



NEWMAN'S EARLY ROMAN  
CATHOLIC LEGACY  
1845-1854

C. MICHAEL SHEA

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*To my wife, Ksenija  
Ljubav mog života*



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The roots of this book stretch back to 2007 when I was a second-year MA student in historical theology at Saint Louis University. In the spring of that year, I took Kenneth Parker's survey course in modern historical theology and read Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* for the first time. I was captivated by the imagination and historical ferment of Newman's mind, as well as intrigued and uneasy about the potential implications of his theory of development. Sensing my interest, Dr. Parker invited me to meet over a cup of coffee to discuss Newman's *Essay* and the prospects of my pursuing further studies on the topic. And so began what has become more than a decade of intellectual growth, support, and friendship with Ken, for which I will ever remain grateful.

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## Abbreviations

APUG	Archivum Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianum
APF	Archivio della Sacra Congregazione Propaganda Fide
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
ASR	<i>Annali delle Scienze Religiose</i>
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i>
BBKL	<i>Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon</i>
BCH	<i>British Catholic History</i>
BCJ	<i>Bibliothèque de la compagnie de Jésus</i> (C. Sommervögel)
BOA	Birmingham Oratory Archive
BQR	<i>Brownson's Quarterly Review</i>
CL	<i>Collectio Lacensis</i>
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli Italiani</i>
DR	<i>Dublin Review</i>
DS	<i>Enchiridion Symbolorum</i> (Denzinger)
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
EVA	<i>The English Vicars Apostolic</i> (N. Scofield and G. Skinner)
GJ	<i>Gregorianum Journal</i>
HT	<i>History and Theory</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JHMT	<i>Journal for the History of Modern Theology</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LD	<i>The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman</i>
LThK	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>
NAA	Newark Archdiocesan Archive
NYA	New York Archdiocesan Archive
NS	<i>Newman Studien</i>
NSJ	<i>Newman Studies Journal</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PE	<i>The Papal Encyclicals</i> (ed. C. Carlen)
RH	<i>Recusant History</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
SC	<i>Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio</i> (ed. J. Mansi)
SP	<i>Souverain et Pontife</i> (P. Boutry)
TDR	<i>Downside Review</i>
UGC	Università Gregoriana del Collegio Romano
VL	Vatican Library
WDA	Westminster Diocesan Archive





# Introduction

## *Problems, Strategies, and Objectives*

It has become commonplace among scholars of modern Roman Catholic theology to assume that the legacy of John Henry Newman manifested itself not in its own age, but in the century to follow. For this reason, Newman's work is often referred to as prophetic and ahead of its time. There is truth in this common impression. Many theologians in the nineteenth century kept Newman's work—in particular his theory of doctrinal development—at arm's length. Only in the next century did Newman's work reemerge in direct, and, as often as not, indirect ways, through the efforts of such figures as Henri Brémond, Maurice Blondel, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, and Erich Przywara. Yet this broad impression obscures the important and largely oblique impact that Newman's theory of doctrinal development had upon theological discussions among Catholics shortly after its first appearance.

The goal of this book is to explore the key features of this early influence by tracing the reception of Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in Rome, from its publication in 1845 through the wake of the definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in December of 1854.<sup>1</sup> This narrative will show that in the years following the *Essay on Development's* appearance, Newman's theory had a significant influence upon Roman Catholics in the nineteenth century, whose legacy, though hidden, lasts even until our own day.

<sup>1</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: James Toovey, 1845) (hereafter, *Essay on Development*, or *Essay*). Unless specifically noted, citations of the *Essay on Development* in this book will come from the first edition.

By necessity, such an investigation covers numerous figures, geographical and linguistic regions, social and institutional strata, and textual genres. I intend for this book to contribute to the growing trend in nineteenth-century religious scholarship, which seeks to break down artificial divisions between national, linguistic, and ecclesiastical boundaries. This study offers what some might call a “crossed” or “entangled” narrative of Newman’s impact in the nineteenth century, which focuses upon intellectual borrowings and exchanges across national, religious, and linguistic spheres.<sup>2</sup> The recent volume edited by Peter Nockles and Stewart Brown, *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World, 1830–1930* and Mark Chapman’s *The Fantasy of Reunion: Anglicans, Catholics, and Ecumenism, 1833–1882* have offered promising indications of what such vistas may offer a new generation of scholars.<sup>3</sup> In the following pages I offer a full-scale examination of an important dimension of nineteenth-century religious thought from precisely this perspective. I aim to show that a crossed-narrative approach to Newman’s legacy has the potential to subvert established narratives in this area and provides a model for broader inquiries in this period of religious history.

