
Daniel Lattier

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JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND GEORGES FLOROVSKY:
AN ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Daniel J. Lattier

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JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND GEORGES FLOROVSKY:
AN ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

By
Daniel J. Lattier

Approved November 12, 2012

Dr. Radu Bordeianu
Associate Professor of Theology
(Committee Chair)

Dr. George Worgul
Professor of Theology
(Committee Member)

Dr. Bogdan Bucur
Assistant Professor of Theology
(Committee Member)

Dr. James Swindal
Dean, McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts
Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Maureen O’Brien
Chair, Department of Theology
Professor of Theology
This dissertation examines the idea of doctrinal development in the writings of
John Henry Newman and Georges Florovsky, who are both representative thinkers in
their respective Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Newman’s theory of
doctrinal development proposes that divine revelation has been given once and for all, but
that the Church is still growing in its understanding of this revelation. This growth
sometimes results in new doctrinal definitions, which require confirmation of their truth
by an infallible authority. The essence of Newman’s theory has been received as
compatible with Roman Catholic theology, and constitutes a hermeneutical lens through
which Roman Catholics view the categories of revelation, Tradition, and authority. On
the contrary, many leading Orthodox theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first
centuries have expressed serious reservations about the idea of doctrinal development,
leading one to wonder if there are some unexamined hermeneutical disagreements between Roman Catholics and Orthodox on these categories.

In order to respond to these Orthodox reservations, I constructed the dissertation as a dialogue between Newman and Florovsky on doctrinal development. More specifically, I arranged the dissertation as a dialogue between Newman and Florovsky on their understandings of revelation, Tradition, and authority—categories implied in the idea of doctrinal development. The first goal of the dissertation is to show that Newman’s theory of doctrinal development is in fact compatible with Orthodox understandings of revelation and Tradition. The understanding of authority in Newman’s theory does not currently share this compatibility, but dialogue does offer the opportunity for mutual enrichment of Newman’s and Florovsky’s thought on this category. A second goal is to expose Newman’s theory to Orthodox categories of thought in the hopes of further developing Newman’s theory itself. One of the principal developments that results from this exposure is the clarification that Newman’s theory is a function of the incarnational character of his theology. Showing that the affirmation of doctrinal development follows from an incarnational, or Christocentric, theology represents the third and final goal of this dissertation.
DEDICATION

To Kelly, John, Finn, James, and Alethea.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Above all, thanks are due to Christ, who provided me with the strength to endure the ascetical trials that attend dissertation writing.

I could not have completed this dissertation, much less pursued graduate work, without the unwavering faith and constant encouragement of my lovely wife, Kelly. She and my children sacrificed much over the past six years so that my studies could reach fruition in this work. Thank you, honey, for continuing to run the race with me. I truly do not deserve you.

I would like to give special thanks to John and Kathy Corrigan—my father and mother-in-law—whose support also made my graduate work possible. They have also made great sacrifices so that I could complete my studies. Their support sprang not only from their love of me, their daughter, and their grandchildren, but also from their love of the Church, and their belief that my work might somehow contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ.

I would also like to thank my father, Doug, and my mother Mary and her husband Manfred, for their help during these years of my graduate school sojourn.

I am grateful for the mentorship and gentle guidance of my dissertation director, Fr. Radu Bordeianu. He first introduced me to the writings of Georges Florovsky, and it was in his class that the idea for this dissertation first emerged. Fr. Radu was always prompt in responding to me during the dissertation process, and his comments and edits helped to improve my abilities as a writer. I look forward to further collaboration with him in future years.
I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee—Dr. George Worgul and Dr. Bogdan Bucur—for reading my dissertation on rather short notice, and for their kind comments during the defense. In addition, I am truly appreciative of the entire theology faculty of Duquesne University, who provided me with a thorough theological education, and an initiation into the academic life.

And finally, I would like to thank my good friend, Matthew Baker, for his magnanimity in pointing me toward invaluable resources on Florovsky, and in carefully reading and editing the drafts of my chapters. He was really the fourth member of my dissertation committee. He is one of the greatest scholars I know, and his writings and our conversations remain a consistent source of edification to me.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**WORKS OF NEWMAN**

I would like to thank the National Institute of Newman Studies for providing online editions of many of Newman’s writings that I have used in this dissertation on newmanreader.org.

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V.M. 1,2  *The Via Media.* London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1901.

V.V.  *Verses on Various Occasions.* London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903.

**WORKS OF FLOROVSKY**

Unless otherwise noted, references to Florovsky’s works are taken from the *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* edited by Richard Haugh from 1974 to 1989. The *Collected Works* consist of 14 volumes, and I refer to each of these volumes as “V” followed by the number (“V1,” “V2,” etc.). The volumes were first published by Nordland Publishing Co. in Belmont, MA, and then, by Büchervertriebsanstalt of Vaduz, Liechtenstein.
INTRODUCTION

In the title of his important 2003 lecture, Orthodox scholar Andrew Louth asks the question: “Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology?” Louth particularly singles out John Henry Newman’s theory of the development of doctrine, which posited that the Church grows in its understanding of divine revelation over the course of time. Louth rightly recognizes that there has not been a great deal of explicit Orthodox reflection on doctrinal development, and that he is thus “venturing on to virgin territory as an Orthodox theologian choosing to discuss this topic.” He eventually answers the question posed in his title in the negative, concluding that “the idea of development is not an acceptable category in Orthodox theology.”

Other modern Orthodox authors have also rejected the idea of doctrinal development, leading one to wonder whether there is an Orthodox consensus against this category. In his essay “Tradition and Traditions,” Vladimir Lossky cautions those who would “dare to speak, against all the evidence, of a collective progress in the knowledge of the Christian mystery, a progress which would be due to a ‘dogmatic development.’” John Behr writes that “From an Orthodox perspective there is therefore no such thing as dogmatic development.” In one of the only Roman Catholic treatments of Orthodoxy and doctrinal development, Aidan Nichols writes, “A majority, it may be, of Orthodox writers register serious reservations about what they take to be the Catholic theory of

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doctrinal development.” These writers typically direct their objections at the understanding of revelation and Tradition they believe is implied in the idea of doctrinal development.

The above-named Orthodox authors who reject doctrinal development either belong to, or are the heirs of, what has been dubbed the “Neo-patristic” school of thought. This designation originated in Georges Florovsky’s repeated call for Orthodox theology to undertake a “Neo-patristic synthesis.” The precise meaning of this call continues to be debated, but it is generally understood as a call for a renewed return to, and appropriation of, the Fathers of the Church. “Neo-patristic” was first applied as a moniker for a particular school of Orthodox thought by Alexander Schmemann, who differentiated it from the “Russian” school represented by such thinkers as Sergei Bulgakov, Vladimir Soloviev, Pavel Florensky, and Nicholas Berdyaev, among others. It is the Neo-patristic school that gained ascendancy in Orthodox thought in the twentieth century, a fact that has led many contemporary authors to call for a re-reception of the Russian school.

Paul Valliere (who is Episcopalian) is among those voices calling for such a re-reception. In *Modern Russian Theology—Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key*, Valliere argues that the differing attitudes toward doctrinal development constitutes a major distinguishing characteristic of the Neo-patristic and Russian schools of thought. He portrays the Russian school as standing for a creative and

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living understanding of tradition that allows for dogmatic development. Soloviev’s essay “Dogmicheskoe razvitie tserkvi v sviazi s voprosom o soedinenii tserkvei” (‘The Development of Dogma in the Church in Connection with the Question of Church Union”) represents the Russian school’s lengthiest advocacy of the idea of doctrinal development. 7 Bulgakov, in his seminal essay “Dogmat i dogmatika” (‘Dogma and Dogmatic Theology”), also supports development as the task of theology. 8 Valliere accuses the Neo-patristic school of thought, on the other hand, of operating with a “hegemonic concept of tradition [that] entails as its corollary the rejection of the historical development of dogma except in the formal sense.” 9

One of my goals in this dissertation is to argue against the notion that there exists a Neo-patristic, or Orthodox, consensus against doctrinal development. As Louth intimated, Orthodox reflection on this issue has been scant, and a more thorough engagement with doctrinal development seems a prerequisite of determining whether or not there exists an Orthodox consensus for or against development. Moreover, influential Neo-patristic theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have endorsed some form of the idea of doctrinal development. This list includes Dumitru Staniloae, John Meyendorff, Thomas Hopko, and none other than the primogenitor of the so-called Neo-patristic school, Georges Florovsky.

More importantly, I believe that the idea of doctrinal development accords with the Orthodox understanding of revelation and Tradition. Without question, the theory of

7 In Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov’eva, supplementary vol. 2 (Brussels: Izdatel’stvo Zhinz’n’s Bogom, Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1969), 1-67.
9 Paul Valliere, Modern Russian Theology—Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 373-403. The quotation is taken from 377.
doctrinal development that has had the most influence upon modern thought is that of John Henry Newman. He most famously formulated it in his 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*—which Yves Congar judged as “the locus classicus for the question [of doctrinal development]”¹⁰—though one can find the principles of this theory in his earlier works, and refined in later works. Since the second half of the twentieth-century, Newman’s theory has become the received understanding of doctrinal development in Roman Catholic theology. Bishop Basil Christopher Butler even made the claim that section 8 of Vatican II’s *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation—Dei Verbum*—“is practically a précis of Newman’s theory of the development of doctrine.”¹¹

The starting point of Newman’s theory is that revelation is similar to other “ideas” that develop, or attain greater complexity, in the minds of men and women over the course of time. In his own words,

> the increase and expansion of the Christian Creed and Ritual, and the variations which have attended the process in the case of individual writers and Churches, are the necessary attendants on any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart, and has had any wide or extended dominion; that, from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as being received and transmitted by minds not inspired and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation.¹²

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¹² *Dev.*, 29-30.
Newman’s description of the theory of development contains the following principles pertaining to revelation and Tradition: divine revelation has been given once and for all; it has been communicated through human media; the understanding of revelation grows, or develops, in human minds as time passes; and this development does not imply a substantial addition to revelation itself. These principles, I contend, constitute the essence of Newman’s theory.

In order to both respond to the supposed Orthodox rejection of doctrinal development and provide a fuller Orthodox engagement with doctrinal development, I have constructed this dissertation as a dialogue between Newman and Florovsky. Florovsky is a representative thinker in modern Orthodox thought, especially on the subjects of revelation and Tradition that are central to the concept of development. The philosopher Nicholas Lossky deemed Florovsky “the most Orthodox of modern Russian theologians: he is anxious strictly to adhere to the Holy Writ and patristic tradition.”

His son, Vladimir Lossky, similarly regarded Florovsky as “le plus grand [théologien orthodoxe] peut être de cet époque.” And Rowan Williams has referred to Florovsky as “the most lucid and systematic” of the Russian émigré theologians. I will attempt to show numerous points of agreement between Newman and Florovsky on the concept of doctrinal development. Because of their eminent place within their respective traditions—Newman in the Roman Catholic tradition, and Florovsky in the Orthodox—a

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dialogue between these two thinkers on the subject of doctrinal development has
ecumenical significance.

Not only is Florovsky a representative Orthodox thinker, but his position on
doctrinal development is also particularly interesting among modern Orthodox authors.
In many essays, Florovsky registered rejections of development for what he believed it
implied about revelation and the theology of history. Yet, in his famous 1937 work *Ways
of Russian Theology*, one finds Florovsky defending Soloviev’s understanding of
development as “a method for dogmatic theology,” though this sentiment did not negate
his other reservations.¹⁶ Moreover, contrary to Lewis Shaw’s contention that “Florovsky
refused to grant Newman’s idea of the development of doctrine,” Florovsky appeared to
endorse it in print in a German encyclopedia article on “Tradition” in 1960.¹⁷ It seems,
then, that Florovsky himself engaged in an ecumenical dialogue about doctrinal
development in his writings. I will explain how Florovsky could both reject and affirm
the idea of doctrinal development during the course of this dissertation.

The fundamental agreement I posit between Newman and Florovsky on doctrinal
development perhaps stops short on the issue of authority. In his *Essay on Development*,
Newman maintained that “an infallible developing authority [is] to be expected” who
could distinguish, with certainty, between true developments and false accretions.¹⁸
Louth seems to be unique among Orthodox authors in including this aspect of Newman’s
theory in his rejection of doctrinal development.¹⁹ As will become clear, Newman and

¹⁶ V6, 159.
¹⁷ Florovsky, “Tradition,” in *Welkirchenlexicon*, ed. F.H. Littell and Hans H. Walz (Stuttgart: Kreuz-
Verlag, 1960), cols. 1469-1475. I would like to thank Matthew Baker for allowing me to consult his
English translation of this article.
¹⁸ *Dev.*, 75-92.
Florovsky do indeed disagree on the particular doctrinal role of authority. Nevertheless, putting Newman and Florovsky in dialogue on the question of authority in relation to doctrinal development has the potential to bear ecumenical fruit, for it brings to light some aspects of this “Church-dividing” issue of authority that are infrequently discussed.

The rejection of doctrinal development by many Orthodox authors provides the catalyst for a second goal of this dissertation, namely, the development of Newman’s theory of development. Newman held that an idea develops through exposure to other ideas, which draw out “the aspects of an idea… [bringing] them into consistency and form.”

Newman’s theology was marked by the influence of the Eastern Fathers of the Church, and even upon his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, his theology retained many Eastern characteristics throughout his life. By putting Newman’s theory of development in dialogue with Florovsky and Eastern categories of thought, I hope to elucidate its Eastern character. Furthermore, exposing Newman’s theory to Eastern Orthodox theology will help bring greater clarity to its underlying theological principles, will shed light on some of the questions that still surround it, and will provide fodder for critiquing some of its lacunae.

Many similarities between Newman and Florovsky will emerge as this dissertation progresses. Monsignor Michel D’Herbigny made the claim in the title of his 1918 work that Soloviev was “a Russian Newman.” However, Florovsky is a much closer parallel to Newman than Soloviev. Florovsky, like Newman, was a much more ecclesial thinker, and also like Newman, has been received as such by his communion.

Scripture and the Tradition as primarily communicated through the Fathers of the

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20 Dev., 38.
Church—both East and West—were the shared starting points, objects, and bounds of their theologies. And as a Roman Catholic reviewer of *Ways of Russian Theology* noted, there is an obvious analogy between the re-appropriation of the Fathers called for by Newman’s Oxford Movement and Florovsky’s “Neo-patristic synthesis.”

Their common rootedness in the ecumenical patristic witness is undoubtedly the principal source of their shared theological emphases. Newman would not have been privy to the Russian theological inheritance, or, the “ways of Russian theology,” that had formed the hermeneutic of Florovsky. He was also not well versed in Orthodox thought contemporary to him. His reflections on the “Greek Church” are confined to his introduction to William Palmer’s *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church* and a few scattered references throughout his writings and letters and diaries.

Florovsky, on the other hand, operated with an almost unparalleled ecumenical knowledge base that included familiarity with the writings of Newman. The exact influence of Newman on Florovsky is worthy of further examination than this dissertation can undertake. George Williams has remarked on Florovsky’s “appreciation of English belles lettres,” which included “a special interest in Walter Scott… certain Victorian novelists… [and] the Caroline Divines.” Florovsky appears to also have had an interest in Newman, whom James Joyce referred to as the “greatest” prose stylist of the Victorian age. Between 1929 and 1939, Florovsky’s involvement with the Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius frequently took him to England, where he

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perhaps further cultivated his knowledge of Newman.\textsuperscript{25} I have only found positive references to “the great Newman,” as Florovsky calls him, in the latter’s writings.\textsuperscript{26}

The common patristic inheritance marked Newman’s and Florovsky’s writings with their most significant shared emphasis, namely, the incarnational, or Christocentric, character of their theologies. Recognition of this emphasis leads to the third goal of this dissertation: to show that affirmation of the idea of doctrinal development flows from such an incarnational theology. “The main theme of Patristic theology was always the Mystery of Christ’s Person… this Christological concern permeated the whole theological thinking of the Ancient Church,” writes Florovsky.\textsuperscript{27} Certain traits and themes emerged from the patristic reflection on Christ as codified in the judgments of the first seven ecumenical councils. These traits and themes were thought to be affirmed by the Incarnation, and thus, were thought to belong to the character of Christianity. They included the idea that God’s assumption of human flesh affirmed both divine and human personhood, that freedom and action flow from personhood, that history is the growth of the Body of Christ and is thus real and meaningful, and that reason and life contribute to this growth.

These traits also mark the theologies of Newman and Florovsky, who both affirm doctrinal development. I will attempt to show that the idea of doctrinal development also bears these marks of the Incarnation: it affirms that God’s personal and free revelation of Himself calls for the free response of human persons in word and deed; that His revelation was a series of historical events in particular times and places, recounted using

\textsuperscript{25} Andrew Blane, ed., \textit{Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman} (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 69.
\textsuperscript{26} V13, 157.
\textsuperscript{27} V4, 24.
particular language and concepts, and that human history constitutes a witness to these events using men’s and women’s own particularity, historicity, and conceptual framework; that God’s salvific activity was aimed at the progressive deification of men and women in the Church; and that reflection on this activity contributes to this deification, and is a testament to the growth of the Church.

**State of Research**


This dissertation also represents the lengthiest correlation of Newman’s theory of doctrinal development with Orthodox categories of thought. Louth’s essay directly engages aspects of Newman’s understanding of development, but Louth does not develop the Orthodox challenges to Newman at any great length. Dumitru Staniloae’s very interesting essay published in *Sobornost* in 1969—“The Orthodox Conception of
Tradition and the Development of Doctrine”—brings to light some distinctive contributions Orthodox theology could potentially make to the understanding of doctrinal development, but Staniloae does not specifically reference Newman in the essay. Jaroslav Pelikan has written of doctrinal development, and even specifically critiqued Newman’s theory in his Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena. But Pelikan wrote this work as a Lutheran, and thus, did not make a conscious effort to employ Orthodox categories of thought in his critique.

In spite of Florovsky’s influence on Orthodox thought in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, not many direct treatments of his thought exist—a phenomenon that is beginning to be rectified. The best comprehensive works on Florovsky’s thought are Lewis Shaw’s unpublished dissertation An Introduction to the Study of Georges Florovsky, Christoph Künkel’s Totus Christus: Die Theologie Georges V. Florovskys, George Williams’ lengthy article “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky: His American Career (1948-1965),” and Matthew Baker’s recent Masters’ thesis, “Neo-Patristic Synthesis”: An Examination of a Key Hermeneutical Paradigm in the Thought of Georges V. Florovsky. This dissertation represents the first lengthy Roman Catholic treatment of Florovsky on the questions of revelation and Tradition that permeated his oeuvre, and the only lengthy Roman Catholic treatment of Florovsky in the English language. The lengthiest Catholic works on Florovsky—both on his ecclesiology—are Yves-Noël Lelouvier’s 1968 Perspectives russes sur l’Église. Un theologien contemporain: Georges Florovsky, and Miguel de Salis Amaral’s more recent Dos Visiones Ortodoxas de la Iglesia: Bulgakov y Florovsky (2003). Other recent dissertations on Florovsky include Andrew Parlee’s The Epistemology of George V. Florovsky (2006), which argues from a
Calvinist perspective that Florovsky’s epistemology reduces to fideism, and Sergei
Nikolaev’s 2008 *Church and Reunion in the Theology of Sergii Bulgakov and Georges
Florovsky, 1918-1940*, which examines Bulgakov’s and Florovsky’s divergent views of
ecumenism from a liberal Protestant perspective.

**LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The dialogical nature of this dissertation necessitates the imposition of some
constraints upon the scope of treatment of each author. I do not engage in any extensive
dialogue between each author’s understanding of development and his respective
ecclesial tradition. Thus, I do not devote a great deal of space to comparing and
contrasting Newman’s theory of development with theories of development proposed by
other Catholic and Protestant authors. I also do not devote a great deal of space to putting
Florovsky in dialogue with other contemporary Orthodox authors. Where I do mention
other Orthodox authors, it is in order to more fully elucidate Florovsky’s understanding
of development and his consonance with Newman. In a future work, I hope to provide a
general overview of the Orthodox response to doctrinal development in the modern era.

In general, my treatment of Newman and Florovsky is more synthetic than
chronological. The main concern of my dissertation is to highlight the abiding themes—or “first principles,” as Newman refers to them—in Newman’s and Florovsky’s
understandings of doctrinal development, rather than the changing application of them.
Nevertheless, when my work of synthesis necessitates it, I will point out shifts that
occurred in Newman’s and Florovsky’s positions on revelation, Tradition, or authority.
Florovsky is a polarizing figure in Orthodox theology today, and I will attempt to nuance
his thought in order to avoid some of the hasty generalizations about him that are in part
the result of bracketing certain statements and isolating them from his entire written corpus. Nevertheless, there is a great need for more detailed chronological work on Florovsky than I will be able to undertake here.

A more thorough treatment of the development of Florovsky’s thought would consult a broader array of texts than I will here consider. My dissertation will engage writings that are rarely taken into account in evaluations of Florovsky. Nevertheless, I do not have facility with German, and thus, I will not be able to engage with Künkel’s book. Because I do not have facility with Russian, I will not be able to consult some of Florovsky’s essays from his Eurasian period of the 1920s, nor some of the letters that are currently being reprinted in Russia. I will also not be able to plumb the depths of Florovsky’s unpublished papers and correspondence housed at the Princeton Library for this dissertation, though I hope to do so for the purposes of future works.

My engagement with Florovsky will principally rely on his writings contained in the fourteen-volume English *Collected Works*. This reliance is somewhat justified given the synthetic concerns of my work. Plus, as Shaw points out, “after 1935 Florovsky took up English as his academic vehicle of expression,” and “wished the translations of his works… to supersede the Russian originals.”28 Nevertheless, there are numerous difficulties with the *Collected Works* that should be kept in mind, including the fact that they are organized thematically rather than chronologically. More troubling is that the editor (Richard Haugh) performed surgery on some of Florovsky’s essays—some were re-titled, broken up, and even re-attached to other works.29 There is a great need for a

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29 Blane recounts that Florovsky began to oppose the misleading changes in the *Collected Works* by volume 3, and even hired a lawyer to mediate between him and Nordland Press. However, Florovsky’s opposition was cut short by his death in 1979 (Blane, 150, 209n28). Later volumes (beginning with Volume 6) were
new edition of Florovsky’s collected works, or better, a true complete works. Until that
time, it is best to refer to Florovsky’s original, though sometimes less accessible,
publications.

CHAPTE RS

Chapter One: Newman and Florovsky on the Mode and Character of Revelation

In Chapter One I expound upon Newman’s and Florovsky’s understanding of the
concept of revelation, which is foundational for their understandings of doctrinal
development. How doctrine develops, I argue, depends upon the way in which God
communicates this doctrine, or, revelation. Newman and Florovsky describe revelation
using their own idiosyncratic language: Newman has recourse to the British empiricist
terms of “idea” and “impression”; Florovsky refers to revelation as “event” and
“experience.” Nevertheless, both authors’ understandings of revelation are marked by a
Christocentric character inasmuch as they portray the Incarnation as the central and
determining historical event in a series of divine, personal, and free events—aimed at
men’s and women’s deification—in which God calls for an active human reception and
response in thought and deed. These characteristics they ascribe to the event of
revelation will also mark the character of the Church’s response to this revelation, i.e., the
Church’s development of doctrine. I will also seek to dispel the charge that Newman’s
understanding of development promotes the idea of new revelation. In addition, I will
discuss the implications of Newman and Florovsky’s shared contention that the entirety
of revelation dwells in the “mind of the Church.”

published by Büchervertriebsanstalt after Nordland went bankrupt. An intended volume of Florovsky’s
sermons and homiletical writings was never published.

xxv
Chapter Two: Newman and Florovsky on Tradition and Doctrinal Development

Chapter Two deals more directly with the idea of doctrinal development, which is often considered synonymous with the concept of Tradition. I will show that Newman and Florovsky both view the history of the Church as one of doctrinal development in which the members of the Church actively respond to revelation through their reason and life. The Christological character of Tradition is more explicit in Florovsky, who portrays the witness of reason and life to revelation (i.e., doctrinal development) as contributing to the growth of the Body of Christ in history. My treatment of Newman and Florovsky on Tradition will raise some of the more interesting and debated questions surrounding doctrinal development, such as the following: the ability of human language to convey the mystery of revelation, the appropriateness of using the organic metaphor to describe the life of the Church, and whether or not doctrinal development corresponds to the growth of the Church in holiness. In the Dialogue section of this chapter, I will compare and contrast Newman’s and Florovsky’s answers to these questions. In addition, I will attempt to reconcile Florovsky’s apparently contradictory views on doctrinal development.

Chapter Three: Newman and Florovsky on Doctrinal Development and Authority

In this final chapter, I will explain Newman’s and Florovsky’s positions on the role of Church authority in the process of doctrinal development. Newman believed that recognition of doctrinal development in the Church’s history necessitated the recognition of an infallible authority who could definitively distinguish true developments from false. He maintained that this authority—vested in the Magisterium whose head is the pope,
and deriving from the presence and guidance of the Spirit in the Church—served as an aid to the certitude of the members of the Church, who are not capable of achieving this certitude about the truth of every doctrinal formula on their own. Newman’s descriptions of authority are permeated by his incarnational emphasis. Florovsky, on the other hand, did not ascribe as clear a role to formal authority in doctrinal development. He acknowledges that the bishops rightfully give voice to the mind of the Church, but he does not believe that this act of voicing the Church’s teaching serves as a formal guarantee of its truth. Yet, Florovsky also frames his understanding of authority within his Christological hermeneutic. In the Dialogue section, I will examine whether or not one can judge Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of authority on their Christological merits, and will also highlight the interesting ecumenical questions raised by a consideration of authority’s role in doctrinal development.

**Conclusion**

In the Conclusion, I will offer a brief overview of each chapter and describe how it contributed to addressing the three goals of this dissertation that I outlined in the Introduction. I will also briefly discuss the potential intra-Orthodox and ecumenical implications of my study.
CHAPTER ONE: NEWMAN AND FLOROVSKY ON THE MODE AND CHARACTER OF REVELATION

The category of divine revelation is fundamental to the concept of the development of doctrine. Other authors have recognized this point. Henri de Lubac, in his groundbreaking 1948 essay "The Problem of the Development of Dogma," states that having an accurate idea of the "fact of revelation" constitutes the "core of the problem" of doctrinal development.30 Herbert Hammans, in a 1967 essay on doctrinal development, similarly writes, "Any theory about the development of dogma rests essentially on the idea of revelation."31 It is unsurprising, then, to find that Newman’s theory of doctrinal development follows from particular claims he made about divine revelation. More specifically, I believe that Newman’s understanding of doctrinal development follows from his understanding of the mode in which God reveals Himself, and the character of this revelation.

In this dissertation, I am arguing that Newman’s theory of doctrinal development is congruent with Florovsky’s theology. In order to successfully argue this thesis, I need to first establish that Florovsky’s understanding of revelation is congruent with that operative in Newman’s theory of development. As I will show, both Newman and Florovsky portray revelation as consisting of God’s personal, and thus free, acts in history for the purpose of men’s and women’s deification. I will also show that both Newman and Florovsky perceive a need for an active human response to divine revelation. What is more, they believe this activity follows from the activity evident in

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God’s revelation of Himself. They therefore understand this activity to consist of men’s and women’s free and personal response to revelation in history through their life and thought, or, their faith and reason. As I will show, Newman and Florovsky understand this activity to mark even the human person’s, and the Church’s, initial reception of revelation. As I will argue in Chapter Two, doctrinal development constitutes the continuation of this active response.

Along with these similarities, certain differences will emerge in Newman’s and Florovsky’s respective understandings of revelation. However, I will argue in the Dialogue section of Chapter One that none of these differences constitutes a fundamental disagreement about the mode and character of revelation, and thus, they do not mitigate my attempt to argue for the consonance between Newman’s theory of doctrinal development and Florovsky’s theology. Rather, I believe that Florovsky’s understanding of revelation provides opportunities for the development of the understanding of revelation operative in Newman’s theory of doctrinal development.

**1.1: Newman on the Mode and Character of Revelation**

By the term “mode of revelation,” I refer to the manner in which God communicates Himself to humanity. In writing of Newman’s understanding of the mode of revelation, I begin with a necessary caveat, namely, that Newman was clear that the way in which God communicates Himself to human beings is forever shrouded in mystery in this life. He understood that the language he used to write about the mode of revelation was merely analogical. In the face of a mystery such as God’s communication of himself to human beings, Newman knew that reasonings ultimately fall short: “not
even the Catholic reasonings and conclusions…are worthy of the Divine Verities which
they represent, but are the truth only in as full a measure as our minds can admit it; the
truth as far as they go, and under the conditions of thought which human feebleness
imposes.”32 Yet reason we must, as Newman recognized, and some of our reasonings are
nearer approximations to the truth than others.33

As others have noted, Newman’s understanding of the mode of revelation has its
roots in the empiricist schema of “object—impression—idea.”34 Applied to knowledge
derived from sense perception in general, this schema means that when the senses
perceive an object that is external to them, that object makes an impression on them that
is coterminously the source of ideas, or reflections, on the part of the beholder. Applied
to revelation, James Cameron explains the schema of object-impression-idea as follows:

    Revelation, then, is of an object that is given, known in us by an impression which
    is self-authenticating in the way the impressions of normal sense perception
    authenticate the reality of the objects to which they correspond. Such impressions
    prompt us to analyse and describe their objects, and the validity of such analysis
    and description rests upon the authenticity of the original perception.35

I understand Cameron’s interpretation of Newman’s application of the schema to
revelation as follows: 1) God is the object of revelation; 2) the impression is both the
action of God in communicating Himself, and the initial reception of that communication

32 U.S., 350.
34 J.M. Cameron, introduction to An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine: The Edition of 1845,
Merrigan, Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman,
Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs, no. 7 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992), 82. Several scholars
have attempted to compare Newman’s empiricist vocabulary with that of Hume and Locke. While
Newman was certainly indebted to Hume and Locke, his use of the empiricist vocabulary is also very much
his own, and thus, these comparisons are not extremely illuminating.
Symposium, ed. J. Coulson and A.M. Allchin (London: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 81-82. See also J.M.
by human beings; and 3) the idea is the human reflection on the object as mediated by the impression.

In the following paragraphs, I will examine Newman’s designation of revelation as “object” and “impression” in order to elucidate what Newman is trying to communicate about the mode and character of revelation. I will leave the discussion of revelation as “idea” to the second chapter. It has been frequently noted that Newman was not stringently consistent with his religious vocabulary. An example of this inconsistency is his sometimes interchangeable use of the terms “impression” and “idea.”

It is also true that Newman believed the impression made by an object on the human mind simultaneously becomes a source of reflection, or, an idea. However, I will argue in Chapter Two that, more often than not, Newman’s use of the term “idea” seems to correspond to the human response to, or reception of, revelation in thought and word. In other words, Newman’s “idea” seems to correspond to the traditioning of revelation, or, to doctrinal development. “Impression,” on the other hand, seems to specially pertain to the initial revelatory moment.

A. GOD AS THE “OBJECT” OF REVELATION

I include within Newman’s understanding of God as “object” three emphases of Newman’s theology of revelation: 1) revelation’s origin is external to human beings; 2)
the object of revelation is one; and 3) this object is not an abstraction, but a concrete person.

Newman’s designation of God as the object of revelation conveys the simple truth that revelation is an existential given that originates outside of its (human) recipients. “By objective truth,” writes Newman, “is meant the Religious System considered as existing in itself, external to this or that particular mind.”37 Newman considers divine revelation in particular to consist in the objective “manifestation of the Invisible Divine Power…”38 In his first lengthy treatment of doctrinal development—his fifteenth Oxford University Sermon entitled “The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine” (1843)—Newman maintains that religious objects are analogous to the objects perceived by the senses, whose corresponding reflections generated in the human mind “[force] on us a persuasion of their reality from the spontaneous congruity and coincidence of these accompaniments, as if they could not be creations of our minds, but were the images of external and independent beings.”39 Newman did not regard God’s invisibility as a detriment to the persuasiveness of His reality, for he always regarded the invisible world as more real than the visible world. Hence his position that “Almighty God, we know, exists more really and absolutely than any of those fellow-men whose existence is conveyed to us through the senses…”40

Newman’s focus on the externality of the object of revelation should be considered in relation to his historical context. His life spanned most of the nineteenth century—that “wonderful age” in which “the enlargement of the circle of secular

37 Ess., 1: 34.
38 Dev., 86.
39 U.S., 331. By the term “analogous,” Newman does not mean to claim that religious objects are not impressed upon human beings by means of the senses, as I will explain below.
40 P.S., 4: 202.
knowledge just now is simply a bewilderment…” He believed that the rapid increase of secular knowledge, and the “confident tone of [its] schools,” had bred in the Western world “nothing else than [a] deep, plausible skepticism…” that engendered an atheistic materialism.\(^{41}\) He elsewhere includes this skepticism and materialism under the umbrella term “Liberalism.” In his “Biglietto Speech” delivered upon receiving the cardinal’s hat in 1879, Newman reflected that, “For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion.”\(^{42}\) He defined this Liberalism as

> the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another… It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion, as true. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, not miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy.\(^{43}\)

Perhaps spurred on by the proliferation of Liberalism in religion during his lifetime, Newman increased his use of the term “objective” in reference to the human reception of revelation from the 1845 to the 1878 edition of the *Essay on Development*.\(^{44}\) His apparent concern was to emphasize that Christianity and its “object” was not something that originated in the human mind.

An instance of the aforementioned inconsistency of Newman’s religious vocabulary arises in the fifteenth Oxford University Sermon in regard to the term “object.” There Newman vacillates between references to the “Object of Faith” and the “Objects of Faith.” He deems God the “great Object of Faith” and the separate dogmas

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\(^{41}\) *Apo.*, 232, 233.


\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Nicholas Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos Press, 1975), 47. One of the most valuable aspects of Lash’s wonderful work on Newman is his careful comparison of the 1878 edition of Newman’s *Essay on Development* with the 1845 edition.
of Christianity, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, as the “Objects of Faith.”

Suffice it to say that Newman’s use of both the singular and plural for the object of revelation results in unnecessary confusion. Within the sermon, however, it is clear that Newman understands the dogmas mentioned not as separable objects of revelation alongside God, but as propositions formulated as a result of the Church’s reflection on the one object of revelation.

Indeed, one of the principal tenets of Newman’s theory of doctrinal development is that the entirety of revelation constitutes a unity or a whole. As I will discuss below, it is Newman’s position that the mind of the Church can implicitly possess the idea of revelation as a whole that allows him to label new doctrines as “developments” rather than new revelations. Newman assigns the characteristic of unity to revelation because of its source in the one God: “Surely, if Almighty God is ever one and the same, and is revealed to us as one and the same, the true inward impression of Him, made on the recipient of the revelation, must be one and the same…” Newman sees this doctrine of God’s oneness as not only a foundation of the theory of doctrinal development, but “the foundation of all religion” as well, as it is a conclusion reachable through human reason.

Newman appears to arrive at the conclusion that revelation is one because its divine source is one through metaphysical reasoning. Such metaphysical reasoning is also behind his Platonic contention that any object is a unity in spite of the variety of the aspects through which men and women view it. After all, men and women cannot reflect

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45 U.S., 329-337.
47 U.S., 328.
48 G.A., 94.
on these aspects all-at-once, and thus, the conclusion that they all belong to the same object cannot be arrived at purely through experience; it involves in part a metaphysical leap. Jan Walgrave and Terrence Merrigan are correct in claiming that Newman’s reasoning is principally carried out by what the former refers to as his “practical psychologism,” and the latter as his “philosophical realism.” But, as Walgrave clarifies, “every great system of philosophy must have a basis in metaphysics... [and Newman’s] metaphysical intuition, therefore, is the highly conscious background of all his intellectual procedures.”

Newman emphasized that this unity that is the object of the Christian’s faith is no mere monad, or abstraction, but a concrete person. In fact, he held that one purpose of divine revelation was to give knowledge of God’s person: “how great an addition of fulness and exactness is made to our mental image of the Divine Personality and Attributes, by the light of Christianity. And, indeed, to give us a clear and sufficient object for our faith, is one main purpose of the supernatural Dispensations of Religion.” Divine revelation provides “an addition of fulness and exactness” to what Newman refers to as “natural revelation.” Here a brief explanation of Newman’s estimation of natural revelation is necessary in order to more fully understand the role he ascribes to divine revelation.

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51 *G.A.*, 107.
According to Newman, natural revelation and the forms of religion derived from it “mean the knowledge of God, of His Will, and of our duties towards Him…”\textsuperscript{52} The primary and most authoritative source of this natural knowledge that pertains to God is conscience. Newman operates with the Thomistic definition of conscience as “the practical judgment or dictate of reason, by which we judge what \textit{hic et nunc} is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.”\textsuperscript{53} He also describes conscience as the human apprehension of the natural law, which reflects the divine law.\textsuperscript{54} However, Newman also assigns a revelatory function to conscience. When a human person does right or wrong, and feels a consequent sense of either “approbation” or “blame,” Newman holds that conscience “impress[es] the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive.”\textsuperscript{55} Because conscience so clearly impresses these characteristics of God on men and women, Newman famously referred to it as the “aboriginal Vicar of Christ.”\textsuperscript{56}

Other sources of natural knowledge about God include “the voice of mankind” and “the course of the world,” by which Newman means, respectively, what the commonalities of human religion and human experience reveal about the character of God and our relation to Him.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, for instance, all major world religions contain some form of a doctrine of sin, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, and rituals of atonement, which, according to Newman, implies that there is someone whose mercy or forgiveness we need to seek. Newman also holds that a reasoned reflection on human experience can yield such truths

\textsuperscript{52} G.A., 303.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Summa Theologiae} I, q.79, a.13; quoted in \textit{Diff.}, 2: 256.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Diff.}, 2: 247.
\textsuperscript{55} G.A., 100, 101.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Diff.}, 2: 248.
\textsuperscript{57} G.A., 389.
as human beings’ inability to autonomously better themselves, or the natural desire for 
religion and eternal life—truths that can further lead one to surmise the existence of a 
good God. In postulating that human knowledge and experience can both tell us of the 
existence of God and also yield truths about God, Newman exhibits a very generous 
attitude toward natural revelation.

Newman divides natural revelation into two categories: “natural religion” and 
what he refers to variously as the “religion of the philosophers,” the “Religion of 
Reason,” or the “Religion of Civilization.” By “natural religion,” Newman means the 
pagan religions prevalent in the time before Christ that were typically polytheistic and 
employed a number of rituals and customs in rendering worship to the gods. By “the 
religion of the philosophers,” Newman means the reasoned reflection on the world and 
human nature that yields truths about God and humankind, but is not explicitly connected 
with a traditional religious structure consisting of creed and worship.

