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Tradition as Given: Eucharist, Theological Pugilism, and Eschatological Patience

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"For there is a port, a definite terminus. The whole universe cries out for its delivery and it is sure to obtain it. Its groaning is begotten by hope." – Henri de Lubac[1]

THE CONCEPT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF Christian doctrine, much as its doppelgänger in the organic world biological evolution, is concerned with tracing the distance between past and present, origin and current manifestation. The task that originally animated John Henry Newman was precisely attempting to provide criteria by which the Christian community evident in the New Testament, and even the medieval Roman Church, was in fact the same entity as the mid-nineteenth century Catholic Church in the overwhelmingly Anglican England. That is, the seven notes that Newman provided function exclusively retrospectively. They are not easy tools for anticipating all future developments, though they undoubtedly aid a process of theological and magisterial discernment regarding new questions, particularly insofar as the notes provide quality control regarding the range of permissible novelties.[2] Even the note regarding the "anticipation of its future," despite its title, is actually the way in which developments can be seen to be anticipated in the past.[3] The proleptic role of the concept of doctrinal development, much like prognostications regarding the biological future, is ancillary at best and subject to becoming a facile justification for all of one's own hopes for the future of the Church, no matter how detached from the past those ideas might be. Indeed, the likelihood that a future-oriented description of the "progress" of doctrine would result in a naked pamphleteering for one's own beloved causes is perhaps sufficient reason for banning the discussion.

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[1] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 143.

[2] See John E. Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: Continuity and Development in Catholic Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), for a discussion of the retrospective and prospective uses of tradition.

[3] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 400–418.

Nevertheless, even noting these temptations and the primarily retrospective glance originally envisaged by Newman, it nevertheless remains the fact that doctrinal development can only be maintained as a legitimate theological concept if Tradition is seen as moving forward towards a definitive, yet extra-historical, fulfillment in the *eschaton*. That is, Tradition must be related not only to past and present, as is usually the scope of investigation but equally to the future, sharing the three "times" of eucharistic signification (*signum rememorativum, signum demonstrativum, signum prognosticum* [ST III q. 60, a. 3]). While a purely retrospective glance only requires teleology as a justification for the present moment, a more robust notion of development knows of an eschatological teleology which not only coordinates local historical developments but also relativizes them in light of the whole, a whole that is only fully seen eschatologically.

The attempt to harmonize the vagaries of theological history with the stability of doctrinal and moral objectivity is a task that must necessarily benefit from future verification and validation. That is to say, ecclesial infallibility, of which papal infallibility is the most sure and concrete witness, is assured only by the interplay between the infallible gift of faith to the Church at its foundation and the perfect reception of that divine communication in the eschatological future. As *Dei Verbum* says, "Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always moving towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her" (no. 8). As a matter of historical fact, theological and dogmatic truths can only be won based on a constant borrowing from and anticipation of the future. This is true intra-historically, as a good many dogmatic quandaries are later settled magisterially, but as will also be argued, this should not provide the false hope that all dogmatic questions will be progressively resolved within the historical frame. This often-presupposed conception of Tradition, which I call here "accumulationism," results not only in an attenuated view of Tradition, but one that degenerates into an ironic form of ecclesial positivism. Attempting to buttress the supernatural capacity of the Church to make dogmatic definitions, it trades the divinity of the object of faith for the prize of perfect, sociological coherence. Instead, the eschatological horizon of Tradition's *denouement* envisaged here creates a space for conceiving of doctrinal development as indebted to definitive, non-revisable truths, while also acknowledging the historical precedence of, and continued need for, theological pugilism. That is to say, serious theological debate knows of no historical end and is a feature, not a bug, of ecclesial life.[4] Finally, given the eschatological

[4] See also, Alasdair MacIntryre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 350: "within some one particular tradition in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with those who inhabit the same tradition."

goals of development, the virtue advocated for here is patience, a patience that longs for the fulfillment of and humbly suffers along with Tradition, at once fully given and awaiting consummation. As argued here, Tradition, as it is actually given, is eucharistic, bound up within the contentious flow of human history, and impelled by an eschatological telos.

EUCHARIST

> *Et maintenant la messe est dite, la profonde action de grâce est offerte.*
> *Allons-nous en au nom de Dieu vers la porte qui est ouverte.*
>
> *Il est dur de quitter ce lieu où vous résidez dans votre tabernacle*
> *Et de reprendre le vieux chemin dans le sable et les herbes traitresses et l'obstacle,*
>
> *Et d'échanger la rumeur humaine au lieu de vos paroles éternelles.*
>
> – Paul Claudel[5]

Before arriving at the issues of theological disputation and an eschatological horizon of development, a Eucharistic conception of Tradition helps frame the issues that follow. For it is preeminently in the Eucharist that Tradition gives itself, and conceptually Tradition is best understood within its Eucharistic context. One *locus classicus* for a theology of Tradition is also the first written account of the Christian Eucharist, 1 Corinthians 11:23: "For I received (παρέλαβον / *accepi*) from the Lord what I also handed on (παρέδωκα / *tradidi*) to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over (παρεδίδετο / *tradebatur*), took bread…." Here παράδοσις / *traditio*, as verbs, bear a remarkable load. They are meant to describe the betrayal of Christ, Christ's handing over the tradition of the Eucharist to Paul, and Paul's handing over of this tradition to the Corinthians. These linguistic parallels evince a more important truth regarding the essentially Eucharistic nature of Tradition. Many theologians, Yves Congar here being representative, have noted that the liturgy is itself a privileged locus

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That is to say, traditions are not immune from disputation, but are in fact necessary generators thereof.

[5] Paul Claudel, *Cinq Grandes Odes, suivies d'un processional pour saluer le siècle nouveau* (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1913), 189–190.
"And now, the Mass has been said, the deep thanksgiving has been offered.
Let us go, in the name of God, towards the open door.
It is hard to leave this place, where you reside in your tabernacle,
And to take up again the old path, through the sand, through treacherous herbs, through obstacles.
And to exchange your eternal words for the rumors of humanity."

for the transmission of the Church's tradition, a fact that would be easy enough to verify psychologically and sociologically.[6] Yet, the Tradition-Eucharist connection can be taken one step further by arguing that the two are a mutually interpreting pair, with elements from Eucharistic theology shedding light on a theology of Tradition. This functions principally on two levels: the epistemological and the causal. The former is simply an affirmation that doctrinal statements function according to the same rhythm of the symbolic reality of sacraments, being simultaneously *sacramentum et res*, a reality under the form of a sign that is formally distinct from its object. In *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II puts it thus: "We are returned to the *sacramental* basis of Revelation, and expressly to the eucharistic sign wherein the indivisible unity between the reality itself and its signification permits us to grasp the depths of the mystery" (no. 13, italics in the original).[7] With this semiotic usage of the sacramental metaphor, the intimate connection between dogmatic formulation and the object of faith is secured (against modernism) as well as the important conceptual distinction between them (against theological positivism).

French philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861–1949) and the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) guide another way of rendering the Eucharistic metaphor for Tradition, which is to say the interplay between infinite gift and finite reception, between the *opus operatum* and *opus operantis*. Blondel sets the stage by diagnosing two opposing errors with regard to the nature of Tradition, while Balthasar provides the positive theological argument regarding the structural unity between the Eucharist and Tradition. For both Blondel and Balthasar, Tradition is conceptualized in terms borrowed from Christ's infinite and intrinsically efficacious gift of self to the Church in the Eucharist that in turn must be received and appropriated by the Church in ways that are necessarily finite and historically particular. The Eucharistic gift, just as Tradition, is conditioned by the Church's disposition for reception. In other words, Tradition is effective due to the plenitude of the gift given (*ex opere operato*), yet the fruit of its reception is bound to the Church's cooperation with that divine gift (*opus operantis*), thus accounting, at least theoretically, for both doctrinal development and variety.

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[6] See Yves Congar, *La Tradition et les Traditions II: Essai théologique* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2010), 183–191 and *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 134–143. The practice of the *traditio* and *redditio symboli* is of particular importance for the patristic understanding of the liturgical and episcopal transmission of the Tradition.

[7] In *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, vol. 1, 3rd edition (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 257, Cardinal Newman noted something similar when he wrote, as an Anglican, that "Every word of Revelation has a deep meaning. It is the outward form of a heavenly truth, and in this sense a mystery or Sacrament."

Maurice Blondel's understanding of Tradition in his trenchant 1904 essay *History and Dogma* can be best summarized by his simple affirmation that "Something in the Church escapes scientific examination."[8] What drew Blondel into this debate regarding the nature of Tradition was both the Catholic biblical exegete Alfred Loisy's novel and controversial understanding of how Tradition relates to history and the Church's standard early twentieth-century Manualist conception of Tradition's imperviousness to historical vicissitudes.[9] Both of these positions Blondel considered to be reliant on an understanding of Tradition that is scientifically verifiable rather than theologically coherent. Blondel labels Loisy's error "historicism." The then-dominant scholasticism he calls "extrinsicism." The former collapses the supernatural content of the Church's Tradition into its historical phenomenality and variability, while the latter believes that doctrinal propositions remain hermetically sealed off from their historical contexts. The two main errors of historicism and extrinsicism are essentially, for Blondel, sins against Christology: extrinsicism (then-regnant scholasticism) because its vision of Christianity is "so divine that there is nothing human, living or moving about it" and historicism (Loisy) because its notion of Christianity's supernatural deposit is spread out and lost in nature so that divinity is reduced to the variations of a non-teleologically oriented history.

Instead, what Blondel proposes is a notion of Tradition that is "both more concrete and more universal, more divine and more human."[10] Thus, instead of choosing a median position between these two extremes (extremes that have their contemporary equivalents), Blondel decides that the fundamental intuitions of both positions need to be affirmed simultaneously and synthesized conceptually. With extrinsicism, Blondel notes that Christian Tradition is not ultimately subject

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[8] Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 268. For more detail on Blondel's understanding of Tradition, see Robert Koerpel, *Maurice Blondel: Transforming Catholic Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), and Oliva Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel: A Philosophical Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 167–209 and 724–749.

[9] Joseph Kleutgen (1811–1883) is a good example of this. According to Gerald A. McCool, SJ, "Kleutgen did not consider history an intrinsic constituent of theology itself…. Kleutgen's absence of any sense of conceptual development and his blindness to the possibility of a plurality of conceptual frameworks within Catholic theology made it possible for him to entertain his vison of the 'old' theology as a single, unified theology and to argue that a unified scholasticism was its mature, developed form" (*Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1989], 187). These two errors of historicism and extrinsicism map on decently well to George Lindbeck's categories of the "experiential-expressive" conception of Christianity and the "propositionalist" mode. Note, however, that even if they share common enemies, Blondel's solution is not the same as Lindbeck's proposal of a "cultural-linguistic" model.

[10] Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, 286.

to human vicissitudes and is thus something essentially different than the cultural traditions with which it is often compared. With historicism, Blondel is willing to acknowledge that the content of Tradition is only alive insofar as it is *in act*, as it is lived by the actual Church in distinct times and places.

Blondel's *History and Dogma* is an ecclesial application of his philosophical conception of action in his 1893 dissertation, *L'Action*. It demonstrates that even on philosophical grounds alone, the dichotomy between extrinsicism and historicism is a false opposition created by an insufficient understanding of the dynamism of the human spirit, both individually and collectively considered. Just as a subject comes to itself through action in the world, and it is only by being in act that a subject can be understood, so too Tradition is the Church *in act*. In *L'Action*, Blondel argues that the human will first necessarily wills finite, particular objects, which he calls the objects of the willed will (*volonté voulue*) but that the willing will (*volonté voulante*) remains dissatisfied with any particular object and thus implicitly wills the infinite in every act of the will. Yet the goal of human life, according to Blondel, is neither to abolish the particularity of the willed will in favor of the infinite, nor to grasp at the infinite *qua* infinite, which is an impossibility. Instead, and this is why Blondel's entire philosophy is aimed at creating a space for the necessary intervention of a supernatural religion, the will requires that the infinite present itself in a manner that is comprehensible to the finite creature, though it cannot compel the infinite to do so. Thus, for Blondel, the supernatural is simultaneously necessary and impossible. "We must have the infinite as finite; and it is not for us to limit it; otherwise we would be lowering it to our size. It is up to this infinite alone to bring itself within our comprehension and to condescend to our littleness in order to exalt us and broaden us to its immensity."[11]

L'Action is also filled with subterranean Eucharistic motifs, which become progressively explicit, and one could argue that sacramental theology is even the motive force behind much of his philosophy.[12] In addition to his more influential *L'Action*, Blondel's Latin dissertation, defended on the same day in 1893, was a retrieval of a relatively obscure notion that Leibniz developed as an ecumenical rapprochement concerning transubstantiation, the *vinculum substantiale*. In his attempt to show how this occasional concept was not only compatible

[11] Maurice Blondel, *Action: Essays on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 384.
[12] The fact that Blondel attended Mass daily is also not insignificant. Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel*, 760. See also Xavier Tilliette, *Philosophes Eucharistiques de Descartes à Blondel* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 101–116, Cathal Doherty, *Maurice Blondel on the Supernatural in Human Action: Sacrament and Superstition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), and David Grumett, "Blondel, Modern Catholic Theology and the Leibnizian Eucharistic Bond," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 4 (2007): 561–77.

with the *Monadology* but also a major contribution to it, we can also see Blondel's own trust in the philosophical power of the sacrament.[13] For Blondel, religious cult is precisely the concrete means by which the infinite presents itself finitely. In *History and Dogma*, Blondel uses this same framework to discuss the dynamism of Tradition as the Church's self-actualization in a mode that is particularly suited to finite, historically constituted creatures.

