

# Newman's *Essay on Development* as a basis for considering Liturgical Change<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The English Benedictine liturgy symposium of 2006 was concerned with the 'Reform of the Reform', and the participants heard an interesting paper from Dr Alcuin Reid, which gave rise to a discussion about how particular changes in the Church's liturgy, especially since the Second Vatican Council, might be known to be either legitimate developments in the liturgy or rather corruptions, which Reid in his book on *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, variously attributes to unwarranted innovation, liturgical antiquarianism, expediency and a misplaced sense of pastoral need, all of which subvert and corrupt what he terms 'objective liturgical Tradition'.<sup>2</sup>

Now I am not a liturgist, and so do not really feel able to enter the debate about which liturgical changes are authentic and which are in need of some revision or even reversal. Nor do I intend to try to show that Reid is wrong in his analysis of liturgical change, but I would like to suggest that Newman's theory of development could be of some use to this general discussion, as it seems to me that it coheres quite well with the 'General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy' set out in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*; and furthermore, that it arguably allows for rather more widespread change than Reid would appear to be comfortable with – though a detailed discussion of the two models of development would, of course, be the work of another paper.

## *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper draws on previously published research. Cf W Peterburs, 'Newman's Use of Scripture in his Theory of Development' in P McCosker (ed.), *What is it the Scripture Says? Essays in Biblical Interpretation, Translation and Reception in Honour of Henry Wansbrough OSB* (Continuum: London 2006), pp. 183-196 and M. Peterburs, 'Newman and the Development of Doctrine' in V.A. McClelland (ed.), *By Whose Authority? Newman, Manning and the Magisterium* (Downside Abbey Press: Bath 1996), pp.49-78. I am grateful to the copyright holders for permission to reproduce material here.

<sup>2</sup> A Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and their Relation to the Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (St Michael's Abbey Press: Farnborough 2004). This is seen clearly in his attack on the liturgical scholar Josef Andreas Jungmann SJ on pp.151-9.

Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the intellectual defence of his conversion to Roman Catholicism, was first published towards the end of 1845. Newman had begun the *Essay* two years earlier, as he began to feel more intensely than before the attraction of Catholicism, and needed to establish to his own satisfaction that despite the very real differences between the teachings of the ancient patristic Church and the Catholic Church of the nineteenth century, the latter was indeed the true and legitimate successor to the former. Put differently, Newman had to try to find out whether it was possible to say that despite the obvious changes in teaching that had occurred over the centuries, which made the two Churches look so different, they had nevertheless, as he was to put it later, remained 'one in temper and principle'. With regard to the liturgy, this raises the very obvious question as to whether it would be possible to say on the basis of Newman's theory that, despite a variety of differences in outward appearance and practice, the post-Vatican II liturgy of the Catholic Church is substantially the same as that of the pre-conciliar Church; and in particular, that certain liturgical developments or practices, although quite different in appearance from what went before, are nevertheless authentic developments (e.g., the lectionary).

It is worth noting that a second edition of the *Essay*, with only minor textual changes, was published in 1846, and a third edition, markedly different from the previous versions in its arrangement and order of material, in 1878. But as Owen Chadwick has noted, Newman in 1878 was still arguing that 'you cannot account for the historical facts, which every sane and rational man must accept, so long as you cling to the two traditional ways of explaining dogmatic history [i.e., translation and logical deduction].... The 1878 *Essay* still taught that Christianity was an idea which makes impressions, and that developments are aspects of the original idea slowly elicited: still taught that the Church had been unconscious of truths which she had later defined: still taught... that dogma grew by "incorporation" or "assimilation".'<sup>3</sup>

In the Introduction to the *Essay on the Development*, Newman sets out his view that the dictum of St. Vincent of Lérins, that revealed truth is *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, is inadequate as a guide to the true faith of the Church. For a start, he questions

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<sup>3</sup> O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (CUP: Cambridge 1957), pp, 189 & 191. By 'translation' is meant the view typified by Bossuet and Brownson who denied that any real change in the Church's teaching had occurred, arguing that there had only been an improvement in the expression of it. In contrast to this is a view found in 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish theology that real advances in doctrine can be made as the Church works out the logical implications of Scripture ('logical deduction'), arriving at truths not found in Scripture. Cf. Chadwick, *Bossuet to Newman*, pp.20 (Bossuet), 171 (Brownson), and 25-44 (Spanish).

