Review Essay

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Newman on Doctrinal Corruption by Matthew *Levering (Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire Academic, 2022)*, vii + 448 pp.

As in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," Matthew Levering is something of a secret hidden in plain sight. He is so prodigiously productive that, like trains running constantly just overhead where we eat and sleep, we no longer notice. Somehow we have become inured to the vast extent of his reading, his truly catholic sympathies, and the level of his mastery of the Catholic tradition. Perhaps it is a matter of self-protection: with not only all those monographs on theological topics (e.g. revelation, creation, Mary, Christ, resurrection, biblical interpretation) and figures (e.g. Augustine, Balthasar, and now Newman), but all those superb edited volumes (e.g. Trinity, Deification), we find ourselves overwhelmed—and further overwhelmed that Levering himself is not overwhelmed and remains unconscionably indefatigable. Levering has always operated as an ecclesial theologian open to the entire *katholika*. Rather than narrowing, his Thomist training has made him extraordinarily capacious and welcoming of other voices in the Catholic tradition. After the manner of *Fides et Ratio* (1998), he ascribes to Catholic thinking a genuine pluralism.

Newman on Doctrinal Corruption is one of the more recent enactments of this Catholic pluralism not only in the sense that Newman is judged to be worthy of a monograph treatment but also that he is not tagged with Aquinas in the misguided effort to normalize him and make him more

Scholastic than in fact he is. For Levering, Newman sheds his own unique light on the prospects of faith in the modern world, reminding us what to fight for and providing us tools to fight with. In this sense, Levering seems to be persuaded with Przywara that Newman is indeed an *Augustinus redivivus*. This book differs significantly from Levering's recent book on Augustine, however, in that it is in no way a survey. It is focused on a single theme: the vexed topic of doctrinal corruption.

In what follows I want to honor Levering's major stated aim by synopsizing and commenting on some highlights in each of the five chapters devoted to a specific doctrinal corruption at a particular time in Newman's life. This will be the subject of the first section and will occupy the bulk of the review. Still, I also want to suggest that in his particular analyses Levering surfaces broader themes that connect and underlie more particular doctrinal corruptions. This will be the subject of the considerably shorter second section.

The Confederacy of Corruptions

There is every reason to accept Matthew Levering at his word when he writes in the opening pages of his *Newman on Doctrinal Corruption*: "Although I defend Newman on doctrinal development, my book is not a study of Newman's understanding of development per se . . . my goal instead is simply to reflect with Newman on the threat of doctrinal corruption as it presented itself to him over the course of a long career of faithful proclamation of the Gospel" (4). Of course, while the threat of doctrinal corruption is essentially built into Christianity, and maybe even is in a broad sense a logical feature of it, Levering is less interested in abstractions than pointing to Newman's perception of specific threats to historical forms of Christianity either side of his conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1845 that galvanized all his resources of intelligence and rhetoric in order to meet the moment—whether Gibbon's complacent demonstration of doctrinal corruption in Christianity; the Erastianism that he regarded with Hurrell Froude in the 1830s as the illegitimate encroachment of the secular state; the claim by his alienated brother, Francis, in the 1850s concerning the tangle of doctrinal corruption that accompanies the reception of an originally pure Christianity; the charge in the 1860s by his onetime ally and close friend, Edward Pusey, concerning the promulgation of the doctrine of Immaculate Conception in 1854 as well as the corruption represented by Catholic Marian devotion in general; and finally Newman's response in the 1870s

to Johann Josef Ignaz von Döllinger, who disputed the doctrine of papal infallibility formulated at Vatican 1.

Levering tells the story of these encounters for general and particular reasons. The general reason is that he is convinced that the story of Newman tackling doctrinal corruption or claims of doctrinal corruption will prove the seriousness with which he takes the phenomenon and thus make plausible the judgment that he is by no means the phlegmatic advocate of doctrinal development more or less on automatic that his critics then and now accused him of. The particular reason (or reasons) is that Levering regards these disputes to have intrinsic importance as well as importance in Newman's own life, and also that somehow the issues raised connect with each other in surprising ways to produce something like—to evoke Jonathan Swift in *Thoughts on Various Subjects*—a confederacy of loosely connected corruptions. The trunk of the book, chapters 1–5, validates the claim made in the introduction by presenting an extended narrative of Newman's interventions in situations where doctrinal corruption is either too obvious or insistent to be ignored.

