articulate parts of it: “Particular propositions . . . which are used to express portions of the great idea vouchsafed to us, can never really be confused with the idea itself which all such propositions taken together can but reach, and cannot exceed.”¹⁹ *Second*, the idea of Christianity necessarily issues in distinct doctrinal knowledge by way of which the idea is received relative to human apprehensions:

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas tersely observes that “we do not form propositions, except in order to have knowledge about things through their means” (*Summa theologiae* [ST] II-II, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2). To conceive of religious “experience” as essentially pre-conceptual or a-linguistic is profoundly misguided. What is in many ways implicit in Newman’s earlier thought, and especially already present in the latter half of his *Oxford University Sermons* and in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, he worked out explicitly in his 1870 *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* [hereafter, *G.A.*] (London: Longmans, 1907). Note that Newman’s distinction in chapter 4 of *G.A.* between real and notional assent supposes that propositions about matters of fact and existence may be entertained in a real or in a notional manner. When entertained in a notional manner, then the assent to the proposition must be notional, and when entertained in a real manner, then the assent to the proposition must be real. Yet in either way, there is an assent to a proposition. Assents of faith may be very well real assents, but they can never be pre-conceptual or a-linguistic assents.

¹⁹ Newman, *O.S.*, 331.

The notion of doctrinal knowledge absolutely novel, and of simple addition from without, is intolerable to Catholic ears, and never was entertained by anyone who was even approaching to understand our creed. Revelation is all in all in doctrine; the Apostles its sole depository, the inferential method its sole instrument, and ecclesiastical authority its sole sanction. The Divine Voice has spoken once for all, and the only question is about its meaning. . . . Christian Truth is purely of revelation; that revelation we can but explain, we cannot increase, except relatively to our own apprehensions; without it we should have known nothing of its contents, with it we know just as much as its contents, and nothing more. And, as it was given by a divine act independent of man, so will it remain in spite of man.²⁰

It is by way of the Church's living doctrinal Tradition that revelation continues to bear upon the Church claiming and informing the mind of Christians such that the idea of Christianity continues to unfold "relatively to our apprehensions." What gives unity and coherence to the idea of Christianity in the Church's mind is the dogmatic principle that informs the Church's understanding from the apostolic age to the present time. From early on, Newman explains, the dogmatic principle has been

a conviction that truth was one; that it was a gift from without, a sacred trust, an inestimable blessing; that it was to be revered, guarded, defended, transmitted; that its absence was a grievous want, and its loss an unutterable calamity. . . . Councils and Popes are the guardians and instruments of the dogmatic principle; they are not the principle themselves; they presuppose the principle; they are summoned by it into action at the call of the principle.²¹

Insofar as the idea of Christianity is the object of the Church's progressive growth in insight, it becomes a concrete body of defined teaching. And because the animating principle of the idea of Christianity is God's living Word in history, Christ, this body of teaching is really *one* single, albeit

²⁰ Newman, *Idea*, 223–24. To take this passage from *The Idea of a University* as some concession that Newman makes to his Catholic Irish audience—a wink to an allegedly scholastic understanding of theology that he himself would not hold—and as uncharacteristic of his own understanding of the development of doctrine is to ignore the central role the "real idea" plays in his *Essay*. On the contrary, this passage from the *Idea* captures in a nutshell what is epistemically essential of revelation as a real idea.

²¹ Newman, *Dev.*, 360.

surpassingly complex, idea. As Newman explains in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, “this body of thought, thus laboriously gained, will after all be little more than the proper representative of one idea, being in substance what that idea meant from the first, its complete image as seen in a combination of diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustrations of many experiences.”²²

The very reality of this developing body of the Church’s doctrinal patrimony—the Church’s ongoing reception of an ever-deeper unfolding of the idea of Christianity in the Church’s mind—has been challenged by two distinct yet not unrelated ideas that became powerful opposing historical forces, each with its own programmatic claim of epochal rupture. These two historical forces represent distinct ways of forfeiting “to be deep in history,” the one by way of idealizing a particular state of the past—we shall call this in the following “antiquarianism”—the other by way of projecting an idealized state of the future onto the present—we shall call this in the following “presentism.”²³ Antiquarianism arises with the Protestant Reformation and is in many ways simply identical with it, while presentism emerges in full force only with the Enlightenment and is implemented for the first time in the Europe of the eighteenth century during the so-called “Catholic Enlightenment”—the suppression of the Jesuit Order and the sweeping Josephinist reform program—culminating with logical consequence in the institution of the *Culte de la Raison*, publicly celebrated on the *Fête de la Raison* on 20 Brumaire, year II (November 10, 1793), in Notre Dame de Paris, replacing effectively the divine worship due to the Most Holy Trinity with the counterfeit worship of reason.²⁴

²² Newman, *Dev.*, 38.

²³ I understand ecclesial antiquarianism and ecclesial presentism as ideal types, heuristic devices for identifying theologically detrimental attitudes, tendencies, and programs. In concrete lived reality they occur often in mixed forms, are qualified by other factors, and appear in varying degrees of intensity. When I refer in the following to specific theological authors in order to identify the one or the other tendency, these qualifications are to be kept in mind. Identifying the work of theologians in such a way does not entail a denigration of their intellectual labor and achievement but simply an acknowledgment of the normative thrust that informs the overall scope of the argument advanced in the work.

²⁴ In this memorable event, the sad figure of Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Gobel (1727–1794) took part. Gobel was a French Catholic priest who during the French Revolution took the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, was elected “constitutional” archbishop of Paris, consecrated in 1791 by eight bishops (among them none other than Talleyrand himself). As constitutional archbishop of Paris, Gobel opposed clerical celibacy. On 17 Brumaire, year II (November 7, 1793), he resigned from his episcopal functions and three days later participated in Notre

Antiquarianism

Let us consider, first, antiquarianism, the return to some normative state that is identical with the purportedly pure origin itself of Christianity or that reflects its last authentic expression. One version of antiquarianism may locate the true and original teaching of Jesus in the reconstruction of the “historical Jesus” behind the portraits of Christ painted in the four Gospels; another version may locate it in the Apostle Paul’s original radical message—uncompromised by subsequent “deutero-Pauline” accretions; another again may locate it in the Church of the New Testament canon and the earliest pre-Nicene Church Fathers (usually Saint Irenaeus of Lyon) unencumbered by later doctrinal complications; and other versions may locate it in some authentic tradition that at some identifiable point in history was purportedly abandoned or corrupted in some irreparable way, be it after Chalcedon, or after the completion of the first seven ecumenical councils, or after the Great Schism of 1054, or after the promulgation of the dogma of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, or after the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Dignitatis Humanae* at the Second Vatican Council. What exactly this purportedly authentic state of the past is, and when it was allegedly corrupted, depends on whether the antiquarianism is of liberal or evangelical Protestant, of Anglican, of East-

Dame de Paris in the counterfeit liturgy to *la déesse de la Raison*. In the spring of 1794 Robespierre replaced the Cult of Reason with his own deist Cult of the Supreme Being. The inventors and supporters of the Cult of Reason were charged with atheism and sent to the guillotine, among them, Gobel (see L. J. Rogier, G. de Berthier de Sauvigny, and J. Hajjar, *Geschichte der Kirche*, vol. 4, *Die Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung: Revolution und Restauration* [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1966], 133ff.) Arguably, the spiritual and intellectual roots of the presentism characteristic of the claim of epochal rupture and the utopian ambitions of the radical Enlightenment reach back to the millennialism of the Italian theologian and apocalyptic thinker Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202). For an extended argument along these lines, see Henri de Lubac’s late magnum opus, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim of Flore* (Paris: Cerf, 2014). It would be far from irrelevant to pursue the question whether—and if so, in which way and to which degree—contemporary ecclesial presentism is ultimately indebted to the patrimony of Joachim of Fiore. Henri de Lubac had good reasons to thematize critically two influential works in which Christian eschatology is re-conceived as revolutionary utopianism—Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch’s monumental three-volume *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), originally to be called “Dreams of a Better Life,” and Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), two works with a lasting, albeit by now somewhat subterranean, influence on contemporary theological presentism.

ern Orthodox, of Jansenist, of Old Catholic, or of Lefebvrist provenance.²⁵ A certain form of antiquarianism can also be developed in service of a presentist program; this antiquarianism usually puts forward a reconstruction of the “historical Jesus” and his purported “real” agenda (in differentiation from what the four Gospels might project) that in turn serves as a theological warrant for a unique form of presentism.²⁶

For antiquarianism, all developments beyond some allegedly pure origin or some definitively last authentic expression of that origin are doctrinal corruptions, increasing admixtures with distortions and falsehoods that more and more pollute the clear spring water the further it is carried away from its pristine source or its last authentic expression. Return to and union with the origin, or at least with the latest state of its authentic expression, is the ultimate goal of antiquarianism.²⁷

²⁵ For liberal Protestant antiquarianism, see the classical formulation by Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, published originally in 1900, and for a more recent typical instantiation, Robert Walter Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). For a sophisticated expression of the evangelical Protestant version, see Friedrich Mildener, *Biblische Dogmatik: Eine biblische Theologie in dogmatischer Perspektive*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991–1993), and for a Pauline version of antiquarianism, see Douglas A. Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics: The Triumph of God's Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020). The situation in Eastern Orthodoxy is diverse and complex on this matter: some orthodox theologians permit the notion of a development of doctrine, others reject it; see the informative appendix “The Idea of Doctrinal Development in Eastern Orthodoxy” in Aidan Nichols, O.P., *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 279–86; see also Andrew Louth, “Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology?,” in *Orthodoxy and Western Culture: A Collection of Essays Honoring Jaroslav Pelikan on His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Valerie Hotchkiss and Patrick Henry (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 45–63, and Daniel J. Lattier, “The Orthodox Rejection of Doctrinal Development,” *Pro Ecclesia* 20, no. 4 (2011): 389–410.

²⁶ The historical-critical reconstructions of the allegedly authentic historical Jesus behind the Gospel portraits, per se a version of antiquarianism, stand most often in service of some presentist program to be legitimated by the recovery of the original Jesus. This tendency of putting a certain version of antiquarianism in service of a presentist theological agenda can also be observed in strands of Catholic modernism and then again in the use of the historical-critical method in service of a presentist agenda in the post-Conciliar discussion of the 1970s. See for example Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith: Interpretation and Criticism*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Seabury, 1974), and *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins and Marcelle Manley (New York: Seabury, 1979).

²⁷ Note that the *via media* that John Henry Newman constructed as the ecclesiological program of Tractarianism grounding a vision of the Anglican Church as

Presentism

Unlike antiquarianism that privileges some idealized fixed state of the past as a norm—the pure origin or some definitively last authentic expression of it—presentism privileges a projected future as norm in light of which the present must be shaped in order for the Church to conform with the norm of the projected future. Presentism holds the Church to be an essentially self-actuating and self-norming body that projects the future and anticipates it as blueprint for designing the Church of the present. To the degree that presentism appeals to the spirit, it seeks to bring the idea of Christianity in conformity with what is taken to be the “spirit of the age” and its characteristic signs of the times to be received as normative divine communications—inspirations—meant to bring a Church, usually perceived as almost hopelessly behind its time, up to date with the overall historical dynamic of a providentially guided progress racing toward an ever-brighter future of universal enlightenment, comprehensive material prosperity in a world of peace and justice, and maximized individual freedom. Characteristically for presentism, the normative source of theological judgment is no longer found *in* faith and its dogmatic content but is applied, *ab extra*, to those contents.²⁸

Unsurprisingly, a prominent feature in this progressive future-oriented dynamic is rupture. Rupture is the “spirit”-granted liberation from a past that once was the self-actuation of what is now the Church of the past. Presentism welcomes, encourages, and indeed sets into motion the dynamic, rupture-filled, and spontaneous fluidity of ongoing transformative ecclesial self-actuation—the interminable process of shaking off the shackles of past ecclesial self-actuations and bringing about the self-ac-

authentically Catholic, that is, as the sole authentic successor to the Church of the Fathers in the West (Protestantism being a distortive reduction and Romanism a corrupting excess), arguably, was nothing but a distinct version of antiquarianism. For a fully annotated edition that meets contemporary scholarly standards, see John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church: Illustrated in Lectures, Letters and Tracts Written between 1830 and 1841*, ed. H. D. Weidner with introduction and notes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

²⁸ For one concrete application of such a subtle, albeit programmatic, presentist view, see Hans-Joachim Sander’s extensive commentary on Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, where he argues that the “signs of the times” originating outside the Church should—in alleged accord with *Gaudium et Spes*—be accorded a privileged place in shaping the future course of doctrine and pastoral practice (Hans-Joachim Sander, “Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute,” in *Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath and Peter Hünermann, vol. 5 [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005], 581–886).

tuation of the new Church of the present. The notion that differentiates between the outgoing and the incoming Church of the present is “future.” The very shape the future is supposed or desired to take, based on the purportedly collective convictions of the future-oriented part of the outgoing Church of the present, becomes the blueprint for the self-actuation of the new incoming Church of the present and the criterion by which the outgoing Church of the present, now the Church of the past, is purged, corrected, and re-modeled. For presentism the necessity of the constant reform of the Church (*ecclesia semper reformanda est*) does not arise from the fact that the visible Church is a *corpus permixtum*, a mixed body, and that its personnel—to use the philosopher Jacques Maritain’s term—are fragile, sinful, and at times corrupt.²⁹ On the contrary, for presentism, the principle *ecclesia semper reformanda* simply articulates the transformative dynamic of the Church’s ongoing self-actuation.