Specialists working on the Victorian era have traditionally relied upon a rich but narrow range of source material for their investigations. This is especially true for the study of Newman, who left behind a prolific corpus of published and unpublished writings that was nearly unmatched in his age. How many areas of historical inquiry concerning an individual can boast over thirty volumes of edited correspondence, autobiographical memoirs, memoranda, and archival holdings, reaching nearly one-quarter of a million pages—most of which is now becoming available in digital form? Yet the very wealth of this material, particularly for Newman’s life, lends itself to scholars along with the all-too-easy temptation of envisioning his life and legacy from an artificially narrow English perspective. Even the well-documented area of Oxford Movement scholarship has to struggle with this imbalance in the available sources, whereas the broader

<sup>2</sup> Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 30–50.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Nockles and Stewart Brown (eds.), *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World, 1830–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Mark Chapman, *The Fantasy of Reunion: Anglicans, Catholics, and Ecumenism, 1833–1882* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

international dimension of Newman's life and legacy has been nearly lost in the proverbial trees of such abundant literary remains.

New technologies and scholarly techniques offer promising avenues for facing these challenges. The growth during the past decade of online repositories such as the Internet Archive, Google Books, Gallica, and the Hathi Trust Digital Library, has revolutionized the way scholars approach their material, particularly for those working on the nineteenth century. This development has enabled researchers to access and engage with a far broader set of printed source material than had ever been possible in previous years. The concomitant digitization of numerous archival collections and their catalogues, and the relative ease with which one can now locate and obtain unpublished materials from a distance has greatly reduced time and travel constraints, which would have made such international approaches to Newman scholarship unfeasible in the past.

Taking advantage of such developments, this book covers a broad set of sources relating to transnational social and intellectual networks, which were deeply entwined with the early reception of Newman's theory of doctrinal development. In addition to Newman and his circle in England, the study focuses on Nicholas Wiseman's writings, international travels, and activities, as well as those in his circle, which span several national and institutional boundaries. The investigation also focuses on Newman's intellectual exchanges with one of most centrally placed and influential theologians of the age, the Jesuit professor of the Collegio Romano—today the Gregorian University—Giovanni Perrone (1794–1876) and the impact of these exchanges upon those within the orbit of Perrone's intellectual circle in Rome.

It was in large measure through Perrone's writings and activities that Newman's theory of doctrinal development came to prominence in Rome as early as 1847. By way of Perrone's influence, the theory came to play an important role in discussions preceding the definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in the early 1850s. Questions regarding precedent and doctrinal variability in the historical roots of the dogma would provide an occasion for Perrone and others to put the theory of development to use. With Perrone's advocacy, Newman's theory left its imprint upon the very language that the Church came to use in referring to doctrinal variation through history, particularly in the bull *Ineffabilis*, which promulgated the 1854 definition.

Yet this early legacy of the theory of development passed unnoticed in the scholarly literature on Newman and nineteenth-century Catholicism. As will be shown, part of the reason for this blind spot had to do with the inertia of scholarship in twentieth century, its apparent exhaustiveness, and the effect it has had of turning attention away from evidence with the potential to overturn what seemed to be settled narratives. But perhaps just as important has been a certain Anglocentric insularity and the consequent lack of attention that scholarship has shown toward Roman Catholic theology on the European Continent in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Although this book focuses on Newman and the legacy of his famous *Essay*, sustained attention must be given to contemporary developments in Rome as well as in other places to balance the account. Only then will it be possible for a new picture of Newman's influence to emerge, a picture which provides an explanation for why deficiencies in the scholarly literature have persisted for so long.

### ESSAY ON DEVELOPMENT

This narrative turns upon the social life of a text. To begin such a narrative adequately, the text itself must be understood from the standpoint of the author's contemporaries, as emerging from within the narrative of the Oxford Movement and Newman's life. The impact of Newman's *Essay on Development* cannot be separated from the circumstances of its origin or from the traces of those circumstances within the text itself. As is well known, Newman wrote his famous *Essay* while still an Anglican, and on the path to communion with Rome. The *Essay* provided a public rationale for the decision, and represented the course of reasoning that Newman traversed in the months preceding the move.