what 'taught always'<sup>4</sup> means, and points out the obvious difficulties involved in first deciding how to interpret the rule before applying it:

It does not seem possible, then, to avoid the conclusion that, whatever be the proper key for harmonising the records and documents of the early and later Church, and true as the dictum of Vincentius must be considered in the abstract, and possible as the application might be in his own age, when he might almost ask the primitive centuries for their testimony, it is hardly available now or effective of any satisfactory result. The solution it offers is as difficult as the original problem.<sup>5</sup>

This conclusion resulted from Newman's analysis of what the various Fathers believed about certain doctrines of the modern (Catholic) Church, a number of which were viewed by some Protestants as corruptions. The first doctrine to be considered, however, was that of the Trinity; but when the evidence among the Fathers for this doctrine is viewed in relation to the evidence for certain other doctrines, Newman's verdict is:

I do not see in what sense it can be said that there is a consensus of primitive divines in its favour, which will not avail also for certain doctrines of the Roman Church which will presently come into mention.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, it seemed to Newman that all of the doctrines of the modern Roman Catholic Church could in some way be traced back to the Fathers, and he argued that there is more evidence among these Fathers for some doctrines that some Protestants reject, than there is for some which they accept. For example, he finds more evidence for purgatory than for original sin.

This analysis obviously reveals the partially apologetic purpose of the *Essay*, namely Newman's desire to show that the teachings of the nineteenth-century Catholic Church were defensible against the charge, that he himself had once levelled, of being additions to the faith. But the *Essay* is also a work of investigative, historical theology in which Newman is genuinely attempting to discover the 'true' Church, and it is suggested here that despite Newman's apologetics, the *Essay* can still make a useful contribution to modern theology. As with any older work, this cannot be done simply by transposing one scholar's thoughts whole and entire into a new context and supposing that this can supply the answer to modern

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<sup>4</sup> J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (James Toovey: London 1845), p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.24.

<sup>6</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.11; cf. 16-23.

questions, but by trying to apply key insights and ideas to modern problems in seeking a way towards their solution; and this is what is attempted in this paper.

In examining what Newman called ‘that apparent variation and growth of doctrine which embarrasses us when we would consult history for the true idea of Christianity,’<sup>7</sup> his first substantial discussion is of the *disciplina arcani*<sup>8</sup> (discussed also in his earlier writings, particularly the 1828 *Arians of the Fourth Century*), according to which it ‘is maintained that doctrines which are associated with the later ages of the Church were really in the Church from the first, but were not publicly taught, and that for various reasons.’<sup>9</sup> Despite the fact, however, that Newman considered that a *disciplina arcani* did at one time exist, he felt that it could not account fully for the inconsistencies in doctrine found in the early Church, since they continued long after the practice ceased to operate.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the theory of the *disciplina arcani* takes no account of the growth of ideas,<sup>11</sup> which Newman regarded as a reality attested to by the history of the Church, as discussed in the last of the *University Sermons* on ‘The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrines’ (1843), and which he held to be central to a proper understanding of doctrinal development, as expounded in the *Essay*.

For Newman, the central ‘principle’ or ‘idea’ of Christianity is the Incarnation,<sup>12</sup> in which God has revealed himself to humankind. This idea makes ‘impressions’ upon people and their minds, and thus grows and develops. However, rather like the development of his own ideas, and perhaps also like liturgical development, the development of an idea ‘is not like a mathematical theorem worked out on paper, in which each successive advance is a pure evolution from a foregoing, but is carried on through individuals and bodies of men; it employs their minds as instruments and depends upon them while it uses them.’ ‘Moreover’, he considered that ‘a development will have this characteristic, that, its action being in the busy scene of human life, it cannot progress at all without cutting across, and thereby destroying or modifying and incorporating within itself existing modes of thinking and operating... It is the warfare of ideas.’<sup>13</sup> In the language of Vatican II, it might be said that this occurs as the Church reads the ‘signs of the times.’<sup>14</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>7</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.25.

<sup>9</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.25.

<sup>10</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), pp.26-7.

<sup>11</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), pp.30-57.

<sup>12</sup> J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Longmans, Green & Co: London 1878), p.36.

<sup>13</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.37; cf. *Development* (1878), p.39.