More theological precision comes with Blondel's very late work from 1946, *La Philosophie et L'Esprit Chrétien*, which can clarify some potential ambiguities in Blondel's position forty years earlier.[14] Whereas in *History and Dogma*, it is the Church itself that is envisaged as the motive force behind the progress of Tradition, in *La Philosophie et L'Esprit Chrétien*, Tradition is interpreted not firstly in its ecclesial manifestation but in its properly Christological foundation. He says clearly here that the real agent of Tradition is, not the Church, but God as God gives God's self infinitely to the Church in Christ: "God cannot be exhausted; and Tradition is, I repeat, God surrendering himself to humanity…. Tradition appears therefore as a minting of eternity, in anticipation of coming into possession of the entire treasure, whose total appraisal will give the simultaneous certainty of the immensity that is definitively possessed, but always inexhaustible."[15] Or, even better, using a metaphor more organic and less vulgar than the relation between currency and its guarantee, Blondel says that Tradition is the umbilical cord that prevents the Church from being stillborn. Tradition allows the "divine blood" to flow into the life of the Church and thus not only encourages but requires development and growth.[16]

Blondel then goes on in the next section to discuss all of the sacraments, with an homage to the Eucharist as the fulfillment of his philosophy of action, as that which gives human action an object proportional to the strivings of the will. His notion of Tradition, too, whether knowingly or not, is patterned on a Eucharistic logic whereby Christ gives himself totally to the Church in order to be put into action in the

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[13] In 1930, Blondel made a major revision of his original 1893 dissertation, *De Vinculo substantiali et de substantia composita apud Leibnitium*. In the later *Une énigme historique: Le "Vinculum Substantiale" d'après Leibniz et l'ébauche d'un réalisme supérieur* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1930), Blondel is more critical of Leibniz's failure to fully explore the potential of the *vinculum*.

[14] For instance, Avery Dulles characterizes Blondel's understanding of Revelation as "New Awareness," which is later taken up by Gregory Baum and others to suggest that Tradition is the new self-consciousness and awareness of the Church. See Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 101. While this is a debatable interpretation of *History and Dogma*, it is certainly not true of Blondel's later position.

[15] Maurice Blondel, *La Philosophie et L'Esprit Chrétien, Tome II*: *Conditions de la Symbiose seule normale et salutaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946), 81–82.

[16] Maurice Blondel, *La Philosophie et L'Esprit Chrétien*, 82–83.

Church's life. On the one hand, there is the infinite gift of Christ's self, the fullness of Christian truth and practice that can be said to function *ex opere operato*, and, on the other hand, the Church's continual reception of that gift according to its own ability of reception, its *opus operantis*. The divine blood flows through the umbilical cord, but that blood must be absorbed and incorporated by the fetus. This the Church does throughout its historical sojourn but always as a means towards eschatological fulfilment, when the gift is possessed without ambiguity.

What is an implicit Eucharistic logic in Blondel becomes explicit in Hans Urs von Balthasar. There is not sufficient space here to show any genetic dependence of Balthasar on Blondel, a tale that would have to pass through Auguste Valensin and Henri de Lubac,[17] but we can simply stipulate here that Balthasar knew and acknowledged his debt to Blondel throughout his life, both regarding Blondel's philosophy in general and with regard to his understanding of Tradition in particular.[18] With praise from some quarters and with scorn from others, Balthasar unequivocally rejected what is often called the "propositionalist" understanding of doctrine and Tradition, or what Avery Dulles calls the model of "Revelation as Doctrine." Thus, from his seemingly iconoclastic *Razing the Bastions* in 1952 to his later essays and his *Trilogy*, Balthasar's concept of Tradition was such that he was quite reticent to claim any isolated aspect of Catholicism, whether doctrinal statements or liturgical customs, as pristinely-concretized moments of Tradition. For even those moments that bear the greatest weight of magisterial authority or Christian custom are also relativized in light of a greater whole. When Balthasar thus speaks about Tradition as that which is passed on from one generation to the next, he is not then thinking about anything that could be easily cataloged with regard to its relative authoritative weight.

For Balthasar, there are essentially two "traditions" within the Church: first, Tradition as Christ perpetually handing himself over eucharistically to the Church, and alternatively, the tradition of the original *traditor*, Judas. In one and the same act, Judas hands Christ over to be sent to death, and Christ hands himself over for the same end. One is the inauguration of an entirely new understanding of Tradition that is free from the dead weight of the past by being an unending font of new life, the other being a reduction of this divine self-gift to a con-

[17] See Francesca Murphy's "The Influence of Maurice Blondel" in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury, 2017): 57–91.
[18] For the influence of Blondel on Balthasar, one would need to make note of the fact that Balthasar translated the *Carnets Intimes* into German (*Tagebuch vor Gott*), as well as notice the heavy philosophical influence of *L'Action* on *Theo-Logic* I, in addition to the numerous places where he is cited explicitly elsewhere. Note also *My Work in Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 70 and 108.

trollable and thus verifiable site of transmission and adaptation. According to Balthasar, the simplest explanation of the Judas factor in Tradition is that it is "the denial of the more-than-human in the event of Christ."[19] Balthasar consistently had the same allergy as did Blondel to a form of extrinsicism whereby Tradition is nothing more than a list of a-historical truths, instead preferring a more existential and vital conception. Yet later, particularly in the decades following the Second Vatican Council, Balthasar began to worry about what could be considered a renewed version of the historicism that Blondel had already combatted: the idea that Tradition is in fact something that must be constructed according to the exigencies of the current Church, pure *opus operantis* without an objective referent.[20]

According to Balthasar, each of these contemporary forms of extrinsicism and historicism is a competing means of reducing the Church's Tradition to a form that is controllable, verifiable, and predictable. Whether it is the repetition of venerable formula or the impassioned attempt to invent new ones, for Balthasar both are attempts to refuse the influx of divine grace into the Church. To return to Blondel's metaphor, it is to stop the blood flow through the umbilical cord, either in order to resist any further development and growth or rather to ensure it according to one's own resources. This is partly why Balthasar infrequently employs the concept of the development of doctrine.[21] Instead of considering Tradition and its development as the accumulation of more and more facts, more and more magisterial decisions, *ad infinitum* and very likely *ad nauseam*, for Balthasar, Tradition is Christ giving himself in his entirety at each moment: "Tradition is not about handing over some random item—however venerable—for preservation. No, tradition is about handing over *itself*: in tradition, the very act of self-gift gives itself. But this is another way of saying that tradition is primarily God in the act of giving himself."[22]

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[19] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Tradition," in *Explorations in Theology V: Man Is Created* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 368. We can also note parenthetically that the Gospels only record Christ using the word παράδοσις negatively, as essentially opposed to the direct commandments of God. See Mark 7:8 and Matthew 15:3.

[20] Terrence W. Tilley's *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) being a recent example. See Matthew Levering's critique of Tilley in *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 146–158.

[21] See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Martin Buber and Christianity: A Dialogue Between Israel and the Church*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 94: "The fullness once attained cannot, as such, develop—and while people talk somewhat loosely of the development of doctrine they really mean the reflective unfolding of depths of truth already present, the process by which we become conscious of them, which takes place in successive generations of Christians and as they are set forth by the teaching office of the Church."