Presentism entertains three interrelated cognitive reservations about doctrine and dogma: *first*, the eschatological reservation—doctrine and also dogma are penultimate witnesses to and transient approximations of what will be the eschatological truth of revelation; *second*, the historicist reservation—the conceptuality, linguistic rendition, and propositional intention of doctrines and dogmas are bound to and by the socio-historical and discursive context in which they were formulated and which they address—they are, in short, expressions of thought of and for a particular age and place cast into the passing fashions of then dominant thought forms; and *third*, the pneumatological-ecclesiological reservation—the she-agent of the Church is empowered to actuate herself anew over against past actuations. Dogmatic definitions are never unequivocally definitive and irreversible. Rather, because contingent on their socio-cultural context of articulation, they remain conditional, that is, always subject to the Church’s new self-actuation and with it to their reinterpretation leading possibly to their eventual reversal. While “continuity” and “discontinuity” are inherently correlated notions characteristic of the dynamic of organic development or homogeneous evolution of a real idea that takes increasingly hold of human minds and thereby develops and undergoes

²⁹ See Jacques Maritain, *On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973). As is well known, in this important late work on the Church, Maritain draws the distinction between the Church’s *personnel*, which is subject to sin and fallible, and the Church’s *person*, which is in principle inviolate. Characteristically, presentism does not accept this distinction. For presentists, the Church is in constant need of reform because it is simply the sum total of all its members.

change, “rupture,” on the contrary (and with it the silent implications of rupture—doctrinal reinterpretation and reversal), is the essential characteristic of the Church conceived as a sovereign spirit-subject that actuates herself again and again. “Rupture,” in other words, is the negative aspect, the liberation from the shackles of the past, of which the free self-actuation is the positive aspect. No self-actuation without rupture.

In the wake of the conflict-laden reception of the Second Vatican Council, the post-conciliar agenda of presentism might be best characterized as the ever-deeper and more comprehensive reception into the Catholic Church of what were taken to be the epochal and lasting achievements of the Enlightenment in its earlier as well as later stages, especially the consistent application of the new, all-comprehensive awareness of the comprehensive and radical historicity of all aspects of reality. This is historicist historicity, and the only trans-historical law it acknowledges is the “law of historicity” itself. Presentism endorses this all-embracing “law of historicity”: all reality is, all the way down, temporally inflected and thus characterized by a primordial contingency, particularity, and transiency. The “law of historicity” pertains not only to events, cultures, and institutions but also to the meaning of these realities and to ideas themselves. In short, by embracing the “law of historicity,” for presentism, there are no eternal truths, and for that matter no divine law other than the law of change. Normatively *modern* presentists would want to stop short of the relativism entailed in radical historicity by conceiving the “law of historicity” to express a single “logos” that unfolds by way of one “grand narrative” from the triune self-constitution of the Absolute and its further self-differentiation into the “other” of the world and its eventual expression in the human mind, culture and language, to the concepts of human thinking culminating in the reality of the Church, the ever new self-actuating community of spirit and increasingly realized freedom.³⁰ *Postmodern* presentists, by contrast, declare the definitive end of all grand narratives and propose instead multiple local, contextual narratives, subversive of all forms of power discourse and power structures and envision “church” as the spirit-event ever constituting itself as anti-, post-, or trans-hierarchical

³⁰ The most comprehensive vision along these lines in the twentieth century was developed by Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. See especially *Le phénomène humain*, written in 1930 but published only posthumously in 1955 (*The Human Phenomenon*, ed. and trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber, foreword by Brian Swimme [Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 1999] and *The Divine Milieu*, rev. and trans. Siôn Cowell, foreword by Thomas M. King, S.J. (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic, 2004).

communities of liberated human authenticity and solidarity.³¹

Applied to the problem of the development of doctrine, Andrew Meszaros aptly characterizes the historicist suppositions of presentism thus: "The Church and her teaching could develop in any direction. 'Development' and 'reform' are euphemisms for 'transformation' and even 'revolution.'" ³² The characteristic trait of presentism is, according to Meszaros, "a conspicuous hesitation, if not outright refusal to name and identify the enduring truths of Christian revelation, or for that matter, the constitutive elements of the Church."³³ At bottom, presentism when following the all-embracing "law of historicity" consistently, that is, in its postmodern modality, has to hold—and indeed does hold—that everything including all historical construals of truth and meaning, and hence of revelation, doctrine, dogma, and so on, are, all the way down, of a transient contingency relative to a plurality of co-temporaneous particular socio-cultural and socio-linguistic contexts replete with distinct and possibly incommensurable values and moral norms. And because of their contingency all the way down, it seems perfectly legitimate to submit these past construals to just another form of contingency—the will of change, the will of reconstruction. Jon D. Levenson calls this characteristic fallacy at the very heart of the presentist program "the venerable liberal . . . argument, that the inevitability of unwilld change legitimates willed change, that the historical reality that the tradition was, de facto, always changing validates, de jure, contemporary efforts to alter it."³⁴

The unavoidable entailment of a consequent implementation of presentism's radical historicization of revelation, the Church, dogma, and doctrine is the increasingly explicit acknowledgement that, after all, they are the effect of natural historical processes to which they can be reduced without remainder and that their ongoing justification and maintenance necessarily requires a "neo-logical" transposition from a once allegedly

³¹ See, e.g.: David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975); Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emerging Church: The Future of Christianity in a Post-Bourgeois World*, trans. Peter Mann (New York: Seabury, 1981); Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000); Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Post-modern Context* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2003); Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

³² Meszaros, *Prophetic Church*, 5.

³³ Meszaros, *Prophetic Church*, 7.

³⁴ Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 7.

divine to a now fully recognized human meaning and purpose—the long overdue complete implementation of the Enlightenment in the Church.³⁵

Counterfeits of an Authentic Development of Doctrine

John Henry Newman's account of an authentic development of doctrine and the entailed theological understanding of history and historical transition unmask antiquarianism and presentism as what they are: seductive counterfeits that are gravely mistaken theologically about the nature of revelation, the Church, and the nature of doctrine and dogma, each in its own characteristic way, the one denying, the other absolutizing history. At the same time, I would argue, Newman's understanding of an authentic development of doctrine integrates into a higher synthesis a true insight in each: Without being rooted in the original deposit of faith, without a constant return to revelation received in the Sacred Scriptures and in sacred Tradition, the Church would cease to be apostolic in its doctrinal substance; she would eventually betray the teaching of the Gospel, the *depositum fidei*. Yet without living constantly in the Christ-centered and Spirit-filled present within an ever-present historical horizon that calls again and again for a fresh proclamation of the Gospel and hence for a fitting articulation of it, the Church would turn into a museum, a vast display of precious architectural, liturgical, and intellectual antiques, a display of cold memories instead of the throbbing, Christ-rooted and Spirit-filled, *living* Tradition of the Church.

Antiquarianism and presentism are counteracted best by a robust understanding of the development of doctrine and the Christologically and pneumatologically informed theology of history that necessarily undergirds it. Such a robust understanding clarifies the meaning of Christ's promise that "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13; RSV). If the Spirit sent by Christ indeed guides the Church into all the truth and if the mission of the Spirit indeed is one single divine act encompassing all created time, then this is true—in the Christ-rooted and Spirit-filled Church to be deep in history and to be

³⁵ For one of the most ambitious recent philosophical program legitimizing such a "translation" of the Enlightenment into religion and simultaneously the complete "translation" of the values of Christianity into a fully enlightened secular society within a grand narrative of reason's emancipation from the tutelage of religion, a "pilgrim's progress" from the City of God to the City of Man, the city of the new *homo deus*, see Jürgen Habermas's late magnum opus, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, *Die okzidentale Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen*, and vol. 2, *Vernünftige Freiheit. Spuren des Diskurses über Glauben und Wissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019).

deep in the present are two aspects of the selfsame reality. To put it into a Newmanian way: *The present is the fruit of history and history is the root of the present.* What connects the one with the other is the development of doctrine.

Yet how do we distinguish between authentic developments of doctrine and developments that are actually corruptions of doctrine? How are anti-quarian ossifications and, more importantly, presentist fluidifications and transformations of doctrine discerned for what they are—corruptions of doctrine? Quite obviously, not every development is necessarily an authentic development.

In order to address this question in light of contemporary forms of anti-quarianism and especially of presentism and guided by Newman's pivotal account of the authentic development of doctrine, we must first recall the teaching of the modern magisterium on the development of doctrine.

What Is the Development of Doctrine?

Recalling the Recent Teaching of the Magisterium

This magisterial teaching can only be ascertained on the background of what the selfsame magisterium understands to be “dogma.” While there does not exist a formal magisterial definition of what, according to the Catholic understanding, a dogma is, the Fathers of the First Vatican Council, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, advance in their explication of the “object of faith” (*objectum fidei*) a perspicuous circumscription of dogma:

By divine and catholic faith all those things are to be believed which are contained in the *Word of God* as found in *Scripture* and *Tradition*, and which are *proposed by the Church as matters to be believed as divinely revealed*, whether by *her solemn judgment* or in *her ordinary and universal magisterium*.³⁶

Hence, according to this definitional paraphrase—as close to a “meta-dogma,” a dogma about the nature of dogma, as the magisterium can meaningfully come without committing a theological version of the fallacy of circular reasoning—a dogma is a doctrine of the Church that is proclaimed authoritatively to the faithful by the ordinary and general

³⁶ “Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur, et ab Ecclesia sive solemn iudicio sive ordinario et universali magisterio tamquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur” (DH 3011; emphasis mine).

magisterium of the Church or by a papal or conciliar definition as a truth of faith revealed by God. It is only in the post-Tridentine Catholic theology that the magisterium appears explicitly as the guarantor and authority of dogma; during this period Catholic theology as whole becomes reflexively aware of the central role of the magisterium in the formation of dogma. By the eighteenth century, a broad consensus had emerged among virtually all Catholic theologians about the requisite formal and material elements of a dogma, a consensus that found its explicit conciliar expression in the definitional paraphrase of *Dei Filius*.³⁷ Walter Kasper articulates well what might strike some as astounding: “So we are faced with the initially surprising fact that a term like dogma, which is central to today’s thinking in the Catholic Church, has only been used since the eighteenth century in Catholic theology and only since the nineteenth century in the official language of the Church in the sense that it is used today.”³⁸ Yet what matters is not the initial surprise but the way this fact is received and reflected in contemporary Catholic theology. To take and reject this understanding of dogma as a regrettable or even scandalous departure of the modern, post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church from an earlier, patristic and primarily doxological and liturgical understanding of dogma, is to embrace antiquarianism. To take and embrace this understanding of dogma as an indication of a rupture with an earlier understanding and the positing of a radically different new understanding reflective of a vision of papal infallibility and a Rome-centered Catholicism advanced by Pope Pius IX and ultramontanist forces that—it being allegedly a rupture—legitimizing another radical rupture from this understanding of dogma of what is now the church of the past, is to embrace presentism. To understand the matter rightly is to appreciate (1) that the Church never was without what now is referred to as “dogma,” (2) that the definitional paraphrase of *Dei Filius* is the fruit of a longer process of theological discernment and understanding reflecting and reacting to the doctrinal crisis concomitant with the Protestant Reformation, yet without (3) having to hold that this understanding of dogma necessarily includes all aspects of the wider patristic understanding of the notion of dogma or represents a straightforward explication of what

³⁷ On the emerging explicit understanding of a “living tradition” and the role of the “living magisterium” in this tradition in the Catholic theology of the nineteenth century, see Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical Essay and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby (pt. 1) and Thomas Rainborough (pt.2) (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 189–221.

³⁸ Walter Kasper, *Evangelium und Dogma: Grundlegung der Dogmatik*, Gesammelte Schriften 7 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015), 68.

was implicit in the patristic and medieval period.³⁹ As much as Nicaea and Chalcedon were the conciliar responses to doctrinal crises in which the conciliar definitions had to do more of a doctrinal specification than simply to make explicit what was implicit in the pre-Nicene or the pre-Chalcedonian Fathers in order to address the specific problematics embedded in the doctrinal crises, so also the Fathers of Vatican I, in order to address the specific doctrinal problematic they saw themselves faced with, had to articulate an understanding of dogma that reflected more a necessary specification of the notion of dogma than an explication of what has been regarded as implicitly present in all periods. To understand the matter rightly is finally to appreciate (4) that even the neo-Scholastic theologians, often unjustly derided for their allegedly ossified timeless concept of dogma, were quite aware of the fact that, according to the understanding authoritatively proposed in *Dei Filius*, a dogma was far from an exhaustive articulation of the divine truth. The Jesuit expert on theological notes Sixtus Cartechini (1912–1994) could explicitly state: “While a dogmatic formula is infallible and immutable in what it affirms or negates, it nevertheless frequently may be perfected through that by which it expresses more deeply and in a better way the divine mysteries. . . . Thus one and the same revealed truth may be determined to a greater degree in successive times in diverse respects.”⁴⁰ Hence, since in its content a dogma always remains true and binding, and since no single dogma ever fully expresses the *divinum depositum*, a dogma always necessarily points beyond itself to the ultimately non-objectifiable,

³⁹ Inquiries into the conceptual history of terms like *fides*, *regula fidei*, and *articulus fidei* make plain that the Church never was without what now is referred to as doctrine and also as “dogma,” at least *in embryo*. It is the apostle Paul who creates the link between binding doctrine and received apostolic Tradition. The *typos didaches* (*forma doctrinae*) is St. Paul’s term (Rom 6:17) that fuses both, the binding doctrine and the apostolic Tradition, as the articulation of the faith that is affirmed at baptism. I do not find the account that Karl Rahner and Karl Lehmann advance persuasive (*Mysterium Salutis*, vol. 1 [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965], 641) and take rather Josef Rupert Geiselmann’s overall assessment still to hold (*Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 [Munich: Kösel, 1962], 226). The scholarly most detailed and still most reliable account is found in Georg Söll, *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1/5, *Dogma und Dogmenentwicklung*, ed. Michael Schmaus, Alois Grillmeier, and Leo Scheffczyk (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1971).