<sup>14</sup> Newman, *Gaudium et Spes* 4.

Since an idea... cannot be viewed except under particular aspects... there is no one aspect such as to go to the depth of the real idea, no one term or proposition which can duly and fully represent it; though of course one representation of it will be more just and appropriate than another, and though when an idea is very complex, it is allowable to consider its distinct aspects as of separate ideas, for the sake of convenience.<sup>15</sup>

This is in accord with the view Newman expressed in the last of the *University Sermons*, that the idea of Christianity is not, in the first instance, communicated by propositions, but personally. Propositions do play an essential role in the communication of revelation, since they are the means by which the idea is given expression,<sup>16</sup> but it is also the case that they cannot of themselves give full expression to the idea they represent. It is thus to be expected, that in the development of a teaching there will be a number of (seemingly) conflicting statements and theories; that developed teachings might seem quite different from their putative forebears; that a number of lines of research or particular practices will not prove adaptable to new circumstances, whilst others prove profitable; and that thus it is not possible to trace the development of an idea as a smooth, linear progression. From this it would seem, then, that there can be no *a priori* rules which can govern the development of an idea and its associated doctrines; rather, the appropriateness of a development would seem to be a matter of judgement; and this is perhaps as much the case in liturgy as in doctrine, given that ultimately the purpose of liturgy is to communicate, and to allow the faithful to participate in, the 'mystery of Christ'<sup>17</sup>, which for Newman was, of course, the central 'idea' of Christianity.

An idea, then, lives in the mind of the recipient and as it comes into contact with people, communities and other ideas it grows and develops.<sup>18</sup> Thus, 'if Christianity is a fact, and can be made subject-matter of exercises of the reason, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds, that idea will in course of time develop'.<sup>19</sup> For Newman, this is why in the early years of the Church there was no explicit concept of the Trinity, whereas in later years it could be defined by an ecumenical council as a dogma. To use the language of the thirteenth *University Sermon*, 'Implicit and Explicit Reason', the doctrine was, from the first, implicit in the idea of Christianity, but was only gradually developed and made explicit. Applying this

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<sup>15</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.34.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. I.T. Ker, *Newman on Being a Christian* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame 1990), pp.21-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 2.

<sup>18</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), pp.35-9.

<sup>19</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.94.

analysis to the liturgy, then, we would expect to take different forms – or exhibit different varieties of expression – as needs and circumstances require, though it would always be the one, saving mystery of Christ that it sought to communicate. There is, however, clearly a need for caution at this point, as it could seem that this method could lead to justifying almost any change in teaching – and so any liturgical practice or change - whether legitimate or not, and it is for this reason that Newman proposed certain, admittedly rather tentative, criteria – ‘tests’ or ‘notes’, as he was to call them - of a true development, which will be discussed below.<sup>20</sup>

The notion, then, that Christianity is an idea and develops, forms part of Newman's argument that there is an antecedent probability that there can be legitimate developments in Christian doctrine. The other part of the argument is that one cannot keep merely to the word of Scripture. For example, the phrase 'The Word became flesh' must be interpreted if one is to understand what is meant by 'Word', 'became' or 'flesh'; one's understanding of the verse needs to be developed.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Newman argued that the whole of Scripture is 'written on the principle of development':<sup>22</sup>

The same test of development is suggested in our Lord's words on the Mount, as has already been noticed. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He does not reverse, but perfect, what has gone before.<sup>23</sup>

Newman is therefore able to conclude:

From the necessity, then, of the case, from the history of all sects and parties in religion, and from the analogy and example of Scripture, we may fairly conclude that Christian doctrine admits of formal, legitimate, and true developments, or of developments contemplated by its Divine Author.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> In the 1845 edition of the *Essay*, Newman had called these ‘tests’, but in 1878 he called them ‘notes’, recognising the difficulty of applying them.

<sup>21</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), pp.97-8.

<sup>22</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.103.

<sup>23</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845),p.103.

<sup>24</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.113.