[22] Balthasar, "Tradition," 372. The German should be considered: "*Die Übergabe selbst übergibt sich: Gott selbst ist das, was sich gibt*."

Balthasar has the disdain for an ossified human tradition that would be the envy of any Reformer, but this critical edge is set within the context of a faith that the Church is in fact the recipient of Christ's gift of self, even if occasionally that reception is a rather inhospitable one. We can now see how his notion of Tradition is one modeled explicitly on the dynamism of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, Christ gives himself totally to the communicant, thus an infinite gift is received by a finite and sinful creature, even Judas himself,[23] variously stunting the effect of that gift. It is, at best, a necessary accommodation of the infinite to the capacities of the finite creature.

The tension between the objective efficacy of the sacrament and the necessity of personal attestation and appropriation of that gift is precisely the lens that Balthasar uses to understand Tradition, as seen especially in *Theo-Logic III*, in a key section where Blondel's *History and Dogma* also intervenes. There Balthasar writes that "if one receives Holy Communion without faith, one will receive nothing of the inner grace; one can 'hand on' statements of the Fathers as if they were bricks, but this has nothing to do with God's primal 'handing over' of himself."[24] In the original German, this last phrase is "*ursprünglichen Selbsttradition Gottes*": God's original self-traditioning, handing-over of himself, which for Balthasar means that Tradition originates in the Father handing over, "traditioning," everything to the Son, and with the Son to the Spirit.[25] This original Tradition is extended to the creature in Christ's being handed over on the Cross and in the Eucharist, and thus the Church's Tradition is simply the historical and social manifestation of this Eucharistic and ultimately Trinitarian movement. What exists as a fissure for us, namely the disjunction between the objectivity of the gift and the subjectivity of the reception, is resolved in God, a God whose objectivity is always subjective, and whose subjectivity springs from a shared objectivity. Yet, the current disjuncture between the Creator's gift and the creature's ability for reception is resolved beforehand, according to Balthasar, in Mary's *fiat*, which is not only the model but the continual form of the Church's capacity to participate in Tradition.

While this Eucharistic conception of Tradition may be theologically satisfying, one could argue that it provides no concrete directives about how to understand the theological controversies of our day. It does not give us criteria to follow when confronting questions regarding divorce and remarriage and the challenges provoked by *Amoris*

[23] Which is admittedly a contested exegetical point but one that Balthasar frequently repeats. For instance, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Bernanos: An Ecclesial Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 522.

[24] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic III: The Spirit of Truth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 322.

[25] Yves Congar also notes, however briefly, that Tradition begins *within* the Trinity. See Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 10.

Laetitia, for example. Thus, even if it *is* true, it is uselessly true. Yet there are certain benefits of this conception, not only for the development of a *theology* of Tradition rather than a simple ecclesial pragmatism and phenomenological analysis thereof, but also for relieving a great deal of anxiety regarding the question of what constitutes genuine or corrupt Tradition.[26] Because every individual's and the totality of individuals' ability to receive and participate in Tradition is *per definitionem* a finite and limited form of Tradition *in se*, there is an *a priori* tendency towards generosity and openness with regard to particular forms of theology and holiness. For Blondel as well, but most explicitly for Balthasar, there is a prior assumption that seemingly aberrant forms can in fact be redeemed, even if only in the future. Thus, for example, in Balthasar's rendering of theological history, Ruysbroek saves the genuine novelty of Eckhart, Thérèse of Lisieux clarifies John of the Cross, and certain dangers inherent in Origen of Alexandria are put to productive use in the orthodoxy of Maximus the Confessor.

Likewise, this Eucharistic conception of Tradition means that the best means of debating any contentious issue is not primarily by garnering definite proofs from Denzinger, nor by allowing individual experiences or ethical norms to dictate doctrinal formulation. Instead, the best answer is not only non-contradictory with scripture and tradition, but in fact enriches our understanding of the whole by sharing in the same internal logic of Christ's self-gift to the Church. More generally, this Eucharistic notion of Tradition is also able to give greater credence to historical development without the anxiety of definitively proving continuity. Like Newman's seven notes, continuity can be found after the fact, but it is assumed in faith beforehand. Thus, the different emphases and priorities of any given theological era need not cause embarrassment for those wanting to hold to the continuity of Tradition, for variation is assumed to be the normal procedure. Just as fruitful Eucharistic reception results in a plurality of forms of holiness, so too with regard to theological and doctrinal expression. If truth is symphonic, as Balthasar insists, unity is established not by monotonous repetition but by the harmony of particular parts into a larger whole. In the end, it is the whole that justifies the parts, a whole that is only seen *as* the whole eschatologically, even if it is always given throughout the Tradition. The perhaps decisive point, then, for both Blondel and Balthasar, is that Tradition looks forward, not backward, concerned more for when the finite and historically conditioned modes of reception will give way to a form of reception that can adequately

[26] As an example of how the various themes (especially Eucharist and eschatology) and figures (Blondel and Balthasar) explored here can be applied concretely to moral theology, see Livio Melina, *The Epiphany of Love: Toward a Theological Understanding of Christian Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 127–145.

honor the gift that is given. In other words, when the *sacramentum et res* cedes place to the *res tantum*, the symbolic and creaturely mediation to the reality itself. Or, as Blondel says, "Tradition is less concerned to conserve than to discover: it will only attain the α at the ω."[27] Instead of a restive desire to attune dogma and practice to contemporary sentiments or to erase every doctrinal ambiguity in favor of a complete and incontrovertible limpidity, the eschatological horizon of Tradition's consummation requires a patience capable of deferring perspicuity until the created world as a whole is unambiguously *capax traditionis*.

THEOLOGICAL PUGILISM (OR, AGAINST ACCUMULATIONISM)

> So the intellect, which is not truth, never comprehends truth so precisely but that it could always be comprehended with infinitely more precision. The intellect is related to truth as a polygon to a circle. The inscribed polygon grows more like a circle the more angles it has. Yet even though the multiplication of its angles were infinite, nothing will make the polygon equal the circle unless the polygon is resolved into identity with the circle. – Nicholas of Cusa[28]

The theological accumulationist, usually also an inveterate extrinsicist, suffers from interminable embarrassment before both the *longue durée* of theological history and the contested, fractured, and often quarrelsome nature of the current theological climate. The accumulationist, good natured to a fault, hopes eagerly for a quick resolution to any given dispute and seeks a resolution by appealing to a previous magisterial decision, indicating that there is indeed no legitimate debate at all that has not already been satisfactorily solved by the competent authorities. Or, if no historical precedent will quite do, the accumulationist will impatiently await a verdict from the same authority in order to quickly end the dilemma. Tradition for our accumulationist cannot be finished soon enough: given the time constraints placed on authors of the biblical canon, Tradition simply does the work that they were unfortunately unable to complete. Eventually, and never soon enough, all relevant theological questions will indeed be solemnly answered, the only task remaining being the rebuffing of new heresies among those who refuse to accept the closure of the canon of Tradition. How long, O Lord?