As one might expect from a work arising out of such circumstances, the *Essay on Development* evinced numerous tensions, ambiguities, and moments of rhetorical silence. Newman proposed the work as a "hypothesis to account for a difficulty," which consisted in how one ought to use history as a testimony for authentic Christian teaching.<sup>4</sup> Newman did not pretend that the *Essay on Development*

<sup>4</sup> *Essay on Development*, 27.

expounded a clinching argument in favor of all Roman Catholic claims, nor even a full-fledged conceptual framework for development itself. To borrow a shorthand term that Newman often used, the composition might be best characterized as an essay in aid of a “view” of Christian doctrine in history.<sup>5</sup> One scholar has even called into question whether Newman’s idea of development should be regarded as a “theory” in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

Such tentative features of the text pose challenges for any investigation, which would seek to examine the discrete contours of *Essay on Development*’s impact. But the *Essay* was more than a mere bricolage of ideas, and the work’s various strands of argument do converge into a coherent, even if permeable web. Hence some attention to the internal features of the text is merited before proceeding.

Central to Newman’s understanding of development was the notion of Christian doctrine as a “living idea,” which remained self-identical but shifted and expanded in expression over the course of history. At times the *Essay on Development* referred to the Christian idea in an objectivistic, almost material sense, as identical with the deposit of revelation. Other times the *Essay* referred to the idea as shifting and expanding in human minds. Neither conception was fully exclusive of the other. And Newman employed the notion in ways that included scripture, the writings of the Fathers, definitions of councils, and liturgical and private devotional experience.

One could critique Newman’s use of the “idea” in the *Essay on Development* as a hopelessly ambiguous superstructure, which could overlay any construal of the Christian past and legitimize any novelty of doctrine. Depending on what one expects from the *Essay* and the circumstances of its reader, this might be regarded as a significant critique. Yet Newman provided his notion of the idea with a basic coherence through the articulation of various supportive principles.

The first was the “dogmatical” principle, which Newman identified in the commitment that the Church maintained for the unity, objectivity, and divine origin of the Christian deposit of faith. This

<sup>5</sup> Newman uses the word itself in a passage where he most clearly states the intention of the *Essay on Development*’s purpose (ibid.).

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Lash, “Literature and Theory: Did Newman Have a ‘Theory’ of Doctrinal Development?” In J. Bastable (ed.), *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays* (Dublin: Veritas, 1978), 161–75. The question of whether Newman’s idea of development constituted a “theory,” is really one of semantics, and since Newman used the term to describe his idea of development, the term will also be used here.

principle helped to distinguish Christianity from ancient speculative systems of philosophy as well as from heresy: the former left little place for revelation in the Christian sense of the term and both left doctrines open to question.<sup>7</sup> It was on account of the dogmatical principle that early Christians tended toward polemics in encounters with conflicting bodies of thought and regarded the condemnation of heresy as a condition for the unity and maintenance of faith.<sup>8</sup>

The *Essay on Development* balanced the dogmatical principle with the “sacramental principle,” which Newman understood as having its archetype in the incarnation.<sup>9</sup> This principle embodied the abiding commitment among Christians that grace manifested itself in and through the history of the Church as a living community. This grace enabled Christianity to spread and adapt itself to innumerable circumstances without losing its fundamental character.<sup>10</sup>

Other principles in the *Essay on Development* included the primacy of faith to reason in conduct and the privileged position of the mystical interpretation of scripture over the literal. Both of these notions were related in various ways to the sacramental and dogmatical principles, and provided Newman with orientation in approaching the monuments of the Christian tradition. The primacy of faith to reason, which will be discussed later on in this study at length, offered Newman a principle for conceiving the dynamism of Christian life through an affirmation of Christian doctrine’s sovereignty over the individual. The mystical interpretation of scripture functioned similarly, in as much as it involved life in evolving dialogue with the biblical text. Although based upon the dogmatical and sacramental principles, these latter notions were more adapted to specific dimensions of the various discourses Newman examined within the Christian tradition and so assumed less prominent roles in the *Essay on Development*. But these principles were no less essential than the dogmatic and sacramental principles in the *Essay on Development*’s rhetorical framework.