It might be argued – in fact, in the writings of some liturgical scholars it seems to be a commonplace – that the same might be said of the liturgy.<sup>25</sup>

The next stage in Newman's argument is that if it is probable that there can be legitimate developments of doctrine, it is therefore probable that an infallible authority is required, so that the Church can determine which developments are true, and which should properly be called corruptions:

It feels that the very idea of revelation implies a present informant and guide, and that an infallible one; not a mere abstract declaration of truths not known before to man, or a record of history, or the result of an antiquarian research, but a message and a lesson speaking to this man and that.<sup>26</sup>

Newman then gives various 'Instances in Illustration'<sup>27</sup> of the development of doctrine. They are the *homoousion*, the canon of Scripture, communion under one kind, and papal authority, the last of which will be elaborated upon here for two reasons: first, because it can be taken as an example of how Newman sees doctrine developing; and second, because the issue of papal authority with regard to the liturgy is one that has been debated by liturgical scholars over the course of the last fifty or so years.

The question is this, whether there was not from the first a certain element at work, or in existence, which, for some reason or other, did not at once show itself upon the surface of ecclesiastical affairs, and of which events in the fourth century are the development; and whether the evidence of its existence and operation, which does occur in the earlier centuries, be it much or little, is not just as ought to occur upon such an hypothesis.<sup>28</sup>

Newman regarded the promises made to St. Peter, in the so-called 'primacy texts',<sup>29</sup> as prophecies fulfilled in the fourth and subsequent centuries, the understanding of these

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Reid, *Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 290.

<sup>26</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.125. At this stage in the argument (pp.114-30), Newman does not bring the pope into the discussion. He is more concerned with 'the necessity of an infallible doctrinal authority of the Church as a whole'. P. Misner, *Papacy and Development: Newman and the Primacy of the Pope* (E.J. Brill: Leiden 1976), p.75. Indeed, the role of the whole Church in an infallible definition was an important aspect of Newman's thought, as shown by G. Lease, *Witness to the Faith* (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh 1971).

<sup>27</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), pp.158-79.

<sup>28</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.165.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 16:16-19; Luke 22:31-33; John 21:15-17.

prophecies growing as the Church grew into a hierarchical and imperial organisation.<sup>30</sup> So, there are two parts to Newman's theory: 'the antecedent probability of a Popedom, and the actual state of the Post-Nicene Church,'<sup>31</sup> the history of which shows the establishment of the monarchical Church structure Newman sees envisaged in the prophecies in Scripture.<sup>32</sup>

For Newman, however, the unity of the Church, not papal supremacy, was the central issue. The pope's function at the head of an international communion was essentially unitive, and, as Newman's essay 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine' shows, he believed that it was the whole Church, clergy and laity together, that judged rightly in matters of faith;<sup>33</sup> and he was contemptuous of those ecclesiastics, who argued that the laity owed the Church, 'a *fides implicita* in her word, which in the educated classes will terminate in indifference, and in the poorer in superstition.'<sup>34</sup> As he noted in regard to St Augustine's dictum, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*: 'When we say that the Church infallibly protects herself, this means when regarded as a whole.'<sup>35</sup>

In the *Essay*, Newman argued that scepticism and doubt are useful instruments in scientific investigation, but that in theological investigations, antecedent probabilities 'may have a real weight and cogency'.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in the same way as it would be wrong to think of the Ante-Nicene Fathers as heretical, 'the Nicene Creed [being] a natural key for interpreting the body of Ante-Nicene theology,'<sup>37</sup> it follows that for Newman, in analysing the doctrines handed

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<sup>30</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.166. This monarchical structure was, according to Newman, to be expected, and to substantiate this he refers to a number of institutions of monarchical structure, such as the Church of England with the See of Canterbury at its head. Cf. *Development* (1845), p.171. This, however, would appear to be a poor example for Newman to use, since the Archbishop of Canterbury does not possess the same juridical authority in either the Church of England, or the Anglican Communion, as is possessed by the Pope in the Catholic Church as a whole.

<sup>31</sup> *Development* (1845), p. 170.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. J.H. Newman, *Essays Critical and Historical*, (Pickering: London 1871), vol. II, p.182, 'Can anyone doubt that what Isaiah sang of the glory of Jerusalem was fulfilled in the church triumphant in the fourth and ensuing centuries?' Also, Misner, *Papacy and Development*, p.53.

<sup>33</sup> As John Coulson comments: 'If the Church has a duty to consult the faithful, then it has a duty to manifest itself fully as a *conspiratio* of priests and laity, as distinct from the existing practice of acquiescing in a laity which was either superstitious or indifferent, and capable of merely notional assent in matters of faith.' *Newman and the Common Tradition: A Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1970), p.121.