Our accumulationist does not recognize the infinite distance between the inscribed polygon and its containing circle, assuming that if enough angles are added to the former it quite seamlessly becomes the

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[27] Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, 276.
[28] Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 91.

latter. Tradition would then be that process of adding magisterially-promulgated angles to the scriptural polygon until the roughness of the edges becomes the smoothness of complete doctrinal clarity. And of course, one does not repeat the edges. *Amoris Laetitia* tries to insert a new edge in a space already occupied by *Familiaris Consortio*, and perhaps earlier, *Dignitatis Humanae* tried to do the same with regard to *Quanta Cura*. In both cases, one can only repeat "*Roma locuta, causa finita*" and pray for the souls of the innovators.

As opposed to accumulationism (which often exists more as a temptation than as an articulated position), I propose that the rather sordid history and present reality of theological pugilism be read as a necessary and fruitful, and in any case inevitable, aspect to the unfolding of Tradition. It is, too, an essential part of Tradition as given. The transcendence of Tradition is not diminished by its often-contentious historical manifestation, any more than the *Logos* is diminished by the Incarnation, or the Real Presence by the sacramental species. Whether characterized as the fourfold charisms of Balthasar,[29] Przywara's polarities,[30] or de Lubac's paradoxes,[31] it is the case that the Church by nature encompasses intellectual, temperamental, and spiritual variety within its own unity. There are thus inevitably tensions inherent within the Church, such as that between the preserving role of the Petrine office and the daring of the Pauline charism, and with regard to doctrinal and ethical disputes, it is no surprise that tensions quickly become opposition. Although there are entirely pernicious aspects of ecclesial tensions, at root, there is a structured set of polarities inherent to the Church due to the fact that Christ shows himself, mediated through scripture and traditions primarily, to the whole diversity of the ecclesial body. If the singularity of Christ is magnified rather than diminished by the plurality of Gospels, so too does the Church's own genuine multifariousness move centripetally rather than centrifugally.

Against the accumulationist assumption that doctrinal development happens simply by way of addition, we can agree in principle with Karl Rahner's insight that genuine development often moves in the opposite direction:

> Dogmatic development must also contain a dynamism of compression and simplification, tending towards the blessed darkness of the one

[29] That is, Balthasar's reflections on the enduring ecclesial tensions based on the charisms of Paul, James, Peter, and John, in *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

[30] See particularly Erich Przywara, *Kirche in Gegensätzen* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1962). See also Aaron Pidel, *The Church of the Ever-Greater God: The Ecclesiology of Erich Przywara* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

[31] Though this theme is found throughout de Lubac's writings on the Church, the idea of paradox is expressed most explicitly in his *Paradoxes of Faith* and *More Paradoxes* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987 and 2002).

> mystery of God. It is not at all as if dogmatic development must always move in the direction of multiplying individual assertions. Just as important, indeed, strictly speaking still more important, is the development in the line of simplification, towards an ever clearer view of the experience in faith of what is infinitely simple and in a very essential sense obvious.[32]

If dogmatic development is not only multiplication of formulas then it is also not primarily the oscillation between expansion and contraction. It cannot be the case that the development of doctrine is simply the fulfillment of a divinely-ordained process by which the necessary dogmatic propositions are eventually explicitly promulgated and insufficient theological notions are eventually removed, resulting in the inspired handbook of Catholic dogma. When, for example, Tradition expands in clarifying the state of purgatory and contracts by removing the former confidence in the *limbo infantium*, it is because the Church is purifying and specifying that which she always has access to: the eschatological whole seen with varying degrees of clarity. This is to say, instead of viewing the development of doctrine as the slow release of doctrinal or ethical truths, which would necessarily imply that later ecclesial history always has a privileged epistemic perspective over that of prior periods, a notion antithetical to the Catholic mind, Tradition is always given in its totality, even if the capacity for reception varies considerably. As Charles Journet insists, "progress" is not made by going beyond its initial foundation but is instead made "by a *successive manifestation* of the requirements of the initial gift."[33] For Journet, the Church is perfected from the moment of her birth with respect to her "*constitutive structure*," though with respect to the deployment of that structure "she remains in a state of becoming." This becoming, though, is subject to what he calls the "*law of eschatological tension*," being propelled towards the ultimate end.[34] The Church, of any age, stands within that tension between foundation and consummation, and both early and late ecclesial epochs have equal access, though veiled, to the *alpha* and the *omega*.

Undoubtedly, the theologian must *sentire cum ecclesia*.[35] But while thinking with the Church includes attention to the whole breadth of the theological, dogmatic, liturgical, and spiritual patrimony of ecclesial history, it is not reducible to the activity of citation or memory recall. While Thomas Aquinas's thought cannot be separated from his

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[32] Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Development of Dogma," in *Theological Investigations IV: More Recent* Writings, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 26.
[33] Charles Journet, *Theology of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 430.
[34] Journet, *Theology of the Church*, 143 and 434.
[35] See de Lubac's reflections on the *vir ecclesiasticus* and on *sentire cum ecclesia* in *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 236–278.

intimate familiarity with the Church Fathers, for instance, his breadth of theological vision is clearly greater than the sum of his influences. Neither the Church Fathers nor the scholastics of the high Middle Ages could be seen to have consistently used anything closely resembling the modern notion of a "theological criteriology" by which doctrinal statements are weighed according to their levels of authority. This is not to say that criteriology is not itself a fruitful development, and it is certainly a good expression of the Magisterium's role of guarding the deposit of faith and ensuring historical continuity, thus reflecting a "conservative action on its past."[36] But the criteriology by which a development is ultimately judged is not to be confused for the actual engine of development. Development instead occurs by way of a constant ecclesial adjustment in order to bring the infinity of the object of faith into clearer perspective.[37] And given the inexhaustibility of the object and the finitude of the subject, this quite often results in singular, and debatable, theological visions.

Although the devout are wont to view theological history as an obvious march of the triumph of orthodoxy, it would be anachronistic to say that a method of theological criteriology would prove that Athanasius rather than Arius, Cyril rather than Nestorius, or Lanfranc rather than Berengar had theological tradition solely on their sides. To take the last as an example: Lanfranc and Berengar could equally appeal to Augustine as a theological support, and given the relative lack of prior magisterial decisions regarding the question at hand, it is only by the future ratification and intensification of the faith in the Eucharistic real presence that it is clear that it is Berengar rather than Lanfranc who is to be seen as a theological aberration. At issue in every theological debate is the whole of the object of Revelation, which, according to *Dei Verbum*, is Christ: *qui mediator simul et plenitude totius revelationis exsistit* (no. 2). Scripture and traditions are not thereby relativized but are rather seen as conduits by which the fullness of revelation is handed on. Whether Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist was certainly the patent issue contested by Berengar, but bound up with it is the whole network of a theological vision, touching on questions such as scriptural exegesis, the philosophical question about the relationship between sign and referent, how to

[36] See Newman's sixth note in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 419–436.