Part of Newman’s apologetic for the development of Christian doctrine is the 
argument that development is a principle of life and history. As such, Newman perceived 
a process of development in natural revelation that served a preparatory role for divine 
revelation. This process of development involved men’s and women’s growth in both the 
understanding and living out of those truths about God that they could glean through their 
reflection on the world. Francis McGrath argues that Newman’s view of development

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59 Newman elaborates on the nature of “the religion of the philosophers” in his sixth Oxford University 
60 The implications of Newman’s view of natural revelation and the capability of development in religions 
outside of Christianity are relevant to interreligious dialogue today. For instance, the Roman Catholic 
Church’s position that it possesses “the fullness of truth” has led some Catholics to question whether 
interreligious dialogue is really a dialogue at all. That is, does the Roman Catholic Church really need to 
dialogue with the religious other in order to arrive at a greater grasp of a truth it already possesses in its 
fullness? If, however, as Newman maintains, other religious traditions visibly manifest certain truths about
in natural religion was in part attributable to his appropriation of Justin Martyr’s doctrine of the *Logos spermatikos* and Clement of Alexandria’s view of Greek philosophy as a preparation for Christianity.\(^{61}\) McGrath’s argument is plausible, though only indirectly supported in Newman’s works.\(^{62}\) A more certain influence was Newman’s doctrine of Divine Providence, which held that both natural and divine revelation were “appointments of one and the same being, working at sundry times and in diverse manners, but on consistent principles.”\(^{63}\)

In spite of his optimistic view of natural revelation as manifested in both natural and philosophical religion, Newman is clear that it remains incomplete and thus inadequate without divine revelation. He believes that natural revelation testifies to its own inadequacy inasmuch as the desire for, and expectation of, a divine revelation is “an integral part” of it.\(^{64}\) In describing why natural revelation is inadequate, Newman employs epistemological distinctions between the “concrete” versus the “abstract,” and relatedly, the “real” versus the “notional.” These distinctions, as elaborated in the


\(^{62}\) Such apparent statements with affinities to Justin Martyr include the following: “… the Almighty scattered through the world, before His Son came, vestiges and gleams of His true Religion, and collected all the separated rays together, when He set Him on His holy hill to rule the day, and the Church, as the moon, to govern the night” (*D.A.*, 210-211); and “from the beginning the Moral Governor of the world has scattered the seeds of truth far and wide over its extent; that these have variously taken root, and grown up as in the wilderness, wild plants indeed but living” (*Ess*. 1: 231); quoted in McGrath, 75, 79.

\(^{63}\) *A.S.*, 1: 214; quoted in McGrath, 42.

\(^{64}\) *G.A.*, 315.
Grammar of Assent, act as the lens through which Newman views not only natural revelation, but divine revelation, as well. They thus require explanation.

The “concrete” refers to those things or objects of which men and women have an experience, either sensual, intellectual, or both. It refers to individuals or particular instances of things, versus universals or general instances of things. Newman calls our knowledge of the concrete “real,” because it is a knowledge whose reference points are res (“things” or “objects”). Thus, one can be said to have real knowledge of objects such as a flower, or the sun, or one’s mother, through having actually experienced these realities with one’s senses. But, according to Newman, one’s real knowledge is not confined to those phenomena with which one has sensual familiarity. For instance, even though a man has never fought in a war, he can be said to have a real knowledge of it through the descriptions he has read of the Jewish War by Josephus, or the Napoleonic wars in Tolstoy’s War and Peace. These, too, constitute experiences inasmuch as men and women are actively engaged in interpreting the experience of the authors.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Newman elaborates on how we can have real knowledge of things without having sensually experienced them as follows: “Further, we are able by an inventive faculty, or, as I may call it, the faculty of composition, to follow the descriptions of things which have never come before us, and to form, out of such passive impressions as experience has heretofore left on our minds, new images, which, though mental creations, are in no sense abstractions, and though ideal, are not notional. They are concrete units in the minds both of the party describing and the party informed of them. Thus I may never have seen a palm or a banana, but I have conversed with those who have, or I have read graphic accounts of it, and, from my own previous knowledge of other trees, have been able with so ready an intelligence to interpret their language, and to light up such an image of it in my thoughts, that, were it not that I never was in the countries where the tree is found, I should fancy that I had actually seen it. Hence again it is the very praise we give to the characters of some great poet or historian that he is so individual. I am able as it were to gaze on Tiberius, as Tacitus draws him, and to figure to myself our James the First, as he is painted in Scott’s Romance. The assassination of Caesar, his ‘Et tu, Brute?’ his collecting his robes about him, and his fall under Pompey’s statue, all this becomes a fact to me and an object of real apprehension. Thus it is that we live in the past and in the distant; by means of our capacity of interpreting the statements of others about former ages or foreign climes by the lights of our own experience. The picture, which historians are able to bring before us, of Caesar’s death, derives its vividness and effect from its virtual appeal to the various images of our memory” (G.A., 42).
The “abstract,” on the other hand, refers to the realm of the universal and the general. Whereas the concrete is represented by propositions whose terms are singular (“Philip was the father of Alexander,” “the earth goes round the sun”), the abstract is represented by propositions whose terms are general. Newman provides the following examples of abstract propositions: “Man is an animal, some men are learned, an Apostle is a creation of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{66} The abstract is the product of the human mind, which can only grow in knowledge through situating objects in relation to other objects. Since the abstract refers to ideas or notions originating in the human mind, Newman calls our knowledge of the abstract “notional.” Notional knowledge is thus the work of “regarding things…as they stand in relation to each other,” of comparing and contrasting, of defining, that is natural to human beings.\textsuperscript{67} In other words, it is the product of human reason.

According to Newman, the concrete and the abstract, the real and the notional, are complementary to one another. He held that “life is for action,” and the concrete and the real is that which stirs our emotions and impels us to action.\textsuperscript{68} “It is in human nature,” writes Newman, “to be more affected by the concrete than by the abstract.”\textsuperscript{69} Newman did not believe that human beings are moved to action by that of which they only have an abstract or notional knowledge. Someone may have learned and understood the maxim \textit{dulce et decorum est pro patria mori} (“It is sweet and good to die for one’s country”), but unless one is able to apply this maxim to particular experiences, one will not desire to sacrifice himself or herself on the battlefield.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{G.A.}, 29.  
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{G.A.}, 44, 45.  
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{D.A.}, 295.  
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{G.A.}, 50.
However, Newman assigns the notional a significant role in human knowledge. Whereas men and women anchor themselves in knowledge of an object through real knowledge, they grow in knowledge of that object through notional knowledge:

Each use of propositions has its own excellence and serviceableness, and each has its own imperfection. To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement. Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations.  

Applying this distinction to religious epistemology, (which is Newman’s ultimate concern in the Grammar of Assent,) faith corresponds to real knowledge, whereas theology corresponds to notional knowledge. Faith is rooted in one’s experience of God; it is a belief in, or assent to, the God whom one knows as an individual, as a person. Theology, on the other hand, is fides quaerens intellectum; it is the development of one’s knowledge of that God in whom he or she has faith. As I will discuss further in Chapter Two, Newman understands doctrinal development to primarily refer to the development of the Church’s notional knowledge of God and His revelation, though this notional knowledge must remain rooted in the real knowledge of God.

According to Newman, the role of divine revelation is to perfect both the abstract and concrete elements of natural revelation. Natural religion’s particular strength, Newman holds, was its exhibition of the concrete and real through personal conceptions of gods who were worshipped in ritual actions. “But it failed,” assesses Newman, “as degrading His invisible majesty by unworthy, multiplied and inconsistent images, and as shattering the moral scheme of the world into partial and discordant systems.”

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70 G.A., 47.
71 U.S., 24.
Philosophical religion testified more to the abstract and the notional element through the development of its reasonings on God and human nature. But because these reasonings were rooted neither in faith in a concrete and personal deity, nor in a sense of sin and corporeality, they did not inspire action. Newman thus concludes, “The God of philosophy was infinitely great, but an abstraction; the God of paganism was intelligible, but degraded by human conception… it was left for an express Revelation to propose the Object in which they should both be reconciled…”

Divine revelation thus performs the dual function of uniting and completing the concrete and abstract, the real and the notional, as they exist in natural and philosophical religion.

Newman especially highlights divine revelation’s function of communicating the personal character of the one object of faith. He allows that men and women can arrive at the truth that God is a person through natural revelation. In fact, he maintains, “No one is to be called a Theist, who does not believe in a Personal God, whatever difficulty there may be in defining the word ‘Personal.’” Newman believes that the personhood of God is especially communicated in natural revelation via conscience. But he regards the picture of the divine person that emerges from natural revelation as so limited and vague that it cannot sustain the religious longings of men and women: “Natural Religion teaches, it is true, the infinite power and majesty, the wisdom and goodness, the presence, the moral governance, and, in one sense, the unity of the Deity; but it gives little or no

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72 *U.S.*, 24. See also *Mix.*, 295: “and the great consolatory disclosures of Him, which Nature begins, Revelation brings to perfection”; and *G.A.*, 375: “Revelation begins where Natural Religion fails. The Religion of Nature is a mere inchoation, and needs a complement,—it can have but one complement, and that very complement is Christianity.”

73 *G.A.*, 111.

74 *G.A.*, 98-107.
information respecting what may be called His Personality.” 75  “The philosopher,” writes Newman, “aspires towards a divine principle; the Christian, towards a Divine Agent.” 76

Newman holds that divine revelation primarily fills this lack in natural revelation by impressing upon human beings the personal character of God. This is the theme of his 1830 Oxford University Sermon entitled “The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively,” wherein one finds many crucial elements of Newman’s theology of revelation. 77 Divine revelation, according to Newman, is “especially calculated… to impress upon our minds the personal character of the Object of our worship.” 78 Underlying this point is Newman’s principle that human beings are moved to action (the purpose of life) more by the concrete than the abstract, and that the personal constitutes the concretissimum. The personal, he maintains, is “that most efficient incentive to all action, a starting or rallying point,—an object on which the affections could be placed, and the energies concentrated.” 79 Walgrave points out that Newman does not anywhere provide an analysis of why it is that men and women are more affected by personal rather than impersonal objects. But nevertheless, writes Walgrave, “[Newman] felt it strongly and refers to it frequently.” 80

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75 U.S., 22. Newman qualifies in a note that he believes this statement “seems to me too strongly said” (36), but his qualification only serves to temper his estimate of how much of the divine personality is knowable through natural revelation. It does not negate his position that divine revelation further reveals the personality of God. This passage also demonstrates that Newman did not consistently maintain his distinction between “natural religion” and “philosophical religion,” since the latter here appears to be denoted by the former.
76 U.S., 28.
77 The entire sermon is found in U.S., 16-36.
79 U.S., 23. See also Newman’s fifth Oxford University Sermon, “Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth” (U.S., 75-98), in addition to G.A., 101: “Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons.”
80 Walgrave, Newman the Theologian, 112. The full passage is as follows: “Nowhere, for example, did [Newman] give a phenomenological description of the great difference between real apprehension of a ‘thing’ or an ‘object,’ and that of a ‘person’ or ‘subject.’ These are two irreducible kinds of experience; the one, of a world which is at my disposal, like an extension of my body; the other, of a presence standing
Thus, in divine revelation one sees carried out what Newman refers to as the
“method of personation.” By “method of personation,” Newman means that God,
evidently concerned with impelling men and women to action, frequently reveals truths
through persons. Newman elaborates on the “method of personation” as evidenced in
Scripture:

The doctrine of original sin is centred in the person of Adam, and in this way is
made impressive and intelligible to the mass of mankind. The Evil Principle is
revealed to us in the person of its author, Satan. Nay, not only thus, in the case of
really existing beings, as the first man and the Evil Spirit, but even when a figure
must be used, is the same system continued. The body of faithful men, or Church,
considered as the dwelling-place of the One Holy Spirit, is invested with a
metaphorical personality, and is bound to act as one, in order to those practical
ends of influencing and directing human conduct in which the entire system may
be considered as originating.  

Newman assumed this method of personation in his Anglican sermons. To his listeners
at St. Mary’s of Oxford and the chapel at Littlemore, he portrayed Abraham an example
of faith and self-denial, and Lot as a contrast to these virtues. He regarded Balaam as
an instance of “obedience without love,” Josiah as “a pattern for the ignorant,” and
Jeremiah as “a lesson for the disappointed.” And in his famous sermon, “The Parting of
Friends” (1843), he invoked Jacob, Naomi, and David as examples of those who have
endured the painful necessity of leaving behind of loved ones in order to do God’s will.

Newman regards the “method of personation” of the revealed system as reaching
its culmination in the Incarnation. It is only in a “real and manifested incarnation of the
Deity,” writes Newman, that the “desires” of both natural and philosophical religion are

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83 P.S., 4: 18-36; 8: 91-109, 124-140.
84 S.D., 395-409. Newman delivered this sermon on September 25, 1843, in the church at Littlemore. It
was the last sermon he preached as an Anglican.
“satisfied.”\textsuperscript{85} To the person of Christ are attributed “all those abstract titles of moral excellence bestowed upon Him which philosophers have invented. He is the Word, the Light, the Life, the Truth, Wisdom, the Divine Glory.”\textsuperscript{86} As the ultimate concretization of the abstract, and the enhypostatization of all notional truths, the Incarnation represents for Newman the pinnacle of divine revelation, and the “central aspect of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{87}

In presenting Newman’s contention that the Incarnation is the ultimate revelation of the concrete person of God, I introduce what Merrigan has referred to as the “radically incarnational” character of Newman’s theology.\textsuperscript{88} Newman considered the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity to be the central identifying mark of Christianity, and the lens through which the Church judges all other aspects of Christianity: “It is the Incarnation of the Son of God rather than any doctrine drawn from a partial view of Scripture (however true and momentous it may be) which is the article of a standing or a falling Church.”\textsuperscript{89} As Ian Ker points out, Newman’s incarnational theology could also be termed “radical” if contrasted with the (at the time) contemporary Protestant and Catholic focus on, respectively, the doctrines of the atonement and the crucifixion. Ker attributes Newman’s focus on the Incarnation to his reading of the Greek Fathers of the Church, whose writings are permeated with the idea that the Incarnation is the axis of the whole of salvation history, and the gateway to the knowledge of, and participation in, God.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{85} U.S., 24.  
\textsuperscript{86} U.S., 28.  
\textsuperscript{87} Dev., 36.  
\textsuperscript{89} U.S., 35.  
\textsuperscript{90} Ker, introduction to Selected Sermons, by John Henry Newman, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 29. For Newman’s critique of the subordination of the doctrine of the Incarnation to that of the Atonement, see Ess. 1: 47-8. See also McGrath, 60-63.
Nicholas Lash, like Merrigan, also sees the Incarnation functioning as a hermeneutical principle in Newman’s works “throughout the greater part of his life.”

Lash claims that the Incarnation was the ultimate realization of the sacramental principle that was first inculcated in Newman by Bishop Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* and John Keble’s *Christian Year*. He quotes Newman, who writes that “The doctrine of the Incarnation… establishes in the very idea of Christianity the *sacramental* principle as its characteristic.” It is, writes Newman, “the central truth of the gospel, and the source whence we are to draw out its principles.” As such, I argue throughout this dissertation that the Incarnation is a crucial hermeneutical key for understanding Newman’s theory of doctrinal development.

The above aspects I have included under Newman’s label of God as the “object” of revelation have implications for his theory of doctrinal development. In referring to God as the object of revelation, Newman implies that revelation is an existential given whose origin is external to human beings. Accordingly, the development of doctrine involves a development in the Church’s understanding of this existential given. The Church’s development in its understanding of the object of revelation is conditioned by the character of this object. Newman emphasizes that the object of revelation, God, is one, concrete, and personal. Accordingly, as I will demonstrate below, these characteristics of oneness, concreteness, and personhood, are at the heart of Newman’s...

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92 “… the two main intellectual truths which [the *Christian Year*] brought home to me, were the same two, which I had learned from Butler, though recast in the creative mind of my new master. The first of these was what may be called, in a large sense of the word, the Sacramental system; that is, the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen,—a doctrine, which embraces in its fulness, not only what Anglicans, as well as Catholics, believe about Sacraments properly so called; but also the article of ‘the Communion of Saints,’ and likewise the Mysteries of the faith” (*Apo.*, 37).
94 *Dev.*, 324.
understanding of revelation and doctrinal development. Finally, in this section I have introduced Newman’s distinctions between the concrete and the abstract, and the real and the notional. These distinctions are operative in his theology of revelation, as he expresses one purpose of divine revelation as the completion of the concretizations and abstractions, the real and the notional knowledge, of natural revelation through God’s self-manifestation. In Chapter Two I will show how these distinctions are also operative in Newman’s theory of doctrinal development, where such development is understood as a development in the notional knowledge of the “real” object of revelation.

B. REVELATION AS “IMPRESSION”: GOD’S IMPRESSION OF HIMSELF

In Newman’s application of the empiricist schema of object-impression-idea to revelation, I interpret his use of the term “impression” as referring to both God’s communication of Himself and the initial human reception of this communication. In implying both divine and human action, the term “impression” thus embodies what I see as the relational character of Newman’s theology of revelation. My focus on the theological implications of the term “impression” here involves taking a divergent path from much of Newman scholarship—which tends to briefly define the term “impression” in order to devote the majority of the attention to the term “idea”—and also involves a development of Newman’s own thought.

I maintain that a number of important themes in Newman’s theology of revelation emerge from a stricter interpretation of the term “impression” within the empiricist schema. The impression is the initial relational moment when God reveals Himself through impressing an image of Himself upon the human person. God’s otherness
necessitates the use of economic media for impressing His revelation on men and women. Among these economic media, Newman particularly emphasizes that God at first impressed Himself on men and women through historical facts and actions, and has done so since the apostolic age through the instrumentality of the Church. Though the media of God’s impression are various, Newman holds that this impression is essentially one. According to Newman, this impression is made upon both individual members of the Church and what he refers to as “the mind of the Church.” As was the case with the above section on revelation as “object,” the principles established in this section have important implications for Newman’s understanding of doctrinal development.

The relational character of Newman’s theology of revelation is implied in the purpose he ascribes to divine revelation. Newman described the revelation of God’s personality as one of the purposes of divine revelation. But he understood this purpose as subservient to the ultimate purpose of human beings’ deification, or, their “partaking of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). As C. Stephen Dessain has shown, deification was a persistent theme of Newman’s writings. It permeates Newman’s Parochial and Plain Sermons. Andrew Louth, himself a Newman scholar, has remarked that one can also consider the doctrine of deification to be the “central theme” of Newman’s Lectures on Justification and the “central conviction of the Oxford Movement.”

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95 Newman rarely used the term “deification,” speaking instead of the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” When he did use it, he qualified that it was his translation of Athanasius’ term “theopoiesis” (L.D., 22: 160-161; L.D., 28: 197). In the latter reference Newman writes, “St Athanasius dwells much on the deification of man.”


98 Andrew Louth, “Manhood into God: The Oxford Movement, the Fathers and the Deification of Man,” in Essays Catholic and Radical, ed. Kenneth Leech and Rowan D. Williams (London: Bowerdean Press,
Ker attributes Newman’s use of the soteriological model of deification to the influence of the Eastern Church Fathers and the incarnational character of their theology. Indeed, Newman used the oft-referenced Athanasian (and Irenaean) formula to characterize the purpose of the Incarnation: “by God's becoming man, men, through brotherhood with Him, might in the end become as gods.” Ker also points out that Newman endorsed the predominantly Eastern view that the Incarnation would have taken place in spite of the original sin of Adam and Eve: “In his Catholic sermons Newman does not hesitate to ally himself with the view of Duns Scotus (as against St. Thomas Aquinas) that even had mankind never sinned, the Son of God would still have ‘had it in mind to come on earth among innocent creatures…to fill them with grace, to receive their worship, to enjoy their company, and to prepare them for…heaven.’” John Connolly makes the important observation that Newman “present[s] an outline of salvation history from the perspective of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit” in his Anglican sermon “The Law of the Spirit.” In this sermon, Newman describes the righteousness that Adam possessed due to the indwelling of the Spirit, his loss of this indwelling after original sin, and the regaining of the indwelling after the redemption brought about by Christ. Thus,

1983), 74-5. Ian Ker has gone one step further in claiming, “In Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification Newman solves the problem of justification, which of course was at the heart of the Reformation, by invoking the great scriptural and patristic doctrine of the divine indwelling, so long forgotten and neglected in the West by both Protestants and Roman Catholics” (The Fullness of Christianity [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], 95). Allusions to the doctrine of deification are less frequent in Newman’s Catholic writings because, as Dessain writes, “the atmosphere was not propitious, and as a convert he did not wish to set up as a dogmatic and mystical teacher” (“Cardinal Newman and the Doctrine of Uncreated Grace,” 285). Dessain neglects to mention that Newman’s adoption of the Catholic practice of delivering sermons from memory or brief notes, rather than a written text, probably also contributed to the paucity of Newman’s mentions of deification as a Catholic.