<sup>34</sup> *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*: edited and with an Introduction by J. Coulson (Collins: London 1986), p.106.

<sup>35</sup> *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and Papal Infallibility*: edited by J.D. Holmes (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1979), p.135.

<sup>36</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.181.

<sup>37</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.158.

down from the Fathers, one must practise a 'hermeneutics of recognition'.<sup>38</sup> In the 1878 edition of the *Essay*, Newman summarised matters as follows:

My argument is then this:- that, from the first age of Christianity, its teaching looked towards those ecclesiastical dogmas, afterwards recognised and defined, with (as time went on) more or less determinate advance in the direction of them; till at length that advance became so pronounced, as to justify their definition and to bring it about, and to place them in the position of rightful interpretations and keys of the remains and the records in history of the teaching which has so terminated.... In such a method of proof there is, first, an imperfect, secondly, a growing evidence, thirdly, in consequence a delayed inference and judgement, fourthly reasons producible to account for the delay.<sup>39</sup>

To the contemporary scholar who is keen to understand the theological and liturgical issues that underlie the Church's revision of the liturgy, Newman's talk of a 'Poppedom' and of 'definition', his reliance on 'antecedent probability' expressed in his willingness to interpret the teachings of earlier centuries through those of the later, and the partially apologetic purpose of the *Essay*, may seem to amount to a theory that could be used as no more than a tool for justifying papal teaching on the grounds that it is papal teaching.<sup>40</sup> But this would be unfair to Newman: although in the *Apologia* he could describe an ideal and harmonious relationship between theologians and Church authorities,<sup>41</sup> in practice he felt that:

This age of the Church is peculiar – in former times, primitive and medieval, there was not the extreme centralisation which is now in use. If a private theologian said anything free, another answered him. If the controversy grew, then it went to a Bishop, a theological faculty, or some foreign university. The Holy See was but the court of ultimate appeal. Now, if I, as a private priest, put anything into print, *Propaganda* answers me at once. How can I fight with such a chain on my arm? It is like the Persians driven to fight under the lash.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> A. Nichols, *Holy Order: Apostolic Priesthood from the New Testament to the Second Vatican Council* (Veritas: Dublin 1990), p.24.

<sup>39</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), pp.122-3.

<sup>40</sup> Indeed, there are perhaps those who have sought to use Newman's theory in just this way. As he himself said of the *Essay on Development* at the time of Vatican I, it had at first been regarded with suspicion in Rome, but was now being used against him as he opposed the definition of papal infallibility by the Council.

<sup>41</sup> J.H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions*: edited and with an Introduction by M.J. Svaglic (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1990), pp. 238-9.

<sup>42</sup> *The Letters & Diaries of John Henry Newman*: edited by C.S. Dessain, E.E. Kelly, T. Gornall (London & Oxford), vol. XX, p.448.

So, for Newman, doctrine by its very nature develops, and this he explains in the *Essay* by way of different analogies, which taken together help to clarify how the change in teaching has come about. Christianity can be understood as an idea that impresses itself upon people and communities (the Church), and as they reflect upon its meaning and significance, they are able, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to draw out that which is implicit in God's self-revelation in Christ. This can be seen as similar to the thought of a poet, whose verse contains more than was explicit in his mind when he composed it; or to the way in which the beliefs of a child mature in the mind as the child grows into adulthood; or as being like organic life as it grows from bud to flower. 'By all these comparisons Newman confessed that changes had occurred in the doctrine of the Church, but he maintained that the changes had been rooted in the original revelation and were a perfection, not a distortion, of it.'<sup>43</sup> As already noted, this work of development was, according to Newman, the work of the whole Church, and although he believed, many years before the First Vatican Council was even announced, that the Church possessed the gift of infallibility, he did not think that the judging of developments in matters of doctrine could be left to the hierarchy alone. Rather, he held that whilst it was the function of bishops to teach, he understood that it was the task primarily of theologians to investigate and to establish the legitimacy or otherwise of various theories,<sup>44</sup> whilst the *sensus fidelium*, which in 'On Consulting the Faithful' he argued preserved the Church from lapsing into the Arian heresy, also acts as a measure.<sup>45</sup>