[37] Without, of course, resulting in perfect comprehension. ST I q.12, a.7: "Now no created intellect can know God infinitely. For the created intellect knows the Divine essence more or less perfectly in proportion as it receives a greater or lesser light of glory. Since therefore the created light of glory received into any created intellect cannot be infinite, it is clearly impossible for any created intellect to know God in an infinite degree."

value the popular piety surrounding the sacrament, and so forth.[38] The metaphysical landscape presupposed throughout the Christological debates is also quite evident,[39] and it would be a mistake to think that the Reformation debates concerning justification were merely quibbles regarding exegesis of Paul, bound up as they were with questions such as the extent of the Fall, the value of popular piety, ecclesial authority in general, and the metaphysical question of creaturely co-operation with divine activity. All of this is to say that the theological disputes that generate doctrinal development are often, if not always, competing visions of Christianity's whole message rather than localizable issues detached from the whole. Even Bernard Lonergan, who has done so much to clarify the epistemological procedure as well as to argue for a precise taxonomy of the theological task, acknowledges that no prior rule for the development of doctrine can be set forth, given that often "development is dialectical."[40]

Every theological vision, however orthodox or magisterially validated, is necessarily *per speculum in aenigmate* (1 Corinthians 13:12), though, to use Cusa's metaphor, some polygons are more nearly circular than others. Despite the perhaps overwhelming urge to do so, insisting upon the magisterial weight of prior decisions alone constitutes an argument that is as untheological as it is unconvincing. Instead, perhaps buttressed by ecclesial precedent, theologians that have been honored by posterity, and have contributed to doctrinal development, are the ones that provide theological visions more circular and comprehensive than the alternatives. For a recent example of the type of pugilism being argued for here, note that when Balthasar wrote to defend the decisions of *Humanae Vitae,* one of very few theologians to do so, he was unconcerned with relying upon the dogmatic authority of the papal encyclical.[41] Instead of leaning on the seemingly non-reversible papal authority, Balthasar attempted to demonstrate the biblical, theological, and anthropological coherence of the nuptial vision implied in the encyclical, arguing that this is more intellectually satisfying than the given alternatives and more reflective of the whole network of dogmatic *topoi*, from Trinitarian theology, to Christology and ecclesiology.[42] If a battle is to be fought over this issue, or any other,

[38] The most comprehensive work on the controversy is still Jean de Montclos, *Lanfranc et Bérenger: La controverse eucharistique du XIe Siècle* (Leuven, 1971).
[39] See, for instance, Rowan Williams's recent *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018).
[40] Bernard Longeran, *Method in Theology* (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1979), 319.
[41] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "A Word on 'Humanae Vitae,'" in *New Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 204–228.
[42] Or we could point to a contemporary debate regarding universal salvation, provoked by David Bentley Hart's *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Sal-*

the winner is not the one who brings the more copious list of scriptural and patristic citations (and Aquinas was usually content with only one for his *sed contras*) but the one whose position is shown to be irreducibly bound up with the fullness of Revelation, a fullness that awaits eschatological completion.

All of this is to say that theological pugilism, the contentious battlefield that is theological history, cannot be replaced by a more amicable process by which proposals are simply affirmed or rejected by the reigning magisterium, whether ordinary or extraordinary. For the authoritative decisions of the past are precisely what theologians, as well as the contemporary magisterium, are disputing. Instead, while there are undoubtedly dogmatic decisions that the Catholic theologian must regard as irreformable, and thus a certain amount of theological criteriology is often required, the critique of doctrinal corruption or the affirmation of doctrinal development is based on the relative consonance of parts to whole. Based on the Eucharistic notion of Tradition outlined above, Tradition does not accumulate, burying the contemporary Church in a mountain of previous affirmations and denunciations, but is given afresh in order to be received as adequately as possible, even if always finitely. Access to that Tradition is undoubtedly mediated through a variety of intellectual, moral, and experiential means, some of which allow a greater perception of the whole that was previously unseen and some of which can blur and distort. Pugilism occurs as a matter of course. Yet this pugilism will be productive only insofar as it is accompanied by a patience that acknowledges the distance between polygon and circle, between a *visio per speculum in aenigmate* and the *visio beatifica*.

ESCHATOLOGICAL PATIENCE

> I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (τὰ ἐρχόμενα / quæ ventura sunt). – John 16:12–13

The history of doctrinal development, as it is in reality rather than in dreams, is one in which the truth seems to be ever postponed for future clarification. That is to say, it would be quite impossible to select one era in which the doctrinal content of a given question had been specified with such precision by the relevant authorities that it is not *a*

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vation (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019). Asseverating that hell has always been held as a central tenet by bishops or popes is not a sufficient reply if the possibility of eternal damnation is not also shown to be more philosophically coherent, more in tune with the logic of Christ's teachings and gift of self, and more resonant with genuine human freedom than the argument in favor of *apokatastasis*.

priori open to future specification or alteration. Patience is thus seen to be a necessary theological virtue. We can take a few moments from the classical development of Christology in the first ecumenical councils as examples. Not only did Nicaea I (325) fail to end Arianism, but Arianism and Semi-Arianism endured, eventually receiving the favor of Constantius II. The various Arian Councils in the second half of the fourth century, particularly those of 353 (Arles) and 355 (Milan), succeeded in condemning and exiling Athanasius and in rejecting Nicaea's *homoousias* in favor of an ontological subordinationism. How would a theologian of that era decide between Nicaea or the Arian Councils? Is there anything intrinsically more authoritative about the one over the other, as each has the support of bishops (ordinary magisterium) as well as the reigning emperor?[43] Or, in the next century, on the eve of the Council of Chalcedon (451), how would a theologian decide between Cyril's Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Ephesus that decided in favor of Eutyches in 449, the Council that was labelled the *latrocinium* by Pope Leo I? Both Ephesian councils had a large number of bishops in attendance, and one could not easily say that the Council of 431 was any less filled with chicanery than was that of 449. Or, two centuries later still, was it obvious that Maximus the Confessor and Pope Martin I were in the right regarding dyothelitism, when both the emperor (Constans II) and the Patriarch of Constantinople (Sergius I) were proposing and enforcing monoenergism and monothelitism? It would of course be anachronistic to insist on papal primacy here, which, in any case, is justified by a backward glance at this historical record rather than assumed beforehand.

Noting that Nicaea (325) and Ephesus (431) were orthodox Councils while Milan (355) and Ephesus (449) were heterodox or pseudo-councils were, historically speaking, decisions made after the fact. This is not to suggest the tired mantra that orthodoxy is simply the choice of the victors, but, in fact, quite the opposite. The point is rather that orthodoxy is always looking for future verification and ratification and can never enjoy it simply by the weight of the promulgation. Pope Boniface VIII's bull of 1302, *Unam Sanctam*, as is well-known, specified that the traditional phrase *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is to be read as indicating that only those subject to the Roman Pontiff can be saved. There is no mistaking the solemnity of the language: "We declare, state, and define that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of all human creatures that they submit to the Roman Pontiff." To put

[43] For an account of the period that attends to the contentious ecclesial and theological atmosphere as well as provides a sophisticated account of doctrinal development based on competing interpretations of Christianity as a whole, see Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

it generously, this is wholly reinterpreted through Pope Pius XII's excommunication of Fr. Leonard Feeney as well as by *Lumen Gentium*, thus drawing back from the horrific implications of the doctrine (implications perhaps not understood fully before the expeditions of the sixteenth century), as well as from the certainty regarding the status of the damned. This is not to say that *Unam Sanctam* is wholly rejected but that ecclesial Tradition, as it is actually given historically, corrects, validates, and adjusts its own historical record in light of a clearer vision of Revelation itself.