⁴⁰ Sixtus Cartechini, S.J., *De valore notarum theologicarum et de criteriis ad eas dignoscendas* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1951), 18: “Formula dogmatica est infallibilis et immutabilis in eo quod affirmat vel negat, sed tamen saepius potest perfici quod plus et melius exprimat divina mysteria. . . . Ita una eademque veritas revelata magis determinatur successu temporis sub diversis respectibus.”

that is, propositionally and discursively inexhaustible and thus ever greater mystery of God's salvation. The ongoingly relevant corrective principle to the danger of doctrinal conceptual univocity remains the rule that was formulated at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): "Between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them."⁴¹ This rule has been expressed most recently and most relevantly to our topic under discussion by Pope Benedict XVI in his lecture on "Faith, Reason and the University:"

The faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which—as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated—unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language. God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as *logos* and, as *logos*, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as Saint Paul says, "transcends" knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is *Logos*.⁴²

In all that follows this fundamental analogical rule of Lateran IV must be kept in mind lest dogma is misunderstood as an exercise of exhaustive conceptual comprehension (à la Hegel) or, in reaction to such a misunderstanding, is rejected in favor of a misplaced radical apophaticism that takes dogma as an anathema, that is, as a pure negation of some distortive constriction of divine revelation, a revelation that in itself remains always and in principle ineffable. Hence, in order to avoid both distortions of dogma, the *logos* of human conceptual and propositional articulation and discursive ratiocination, unfolding in time, even in the case of an infallible and irreversible dogma, still must always acknowledge its infinite distance vis-à-vis the divine *Logos* of creation and redemption.⁴³

⁴¹ Lateran IV: "Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda" (DS 806).

⁴² Pope Benedict XVI, Lecture on "Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections," University of Regensburg, September 12, 2006 (see Benedict's page on the Vatican site, speeches, 2006).

⁴³ Theological discourse in dogmatic theology, when considering the revealed mysteries, therefore relies always on analogical predication. Since dogmatic discourse is essentially cataphatic, the apophatic moment remains an inherent

With this understanding of dogma in place, we are now in a position to turn to the first important statement of the modern magisterium on the development of doctrine articulated in *Dei Filius* at the very end of the section in which the above definitional circumscription of dogma is to be found:

The doctrine of the faith which God has revealed is put forward not as some philosophical discovery capable of being perfected by human intelligence, but as a divine deposit committed to the spouse of Christ to be faithfully protected and infallibly promulgated. Hence, too, that meaning of the sacred dogmas is ever to be maintained which has once been declared by holy mother church, and there must never be any abandonment of this sense under the pretext or in the name of a more profound understanding. May understanding, knowledge, and wisdom increase as ages and centuries roll along, and greatly and vigorously flourish, in each and all, in the individual and in the whole church: but this only in its own proper kind, that is to say, *in the same doctrine, the same sense, and the same [meaning]* (“*in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*”).⁴⁴

corrective of analogical predication. While the basic fact is uncontroversial for most Catholic theologians, there is a complex discussion over the nature, kind, and extent of analogy in theological discourse between Thomists, Scotists, Suarezians, and those who have fallen under the spell of Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, or Wittgenstein—the five most influential modern philosophical ways of denying analogical predication, the first for the sake of securing the univocity of the concept and achieving truth in the system of *Wissenschaft*, and the last four on the assumption that language is primordially metaphorical. *Dei Filius* and John Paul II’s encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* have clarified—once and for all, one should think—that the philosophical conceptualizations of being, truth, and language advanced by each of them are ill suited for Catholic theology.

⁴⁴ Vatican I, *De Filius*: “Neque enim fidei doctrina, quam Deus revelavit, velut philosophicum inventum proposita est humanis ingeniis perficienda, sed tamquam divinum depositum Christi Sponsae tradita, fideliter custodienda et infallibiliter declaranda. Hinc sacrorum quoque dogmatum is sensus perpetuo est retinendus, quem semel declaravit sancta mater Ecclesia, nec umquam ab eo sensu, altioris intelligentiae specie et nomine, recedendum. ‘Crescat igitur et multum vehementerque proficiat, tam singulorum, quam omnium, tam unius hominis, quam totius Ecclesiae, aetatum ac saeculorum gradibus, intelligentia, scientia, sapientia; sed in suo dumtaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia (Vine. *Lir. Common*, n. 28)’” (DH 3020; trans. Norman P. Tanner, S.J., in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990]).

The Fathers of the First Vatican Council emphasize the ongoing identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning between a definitive and irreversible dogma and its ongoing interpretation that aims at an ever-deeper understanding of the mystery the dogma specifies. Needless to say that such a process of growth in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom in the same doctrine, sense, and meaning is only conceivable on the supposition that a universal “law of historicity” that comprises all truth and meaning does not exist. Differently put, the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning that *Dei Filius* teaches and the “law of historicity” issuing in the alleged universal historicity of all truth and meaning cannot coexist. They are, in short, incompatible.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, understanding perfectly well this fundamental incompatibility, yet being also concerned that the deepened awareness of and legitimate insight into the reality of history be appropriately acknowledged, shift the focus from the First Vatican Council’s teaching of the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning to the pneumatologically funded, *theological* historicity that characterizes the history of salvation and with it also the Church. The law of *this* historicity is nothing but the eternal law of God’s providence as it unfolds in this history of creation, redemption, and glorification by way of the integrity of created secondary causality, be it necessary causes or contingent causes, the latter comprising also the causality characteristic of rational free creatures.⁴⁵ It is for this reason that *theological* historicity taken in this precise sense is not only fully compatible with the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning that *Dei Filius* teaches. Rather, guided by divine providence and conveyed by divine revelation, *theological* historicity also provides the very horizon in which the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning can be coherently prescribed and actually followed. Differently put: the given-ness of the divine economy, the history of salvation, as communicated by revelation, constitutes a comprehensive horizon of understanding, of intelligibility, that creates an antecedent expectation of future intelligibility—the very condition for the ongoing *intellectus fidei* to occur. Bereft of this encompassing horizon and bereft of the supposition of revelation and its ongoing unfolding as a real idea in the mind of the Church, the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning becomes the wishful thinking of an abstract dogmatism—precisely the way the post-conciliar historicist historiography would

⁴⁵ “Divine providence works infallibly in all things, and nevertheless, the effects of contingent causes come about contingently, as God moves all things proportionately, each thing according to its mode” (Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 22, a. 4; *De malo*, q. 6).

tend to critique and eventually deconstruct this identity—as an intrinsically impossible reality.

We find a brief but concise formulation of this pneumatologically funded, *theological* historicity in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*. The key term under which this historicity is unfolded is *traditio* or *paradosis*:

This tradition [*traditio*] which comes from the apostles progresses in the church under the assistance of the holy Spirit. There is growth in understanding of what is handed on, both the words and the realities they signify. This comes about through contemplation and study by believers, who “ponder these things in their hearts” (see Luke 2:19 and 51); through the intimate understanding of spiritual things which they experience; and through the preaching of those who, on succeeding to the office of bishop, receive the sure charism of truth. Thus, as the centuries advance, the church constantly holds its course towards the fullness of God’s truth, until the day when the words of God reach their fulfillment in the church.⁴⁶

While the Fathers of the First Vatican Council emphasize the ongoing identity of the meaning of doctrine with the original deposit, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council emphasize the ongoing dynamic explication of doctrine until the very plenitude of divine truth given to the apostles in the deposit of faith has been received into the Church’s mind. Far from being contradictory, the two teachings only differ in emphasis and scope, Vatican I focusing on the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning in the ongoing growth of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom; Vatican II stressing the complex and manifold dynamics that are integral to this process involving in various ways three distinct but interrelated motors that stimulate this growth of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. The Fathers of Vatican

⁴⁶ The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, §8, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils. Volume II: Trent–Vatican II*, 974. On this topic, see the two important contributions by Joseph Ratzinger: first his remarks, written for Cardinal Frings, on the first schema of what was to become *Dei Verbum*, “Bemerkungen zum Schema ‘De fontibus revelationis,’” in *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 7/1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012), 157–74, trans. Jared Wicks, S.J., in “Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *peritus* before and during Vatican Council II,” *Gregorianum* 89 (2008): 233–311, at 269–85 (“Observations on the Schema *De fontibus revelationis*”); and his later discussion in *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), esp. “Short Formulas of Faith? On the Relationship between Formulas and Interpretation” (122–32).

I and Vatican II obviously share the selfsame horizon of *theological* historicity. This horizon simultaneously and without contradiction in the context of the epistemological focus on revelation, faith, reason affords the Fathers of Vatican I to stress in *Dei Filius* the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning. The selfsame horizon of *theological* historicity, but now with a focus on the dynamic of salvation history itself, affords the Fathers of Vatican II to emphasize in *Dei Verbum* the existential, spiritual, and evangelical dynamic of the growth in understanding of revelation. It is the shared horizon of theological historicity that makes the different emphases of Vatican I and Vatican II compatible and complementary.

Vincent of Lérins's *Commonitorium against Heresies*

The complete compatibility between the teachings of Vatican I and Vatican II on the authentic development of doctrine becomes more fully transparent when both conciliar statements are read in light of the patristic author from the early fifth century who reflected deeply about the question of doctrinal coherence and development and who arguably stands behind the conciliar teaching of both Vatican Councils (explicitly in the case of Vatican I; implicitly in the case of Vatican II) on this crucial issue—Vincent of Lérins, a Gallic monk, born in Toulouse, who died circa 445 on the island of Lérins, off the coast of Cannes. His most famous work, composed around 434 and published only posthumously, is the *Commonitorium against Heresies*. During the long period of medieval theology, that is, for almost one thousand years, the *Commonitorium* was virtually ignored, presumably because of Vincent's hidden polemic against Saint Augustine. From the time of the early sixteenth century on when the question of the authentic development of doctrine became increasingly virulent in the context of the emerging Protestant Reformation, the *Commonitorium* became a theological resource in high demand. In 1528, it received a first print edition ever in an anti-heretical collection of sources and subsequently, in the same century went through thirty-five editions and twenty-two translations and thus became an increasingly important patristic point of reference for Catholic but also Anglican theologians.⁴⁷ In his canon or rule to overcome heresy, Vincent famously states that “in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all (*ubique, semper, et ab omnibus*).”⁴⁸ This rule played a major role in Newman's *via*

⁴⁷ For an informative account, see Weidner's introduction to *Via Media*, xiii–lxxix.

⁴⁸ Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, 18: “In ipsa item Catholica Ecclesia magnopere curandum est ut id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab

media, articulated most forcefully in his 1837 *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*.⁴⁹ Based on Vincent's canon or rule, Newman critically exposed what he took to be Roman Catholic corruptions of doctrine and embraced a consistent antiquarianism that took the consensus of the first four centuries, the consensus of antiquity, as the ideal state of doctrine that reflected authentically the purity of the scriptural and apostolic origin. In his subsequent 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman expunged his previous antiquarianism in an explicit self-critique. Already in his *Lectures* though, Newman explicitly admits that: "The Rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it. . . . it admits of various and unequal application in various instances."⁵⁰ Only two years after the publication of the *Lectures* one of Newman's friends confronted him

omnibus creditum est." See Martin Elze, "Der Begriff des Dogmas in der alten Kirche," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 61 (1964): 421–38, at 438. For the best recent scholarly edition enriched with an extensive historical and interpretive study, see Vinzenz von Lérins, *Commonitorium*, ed. Michael Fiedrowicz with commentary, trans. Claudia Barthold (Mühlheim: Carthusianus, 2011).

⁴⁹ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church, Viewed relative to Romanism and Popular Protestantism* (London: Rivington, 1837), 51–52, 54–56, 253, 321–27 (this material appears in Weidner's edition of *Via Media* on 99–100, 102–3, 271, and 329–34). Already between 1833 and 1836, Newman published translated sections of Vincent's *Commonitorium* in the *British Magazine*. They can now be found in section IV, "Primitive Christianity," as ch. 2 under the title "What says Vincent of Lerins?" in *Historical Sketches*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1908), 375–90.