Chapter 1 opens with Levering's account of Newman's story of encounter with corruptions that were significant for him. Though Newman's public taking stock of Gibbon begins in *Development of Doctrine* in 1845 on the cusp of Newman's conversion, for Levering, Newman's early reading of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—it started in 1818—justifies beginning with Gibbon, the writer who is a major challenge for Newman precisely because of his extraordinary prestige. Despite Newman's realization long before the *Development of Doctrine* that Gibbon was no friend of traditional forms of Christianity, nonetheless, he could not be peremptorily rejected. For him, as for many before Newman, Gibbon was viewed to have married extraordinary erudition with incisive critical judgment, objective appraisal of before and after with psychological profiles of his major protagonists, while also managing with considerable ingenuity to persuade many of his claim of disinterestedness in his account of Christian origins while exercising a deep-seated bias against Christianity. As one might have expected from a Newman scholar of Levering's standing, he highlights the importance of Gibbon for Newman (13, 16, 18) even before he gets to a substantive chapter that is as informative as it is eminently readable.

The key points of Levering's balanced and astute analysis in Newman's intervention against Gibbon's historiography include the following: Firstly, whatever reservations Newman entertains about Gibbon's reading of Christianity and its main characters, nonetheless it is Gibbon who provides the "historiographical context" for Newman's account of both

corruption and development (43). Essentially, it cannot be otherwise, not only because of Gibbon's enormous prestige but also because, unlike Locke and his epigones, Gibbon represents that particular caste of the English Enlightenment—Hume might also be a representative—that takes history seriously and uses it in evidence against claims for the integrity of Christianity across the ages. Secondly, as it evolves or devolves from the first century on, on Gibbon's account, Christianity undergoes a metamorphosis by assimilating select aspects of the Hellenistic discursive culture, which in turn gives rise to Christianity's penchant for dogmatic abstractions such as the Trinity that have had the unfortunate effect of violent factionalism. The Nicene Creed represents less the triumph of the better argument than the thuggery and manipulation blatantly evident at the Council of Nicaea (325). Moreover, the ultimate victory of the orthodox party over the Arians is predicated on the shifting allegiances of political leaders, in this instance, the emperor Constantine. Finally, to the above by-then-common Protestant narrative of corruption, Gibbon adds the Enlightenment rider that Christianity shows signs of corruption from the beginning, given its origin in Judaism, which by temperament and conviction was fanatical and intolerant.

In prosecuting his case against Gibbon in the *Development of Doctrine*—albeit in an unsystematic way—Newman effectively rebuts all these points, while praising Gibbon for his historical consciousness so conspicuously absent in the tradition of English natural theology. Throughout the nineteenth century, Gibbon loomed over the English writing of history, and Church history in particular. This is evinced by the rendering of Christianity provided by Henry Milman in his multi-volume *Introduction to Christianity*. Newman had written a long review of Milman's s book in 1841—thus four years before the appearance of *Development*—and worried whether Milman, who was arguably Gibbon's most devoted admirer of the period, had adequately attended to Gibbon's skepticism and hostility regarding Christianity. Probing, Newman suggested that even if one washed out Gibbon's negativities, there was the crucial matter of the prohibition in historiography against importing theological constructs such as providence into one's interpretation, even—or especially—when it concerned the Church. On this view, history is exclusively the scene of secondary causes (50); it is intellectually irresponsible to proceed otherwise. While Newman allows that for the most part history can and should be read this way, with respect to the history of the Church in general and doctrine in particular, given their peculiar nature, some leeway might be

extended the invocation of "providence" to shore up Christian belief and provide confidence that the Church is free of error (45).