99 P.S., 5: 118. For Newman’s understanding of the doctrine of deification as found in the Fathers, see his articles in Ath., 2 on “Deification” (88-90), “The Divine In-Dwelling” (193-195), and “Metousia” (424-425).

100 Ker, introduction to Selected Sermons, 29; Mix., 321-322.

101 Connolly, 8; P.S., 5: 143-163, at 148.
the Incarnation and deification are interconnected lenses through which Newman views Christianity.¹⁰²

Newman understands deification to be the dwelling of God’s very self in the Christian. I have thus far been describing Newman’s understanding of revelation as God’s impression of Himself on the Christian. Indeed, Newman at times seems to attribute a divinizing character to the impression, such as when he describes Christians “(as if) inhabited by that sacred impression…which acts as a regulating principle, ever present, upon the reasoning…”¹⁰³ However, Paul Misner has expressed dissatisfaction with qualifications like “as if,” and has criticized Newman for having an inadequate notion of revelation inasmuch as “he nevertheless never expressed this insight required by his theory of development, namely that God’s revealing Word confers not merely an idea of himself, nor a vision of himself, but his very Self.”¹⁰⁴ Lash and Merrigan have both cryptically remarked that Misner’s preferred concept of revelation as God’s communication of His self “is not without its difficulties.”¹⁰⁵ I wish to flesh out Lash’s and Merrigan’s brief remarks by pointing out what I believe to be the major difficulty of Misner’s desired understanding of revelation as he expresses it, namely, that it fails to account for Newman’s principle of mediation, which in turn is so significant for Newman’s understanding of doctrinal development.

¹⁰² Dessain perceptively remarks, “One of the reasons why the Greek Fathers of the fourth century defended so firmly the divinity of Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit, was the connection of these truths with the divinization, the deification of the Christian” (“Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition,” 95). This insight is also at the heart of Norman Russell’s The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰³ U.S., 336.

¹⁰⁴ Misner, “Newman’s Concept of Revelation,” 44, 45.

In order to accomplish the deification of men and women, God revealed Himself to them through what Newman refers to as a “system of continual mediation.”

Newman understands that the need for mediation arises from “the great revealed principle [of] the incommunicable character and individuality of the Divine Essence,” combined with the finite, limited nature of human understanding. He uses the Alexandrian term of “Economy” to refer to God’s mediating, revelatory actions.

Newman’s most thorough description of “Economy” occurs in *Arians of the Fourth Century*. Like the Alexandrian Church Fathers, Newman understands “Economy” in a broad sense to mean “any Divine procedure, greater or less, which consists of means and an end”—the end being the deification of men and women. Thus, Newman explains that “Economy” refers to “the work of creation itself, as opposed to the absolute perfection of the Eternal God, that internal concentration of His Attributes in self-contemplation…” “Again,” he writes, “it might with equal fitness be used for the general system of providence by which the world’s course is carried on.” It also refers to the truths communicated through natural revelation and the sacramental character of the world. And, it of course refers to divine revelation as present within “the Jewish and patriarchal dispensations,” and the life of Christ, “as exhibited in the doctrines of His incarnation, ministry, atonement, exaltation, and mediatorial sovereignty.” Newman considers all such examples of God’s Economy, “which display His character in actions, [as] but condescensions to the infirmity and peculiarity of our minds, shadowy representations of realities which are incomprehensible to creatures such as ourselves,

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106 *A.S.*, 1: 213; quoted in McGrath, 41.
107 *Ari.*, 189.
108 *Ari.*, 74.
109 *Ari.*, 74, 75.
who estimate everything by the rule of association and arrangement, by the notion of a purpose and plan, object and means, parts and whole.”

If Newman failed to so bluntly describe revelation as God’s communication of His very self, it was because he recognized the need to respect the principle of Economy in one’s theological reasonings. Misner’s attribution of his “more comprehensive present-day concept of revelation” to Karl Rahner is perhaps predictable, since Rahner has been famously criticized for blurring the distinction between God’s immanence and economy. Misner also fails to proffer a distinction between God’s communication of Himself in revelation and God’s communication of Himself through the Sacraments. It is through the latter, not the former, Newman maintains, that God comes to “inhabit us personally.” Nevertheless, Newman repeatedly affirms that there is no division in God, and that the impression God makes on human recipients is also without division in spite of the various means by which it is communicated. If one holds these affirmations in tension with the principle of mediation, it follows that one could claim Newman regarded the communication of divine truths as God’s communication of Himself.

A difference in the way God impresses Himself in natural and divine revelation emerges from Newman’s understanding of Economy. In natural revelation, men and women discern, through the use of reason, principles or “scattered fragments” of truth in

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110 Ari., 75. Newman expounds upon another understanding of Economy in Arians (70-74) and the Preface to the Third Edition of the Via Media (lvi-lxix). He defines it as the method by which one holds back upon disclosing certain truths to a person or group due to their inability to rightly comprehend them, or allows for certain excesses in practice lest putting them down cause unnecessary scandal. Thus, in the “Preface” he gives the examples of God’s allowance for divorce in Mosaic Law, or Jesus’ failure to rebuke the hemorrhaging woman who touched his cloak for superstition. Newman also refers to this particular understanding of Economy as the principle of “Accommodation.”


112 Ath., 2: 193.
“the phenomena of the external world” and human behavior and conscience.\textsuperscript{113} One might say, then, Newman understands natural revelation as God impressing His truth on men and women by means of His creation.

Newman understands divine revelation, however, as God impressing Himself through His actions \textit{in history}. He determines, “Such, then, is the Revealed system compared with the Natural—teaching religious truths historically, not by investigation; revealing the Divine Nature, not in works, but in action; not in His moral laws, but in His spoken commands...”\textsuperscript{114} The historical character Newman ascribes to divine revelation, Merrigan explains, also fulfills the underlying desire of men and women that what they know in abstract principles be manifested in the concrete: “It is, above all, the radically ‘historical’ character of Christian teaching, its rootedness in concrete facts and historical events which, according to Newman, accounts for its appeal to the beleaguered practitioner of natural religion.”\textsuperscript{115} Out of the desire that men and women may come to know and participate in Him, God enters into human history through economic means. As such, the historical character of divine revelation further testifies to its relational character. “Its home,” writes Newman, “is in the world,”\textsuperscript{116} as its purpose is the salvation of those who dwell in the world.

Newman understands divine revelation to encompass the historical actions and events of both the Jewish and the Christian “dispensations.” Newman refers to Judaism in the \textit{Grammar} as “this grand drama, so impressed with the characters of supernatural agency...[with] all those tokens of the Divine Presence, which distinguish [its]..."
history..." At the same time, Newman’s writings scarcely make mention of the particular actions and events that make up the Jewish history, which constitutes a weakness of his account of divine revelation. His tendency is to focus on the preparatory role of Judaism, illustrated by his frequent association of Judaism with prophecy and typology. The effect of this tendency is the subsuming of the distinctive historical and revelatory character of the acts and events of the Old Covenant; they become subservient to the perceivably greater principles of development and fulfillment. While not denying the preparatory role of Judaism, a more complete Christian theology of revelation would give due attention to the concrete acts of God’s communication of Himself during the time of the Jewish covenants, rather than remain at the level of abstract generalizations of the history of this communication. Nevertheless, one could claim that Newman affirms the action and event character of Jewish revelation in differentiating it and Christianity from natural revelation. He also affirms this character by his inclusion of Judaism within Christianity, the latter of which, Newman claims, is “Judaism itself, developed and transformed.”

When describing the Christian dispensation, Newman more clearly characterizes it as comprised of concrete actions and events. “Christianity,” writes Newman, “is a history supernatural, and almost scenic: it tells us what its Author is, by telling us what

117 G.A., 339.
118 Dev., 68-71 constitutes one exception to this tendency in Newman.
119 G.A., 342, 345.
121 G.A., 339.
He has done...‖ With the Incarnation “revelation meets us with simple and distinct
facts and actions, not with painful inductions from existing phenomena, not with
generalized laws or metaphysical conjectures, but with Jesus and the Resurrection…”
Indeed, Newman holds that it is not only the principal actions of Christ that are
revelatory, but “the [entire] life of Christ [that] brings together and concentrates truths
concerning the chief good and the laws of our being, which wander idle and forlorn over
the surface of the moral world, and often appear to diverge from each other.”

Newman regards the Incarnation, understood as the entire life of Christ, as the
ultimate historical fact and action of God. I have already mentioned Merrigan’s
characterizations of Newman’s theology as “radically incarnational” and “radically
historical.” I would perhaps take Merrigan’s characterizations one step further and
claim that it is because Newman’s theology is radically incarnational that it is also
radically historical. In the Incarnation, God most fully enters into history, where He
“pitches His tent” among men and women in order that they may come to know, love,
and participate in Him. The Incarnation, as what revelation was leading up to, becomes
in Newman’s mind the standard by which all previous modes of historical revelation are
judged; it is “the principle of a new life.” Thus, Newman holds that God incarnates
Himself in an analogous way during the Jewish dispensation, when God dwelt in His

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122 G.A., 92.
123 U.S., 27.
124 U.S., 27. Newman’s emphasis on revelation as action and event is in part attributable to his opposition
to the dogmatic liberalism manifested in Oxford Noetics such as Renn Dickson Hampden (1793-1868) and
Richard Whately (1787-1863), and Evangelicals such as Thomas Erskine (1788-1870) and Jacob Abbott
(1803-1879). According to Newman, the chief characteristic of their liberalism was that they judged
Christianity by the yardstick of their principles (such as the belief that religion is primarily ordered toward
morality) rather than vice versa. See especially Newman’s Tract 73—“On the Introduction of Rationalistic
Principles into Revealed Religion”—in Ess., 1: 30-101.
125 Merrigan, “Revelation,” 56.
126 Ess., 1: 248.
prophets, and continues to dwell in their utterances; when He filled the Temple with His presence; and when He appeared to men in those visions known as theophanies. However, these historical manifestations are contrasted to “that infinitely higher and mysterious union which is called the Incarnation...” In the Incarnation, Newman claims, “All is superseded by Him, and transmuted into Him.”

Newman’s characterization of revelation as action and event seems contrary to the propositional understanding of revelation that had dominated post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theology. However, Newman’s descriptions of revelation were not entirely consistent, and scholars have argued that at times he appeared to fall back into a predominantly propositional understanding of revelation. Misner implies this inconsistency in his characterization of Newman’s view of revelation as “intellectualist.” Lash sees it evidenced by Newman’s resort to the formula—made de fide in 1907 by Pope Pius X’s Lamentabili Sane—that divine revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle. Writes Lash,

Unfortunately, this claim, thus formulated, seems to imply that revelation consists in the divine provision of items of information. Certainly Newman’s treatment of revelation in the Essay would have gained in coherence if he had more clearly perceived that the categories within which the Christian claim to the finality of the Christ-event was, at the time, expressed, were inadequate to their intention.

127 P.S., 2: 33-36.
128 Jfc., 196.
129 Indeed, one might accuse Newman of denying that revelation is conveyed through propositions. A note in the margins of Newman’s 1877 edits of his Essay on Development reads, “Revelation is not of words—from the derivation of the term it is addressed to the sight” (Chadwick, 246). Chadwick also remarks, “Though sometimes, in his careless or luxuriant use of analogies, he sounded as though he thought that all was wordless, that religion was (ultimately) feeling or religious or moral experience, that revelation contained no propositions,” but then concludes, “he neither believed nor intended to teach that” (153).
130 Misner, “Newman’s Concept of Revelation,” 44.
131 Denzinger 2021; H.S., 3: 164; Idea, 223-4, 255-6, 440-1; S.N., 317-18; T.T., 333.
132 Lash, Newman on Development, 100.
Lash’s lament derives from his assumption that the “death of the last Apostle” formula implies that since the salvific actions and events of revelation had been completed with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the interim between Pentecost and this death was solely filled with the further conveyance or transmission of divine truths.

At first glance, Newman’s dynamic emphasis on revelation as action and event certainly appears to conflict with his repeated invocation of the formula that revelation closed with the death of the last Apostle. Many today consider this formula to be an expression of the more static, propositional understanding of revelation that Newman and post-Neoscholastic Roman Catholic theology have opposed. Perhaps Newman’s resort to the formula is in part attributable to the unresolved tensions that persisted, after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, between his Anglican and patristically-influenced theology and the predominant Roman Catholic theology of the time. Thus, Lash would be right in pointing out that Newman’s affirmation of the formula was not entirely consistent with his religious epistemology.

However, it must be born in mind that Newman’s main concern in invoking the “death of the last Apostle” formula was likely to affirm that developments of doctrine do not constitute new revelations, but instead represent a growth in the Church’s understanding of that divine revelation definitively given to it in the time of the Apostles. His invocation of the formula thus establishes his orthodoxy on the closure of divine revelation. It is difficult to judge the strength of Newman’s assent to all that the formula may imply about the mode of revelation. But given the suspicious attitude that his Essay on Development engendered among many within the Roman Catholic Church of the time, his affirmation of the formula would have been a relatively small concession.
Had Newman reflected on this question further, however, it is certain that he would not have brushed aside the formula as “inadequate” to his theory of revelation and development. The formula was not made *de fide* until after Newman’s lifetime, and thus, he technically could have regarded it as a theological opinion and proffered another way of expressing the truth that divine revelation is in some sense “closed.” But Newman was no doctrinal minimalist, and he believed that a Catholic’s duty was to “accept what is taught him with what is called the *pietas fidei*…”133 His instinct would have been to accept the formula and seek to bring his theory of development and its attendant understanding of revelation into harmony with it. I will attempt to do just that in the Dialogue portion of this chapter.

Newman more fully includes the verbal mode of God’s impression of Himself when he writes of the conveyance of revelation in the post-Apostolic Church. In the time of the Old Testament and the Apostolic Church, Newman’s emphasis is primarily on God impressing Himself on men and women through the media of actions and events. In post-Apostolic times this impression is made “through the instrumentality of His Church.”134 Newman allows that this impression may be made through extraordinary means, such as “inspiration” or “the illuminating grace of Baptism.” However, he lists the ordinary means by which Christians receive the impression as “the habitual and devout perusal of Scripture… the gradual influence of intercourse with those who are in themselves in possession of the sacred ideas… the study of Dogmatic Theology… [or] a continual

133 Diff., 2: 339.
round of devotion…” Of these means, Newman is clear that Scripture enjoys pride of place.

Newman holds that God’s impression of Himself through the instrumentality of the Church is still very much a historical impression through acts and events. In accordance with His Providence, God still “is acting through, with, and beneath those physical, social, and moral laws, of which our experience informs us,” and “is secretly concurring and co-operating with that system which meets the eye, and which is commonly recognized among men as existing,” maintains Newman. Newman especially affirms that God continues to act in history through the Church. “The long history of the Church,” writes Newman, demonstrates “fresh exhibitions of Divine Agency….“ His affirmation is rooted in his consistent ecclesiological emphasis on the Church as the Body of Christ: “what His material Body was when He was visible on earth, such is the Church now. It is the instrument of His Divine Power…” Newman clarifies that Christ now acts in his Church through the Holy Spirit: “[the Church’s] outward rites and forms are nourished and animated by the living power which dwells within it.”

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135 U.S., 333.
136 Newman interpreted the Church Fathers as giving a priority to Scripture above all other sources of faith. In an 1835 letter to Hurrell Froude he wrote, “The more I read of Athanasius, Theodoret etc, the more I see that the ancients did make Scripture the basis of their belief… [the Creed] is the authentic record & document of this faith… for the Holy Catholic Church etc [in it] is but the medium through which God comes to us. Now the θεολογια, I say, the Fathers do certainly rest upon Scripture, as upon two tables of stone” (L.D., 5: 126).
137 Ess., 2: 192; Merrigan, Clear Heads and Holy Hearts, 83.
139 P.S., 4: 250. Ker maintains “that Newman both as an Anglican and a Roman Catholic had the same sacramental conception of the Church as the Body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, or the communion of the baptized” (“The Church as Communion,” in Cambridge Companion to Newman, 139).
140 P.S., 5: 41. Another instance of the patristic character of Newman’s thought is his insistence that the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit not be separated, going so far as to write, “This indeed is a mystery, how God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, two Persons, can be one, how He can be in the Spirit and the Spirit in Him; but so it is” (P.S., 4: 249).
actions in history through the Church are received by corresponding actions on the part of men and women.

**C. REVELATION AS “IMPRESSION”: THE RECEIVED IMPRESSION OF REVELATION**

I wrote above that Newman’s concept of the impression implies the relational character of his theology of revelation. According to Newman, God not only impresses Himself on men and women through historical actions and events, but men and women personally *receive* this impression in their “imaginations,” and immediately seek to rationally understand and conceptualize this impression. Their reception of God’s impression of Himself thus implies an active role on their part in the very process of revelation, which has important implications for Newman’s theory of doctrinal development. Moreover, I will also discuss the active role of the entire Church in receiving this impression, which, Newman claims, God also makes on the “mind of the Church.”

Newman holds that human beings exhibit both passivity and activity in their reception of God’s impression of Himself through historical actions and events. Indeed, in the human reception of an object, there is the initial moment of passivity when the object imprints itself on both the physical and mental senses. However, the human mind immediately begins an active categorization of this impression according to physical traits such as color, shape, and size, and moral traits such as beauty, goodness, and truth, so that one might claim that the passive impression of an object is inseparable from the active apprehension of it. Newman deems the “imagination” as the special sphere of this activity. The imagination, writes Walgrave, is “our entire faculty of knowing the
concrete,” and involves “an act of synthesis, namely, the active apprehension, through the impressions received, of existing reality.”¹⁴¹

Newman thus emphasizes that human beings play an active role in the process of receiving revelation. God impresses Himself on men and women, and they receive this impression through apprehending it with the aid of the imagination. Their active reception of revelation derives from their status as persons. Newman understands revelation to consist of the establishment of a relation between God and an individual person through God’s impression of Himself and the person’s reception of that impression. God “is found through His preachers [here understood as all those “secondary means” of communicating revelation in the post-Apostolic age], to have imprinted the Image or idea of Himself in the minds of His subjects individually…”¹⁴²

Facilitating the human reception of this impression is God’s grace, which accounts for the difference Newman sees as existing between the impressions of material objects and religious objects. “…[N]o such faculties have been given us, as far as we know, for realizing the Objects of Faith,” writes Newman. Between all those historical actions and events that are the media of God’s impression of Himself, “man sees no necessary bond.”¹⁴³ Thus, Newman maintains that men and women need grace in order to attribute the impression of these actions and events to God. This is the grace of faith, “for faith

¹⁴¹ Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian*, 108. Walgrave also points out that Newman described this same faculty of knowing the concrete as “instinct,” “intuition,” “perception,” and “real apprehension.”
¹⁴² *G.A.*, 359. When he was made a cardinal, Newman chose for his motto the phrase “cor ad cor loquitur” (“heart speaks to heart”).¹⁴² One may fairly substitute “persona” for “cor” in order to produce a fitting summary of Newman’s theology of revelation: “Persona ad personam loquitur”—“Person speaks to person.”
¹⁴³ *P.S.*, 2: 213.
impresses the mind with supernatural truths, as if it were sight, and the faith of this man, and the faith of that, is one and the same, and creates one and the same impression.”\textsuperscript{144}

The individual person then receives this graced impression according to his or her particularity. Newman claims that the human reception of the impression is in part conditioned by what he refers to as “first principles.” By “first principles,” Newman means both the conscious and unconscious starting points of our knowledge; those truths we have accepted as “givens” and through which we view the world and judge our encounters with it. They are

the recondite sources of all knowledge, as to which logic provides no common measure of minds—which are accepted by some, rejected by others,—in which, and not in the syllogistic exhibitions, lies the whole problem of attaining to truth,—and which are called self-evident by their respective advocates because they are evident in no other way.\textsuperscript{145}

These principles are formed in part by our shared human nature, and in part by our individual traits and context. As Merrigan explains,

The former flow spontaneously from certain experiences which belong to us by nature. Those experiences can never be completely absent. The latter are the direct issue of decidedly individual doings and undergoings, and involve a graduated scale of personal responsibility.\textsuperscript{146}

Thus, men’s and women’s first principles are of a personal nature not only because they are based upon their particular experiences, but also because they are in part products of their free will.\textsuperscript{147} Though men and women are for the most part unconscious

\textsuperscript{144} Diff., 289.
\textsuperscript{145} G.A., 216.
\textsuperscript{147} On the personal character of first principles, see also Walgrave, \textit{Newman the Theologian}, 122: “All together, [first principles] are the expression of our personality. Our common nature, social position, individual gifts, personal acquirements, these are what our mind expresses in the form of first principles.
of these principles and their operation in their assents, Newman holds that they are responsible for some of them: “Certainly [first principles] are not necessarily true; and, again, certainly there are ways of unlearning them when they are false: moreover, as regards moral and religious First Principles which are false, of course a Catholic considers that no one holds them except by his own fault…” Because men and women arrive form these first principles through their free response to experience, they factor into the active role exercised by human persons in their response to revelation.