⁵⁰ Newman, *Lectures*, 55–56. It is worth considering Newman's qualification in full: "The Rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it. For instance: what is meant by being 'taught *always*'? Does it mean in every century, or every year, or every mouth? Does '*everywhere*' mean in every country, or in every diocese? And does 'the *Consent of Fathers*' require us to produce the direct testimony of every one of them? How many Fathers, how many places, how many instances constitute a fulfilment of the test proposed? It is, then, from the nature of the case, a condition which never can be satisfied as fully as it might have been; it admits of various and unequal application in various instances; and what degree of application is enough must be decided by the same principles which guide us in the conduct of life, which determine us in politics, or trade, or war, which lead us to accept Revelation at all, for which we have but probability to show at most; nay, to believe in the existence of an Intelligent Creator. This character, indeed, of Vincent's Canon, will but recommend it to the disciples of the School of Butler, from its agreement with the analogy of nature; but it affords a ready loophole for such as do not wish to be persuaded, of which both Protestant and Roman controversialists are not slow to avail themselves" (*Lectures*, 55–56).

with an article published in the *Dublin Review* by Roman Catholic bishop Nicholas Wiseman. In this article, Wiseman forcefully argued that the principle of catholicity, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*—the verdict of the whole world is conclusive—was demonstrably integral to the early Church and that it was plainly self-contradictory for Anglicanism, appealing to the Lerinian canon and rule, to insist on antiquity and simultaneously to deny the very catholicity at the heart of the early Church. As Newman vividly recollects in his *Apologia*, Wiseman's point struck home and the argument of the *Lectures*, the theory of the *via media*, came undone.⁵¹ A few years later, in the course of the composition of his 1845 version of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman submits in the very introduction to this work his own Anglican use of the Lerinian canon to an explicit self-critique showing that the way he had used the canon in his *Lectures* offered indeed no reliable criteria but rather served to justify a position arrived at on other grounds. Acknowledging that the solution Vincent offers with his rule and canon is indeed as difficult as the original problem, Newman ends this self-critique with the conclusion "that, whatever be the proper key for harmonizing the records and documents of the early and later Church, and true as the dictum of Vincentius must be considered in the abstract, and possible as its application might be in his own age, when he might almost ask the primitive centuries for their testimony, it is hardly available now, or effective of any satisfactory result."⁵²

What became increasingly important for Newman in the course of researching and writing the 1845 version of the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was Vincent of Lérins's less well-known but at least equally, if not actually more, important second rule from chapter 23 of the *Commonitorium*. There Vincent states:

Objection: Shall there, then, be no progress [*profectus*] in Christ's Church? Answer: Certainly: all possible progress. For what being is there so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith [*sed ita tamen ut vere profectus sit ille fidei, non permutatio*]. For progress requires that the subject be enlarged in itself; whereas alteration implies that it is transformed into something else. The

⁵¹ See appendix 2 below for the highly instructive account that Newman offers of this event in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions* [hereafter, *Apo.*] (London: Longmans, 1908 [originally 1865]).

⁵² *Dev.*, 27. Cf. the extended critique Newman advances in sections 8 through 19 of the introduction (*Dev.*, 11–27).

[understanding], then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning [*sed in suo duntaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*].⁵³

What makes this second Lerinian rule unique is that it ends with what I shall call in the following the “criterion of identity.” This criterion of identity is an indispensable part of the second rule, because it is only by way of this criterion that Vincent can make a meaningful distinction between real progress (*vere profectus*) and alteration (*permutatio*) of the faith. The salient point of Vincent’s criterion is that authentic progress (*vere profectus*) presupposes both the continuity and substantial identity of the subject.⁵⁴ Since Vincent is referring here to the *material* object of the faith, *what* is believed, and since the object of the faith is made up of the teachings, the doctrines of the faith, Newman’s distinction between an authentic development and a corruption of doctrine maps neatly onto the Lerinian distinction. We shall see later how Newman handles, indeed develops, the criterion of identity.

It is important to realize that the Fathers of the First Vatican Council magisterially affirm the criterion of identity of the second Lerinian rule in *Dei Filius* when they insist on the identity of doctrine, sense, and meaning. Vincent’s second rule makes obvious that neither he nor by implication the Fathers of the First Vatican Council succumb to the temptation of antiquarianism. Thomas Guarino, in his noteworthy book about Vincent, rightly observes that according to the latter, “antiquity itself must always be

⁵³ Saint Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 110.

⁵⁴ That Vincent’s criterion of identity is not some bygone mental construct of Christian late antiquity can easily be ascertained by consulting Hans-Georg Gadamer, who writes insightfully on the underlying distinction in his *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 2006), 110–11. Interestingly, in order to account for the categorical difference between what Gadamer calls *Veränderung* (Vincent’s *profectus*) and what he calls *Verwandlung* (Vincent’s *permutatio*), he draws upon the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and accident and argues that the former signifies an accidental and the latter a substantial change. We will see much later in this essay that Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P., in developing a conceptual account for a homogeneous evolution of dogma, also draws upon the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and its concomitant categorical distinctions, but develops the differentiation in a much more elaborate and nuanced way than Gadamer.

understood within the horizon of legitimate development.”⁵⁵ Differently put, already Vincent of Lérins presupposes the *theological* historicity that we find also presupposed in Newman’s understanding of the development of doctrine. This historicity is simply an entailment of the realization that what is implicit in revelation and respectively in the idea of Christianity becomes successively explicit as time expands, as new historical situations need to be faced and heresies addressed, and as the tradition that comes from the apostles is ongoingly proclaimed, taught, and contemplated by the Church.

Theological Historicity versus Historicist Historicity

Unsurprisingly, *theological* historicity in Vincent’s and Newman’s sense is categorically different from the “law of historicity” characteristic of the historicism to which the Enlightenment gives rise and which presentism tends to embrace.⁵⁶ The *theological* historicity that Vincent and Newman presuppose is nothing but the unfolding divine economy, that is, salvation history, a history, not only informed but established by the surpassing trans-historical transcendence of God, the triune Lord of history and sovereign agent of revelation, Incarnation, and redemption—and the human being, the recipient of the *paradosis* of revelation, held by divine and Catholic faith, a recipient who qua rational being is able to apprehend and understand truth that transcends as well as penetrates the transiency of time, the vagaries of history, and the contingent particularities of language, culture, and custom. It is, in short, the historicity of the comprehensive, sovereign, and homogeneous divine economy and as such an essentially non-historicist historicity. *Historicist* historicity, on the contrary, compromises the very meaning of concepts like revelation, faith, church, and even truth and subjects them to the supposition of epochal changes that call for radical hermeneutical transpositions from a bygone into a new epoch and from one socio-cultural locality to another. Especially in its postmodern modality, historicism supposes the fundamental heterogeneity of succes-

⁵⁵ Thomas G. Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 16.

⁵⁶ On the complex topic of differentiating between the greatly varying senses of historicity in general, see Gerhard Bauer, *“Geschichtlichkeit”: Wege und Irrwege eines Begriffs* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963), and on the challenging theological task of sorting out the legitimate and unavoidable historicity that characterizes salvation history itself from historicism’s programmatic notion of historicity, see Winfried Schulz, *Dogmenentwicklung als Problem der Geschichtlichkeit der Wahrheitserkenntnis: Eine erkenntnistheoretisch-theologische Studie zum Problemkreis der Dogmenentwicklung* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1969).

sive or even simultaneous, contiguous horizons of understanding and interpretation. Put into theological terms, in faithful discipleship to the late Heidegger, it is essentially “polytheistic.”

Historicist historicity has an implicit principle—*naturalism*—and a largely unacknowledged consequence—relativism. The implicit principle of *naturalism* finds its intellectually most sophisticated expression in the programmatic essay by Ernst Troeltsch in his 1898 “Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology.”⁵⁷ The principle of naturalism takes the form of understanding scientific laws that govern all physical and historical reality as inflexible principles that determine all conditions and do not allow for exceptions. In consequence, one must presuppose a fundamental similarity among all historical occurrences. It is this underlying principle of naturalism that funds the one principle that gives coherence to Troeltsch’s critical historiography across the wide variety of historical phenomena—the principle of analogy. Historical judgments presuppose an essential similarity between present and past reality. The observation of analogy between similar events of the past gives the possibility of ascribing probability to them and of ascertaining what is not known in the one from what is known in the other. What this principle of analogy entails is obvious: since in the contemporary experience of the vast majority of human beings, it is not the case that people rise bodily from the dead. Hence one has no rational grounds for assuming that such might have happened at any other time in history. Consequently, Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead cannot have been a historical event in this physical universe. The German philosopher, philologist, and literary critic Friedrich Schlegel captured in a nutshell, by anticipation so to speak, the two correlated principles of naturalism and analogy at the very heart of Troeltsch’s historicist program and by way of his witty aphorism exposes their metaphysical arbitrariness:

The two main principles of the so-called historical criticism are the Postulate of Vulgaritry and the Axiom of the Average. The Postulate of Vulgaritry: everything great, good, and beautiful is improbable because it is extraordinary and, at the very least, suspicious. The Axiom of the Average: as we and our surroundings are, so must have been always and everywhere, because that, after all, is so very natural.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ This essay is to be found in Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion in History*, trans. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 11–32.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. and ed. Peter Virchow (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 3.

The largely unacknowledged consequence of historicist historicity is *relativism*. Despite their sharp distinction between historicism and relativism, Wilhelm Dilthey, Troeltsch, Friedrich Marheinecke, and the sociologist Karl Mannheim admitted as a consequence of historicism the high probability of relativism.⁵⁹ And this should not come as a surprise. Since, according to historicist historicity, this epoch is the epoch of the full and consequent grasp of the radical historicity of human existence all the way down, one must assume and embrace a primordial plurality of subsequent and even concurrent heterogeneous conceptual frameworks and consequently a notion of truth as relative to these frameworks. To the degree that presentism embraces historicist historicity as a guiding supposition, it has to endorse the historicity of truth. To affirm the historicity of truth is, however, necessarily to reject the criterion of identity. Historicist historicity is, in short, essentially anti-economic and in this sense also anti-theological.

By now it will have become obvious that theological historicity and historicist historicity are funded by incommensurable first principles. In theological historicity truth and history are fundamentally united in their first transcendent cause, the provident God. The unfolding of created being, including the unfolding of human history and with it the growth in knowledge and understanding of the human being individually and humanity collectively does entail not only a fundamental historicity of being in the natural order (evolution) and in the order of free human agency (history), but also a historicity of the knowledge of truth (discourse traditions of inquiry). Ontological, historical, and epistemological historicity are indexed to a transcendent protological, soteriological, and eschatological horizon that is not only constitutive of the historical dynamic itself but present most intimately to every moment of history and accessible from every moment of history—by reason, thanks to the discursive logos of the human creature, and by faith, thanks to the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ.

For historicist historicity, history and truth are fundamentally unrelated realities. On the suppositions of historicism one might be able to reconstruct an accurate history, but one can never narrate a true history since history cannot convey or transport a meaning that would transcend

⁵⁹ For an astute analysis and demonstration of the theoretical inadequacy of philosophical historicism precisely because of the conceptually irresolvable and eventually detrimental problem of relativism, see Carl Page, *Philosophical Historicism and the Betrayal of First Philosophy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). This book should be required reading for presentists who characteristically invoke in intellectually all too facile ways the purportedly obvious inevitability of an intellectually and culturally historicist reading of past and present as the *de facto* horizon for theology in the twenty-first century.

its very historicity. When historicism is consistent and follows through on its implications, truth itself is a historical phenomenon encompassed fully by the horizon of absolute historicity. The one exception to the encompassing historicization of truth must, of course, be the universal principle of historicity itself that has to remain absolutely trans-historical in order to account for the historicity of all reality. The defining principle in short cannot be part of the set of all sets that it defines. This is historicism's insurmountable *prōton pseudos*, fundamental aporia. Apply the acid of historicist historicity to historicism itself and the mirage suddenly disappears. As soon as historicism itself is historicized, it turns into a temporally situated and historically conditioned ideology. Historicism can only be universalized (and what would be the point of a non-universal historicism!) at the price of its own self-contradiction and eventual self-destruction. For this very reason (as well as others), philosophers have long since abandoned historicism as a philosophically viable position. Yet Catholic theologians committed to the presentist program still are beholden by the purportedly radical challenges historicist historicity seems to pose to Catholic theology and inebriated by the promises the radical application of historicist principles to the Church's doctrine seems to hold.

From the perspective of presentism, Vincent is naively premodern about matters of historicity, as one should expect, and therefore must be dismissed upfront as lacking any relevance, let alone normativity, for the present discussion. Newman does not fare much better, if at all, since—at least according to the hermeneutics of the Newman reception that is dominant among presentists—he is supposed to be a precursor of historicist historicism. Yet even taken as such a precursor, Newman turns out to be still disturbingly unreflective about what historicists would regard to be the necessary entailments of historicist historicity, and therefore Newman's thought would need to be considerably updated if not transformed in order to acquire any relevance for presentists. Yet it has become plain in the course of these considerations, that any presentist claim whatsoever on Newman ignores the plain fact that Newman would vehemently resist such a historicist updating of his understanding of the development of doctrine.⁶⁰ As a matter of fact, Newman would regard such a historicist bringing-up-to-date of his thought as nothing but the illegitimate intro-

⁶⁰ It is at this point where Newman differs most emphatically from Hegel's model of historicity, as Thomas Pfau argues persuasively in the greatly informative chapter "Tradition" in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel Whistler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 219–46.

duction of historicist principles into essentially theological considerations appropriately informed by revealed religion, indeed as an imposition of principles categorically foreign to the nature of revealed religion, an imposition that would amount to nothing less than one particular version of the rationalist usurpation of revealed religion.⁶¹

Newman at Vatican II

Newman's understanding of the development of doctrine became influential at the Second Vatican Council primarily by way of two *periti*, who—deeply influenced by Newman—embraced and affirmed the theological historicity that Vincent as well as Newman presuppose, yet who at the same time decidedly reject historicist historicity and the ensuing rationalist usurpation of revealed religion—Yves Congar and Joseph Ratzinger. Both theologians were able to receive Newman in the context of a rich harvest of Catholic theological reflection on the development of doctrine that marked the century between the two Vatican Councils. Two catalysts played a central role in what has rightly been described by Guy Mansini as the “development of the development of doctrine”⁶²—the modernist crisis and the ongoing reception of Newman's path-breaking work on the development of doctrine. Francisco Marín-Sola, O.P., Ambrose Gardeil, O.P., Pierre Rousselot, S.J., Léonce de Grandmaison, S.J., Maurice Blondel, Henri de Lubac, S.J., Karl Rahner, S.J., Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., and first and foremost Yves Congar, O.P., himself come to mind.⁶³ All of these

⁶¹ Newman focused on this problem much more extensively during his Anglican period before and during the Oxford Movement, when he confronted his own former associates, the Oriel Noetics in Oxford, whose evidential theology was a prototypical rationalist usurpation of revealed religion. See paradigmatically his Oxford University Sermon no. 4, “The Usurpations of Reason” (*O.S.*, 54–74), and no. 73, “On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion” (in *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical* [London, Longmans, 1908; originally 1847]; repr. in *Ess.*, 1:30–101).