As Levering judiciously points out, the dispute between Newman and Gibbon on this basic historiographic point is not confined to Newman's Anglican years. Twenty-five years later in *A Grammar of Assent* (1870), specifically in its tenth and final chapter, the agon with Gibbon's reduction of the writing of history exclusively to secondary causes forms an important set piece. Newman once again pleads his case against the absolute reduction to immanent causality, while at the same time by no means encouraging peremptory appeal to its workings of providence in the rough and tumble of doctrinal dispute. This suggests that what is at stake between Newman and Gibbon both with respect to the understanding of Christianity and the writing of its history is fundamental, though Gibbon can get refracted in more congenial and sympathetic forms. Indeed, while Levering does not draw explicit attention to it in his discussion of Newman's argument against Gibbon's historiographical principles in *A Grammar of Assent*, Newman's dispute with Döllinger on papal infallibility in the early 1870s seems to evince a similar clash of different fundamental principles of reading history: In the case of Döllinger, the commitment to a purely historical account of the development of doctrine effectively indicts the promulgation of papal infallibility as a doctrinal corruption. To the contrary, Newman thinks you both can and ought to appeal to the working of the divine in the last instance. I speak out of sequence here because I suspect that while Levering's reflection on the relation between Newman and Gibbon can be conceived as a standalone discussion, there are some reasons for thinking that his leading off with this relation is different in kind from his treatment of Newman's responses to the other corruptions he covers, or is at least *primus inter pares*. I will return to the point in the second section of this review, but perhaps here I might make the following observation: In terms of an actual public intervention, Newman's argument directly with Gibbon (1845) and by proxy with Milman (1841) comes in fact *after* Newman's speaking out against Erastianism in the 1830s.

Chapter 2 concerns Newman's tagging along in revolt—in the newly emerged situation in which the membership of the Church of England was no longer obligatory—with his dear and too-soon-departed friend, Hurrell Froude (1803–1836), against the rights of Parliament to make ecclesiastical appointments. For Froude, this was Erastianism in its purest form, the name borrowed from the sixteenth-century Calvinist thinker Thomas Erastus, who stipulated the rights of secular authority in a far more limited way than was adhered to by Froude's contemporaries. In

any event, the change in the constitution of Parliament set off alarm bells concerning the security and integrity of the Church of England. The issue was both that of secular priority and the likely leakage of secular principles into the religious domain such that Thomas Arnold's idea of a "Christian kingdom" might well become the Church's future (118). Keble had already addressed such a concern in his famous "National Apostasy" sermon in 1833. Levering usefully reminds us that for both Froude and Newman Erastianism is a plenary example of Liberalism or Latitudinarianism (133–36), a doctrinal corruption that must be resisted at all costs.

One can suppose that since we are speaking to Newman's resistance to a doctrinal corruption, this in itself legitimates the selection of anti-Erastianism, even if the issue is peculiarly Anglican and not a real possibility in the Catholic Church. Levering clearly senses that, while a necessary condition has been supplied for inclusion in the story, it is not fully sufficient. If I read him correctly, three other conditions need to be met in order to shift the needle towards sufficiency. The first is that anti-Erastianism is intrinsic to the Roman Catholicism that is the terminus of Newman's religious journey. Thus, Catholicism provides a real alternative. Second—and this point cannot be emphasized enough—Newman comes to see that Erastianism is endemic to Anglicanism and not just a nineteenth-century blip dependent on a Parliament no longer univocally Anglican. Levering doesn't go into detail here, but he could easily have adduced the fact that that a modified form of Erastianism had been supported by Richard Hooker, a seventeenth-century Anglican divine beloved by Newman. Third, and crucially, Levering insightfully opens up a broader discussion about corruption and development by sifting out the theological bases of Newman's argument against Erastianism in the *Via Media* (1834), which Newman will revise a decade later and put to bed entirely in *Development of Doctrine*. The theological basis is the standard one of the Bible being the measure of Anglicanism (135), especially as the Bible is read and used in the early patristic tradition. As Levering sees it, if for Newman in his Anglican period the Bible and the patristic tradition serve as a bulwark against Erastianism, they also serve as a bulwark against Catholicism and its manifold doctrinal corruptions (137, 139, 144). Levering's point is not that Newman sees that doctrinal corruptions abound. He is well aware that Newman's actual assessment of Catholic doctrinal corruption in the early 1830s is entirely conventional. Indeed, such a view of Catholicism is part of the very grammar of Anglicanism. Rather, what he is interested in is how a decade later there is a momentous volte face in Newman's religious opinion from the denial of development

to its affirmation and a withdrawal of the charges of corruption against Roman Catholicism. Levering's summing up of his chapter is to the point: "The anti-Erastian concerns about doctrinal corruption that motived the Oxford Movement and that were articulated by Froude, therefore, continued to set the tone for Newman. As a Catholic, he both criticized the doctrinal corruption that he now believed to be characteristic of the Church of England and sought to justify the Roman Catholic Church as offering an anti-Erastian alternative, based upon magisterial authority that guides doctrinal development, in accordance with Scripture and Tradition, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, preserving the Church of Christ from doctrinal corruption" (153).