The principles provided a schematic for discerning Christianity’s “bold outlines” that “rise out from the records of the past.”<sup>11</sup> But these principles alone were still too vague and elastic to distinguish legitimate developments in Christianity from aberrations in many points of dispute. To address this deficiency, Newman devised seven now-famous “tests” for distinguishing true developments of Christian

<sup>7</sup> *Essay on Development*, 338.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 346–8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

doctrine from corruptions. These included the (1) discernment of a continuity of doctrinal type, (2) continuity of underlying principle, (3) the power of assimilation in new contexts, (4) early anticipation, (5) logical sequence, or elaboration, (6) additions occurring for the preservation of other doctrines or principles, and (7) chronic continuance.

The Council of Ephesus's (431 CE) definition of Mary as *Theotókos*, the God-Bearer, illustrates how Newman's tests functioned. Although one will not find such lofty appellations of Mary in scripture, there are gestures in this direction as well as later witnesses that anticipate the fifth-century definition (tests nos. 1, 4). Because the doctrine emerged amidst discourses regarding the nature of Christ and the critical reception of Hellenistic categories to that end, the Marian doctrine can be understood as a continuation of the principle of the incarnation (test no. 2), an indirect product of the Church's assimilation of Platonic categories (test no. 3), a logical elaboration of Christology (test no. 5), and also a safeguard of the Church's affirmation of the unity of Christ's person and divine nature (test no. 6). Finally, although the doctrine certainly shifted in expression over the centuries, the basic orientation of Christian statements on the matter, and the lack of countervailing witnesses, further underscores the legitimacy of the doctrine (test no. 7).

Anglican theologians generally accepted the first six ecumenical councils without controversy while rejecting many other doctrines defined in later periods. For Newman, this was an arbitrary standard. If one accepted Chalcedon and Ephesus, the burden of proof rested upon one wishing to cast into doubt the validity of subsequent definitions. The theory of development provided Newman with a consistent solution to this difficulty.

The doctrine of purgatory offers a case in point from a later era. Scripture never mentioned purgatory in a direct way, though many have discerned indirect expressions of the idea in the biblical texts and over the course of Christian history (tests nos. 1, 4, and 7). The doctrine may be considered as a logical elaboration (test no. 5) of the intermediate state in scripture before the resurrection.<sup>12</sup> It may also be regarded as a continuation of the practice of penance and of

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 101.



human cooperation with the grace of justification (test no. 2) and as a safeguard against heresies that would undermine these components of the deposit of faith (test no. 6). The expansion of purgatory as a doctrine in the patristic period could further be understood in terms of the power of assimilation (test no. 3), insofar as certain Church fathers employed Platonic doctrines of purification to articulate the idea, for example.<sup>13</sup>

Newman's tests for distinguishing true developments in doctrine from corruptions helped to legitimate his decision to cross over to Rome. The *Essay on Development* did not offer an apology in favor of all doctrines that distinguished the Roman Catholic Church from other Christian bodies. The crux of the issue for Newman consisted in whether there existed a developing institutional authority in Christianity, indeed an infallible authority on religious matters, to which one was bound by faith to submit.<sup>14</sup> Newman seemed acutely aware of the apparent conflict involved in making a rational or seemingly neutral intellectual argument for such a move. He distanced himself from rhetorical strategies in favor of Rome, which would imply that the individual enjoyed unqualified sovereignty in determining religious questions. The problem of individual decision was inescapable for Newman both on a personal and theoretical level. The *Essay on Development* assumed that an individual's adherence to Church teaching rested on the moral authority of conscience, which sought for and also confirmed the legitimacy of external authority. Reason and history alone could only produce probable arguments in favor of Newman's decision.

This final point gestures to an important characteristic about Newman's 1845 text, which must be taken into consideration when examining its early reception. The rhetorical form of Newman's *Essay* assumed the role of presumption, or "antecedent probability," in arriving at truth.<sup>15</sup> It was a given for Newman that history could provide no demonstrative arguments in favor of Roman Catholicism. Such a requirement was at any rate incommensurate with the act of faith. Newman's *Essay on Development* offered instead a series of arguments in favor of development as a general fact and then presented arguments in favor of Roman Catholic positions on issues

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 114–31, see especially, 119–22.