⁶² Guy Mansini, OSB, “The Development of the Development of Doctrine in the Twentieth Century,” *Angelicum* 93 (2016): 785–822.

⁶³ Francisco Marín-Sola, O.P., *L'Évolution homogène du Dogme catholique*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Fribourg: Librairie de l'oeuvre de Saint-Paul, 1924); Ambrose Gardeil, O.P., *Le Donné révélé et la Théologie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1932); Pierre Rousselot, S.J., “Petite théorie du développement du dogme” (1915), ed. Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 53 (1965): 355–90; Léonce de Grandmaison, S.J., *Le Dogme chrétien—sa nature—ses formules—son développement* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1928); Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Iltyd Trethowan (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964); de Lubac, “The Problem of the Development of Dogma” (1948),

theologians who contributed to a deeper understanding of the development of doctrine in the interval between the First and the Second Vatican Councils were influenced to varying degrees by and drew in different ways upon Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. What accounts for the rupture in the positions of some of these theologians—especially Rahner and Schillebeeckx—between their pre-Vatican II reception of Newman and their post-Vatican II abandonment of Newman is their exchange of a fundamentally theological and primarily Christological and pneumatological frame of reference for a new frame of reference constituted by the all-encompassing law of historicity, the entailed principle of primordial pluralism, and a hermeneutics guided by existential experience and authenticity oriented to universal liberation.⁶⁴ As central as Newman was before, up to, and during Vatican II, so obsolete and passé did he become in the aftermath of the council when presentist ruptures with the past and departures to new horizons were the call of the day.⁶⁵

Newman's Anticipated Lerinian Critique of Post-Conciliar Antiquarianism and—especially—Presentism

In light of the *explicit* reception of the criterion of identity of Vincent's second rule in Vatican I's *Dei Filius* and of the *implicit* reception of

in *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Eglund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 248–80; Karl Rahner, S.J., "The Development of Dogma," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 39–77; Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., "The Development of the Apostolic Faith into the Dogma of the Church," in *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 1, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 57–83; Yves Congar, O.P., *La Foi et la Théologie: Le mystère chrétien, théologie dogmatique* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962); Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*.

⁶⁴ See: Karl Rahner, "Yesterday's History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 18, *God and Revelation*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 3–34; Rahner, "The Experience of God Today," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 11, *Confrontations I*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1974), 149–65; Rahner, "The Two Basic Types of Christology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 13, *Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1975), 213–23; Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury, 1974). See also Schillebeeckx, *Understanding of Faith*, and *God the Future of Man*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

⁶⁵ For two of the most informative presentations of this rich and complex discussion, see Herbert Hammans, *Die neueren katholischen Erklärungen der Dogmenentwicklung* (Essen: Ludgerus-Verlag Wingen KG, 1965), and Aidan Nichols, O.P., *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990).

Newman in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, the development of doctrine is not simply a historical fact—merely an accident of the Church's ongoing reception of the deposit of faith, of interest only to historians of dogma as a feature of the Church's historically extended and socio-culturally embedded reality. It is, rather, first and foremost a reality that is integral to the Church's life, a reality that the Church has become aware of only slowly, but now holds and teaches explicitly. Hence, neither antiquarianism nor presentism have a legitimate place in the Church's life and her theological labor. It is quite obvious, in light of the dogmatic evolution that characterizes the Church's reception of revelation, the *depositum fidei*, and especially in light of the promulgation of the two Marian dogmas and the dogma of papal infallibility, that antiquarianism never had a legitimate place in the Church's life and theological labor. The first council of Jerusalem made this already plain. What is, however, much more important to realize in the wake of the Second Vatican Council is that neither does presentism have a legitimate place in the Church's life and theological labor. Indeed, presentism actively delegitimizes itself: in measuring doctrine by criteria historically extrinsic to the faith, it inverts (and perverts) the core meaning of the faith: namely, to liberate human persons from being ensnared by their contingent historical moment and to achieve spiritual and moral orientation *on* their world, rather than being engulfed within the historically contingent modes of judgment. *Dei Filius*, by way of its magisterial insistence on the criterion of identity, delegitimizes presentism. Moreover, neither Newman nor, for that matter, *Dei Verbum* endorse the kind of historicization of doctrine and dilution of its development into a process of ongoing revisionist or even revolutionary transformation that characterizes the presentist program. In the final analysis, presentism always means supplanting theology with politics. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council never intended to reverse *Dei Filius* but, on the contrary, presupposed the doctrine laid down in *Dei Filius*, as attested by the fact that in *Dei Verbum* the Vatican II Fathers cite *Dei Filius* extensively. The “burden of proof” for alleging that the Second Vatican Council, and especially *Dei Verbum*, departed from the First Vatican Council, that is, concretely from *Dei Filius*, thereby opening the doors to a presentist program, lies with the rupturers.

As already mentioned earlier, the original 1845 version of Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was his—at least for his own person—successful endeavor to address and overcome, by way of a theological argumentation built on cumulative historical evidence, the antiquarianism of the his own *via media* “paper church” from his 1837

Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church and his exclusive focus therein on Vincent's canon or first rule: *ubique, semper, et ab omnibus*. Because the force of Newman's cumulative argument in the 1845 version of his *Essay* was primarily directed against his own previous Tractarian antiquarianism, the modernists George Tyrell, Alfred Loisy, and others, especially in France, fell into the creative misunderstanding of assuming that Newman shared and even offered warrants for their presentist program built upon primarily historicist suppositions.⁶⁶ To think that Newman's overcoming of his own antiquarianism necessitates his endorsement of presentism is, of course, a *non sequitur*. Avery Dulles rightly stresses that "Newman gave no quarter to dogmatic relativism. He argued vigorously for the irreversibility of dogmas, not necessarily in their wording, but in their meaning. His balanced position represents a middle course between a fluid historicism and a rigid dogmatism."⁶⁷ Dulles continues to observe:

From the very outset Newman opposes the "transformist" view that Christianity is ever in flux and accommodates itself to the times. For him it is axiomatic that the faith of the apostles must perdure. But in order to retain its vitality and ward off new errors, the living Church will sometimes have to articulate its faith in new ways. Granted that development must occur, it must still be asked whether the new formulations are in accord with the ancient faith.

⁶⁶ I would not include Maurice Blondel in that group. His *Letters on History and Dogma* are substantially, and at times verbatim, in agreement with Newman's position from 1845—a plainly non-modernist position. Furthermore, Blondel's accurate and lucid critique of historicism sets him very clearly apart from the modernists. Finally, the controversy around Blondel has its unique origin and character—quite different from the modernist problematic. Blondel's polemic of what he calls "extrinsicism" seems to me to be to a large degree misplaced—a caricaturizing counterpolemic against those who on philosophical grounds from a Thomist philosophical point of view criticized his *L'Action*. Because he draws on his *philosophie de l'action* to back his account of the inherent vitality of Tradition, there remains a point of controversy and disagreement for those who regard the approach of *L'Action* as philosophically problematic if not misguided, his philosophical backing for his account of tradition therefore lacking, and the polemic against "extrinsicism" therefore unconvincing and misplaced. Regardless of the position one might hold regarding the assessment of *L'Action* and Blondel's polemic against "extrinsicism," it should be obvious that Blondel can on no legitimate grounds be characterized as a modernist.

⁶⁷ Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., *John Henry Newman* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 79.

To respond to this difficult question he proposed seven notes or tests for authentic development.⁶⁸

It does not require advanced hermeneutical sophistication to realize that when Dulles penned these lines, he had on his mind first and foremost the presentist program. The difficult question that according to Dulles Newman was facing—whether new formulations are in accord with the ancient faith—was the question Vincent was addressing in his second rule, “in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning.” It is the criterion of identity that checks and obviates the presentist program and that simultaneously serves as the one criterion that helps to address and alleviate legitimate concerns about the corruption of doctrine that, unaddressed, will only give rise to new versions of antiquarianism.

For the criterion of identity to be considered valid, one should be able with its help to distinguish between an authentic development and a corruption of doctrine. Yet can it actually fulfill this function? Differently put, how does one distinguish between authentic developments of doctrine and developments that are actually corruptions of doctrine, how to discern antiquarian ossifications and presentist transformations? Newman offers a first important step toward a full answer in the way he specifies Vincent’s second rule by offering seven notes of authentic development, notes that have the fingerprints of Vincent’s second rule all over them.

How Is an Authentic Development of Doctrine to be Discerned?

As will become patent in the following, Newman’s “tests” or “notes” of an authentic development of doctrine are best to be understood as a sophisticated development of Vincent’s second rule. Remember that in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman turns Vincent’s second rule against his (Newman’s) own earlier exclusive use of Vincent’s canon or first rule. Yet in order to make a successful case in which the second rule trumps his own mistaken prior antiquarian use of Vincent’s first rule, Newman has to flesh out, unfold, or in short, develop the second rule into a heuristic web of multiple criteria. And precisely this—the explicative unfolding of Vincent’s second rule—is the point as well as the ongoing relevance of Newman’s “tests” or “notes” of an authentic development of doctrine.

In order fully to appreciate the way Newman develops Vincent’s second rule it is necessary to present in full the relevant passage from chapter 23 “On the Development of Religious Knowledge” from the *Commonitorium*:

⁶⁸ Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, 74.

The growth of religion in the soul must be analogous to the growth of the body, which, though in process of years it is developed and attains its full size, yet remains still the same. . . . In like manner, it behooves Christian doctrine to follow the same laws of progress [*ita etiam Christianae Religionis dogma sequatur has decet profectuum leges*], so as to be consolidated by years, enlarged by time, refined by age, and yet, withal, to continue uncorrupt and unadulterated, complete and perfect in all the measurement of its parts, and, so to speak, in all its proper members and senses, admitting no change [*permutatio*], no waste of its distinctive property, no variation in its limits. . . . This, then, is undoubtedly the true and legitimate rule of progress, this the established and most beautiful order of growth, that mature age ever develops in the man those parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator framed beforehand in the infant. . . . For it is right that those ancient doctrines of heavenly philosophy should, as time goes on, be cared for, smoothed, polished; but not that they should be changed, not that they should be maimed, not that they should be mutilated. They may receive proof, illustration, definiteness; but they must retain withal their completeness, their integrity, the characteristic properties [*sed retineat necesse est plenitudinem, integritatem, proprietatem*].⁶⁹

In the only extant study of Vincent's influence on the formation of Newman's notes, Thomas O'Loughlin rightly argues "that all of Newman's notes can already be found in the writings of Vincent of Lérins, and indeed all found *in nuce* in the precise chapter in which he deals with the question of development."⁷⁰

Because authentic developments of doctrine result from the one, real, and living idea of Christianity, all authentic Christian doctrines are, as Newman never tires to stress, "members of one family, and suggestive, or correlative, or confirmatory, or illustrative of each other. One furnishes evidence to another, and all to each of them. . . . You must accept the whole or reject the whole; attenuation does but enfeeble, and amputation mutilate. It is trifling to receive all but something which is as integral as any other portion; and, on the other hand, it is a solemn thing to accept any part, for, before you know where you are, you may be carried on by a

⁶⁹ Saint Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 110–15.

⁷⁰ Thomas O'Loughlin, "Newman, Vincent of Lerins and Development," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (1991): 147–66, at 162.

stern logical necessity to accept the whole.”⁷¹

**Newman’s Explicative Unfolding of the Second Lerinian Rule
into Seven Notes of an Authentic Development of Doctrine**

Newman’s first note is *preservation of type*, which he illustrates with the help of an analogy from biological life:

This is readily suggested by the analogy of physical growth, which is such that the parts and proportions of the developed form, however altered, correspond to those which belong to its rudiments. The adult animal has the same make, as it had on its birth; young birds do not grow into fishes, nor does the child degenerate into the brute, wild or domestic, of which he is by inheritance lord. Vincentius of Lerins adopts this illustration in distinct reference to Christian doctrine: “Let the soul’s religion,” he says, “imitate the law of the body, which, as years go on, develops indeed and opens out its due proportions, and yet remains identically what it was. Small are a baby’s limbs, a youth’s are larger, yet they are the same.”⁷²

Not only is the illustration itself obviously inspired by Vincent; this first and foundational note is also the prominent place where Newman makes explicit reference to chapter 23 of Vincent’s *Commonitorium*.