The same applies to questions of morality and liturgy. Whether Pope Francis's denunciation of the death penalty is ultimately understood as the culmination of a long history of widening the scope regarding the value of human life or as an aberrant decision wholly out of tune with ecclesial tradition as well as the virtue of justice will perhaps not be settled either within the lifetimes of those currently debating the issue or perhaps within history at all. Likewise, though historical, aesthetic, and experiential reasons can be garnered for the preference of either the *ad orientem* or the *versus populum* liturgical posture, it may ultimately remain at the level of acceptable liturgical diversity. None of this is to say that one should not provide trenchant arguments, say, against the death penalty and for the *ad orientem* posture, but that the necessary virtue for the one providing such an argument is patience, a patience that, as Aquinas says, "safeguards the mind from being overcome by sorrow" (ST II-II q.136, a.1, ad.3). That is, theological and ecclesial disputation will occur, often descending to the realm of accusations of heresy, whether real or imagined, but patience allows for both an acknowledgment of one's own distance from the eschatological whole, but also that of the Church as a whole.

Patience is an essential virtue not only for the theologian but for the Christian life as a whole, such that we could call it the "form of Christian life."[44] The patience advocated for here is one that exceeds the expectation of validation within history. While the Nestorian controversy was largely resolved (though can we not hope for further clarification in light of dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East?), others may never be (e.g., the *de auxiliis* debate), while many others, and some of the most contentious, concern prudential decisions about which orthodoxy or heterodoxy are not the most accurate categories (e.g., the Chinese Rites controversy). *Dei Verbum* stated this precisely, balancing the plenitude of the gift given to the Church in Christ with an extra-historical future in which that gift is fully received: "This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is

[44] As Erich Przywara does in *Demut, Geduld, Liebe: Die drei christlichen Tugenden* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1960).

brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face" (no.7). Again, instead of viewing the development of doctrine with the perspective of our accumulationist, the only actual accumulation, in which the posterior can be said to be definitively superior to the anterior, is an eschatological one.

Unless one were to adopt a rather Joachimite schematic, John 16 should not be read as if Christ revealed a certain portion of doctrine to his disciples, leaving it to the Holy Spirit to complete the development. In that case, "the things that are to come" that the Spirit imparts are the dogmatic decisions of the Church of the future. Instead, that which is to come is the eschatological fullness, the Church's own future in which the polygon is resolved into the circle, when the gift of Christ to the Church is received adequately and without the shadow of Judas. When Christ said that there are things that "you cannot bear now," it is because it is the Spirit that makes the Church capable of reception. Yet even if the Spirit has been poured out on the Church, which is the precondition for understanding the Church as a theandric society, this does not mean that the Church is always perfectly capable of bearing the eschatological truths of Revelation. In addition to the role played by the need to apply the Christian faith to ever new philosophical or moral or political questions, doctrine can also be said to develop due to the varying abilities of the Church to bear Christ's message within history. Although the Church is preserved from grave error, neither ecclesial infallibility in general or papal infallibility in particular indicates that the Church is always equally suited to bearing the message of Christ or of doing so with regard to the whole breadth of its doctrinal, moral, and practical implications. The promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance does indeed occur along the intra-historical path, but the arrival occurs only eschatologically.

The theological task, then, in arguing for a legitimate development of doctrine, is one in which the genuine theological "parts," as it were, can be seen as an integral aspect of the whole or when providing a critique of the corruption of doctrine, in demonstrating the discordance of the particular note. We can briefly mention two examples regarding papal primacy in which the theologians in question, due to a prior grasp of a comprehensive theological vision, moved from an initial stance of opposition to one of dedicated support. Nicholas of Cusa, once the great advocate of conciliarism, based at least in part on his vision of an ecclesial and metaphysical harmony in which the whole and the parts are inseparable, later became the "Hercules of the Eugenians," arguing that only with the supremacy of the pope can the diversity of the Church speak as one.[45] Or John Henry Newman, an

[45] Cusanus wrote much in defense of conciliarism, most notably *De concordantia catholica*, representing his work in support of the Council of Basel. His writings as both a conciliarist and as a defender of papal authority over the council are gathered and

opponent of papal infallibility not only as an Anglican but even as a Catholic up to the promulgation of *Pastor Aeternus*, slowly came to accept and even advocate for papal infallibility as a legitimate expression of the first principles that consistently animated his theological vision: that of a "dogmatic Christianity" as opposed to an anti-dogmatic liberalism and a "sacramental principle" with its attendant implications regarding ecclesiology.[46] In these cases a moment of doctrinal development was critically accepted as an integral aspect of the whole content of Revelation, with both thinkers being served by their respective patient analyses of their ecclesial situations. At other times, though, the patience required will not result in a happy resolution within one's lifetime, such as was the case with Catherine of Siena.

The patron saint of both pugilism in the name of ecclesial reform and the virtue of patience is Catherine of Siena (1347–1380). Raymond of Capua, one of Catherine's spiritual directors, who also worked towards resolving the western schism caused by the Avignon papacy, wrote Catherine's first main biography. Though it is hagiographical, often in the pejorative sense, Raymond had the remarkable insight to conclude his *Life* with an epilogue extolling Catherine's greatest virtue, patience: "I was always more edified by this patience of hers than anything else I saw her do, or heard she had done, not excluding the most breathtaking miracles and wonders."[47] Raymond extols above all her patience regarding the confusion and insults she endured due to her quite particular form of sanctity but also her patience when involved in the highly complex tensions between Pope Gregory XI and Florence, resulting in an interdict, an effect of Gregory's attempt to return the papacy to Rome. Behind her attempts to bring the pope back to Rome, as well as her correspondence with his successor, Urban VI, was a vision of the holiness required of Christ's ministers, a holiness besmirched by the political machinations of the time. Her mystical *Dialogues* makes this disjuncture clear: "O dearest daughter, I have told you all this so that you may better know how I have dignified my ministers, and thus grieve the more over their wickedness. If they themselves had considered their dignity, they would not have fallen into the darkness of deadly sin nor muddied the face of

translated in Nicholas of Cusa, *Writings on Church and Reform*, trans. Thomas M. Izbicki (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[46] Newman lays out these principles, along with the "anti-Roman" principle that he had to abandon due to its dissonance with the other two principles, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. For a nice summary of Newman's relationship to infallibility throughout his life, see Avery Dulles, "Newman on Infallibility," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 434–449.