According to Newman, the impression of revelation exists not only in the minds of individual Christians, but also in what he refers to as the “mind of the Church.” As an Anglican, Newman alluded to revelation existing in the “bosom of the Church itself.” Beginning with the fifteenth Oxford University Sermon, Newman gives a more epistemological tone to his metaphor by deeming revelation to exist within the “mind of the Church.” He discovered, however, that Roman Catholic theology of the time was uncomfortable with the idea of a common mind that was shared by all the faithful. He had referred to the “Catholic mind” in his 1847 “Newman-Perrone Paper on Development,” but had written in a parenthetical note to W.G. Ward a couple of years later that “Perrone does not seem to allow me to speak of the consciousness or intellect of the Church.” Newman’s silence on the “mind of the Church” in “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine” (1859)—where the phrase would have been particularly

Character, temperament, personal cast of mind, practical attitudes, the level of culture, the history of the individual, his moral condition, all these factors, and other too, combine in the setting up of our first principles. Now, if these are personal, so it thought as a whole.” See also Prepos., 260-261; G.A., 216-217, 222, 284-285, 287-288, 321.

148 Prepos., 279.
149 V.M., 1: 250.
suitable to the subject—further illustrates his desire to avoid any unnecessary controversy with Rome. As a result of the boundaries of his milieu, Newman’s concept of the “mind of the Church” remained undeveloped during his lifetime.

Toward the end of the 1868 “Letter to Flanagan,” which contains Newman’s most direct treatment of the concept, Newman poses the question: “What is meant by the mind of the Church?” Newman attempts an answer to his question, but his answer is circumscribed by the parameters of the discussion that prompted the letter, namely, the question of the infallibility of the Church.\footnote{Newman, “Letter to Flanagan,” in \textit{The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility}, ed. J. Derek Holmes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 159-160. Newman addressed the letter to Fr. John Stanislas Flanagan, a parish priest in Ireland, who wished Newman to clarify his position on the Apostles’ knowledge of the deposit of faith.} The letter ultimately accounts for only one aspect of the mind of the Church, namely, its ability to pronounce on matters of faith when called upon to do so. Newman’s question therefore deserves a better answer than he was able to give at the time.

Assuredly, Newman sees the mind of the Church as a function of the corporate identity of the Church as the Body of Christ. Yet, he also recognizes that a mind or intellect belongs properly to a person, and that the Church is not a person.\footnote{Newman, “Flanagan,” 159: “… for the Church is not a person, as an Apostle is, but is merely made up of Fathers & theologians, and how can they altogether have one mind, which is not the mind of each?”} He writes in the \textit{Grammar} about “that Image, apprehended and worshipped in individual minds, [that] becomes a principle of association, and a real bond of those subjects one with another, who are thus united to the body by being united to that Image…”\footnote{\textit{G.A.}, 359.} In part, then, he understands the mind of the Church to consist of that collective apprehension of God’s impression of Himself as it exists in the minds of individual members, or persons, of the Church. This aspect of the mind of the Church corresponds to the \textit{consensus fidelium},
which Newman defines as “a sort of instinct, or *phronema*, deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ.” But, in “Flanagan,” he also claims this mind existed in its fullness in the Apostles, and then was handed on in its fullness to the Church, but does not now exist “habitually” in its fullness in any of its members, even the pope. Thus, Newman describes the mind of the Church as at the same time internal and external to its members.

There is a need to posit the existence of a mediating principle in order to explain Newman’s contention that the mind of the Church is both internal and external to its members. Newman appears to claim that the Holy Spirit serves as this mediating principle. In the *Via Media* he attributes a Pauline origin to this link between the mind of the Church and the Spirit when he describes the Church’s understanding of revelation (Tradition) as “what St. Paul calls ‘the mind of the Spirit,’ the thought and principle which breathed in the Church, her accustomed and unconscious mode of viewing things, and the body of her received notions, than any definite and systematic collection of dogmas elaborated by the intellect.” In “Flanagan” Newman wonderfully links Christology and Pneumatology in describing the Church’s possession of revelation in its fullness as “a living, present treasury of the Mind of the Spirit of Christ.”

The close link Newman posits between the mind of the Church and the mind of the Spirit helps explain some of the characteristics of the former alluded to above. Newman maintains that the mind of the Church existed in its fullness in the Apostles precisely because they were *inspired*, that is, precisely because the Holy Spirit was

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154 *Cons.*, 211; Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts*, 235.
155 *V.M.*, 1: 251.
specially working through the Apostles during their lives. The Apostles communicated this “mind” to the Church through Scripture, the Creed, and other manifestations of the Christian idea, but also through the sacraments. The Church understood as comprised of its members does indeed have a collective consciousness inasmuch as the members share a common bond of God’s impression of Himself. But, according to Newman, this consciousness alone does not amount to the fullness of revelation. This fullness only exists in the mind of the Spirit, without whom “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’” (1 Cor 12:3). It is the Spirit who acts as the “common bond” of the members of the Church, and who is the “person” in which the mind of the Church can truly be said to dwell. Thus, I hold that the mind of the Church is a participatory concept for Newman: it is a participation of the minds of the Church’s members in the mind of the Spirit who dwells within them individually and the Church collectively.

Newman’s references to the “mind of the Church” were ultimately directed toward explaining his theory of doctrinal development, which has recourse to an analogy between the individual and the corporate manner of apprehension. According to Newman, when an individual receives an impression of an object on his or her mind, he or she can be said to have an implicit knowledge of that object as a whole, as a unity. The reasoning process is the making explicit of this implicit knowledge of an object; it is the “tracing out of our ideas and impressions,” the latter of which come to us with an initial vagueness. Newman maintains that just as an individual Christian mind possesses an implicit knowledge of revelation as a whole, so too does the mind of the Church, and “the absence, or partial absence, or incompleteness of dogmatic statements is no proof of

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157 See D.A., 146.
the absence of impressions or implicit judgments, in the mind of the Church.”\(^{159}\)

Doctrinal development, for Newman, is the process whereby the mind of the Church makes explicit what it knows implicitly through the impression God has made of Himself on it. It is the reflection by various minds who “analyze, verify, methodize, and exhibit” what is essentially contained in the impression that has been communicated to the Church \textit{per modum unius}.\(^{160}\)

Newman emphasizes in his fifteenth Oxford University Sermon the “reality and permanence of inward [or implicit] knowledge, as distinct from explicit confession.”\(^{161}\)

This emphasis is important given the nature of Owen Chadwick’s suggestion that Newman’s particular theory of development implies that new doctrinal definitions are new revelations. Chadwick writes,

\begin{quote}
\ldots we are in difficulties about the language in which these “new” doctrines are expressed. This language is new language. As language it is not part of the original revelation. Nor is it a restatement of part of the revelation already expressed in propositions. Nor is it logically deducible from the original revelation, since you cannot “infer” propositions from a wordless experience or feeling or (in Newman’s sense) “idea”… Newman’s theory, like that of Suarez, is dependent upon the contention that definition by the Church is “equivalent” to revelation. If it were established (for example) in Catholic theology that “revelation ended at the death of the last apostle,” Newman’s theory could hardly survive without a restatement so drastic as to leave it almost unrecognizable.\(^{162}\)
\end{quote}

As Ker rightly points out, Chadwick’s suggestion is based on the erroneous conclusion “that what is ‘wordless’ must therefore be ‘feeling.’”\(^{163}\) Ker thus repeats Newman’s assertion that the implicit knowledge contained within the human reception of God’s impression of Himself is, in fact, a true knowledge. Chadwick had acknowledged that

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^{159}\) U.S., 323.
\item \(^{160}\) U.S., 263.
\item \(^{161}\) U.S., 323.
\item \(^{162}\) Chadwick, 160.
\end{itemize}
this impression was “in part a proposition-bearing impression.” Ker counters, “But Newman’s point is that original ideas are essentially simple intuitions, all of which are ultimately and in theory susceptible to comprehension in propositional form… they cannot be divided up into propositional and feeling or experiential parts.” In other words, Ker opposes Chadwick by claiming that Newman considered experience to be a form of knowledge.

The pneumatological character of Newman’s understanding of the “mind of the Church” also further illustrates the relational, or dialogical, character of doctrinal development. In the Essay on Development, Newman conceives development as a dialogue where men and women grow in their understanding of the Christian idea through interacting with other minds and ideas: “it is carried on through and by means of communities of men… and it employs their minds as its instruments… it develops by establishing relations between itself and them…” I have argued that Newman’s concept of the “mind of the Church” includes not only the collective instinct of the individual members, but also the “mind of the Spirit,” in which Christians participate. The fullness of understanding exists only in the Spirit, and the development of doctrine is thus a process where the mind of the Church grows in its understanding of revelation in dialogue with the mind of the Spirit.

The Church’s growth in the understanding of revelation is the fulfillment of a call contained within its initial reception of revelation. As Newman shows, the persons who constitute the Church begin a free and active process of reception the moment God impresses Himself on them. Doctrinal development is but the Church’s continuation of

164 Chadwick, 153.
166 Dev., 38-39.
this active process of reception. It is the history of the Church’s active reception of what God has impressed on them in and through history.

1.2: Florovsky on the Mode and Character of Revelation

In his patrologies Florovsky begins his analysis of the work of St. Maximus the Confessor by claiming that his “whole system can be understood most easily from the idea of Revelation.” Florovsky could have appropriately applied this statement to himself, for much of his writings are either directly or indirectly concerned with elaborating and defending an orthodox, Christian understanding of revelation. His theology of revelation serves as an introduction to the emphases that permeate his understanding of the entire Christian theological system; it “is that proto-fact to which any theological reflection goes back.” After presenting these emphases of Florovsky’s theology of revelation, I will show how they are further illustrated in his opposition to the forms of de-Christianized Hellenism he perceived in both the patristic age and his own era. Furthermore, I will show in Chapters Two and Three, respectively, that they undergird his understandings of Tradition and ecclesiastical authority.

A. Revelation as Divine “Event”

Consistent with the radically Christocentric tenor of Florovsky’s theology, his theology of revelation begins with the Incarnation. “Christ,” writes Florovsky, “is both the alpha and omega, the ‘first’ and ‘last,’ as well as the center. In another sense, Christ

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167 V9, 215.
168 Christoph Künkel also uses the category of revelation as central to synthesizing Florovsky’s thought in Totus Christus: Die Theologie Georges V. Florovskys (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).
169 V9, 215.
is precisely Beginning.”¹⁷⁰ Florovsky holds that the Incarnation serves as both the axis of history and the hermeneutical key for interpreting what the Bible demonstrates is “a comprehensive vision of history, a perspective of an unfolding time, running from a ‘beginning’ to an ‘end,’ and guided by the sovereign will of God toward the accomplishment of His ultimate purpose.”¹⁷¹

Florovsky’s emphasis on the Incarnation includes the corresponding emphasis that the entire meaning of history is centered upon a person, namely, the person of Christ. He attributes this Christocentric personalism to the Church Fathers: “The main theme of Patristic theology was always the Mystery of Christ’s Person.” In particular, Florovsky regards the Christological dogma formulated at Chalcedon as itself a midpoint and hermeneutical key for Christian theology. He maintains that “one can evolve the whole body of Orthodox belief out of the Dogma of Chalcedon.”¹⁷² Florovsky sees Chalcedon as the starting point of the Church’s attempt to achieve a Christological synthesis when it dogmatically defined the enhypostasized divine and human natures of Christ.¹⁷³ As I will show, Florovsky wonderfully illustrates the centrality of Chalcedon in his own theology of revelation by portraying revelation as a synergy of divine and human actions.¹⁷⁴

Florovsky’s synthetic view of history from the perspective of the Incarnation illustrates balance by not diminishing the significance of history either preceding or following the Incarnation. He recognizes that the Christian views history as a whole

¹⁷⁰ V2, 58-59.
¹⁷¹ V3, 244.
¹⁷² V4, 24. See also V1, 14, where Florovsky argues that a renewed emphasis on the doctrine of Chalcedon “can change the whole spiritual outlook of modern man” through its “integral conception of the Incarnation” that affirms that “man is not alone in this world, and God is taking personal interest in the events of human history.”¹⁷³ V8, 191-192.
“definitely linear from the beginning to the end” in which the parts plays a role in bringing about that end. Though Florovsky acknowledged that “no more than a ‘hypothetical’ (or ‘convenient’) answer can be given” to the Anselmian question of *Cur Deus Homo?*, his preference was to assume with Maximus the Confessor that it was inscribed in the very “logos and skopos” of creation. Behind this preference, as Jaroslav Pelikan has perceptively noted, is Florovsky’s concern with proposing “a doctrine of the Incarnation that does not negate, but in fact requires, ‘the context of the general doctrine of Creation.’” As such, Florovsky’s Christocentrism can also claim that “the very fact of Creation constitutes the basic paradox of the Christian faith, to which all other mysteries of God can be traced back, or rather in which they are implied.” Indeed, as I will now illustrate, one discovers the principal truths of Florovsky’s theology of revelation within his elaboration of the Christian understanding of creation.

In common with the patristic tradition as represented by Maximus, Florovsky identifies the “logos and skopos” of creation as the deification, or *theosis*, of men and women. In “Creation and Creaturehood” (1928) he writes, “The limit and goal of creaturely striving and becoming is *divinization* [θεωσις] or *deification* [θεοποίησις].” “[This] *telos,*” he writes, “is implied in the very design of Creation.” With Maximus, Florovsky acknowledges that this *telos of theosis* could not be accomplished without the

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175 V2, 58.
176 V3, 167-170.
178 V3, 246.
180 V3, 247.
Incarnation. “For St. Maximus,” writes Florovsky, “the Incarnation is the focus of the world’s existence—and not only in the plan of redemption but also in the primordial plan for the creation of the world… Man is created so that God may become man and through the Incarnation man is deified.”181

In some essays Florovsky exhibits a certain reticence regarding the term theosis. It is, he writes, a “daring word” that is “rather offensive for the modern ear” and “quite embarrassing, if we would think in ‘ontological categories.’”182 Yet, Florovsky at the same time recognizes that the doctrine of theosis “was the common conviction of the Greek Fathers,”183 and he affirms the implications of the term throughout his oeuvre. Florovsky understands the essence of theosis to be “a personal encounter. It is that intimate intercourse of man with God, in which the whole of human existence is, as it were, permeated by the Divine Presence.”184 Florovsky also emphasizes that the telos of creation includes the transformation of all creation: “the ‘whole creation’ was expected to share or to participate in that ultimate ‘re-novation,’…”185 But he makes clear that this aspect of the telos is subordinated to, and contingent upon, the deification of men and women, the “microcosmoi,” and their personal relationship with God.186

181 V9, 215, 216.
182 V1, 114, 115. See also V3, 240.
183 V1, 115.
184 V1, 115; V3, 240.
185 V4, 66.
186 Unsurprisingly, given the anthropocentric focus of his theology, Florovsky repeatedly endorsed the idea of human beings as “microcosms” throughout his oeuvre. In his essay on “Redemption” he writes, “Man is a sort of ‘microcosm,’ every kind of life is combined in him, and in him only the whole world comes into contact with God” (V3, 106). Florovsky’s recourse to the microcosm concept is also another instance of the tremendous influence of Maximus on his theology, for, he writes, “The idea of the central position of man in the cosmos is strongly emphasized in the theological system of St. Maximus the Confessor” (V3, 283n19).
Florovsky interprets the term “creation” as synonymous with the distinctive Judeo-Christian concept of creatio ex nihilo.\textsuperscript{187} “The world is created,” he writes. “That means: the world came out of nothing.”\textsuperscript{188} Florovsky understood the Christian doctrine of creation to be the fruit of the early Christological controversies, especially the Arian crisis: “The Fathers of the fourth century, in their struggle against Arian heresy, were specially concerned with a clear definition of Creation.”\textsuperscript{189} For Athanasius, writes Florovsky, the doctrine of creation “was intimately related to the crucial message of the Christian faith: the redemptive Incarnation of the Divine Word.”\textsuperscript{190} Florovsky particularly emphasizes two interrelated truths that emerged from the patristic reflection on creation, namely, freedom and personhood. These truths are crucial elements of his theology of revelation.

Florovsky’s theology of revelation is punctuated by his raising of a number of antinomies that the Christian must hold in tension. Accordingly, he describes the idea of creation as “basically antinomical,” and its attendant concept of freedom as “always essentially antinomical,” too.\textsuperscript{191} God is a necessary, immutable being who has always existed. In creating something out of nothing, however, God acts in bringing into being a contingent reality, that is, something that did not have to exist. Writes Florovsky, “To say: the world is created is, first of all, to emphasize its radical continengcy... a created

\textsuperscript{187} On the uniqueness of Christian idea of creation, see V3, 51; V4, 39-40; “Idea of Creation,” 53-54. I hesitatingly use the term “Judeo-Christian” here, since Florovsky viewed Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism, which for him entailed that one should oppose any attempt to extract and examine the Hebraic character of Christianity from its now privileged Hellenistic garb. “The categories of sacred Hebraism,” he writes, “have lost their independent meaning,” and furthermore, “Paul was sent to the Greeks and so the way of orthodox Judeo-Christianity proved to be an historical dead-end” (V4, 196, and “Bogoslovskie Otryvki [Theological Fragments],” Put’ 31 [December 1931], 14; quoted in Gallaher, 665). Today, Florovsky’s attitude toward Judaism would be deemed “supersessionist.”

\textsuperscript{188} V3, 43.


\textsuperscript{190} V4, 49.