Newman’s second note is *continuity of principles*. It is an entailment of the first note. For in order to preserve its type, the Church must be faithful to its foundational principles. Newman proposes nine such principles: the principle of dogma, the principle of faith, the principle of theology, the sacramental principle, the principle of the spiritual sense of Scripture, the principle of grace, the principle of asceticism, the principle of the malignity of sin, and the principle that matter and the mind are capable of sanctification. In a footnote, he adds a tenth principle, the principle of the development of doctrine.⁷³ Abandon any one of these principles and Christianity will be diminished and even distorted in one or the other respect. Accepting all of these principles and assuring their continuity is essential to the life and vigor of the Church. It is noteworthy that in his list of principles Newman does not include a principle of historicity. Quite obviously, the sacramental principle, the principle of the spiritual sense of Scripture, the principle of grace, and the principle of the malignity of sin

⁷¹ Newman, *Dev.*, 93–94.

⁷² Newman, *Dev.*, 171–72.

⁷³ For the complete list, see Newman, *Dev.*, 325.

presuppose the encompassing horizon of the *theological* historicity of salvation history. Yet theological historicity is a fact and not a principle. And historicist historicity—historicism's fundamental principle—is incompatible with the principle of dogma, for the latter is the trans-historical and trans-cultural principle par excellence. The continuity of this principle, as well as its dynamic unfolding, is accounted for by the principle of the development of doctrine.

The third note is *power of assimilation*, which Newman explains pithily thus: "Development is a process of incorporation."⁷⁴ Dulles offers a helpful image to understand this note: "As a healthy organism builds itself up by ingesting food, so the Church takes in what is assimilable in the cultures it meets, and transforms what it appropriates."⁷⁵ Also this note is entailed in the first one, presupposing (as also the second note does) Vincent's guiding image of the organic growth of a body.

The fourth note is *logical sequence*. Here Newman has in mind the fact that, in retrospect, "the process of development is capable of a logical expression."⁷⁶ "A doctrine . . . professed in its mature years by a philosophy or religion, is likely to be a true development, not a corruption, in proportion as it seems to be the *logical issue* of its original teaching."⁷⁷ The fourth note is an entailment of the second one, continuity of principles, and of the first principle listed there, the principle of dogma.

The fifth note is *anticipation of its own future*. An ultimate development may be authentic when there is a "*definitive anticipation* at an early period in the history of the idea to which it belongs."⁷⁸ Also this note is an entailment of the second note, especially of the sacramental principle, the principle of grace, the principle of the malignity of sin, and the principles of asceticism.

The sixth note is *conservative action on its own past*. "A true development . . . may be described as one which is conservative of the course of antecedent developments being really those antecedents and something besides them: it is an addition which illustrates, not obscures, corroborates, not corrects, the body of thought from which it proceeds; and this is its characteristic as contrasted with a corruption."⁷⁹ The sixth note is an indispensable specification of the first note. The preservation of type is secured

⁷⁴ Newman, *Dev.*, 186–87.

⁷⁵ Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, 75.

⁷⁶ Newman, *Dev.*, 191.

⁷⁷ Newman, *Dev.*, 195.

⁷⁸ Newman, *Dev.*, 199.

⁷⁹ Newman, *Dev.*, 200.

precisely by the conservative action on the past.

The seventh note is *chronic vigor*. By retaining its youthful vigor despite its antiquity, the Church with its development of doctrine may be presumed to be authentic. By contrast, “a corruption, if vigorous, is of brief duration, runs itself out quickly, and ends in death; on the other hand, if it lasts, it fails in vigor and passes into a decay.”⁸⁰ This last note is a corrective complement to the sixth note. Were conservative action upon the past all-embracing and absolute, the result would be an antiquarian ossification of the Church’s doctrine, a dead and cold traditionalism. Ongoing true reform, ongoing charismatic renewal, and ongoing authentic development of doctrine are signs of the Church’s Spirit-guided life and hence chronic vigor. We might call the seventh note the anti-antiquarian note par excellence. It is against the danger of antiquarianism that Newman famously maintains:

It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the history of a philosophy of belief, which on the contrary is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full. . . . In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.⁸¹

At the very end of the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman makes a telling statement that shows that he is aware not only of the antiquarianism he overcame in itself, but also of the presentism that emerges as soon as theologians embrace all too uncritically Enlightenment tenets (the liberalism Newman fought all his life) and are bent on engineering the ruptures, reversals, and transformations that the “law of historicity” allegedly calls for. Newman states: “A true development is that which is conservative of its original, and a corruption is that which tends to its destruction.”⁸² This is about as straightforward an appropriation of Vincent’s second rule as one might wish. Authentic development is a function of the ongoing identity of meaning, of faithfulness to the principles given in the one single and selfsame deposit of faith. It is for this very reason that Newman saw his notes as applicable to the “actual

⁸⁰ Newman, *Dev.*, 437.

⁸¹ Newman, *Dev.*, 40.

⁸² Newman, *Dev.*, 419.

decisions of authority,”⁸³ that is, to a promulgated teaching. The seven notes of authentic development are not at all meant to help project, predict, or even somehow encourage and bring about future developments. Hence, the development of doctrine, Newman emphasizes,

is not an effect of wishing and resolving, or of forced enthusiasm, or of any mechanism of reasoning, or of any mere subtlety of intellect; but comes of its own innate power of expansion within the mind in its season, though with the use of reflection and argument and original thought, more or less as it may happen, with a dependence on the ethical growth of the mind itself, and with a reflex influence upon it.⁸⁴

Against the danger of presentism, Newman insists that the development of doctrine is not the tool of ongoing change managed by “developers” of doctrine in view of a desired “Church of the future” whose teaching is to be designed in advance by the self-authenticating Church of the present. Such a presentist misconception of the development of doctrine could, according to Newman, lead only to doctrinal corruptions. Rather, Newman reminds his readers that “from the necessity . . . of the case . . . we may fairly conclude that Christian doctrine admits of formal, legitimate, and true developments, that is, of developments contemplated by its divine Author.”⁸⁵

Newman’s seven notes of an authentic development can only be received rightly, that is, as perpetually pertinent, when understood as Newman’s way of fleshing out Vincent’s second rule. This explicative unfolding, however, must itself be seen in the context of two fundamental theological suppositions—suppositions that every Catholic theologian should hold: first, the dogmatic principle, that a theological dogma is the infallible definition of a revealed truth, and, second, as an entailment, the principle of the Church’s infallibility. Newman formulated these two principles with all desirable clarity in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and I shall quote him here at length to put in front of the readers’ eyes what is the indispensable normative context for an authentic development of doctrine that Vincent of Lérins, John Henry Newman, the Fathers of the First Vatican Council in *Dei Filius*, and the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in *Dei Verbum* share:

⁸³ Newman, *Dev.*, 78.

⁸⁴ Newman, *Dev.*, 73–74.

⁸⁵ Newman, *Dev.*, 74.

I believe the whole revealed dogma as taught by the Apostles, as committed by the Apostles to the Church, and as declared by the Church to me. I receive it, as it is infallibly interpreted by the authority to whom it is thus committed, and (implicitly) as it shall be, in like manner, further interpreted by that same authority till the end of time. I submit, moreover, to the universally received traditions of the Church, in which lies the matter of those new dogmatic definitions which are from time to time made, and which in all times are the clothing and the illustration of the Catholic dogma as already defined. And I submit myself to those other decisions of the Holy See, theological or not, through the organs which it has itself appointed, which, waiving the question of their infallibility, on the lowest ground come to me with a claim to be accepted and obeyed. Also, I consider that, gradually and in the course of ages, Catholic inquiry has taken certain definite shapes, and has thrown itself into the form of a science, with a method and a phraseology of its own, under the intellectual handling of great minds, such as St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas; and I feel no temptation at all to break in pieces the great legacy of thought thus committed to us for these latter days.⁸⁶

Antiquarianism and presentism explicitly or implicitly deny these two suppositions. Antiquarianism denies the principle of the Church's ongoing and uninterrupted infallibility, and presentism denies the dogmatic principle and the normative tradition of faith to which it gives rise, including the authentic development of doctrine as well as the emerging tradition of Catholic theology as a science *sui generis*.

Newman's Notes—Only the First Step toward an Answer

It is arguably the case that with his seven notes Newman offered only the first step toward an answer to the question how an authentic development of doctrine might be distinguished from a corruption of doctrine. It is telling that in the 1845 edition Newman calls these seven criteria "tests," while in the reworked Catholic edition form 1878, he calls them merely "notes." Guarino states the matter well:

After devoting two thirds of his most famous book, *An Essay in the Development of Christian Doctrine*, to his notes or tests for distinguishing true developments from a noxious corruption, Newman

⁸⁶ Newman, *Apo.*, 250–51.

never returned to the notes for the rest of his life. Why not? Possibly Newman recognized that he needed not just isolated notes but also a stronger accent on ecclesial structures in order to settle the issue of proper development. In other words, the crucial question is this: how does one ascertain that “continuity of type” actually exists over time? Vincent would say that one can be certain of proper development *in eodem sensu* because of Scripture, the sure foundation of divine truth, as interpreted by the ecumenical councils, theological doctors, the faithful universally, and the bishop of Rome. The Lerinian offers determinate criteria to ensure that proper growth occurs.⁸⁷

Guarino makes a convincing case that Newman might have realized—especially in light of the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the dogma of papal infallibility—that in fact even more determinate criteria than the seven he originally called “tests” might be needed. We find an indication that this is indeed the case when we turn to Newman’s most mature reflections on these matters in the lengthy preface to the third edition of the two-volume re-publication of his *Via Media of the Anglican Church* issued in 1877. In this important preface he states that while the bishops and the pope occupy *the governing or regal office* and the faithful, that is, the pastors and people, occupy *the priestly office*, the theologians occupy *the prophetic office* in the Church. Newman argues that an authentic development of doctrine can occur only when consentient coherence is eventually achieved—again and again, and sometimes only after a longer period of time—among these three offices, the regal, the priestly, and the prophetic. Furthermore, Newman stresses that theologians occupy a singular role: “Theology is the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system. It is commensurate with Revelation, and Revelation is the initial and essential idea of Christianity.”⁸⁸ It is for this very reason that Newman famously states: “None but the *Schola Theologorum* is competent to determine the force of Papal and Synodal utterances, and the exact interpretation of them is a work of time.”⁸⁹ Guarino astutely observes: “The decisions of councils and popes are authoritative for Newman. However, such statements also mark the

⁸⁷ Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins*, 62.

⁸⁸ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1911 [originally 1837, revised 1877]), xlvii (Weidner edition, 29).

⁸⁹ John Henry Newman, “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk,” in *Difficulties of Anglicans*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, 1910 [originally 1865]), 176.

beginning of sustained reflection wherein theologians determine precisely *how and in which exact manner* they are in continuity with the prior tradition.”⁹⁰ And the intimately connected sobering warning he utters in this preface in 1877 has only become more relevant 150 years later. What Newman stated as an acute caution seems presently to be closer to an accurate description of the current state of affairs in Catholic theology: “Religion [is never] in greater danger than when, in consequence of national or international troubles, the Schools of theology have been broken up and ceased to be.”⁹¹ To permit the decline, floundering, and eventual closing of the schools of theology or to denigrate the work of dogmatic and speculative theology (and that is, according to Newman, what belongs to the very heart of the *Schola Theologorum*) turns, I take Newman to imply, theology into the playground of hermeneutical creativity in an exclusively anthropocentric horizon—thereby eventually evacuating the prophetic office of the Church. Theological inquiry, therefore, that does not emerge from the prophetic office of the Church and its essential task of pursuing the *intellectus fidei* in relationship to the authoritative *paradosis* of revelation, and that is pursued in isolation from the priestly and the regal offices of the Church, either remains an essentially pre-theological (philological, historical, philosophical) exercise or, if it arrogates to itself the distinguishing mark of “theology” proper, deteriorates into nothing but an ultimately frivolous, exclusively anthropocentric endeavor—instead of speaking of God, speaking of the human in a loud voice.⁹²

The Indispensable Work of the Prophetic Office of Theology for Establishing the Intelligibility of an Authentic Development of Doctrine

Newman’s profound reflections in the long preface he penned in 1877, after having been a Catholic for more than thirty years, are a sobering reminder that, even after the theological horizon, the Christological center, and the pneumatological dynamic of the development of doctrine have been reaffirmed by Henri de Lubac and especially by Yves Congar⁹³ in the

⁹⁰ Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins*, 72.

⁹¹ Newman, *Via Media*, 1:xlvi (Weidner edition, 29).

⁹² It is in this context that I gladly quote the famous characterization of Liberal Protestant theology by a Protestant theologian from whose writings I initially learned as a student of Protestant theology what theology was all about: “One cannot speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice” (Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Hourton [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935], 195–96).