[47] Blessed Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. George Lamb (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2003), 341.

their souls."[48] Thus her famously brazen letters to Popes Gregory XI and Urban VI, which indicate both her absolute obedience to the office and her perturbation regarding the caesura between Christ's intention for the Church and its actual performance, are reflective of a vision that sees the Church not only in its historical vagaries but in its divine foundation and eschatological consummation.[49] Yet, though she would live to see Gregory's return to Rome, she died when the Great Western Schism was just beginning.

This is not to say that the mystic visionary or the theological polymath has access to Revelation in a manner that supersedes the role of magisterial judgment. Theological history is not only populated with the likes of Maximus and Catherine but equally those who had a vision that was ultimately judged as inadequate to the givens of Revelation, such as Berengar or Baius. And it is indeed the proximate role of the magisterium to evaluate and judge the respective adequacies of these visions, some of which are truly prescient with regard to later doctrinal specification, others of which are wholly delusionary, and a great many others of which see a part of the whole with great illumination, though without proper integration with the other givens of the Christian form of life. Nevertheless, Tradition as it is given historically is the interplay between competing visions of the whole, none of which is wholly adequate to eschatological resolution, with theological, moral, and liturgical pugilism being the inevitable result of a Church reaching out to an object that remains inexhaustible in its import.

CONCLUSION

> If then we have taught you that the head of God is that which was before the foundation of the world, and His feet that which is to be after the consummation of the age, we must take the intervening portion of His body to be the period of time between beginning and end….This body is the Church, which began when the world began, and will last till the end of the age. This is the ark, of which we have set out to speak…. – Hugh of St. Victor[50]

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[48] Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, OP (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 212.

[49] Note the following to Gregory XI (unknown date): "I am constrained by the Sweet Primal Truth to say it." Throughout these letters Catherine makes it clear that even insofar as she remains bound to the papal office, she has access to "primal truth," an eschatological court of appeal that exceeds its ecclesial manifestation. Also, in her first letter to Urban VI, she appeals to eschatology in order to encourage the pope: "Not that I do not believe that you are in charity, but because we can grow in the perfection of charity since we are always pilgrims and strangers in this life, I said that I wished this perfection in you…." *Saint Catherine of Siena as Seen in Her Letters*, trans. Vida D. Scudder (St. Athanasius Press, 2017), 171 and 181.

[50] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali* I.10, in *Selected Spiritual Writings* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 58.

There is often a tension between a more theoretical, usually highly speculative, account of the development of doctrine and a more practical, often juridical, account that is attracted to some form of criteriology. While the former provides theological substance, it can lack real contact with ecclesial history and be rather irrelevant as far as practical application is concerned. The latter aims precisely at delimiting the proper categories and methods for development, but without a more robust theological scaffolding, it degenerates into a form of ecclesial positivism that mistakes the main conduits of Revelation (preeminently scripture and ecclesial tradition) for Revelation itself. Without a more theological conception, and due in part to a certain sociological reduction of the Church, however implicit, there is no need in this view to consider a definitive telos to development, as the task devolves into ensuring a minimum of continuity between past and present. Yet only an eschatologically focused notion of development is able to positively evaluate the vitality and variety of Tradition as it is given in history without either succumbing to the (historicist) temptation towards abandoning the continuity and solidity of the subject of the Church or to the (extrinsicist) temptation towards imposing an unreal, ahistorical dogmatic superstructure that renders the patent ecclesial dynamism into an illusion, absolving the Church from plunging into the vagaries of history like its founder.

From the second century on, theologians have often utilized a maritime metaphor for the Church. Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141) was particularly absorbed by this symbol, writing three works on Noah's ark, and it is his image of the Church as ark that can represent the major moments of this paper, namely Eucharist, pugilism, and eschatology.[51] According to Hugh, again reflecting a ubiquitous patristic metaphor, the ark of the Church was "fashioned when the Church's sacraments flowed forth in blood and water from the side of Christ," which provided the assurance that the ark would safely reach its port.[52] And although Christ is indeed present within the ark itself, set up in the middle of the ark on a pillar of thirty cubits, he is not only "set up in the midst of His Church for all believers alike as the reward of work," but he is also "the End of the journey, and the victor's crown."[53] Christ is thus continually given to the Church, guiding it, but equally the goal of the journey, when reception of that gift matches the height of the gift itself.

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[51] The works are *De arca Noe morali*, *De vanitate mundi*, and *De arca Noe mystica*. The first two are available in *Selected Spiritual Writings* and the last can be found in Conrad Rudolf, *The Mystic Ark: Hugh of Saint Victor, Art, and Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 397–502. Hugh uses the ark motif for far more than reflecting on the Church, and the complexity of the image is analyzed in minute detail in Rudolf's excellent work.

[52] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 65.

[53] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 82.

Yet even with its sacramental foundation and Christic guarantee, Hugh's ark is not spared from the normal tumults of seafaring. It is buffeted both internally and externally. The external pressure comes "when she is attached by unbelievers, the ark is buffeted as it were by stormy waves."[54] Though undoubtedly some of the pressure comes from critics of the Church and other various "unbelievers," equally the Church traverses the simple intellectual flux of philosophical and cultural change, which requires the Church to ensure that it responds to the waves in such a manner as not to be capsized by them. Although wisdom accumulated by a life of seafaring will indispensably aid the handling of the storm, only action in the present tense will safely see the vessel through the tempest. As to the internal pressure, Hugh says it comes when suffering from "false brethren, the body is racked inwardly, as by noxious humours."[55] Although they are not *de Ecclesia*, belonging interiorly within the bond of charity, they are *in Ecclesia*, in the ark of the Church, just as Judas was a legitimate apostle They thus can detrimentally affect navigation. The "Judas element" is certainly a major factor contributing to the pugilism on deck, though it is quite difficult, and often irresponsible, to discriminate with any certainty between an intentional mutiny and mistakes arising from incompetence. Nevertheless, for Hugh, the diversity within the ark is not only between the noxious humours and the healthy members, but even within the latter there is the greatest diversity corresponding to various levels of spiritual attainment. Yet we could add that the diversity is not solely due to spiritual perfection but equally a diversity based on the different competencies required to perform the harmonious common action of sailing. It is expected here that disagreement as to best course of action would be anything but exceptional.

The internal and external tumults are marked indelibly on the body of the ship, which, though it survives the journey, does so only with the patient trust that a port is prepared on the other shore. Between the shores of past and future, between the Eucharistic gift of foundation and the eschatological consummation, the fate of the Church seems to be invariably precarious, always on the brink of capsizing. Despair at the state of the Church, for either its constant betrayals of its accumulated wisdom or its slowness to anticipate the coming waves, is inevitable without patience, the virtue that ripens the tree of wisdom.[56] The vision granted by patience sees that the shores are ever united, folded within the one mystical body that reaches from alpha to omega, that turns even the *metaxu* of historical strife into a prolongation of the Eucharistic origin and an anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment.

[54] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 58.
[55] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 58.
[56] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 118.

> [Christ], who in His compassion is aware of the danger and by His power provides the remedy against it, know what is best for His body. He it is who makes a track across the sea; for, guiding His body the Church through the storms of this life, as it were the ark in the flood, He brings her at last to the haven of eternal rest.[57]

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[57] Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe Morali*, 59.