\textsuperscript{191} “Idea of Creation,” 56.
world is a world which might not have existed at all.”\textsuperscript{192} Thus, the idea of creation discloses the antinomy of a necessary, immutable being who acts by creating something essentially non-necessary. The Fathers wished to respect this antinomy while at the same time affirming the divinity of the Son and Spirit. In order to do so, they differentiated between the creation of the world and the respective generation and procession of the Son and the Spirit from the Father. With Athanasius, Florovsky maintains that “creating is an act of will [ἐκ βουλήματος], and therefore is sharply distinguished from the Divine generation, which is an act of nature [γεννᾶ κατὰ φύσιν].”\textsuperscript{193}

Inasmuch as creation is an act of the divine will, it testifies to God’s freedom—a point that Florovsky considered well expressed by the “Subtle Doctor” Duns Scotus: “The creation of things is executed by God not out of any necessity, whether of essence or of knowledge or of will, but out of a sheer freedom which is not moved—much less constrained—by anything external that it should have to be a cause.”\textsuperscript{194} Once it has been established that creation is a free act of God’s will, Florovsky recognizes that one must admit a distinction in God that the Eastern tradition has formulated as the distinction between God’s “essence and His energies.” If creation was an act of God’s essence or nature, it would mean that creation was always in existence, and indeed, is God.

Furthermore, it would not be a free act, since willing involves giving existence to that

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 54; V3, 51.

\textsuperscript{193} Athanasius, \textit{Contra Arianos}, 3; quoted in V3, 48. In making this point, Florovsky was also wont to quote Etienne Gilson’s reminder that “a God whose very essence is to be a creator is not a Christian God at all” (Gilson, \textit{God and Philosophy} [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941], 88; quoted in “Idea of Creation,” 60; V4, 40-41).

\textsuperscript{194} V3, 52. The quotation is Florovsky’s translation of the following Latin text from Scotus: “\textit{Procedit autem rerum creatio a Deo, non aliqua necessitate, vel essentiae, vel scientiae, vel voluntatis, sed ex mera libertate, quae non movetur et multo minus necessitatur ab aliquot extra se ad causandum}” (Duns Scoti question disputatae de rerum principio, quaestio IV, articulus I, n. 3 and 4,—\textit{Opera omnia}, edition nova juvata editionem). In the footnote Florovsky writes, “This whole discourse of Duns Scotus is notable for its great clarity and profundity” (V3, 270-271n27).
which previously did not exist. Therefore, Florovsky describes creation as an act of God’s energies—“the powers and operations of God” that proceed from His will.195

In the Florovskian schema, God’s free will, as illustrated in His creation of the world, is a function of His personhood. More accurately, it is a function of the Trinitarian personhood: “Creation is a deed of the Divine will, and this will is common to and identical in all Three Persons of the One God.”196 According to Florovsky, “The idea of personality itself was probably the greatest Christian contribution to philosophy.”197 This statement has been born out in the work of Florovsky’s student, John Zizioulas, who has developed an ontology of personhood based upon what he views as the patristic understanding of the person as fundamentally one who is in relation.198 Unlike Zizioulas, however, Florovsky does not attempt to locate specific texts that testify to the Fathers’ personalism. Rather, he sees it implied in their theology of creation and their personalist Christocentrism. One should also note that Florovsky’s personalism owes a debt not only

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195 V1, 63.
196 V4, 53.
197 V4, 77.
198 For Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood, see especially *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1985) and *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Zizioulas emphasizes that God’s way of being, His very essence, is to be in relationship, to be in communion. He holds that the relational character of God is most fully evidenced by the fact that God is Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three persons in eternal communion. Zizioulas does not stop here, though, for he feels that this theology of the Trinitarian relationality would still not prevent placing the shared nature of the Trinity above the their identity as persons. In union with his Orthodox faith, he holds that the *monarchia* of the person of the Father further guarantees personhood its primary ontological status. According to this conception, a person—the person of the Father—is the cause of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit: “Thus God as person—as the hypostasis of the Father—makes the one divine substance to be that which it is: the one God.” In other words, “The personal existence of God (the Father) constitutes His substance, makes it hypostases. The being of God is identified with the person” (*Being as Communion*, 41). Furthermore, Zizioulas claims that this ontology also best affirms the freedom that is intrinsic to personhood. It is not a God whose nature compels Him to generate and spirate the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit; rather, the Son and Spirit are respectively generated and spirated by means of a divine person’s free will.
to the Fathers, but also to the work of the modern French philosopher Charles Renouvier (1815-1903). 199

As a free act of the Trinitarian Persons, Florovsky assigns to creation a term that is all-important in his theology of revelation, namely, “event.” In “The Predicament of the Christian Historian” (1959)—which Rowan Williams has called “a philosophically systematic defense” of Florovsky’s Neo-patristic program—Florovsky quotes the English historian Robin Collinwood (1889-1943) who defines “event” at the same time he critiques the term: “What is miscalled an ‘event’ is really an action, and expresses some thought (intention, purpose) of its agent…” 200 Collingwood’s definition of event as an action, a free action, serves in its simplicity as a fitting summary of Florovsky’s understanding of the term. In his writings Florovsky repeatedly uses the terms “facts,” “deeds,” and “actions” interchangeably with the term “events.”

Unfortunately, the simplicity of Florovsky’s few descriptions of the term “event” reveals a lack of philosophical analysis of the concept in his writings. He is so emphatic about the free and personal character of events that he borders on the tautological when he attempts analysis. For example, in “In the World of Quests and Wanderings” (1923),

199 According to Florovsky, Renouvier opposed Kantian noumenalism and Hegelian pantheism by “construct[ing] a philosophy of freedom, and in so doing—a philosophy of the personality, ‘personalism’” (V12, 129). Impressed by Renouvier’s emphasis on personhood and its attendant characteristic of freedom, Florovsky could say of him that though he “was decidedly anti-Christian… on the main burning issues of metaphysics he was unexpectedly closer to truth of Revelation than many of those who had claimed for themselves the honorific title of Christian thinkers” (“Idea of Creation,” 54). This evaluation is based on Florovsky’s opinion that “if there is any room for Christian metaphysics at all, it must be a metaphysics of persons” (V1, 119). On Renouvier’s influence on Florovsky, see George H. Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky: His American Career (1948-1965),” Greek Orthodox Theological Review 11:1 (Summer 1965): 24, and F. Lewis Shaw, “The Philosophical Evolution of Georges Florovsky: Philosophical Psychology and the Philosophy of History,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 36:3 (1992): 237-255.
Florovsky seemingly introduces a significant addition to the definition of “event” by writing that it “turns out to be a ‘meaning’ and a ‘value,’ a manifestation of ‘other worlds.’” However, in the very next paragraph he makes a statement that simply equates the new term “value” with “event”: “The birth of any value is free; it is accomplished through the creative deed of the personality.”

As an aside, I wish to also note that Florovsky’s understanding of “event” reveals a certain allergy to form. This allergy is in part attributable to his desire to stress the uniqueness and contingency of the event. Also, as I will explain below, Florovsky considered experience and interpretation to be constitutive of the event, and to represent the “‘formedness’ that is of true value.” Furthermore, Florovsky opposed his understanding of history as events to the Idealist view of history, where “the notion of form remains here always the final and highest value.” It is important to remember this allergy to form evident in Florovsky’s understanding of event, for it plays a negative role in other aspects of his theology—most significantly, his theology of ecclesiastical authority.

Creation’s character as an event serves for Florovsky as a pattern for the rest of history. “History,” he writes, “is a field of action”; it is comprised primarily of “actions, or complexes of actions,” both divine and human. Thus, Florovsky primarily describes divine revelation as “the system of divine deeds; one might say, revelation was the path

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202 V12, 77.
203 V12, 29.
204 V2, 48.
of God in history.”

“The revelation of God,” he writes, “consists of a series of events rather than a chain of symbols.” The Scriptures recount the history of these divine deeds: “They tell us still the story of salvation, Magnalia Dei.” Christianity, which Florovsky consistently deems the fulfillment of the Old Testament and Israel, “consists of nothing but events.” According to Florovsky, Christianity is history. He writes, “It comprises the whole of existence in a single historical scheme as one ‘History of Salvation,’ from Creation to Consummation, to the Last Judgment and the End of history. Emphasis is put on the ultimate cruciality of certain historic events, namely, of the Incarnation, of the Coming of the Messiah, and of his Cross and Resurrection.”

Florovsky holds that the event-character of Christianity was especially affirmed by the Fathers, whose theology he refers to as a “theology of facts,” and he claims that such a theology is “the only sound Orthodox theology.”

Florovsky thus expresses the category of “event” as the thread linking all of salvation history, punctuated by the beginning event of creation, the middle event of the Incarnation, and the final event of the parousia. Using the patristic vocabulary, he designates all divinely-enacted events as part of God’s οἰκονομία, as distinct from the inner-Trinitarian θεολογία. To use Florovsky’s term, the “cruciality” of these events for him consists not only in their revelatory character—that they reveal truths about God to men and women—but in the fact that they actually accomplish something. As

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206 V12, 35.
207 V1, 23.
208 V12, 35.
209 See V3, 23: “Scripture can be viewed from a double perspective: outside of history or—as history.”
210 V2, 31-32.
211 V1, 120; V6, 297.
212 V3, 63; V4, 52; Florovsky, “Idea of Creation,” 68-69.
Florovsky maintains, the Scripture narrative “is more than merely a narrative; it relates not only something that took place, but something that was realized and completed.”

In his writings on revelation, Florovsky tends to make an unfortunate distinction between divine “events” and divine “words.” Thus, in “Revelation, Philosophy and Theology” he writes that “Revelation is not only a system of divine words but also a system of divine acts…” A similar qualification appears in “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Revelation,” the only difference being that Florovsky substitutes the word “works” for “acts.” Lest one think this distinction is only a mark of his essays on revelation from the 1930s, Florovsky writes in a later essay, “Revelation and Interpretation” (1951), that “Historic events are the source and the basis of all Christian faith and hope. The basis of the New Testament is facts, events, deeds—not only teaching, commandments or words.” His repeated qualification that revelation consists of events, and not only words, is undoubtedly directed toward a Protestant identification of revelation with the Scriptural text. However, Florovsky should have clarified that divine words are also divine events inasmuch as they are the product of God’s free activity.

Consistent with his Christocentrism, Florovsky regards the Incarnation as “the event of all events.” “This point is the center of history, of the ‘history of salvation,’ die Heilgeschichte,” he writes. The event of the Incarnation refers back to the original event of creation inasmuch as it is both the fulfillment of creation and the beginning of

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214 V3, 24.
216 V1, 24.
217 V12, 35.
218 V2, 58.
the new creation. In defending the newness of the Incarnation, Florovsky lauds the words of Kierkegaard: “God enters the world... Something new happens. This new reality is the beginning of eternity!”

With the Incarnation Christianity has an “‘experience of novelty,’ a ‘Neuheitserlebnis’” that provided “the solution of an existential predicament in which mankind was hopelessly imprisoned.” In “Predicament,” Florovsky wrote that one could conceive of an event as either an action or “complexes of action.” He clearly intends the latter when referring to the Incarnation, which term he uses to designate “the Incarnate life of the Son, ‘with all that for our sakes was brought to pass, the Cross and tomb, the Resurrection the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the sitting on the right hand’ (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Prayer of Consecration).”

What is more, Florovsky considers that the actions and events inaugurated by the Incarnation are continued in and through the Church. Florovsky’s ecclesiology is above all marked by his conception of the Church as the Body of Christ—that Pauline image whose renewed emphasis in contemporary theology he considered essential to his program of Neo-patristic synthesis.

In his frequently repeated homage to St. Augustine, Florovsky refers to the Church as “the Whole Christ – totus Christus, caput et corpus.” Through the Church, which is the “continuation and the fulfillment of the theanthropic union,” “God’s Revelation continues coming down to us.”

WV 12, 37. On the Incarnation as the new creation, see also V2, 59; V3, 23.

V4, 65. Florovsky here probably takes the description of Christianity as “Neuheitserlebnis” from Karl Prümm’s “Christentum als Neuheitserlebnis” (Freiburg: Herder, 1939).

V2, 48.

V1, 64.

V1, 67.

V4, 25.

unchangeably and unceasingly reveals Himself in the Church, in His own Body.”²²⁶ In the Church, “the Heilsgeschichte is effectively continued” through the Liturgy, the sacraments, dogma—indeed, the entire matrix of the Church’s life.²²⁷ Thus, Florovsky affirms that Christ continues to act in history through His Church, “knit together” by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that the Church “is a part of revelation—the story of the Holy Ghost.”²²⁸

Florovsky also refers to the events surrounding Christ’s Incarnation—“[his] coming into the world, his Incarnation, his Cross and Resurrection, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit”—as “eschatological events.”²²⁹ In part Florovsky deems these events eschatological because they accomplished the redemption of the world, which is the sine qua non of the eschaton. It is also “because [these events] are situated in a sequence of the antecedent events, and thereby validate retrospectively the whole series.”²³⁰ However, there is a third reason why Florovsky designates these events as eschatological. Through Christ’s coming, Florovsky maintains that “time was validated… It was ‘consecrated’ and given meaning, the new meaning. In the light of Christ’s coming history now appears as a ‘pro-gress,’ inwardly ordered toward ‘the end,’ to which it unfailingly precipitates.”²³¹ The “meaning” of the time since Christ’s coming consists of the fact that the historical actions and events preceding the eschaton are in actuality constitutive of it. These include both the actions of Christ through his Body, the Church, and the actions of men and women who contribute to the building up of this Body.

²²⁶ V1, 48.
²²⁷ V2, 62.
²²⁹ V2, 58.
²³⁰ V2, 58.
²³¹ V2, 59.
Florovsky refers to these actions as “prophetic” and “sacramental,” and thus, revelatory.232

The understanding of revelation as event described above leads Florovsky to reject the formula that revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle. In a lesser known publication of 1968, “The Patterns of Historical Interpretation,” Florovsky laments,

And unfortunately even first-class historians are sometimes using these strange phrases: “with the death of the last apostle.” It is an absolutely impossible historical date—because nobody can verify it—and it is unclear which Apostles were meant, the twelve or some wider group. What is the use of this phrase when it is said that “the normative period continues till the death of the last apostle,” when nobody knows when it was… Actually, it is just a romance of fiction.233

In this passage, Florovsky ostensibly rejects the formula as an arbitrary historical construction that is impossible to verify. However, other texts reveal that Florovsky’s rejection is not solely based on historiographical considerations. Elsewhere, Florovsky designates the event of Pentecost as the end of divine revelation: “On the day of Pentecost Revelation was completed, and will admit of no further completion till the Day of Judgment and its last fulfillment.” The only possible reason for this designation is that Florovsky understood the “end” of revelation to mean that there will be no new revelatory events that accomplish or bring about our redemption. According to Florovsky, Pentecost represents the last redemptive event until the Last Judgment: “The descent of the Spirit was a supreme revelation. Once and for ever, in the ‘dreadful and inscrutable mystery’ of Pentecost, the Spirit-Comforter enters the world in which He was

232 V1, 68.
233 Florovsky, “The Patterns of Historical Interpretation,” Anglican Theological Review 50:2 (1968): 150. This essay is a transcription of a tape recording of an address Florovsky gave in Dallas, TX. It is interesting to note that Florovsky references Chadwick’s From Bossuet to Newman in this address.
234 V1, 49. See also V3, 23: “For Revelation is indeed completed with the founding of the Church and with the Holy Spirit’s descent into the world.”
not yet present in such manner as now He begins to dwell and to abide.”\textsuperscript{235} However, one must hold in tension Florovsky’s belief that revelation ended with Pentecost with his affirmation that this event continues in the Church through the abiding of the Holy Spirit and the sacramental life of the Church.\textsuperscript{236} To use the antinomical language to which Florovsky frequently had recourse, he believed that revelation is at the same time completed and continuing.

Florovsky’s understanding of both creation and revelation as “events” begs the question about his understanding of the difference between natural and divine revelation. In spite of Rowan Williams’ description of Florovsky’s essays on revelation from the 1930s as “strongly Barthian in tone,” they appear to demonstrate a fairly traditional understanding of natural revelation.\textsuperscript{237} For instance, Florovsky writes that “in a certain sense the whole world is the Revelation of God. The creation of the world is a revelation… The whole world testifies of God, of His Wisdom, Mercy and Love. This is generally named: ‘Revelation through Nature.’” Indeed, the Maximian influence on Florovsky would seem to demand an acknowledgement of the sacramental character of the world, though his opposition to German Idealism probably prevented him from

\textsuperscript{235} V1, 62.
\textsuperscript{236} V1, 45, 62.
emphasizing it. Florovsky also allows that God is somehow manifested within the human person himself or herself, created as he or she is in the image of God.\textsuperscript{238}

However, Florovsky is ultimately concerned with stressing the difference and otherness of divine revelation. “So-called ‘natural theology,’” he writes, “is no theology in the true sense of the word. It is rather a philosophy, a word about the ‘Unknown God,’ towards whom the restless human soul reaches out but has not yet found…”\textsuperscript{239} He characterizes the difference between natural and divine revelation as the difference between “manifestation” and “Revelation,” where only the latter represents “a direct vision of God granted to man…the path of God towards man…the Voice of God speaking to man.”\textsuperscript{240} Somewhat more helpful is his description of the difference as between “a realm of rupture and interruptions” and “the continuous stream of the world’s natural order.”\textsuperscript{241}

These distinctions are not wholly illuminating, and perhaps serve as a reminder that Florovsky was primarily a theologian and not an apologist. They also serve to illustrate a point that Florovsky knew well, namely, that an apt phenomenological description of the difference between natural revelation and divine revelation is impossible. Nevertheless, and most importantly, Florovsky’s distinctions between natural revelation and divine revelation serve to uphold God’s freedom, for they entail that God can act in different ways and at different times in history. This affirmation seems to be a particular difficulty for those who conflate natural revelation and divine revelation. However, because Florovsky posits a distinction between God’s essence and

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 5-6.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
energies, he is not forced to conclude that creation and revelation proceed according to a common mode, and originate in a singular act.

As I have demonstrated, Florovsky understood the Christian doctrine of creation to exhibit many of the same truths present in other Christian doctrines, including the Christian doctrine of revelation. He portrays both creation and revelation as enacted events of the free and personal God for the purpose of the deification of humanity. Some of these same truths are also evident in Florovsky’s portrayal of the reception of revelation by men and women, who are in the image of God. As I will show in the next section, Florovsky stresses that the human reception of revelation is a personal, and thus free and active, process in which they strive toward theosis through their knowledge and living out of revelation. I will for the most part limit myself to describing Florovsky’s understanding of the initial human reception of revelation, which acts as a model for the Church’s continued reception of revelation in history.

B. REVELATION AS HUMAN “EXPERIENCE”

In order to counter a modern, predominantly Western tendency toward Nestorianism, Florovsky proposed what he called an “asymmetric Christology” that prioritized the divine nature and person over the human in Christ. Applied to his theology of revelation, Florovsky’s “asymmetric Christology” manifests itself in his emphasis upon the contingent nature of God’s revelation of Himself. In other words, Florovsky recognizes the initial priority of the divine over the human inasmuch as God must first reveal Himself to men and women before they can respond to Him. However, this asymmetry in Florovsky’s theology of revelation hardly extends beyond this initial

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242 V9, 54-55; G. Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 66-68.
priority, as he portrays revelation as a wonderful synergy of both divine and human activity. Indeed, as I will show, Florovsky considers the human response to revelation as integral to the substance of divine revelation. According to Florovsky, this human response is personal, free, active, and thus, creative, and characterizes not only men’s and women’s initial response to revelation, but the continuing response of the Church in history.

In this section, I will outline the main features of the anthropological character that Florovsky assigns to revelation. He regards revelation as comprised of not only divinely-initiated events, but the active human reception of these events. Revelation, for Florovsky, is thus a relational phenomenon where the personal God communicates with human persons in order that they may participate in His divine life. Florovsky expresses the initial human reception of revelation as an “experience” to which the Christian person attempts to be a witness through his or her askesis in life and thought. The Christian experiences revelation in and through the Church, and strives to express this experience in its fullness according to the “mind of the Church.”