⁹³ De Lubac, “Problem of the Development of Dogma,” 248–80; Congar, *La Foi et*

decades leading up to Vatican II, there remains the ongoing indispensable task of establishing the concurrent and retrospective intelligibility of the authentic development of doctrine, the task of determining “precisely *how and in which exact manner* [the decisions of the councils and popes] are in continuity with the prior tradition.”⁹⁴ The encompassing horizon of the theological historicity of salvation history will always securely locate the authentic development of doctrine in the order of divine providence and under the mission of the Holy Spirit leading the Church ever deeper into an explicit understanding of the truth of revelation. Ultimately, the continuity between doctrines is the continuity of the unfolding mission of the Holy Spirit. True developments are gifts, disclosures, of the Holy Spirit to the Church. This Hans Urs von Balthasar rightly and beautifully emphasizes in continuity with and development of the thought of his teacher Henri de Lubac.⁹⁵ At the same time he affirms that the laws of logic are under no circumstances overridden in this ultimately pneumatological dynamic. Not only does von Balthasar’s important concession bar the road toward an enthusiastic pneumatic form of presentism; it rather also shows that a fully theological interpretation of the development of doctrine—affirming the absolute epistemic priority of the theological historicity of salvation history under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and also the importance, if not even priority, of non-rational affective and spiritual apperceptions of certain aspects of the mysteries of faith—cannot ignore the fact that the apprehension, articulation, interpretation, and communication of such apperceptions requires concepts, propositions, and judgments and that the absence of the antecedent, concomitant, and retrospective establishment of the intelligibility of the logical connection between a newly defined teaching and previously defined teachings would, first, expose the magisterium to have left the orbit of the *intellectus fidei* and submitting instead to voluntarism, authoritarianism, and anti-intellectualism, and secondly, would support the impression that the magisterium, the governing office of the Church, is inherently independent from theology, the prophetic office of the Church. If one were to entertain the counterfactual that the magisterium were to proceed this way, one would realize

la Théologie and Tradition and Traditions. On de Lubac, see Nicholas J. Healy Jr., “Henri de Lubac on the Development of Doctrine,” in *Ressourcement after Vatican II: Essays in Honor of Joseph Fessio, S.J.*, ed. Nicholas J. Healy Jr. and Matthew Levering (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019), 346–65; on Congar, see Meszaros, *Prophetic Church*.

⁹⁴ Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins*, 72.

⁹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologie der Geschichte: Ein Grundriß. Neue Fassung* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1959), 80–81.

that in doing so the magisterium would instantaneously contradict its own prescription laid down in *Dei Filius* by ignoring to attend to the criterion of identity that specifies Vincent's second rule by calling for the litmus test that distinguishes a *profectus*, a legitimate development of doctrine, from a *permutatio*, a corruption of doctrine. And to attend to the criterion of identity is to display the intelligibility of the logical connection. To override any antecedent and to neglect any retrospective establishment of the logical connection is to jettison the criterion of identity itself, to evacuate the prophetic office of the Church, and to make the magisterium vulnerable to the above charges.

The Dominican theologian J. C. M. van der Putte adumbrated the absolute minimum that is required to do justice to the criterion of identity: "All perceptible development and growth must be able to show a logical connection with the previously given doctrine," with the result that the "homogeneity of the development of dogma demands that every justified theological conclusion should be credible both objectively and subjectively."⁹⁶ Nothing less than this theological work will do when it comes to the very heart of the development of doctrine, that is, the homogeneous evolution of dogma. To suppose up front that such theological work is intrinsically impossible or de facto at best a conjecture of no real cognitive value means to open the doors wide to antiquarianism (a mental attitude virtually impossible to hold for a Catholic theologian) or presentism (the presently preferred mental attitude of not a few contemporary Catholic theologians). Hence, Newman's fourth note (logical sequence) and sixth note (conservative action on the past) turn out to be the two most important notes specifying and thereby securing together Vincent's second rule.

Yet fleshing out these notes in ways that afford the intelligible continuity that Vincent's second rule requires is the labor that cannot be undertaken without coming to appreciate anew the work that the Spanish Dominican Thomist Francisco Marín-Sola undertook in his *Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma*.⁹⁷ Newman sets a high bar when he states that "the new

⁹⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 66, quoting J. C. M. van der Putte, O.P., *De dogmatische waarde van de theologische redeneering* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Centrale Drukkerij N.V., 1948), 252.

⁹⁷ Even an only superficial familiarity with this monumental work of dogmatic and speculative theology suggests immediately that Marín-Sola's magnum opus deserves an unrivaled place next to Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. For a brief introduction to the life and work of Marín-Sola, and especially to his magnum opus, his *Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma*, see my *John Henry Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 155–66, and also my article "Francisco

truth which is promulgated, if it is to be called new, must be at least *homogeneous, cognate, implicit*, viewed relatively to the old truth.”⁹⁸ Marín-Sola’s is the single work of a Catholic theologian in the twentieth century that comes closest to reaching this bar. Unsurprisingly, the renowned Anglican Church historian Owen Chadwick regards Marín-Sola’s work as “probably the most able, and perhaps the most influential thesis upon the theory of development written during the twentieth century.”⁹⁹ While *The Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma* is informed quite obviously by a different philosophical tradition and theological method than Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, it is crucial to understand that Marín-Sola as well as Newman hold revelation to have cognitive content expressed in propositions that can be apprehended and assented to, and that neither of them gives any quarter to the kind of dogmatic relativism characteristic of a pre-conceptual historicist understanding of revelation. Both Newman and Marín-Sola achieve a level of theological penetration and conceptual sophistication that has not been reached by Catholic theology in the post-Vatican II period. Even the commendable ressourcement in the patristic patrimony can only for so long circumvent and postpone the questions Marín-Sola treated with great profundity and rigor in his theological masterwork. After the more recent flirtations by avowedly late-modern or postmodern Catholic theologians with philosophical historicism and constructivism have exhausted themselves, the opportune time might have arrived for a new generation to tackle again the profound and substantive theological as well as conceptual issues involved in the development of doctrine and in this course rediscover the treasure that Marín-Sola’s work is. To label Marín-Sola’s account as purportedly merely “logical” and to dismiss it due to its alleged lack of “historical consciousness” might be nothing but an all too facile way of ignoring the perennial

Marín-Sola, O.P., “La evolución homogénea del dogma católico,” in *Great Works of Twentieth Century Thomism*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. (Rome: Urbana University Press, 2020), 47–59. Marín-Sola’s magnum opus is easiest available in the last Spanish edition: *La evolución homogénea del dogma católico*, introduction by Emilio Sauras, O.P., 2nd ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1963 [originally 1952]). The French edition is harder to find: *L’Évolution homogène du dogme catholique*, 2 vols. (Fribourg: Saint-Paul, 1924). Hardest to find is, unfortunately, the English translation that students of Marín-Sola from Manila provided from the Spanish edition: *The Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Antonio T. Piñon, with introduction by Emilio Sauras, O.P. (Manila: Santo Tomás University Press, 1988).

⁹⁸ Newman, *Apo.*, 253 (emphasis mine).

⁹⁹ Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 204.

challenges he addresses, as well as, possibly, unreflective and unwarranted historicist premises at play in such critique. There obtains a categorical difference between the new awareness of history reflected in the important Spanish Dominican theologian Melchior Cano's *De locis theologicis* (1563)—a work that had a deep and lasting impact on Marín-Sola and that he taught regularly—and the principled historicism advanced in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Recall that in his *De locis theologicis*, Cano, next to the seven *loci proprii* of theology (Scripture; the oral tradition of Christ and the apostles; the universal Church; the Councils; the Apostolic See; the saints of the early Church; Scholastic theology and canonist thought) identifies three *loci alieni* of theology: (1) human reason expressed in the sciences, (2) human reason expressed in philosophy and in the history of philosophy, and—last but not least—(3) human history. Not only because of his unique vocation as a friar preacher that led him to work on three continents, Asia, America, and Europe, but also because of his deep familiarity with Cano's *opus magnum* and especially its last *locus alienus* of theology, human history, we should rightly expect that the categorization of the *Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma* under “logical theories” of development fails to do justice to the complexity and nuance of his achievement. Marín-Sola is as little a “logicist” in matters of doctrinal development as Newman is a “modernist.”

In order, however, to save Marín-Sola's achievement and the kind of rigor of theological argumentation he exemplifies, it is necessary to develop his project by way of expanding it to include and account for Newman's insight that cumulative probabilities can produce a certain conclusion and hence establish that “the new truth which is promulgated, if it is to be called new, must be at least *homogeneous, cognate, implicit*, viewed relatively to the old truth.”¹⁰⁰ Developed in a Newmanian way, Marín-Sola's work remains an indispensable benchmark for working out the distinct ways of logical connection that afford intelligibility to widely diverse cases of an authentic development of doctrine and thereby fulfill the criterion of identity. Yet it remains a regrettable lacuna in his work that he does not account in it for the kind of demonstration Newman privileges, moving from cumulative probabilities to demonstrative certainty. If he had provided in this overall account of legitimate demonstrations of homogeneity of dogma Newman's path of moving from cumulative probability to demonstrative certainty, Marín-Sola would have achieved two things: first, he would have been able to preempt the criticism that a number of Thomist theologians (first and foremost Ambroise Gardeil, Reginald-Maria Schul-

¹⁰⁰ Newman, *Apo.*, 253 (emphasis mine).

tes, and Yves Congar) advanced regarding the cogency of the demonstrations Marín-Sola provided in his ten paradigmatic doctrinal cases; second, Marín-Sola would have been able not only to admit the sheer fact that the Church did indeed proceed on the basis of such cumulative probable arguments and in union with the *sensus* of the entire Church, to such definitions, but rather also to account for this path as one perfectly defensible rational way of establishing that “the new truth which is promulgated, if it is to be called new, must be at least *homogeneous, cognate, implicit*, viewed relatively to the old truth.”¹⁰¹

To jettison this theological labor of the *intellectus fidei* as the bygone and allegedly failed efforts of the so-called logical theory of development, as presentists are all too prone to do, is to forget that at the very heart of an argument that affords intelligibility to the continuity between developments and the prior tradition must stand the syllogism. Intelligibility is the achievement of explicit reasoning. The vehicle of explicit reasoning is the proposition; and the vehicle for achieving a demonstration of the intelligible continuity is the syllogism. What kind of case for the intelligibility of the logical connection can be made depends on the individual case and also on whether it is an antecedent or a retrospective argument. Drawing upon Newman, the pre-conciliar Schillebeeckx formulates well the indispensable minimum requirement at stake for the retrospective explicit reasoning:

Explicit reasoning . . . is either purposeful, or reflective, technical, and logical thought. In explicit reasoning, implicit reasoning is re-thought in a logical form. It is, in other words, a later logical arrangement of the growth of experiential knowledge. The syllogism, therefore, does not give us a new truth, but exposes the logical structure of the process of development along which we have already come, in our spontaneous experience, to this truth. Although it does not measure up to the wealth of implicit thought, this logical interpretation is nonetheless a homogeneous extension of the implicit preliminary stage.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Newman, *Apo.*, 253.

¹⁰² Here is the context for the full quote including the characterization of “implicit reasoning:” “Newman called ‘reason’ or ‘reasoning’ the real principle of development, and by this he meant reasoning in the widest sense of the word. He distinguished between two aspects of reasoning in this sense. (1) *Implicit reasoning* is, according to Newman, spontaneous, non-technical, non-reflective, and unconscious experience as an aspect of the whole of the personal Christian life. This form of reasoning is a slow maturing which is subject to many different influences

This form of retrospective explicit reasoning rests upon the dynamic that Marín-Sola characterizes as “evolution through the affective and experimental channel,” his way of integrating Newman’s insights into his overall account. Yet cumulative results of implicit reasoning may also prompt antecedent forms of explicit reasoning advancing an argument for the homogenous development of doctrine before the Church authoritatively declares it as such.

I argued earlier that Newman’s reception and development of the Lerinian criterion of identity and Marín-Sola’s work are completely compatible theological strategies of establishing that “the new truth which is promulgated, if it is to be called new, must be at least *homogeneous, cognate, implicit*, viewed relatively to the old truth.”¹⁰³ When it comes to the very nature of the arguments that are acceptable as cogent in this regard, I take it that Marín-Sola’s project must be expanded and modified in such a way that it includes explicitly Newman’s insight that cumulative probabilities suffice for a certain conclusion.¹⁰⁴ Hence, the argument might achieve its goal, a persuasively argued demonstration of continuity, by way of the cumulative effect of multiple arguments that remain each in itself probable and not strictly demonstrative, that is, by moral implication, or it might reach this goal by way of a straightforward demonstrative syllogism, that is, by virtual implication, or it might reach its goal by way of a simple explication of conceptions, that is, by formal implication. In each case, the argument achieves its goal conceptually, propositionally, and syllogistically—the universal tools of explicit reasoning. Of course, no theory of development can comprise *qua* theory by way of logical anticipation all possible cases of development under question. Yet at the same time, the exigency of a theological argument that grants intelligibility to a homogeneous development and thus excludes heterogeneous rupture and corruption of doctrine requires one of the three above forms of demonstration. Resignation to the sheer fact of the magisterial act of definition would amount to the acknowledgement that the sole cause of and justifi-

and whose results are personal and cannot be communicated” (Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 1:70). The studies collected in his volume were in their Dutch original form written before Vatican II and published as a volume in the Netherlands in 1964, right during the council.

¹⁰³ Newman, *Apo.*, 253 (emphasis mine).

¹⁰⁴ This crucial point forms the crux of Andrew Meszaros’s contribution to this symposium, “Newman and the Thomistic Tradition: Convergences in Contribution to Development Theory.” He makes the case with great lucidity and persuasive force. I am in full agreement with his line of argumentation and with his overall conclusion.

cation for doctrinal change is a magisterial act of will—a rather disastrous capitulation to voluntarism and the foregoing of doctrinal intelligibility per se—and according to Newman that would ultimately be the foregoing of divine revelation itself.¹⁰⁵

This is not a question of retrieving a bygone allegedly “a-historical” neo-Scholastic “logical theory of development”—so called by its presentist critics. It is rather marking the crucial difference between explicit thinking that offers coherent and persuasive theological arguments and the invocation of some general theological motives or the primordial and irreducible plurality of diverse and heterogeneous concept-producing socio-cultural contexts on account of some universal law of historicity that evacuate the criterion of identity. To jettison the former and endorse the latter is to embrace presentism. Yet it is of greatest importance to realize that presentism will always provoke the reaction of antiquarianism. And this is—at the very the least—a grave burden for ecumenical relations, for presentism will rekindle Protestant as well as Eastern Orthodox concerns about a self-actuating, ultimately voluntaristic transformationism of doctrine—a concern that will only fortify the antiquarianism still at play in Protestant communions as well as Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches.