Chapter 3 concerns doctrinal corruption as a point of contention between John and his brother Francis in Newman's post-conversion years. Levering does not neglect to point out that the rupture between the two brothers was a cause of great pain to both. Nor does he fail to hold John Henry Newman to account for the role that he played in it. Levering illuminates the *Apologia* (1864) by showing that its history of religious opinions imitates Francis's earlier *Phases of Faith* (1850) (169–91), with the difference that in the latter text we are dealing not with the incremental strengthening of a doctrinal faith but with the unrubbishing of doctrine in which, in succession, Francis loses his conviction in the divinity of Christ (166) and the Trinity (177) and comes to dispatch the doctrines of predestination, eternal punishment, and atonement on the grounds that they are "morally repulsive" (178–79).

Crucially, there were two main issues between the brothers. The first concerned historical criticism of the Bible and whether or not it demonstrated that there existed an unbridgeable gap between the Bible and subsequent doctrinal formulation (186–87). The second, more general issue concerned both the relation between and the relative value of history and theology (170–71). Discussing *Phases of Faith*, Levering convincingly argues that if the gap between the Bible and the production of doctrine is conventional enough given Francis's evangelical roots, the gap is reinforced in and by Francis's exposure to German historical criticism (181, 186). Levering brings out well that for Francis theology is a *bête noir*: It is intellectually obtuse and morally bankrupt (171, 179), the former leading to fanaticism, the latter to viciousness. Levering captures Francis's disciplinary preference for history over theology, which, if in part instinctive, is also buttressed by his reading of German scholarship reflecting on historical method. A question that Levering does not ask, but after his sympathetic account of Francis might

be asked, is the following: What role did Gibbon play—if any—in Francis's conviction of the prerogatives of history over theology?

In chapter 4 Levering treats of the contretemps in Newman's post-conversion period between Newman and his fellow Tractarian and longtime friend, Edward B. Pusey. The point of contention is particular and does not ramify, as in the case of Newman's opposition to Gibbon and his brother Francis, into broader issues of historical methodology and religious epistemology. The proximate provocation is provided by Pusey's *Irenicon* (1865), in which Pusey details his objections both to Catholic devotional practices and doctrines, with the aggravation of the papal promulgation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 particularly in mind. Catholic Marian devotions are for Pusey deviant (250–53), the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception illicit, and theologizations such as Mary's assumption and her role as "co-redemptrix" (247) corruptions of the highest order. Leaving aside the contested issue of the authority of the bishop of Rome to unilaterally pronounce on any doctrine, especially on one that was likely to cause offense to the other Christian confessions, Pusey judges that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception represents a manifest corruption (244–46). The grounds are the obvious grounds of an Anglican—that is, Scripture and the patristic tradition. Such a doctrine had neither biblical nor patristic warrant.

Responding to Pusey a year later in a text that runs 150 pages, Newman concedes that though neither the Bible nor Church Fathers provide evidence for the Immaculate Conception that is strictly speaking demonstrative, but he goes on to argue the fact that Mary is the mother of Jesus and a person of special dignity in the Bible provides a point of departure for theological reflection, even more so if the acceptance of the doctrine of the Theotokos at the Council of Ephesus (AD 431)—which Pusey does not seem to dispute—is taken into account (264). Regarding Pusey's slights against Catholic Marian piety, Newman is prepared to allow that in some cases the accusations hit their mark. There have been excesses, and these excesses have from time to time been supported by bad theology such as the construction of Mary as "co-redemptrix." With regard to this theological position, Newman makes the obvious points that the position is neither truly representative of the Catholic tradition nor a matter of Catholic doctrine. Moreover, from Newman's perspective, Pusey's view that devotion to Mary crowds out Christ as the proper focus of Christian worship is entirely unfounded. It is not a zero-sum game: Indeed, it is in precisely those countries in which devotion to Mary is strong that devotion to Christ is most conspicuous.

As one might expect from a theologian who is expert in Catholic Mariology, Levering is entirely at home in his discussion both of Pusey's Anglican objections and Newman's defense against doctrinal corruption. While, undoubtedly, the formulation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was the neuralgic point around which clustered old Anglican grievances against Marian devotions and doctrines, one wonders to what extent Newman's own account in the *Apologia*, published just one year before Pusey's *Irenicon*, of his shedding of his Anglican antipathy toward Marian devotions and doctrines and his difficult opening up to what was foreign to his English sensibility in Marian devotion on the continent may also have played a role in Pusey's agitation.

Chapter 5 sees Levering treat Newman's defense against Döllinger's judgment that the doctrine of papal infallibility promulgated at Vatican I represented a doctrinal corruption (295). As he showed in the cases of Francis Newman and Pusey, Levering sees the pathos that accompanies Newman's articulation of his position or counterposition. For Newman, Döllinger was a towering intellectual figure who empowered him to think through the origins of Christianity and its trajectory across the ages, a fast friend since his conversion who enabled him to negotiate through the opaque Vatican bureaucracy, and an ecclesiastic of unimpeachable integrity. Nonetheless, the fact that Döllinger's attack came from within Catholicism and the vituperative nature of the rejection of the doctrine of papal infallibility were grounds for the reply provided in *A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* (1875), which, if ostensibly a reply to Gladstone's vehement rejection of *Dei Filius*, also represented a reply to Döllinger. Levering hardly ignores Newman's attempts to palliate. Newman is sensitive to the shenanigans that accompanied the formulation of papal infallibility at Vatican I (312; 287–89) and can understand how and why Döllinger felt aggrieved. In addition, Levering underscores Newman's confession that he, too, is sensitive to the ecumenical fallout due to the promulgation of the doctrine. Even so, in his letter to Gladstone Newman argues that the final form of the doctrine is far more moderate than the one originally presented by the ultramontane bishops. In any event, whatever the advisability of its formulation, for Newman the grounds upon which the Council moved from the infallibility of the Church to the infallibility of the pope are basically secure on biblical (Matthew 16:8) and patristic grounds. Döllinger, of course, was not to be appeased. He judges that the doctrine of papal infallibility represents an absolute rupture—indeed, nothing less than an "excrescence" (295)—and another, though the worse, example of papal overreach and malfeasance, what he refers to colorfully as "papal

rapacity" (343). Making the point of historical precedent, or rather lack thereof, Döllinger argues that before the rise of the Ultramontanism in the modern period, the doctrine of papal infallibility has few advocates; it is really attested only by Cajetan (309).

Levering brilliantly shows, however, that broader issues emerge in the political-theological tangle of papal infallibility. Once again the issue of history emerges, as it had with Gibbon and Francis Newman, though this time in a context in which authentic development in principle was allowed by both sides. Both Döllinger and Newman think that history is vital to doctrine since it is the domain from which doctrine arises. To ignore history is to have undermined the very intelligibility of doctrine. Unlike the case with both Gibbon and Francis Newman, there is no incompatibility in principle between historical and theological judgment. Nonetheless, from Döllinger's perspective, there can be incompatibility in fact: Papal infallibility is one of those instances. A scrupulously honest review of history demonstrates that the doctrine of papal infallibility is without basis in Scripture and Tradition. Moreover, this lack of basis can neither be compensated for by an appeal to ecclesial authority nor a theological construct (336). Though couched in the more muted way of a Henry Milman rather than a Gibbon or Francis Newman, nonetheless, Levering avers, Newman feared that Döllinger had elevated the talented historian over the Tradition, thereby effecting in fact an alternate magisterium. Levering insightfully lays out that Newman comes to consider Döllinger and Gladstone as the latest instances of historical reductionism. He renders Newman giving voice to his complaint in *A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* (339): "They [Gladstone and Döllinger] seem to me to expect from History more than History can furnish, and have too little confidence in the divine Promise and Providence as guiding and determining those enunciations."

The Horizon of the Confederacy of Doctrinal Corruptions

As a document of Newman's interest in and actual engagement with specific doctrinal corruptions over a long life full of controversy, Levering's book is an unequivocal success. Not only does it sustain its argument, it offers a level of quotation sufficient for the reader to be assured that she is not the victim of eisegesis. In addition, there are signature moments in each of the five substantive chapters. Yet, there are a number of different ways in which *Newman on Doctrinal Corruption* is also more than advertised. First, though the book is focally about Newman and doctrinal corruption,

it is not *not*—pardon the double negative—about Newman and doctrinal development. On the one hand, it cannot fail in some sense to be about Newman and doctrinal development given the imbrication of the notions of development and corruption in Newman's discourse. On the other hand, it cannot fail to be about doctrinal development itself given the level and extent of Levering's critical engagement with the topic of doctrinal development in Newman in the notes. Indeed, Levering's obvious mastery of the enormous literature on the topic demonstrates that Newman's notion of development is never far from his mind.

With regard to Levering's mastery of the literature on the topic, a special compliment is owed to his engagement with the more recent studies of Newman on the topic by the likes of Andrew Meszaros, Christopher Cimorelli, Stephen Morgan, and others. These studies indicate that Newman has finally come to enjoy the kind of readers he deserves. I have also drawn attention in my presentation of Levering's narrative of resistance to doctrinal corruption to a number of broader themes that touch on the relation of history to truth and the relative intellectual-moral merits of the historian and theologian. In fact, I will return to these issues anon. Before I do, however, I should draw attention to Levering's own flagging of broader themes in the introduction and conclusion, which frame his story of exemplary Newmanian interventions against doctrinal corruption across a period of over forty years, specifically from the *Via Media* (1834) to *A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* (1875).

In his introduction, especially in his section on "The Challenge of Religious Liberalism" (22–34), Levering suggests as a possible frame for his narrative of Newman's intervention against doctrinal corruption his well-known aversion to liberal religion regulated by fundamental principles that are just the contrary of the principles that regulate historical forms of Christianity. The two touched on in *Newman on Doctrinal Corruption* are the dogmatic principle and the sacramental principle. In what appears to be a nod to the contemporary relevance of the ensuing presentation of Newman's resistance to a series of doctrinal corruptions, Levering restricts himself to nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological authors—figures such as Schleiermacher, Tyrrell, Schillebeeckx, Rahner, and Lieven Boeve—none of whom, with the exception of the modernist Tyrrell, have much to do with Newman. His intention to broaden our interpretive horizon is obvious when Levering eschews mentioning any of Newman's nineteenth-century religious others: There is no Paley or Whately, no Thomas Arnold or Kingsley, no George Eliot or Leslie Stephens. With respect to the figures Levering adduces, it seems that

development more than corruption is the theme—even if they go hand in hand. In Levering's view, what unites each of the above is the positing of an original revelation and/or primordial experience, with respect to which subsequent formulations can at best be merely relatively adequate and in all likelihood will distort and corrupt. Levering cannot be faulted for not further specifying the tendencies of each; this is quite simply not part of his brief. In any event, the general description of their theological enterprises is sufficient in that they obviously seem to deny what Newman wants to affirm—that is, that later formulations can realize or actualize what was given in revelation and original experience (39).

Levering provides us with good reason to suppose that the conclusion runs parallel to the introduction in two different ways. In addition to recalling Newman's discussion of doctrinal corruptions throughout the five substantive chapters that were anticipated in the introduction, the conclusion also opens out on larger themes related to the contrast between Newman's view of the relation between original Christianity and subsequent doctrinal expression. In the conclusion, however, rather than returning to the liberal theologians discussed in the introduction, Newman turns to the Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart. While Hart's *Tradition and Apocalypse* (2022) is, among other things, an anti-Newman screed, it is far from evident that Levering has yielded to a provocation. He is interested in making the general point that there exists a surprising analogy between Hart's latest book and the phalanx of liberal theologians whom Hart affects to despise. Original Christianity (however characterized) simply by the nature of the case will be communicated over time in idioms that either do not represent it adequately or distort it. In the case of Hart, Nicene doctrine provides an example of the former, the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory an example of the latter. Now, if there is nothing adventitious about Levering's discussion of Hart (361–67), neither is there anything of a cheap "gotcha." As with the theologians who represent liberal theology in the introduction, so also in the case of Hart originalism implies and maybe even demands a negative stance toward doctrinal development.

Speaking of these liberal theologians, as he looks forward to his main task of offering a narrative of exemplary Newmanian interventions against doctrinal corruptions over the course of his long career, Levering picks out one of the five figures for more detailed consideration regarding a more explicit stance on the development of doctrine. This is the contemporary Leuven theologian Lieven Boeve (29–34), who, as an explicitly postmodern theologian, is influenced in equal parts by Ricoeurian hermeneutics, critical theory, and deconstruction. For Levering, while not eradicating all

traces of continuity, Boeve advocates for a "ruptural" view of history and tradition. Tradition is the history of different perspectives on an excessive origin that cannot be tied down to a single imperial perspective. To attempt to do so is to radically distort. Boeve in this respect is paradigmatically anti-Newman, even if it is the case that Newman's sense of continuity across history, even as its most explicative, is more dynamic and dialectical than either Boeve or Hart would credit. Boeve, then, is a kind of synecdoche, but also a kind of hyperbole, of the discontinuity that we would find in the other authors who are listed: Schleiermacher with his sense of the specific community constructions of truth across history; Schillebeeckx with his sense that explicitly formulated doctrines both reveal and hide the excess of the original; Rahner with his sense that doctrinal language is the best that the Christian community was able to do at a particular time but which is essentially (if not necessarily practically) replaceable.

Levering's discussion of Boeve in the introduction sets the stage for his fair-minded but critical discussion in the conclusion of *Tradition and Apocalypse*, wherein Hart denounces Newman's *Development of Doctrine* as a "fantasia" of the development of doctrine that effectively amounts to a tautology. Hart contends that original Christianity is essentially the giving and receiving of an apocalypse that, while it has intelligible components, is an excessive whole that cannot be fully mastered by doctrinal formulations, even Nicaea. Though Hart does not present the reader with the pedigree of this idea, this is the quintessence of the liberalism that Levering sketched in the introduction and also the liberal Anglicanism that Newman resisted both as an Anglican and a Catholic. Given that he turns to Hart only in the concluding pages of *Newman on Doctrinal Corruption*, Levering does not proceed to strengthen his case that, far from occupying a higher viewpoint to that of Newman and the nineteenth-century liberals who were the object of his intellectual resistance, Hart has effectively inscribed himself in the drama between traditional and liberal Christianity that marked the nineteenth century and continues to mark our so-called postmodern age. Levering would not have had to work particularly hard. Throughout *Tradition and Apocalypse*, Hart often sounds like Gibbon when putting aside Newman as incurably theologically biased, as well as when he insists on the prerogatives of the historian to judge the relation between earlier and later forms of Christianity. And he seems to resound Francis Newman when he avers in *Tradition and Apocalypse* that Newman might have been well served had he come in contact with Historicism, not realizing that in answering Francis Newman on this point, Newman has effectively answered him also.

Conclusion

With this monograph on Newman Matthew Levering has shown that in addition to being perhaps the main positive force behind Newman studies in North America at the moment (with two recent edited volumes coming out under his editorship[1]), he is himself also an accomplished exponent of the versatile and hard-to-pin-down John Henry Newman. Levering has produced a book on a topic that usually takes a back seat to numerous other topics in Newman, most relevantly Newman's notion of the development of doctrine, to which, of course, it is intimately related. The book is unfailingly interesting, the scholarship impeccable, the authorial voice unintrusive. Levering wishes to show the reader the importance of the topic of doctrinal corruption by telling a story; he refuses to insist on it. He is so on top of Newman scholarship that he refuses to fuss about it; his fidelity to the Catholic tradition and his intellectual and moral seriousness is such that it seems to be a joy rather than a burden for him to speak to a theological truth or recommend a historical figure as pertinent today and tomorrow. He is so committed to the truth of the Catholic faith that apologia is simply the natural outlet. Yet, as I have also suggested throughout, there is an obvious pregnancy to this book that suggests that another is fermenting—perhaps that book on the development of doctrine that Levering sets aside at the opening bell. N·V

[1] See *John Henry Newman and Joseph Ratzinger: A Theological Encounter*, ed. Emery de Gaál and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2025); and *John Henry Newman's* An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*: A Critical Guide*, ed. Frederick D. Aquino and Matthew Levering (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic Press, 2025).