Florovsky illustrates the relational character of revelation by maintaining that it is not only a revelation about God, but also a revelation about humankind. He writes, “Revelation is the Word of God and the Word about God. But, at the same time, in addition to this, Revelation is always a Word addressed to man, a summons and an appeal to man. And in Revelation the destiny of man is also revealed.”²⁴³ As already established, Florovsky understands this “destiny” as theosis, which means that men’s and

²⁴³ V3, 25. See also Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 8. Florovsky also affirms that revelation is “about the world,” and has implications for all of creation. However, this affirmation must be held in tension with Florovsky’s view of the anthropocentric character of creation in which human persons are microcosms whose actions (along with Divine Providence) determine the destiny of the world.
women’s very destiny is to be in relation with God. Again, for Florovsky, *theosis* primarily means “*a personal encounter,*” and is the fulfillment of the true relation that is only possible between persons.\(^{244}\) In revelation, he writes, “‘the God of the living’… speaks to living persons” and establishes a personal relationship with them that reaches its culmination in their participation in His nature.\(^{245}\) Florovsky’s relational understanding of revelation extends so far as to claim that “without man Revelation would be impossible— because no one would be there to hear and God would not speak.”\(^{246}\) Thus, both divine and human persons play a role in revelation.

In spite of his emphasis on personhood, Florovsky does not provide a consideration of its etiology in human beings. It is fair to assume, however, that Florovsky located human beings’ personhood in their creation in the *imago Dei*— an attribution that Florovsky’s student Zizioulas has developed. Like Irenaeus, Florovsky maintains that “the ‘image’ is in the total structure of man,” which includes men’s and women’s personalities.\(^{247}\) Also like Irenaeus, Florovsky’s understanding of the *imago Dei* is Christocentric, for “the ‘image’ is the Son of God, in whose image man was made.”\(^{248}\) And in line with the Alexandrian Fathers of the Church, he associates the “image” with rationality and freedom, which are qualities possessed in a supreme manner

\(^{244}\) V1, 115.
\(^{245}\) V1, 13; V3, 25.
\(^{246}\) V3, 26.
\(^{247}\) V4, 95, 96, 120. Florovsky asserts this holistic interpretation of the “image” in contrast to Origen, who held that “there is no ‘image of God’ in the body, but only in the soul of man” (V4, 95). As with the concept of personhood, Florovsky appears to be intentionally apophatic about the exact implications of the *imago Dei* as it exists in human beings. Yet, as is also the case with personhood, Florovsky holds that Christian theology must affirm the presence of the *imago* in men and women, even if the character of the *imago* is not fully understood (V4, 122-123).
\(^{248}\) Irenaeus, *Demonstration* 2: 54; quoted in V4, 96.
by the persons of the Trinity. Florovsky also insists that men’s and women’s creation in the image of God makes them “capable of perceiving God, of receiving God’s Word and of preserving it.” As I will explain in Chapter Two, Florovsky understands this capability to mean that men and women are able to “adequately express” revelation in dogmatic formulations.

As I showed in the previous section, one of the principal traits Florovsky assigned to personhood was free and creative activity. In Florovsky’s theology of revelation, the most important consequence of men’s and women’s personhood is that it entails an active reception of revelation. Precisely because they are persons, Florovsky believed that men and women “are called to be more than just spectators, but actors in this drama of salvation. For Christians history is not just a stage on which a symbolical play is performed and certain eternal values are exhibited.” As Florovsky was wont to emphasize, men and women are called not only to listen to God’s speech, but to answer, as well. Indeed, Florovsky points out that men’s and women’s answer itself forms part of the content of revelation! “In Scripture,” he writes, “we not only hear the Voice of God, but also the voice of man answering Him…” It is an obvious, yet often overlooked point in presentations of the Christian understanding of revelation.

Florovsky frequently used the Russian word podvig and the Greek word askesis to express the activity to which human persons are called. Western Christianity has

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249 V4, 125. This passage is taken from Florovsky’s essay “Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemde,” in which he discusses the “unresolved ambiguity concerning the image of God” among the Alexandrian Fathers of the fourth century (V4, 123). Florovsky finds fault with the Fathers for their stress on the deformation (or loss) of the image due to sin, in addition to their tendency to restrict the image of God to the “interior man.” He believes this latter tendency was “undoubtedly, an inheritance from Origen” (V4, 125).

250 V3, 22.

251 V13, 182.

typically understood “askesis” to refer to acts of self-denial, whereas Eastern Christianity has understood it in a wider sense to refer to any spiritual practice that promotes one’s communion with God. Florovsky used the term in an even wider sense to refer to any free and creative response to revelation by human beings.²⁵³ One could thus rightly characterize Florovsky as having an “ascetical theology of revelation.” Men’s and women’s active response to revelation—their “ascetic achievement,” as George Williams translates “podvig”—constitutes the substance of their life in the time before the eschaton.²⁵⁴ Writes Florovsky, “The meaning of history consists in this—that the freedom of creation should respond by accepting the pre-temporal counsel of God, that it should respond both in word and in deed.”²⁵⁵ Florovsky identifies this response with the Christian’s participation in the life of the Church, or, Tradition. It is concretely manifested in Scripture, the Liturgy, the sacraments, and the dogmas formulated throughout the history of the Church.

Florovsky portrays this active reception of revelation, this askesis, as manifest even in the initial revelatory moment. His preferred term for this moment is “experience” which, with revelation as “event,” represents one of the “two aspects of religious knowledge” for Florovsky.²⁵⁶ He defines experience in general as “encompass[ing]...
everything that is simply and directly ‘given’ to us.”

In regard to revelation, which is the concern of this chapter, Florovsky understands experience to consist of the initial human appropriation of the divinely-enacted events of salvation history. To describe the initial human reception of these given events, Florovsky also frequently has recourse to the term “vision.” Thus, he describes revelation as “theophany,” and writes that “Revelation discloses itself and is received in the silence of faith, in silent vision—this is the first and apophatic step of the knowledge of God.”

However, one must be careful not to take Florovsky’s description of the “apophatic” character of experience to mean that it is devoid of concepts. Such is Brandon Gallaher’s mistake in his recent article—“‘Waiting for the Barbarians’: Identity and Polemicism in the Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky”—where he attempts to link Florovsky’s concept of experience or vision with what the Romantics described as an “intellectual intuition” or “feeling.” Contrary to the Romantic, pre-conceptual understanding of experience or vision, Florovsky writes that “Experience is given not in an atomically chaotic state of perceptionlessness but as ‘regulated variety’: relations are initially given.” It is regulated by those relations that the human mind seems to immediately apply to an object that it encounters, “singling it out from among a group of other objects, generally not only not being aware of our grounds for doing so but also

257 V12, 161.
258 V3, 21, 30. Florovsky uses the term “theophany” in analogous fashion to refer to any revelation of God to men and women. However, congruent with his Christocentrism, he is careful to qualify, “Yet all these theophanies of old should never be put on the same level or in the same dimension as the incarnation of the Word, lest the crucial event of redemption is dissolved into an allegorical shadow. A ‘type’ is no more than a ‘shadow’ or image” (V1, 35).
259 Gallaher, 670. A larger problem of Gallaher’s essay is its attempt to undermine Florovsky’s call for a Neo-patristic synthesis that opposes the pseudomorphosis of Western thought by throwing light upon the seeming dependence of Florovsky on the very Western categories he opposed. However, Florovsky never imagined that his own thought was devoid of Western influence, nor did he believe the path forward consisted of ignoring this influence. The ultimate goal of his synthesis was the re-integration of the Christian mind in both its Eastern and Western aspects.
not being in a position to be aware of them.” Florovsky holds that this “‘direct’
‘intuitive’ stability” provided by the mind is “a primary fact,” and testifies that no object
is received by the human person “entirely without form.”

But Florovsky holds that “Givens necessitate interpretation,” and thus, experience
must move quickly beyond this “direct intuitive stability” to become cognition.
Experience is not primarily a passive reality in Florovsky’s writings. In fact, one could
very well critique Florovsky’s religious epistemology for not sufficiently accounting for
the concept of passivity in his understanding of reception, interpretation, and
relationship. He consistently portrays the interpretation of experience, i.e., cognition,
as an active endeavor on the part of men and women: “Cognition, as a historical
phenomenon created by the systematic and interrelated efforts of successive generations,
is a heroic act.” He maintains that a concept (which is the product of cognition) “lives
in judgments,” namely, the active reasonings of the human mind. He thus echoes
Friedrich Trendelenburg’s statement that “Understanding is Interpretation,” as he
believes that experience demands an active response from human rationality.

Florovsky presciently recognized that hermeneutics conditions any individual’s
attempt to understand experience, but also emphasized that “in this willful initial choice

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260 V12, 161, 162. Pace Gallaher, it is also instructive that Florovsky criticized Lev Zander’s book on
ecumenism, Vision and Action (1952), precisely because Zander portrayed faith as “radically different from
processes which we call knowledge” (V13, 189-190).
261 V12, 160.
262 Rowan Williams has critiqued Florovsky for having a “a rather voluntaristic flavor to some of his
writings” (“Eastern Orthodox Theology,” in The Modern Theologians, 166). Similarly, Shaw has pointed
out “that Florovsky was, from the outset of his academic career, under the influences of a decided
voluntarism” (“Philosophical Evolution,” 239). This voluntarism appears to be on display in Florovsky’s
portrayal of cognition as a purely active phenomenon. Interestingly, Florovsky endorses Viktor
Nesmelov’s famous interpretation of the Fall precisely because it demonstrates that “the essence of the
‘fall’ is not in the violation of a law but in superstition, in the conviction that cognition is passive reception
and not a creative act.”
263 V12, 78.
264 Friedrich A. Trendelenburg, Logische Untersuchungen, Bd. II. 2, s.408; quoted in V2, 41.
we are not inescapably restricted by either innate character, inherited predispositions or everyday circumstances.”²⁶⁵ He thus portrays the thought process as free in its activity, for “man remains a free agent even in bonds.”²⁶⁶ Through the active interpretation of experience, Florovsky claims that men and women give “existence,” “meaning,” and “form” to events.²⁶⁷ Through cognition, or rational thought, men and women become “witnesses” to events, which the Russian historian Vassily Bolotov characterized as the goal of history.²⁶⁸

Florovsky defines faith as this active witness to the events of revelation. He writes, “… [F]aith is vision and perception. God appears to man and man beholds God. The truths of faith are truths of experience, truths of a fact… Faith is a descriptive confirmation of certain facts… faith is the evidence of experience.”²⁶⁹ According to Florovsky, it is faith that acknowledges divine events “as truly eventful,” meaning that they were willed by God for the salvation of men and women.²⁷⁰ As Matthew Baker has so well emphasized, Florovsky did not perceive a sharp dichotomy between the experience of faith and reason.²⁷¹ Indeed, Florovsky viewed faith’s acknowledgement of divine events as itself a rational undertaking, for it is “only in the process of cognition” that “‘things’ become ‘sources,’” or, that divine events are “recognized as utterly

²⁶⁵ V12, 76.
²⁶⁶ V2, 48.
²⁶⁷ V2, 38, 45; V12, 161.
²⁶⁹ V3, 27.
²⁷⁰ V2, 31.
momentous.” Furthermore, he viewed the life of faith as a crucial element of rationality, as “revelation becomes clearly heard by us in all its fullness only in spiritual experience.” He thus portrayed rational reflection as constitutive of the very experience of the events of revelation. Faith—understood as the active interpretation of revelation in both thought and life—is formative of the Christian’s experience, which is why Florovsky frequently conjoined the two realities in the phrase “experience of faith.” According to Florovsky, then, experience is itself a synergy between divine and human action, between divinely-willed events and the human reception of them in thought. After the moment of faith, this active Christian reflection on experience continues and forms part of the Tradition of the Church.

Florovsky characterizes the witness of faith as a personal act on the part of each Christian individual. But he understands that the experience that comprises faith is not available to Christians today in the form that it was available to its first witnesses. Revelation now “is given, and is accessible, only in the Church; that is, only through life in the Church, through a living and actual belonging to the mystical organism of the Body of Christ.” Thus, one’s experience of revelation is inevitably an ecclesial experience. As Florovsky points out, “‘the past’ as such cannot be ‘observed’ directly. It has actually passed away and therefore is never given directly in any ‘possible experience’… The knowledge of the past is necessarily indirect and inferential.” The Christian’s experience of faith is thus mediated by the Church’s reflection on revelation as

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272 V2, 31, 38.
274 V13, 95.
275 V3, 36.
276 V2, 36.
manifested in Scripture, dogma, and Liturgy—its entire life—a fact that also serves to demonstrate that Christian experience is intimately tied to thought.\textsuperscript{277}

Furthermore, the Christian’s experience of faith is colored by his or her commitment “to a particular interpretation of certain events of history, and also to a definite interpretation of the historic process itself, taken as a whole. In this sense, [Christians] are inevitably prejudiced.”\textsuperscript{278} On this point Florovsky quotes the Russian historian B.M. Melioransky, who described the Church’s particular interpretation of history as a “key” by which Christians may enter God’s City and enjoy the experience of faith.\textsuperscript{279} Without this key, the events of salvation history remain “unclear, unconvincing” to men and women.\textsuperscript{280}

However, it is not only a hermeneutics of history, but grace that the Church gives to the Christian person who participates in its life. Florovsky recognizes that men and women “need a special method of seeing to be able to recognize [revelation]… reason itself must be transfigured, and this transfiguration of our consciousness can be accomplished only in the Church, in its spiritual charismatic completeness.”\textsuperscript{281} One could call this “special method” divine grace, as I have, but one should also note that Florovsky identifies grace with “a personal communion with the personal God.”\textsuperscript{282}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{277} See “In the World of Quests and Wanderings,” 229: “‘experience’ here is frequently mediated by thought, which reworks it on the basis of its own initial premises.”
\item \textsuperscript{278} V2, 34. Florovsky frequently emphasized that no interpretation of history is ever completely unbiased. “Every historical portrayal is always a relative portrayal from a certain point of view, based on some initial presuppositional axiomatic source” (Florovsky, “Types of Historical Interpretation,” 98).
\item \textsuperscript{279} V1, 50-51; V3, 36; Florovsky, “Le Corps du Christ vivant,” in La Sainte Église Universelle: Confrontation œcuménique (Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé S.A., 1948), 46.
\item \textsuperscript{280} Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 10. See also V4, 18: “Christological formulas are actually meaningful only for the faithful, for those who have encountered the Living Christ, and have acknowledged Him as God and Saviour, for those who are dwelling by faith in Him, in His Body, the Church.”
\item \textsuperscript{281} Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 9.
\item \textsuperscript{282} V1, 14.
\end{itemize}
But human thought cannot exhaust all of the aspects of the experience of faith, which, according to Florovsky, contains the whole of divine revelation. Rational thought gives this experience form from the beginning, but the experience will always be “more comprehensive and fuller” than this form. Florovsky locates the “fullness” of the experience of revelation in the Church; indeed, he describes it as “living” in the Church. What is the character of this fullness of the experience of revelation? Florovsky undoubtedly regards it as a fullness of the knowledge of God, or, a “noetic vision,” that constitutes “a system of religious philosophy.” This fullness of the knowledge of God was made possible by Christ, who “made religious knowledge possible for the first time” through his redemption.

But one must remember that, for Florovsky, this fullness of knowledge is inseparable from the fullness of union that comes through Christ’s redemptive work, and is a condition of this union. He emphasizes that “the Truth is not an idea, but a person, even the Incarnate Lord.” The theanthropic union that Christ effected is continued in the Church understood as the Body of Christ in which the Spirit abides. Christ and the Spirit are the “fullness,” and it is their continued presence in the Church that enables Florovsky to claim that “the Church is fullness, τὸ πλήρωμα that is, fulfilment, completion.” Fullness, for Florovsky, is the equivalent of “catholicity,” and is thus a

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283 V3, 35.
284 V1, 47.
286 V3, 28.
287 V3, 28.
288 V1, 20.
289 V1, 38. See also V1, 63-64: “Body and fullness (to soma and to pleroma)—these two terms are correlative and closely linked together in St. Paul's mind, one explaining the other: ‘which is His body, the fullness of Him Who all in all is being fulfilled’ (Eph. i, 23)... In other words, the Church is the extension and the "fullness" of the Holy Incarnation, or rather of the Incarnate life of the Son...” The connection
mark of the Church. The (true) knowledge of God is only possible in the Church because it is within the Church that the Christian person can participate in Christ’s life through incorporation into his body. In sum, Florovsky regards “fullness” as a gnoseological concept because it is tied to theosis.

Florovsky recognizes an antinomy in regard to the notion of the fullness of revelation: the Church possesses the fullness, but at the same time, this fullness is not yet complete because the Body of Christ is not yet complete. On this point, Florovsky quotes St. John Chrysostom, who writes, “[Christ] Himself is complete and all-perfect, but not yet has He drawn mankind to Himself in final completeness. It is only gradually that mankind enters into Communion with Him and so gives a new fulness to His work, which thereby attains its full accomplishment.” Florovsky also portrays the individual member of the Church as participating in the fullness of revelation in an “already, but not yet” manner. The Christian person is united to Christ through the Spirit, but does not yet enjoy the fullness of this union. Thus, Florovsky writes, “I maintain that each person can realize the catholic standard in himself. I do not say that each person does realize it. That depends upon the measure of one’s spiritual maturity.”

Florovsky sometimes describes the particular ecclesial location of the fullness of the experience of revelation as the “mind of the Church.” What Florovsky writes of the concept of the Church also applies to his concept of the “mind of the Church,” namely,

Florovsky witnesses to between “body” and “fullness” leads him to describe the Eucharist as “the primary witness to the mystery of Redemption, in all its fulness” (V1, 85). See also “The Eucharist and Catholicity” (V13, 46-57).

V1, 41.

V1, 39. See also V1, 55.

V3, 40.
that it “can be rather depicted and described than properly defined.” As with the idea of fullness, there is an epistemological component to Florovsky’s understanding of the mind of the Church. This is evidenced not only by his references to it as “mind,” but also as the “sensus catholicus” and the “φρόνημα ἐκκλησιαστικόν.” He attributes a patristic provenance to this concept of the “mind of the Church,” and regards it as encompassed by neither Scripture nor dogma; rather, it was, “in the Early Church, first of all, an hermeneutical principle and method” that allowed the Church’s members to both understand and protect divine revelation. It “is a concrete oneness in thought and feeling,” writes Florovsky, that is shared by the members of the Church. Ultimately, Florovsky identifies the “mind of the Church” as none other than Tradition.

But Florovsky does not regard this “mind” as some esoteric, impersonal reality that acts as the storehouse for all divinely-revealed truths. On the contrary, he maintains that this mind “is not a common consciousness, neither is it the joint consciousness of the many or the Bewusstsein ueberhaupt of German philosophers. Catholicity is achieved not by eliminating the living personality, nor by passing over into the plane of an abstract Logos.” Again, he emphasizes that “it is not to a ‘transcendental subject,’ not to any ‘consciousness-in-general’ that God speaks. The ‘God of the Living,’ the God of Revelation speaks to living persons, to empirical subjects.” As the Church to whom

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293 V1, 58. This quotation comes from a section of Florovsky’s essay—“The Church: Her Nature and Task”—entitled “The Catholic Mind” (V1, 57-58).
294 V1, 89, 98, 109.
295 V1, 79. Florovsky here refers to Irenaeus and Athanasius in establishing the patristic understanding of the “mind of the Church.”
296 V1, 44.
297 V1, 44.
298 V3, 25.
God reveals Himself is comprised of “a symphony of personalities,”
so also is the mind of the Church.

As a personal reality, Florovsky primarily characterizes the mind of the Church as both an enacted and relational reality. It is less something possessed in a mystical fashion by the members of the Church than it is something to be realized by them through the “transfiguration” of their personality: “It is the ‘telos’ of personal consciousness, which is realized in creative development, not in the annihilation of personality.”