<sup>15</sup> See the section "Presumptive Character of the Proof" (ibid., 131–9).

such as papal authority, purgatory, and Mary. The *Essay* did not claim to argue exhaustively for Roman Catholic claims. Nor did it offer a comprehensive theological framework for understanding development conceptually. As mentioned, one will find no clear articulation of what Newman meant by the “idea” in the *Essay on Development*. Neither will one find more than assertions and illustrations of the sacramental principle. Even the incarnation and Mariological themes in the *Essay*—upon which the dogmatic and sacramental principles were dependent—appear only mutedly in the text.<sup>16</sup> Nor, finally, will one find an overarching set of criteria for applying Newman’s seven tests. These silences created space for human freedom.

And, fittingly, the *Essay on Development* had its origins in a personal act of faith. The text represented the movement of Newman’s mind from the end of December 1844 until his conversion to Rome on October 9 of the following year.<sup>17</sup> The structure of the *Essay* exhibited features of this season in Newman’s life. The text was in fact very hastily written, and though penetrating and at times even arrestingly eloquent, it was also badly edited relative to many of Newman’s other works.<sup>18</sup> Arguments within the *Essay* manifested the simultaneous caution and quiet resolve of Newman’s final step.

These features of the 1845 *Essay*—its tentative and cumulative character, its rhetorical ambiguities, and various connections to Newman’s life, were important factors in the text’s Roman Catholic reception. This makes for a complicated story to tell. Thus, before exploring the reception of the *Essay on Development* directly, a few methodological considerations will be necessary.

<sup>16</sup> Although Robert Andrews’s article “‘Our Pattern of Faith’: The Virgin Mary in John Henry Newman’s Theory of Religious Development,” *Compass* 46.3 (2012): 27–37, mainly focuses on the 1878 edition of Newman’s *Essay on Development*, many of its insights apply to the 1845 edition.

<sup>17</sup> Newman mentioned in the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* that he began writing the *Essay on Development* at the beginning of 1845 (360). This dating is corroborated by Newman’s correspondence from the period. See for example, John Henry Newman to Charles Marriott, s.l., Dec. 14, 1844 (*LD* 10:459); and John Henry Newman to Henry Wilberforce, Littlemore, Mar. 20, 1845 (*LD* 10:603).

<sup>18</sup> For the significant changes that Newman made to the structure of the 1845 *Essay on Development* in the 1878 edition, see Ottis Schreiber, “Appendix: Newman’s Revisions in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*,” in Charles Harrold (ed.), John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1949), 417–35.

## PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATIONS

It is important, first of all, to offer a few remarks on how this study will use the concepts such as “doctrinal development” and “reception,” since the ideas are not as straightforward as they may at first seem and it is in part because scholars have assumed such notions uncritically in the past that ambiguities and distortions remain in the scholarly literature to date.

Because this is a study of the social life of an idea, it would be a mistake to insist upon a definition for doctrinal development that is overly specific, for the concept itself shifted markedly in its basic meaning and connotations in Newman's and others' writings, even during the short time frame of this study. Newman's theory was also intended merely as an essay into the question rather than a comprehensive system and its various strands of argument stood open to conflicting paths of interpretation.<sup>19</sup> After he wrote the *Essay on Development*, the text and the idea associated with it also assumed a course of its own among its various readers, which cannot be traced adequately through examining specific technical terms or citations. Furthermore, Newman often had a role to play in influencing perceptions of his new theory through conversations, letters, lengthier compositions, and the careful procurement of translations. Thus, any working definition of development must be flexible enough to include these features. But there were also multiple other factors at play in the reception of Newman's 1845 *Essay*.

A further historiographical difficulty with examining a concept like doctrinal development has to do with the notion's composite and open-ended character, even aside from ambiguities in the text, which traced back to Newman's life. Broadly, doctrinal development involves the idea that Christian teaching changes over time. But the degree and nature of that change, whether it affects the “substance” of Christianity, its contextual accoutrements only, or something in between, has been debated since Newman's day.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, doctrinal development

<sup>19</sup> See Lash, “Literature and Theory,” 161–75.

<sup>20</sup> Broadly, interpretations of the *Essay on Development* have ranged from those emphasizing the psychological analogy of doctrinal development to those stressing its historical-objective character. For a helpful (though highly idiosyncratic) overview of the history of the *Essay on Development's* interpretation until the post-Vatican II period, see Stanley Jaki, “Introductory Essay,” in John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) (Pinckney, MI: Real View Books, 2003), xxix–cii.