This ecumenical perspective on what is at stake in the authentic development of doctrine and in the avoidance of antiquarianism as well as presentism is the apposite moment to turn to Pope Saint John XXIII.

Conclusion

With regard to the *intellectus fidei*, a prime consideration must be that divine Truth “proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and rightly interpreted by the Church’s teaching” enjoys an innate intelligibility, so logically consistent that it stands as an authentic body of knowledge. The *intellectus fidei* expounds this truth, not only in grasping the logical and conceptual structure of the propositions in which the Church’s teaching is framed, but also, indeed primarily, in bringing to light the salvific meaning of these propositions for the individual and for humanity. From the sum of these

¹⁰⁵ This caveat is stated in light of the fact that magisterial acts that define doctrine do not juridically or formally depend on any antecedent theological demonstration of homogeneous continuity. We know this historically. Yet it is also the case that magisterial acts are assisted by the Holy Spirit. And since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Logos, we know that every magisterial act is completely logical. Even if the logic might not be immediately apparent at the moment of definition, it is rightly expected to be inherently susceptible to the retrospective discursive labor of the *intellectus fidei*.

propositions, the believer comes to know the history of salvation, which culminates in the person of Jesus Christ and in his Paschal Mystery. Believers then share in this mystery by their assent of faith.

—Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §66

It is important to keep in mind that the official Latin text of Pope Saint John XXIII's opening speech at the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, includes a clear allusion to the criterion of identity of Saint Vincent's second rule—in the form the Fathers of the First Vatican Council quote it in *Dei Filius*:

For the deposit of faith, that is, the truths contained in our venerable doctrine, is one thing—another thing is the way in which these truths are expressed, however, in the same sense and in the same meaning.¹⁰⁶

It has been the argument of this article that the mandate entailed in Pope John's reference to Vincent of Lérins and to *Dei Filius* can only be accomplished by consciously avoiding the Scylla of antiquarianism and the Charybdis of presentism. The course to be followed has to be "Tradition in act," and this course leads from Vincent's second rule to the full application of Newman's notes by way of an explicit theological argumentation that displays the logical connection of the development with the prior tradition. It turns out that in order to avoid Scylla and Charybdis, antiquarianism and presentism, and to complete the program that Vincent had formulated and Newman had developed to distinguish an authentic development of doctrine from corruptions of doctrine requires the work that the representatives of the so-called logical theories of development have taken upon themselves, with Putte articulating the indispensable minimalist end of the spectrum and Marín-Sola (enhanced by Newman) reaching for the maximum discursive intelligibility. Only by way of such theological labor of the *intellectus fidei* is the conservative action on the past accomplished and the criterion of identity of Vincent's second rule—as fleshed out by Newman's notes, as prescribed in *Dei Filius*, and as recalled by Pope

¹⁰⁶ Pope St. John XXIII, Address on the Occasion of the Solemn Opening of the Most Holy Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, October 11, 1962, §6: "Est enim aliud ipsum depositum Fidei, seu veritates, quae veneranda doctrina nostra continentur, aliud modus, quo eadem enuntiantur, eodem tamen sensu eademque sententia" (Latin from John XXIII's web page on the Vatican website, speeches, October 11, 1962).

John XXIII in *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*—fulfilled. To forego this discursive labor of the *intellectus fidei*, to declare it to be inherently impossible, or fundamentally undesirable, or ultimately inconsequential, is to eventually decapitate the Church's prophetic office, to ensconce the voluntaristic dynamic of presentism and thereby encourage the rise of a new version of antiquarianism, be it fundamentalist, traditionalist, or apocalyptic. It is ultimately to ignore that antiquarianism is presentism's double, and vice versa. Each is parasitical on the threat posed (latently or viscerally) by the other. The safeguard for "Tradition in act" from presentism as well as antiquarianism has been and continues to be the theological labor of the *intellectus fidei* illuminated, as is the *sensus fidei*, by the selfsame Spirit of truth whom Christ promised to send, who "will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13; RSV).

Appendix 1

John Henry Newman on the intricate relationship between the two patristic principles, the *principle of mystery* and the *dogmatic principle* articulated in "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine":¹⁰⁷

20. The Apostle said to the Athenians, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you;" and the mind which is habituated to the thought of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, naturally turns, as I have said, with a devout curiosity to the contemplation of the Object of its adoration, and begins to form statements concerning Him before it knows whither, or how far, it will be carried. One proposition necessarily leads to another, and a second to a third; then some limitation is required; and the combination of these opposites occasions some fresh evolutions from the original idea, which indeed can never be said to be entirely exhausted. This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather body of dogmatic statements, till what was at first an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason.

21. Now such impressions are obviously individual and complete above other theological ideas, *because* they are the impressions of Objects. Ideas and their developments are commonly not identical, the development being but the carrying out of the idea into its consequences. Thus the doctrine of Penance may be called a development of the doctrine of Baptism, yet still is a distinct doctrine; whereas the developments in the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are mere portions of the

¹⁰⁷ Newman, *O.S.*, 329–35.

original impression, and modes of representing it. As God is One, so the impression which He gives us of Himself is one; it is not a thing of parts; it is not a system; nor is it any thing imperfect, and needing a counterpart. It is the vision of an object. When we pray, we pray, not to an assemblage of notions, or to a creed, but to One Individual Being; and when we speak of Him we speak of a Person, not of a Law or a Manifestation. This being the case, all our attempts to delineate our impression of Him go to bring out one idea, not two or three or four; not a philosophy, but an individual idea in its separate aspects.

22. This may be fitly compared to the impressions made on us through the senses. Material objects are whole, and individual; and the impressions which they make on the mind, by means of the senses, are of a corresponding nature, complex and manifold in their relations and bearings, but considered in themselves integral and one. And in like manner the ideas which we are granted of Divine Objects under the Gospel, from the nature of the case and because they are ideas, answer to the Originals so far as this, that they are whole, indivisible, substantial, and may be called real, as being images of what is real. Objects which are conveyed to us through the senses, stand out in our minds, as I may say, with dimensions and aspects and influences various, and all of these consistent with one another, and many of them beyond our memory or even knowledge, while we contemplate the objects themselves; thus forcing on us a persuasion of their reality from the spontaneous congruity and coincidence of these accompaniments, as if they could not be creations of our minds, but were the images of external and independent beings. This of course will take place in the case of the sacred ideas which are the objects of our faith. Religious men, according to their measure, have an idea or vision of the Blessed Trinity in Unity, of the Son Incarnate and of His Presence, not as a number of qualities, attributes, and actions, not as the subject of a number of propositions, but as one, and individual, and independent of words, as an impression conveyed through the senses.

23. Particular propositions, then, which are used to express portions of the great idea vouchsafed to us, can never really be confused with the idea itself which all such propositions taken together can but reach, and cannot exceed. As definitions are not intended to go beyond their subject, but to be adequate to it, so the dogmatic statements of the Divine Nature used in our confessions, however multiplied, cannot say more than is implied in the original idea, considered in its completeness, without the risk of heresy. Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express,

and which alone is substantive; and are necessary only because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea, except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entireness, nor without resolving it into a series of aspects and relations. And in matter of fact these expressions are never equivalent to it; we are able, indeed, to define the creations of our own minds, for they are what we make them and nothing else; but it were as easy to create what is real as to define it; and thus the Catholic dogmas are, after all, but symbols of a divine fact, which, far from being compassed by those very propositions, would not be exhausted, nor fathomed, by a thousand.

24. Now of such sacred ideas and their attendant expressions, I observe: (1.) First, that an impression of this intimate kind seems to be what Scripture means by "knowledge." "This is life eternal," says our Saviour, "that they might know Thee the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." In like manner St. Paul speaks of willingly losing all things, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus;" and St. Peter of "the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue." [John xvii. 3. Phil. iii. 8. 2 Pet. i. 3.] Knowledge is the possession of those living ideas of sacred things, from which alone change of heart or conduct can proceed. This awful vision is what Scripture seems to designate by the phrases "Christ in us," "Christ dwelling in us by faith," "Christ formed in us," and "Christ manifesting Himself unto us." And though it is faint and doubtful in some minds, and distinct in others, as some remote object in the twilight or in the day, this arises from the circumstances of the particular mind, and does not interfere with the perfection of the gift itself.

25. (2.) This leads me next, however, to observe, that these religious impressions differ from those of material objects, in the mode in which they are made. The senses are direct, immediate, and ordinary informants, and act spontaneously without any will or effort on our part; but no such faculties have been given us, as far as we know, for realizing the Objects of Faith. It is true that inspiration may be a gift of this kind to those who have been favored with it; nor would it be safe to deny to the illuminating grace of Baptism a power, at least of putting the mind into a capacity for receiving impressions; but the former of these is not ordinary, and both are supernatural. The secondary and intelligible means by which we receive the impression of Divine Verities, are, for instance, the habitual and devout perusal of Scripture, which gradually acts upon the mind; again, the gradual influence of intercourse with those who are in themselves in possession of the sacred ideas; again, the study of Dogmatic Theology, which is our present subject; again, a continual round of devotion; or again, sometimes, in minds both

fitly disposed and apprehensive, the almost instantaneous operation of a keen faith. This obvious distinction follows between sensible and religious ideas, that we put the latter into language in order to fix, teach, and transmit them, but not the former. No one defines a material object by way of conveying to us what we know so much better by the senses, but we form creeds as a chief mode of perpetuating the impression.

26. (3.) Further, I observe, that though the Christian mind reasons out a series of dogmatic statements, one from another, this it has ever done, and always must do, not from those statements taken in themselves, as logical propositions, but as being itself enlightened and (as if) inhabited by that sacred impression which is prior to them, which acts as a regulating principle, ever present, upon the reasoning, and without which no one has any warrant to reason at all. Such sentences as “the Word was God,” or “the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father,” or “the Word was made flesh,” or “the Holy Ghost which proceedeth from the Father,” are not a mere letter which we may handle by the rules of art at our own will, but august tokens of most simple, ineffable, adorable facts, embraced, enshrined according to its measure in the believing mind. For though the development of an idea is a deduction of proposition from proposition, these propositions are ever formed in and round the idea itself (so to speak), and are in fact one and all only aspects of it. Moreover, this will account both for the mode of arguing from particular texts or single words of Scripture, practised by the early Fathers, and for their fearless decision in practising it; for the great Object of Faith on which they lived both enabled them to appropriate to itself particular passages of Scripture, and became to them a safeguard against heretical deductions from them. Also, it will account for the charge of weak reasoning, commonly brought against those Fathers; for never do we seem so illogical to others as when we are arguing under the continual influence of impressions to which they are insensible.

Appendix 2

Newman, from the *Apologia*:¹⁰⁸

Hardly had I brought my course of reading to a close, when the *Dublin Review* of that same August was put into my hands, by friends who were more favorable to the cause of Rome than I was myself. There was an Article in it on the “Anglican Claim” by Dr. Wiseman. This was about the middle

¹⁰⁸ Newman, *Apo.*, 116–17.

of September. It was on the Donatists, with an application to Anglicanism. I read it, and did not see much in it. The Donatist controversy was known to me for some years, as has appeared already. The case was not parallel to that of the Anglican Church. St. Augustine in Africa wrote against the Donatists in Africa. They were a furious party who made a schism within the African Church, and not beyond its limits. It was a case of Altar against Altar, of two occupants of the same See, as that between the Non-jurors in England and the Established Church; not the case of one Church against another, as of Rome against the Oriental Monophysites. But my friend, an anxiously religious man, now, as then, very dear to me, a Protestant still, pointed out the palmary words of St. Augustine, which were contained in one of the extracts made in the *Review*, and which had escaped my observation. "Securus judicat orbis terrarum." He repeated these words again and again, and, when he was gone, they kept ringing in my ears. "Securus judicat orbis terrarum;" they were words which went beyond the occasion of the Donatists: they applied to that of the Monophysites. They gave a cogency to the Article, which had escaped me at first. They decided ecclesiastical questions on a simpler rule than that of Antiquity; nay, St. Augustine was one of the prime oracles of Antiquity; here then Antiquity was deciding against itself. What a light was hereby thrown upon every controversy in the Church! not that, for the moment, the multitude may not falter in their judgment,—not that, in the Arian hurricane, Sees more than can be numbered did not bend before its fury, and fall off from St. Athanasius,—not that the crowd of Oriental Bishops did not need to be sustained during the contest by the voice and the eye of St. Leo; but that the deliberate judgment, in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces, is an infallible prescription and a final sentence against such portions of it as protest and secede. Who can account for the impressions which are made on him? For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine, struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before. To take a familiar instance, they were like the "Turn again Whittington" of the chime; or, to take a more serious one, they were like the "Tolle, lege,—Tolle, lege," of the child, which converted St. Augustine himself. "Securus judicat orbis terrarum!" By those great words of the ancient Father, interpreting and summing up the long and varied course of ecclesiastical history, the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized.