Saint John Henry Newman, Development of Doctrine, and Sensus Fidelium: His Enduring Legacy in Roman Catholic Theological Discourse

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The whole Church, laity and hierarchy together, bears responsibility for and mediates in history the revelation which is contained in the holy Scriptures and in the living apostolic Tradition ... [A]ll believers [play a vital role] in the articulation and development of the faith ....

“Sensus fidei in the life of the Church,” 3.1, 67
International Theological Commission of the Catholic Church
Rome, July 2014

In 2014, the International Theological Commission published “Sensus fidei in the life of the Church,” which highlighted two critically important theological concepts: development and sensus fidelium. Drawing inspiration directly from the works of John Henry Newman, this document not only affirmed the insights found in his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845), which church authorities embraced during the first decade of Newman’s life as a Catholic, but also his provocative Rambler article, “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine” (1859), which resulted in episcopal accusations of heresy and Newman’s delation to Rome. The tension between Newman’s theory of development and his appeal for the hierarchy to consider the experience of the “faithful” ultimately centers on the “seat” of authority, and whose voices matter. As a historical theologian, I recognize in the 175 year reception of Newman’s theory of development, the controversial character of this historiographical assumption—or “metanarrative”—which privileges the hierarchy’s authority to teach, but paradoxically acknowledges the capacity of the “faithful” to receive—and at times reject—propositions presented to them as authoritative truth claims.¹

¹ Maurice Blondel, in his History and Dogma (1904), emphasized that historians always act on metaphysical assumptions when applying facts to the historical
This essay traces out the ebb-and-flow of Roman Catholic receptions of Newman’s metanarrative of development, and argues that its acceptance, rejection, and contentious appropriation have focused on questions of magisterial authority and the role of the faithful in the development of doctrine. Four periods will be considered to demonstrate this point. The first will trace out the early reception of Newman’s theory by hierarchical authorities eager to develop and define doctrinal principles that enhanced the papal office as the locus of infallible teaching. The second examines the developmental theory’s receding influence in the magisterial discourse of the Catholic Church during the rise and dominance of neo-scholasticism in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. The third section considers the first half of the twentieth century, and the influence of the developmental metanarrative among lay Catholic scholars and theologians in religious orders, who nurtured an alternative to neo-scholastic theology, despite magisterial suspicion. The final section analyzes its contentious appropriation during the Second Vatican Council, and in the decades that followed, using the controversy over magisterial teaching on birth control as a case study. The conclusion reflects on its contemporary significance and potential for Roman Catholic theological discourse moving forward.

PROLEGOMENA

Prior to the nineteenth century, Christian historiography had been dominated by two competing metanarratives, neither of which could adequately respond to the rise of historical consciousness which emerged among Christian scholars in the fifteenth century and became a compelling ethos by the early decades of the 1800s. Throughout the ancient and medieval Christian experience, church teaching had been received as part of a “synchronic unity,” two handed down through the succession of bishops as unaltered apostolic teaching. This historiographical assumption—called in this essay “successionism”—assured the faithful that church teaching reflected truths received and narratives they create. “Metahistory” was a term coined by Robin Collingwood in the 1920s to describe the work of philosophers of history, and refers to overarching, totalizing theories of history like those of Hegel, Marx, and Spengler. Newman’s theory of development may be numbered among these. Jean-François Lyotard coined the post-modern term “metanarrative,” which has come to be used as a virtual synonym for “metahistory.”

2 In linguistics, “synchronic” is typically used to describe the study of a concept or term at a specific point in time. In this context, “synchronic unity” refers to an assumption that a concept or term, as it is understood in the present, reflects the original meaning of the concept or term.
preserved from its earliest origins to the present. Early modern Roman Catholic scholastic logic rested on this premise. Any enlargement of Church teaching was perceived as a movement from implicitly held ancient truth to an explicit articulation at a later time. This metanarrative continued to be foundational for the neo-scholastics of the early twentieth century and remains a powerful outlook for some Christians down to the present.

Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the “successionist” metanarrative of dogmatic truth met opposition from Christian scholars and church reformers who denied that certain doctrines and church practices could be found in the texts and artifacts of Christian antiquity. These critics asserted that at various points in the past doctrinal change had occurred, corrupting church teaching and introducing innovations. This early modern historiographical shift, described by Anthony Kemp as the “supersessionist metanarrative,” called for a return to apostolic truth and rejected teaching introduced during a corrupted “middle age.” While this historiographical shift rejected the notion of synchronic unity in dogmatic truth, the retrieval of a lost doctrinal purity became the underlying historiographical priority of theological and ecclesial discourse that embraced supersessionism. This metanarrative also came to be used to retrieve “classic” texts and practices from the medieval and early modern periods that were valued and venerated. When using the supersessive metanarrative, historians of doctrine constructed narratives of dissent, that identified primitive/classic truth claims, “middle” periods of corruption or loss of those truths, and contemporary reclamation of what had been lost.

By the early nineteenth century the developmental metanarrative of the Christian past began to emerge, which emphasized the diachronic (historical) nature of church teaching received by each generation of believers. In certain circles, assumptions about the synchronic unity of doctrine gave way to language of organic growth and development. This differed from the scholastic distinctions of “implicit” to “explicit” articulation of doctrine.Responding to the rise of historical consciousness, concepts of organic growth of doctrine can be traced through the works of Catholic and Protestant Tübingen

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6 Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, 21–95.
theologians—most notably Johann Adam Möhler—and the French controversialist Joseph de Maistre. Nascent theories of development among Newman’s Oxford Movement disciples in the 1830s and early 1840s have also been documented. Yet it was Newman’s Essay that has come to be identified with this third historiographical shift in Christian thought. This vision of doctrine acknowledged a distinction between doctrinal ideas in their infancy (origins) and mature articulations of doctrine after generations of reflection, debate, and at times controversy. There emerged a recognition that centuries, even millennia might be required for a consensus understanding to be achieved within the Church. This metanarrative of development embraced historical consciousness, but retained a conviction that God engages humans in time and human circumstance to enable the fullness of truth to emerge.

By the turn of the twentieth century, a fourth metanarrative—called here the “apperceptive” metanarrative—emerged among some who had been inspired by Newman’s theory of development, but who became convinced that historical evidence could not always establish a connection between emerging doctrinal concepts proposed for belief and an “apostolic” deposit of faith, even in embryonic form. Nineteenth-century educational theory had taken up the notion of “apperception”—the grafting of new ideas into an established body of knowledge—to describe the challenge posed by “new” knowledge or a “heightened consciousness” to traditional intellectual disciplines. This apperceptive metanarrative, which grew in importance in the latter twentieth century, initially became associated with notions of the “evolution” of dogma during the Modernist controversy. The apperceptive metanarrative emphasized rupture, change and adaptation of Christian doctrines, as they responded to new issues and challenges in culture, as well as rapid progress in scientific and historical scholarship. Sometimes mistaken for a Newmanian

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understanding of doctrinal development, it has found a place in the
discourse of theologians who seek to respond to contemporary issues
and cultural challenges.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, it has been the Newman-inspired
developmental metanarrative that has been integrated into magisterial
teaching and has transformed the theological imagination of most
Catholics, substantially reshaping how the faithful perceive doctrines
they have received, believe in, and apply to their lives. Its early
reception by Roman Catholic leaders from 1846 to 1870 illustrates its
potential to enlarge understandings of hierarchical authority, its latent
power to challenge that authority, and its capacity to accommodate
“developments” in church teaching which had been resisted as
“inopportune.”

EARLY RECEPTIONS OF NEWMAN’S HISTORIOGRAPHY OF
DEVELOPMENT: 1846–1871

A few months after Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism
(9 October 1845) and the publication of his Essay (27 November
1845), the youthful Swiss-born Reformed scholar Philip Schaff
published his book, What is Church History?: A Vindication of the
Idea of Historical Development (1846). In a footnote that briefly
analyzed Newman’s Essay, Schaff doubted that Roman Catholics
could adopt development as a way of understanding the Christian past.
He concluded, “Romanism cannot give up the principle of stability,
without unsettling its own foundation.”12

It seemed Shaff’s skepticism about development was justified
when the newly converted American journalist and religious
polemicist, Orestes Brownson, denounced Newman’s book in July
1846, observing, “[The Church] asserts that there has been no
progress, no increase, no variation of faith; that what she believes and
teaches now is precisely what she has always and everywhere
believed and taught from the first. She denies that she has ever added a new
article to the primitive creed.”13 Brownson articulated what he asserted
was a widely held judgment, that Newman’s theory implicitly denied
the church’s supernatural character. He concluded, “The Church has
no natural history, for she is not in the order of nature, but of grace.”14

Yet both Schaff and Brownson misread trends among certain
influential Roman Catholic leaders and scholars, who sought to
promote the pope as the Catholic Church’s supreme teaching authority
and argued for an expanded understanding of papal infallibility.

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12 Philip Schaff, What is Church History?: A Vindication of the Idea of Historical
Brownson’s Quarterly Review 3 (1846): 352.
Indeed, Newman’s theory of development received its warmest and earliest reception among ultramontane leaders in Rome during the first decade of Newman’s new life as a Roman Catholic.\(^{15}\)

As has been recently demonstrated, the Roman reception of Newman’s *Essay* in 1846 and 1847 was positive and enthusiastic. Giacomo Mazio, SJ, a theology and canon law professor at the Collegio Romano, Giovanni Perrone, doyen of Roman dogmatic theologians for decades, and Pope Pius IX himself all manifested in private discourse and public statements a positive engagement with Newman’s theory.\(^{16}\) While Newman had Roman detractors, their rejection of his theory did not convince the pope and his closest advisors. From the 1847 publication of Perrone’s case for dogmatically defining the Immaculate Conception of Mary,\(^{17}\) to the formal proclamation of that dogma in 1854, Newman’s theory was invoked in Rome, Great Britain, Europe, and the United States in support of a papal *ex cathedra* definition of dogma.

Perrone also embraced Newman’s understanding of the *sensus fidelium* as integral to a developmental argument for the definition of the Immaculate Conception.\(^{18}\) In 1849, Pius IX acted on this concept in *Ubi Primum*, seeking from bishops around the world reports on whether the laity and clergy would welcome a dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception.\(^{19}\) When the final form of *Ineffabilis Deus* was published, Nicholas Wiseman reported that some French bishops had stated “that it [the final text of the bull] was evidently the adoption of [Newman’s] theory.”\(^{20}\) Archbishop Francis Kenrick of Baltimore came to the same judgment.\(^{21}\) On 22 March 1855, Herbert Vaughan


\(^{17}\) Giovanni Perrone, *De Immaculato B. V. Mariae* (Rome: Ioannes Baptista Marini and Bernardus Morini, 1847).


\(^{19}\) *Ubi Primum*, no. 6.


\(^{21}\) Kenneth Parker, “Francis Kenrick and Papal Infallibility: How Pastoral Experience in the American Missions Transformed a Roman Ultramontanist,” in *Tradition and
recorded in his diary that Ignaz von Döllinger stated that the Immaculate Conception could only be proven on the principle of development.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1855 George Talbot, one of the papal chamberlains, confided to Richard Stanton that Newman’s theory “was the private opinion of the Holy Father himself.”\textsuperscript{23} By 1856, Pius IX made this explicit in \textit{Singulari Quidem}, when he declared,

\begin{quote}
We should not conclude that religion does not progress in the Church of Christ. There is great progress! But it is truly the progress of faith, which is not change. The intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge of everybody should grow and progress, like that of the whole Church of the ages. In this way we might understand more clearly what we used to believe obscurely; in this way posterity might have joy of understanding what used to be revered without understanding.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

By the late 1850s, Pius IX, Giovanni Perrone, and other leading Catholics in Rome and throughout the North Atlantic nations had come to embrace some form of doctrinal development as a way to understand the “progress” and “growth” of doctrine in the life of the church. John Acton observed that “the theory of Development” had been “naturalized” in Germany by Ignaz von Döllinger.\textsuperscript{25} While no consensus existed among Catholic leaders on this matter, Newman’s \textit{Essay} continued to be identified with this trend in Catholic thought, which appeared to support the hierarchy’s ability to define dogma and confirm ‘developments’ in doctrinal truth, after discerning the \textit{consensus fidelium}.

Yet in 1859, Newman’s article, “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,” highlighted a dimension of his theory that British church authorities rejected: a dissenting role for the laity in doctrinal development. In the context of a late 1850s controversy over British educational legislation, bishops objected when Newman sought to explain the prudence of listening to the faithful. He stressed that “there is something in [‘the pastors and faithful thinking together’], which is not in the pastors alone.”\textsuperscript{26} In private correspondence, Newman did not dispute the hierarchy’s exclusive

\textsuperscript{23}Newman, \textit{Letters and Diaries}, xvi: 526n1.
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Singulari Quidem}, no. 8.
authority to teach and define doctrine.27 However, highlighting the role of the faithful in defending fourth-century Nicene orthodoxy against Arian bishops, and the recent example of Pius IX consulting the faithful before defining the Immaculate Conception, Newman urged British bishops to do the same.28

His counsel was not well received. Ushaw dogmatics professor, John Gillow, asserted in a letter that Newman’s claim was proximate to heresy, for it implied that “the [truly] infallible portion” of the church—the pope and bishops—must “consult the fallible” laity before dogma could be defined.29 Bishop Joseph Brown of Newport delivered Newman to Rome for heresy, tarnishing Newman’s reputation for years. In 1867, when Newman received public support from prominent lay Catholics to found an Oratory in Oxford, Mgr. George Talbot wrote to Archbishop Henry Manning of Westminster, denouncing the ability of laity to engage “purely ecclesiastical” matters and observed, “Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your Grace.”30

In the summer of 1867, Pius IX announced his intention to call a council. Though his agenda was not made explicit until shortly before the opening of the First Vatican Council, it was widely understood that the pope hoped for a conciliar definition of papal infallibility, thus making explicit what had been implicitly affirmed in the 1854 *ex cathedra* definition of the Immaculate Conception. That exercise of papal authority had implicitly set another precedent of equal importance: consulting the faithful. Yet in the late 1860s, a dissenting role for the faithful proved inexpedient and unwelcome.

In 1869, Ignaz von Döllinger—troubled by exaggerated assertions made by neo-ultramontane advocates for a broad definition of papal infallibility—published his polemical case against this prospect, entitled *The Pope and the Council* (1869). Employing a supersessionist metanarrative of dissent, Döllinger identified the ninth-century Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals—a collection of forged documents affirming a high understanding of papal authority—as the source of a corrupted doctrine of the papal office. He called for a return to the ancient normative teaching of the early church, and rejected efforts to define papal infallibility at the impending council.31 In a published review, John Acton praised the historical case presented, but criticized the historiographical assumption employed in the book,

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noting, “The theory [of development] is entirely ignored throughout his volume … [and in this point] has failed to maintain its position in the very front rank of science.”  

While a supersessionist metanarrative served Döllinger’s polemical argument more effectively before the council, his appeal to a normative primitive Christianity placed him in an untenable position after the council. It forced him to choose between his scholarly judgment and received conciliar teaching. He was excommunicated in 1871 and died twenty years later in that state.

The theory of development did play a prominent role in the fractious deliberations of the First Vatican Council, though for reasons that caused John Acton dismay. As the council progressed, “inopportunist” bishops sought to accommodate their consciences to a definition of papal infallibility. They took refuge in Newman’s theory of development. Bishop David Moriarty of Kerry wrote to Newman,

Strange as it may seem, if ever this definition comes you will have contributed much towards it. Your treatise on development has given the key. A Cardinal said the other day—“We must give up the first ten centuries, but the infallibility is an obvious development of the supremacy.” Of course development was ever at work in the Church, but you brought it out and placed it on a pedestal.

While Newman’s theory of development is most often associated with the proceedings and documents of Vatican II, Bishop Moriarty’s comment indicates that it may have played an even more decisive role at Vatican I, providing reluctant bishops with a justification for a “development of the supremacy.”

Though Newman, like Acton, found the prospect of a definition distressing, he expressed it in terms that emphasized the importance of “the pastors and faithful thinking together.”

To Bishop Ullathorne he wrote, “What have we done to be treated as the faithful never were treated before? When has definition of doctrine been a luxury of devotion, and not a stern painful necessity? Why should an aggressive insolent faction be allowed to ‘make the heart of the just to mourn, whom the Lord hath not made sorrowful?’”

Yet after the council had voted (18 July 1870) and Pastor Aeternus had been promulgated, Newman took heart in the narrowness of the definition and the extraordinary circumstances prescribed for its use. By January 1871, even the most outspoken council father against the definition, Archbishop Peter Kenrick of Saint Louis, made his

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33 Newman, Letters and Diaries, xxv: 58.
34 Newman, On Consulting the Faithful, 104.
submission to the council’s decision. In a letter to John Acton he observed, “I reconciled myself intellectually to submission by applying Father Newman’s theory of development to the case in point.” Observing that Newman had used his theory to reconcile his difficulties with the papal office, enabling Newman to become a Roman Catholic, Kenrick stated, “I thought that it might justify me in remaining one.”

Newman also found his theory of development reassuring in the wake of the council. As he explained to a disciple who struggled with remaining a Catholic,

Looking at early history, it would seem as if the Church moved on to perfect truth by various successive declarations, alternately in contrary directions, and thus perfecting, completing, and supplying each other. Let us have a little faith in her, I say. Pius is not the last of the Popes. The late definition does not so much need to be undone, as to be completed.—Let us be patient, let us have faith, and a new Pope, and a re-assembled Council may trim the boat.

In the decade that followed the council, Newman worked to supply a minimalist interpretation of Pastor Aeternus, grounded in the text of the conciliar document, and the context of papal and conciliar history. While acknowledging it as doctrinally “true,” he also recognized that it required further development.

Yet over the course of the 1870s, the “Roman School,” under the growing influence of Josef Kleutgen, SJ, and others, promoted a late nineteenth-century revival of scholastic approaches to theological discourse. Kleutgen—noted for his mastery of Thomas Aquinas’s works and a reputed consultant in composing Leo XIII’s Aeterni Patris (1879)—argued that the fragmentation of modern philosophical discourse must be confronted with a unified philosophical framework in theology that brought back harmony between faith and reason. Kleutgen applied a dissenting supersessive metanarrative in his case for rejecting Enlightenment era philosophical frameworks and returning to a medieval scholastic synthesis, with its appropriation of Aristotle. In dissenting from “modernity,” he prioritized Thomas Aquinas as the apex of this “classic” period of medieval theology. Kleutgen’s neo-thomistic synthesis prevailed, eclipsing retrievals of Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham in the latter

36 Peter Kenrick to John Acton, St. Louis 29 March 1871, MS Add.8119/3/K25, Acton Papers, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.
37 Newman, Letters and Diaries, xxv: 311.
nineteenth century. Newman and his theory of development suffered a similar fate, particularly within the “Roman School.”

**NEO-SCHOLASTICISM AND THE MODERNIST CONTROVERSY**

When Pope Leo XIII succeeded Pius IX in 1876, he encouraged the rise of this “neo-scholastic”/“neo-thomistic” approach, which brought with it an implied “successionist” (synchronic) metanarrative and retreat from theories of doctrinal development in magisterial teaching. While Newman’s developmental metanarrative was not condemned, its influence became muted in Rome and marginalized in Roman Catholic theological discourse. When clerical and lay scholars in the North Atlantic nations used the developmental metanarrative, it tended to appear in arguments against the growing influence of neo-scholastic thought in Rome, with its “static” understanding of the deposit of faith.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Roman Catholics struggled to retain Newman’s developmental metanarrative within the parameters permitted by authorized neo-scholastic discourse. Those who used it manifested a sense of marginalization. When the French Catholic biblical exegete Alfred Loisy received Newman’s works from Baron Friedrich von Hügel in the 1890, he warmed to Newman’s theory of development with the Baron’s encouragement. In 1898, Alfred Loisy observed in one of his “Firmin” essays on Newman’s theory of development, “Catholic theology has had in our days the great doctor of whom it stood in need. Nor has that doctor failed to promote devotion to the church and traditional orthodoxy and ... simultaneously, the scientific spirit .... He has only failed to attract disciples.”

This striking commentary from the “Father of Catholic Modernism” reflects not only his own sense of alienation in the late nineteenth-century theological discourse of the Catholic Church but the extent to which Newman’s metanarrative of development had receded as a sanctioned magisterial method for Catholic theology. Indeed, in his *L’Évangile et l’Église* (1902), Loisy stated this in even more stark terms, “[T]he Catholic Church does not even recognize the existence of [doctrinal] development, and condemns the very idea of

it … she has no official theory of the philosophy of her own history.”

In the ethos Loisy described, applying historical criticism in biblical studies and theological debate was viewed with suspicion and associated with late nineteenth-century “modern” notions of “evolution” and “progress.” Yet for those who came to be identified with Catholic modernism—Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell, and Friedrich von Hügel prominent among them—Newman’s metanarrative of development proved a touchstone and inspiration, for it allowed them to engage contemporary intellectual discourse within a Catholic context. Loisy’s “Firmin” articles embraced Newman’s theory of development as a way to identify authentic movements among the faithful and ratify them though the “infallible” organs of the church. Strikingly, Loisy observed, “[S]ince things have happened as though people believed in it, since the Church has not ceased to develop, without hesitation or scruple, in the way Newman described … the theory has been admitted implicitly, equivalently, and the need not yet being felt to formulate it explicitly.” Loisy lacked knowledge of the historical precedents set by Pius IX and Giovanni Peronne, and the role of “development” in the proceedings of Vatican I. Yet he was not alone in this collective forgetfulness, fostered by the neo-scholasticism of that era.

For neo-scholastic critics and church leaders who condemned “modernists,” Newman’s theory did not validate their efforts or protect them from censure; rather it raised questions about the viability of the developmental metanarrative in the Catholic Church’s confrontation with “modernity.” During the first decade of the twentieth century, Alfred Loisy and George Tyrrell had their works placed on the Index of Prohibited Books by the Curia and were ultimately excommunicated for their approach to Catholic theology. Wilfrid Ward, Newman’s first biographer, and Baron Friedrich von Hügel—two lay Catholic scholars who cultivated relationships with Catholic theologians across Europe—sought to maintain a place for Newman’s thought in Roman Catholic theology. Born an Irish Protestant, George Tyrrell had converted to Catholicism through Newman’s example and writings. After an early Catholic period in which he received a neo-scholastic formation, von Hügel influenced Tyrrell to embrace historical-critical methods, and Tyrrell freely

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admitted the influence of Wilfrid Ward on his thought. The works of this circle of scholars, and their collaborators, came to be viewed as challenges to the ordinary magisterial authority of the Catholic Church, which in that period prioritized neo-scholastic theology to the exclusion of other theological schools.

In a period when the hierarchy proved reluctant to “consult” the faithful, the developmental metanarrative came under suspicion, particularly due to parallel theories of “evolution,” “progress,” and the rise of democratic ideals in the broader culture of the late nineteenth-century North Atlantic nations. The post-Darwinian cultural shift influenced those who appealed to Newman’s Essay, and evoked negative responses from church authorities who condemned their use of “development”—or “evolution”—of dogma in biblical scholarship, theological arguments, and narratives of church history. The last two decades of the nineteenth century ended the early influence of “development” in magisterial teaching for more than sixty years, and neo-scholasticism came to be viewed in Rome as the only orthodox approach to theological discourse. With this came a tendency to identify “tradition” with current magisterial teaching, to the exclusion of “consensus fidelium,” particularly between 1910 and 1920.

Ironically, the conciliar definition of papal infallibility provided the justification. Cardinal Henry Manning, in his 1890 preface to Matthias Scheeben’s translated Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik, outlined a two hundred year period when the doctrinal authority of the Holy See had been challenged, not only by adversaries from without, but also “in the guidance of some of its own members within the fold.” Employing a “dissenting” supersessionist metanarrative against this “modern” threat, Manning concluded, “The definition of the Infallible Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff has closed this period of

47 After Charles Darwin’s On the Origin of Species (1859), and his later work, The Descent of Man (1871), the English term ‘evolution’ and its cognates in other European languages evoked a scientific biological analogy that did not reflect the pre-Darwinian theological language of organic growth and human maturation, which Newman and his early Roman admirers adopted and adapted to their purposes.
contention.”50 In his *Problems and Persons* (1903), Wilfrid Ward argued for a *via media* between the “static” and “dynamic” understandings of tradition found in neo-scholastic thought and “scientific” approaches to theology that employed “development.” Appealing to Newman’s theory, Ward stated,

*Semper eadem* [always the same], for the future, need mean no more than it has meant in the past. The very theology whose imposing structure now, for some minds, is an obstruction which bars the way, contains the record of diverse phases of intellectual development in different ages, during which the original revelation, at first committed to unlettered disciples, found its organic expansion in forms of intellectual expression still ratified under the ‘seal of the fisherman’.51

George Tyrrell critiqued Ward’s argument for its attempted synthesis of the “static” (successionist) and “dynamic” (developmental) understandings of doctrine. He observed:

If in earlier times each generation witnessed some sort of quarrel between theology and speculation; today, owing to the rate of scientific and historical advance, we have a more wholesale problem to cope with; we witness more change in [a] decade than many a century has seen in the past. Reflection once underfed by experience, is now surfeited beyond its powers of healthy digestion.52

In private correspondence with von Hügel in February 1905, Tyrrell made explicit his rejection of “the attempt to work the static idea of deposit [of faith] and the dynamic idea of development into one system.” He went on to observe, “Our present theological system ties us to a traditional exegesis, to an interpretation of scripture. And therefore we cannot get on till our doctrine of tradition is revised and reinterpreted.” Calling for a “theological revolution,” Tyrrell concluded that, “I feel Newman cannot help us any more.”53

Tyrrell articulated what other Catholic scholars, initially influenced by Newman, came to conclude: Newman’s understanding of development did not account for the notion of “heightened consciousness,” new awareness of certain issues and new forms of knowledge generated by scientists and historians, which could not be rooted in Christian antiquity, even in embryonic form. This emerging


53 George Tyrrell to Friedrich von Hügel, 19 February 1905, British Library, Add MS 44929, George Tyrrell and Friedrich von Hügel Correspondence 1905–1906, 14r-v.
“apperceptive” metanarrative appeared to draw inspiration from Darwinian notions of “evolution,” and implied that Christian doctrine and discipline responded and adapted to new cultural and social circumstances. For neo-scholastic critics and many church leaders, this implied a diminished role for “providence” at work in the life of the church and untethered development of doctrine from the apostolic “deposit” of faith.

On 3 July 1907, the Curia issued with papal approval *Lamentabili sane exitu*, a list of sixty-five condemned and proscribed propositions that came to be associated with Catholic modernism in general and Loisy and Tyrrell in particular. Proposition six read much like Gillow’s critique of Newman’s essay, “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine.” It rejected the notion that “The ‘Church learning’ and the ‘Church teaching’ collaborate in such a way in defining truths that it only remains for the ‘Church teaching’ to sanction the opinions of the ‘Church learning.’” Of even greater concern for those who cherished Newman’s developmental theory was the condemned proposition: “Dogmas, Sacraments and hierarchy, both their notion and reality, are only interpretations and evolutions of the Christian intelligence which have increased and perfected by an external series of additions the little germ latent in the Gospel.”

Two months later, Pius X condemned Catholic modernism in his *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (8 September 1907), as “the synthesis of all heresies.” The encyclical was not a rigorous analysis of works by Loisy, Tyrrell and others, but outlined papal and curial fears of the trajectory of their line of reasoning. Von Hügel, in a 24 October 1907 letter to Tyrrell, expressed his conviction that Part II of *Pascendi* condemned Newman’s theory of development. Many scholars and church leaders shared this reaction. Tyrrell’s response to von Hügel reemphasized the challenge of reconciling the neo-scholastic “static” concept of church teaching with Newman’s “dynamic” developmental understanding of doctrine. Tyrrell stated, “If we can force them [church authorities] to say that Newman’s ‘most characteristic positions’ are untouched we can put the Encyclical in the fire, as incomprehensible and signifying nothing.” Tyrrell did not have to wait long.

Bishop O’Dwyer of Limerick in his *Cardinal Newman and the Encyclical* Pascendi Dominici Gregis: An Essay (1908), stated his

54 *Lamentabili Sane*, no. 54.
55 *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, no. 39.
56 Nichols, *From Newman to Congar*, 75–76.
57 Friedrich von Hügel to George Tyrrell, 24 October 1907, British Library Add MS 44930, 1907: 75v.
58 Pierce, “Crossbows, Bludgeons and Long-range Rifles,” 63–64.
59 George Tyrrell to Friedrich von Hügel, 13 November 1907, British Library Add MS 44930: 91v.
personal judgment that Newman’s theory was “thoroughly sound and orthodox” and in accord with *Pascendi*. ⁶⁰ Pius X endorsed O’Dwyer’s judgment in a 10 March 1908 letter to the bishop. Affirming that Newman’s writings were “very much in harmony” with his encyclical, the pope expressed his “heartiest approval” of Newman. ⁶¹ Yet papal and curial actions made it increasingly difficult for those devoted to Newman’s theory of development. Tyrrell himself did not live to see the further marginalization of “development” in Catholic theological discourse for he died swiftly of a rare kidney disorder, Bright’s disease, in 1909. Because he died excommunicated, church officials denied him burial in a Catholic cemetery, and the noted French Newman scholar Fr. Henri Bremond was censured for speaking at his graveside. ⁶²

In the Anti-Modernist Oath (1910), Pius X required all bishops, priests and seminary professors to denounce “the error of those who affirm that the faith proposed by the Church can be repugnant to history, and that Catholic dogmas, in the way they are understood now, cannot accord with the truer origins of the Christian religion.” The oath included the statement, “I flatly reject the heretical invention of the evolution of dogmas.” Affirming the “unwavering charisma of the truth,” candidates declared that Roman Catholic teaching “has existed and will always exist in the succession of bishops from the Apostles,” is not “adapted to the culture of each age,” and is “absolute and unchangeable.” ⁶³ This oath remained a requirement until 1967, when Pope Paul VI abrogated its use. ⁶⁴ Many perceived the oath as a routing of Catholics who participated in the critical historical and scientific discourses of the North Atlantic nations. It muted and constrained bishops, priests, and seminary professors from publicly engaging in these matters, for to do so attracted curial and papal censure.

However, the developmental metanarrative worried some neo-scholastic theologians, who sought to account for the challenge it presented to neo-scholastic thought. Ambroise Gardeil struggled to account for historical anomalies, advanced by Tyrell and Loisy, which defied adequate explanation in neo-scholastic categories. Gardeil also found historical problems with arguments employed by Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and put forward theories to account for development. ⁶⁵ Léonce de Grandmaison and Jean-Vincent Bainel

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⁶² For a detailed account of this period of Tyrrell’s life, see Nicholas Sagovsky, *‘On God’s Side’: A Life of George Tyrrell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
contributed to this debate as well. The most insightful effort to find a neo-scholastic way to account for development appeared in Francisco Marín-Sola’s *La Evolución Homogénea del Dogma católico* (1924), which involved a rejection of Suarezian interpretations of Aquinas and a return to the texts of Thomas himself. Yet it was the work of Marcolinus Maria Tuyaerts, Charles Boyer, and other “Logicists”—who insisted on the logical connection of a mature doctrine with both the original deposit of faith and its historical genesis—who influenced magisterial discourse in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Strikingly, the case that proved most troubling for these neo-scholastic theologians was the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception. Gardeil observed that this instance demonstrated that dogmatic definitions were not founded on theological “dialectic alone,” but also the “living, social faith of the Church, of the whole Church, teaching and taught.” For good reasons, neo-scholastic theologians found that the 1854 dogmatic definition defied conventional categories they used. Frankly acknowledging the challenge this case of doctrinal definition posed, Grandmaison recognized that Catholics who had addressed the issue of development owed much to Newman’s insights and analyses and that Newman’s work could not be synthesized into the logic of a neo-scholastic manual. A different way forward had to be found.

**THE BLONDELIAN COMPROMISE AND THE RESSOURCEMENT MOVEMENT**

In the midst of these struggles, another mode for appropriating a developmental metanarrative in Catholic discourse took shape through the work and influence of a lay Catholic philosopher, Maurice Blondel. His monumental work, *L’Action* (1893), had a profound impact on Catholic discourse in the 1890s and well into the twentieth century, particularly in France. Blondel’s knowledge about Newman’s works and ideas initially came through interactions with Léon d’Ollé-Lapruné, an influential lay French Catholic philosopher of that era,
and Henri Bremond.\textsuperscript{70} While establishing direct links between Blondel’s writings and Newman’s influence have been an evidentiary challenge, striking parallels exist between the two on matters of tradition, history, developmental understandings of doctrine, and its organic growth over time. Whole volumes have been devoted to similarities in the works of Newman and Blondel.\textsuperscript{71} Blondel’s active, critical engagement with Loisy and von Hügel during the period of the “modernist crisis” strengthens the assumption that Blondel understood that parallels existed between Newman’s approach to the historiography of doctrine and his own.\textsuperscript{72}

Blondel positioned himself as a critic of both neo-scholastic theologians, who embraced a “static,” a-historical understanding of doctrine, and scholars who advocated “historicism,” by which Blondel meant an analytical practice that “tends to make everything naturally coherent, and to reduce history to the intelligible determinism of phenomena.”\textsuperscript{73} He condemned the view of certain neo-scholastics who asserted, “‘The Church does not search for the truth; she has nothing to learn; a Church which still has something to discover is not a Church to which Jesus Christ has taught all that he learnt from his Father.’”\textsuperscript{74} While Blondel rejected the successionist metanarrative of neo-scholastics, he found deficient the arguments of advocates of the “evolution of doctrine,” which for Blondel meant a devaluation of providence at work in human history, and a reduction of the development of doctrine to documentable human activity. While this was not a fair characterization of Loisy or Tyrrell’s work, it became a caricature of “modernist” thought.

To confront what he considered two extremes in Catholic thought, Blondel proposed an incarnational theology which not only encompassed the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ himself but also his mystical body, the Church through the ages.\textsuperscript{75} There was nothing original in this proposal, for Möhler, Perrone, Newman, and others had explored aspects of the church as “mystical body of Christ”

\textsuperscript{72} Oliva Blanchette, Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010), 181–192; René Virgoulay, Blondel et le Modernisme, 261.
\textsuperscript{74} Blondel, The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma, 277–278.
\textsuperscript{75} Maurice Blondel, Au Coeur de la Crise Moderniste (Paris: Aubier, 1960), 54–63; Gauthier, Newman et Blondel, 212–223.
and had applied human growth in maturity to their concepts of doctrinal development in history. Indeed, this analogy already had a place in the papal teaching of Pius IX, though Blondel seemed unaware of this precedent. Yet, he brought to the fore historiographical insights that were only beginning to emerge in the consciousness of philosophers of history like Robin Collingwood of Cambridge University in the 1920s.

In his 1903 correspondence with von Hügel, Blondel outlined three distinct aspects of the historian’s work. According to Blondel, the historian must first create a collection of “facts” by bringing together, sorting, and analyzing evidence from the past. Blondel appreciated the “scientific” character of this work and affirmed the need for it to be done with an independent spirit. Blondel’s second aspect of the historical project proved more complex, for it requires the historian to reanimate the “facts” from within, so that they reflect “an ensemble of life, a definite chain of ideas, a specific form of humanity.” However, in order for this second aspect to be successful, Blondel emphasized that the historian had to bind that work to some “philosophical” perspective to ensure a unitary coherence. In explaining this third aspect, Blondel observed:

The historian must … hang his work on the pegs of metaphysical and religious perspectives [‘vues’], because human facts are full of metaphysics. If he does not do this explicitly, and with a critical sense, he will still do it all the same, and in that case he will take more risks, and act partially, without a sense of measure.

In November 1904, Blondel further fleshed out this understanding of the historian’s work in what later became known as History and Dogma. In affirming a developmental metanarrative of Christian doctrine, he stated, “A truly supernatural teaching is only viable and conceivable if the initial gift is a seed capable of progressive and continual growth.” He rejected both the successionist and the supersessionist metanarratives, asserting,

So far is ‘development’ from being heterodox, as so many believers fear, that it is the static idea of tradition, fixism, which is the virtual heresy, whether the static conception is that of the historian who claims to seize the truth of Revelation in its earliest version, or that of

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76 Singulari Quidem, no. 8.
the speculative theologian, ready to confine infinite reality in a completed synthesis, as though at some given moment in history the spirit of man had exhausted God’s spirit.80

In this way Blondel affirmed a role for providence in the “progress” and “growth” of doctrine in the life of the Church.

Stressing the indispensable role of an “infallible Magisterium,” Blondel insisted that this “supernatural guarantee” is naturally founded on its functioning in concert with “the powers of each Christian and of all Christianity: viribus unitis docet discendo et discit docendo semper [With united effort one teaches in learning and one always learns by teaching].” In this reciprocal relationship, Blondel rested confident that “Divine assistance ensures the normal, indefectible exercise of this essential function.”81 In this way, Blondel articulated a vision of Tradition that is alive, dynamic, and fruitful when the “infallible Magisterium” remains engaged with the faithful, discerning the growth and progress of truth that emerges in the life of the church, which is rooted in scripture and apostolic teaching, and matured in the experience of “each Christian and all of Christianity.”

Blondel’s vision of a “living tradition,” so parallel to Newman’s understanding of development and the role of the faithful in that process, influenced a new generation of theologians in the decades that followed. Those influenced by Blondel also gravitated to the works and example of John Henry Newman. In the first half of the twentieth century, they sought a path beyond the neo-scholasticism of their era and the controversies of the Modernist crisis toward a theological discourse rooted in ancient and classic (medieval) sources to which they actively posed questions that addressed concerns of their times.

During the last two decades, considerable attention has been devoted to the work of early twentieth-century Catholic theologians and the emergence of what has been called the Ressourcement movement and a “school” of theology initially described by its critics as the nouvelle théologie.82 Jesuits of Lyon-Fourvières and Dominicans of Le Saulchoir, both religious houses of formation, provided much of the early leadership. This initially occurred in the 1910s and 1920s through mentoring relationships and informal exchanges of letters and manuscripts, rather than published works.

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These were covert activities at the Jesuit scholasticate on the Isle of Jersey, instigated by Auguste Valensin, who circulated works by Blondel and other controversial authors. The unpublished works of a young Jesuit, Pierre Rousselot—who died during the First World War—proved particularly influential on Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, among others. Rousselot’s “Petite théorie du développement du dogma,” is reflected in de Lubac’s own work on development, though it was not published until 1965, as a tribute, in the closing year of Vatican II and the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Valensin’s covert activities met with censure and eventually exclusion from teaching, but such activities continued after his departure.

At Le Sailchoir, Domenique-Marie Chenu rejected his formation in Roman neo-scholastic theology under Garrigou-Lagrange and introduced his students to a more historical approach, encouraging the study of patristic sources on which Thomas Aquinas depended. Senior lecturers at Le Saulchoir, and Garrigou-Lagrange, denounced his historical approach as a “slippery slope” to “relativism” and “modernism.” When he provocatively published his manifesto, Une École de Théologie: Le Saulchoir (1937), which derided the neo-scholastic curricula of the seminaries and promoted a historically contextualized understanding of the “classic” texts of scholasticism, Chenu was summoned to Rome and, according to Fergus Kerr, was “bullied” into signing ten propositions, the first of which affirmed: “The dogmatic formulas enunciate absolute and immutable truth.”

While neo-scholastic theologians controlled the official curriculum of these houses of formation and influenced curial affairs, the covert guidance of young Jesuits by men like Valensin, and the emphasis on patristic sources for Thomistic theology by Chenu and others, not only altered their understanding of the theological project but also reshaped attitudes toward those who held authority in their learning communities and the Catholic Church. To be censured became a mark

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86 Kerr, Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism, 18–19.
87 Kerr, Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians, 19–26. For an extensive account of these events see: François Leprieur, Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers (Paris: Plon/Cerf, 1980).
of distinction and a badge of honor.\footnote{Henrick-Moser, “The Auguste Valensin Controversy and the Historiography of Nouvelle Théologie,” 43, 69; Kerr, Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians, 18–33.}

These Jesuits and Dominicans demonstrated a debt to Newman for their understanding of the “development” of doctrine in the life of the church and an awareness of the role played by the whole body of believers, not just the hierarchy, in the growing understanding of the faith. Among the Jesuits, Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou promoted theological initiatives that highlighted the developmental understanding of doctrine in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Under Chenu’s influence, Dominicans like Yves Congar and Edward Schillebeeckx cultivated theological outlooks deeply influenced by a developmental metanarrative.

One example of this movement was de Lubac’s 1948 article, “Bulletin de Théologie fondamentale: le Problème du développement du dogma,” which attacked Tuyaerts’ Étude Théologique sur l’Évolution du Dogme (1919), a neo-scholastic rejection of those who sought to account for development in Catholic doctrine within its historical and cultural context. De Lubac noted that Tuyaerts’s “victims” included not only heterodox thinkers and “modernists” but also included noted neo-scholastics like Grandmaison and Gardeil, who had wrestled with this issue.\footnote{Henri de Lubac, “Bulletin de Théologie Fondamentale: le Problème du Développement du Dogma,” Recherches de Sciences Religieuses 35 (1948): 131.}

Critiquing the bounded nature of Tuyaerts’ Logicist understanding of dogma, de Lubac used the definition of the Immaculate Conception as an example of development of dogma, that incorporated not only the reasoning of theologians, but was guided by unanimous Christian sentiment, and “canonized” by the decision of the infallible magisterium.\footnote{De Lubac, “Bulletin de Théologie Fondamentale,” 144.}

De Lubac, Congar, Daniélou, and others had their works placed on the Index, were removed from teaching positions, and even silenced by Roman authorities during the pontificate of Pius XII (1939-1958). Neo-scholastic thought prevailed in much of the magisterial teaching of that period and with it a static understanding of the Catholic Church’s dogmatic tradition. Yet in 1950, Pius XII defined \textit{ex cathedra} the Assumption of Mary—a striking example of doctrinal development explicitly associated with the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Yves Congar noted ruefully in his \textit{La Tradition et les traditions} (1960) that Pius XII followed the example of Pius IX and sought the \textit{sensus fidelium} before proclaiming this dogma.\footnote{Congar, \textit{La Tradition et les traditions}, 1:286n68.}

Even in the final years of neo-scholasticism’s dominance in the magisterial discourse of the Catholic Church, the early reception of Newman’s theory of development and the crucial role of the \textit{sensus}...
fidelium marked this exercise of papal infallibility. The authority Pius XII invoked had been defined at a council which had employed a developmental metanarrative in its deliberations; and the dogmatic definition did not occur without a global effort to consult the faithful.

When Yves Congar published his *True and False Reform in the Church* (1950), the papal nuncio to Paris, Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, wrote in his copy of the book, “A reform of the Church—is it possible?” In 1958, when he became Pope John XXIII, he acted on that possibility. Congar was one of the first theologians summoned by John XXIII after he announced that a second Vatican council would be convened—this despite Congar’s angst-filled exile to the damp fenlands of Cambridgeshire in 1956. Other theologians who had been marginalized also found themselves deeply involved in the work of the Second Vatican Council. Newman’s understanding of development of doctrine and *sensus fidelium* proved to be vital elements of conciliar debate.

**VATICAN II AND BEYOND**

In the opening days of the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Christopher Butler, OSB, auxiliary bishop of Westminster, observed in his diary, “My own main concern is to avoid dogmatic definitions about ANYTHING … and to avoid doctrinal statements … which clamp down on modern theological renewal, make conciliation with ‘modern knowledge’ and the sciences difficult, and invade the spheres of these sciences esp[ecially] philosophy and historical and literary sciences, particularly as applied to the Bible.” Butler’s resolve seemed to reflect the concerns of many council fathers. Some have noted that this was a stance strikingly different from previous conciliar assemblies, which had convened to denounce heresies and define dogma. Instead, during the proceedings of Vatican II, from October 1962 to December 1965, development of doctrine became the recurring theme in the deliberations of the council and referenced explicitly in conciliar documents. In 1965, John Courtney Murray, SJ, observed that “development” proved to be “the issue under the issues” of the council. *Dei Verbum* (2.8) and *Dignitatis Humanae* (1) explicitly invoked development of doctrine as a guiding principle. In manuscript notes Bishop Butler prepared on *Dei Verbum*, he observed that the opening of chapter two read like a précis of Newman’s theory of development of doctrine. He went on to state, “It shows us the

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94 Butler, *Diaries*, A4i (2) 1962, Downside Abbey Archives and Library, Bath: 5.
Christian revelation actively living, in a vital interaction with the life of the Church herself and her children; and while … it makes room for theology, both professional and amateur, it seems to emphasise particularly the spiritual life and ‘experience’ of the faithful as a major source of development—always under the normative influence of the Church’s teaching body.” Invoking the image of the Church as an ongoing incarnation of Christ, he concluded, “And that word of God is not just information for the human intellect; it is the word made flesh, alive and operative, life-giving and educative, self-communicating and assimilative—the gift and word of divine love more truly given and spoken as it is more completely received.”96

Bishop Butler’s emphasis on the faithful was not exceptional. In the December 1962 debates on the draft document, *De Ecclesia*, Cardinal König of Vienna insisted that the “People of God” be treated before the hierarchy and college of bishops. He also stressed the people of God’s “indefectibility in fide” and the impact of this reality on the magisterium. Cardinal Ritter of Saint Louis reinforced this point observing, “the dep[ositum] fidei is to be kept by the whole Church, not only the magisterium.”97 In a practical application of this principle, Bishop Butler reported that one German bishop publicly asked, “Why don’t WE in this council seek lay help?”98

John XXIII and Paul VI did precisely that on a pressing issue of the 1960s: artificial contraception. Reserving the issue to himself in 1963, just prior to his death John XXIII appointed a commission composed of bishops, clerical theologians, and lay people. Paul VI expanded the numbers and diversity of the commission. As the council drew to a close, the commission also concluded its work and submitted its report to Paul VI in June 1966. Despite curial pressure to uphold Pius XI’s *Casti Connubii* (1930), prohibiting contraception, the overwhelming majority of the seventy-one member commission supported a report that invoked the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*, another conciliar document which explicitly embraced development. Noting that the Church’s teaching on conjugal love had developed during its ancient period (chapter 3), the report stated, “A further step in the doctrinal evolution, which it seems now should be developed, is founded … on a better, deeper and more correct understanding of conjugal life and of the conjugal act …. They concluded that while the church’s doctrine of marriage and its essential values remained constant, these should be applied differently

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96 Butler, Notes on Revelation [undated], Downside Abbey Archives and Library, Bath: 6.
97 Christopher Butler, *Diaries*, A4i (2) 1962, Downside Abbey Archives and Library, Bath: 30.
because of this “deeper understanding” (chapter 3).99

Commenting on the report just prior to its submission, commission member Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore—not known for his progressive views—reportedly observed on 23 June 1966: “The Church develops, and the sensus fidelium plays a big role in that development. The Church must recognize how marriage is lived today.”100 Cardinal Döpfner of Munich and Freising noted that Casti Connubii lacked the infallible character of papal teaching as Vatican I defined it. Observing that the commission had learned from married couples and women, he asserted that the church must change, “so that we do not impose on others any further sacrifices that we know in our hearts are not necessary.”101

Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, whose coat of arms bore the motto, *Semper Idem* [Always the Same], had striven in vain to retain a neo-scholastic character in documents of the Second Vatican Council and along with it a successionist metanarrative. On the matter of contraception, Ottaviani took a determined stand. Working in concert with four clerical moral theologians on the commission, the pope received a “minority report” that countered the arguments of the “majority report.” Using John Noonan’s *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (1965) to ground their claim, the minority members argued that,

> History provides fullest evidence … that the answer of the Church has always and everywhere been the same, from the beginning up to the present decade. One can find no period of history, no document of the church, no theological school, scarcely one Catholic theologian, who ever denied that contraception was always seriously evil.102

While acknowledging that the theology of marriage had “evolved” in a complex theological history over centuries, they insisted that on the question of the “seriously evil” nature of contraception, “there has never been any variation and scarcely any evolution in the teaching. The ways of formulating and explaining this teaching have evolved, but not the doctrine itself.”103

This use of Noonan’s work is striking, for in the closing chapter Noonan suggested that this consistency, particularly since 1800, had been due to an “unhealthy climate” in which “many opinions” had not

appeared in print. He cited Louis Dupré’s *Contraception and Catholics: A New Appraisal* (1964), which noted that the personal convictions of many Catholic moralists contrasted with their published work, and the “regrettable” tendency of moralists not to “reflect more of the doubts concerning the traditional position which are so widespread in theological circles.”\(^{104}\) The practice in Jesuit and Dominican houses of formation of providing an alternative formation through personal mentoring and circulation of unpublished manuscripts supports this observation.

Noonan appealed to Newman’s “pioneering essay,” “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,” and noted that since the demise of the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during World War II, papal teaching had cautioned against the suppression of free discourse, both in society and within the Church. In 1950, Pius XII had observed that the Church “is a living body, and something would be lacking in its life if public opinion defaulted in it, a default for which the pastors and the faithful would be responsible.”\(^{105}\) This indirect reference to Newman’s concept of the “pastors and the faithful thinking together” should not be missed.

In 1966 an eager laity awaited news of a shift in Roman Catholic teaching on birth control. They waited another two years. In July 1968, Pope Paul VI ended the suspense and promulgated the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. The pope rejected the majority report as “unconvincing” and incorporated key elements of the minority report into his encyclical. Contraceptive use continued to be prohibited because the majority report had used criteria that “departed from the moral teaching on marriage proposed with constant firmness by the teaching authority of the Church” (*Humanae Vitae*, no. 6). The pope went further and stated: “The pastors of the Church enjoy a special light of the Holy Spirit in teaching the truth. And this, rather than the arguments put forward, is why you are bound to such obedience” (*Humanae Vitae*, no. 28). On this subject, Paul VI set aside development and *sensus fidelium* as guiding principles, retaining the successionist metanarrative, along with the ecclesiological distinction between the “teaching church” and the “church taught.” Paul VI’s successors have not wavered from this teaching; though in the first two years of Pope Francis, and in debates surrounding the Extraordinary Synods on the Family in 2014 and 2015, the subject generated a renewed and frank discourse within the Catholic Church.

The controversy over artificial contraception is only one instance among many in which the developmental metanarrative and the concept of *sensus fidelium* has been invoked in the Catholic Church in

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105 Noonan, *Contraception*, 487.
tensions between magisterial authorities and the faithful. Over the last fifty years a pattern emerged which mirrored Newman’s own experience between 1845 and 1871. On matters of broad consensus, the developmental metanarrative and the concept of sensus fidelium has been embraced and applied without controversy. When current magisterial teaching has met with dissenting views, these Newmanian concepts have been set aside, and a successionist metanarrative has been employed to argue for continuity and the inalterability of the doctrine or discipline in question.

CONCLUSION

One of the most striking ways to observe the struggle to incorporate the metanarrative of development and the role of sensus fidelium in Roman Catholicism can be found in the published works of Joseph Ratzinger. In 1968, Professor Ratzinger boldly stated in the opening pages of his Introduction to Christianity that Giovanni Battista Vico’s argument against the static scholastic concept of truth, verum est ens [being is truth], and Vico’s assertion that verum quia factum [truth is what is made], ended the apologetical power of the “old metaphysics” and required Christians to think historically about their faith. In his 1969 commentary on Dei Verbum, he reviewed the conciliar debate over Vincent of Lérins’ dictum (quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus)—which Trent and Vatican I had memorialized in their documents. Ratzinger explained why Dei Verbum had excluded it, noting that Vincent’s text “no longer appears as an authentic representative of the Catholic idea of tradition,” a judgment which echoes Newman’s conclusion in his Essay on Development. He went on to observe: “Vincent of Lérins’ static semper no longer seems the right way of expressing this problem.” Ratzinger went further and stated that our “new orientation simply expresses our deeper knowledge of the problem of historical understanding, which is no longer adequately expressed by the simple idea of a given fact and its explanation.”

In a 1986 article on the ecclesiology of Vatican II, then Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, praised Newman’s concept of development, and described it as one of the “decisive and fundamental concepts of Catholicism.” He noted that Vatican II “had the merit of having formulated it for the first time in a solemn magisterial document.” He criticized those who clung to a

literal test of Scripture or patristic teaching for banishing Christ to the past and characterized their practice as “either an entirely sterile faith that has nothing to say to the present, or an arbitrary act that skips over two thousand years of history, throwing them into the waste-bin of failures.”

In December 2005, Pope Benedict XVI delivered his first Christmas address and confronted directly the struggle over the historical legacy of the Second Vatican Council. He described two interpretative models at work: the “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture” and the “hermeneutic of reform.” The pope explained that the first had “availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology”—an oblique reference to what has been called in this essay the “apperceptive metanarrative.” However, he noted that where the “hermeneutic of reform” had been applied, it had borne new life and new fruit, and achieved “renewal in the continuity of the … Church which the Lord has given to us.” Employing explicitly the language of development, Benedict noted that the council had focused on anthropology and had as its agenda “to determine in a new way the relationship between the Church and the modern era.” While development was explicitly invoked by Pope Benedict, the implications of his presentation cast suspicion on those who publicly dissent from current magisterial teaching and called for changes in doctrines and practices that the pope and the Curia affirmed as the constant and unalterable teaching of the magisterium. The remainder of Pope Benedict’s pontificate bore the marks of a struggle between an understanding of development—that prioritized magisterial teaching and confined the sensus fidei fidelium to matters of consensus—and rejection of the notion of “consulting the faithful” on matters around which there is no agreement. Fear of the risk of rupture with previous magisterial teaching and church practices seemed to pervade Benedict’s papacy.

Yet his last major decision proved to be the most historic of papal precedents and ruptures with the past. His resignation of the papal office, and the election of the Catholic Church’s first non-European and first Jesuit pope, might well be viewed as an example of past. Yet Pope Francis’s commitment to a Newmanian understanding of development of doctrine and his efforts to discern the sensus fidei on contentious issues, as Newman recommended in “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,” may be viewed as an example of what Benedict extolled as “true

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reform,” which is a “combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels.” Pope Benedict noted that “practical forms that depend on the historical situation” are subject to change.\footnote{Benedict, “Address of His Holiness.”} That appears to be the agenda of Pope Francis since the spring of 2013.

The International Theological Commission began work on “\textit{Sensus fidei} in the Life of the Church” under Pope Benedict and completed the text during the first year of Pope Francis’s pontificate. The appropriation of Newman’s theory of development and his understanding of the \textit{sensus fidelium}, as expressed in “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,” remains controversial. The criteriology outlined by the Commission’s document, of who may be numbered among the authentic “faithful,” bears the echoes of an ecclesiology of the “church teaching” and the “church taught.” Yet Franciscan papal teaching seems to be pressing beyond Newman’s original argument. In \textit{Evangelii Gaudium} (2013) he wrote, “I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the \textit{sensus fidei}, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.” He went on to explain, in the spirit of Matthew 25, “We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (no. 128). Pope Francis seems to be pressing for a broader vision of who may be included among those who have the authentic \textit{sensus fidei fidelium}. This Franciscan vision is a challenge, for it stretches our vision of the Body of Christ and requires Catholics to find Christ in the most unlikely persons. Whether this is argued as a retrieval of the original purity of Jesus’s gospel (a supersessive metanarrative) or an organic development of Catholic ecclesiology (the developmental metanarrative), it may open a way to embrace “new knowledge” and a more heightened awareness of concerns not addressed by Christians in the past (the apperceptive metanarrative).

Newman’s application of “development” and “\textit{sensus fidelium}” to the history of his adopted spiritual home—the Roman Catholic Church—has forever altered our understanding of its past and has great potential to shape its future. This is particularly relevant for our ongoing debates about the reception of two recent papal documents: \textit{Laudato Si’} and \textit{Amoris Laetitia}. Can Newman’s theory of development and \textit{sensus fidelium} be normatively applied to matters that remain contentious?

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