To help with this task, Newman provided in the *Essay* seven 'notes' for determining whether a change in teaching was a true development or should more properly be called a corruption. The first 'note' was 'Preservation of its Type', which he explained 'by the analogy of physical growth, which is such that the parts and the proportions of the developed form, however altered, correspond to those which belong to its rudiments.'<sup>46</sup> The second was 'Continuity of its Principles', according to which the 'life of doctrines may be said to consist in the law or principle which they embody.'<sup>47</sup> Newman considered 'principles' to be more fundamental than 'doctrines', the distinction between the two being that the former indicates the presence of a living idea in society, whereas the latter is the formal statement of that society's belief. For a development to be a true development, rather than a corruption, there must be a

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<sup>43</sup> J.T. Noonan, 'Development in Moral Doctrine' in C. Curran (ed.), *Change in Official Catholic Moral Teaching: Readings in Moral Theology No. 13* (Paulist Press: Mahwah 2003), p.295.

<sup>44</sup> *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, 2 vols. (Longmans, Green & Co: London 1891), vol. I, pp. xlvii-xlviii; cf. A. Dulles, 'Newman's Ecclesiology', in I. Ker & A.G. Hill (eds.), *Newman after one hundred years* (Clarendon Press: Oxford 1990), pp. 380-3.

<sup>45</sup> *On Consulting the Faithful*, p. 77.

<sup>46</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.171.

<sup>47</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.178.

continuity of its principles: the living idea itself must remain uncorrupted. This would obviously seem to allow for a considerable variety of doctrine (the verbal expression of the principle), but for Newman continuity of principle is not sufficient in itself, as he sees a complementary relationship existing between the two: ‘A development to be faithful, must retain both the doctrine and the principle with which it started.’<sup>48</sup> By the third note, ‘Its Power of Assimilation’, Newman meant that a development takes ‘into its own substance external materials; and that this absorption or assimilation is completed when the materials appropriated come to belong to it or enter into its unity.’<sup>49</sup> For Newman, however, developments do not occur by ‘a conscious reasoning from premisses to conclusion’,<sup>50</sup> but an ‘idea under one or other of its aspects grows in the mind by remaining there’,<sup>51</sup> and its growth can *afterwards* be traced and be seen to form the fourth note, ‘Logical Sequence’. Such a living idea, Newman considered, ‘is sure to develop according to its own nature, and the tendencies which are carried out in the long run, may under favourable circumstances show themselves early as well as late’,<sup>52</sup> hence the fifth note, an ‘Anticipation of its Future’. The sixth note is that a development exercises a ‘Conservative Action upon its Past’, by which Newman meant that they are preceded by definite indications... so that those which do but contradict and reverse the course of doctrine which has been developed before them, and out of which they spring, are certainly corrupt.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, since a corruption is ‘a sort of affectation’ it cannot last long ‘and thus *duration* is another test of a faithful development’,<sup>54</sup> since it exhibits the seventh note, ‘Chronic Vigour’.

It would seem, however, that there is an inconsistency in Newman’s thought at this point. In the first note he argues that type can be preserved ‘*however altered*’ (my emphasis) the ‘parts and proportions of the developed form’, and in accordance with this, the second note would seem to allow for quite some variety of doctrine, provided that the underlying principle is preserved. But Newman then goes to say that a faithful development must retain not only its principle but also the doctrine ‘with which it started’. Furthermore, in the sixth note he argues that true developments cannot ‘contradict and reverse the course of doctrine which has been developed before them.’ In other words, Newman would appear on the one hand to allow that true developments can look quite different from what was originally the case and, in fact,

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<sup>48</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.72.

<sup>49</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.185.

<sup>50</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.189.

<sup>51</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.190.

<sup>52</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.195.

<sup>53</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.199.

<sup>54</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.203.

could even reverse at least on the ‘surface level’ of doctrine as opposed to the ‘deeper level’ of principle, an earlier position, yet on the other hand he will not permit any obvious contradiction or reversal of previous teaching.

It may be possible, however, to resolve this problem: the key to understanding the main thrust of Newman’s thought would seem to be the argument, anticipated in the thirteenth *University Sermon* on implicit and explicit reasoning, that despite apparent differences there must be a real, a substantive, connection between past and present teachings. Thus there must always be a real and substantive connection between a principle and its doctrine, however much the latter changes throughout the course of history; the Church must always be trying to safeguard the same fundamental principle. Put differently, the *depositum fidei* – the ‘principle’ - does not change, but the verbal or propositional expression of it – the ‘doctrine’ – may change.<sup>55</sup> Thus Newman can say, ‘The butterfly is the development, but not in any sense the image, of the grub,’<sup>56</sup> and then of the doctrine of the Trinity:

More subtle still and mysterious are the variations which are consistent or not consistent with identity in political and religious developments. The Catholic doctrine of the Holy Trinity has ever been accused by heretics of interfering with that of the Divine Unity out of which it grew, and even believers will at first sight consider that it tends to obscure it. Yet Petavius says, ‘I will affirm, what will perhaps surprise the reader, that that distinction of Persons which, in regard to *proprietas* is in reality most great, is so far from disparaging the Unity and Simplicity of God that this very real distinction especially avails for the doctrine that God is One and most Simple.’<sup>57</sup>

This point is perhaps more clearly seen in an example drawn from the Church’s moral teaching, if a brief digression may be permitted for this purpose. Thus it could be argued that although *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) reversed the doctrine of Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) in its teaching with regard to religious freedom (it is condemned in the *Syllabus*, but held to be a duty and a right in *Dignitatis Humanae*), the underlying principle that Pope Pius

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<sup>55</sup> ‘An idea then does not always bear about it the same external image; this circumstance, however, has no force to weaken the argument for its substantial identity, as drawn from its external sameness, when such sameness remains. On the contrary, for that very reason *unity of type* becomes so much the surer guarantee of the healthiness and soundness of developments, when it is persistently preserved in spite of their number or importance.’ Newman, *Development* (1878), p.178.

<sup>56</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p.173.

<sup>57</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p. 174. Newman also argues that, ‘On the other hand, real perversions and corruptions are often not so unlike externally to the doctrine from which they come, as are changes which are consistent with it and true developments.’ Newman, *Development* (1878), p. 176.

was seeking to preserve was also upheld by Second Vatican Council. Put in proper historical context, it can be seen that when Pius IX condemned religious liberty, he condemned the view that unaided human reason was the final, or sole arbiter, in religion; whereas in teaching the necessity of religious liberty, Vatican II also taught that ‘the highest norm for human life is the divine law’<sup>58</sup>. This means that despite the change in doctrine – the change in Church teaching – there is nevertheless an underlying continuity of principle, as both Pius IX and Vatican II both held that human beings created in the image and likeness of God ultimately find true knowledge and freedom in God alone.<sup>59</sup>

So, taking this to be the best way of understanding Newman’s argument, it is suggested here that although he lists and explains seven criteria of a true development, these can in fact be reduced to the first two: ‘Preservation of its Type’ and ‘Continuity of its Principles’, since if these two can be identified in the history of a change in teaching, then it would seem that the force of the others would be present as well. In short, Newman’s theory is basically a theory of ‘organic’ development, the later ‘growing’ from the earlier, the identity between the two being maintained by a continuity in its ‘living’ principle, despite a variety, even conflict or (apparent) reversal, of doctrines. If these two ‘notes’ are present, it can be expected that the development will have absorbed external nourishment by way of ‘assimilation’; it will be possible to detect with the benefit of hindsight a ‘logical sequence’ in the course of which an ‘anticipation of its future’ will be present, denoting a ‘conservative action upon its past’; and it can be expected to endure. Thus the development of Church teaching could be likened to

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<sup>58</sup> *Dignitatis Humanae* 3.

<sup>59</sup> Proposition 15 of the *Syllabus* condemned the view that ‘each individual is free to embrace and profess the religion he judges true by the light of reason’, whereas *Dignitatis Humanae* taught that ‘every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek truth in matters of religion, in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgements of conscience, with the use of suitable means.’ On the surface it would seem that there is a clear contradiction between these two statements, and that it would be better to speak of a change, rather than a development, in the Church’s teaching. But when Proposition 3 is considered, the apparently stark contrast between the two documents diminishes. Proposition 3 denies that ‘human reason, without any relation at all to God, is the sole judge of true and false, good and evil, is a law unto itself, and is sufficient by its natural powers to procure the welfare of individuals’. This would seem to clarify what Pius IX meant by the freedom of the individual to follow the light of reason, and as such the *Syllabus* appears to be in harmony with Vatican II when *Dignitatis Humanae* teaches that ‘the highest norm for human life is the divine law – eternal, objective, and universal – whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe’. (*DH* 3) Vatican II, therefore, does not teach the view condemned in Proposition 15 that unaided human reason is a sufficient criterion (without reference to God) in matters faith and truth. Thus the contrast between the *Syllabus* and *Dignitatis Humanae* is not as stark as it at first sight seemed, and it could also be argued that both documents take as their starting point the nature of humankind created in the image and likeness of God, as both teach that people find true knowledge and freedom in God. As *Dignitatis Humanae* puts it, ‘the practice of religion of its very nature consists primarily of those voluntary and free acts by which a man directs himself to God’ (*DH* 3), and this notion of faith as a free act can also be seen as a constant element in the Church’s teaching. (Cf. T Hughson, ‘John Courtney Murray and Postconciliar Faith’ in *Theological Studies*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1997, pp.480-508.) It seems possible, then, to conclude that as regards the religious liberty of the individual, the change in the Church’s teaching can be described as a development, rather than as a repudiation, of an earlier teaching.

the growth of an acorn into an oak tree, the latter to all appearance quite different from the former, yet in some sense already implicit within it. A true development would not be like a ‘mathematical theorem worked out on paper, in which each successive advance is a pure evolution from a foregoing’,<sup>60</sup> but rather be one that, as Avery Dulles has said, maintains ‘a dynamic equilibrium between continuity and innovation’;<sup>61</sup> a work of what Francis Sullivan has termed ‘creative fidelity’.<sup>62</sup> It would progress by ‘fits and starts’, complete with (apparent) contradictions, according to circumstance, as needs must; and it follows that the course of such a development can only be understood within its own, proper, historical context.

This it would appear is different from Reid’s theory of development and his understanding of Newman’s. Reid sees in Newman a theory of organic development, but his emphasis (in his very brief treatment of the *Essay on Development*) is on logical progression, which can be clearly seen and established; but this does not seem to go quite to the heart of what Newman argued for in the *Essay*. The *Essay*, it seems to me, is best understood as the culmination of a process of development in Newman’s own thought, a process which mirrors his explanation of doctrinal development in the *Essay*, and thus provides a way of understanding his theory.<sup>63</sup> When the history of Newman’s theory of development is examined in the context of his own personal history and conversion to Catholicism, it would appear that the theory is one of organic development, which allows for considerable variety in, even a reversal of, doctrine, provided that a continuity of principle or type is preserved. With regard to the liturgy, it would seem to me that this permits more widespread change than Reid would consider ‘authentic’.

## Conclusion

So, for Newman, in the development of doctrine there is both continuity and change. There is continuity in that the new teaching must in some sense or other truly come from the earlier, but there can be change as new historical circumstances and new insights require a

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<sup>60</sup> Newman, *Development* (1845), p.37.

<sup>61</sup> A. Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (Gill & Macmillan: Dublin 1992), p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> F.A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (Gill & Macmillan: Dublin 1996).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Peterburs, ‘Newman and the Development of Doctrine’, pp.49-78.

modification in the application of a principle (and, so in teaching) to the lives of people. As the Second Vatican Council taught in the ‘Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy’:

the liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it.<sup>64</sup>

Put differently, where liturgical practices (particularly as the result of accretion) no longer communicate as effectively as would be wished the saving mystery of Christ, they must be amended, but in such a way that, ‘sound tradition may be retained... [whilst] the way remain open to legitimate progress.’<sup>65</sup> Furthermore:

there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.<sup>66</sup>

These are statements which, I hope the foregoing makes clear, Newman would be very much at home with, though I think that his understanding and application of them would be somewhat broader than Reid’s. As Newman wrote in the *Essay*, ‘In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below, to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.’<sup>67</sup>

With regard to the liturgy, I expect that ultimately it comes down to a matter of judgement as to which changes in liturgical practice should be regarded as true developments. For Newman, this would in the final analysis be the judgement of the whole Church, perhaps based on the deceptively simple principle as to whether they really work or not.

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<sup>64</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21.

<sup>65</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23.

<sup>66</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23.

<sup>67</sup> Newman, *Development* (1878), p. 40.