To repeat, Florovsky held that the fullness of the experience of faith exists only in the Church inasmuch as it is the Body of Christ indwelt by the Spirit. Thus, the Christian person comes to realize this fullness, or, the mind of the Church, only through his or her participation in Christ, who is the “personal centre” of the Church to which Christians are united.

One’s participation in Christ comes through incorporation into his Body, the Church, through Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist. This participation increases through one’s continued *askesis* manifested in one’s life in the Church and growth in the knowledge of God; in other words, through the life of faith and reason. Because Florovsky regards the mind of the Church as something realized by the Christian person through his or her union with Christ through his body, he claims that “the Christian mind is through and through a corporate mind.”

Another way of putting it is that the mind of the Church is a relational reality.

According to Florovsky, the Church deems those persons who have realized this fullness “Fathers and Teachers of the Church.” Their realization of this fullness in their

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299 V1, 67.
300 V1, 44.
301 V1, 67.
302 V13, 81.
knowledge and life does not mean for Florovsky that they reached the limit of this fullness, but that they are able to witness this fullness to the other members of the Church, to speak from the mind of the Church. In deference to this patristic witness, Florovsky advocated that Christian theology today seek to recover the “mind of the Fathers.” This call for the recovery of the patristic mind represents the essence of Florovsky’s call for a Neo-patristic synthesis. However, the “mind of the Fathers,” as Florovsky understands it, does not refer primarily to the content of patristic theology (though it is not separable from it), but a way of life in the Church. This way involves the “existential theology” that Florovsky saw exemplified in the Fathers of the Church. An “existential theology” is one that seeks after the fullness of Christian experience by actively unfolding this experience through rational thought and one’s participation in the life of the Church. Florovsky characterizes this active unfolding of Christian experience as the vocation of each member of the Church. It is the condition of both the individual Christian’s theosis and the completion of the Body of Christ. And furthermore, as I will argue in Chapter Two, it constitutes the essence of what Florovsky understands as Tradition and doctrinal development.

C. THE ERRORS OF HELLENISM

Most of Florovsky’s writings resulted from a perceived need to respond to challenges to the Christian faith. For the sake of clarity, I have above laid out the main tenets of Florovsky’s theology of revelation in a positive fashion. In his writings,

\[303\text{ V3, 40.}
\[304\text{ V1, 107-108; V4, 17; Florovsky, “Patristics and Modern Theology,” in Procès verbaux du premier Congres de théologie orthodoxe à Athènes, 29 Nov-6 Dec 1936, ed. H.A. Alivisatos (Athens: A. Pyrsos, 1939), 240.}
\[305\text{ V1, 108-109, 113.}
however, his theology of revelation was forged through a defense of Christian orthodoxy against certain modern intellectual trends, particularly German Idealism and Romanticism—which he considered the offspring of the Protestant Reformation—in addition to Russian Sophiology. Florovsky was consciously aware that his theology through polemic represented another affinity between him and the Fathers of the Church, whom he said “most often theologized for the refutation of heretics.”

In order to further elaborate Florovsky’s theology of revelation, I will briefly summarize what he opposed in these trends.

Florovsky’s defense of the Christian understanding of revelation, and relatedly, creation, was influenced by his theology or philosophy of history, which he construes as a dialectic between Christianity and Hellenism. With Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, Florovsky was willing to regard Hellenism as a kind of preparatio Evangelii. Indeed, Christianity came to be in a Hellenistic milieu, and thus, the Hellenistic idiom is formative of the Christian experience that is manifested in Scripture and dogma. But the Incarnation and Redemption also signaled the need for Hellenism to be purified and transfigured with the rest of creation, a task that the Church Fathers set about to accomplish through their writings. The efforts of the Fathers produced what Florovsky terms “Christian Hellenism,” or, a “‘Churchification’ [ ‘Verkirchlichung’ ] of Hellenism.” However, some Christians in the early Church desired to figuratively “return to Egypt” by judging Christianity by the logic of Hellenism, rather than judging Hellenism according to the “mind of the Church.” For Florovsky, this return to a pre-

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306 John Meyendorff, “Predislovie,” in Puti Russkogo Bogosloviia, 2nd ed. (Paris: YMCA Press, 1981), vi; translated in Gallaher, 661. See also Blane, 171: “This interest in ‘problems’ was the starting point for all Father Georges’ intellectual pursuits.”
308 V3, 32.
Christian Hellenism in thought constitutes the nature of Christian heresy not only in the early Church, but in all ages of the Church.

Florovsky sees the problems of Hellenism as rooted in a deficient understanding of creation, the concept of which he held “was alien and even unintelligible to the Greek mind…” Whereas Christianity understands God to be other than the world and creation to be *ex nihilo*, Hellenism was pantheistic and thus regarded “the Cosmos... as an ‘eternal’ and ‘immortal’... being.” The pantheism of Hellenism entailed an impersonal God—“a common failure of Greek philosophy”—which meant that the world’s existence was not the result of God’s free act, and thus, was necessary. The necessity of the cosmos colored human existence with a certain necessity. Men and women could bring about no change in the world’s process through their free actions; instead, their purpose was merely to discern the eternal patterns present within the structure of the world and either resign themselves to their fate, or try to escape the cyclical process of the world through a *fuga mundi*.

Florovsky discerns some of these same problems in forms of “de-Christianized Hellenism” that have arisen in Christian history. He sees the dangers of Origenism—Florovsky’s type of an erroneous Christian appropriation of Hellenism—as rooted in Hellenistic “metaphysical presuppositions” that exalt spiritual and immutable reality at the expense of the bodily and historical. Origen could not reconcile the antinomy of God’s immutability and creation’s newness resulting from God’s free action, and opted to preserve the former at the expense of the latter. As a result, Origen postulated the pre-
existence of souls, and portrayed history and its events as an ephemeral realm needing to be surpassed and transcended.\footnote{V3, 52-53.}

Protestantism represented an attempt to remove what it perceived as Christianity’s Hellenistic accretions. Ironically, however, Florovsky believed that anti-Hellenistic Protestantism created the space necessary for modern forms of de-Christianized Hellenism to flourish by eliminating religion as an object for the creativity of Christian thought. German Idealism arose in the wake of Protestantism, and Florovsky paints it as almost a whole scale, though indirect, ressourcement of the deficient Hellenistic views of creation. According to Florovsky, Idealism perceived the world as “an eternal self-revelation of God, an eternal changing existence of divine life,” and was therefore pantheistic inasmuch as it postulated an “absolute, insoluble connection of God with the world, the idea of mutual closest connection.”\footnote{V12, 27.} Like Hellenism, Florovsky saw Idealism as confining men’s and women’s activity to morphological thought and “the search for the unchangeable foundations of the world, at the revelation of its eternally ideal outline or the scheme which holds it together.”\footnote{V12, 25.}

Florovsky considers a properly orthodox understanding of creation (and revelation) as a corollary of a properly orthodox Christology. As such, he perceived a deficient Christology in these forms of de-Christianized Hellenism. He refers to the Christology of Origen as “utterly inadequate and ambiguous,” for Origen portrayed the Incarnation as but “a moment in the continuous story of permanent Theophany of the

\footnote{V3, 52-53.}
\footnote{V12, 27.}
\footnote{V12, 25.}
Divine Logos—a central moment, in a sense, but still no more than a central symbol.”

Idealism does not understand the Incarnation as a central moment in history, but “only a section of the entire theogonic process” of God’s continuously evolving self-revelation. It stresses God’s link with the world and humankind, and postulates their ultimate unity, but this unity is not to be brought about by concrete, historical events such as the Incarnation. Florovsky thus resolves that “One could say that German Idealism is a theory of God-humankind without the God-man. That is its fatal error.”

The manifestations of de-Christianized Hellenism that Florovsky perceived in modern Russian theological thought seemed to come to a head during his lifetime in Sophiology. Florovsky’s student John Meyendorff has gone so far as to claim that the “psychological impulse which inspired Florovsky during the writing of his books was the refutation of the so-called ‘sophiology’ in all its forms.” Sophiology refers to the theory variously elaborated by Soloviev, Florensky, and Bulgakov, among others, which postulates the existence of creation in the Godhead almost to the point of conceiving it as a separate hypostasis called “Wisdom,” or, “Sophia,” symbolized in history in the person of the Virgin Mary. Florovsky characterizes Sophiology as “pan-logistic” because it fails to make a distinction between “the truth of a thing” (the thought of the world in

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317 V12, 36, 38.
318 Meyendorff, “Predisloviye,” vi.
319 Sophiology is a notoriously ambiguous school of thought. Alexis Klimoff rightly points out that “the exact nature of [Sophiology]… has however never received a clear definition and has for this reason been open to charges of incompatibility with accepted Orthodox teaching” (“Georges Florovsky and the Sophiological Controversy,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 49:1-2 [2005]: 67). See also Valliere, 288n21: “No thorough, dispassionate study of the Sophia Affair has yet been made.” A major thesis of Valliere’s book is that “the Sophia Affair was not about the fate of an individual or even about sophiology. It was about Orthodox engagement with the modern world. The issue was the extent to which interpretations of Orthodox faith not clearly attested in antecedent tradition could or would be accommodated in the church” (289).
God’s essence) and the “substance of a thing” (the act of creating the world). According to Florovsky’s reasoning, if creation and humanity were somehow part of the Godhead, as Sophiology holds, then they would necessarily exist, and creation would not be the result of God’s free will.

He also saw Sophiology as insufficiently accounting for free, human activity. His critiques about Sophiology’s views of human activity and history were mainly directed at the young Soloviev. According to Florovsky, Soloviev understood the world as “an ideally constructed mechanism,” and history as “a gradual process of Godmanhood, the profound and free unity of the Divine and the human” that would culminate in a “world synthesis” and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Florovsky sees a deficient Christology lurking behind Soloviev’s problematic conception of history. He could not help but note the irony that “Solov’ev spoke much more about God-manhood than about the God-man.”

“Yet, even in his Lectures Concerning Godmanhood,” Florovsky writes, “the Historic Christ was more a manifestation of a general idea than a true Person.” Thus, in Soloviev’s utopian vision, even the person of Christ fades into the shadows of the continuous flow of the historical process. As a result, Florovsky concludes that Soloviev “did not go beyond Origen” and his Logos-theology. He levels this same criticism at Florensky in his scathing review of the latter’s The Pillar and

320 V3, 54-62.
321 Florovsky interpreted Soloviev as repudiating some of his earlier heterodoxies in the latter period of his life, and sees this repudiation exemplified by his “Story of the Antichrist.” “In a sense” writes Florovsky, “his ‘Story’ was his ‘Retractiones’” (Florovsky, “Reason and Faith in the Philosophy of Solov’ëv,” in Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, ed. E.J. Simmons [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955], 295). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Florovsky believed Soloviev’s about-face was the result of ascetical trial: “In his last years he passed through a difficult religious crisis, in the purging fire of which all his gnostic and theocratic utopias burned” (V12, 113).
322 V12, 110-112.
323 V6, 86.
325 V6, 87.
Florovsky’s calls for a Neo-patristic synthesis and a return to a proper Christian Hellenism have too hastily been characterized by contemporary Orthodox thinkers as anti-Western, isolationist, and an example of “cultural chauvinism.” On the contrary, as Matthew Baker has persuasively argued, Florovsky explicitly repudiated such a simplistic understanding of his prescription for the renewal of Orthodox theology. Like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Florovsky recognized that German Idealism was now part of the Western world’s hermeneutic, and a programmatic effort of Orthodox to forget it would itself be a-historical: “For renouncing Idealism means renouncing the past, means a cultural and historical break.” Plus, though Florovsky warns about certain excesses of modern Russian theological thought, he clarifies that the path of thinkers such as Soloviev and Florensky “is mainly correct,” and commends them for their bringing an examination of the relationship between faith and reason to the forefront of Orthodox thought. Indeed, Florovsky’s call for a Neo-patristic synthesis was primarily a call for the reunification of faith and reason in Christian life. “Solov’yev’s basic and fatal

326 V12, 126-127.
327 See Baker’s summary of, and response to, these critiques in Chapter Four of his thesis (“‘Neo-Patristic Synthesis,’” 167-181). As Baker points out, those who characterize Florovsky’s theological program in this way are numerous, and include Shaw (“Introduction,” 221); Nichols (Light from the East: Authors and Themes in Orthodox Theology, [London: Sheed & Ward, 1995], 135); Gallaher (“Waiting for the Barbarians”); Dorothea Wednebourg (“‘Pseudo-morphosis’: A Theological Judgement as an Axiom in the History of Church and Theology,” The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 42:3-4 [1997]: 321-342); F.J. Thompson, (“Peter Mogila’s Ecclesiastical Reforms and the Ukrainian Contribution to Russian Culture. A Critique of George Florovoy’s Theory of the Pseudomorphism of Orthodoxy,” in Belgian Contributions to the 11th International Congress of Slavists, Bratislava, 30 Aug.-8 Sept. 1993 [no publication date], 67-119); and Kalaitzidis, “From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology.”
328 V12, 24.
329 V12, 114, 120.
contradiction” does not lie in his dialogue with the Idealist tradition, but rather, “lies in the fact that he attempted to construct an ecclesiastical synthesis from non-ecclesiastical experience.”\textsuperscript{330} Christian Hellenism was born when the Church Fathers undertook a rational engagement with Hellenistic philosophy by passing it through the sieve of the Christian experience of faith. Florovsky advocates the recovery of this patristic schema: “the task of theology lies… not in controlling dogma by means of contemporary philosophy but rather in re-shaping philosophy on experience of faith itself so that the experience of faith would become the source and measure of philosophical views.”\textsuperscript{331} Such a theology involves the Church’s authentic engagement with ideas, rather than a slavish imitation of them. The Neo-patristic synthesis is therefore a call for Christians to exercise the freedom that belongs to them as persons.

According to Florovsky, an authentic Christian Hellenism is one that recognizes its Greek patrimony without being subjected to its logic. It is one that preserves a uniquely Christian conception of God as necessary, eternal, and immutable, yet also personal, free, and active. It is one that views both creation and revelation as divine events, culminating in the Incarnation, and affirms that these events were not merely the appearance of pre-existent elements, but brought something new into existence and transformed the world. And it is one that understands history as the forum for both divine and human events, which both contribute to the completion of the Body of Christ and the inauguration of the \textit{eschaton}. In Chapter Two, I will argue that this emphasis on human events and creative activity leads Florovsky to endorse the idea of doctrinal development.

\textsuperscript{330} V6, 85. See also V4, 177.
\textsuperscript{331} V4, 177.
1.3: DIALOGUE

In Chapter One I have focused on summarizing how Newman and Florovsky understand the mode and character of divine revelation. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I believe Newman’s theory of doctrinal development follows from his particular understanding of revelation. In the Dialogue section of this chapter I will attempt to show that Florovsky’s understanding of revelation is fundamentally congruent with Newman’s, thus laying the groundwork for Chapter Two in which I argue that Florovsky accepts the idea of doctrinal development.

Newman and Florovsky demonstrate a similar understanding of revelation in large part because of their common foundation in the theology of the Eastern Church Fathers. However, a comparison of Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of revelation also reveals some interesting differences attributable to their different ecclesial traditions, influences, and opponents. These differences do not constitute obstacles to my argument that Florovsky accepts the idea of doctrinal development. Instead, they represent opportunities for the mutual development of each author’s position, and potentially point the way toward the future development of the understanding of revelation in each author’s religious tradition.

A. NEWMAN AND FLOROVSKY ON GOD’S REVEALING ACTIVITY

Certain common emphases in Newman’s and Florovsky’s theologies of revelation have emerged in this chapter. They converge in emphasizing that God reveals Himself as person to men and women through His free actions in history. They both attach a relational purpose to God’s revealing activity, which aims at union between God and
human persons. In addition, both Newman and Florovsky imply that the way in which God reveals Himself to men and women serves as a model or pattern of the human reception of revelation. As persons, men and women are called upon to freely receive revelation through their own creative activity in history, which manifests itself in thought, word, and deed. These delineations of “thought, word, and deed” are but Newman’s and Florovsky’s categorized way of saying that the Christian’s entire life constitutes his or her active reception of revelation. As I will make clear in Chapter Two, this creative reception of revelation by human persons is nothing other than what Newman refers to as doctrinal development.

Dictating and coloring these common emphases is perhaps the most important similarity between Newman and Florovsky: their use of Incarnation as a lens for their understandings of revelation, and furthermore, for their theologies as a whole. Florovsky further specifies his Incarnational and Christological hermeneutic as consciously Chalcedonic, centered on the person of Jesus Christ possessed of both a divine and human nature. Florovsky interprets Chalcedon as implicitly mandating that any Christian expression of faith or practice affirm the person and his or her ability to freely act. In addition, he sees the coinherence of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ as demanding that Christian theology affirm the place of both θεολογία and οἰκονομία, the dignity of both body and spirit, the importance of both dogma and life, and the significance of both history and eschatology.

Newman does not invoke Chalcedon per se, but a Chalcedonic perspective similar to Florovsky is unmistakably present in his insistence that divine revelation has both concrete and abstract aspects. Newman holds that truth is most fully concrete when it is
enhypostasized, and sees Christian revelation as concrete insofar as it consists of the Person of God revealing Himself to human persons for the sake of their deification. He also sees the concrete nature of revelation manifested in its historical character, for he writes that God primarily reveals Himself through distinct “facts and actions” (see note 123) of which the Incarnation represents the fulfillment and the standard. Yet, Newman also affirmed the abstract character of revelation. According to Newman, Christian revelation is abstract insofar as men and women conceptually express it in order to understand it, while knowing that they can never fully do so because of the otherness of revelation’s object.

Interestingly, one also finds language of the concrete versus the abstract recurring throughout Florovsky’s writings in a manner harmonious with the Chalcedonic character of his theology of revelation. Perhaps the presence of this scheme of the concrete and abstract in both Newman and Florovsky is not so surprising, given Hans Urs von Balthasar’s contention that “this scheme of thought is at the basis of Western philosophy and can be followed down throughout its history.” In his writings, Florovsky associates the “concrete” with the personal, the free, the historic, the visible, and the active. Accordingly, Florovsky regards revelation as concrete because God is a person who freely acts in revealing Himself to persons through visible, historic events. One can translate his critiques of many alternative theological and philosophical systems as his

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333 For Florovsky’s associations of the historical with the concrete, see V1, 89; V11, 15; V13, 30, 60. He associates the personal with the concrete in V1, 41 and V12, 63. For associations between the visible and the concrete, see V2, 201 and V13, 66, 140, 189. For associations between activity and the concrete, see V3, 258 and V5, 4.
perception that abstract principles in these systems overshadowed and determined concrete realities.\textsuperscript{334}

At the same time, Florovsky clearly recognized the importance of the abstract element in revelation, which he located in human reason’s call to unfold the concrete experience of faith through theology.\textsuperscript{335} Parallel to the human and divine natures of Christ, Florovsky held that “both are to be kept side by side: a somewhat abstract or generalized presentation of the main message in a creed or in a system, and all particular documents referring to the concrete instances of revelation. One might say a system and the history itself.”\textsuperscript{336} One could fairly claim that Florovsky believes the “scheme” of the concrete and the abstract find their definitive reconciliation in the person of Jesus Christ.

The concept of personhood is an emphasis in both Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of revelation, but there are some noteworthy differences. Florovsky exhibits a concept of personhood more fully rooted in theology and metaphysics than Newman’s. He principally portrays the person as the nexus of free and creative activity. In regard to God, this portrayal is a fruit of the Christological controversies of the early Church, during which the Fathers perceived the need to more clearly distinguish between God’s person and nature in order to defend the divinity of the Son (and the Holy Spirit). Florovsky roots men’s and women’s free activity in their personhood belonging to them by virtue of their creation in the \textit{imago Dei}. He also implies that personhood is the nexus of relationality, and that men’s and women’s status as persons makes possible their relation with the person of God in \textit{theosis}.

\textsuperscript{334} V12, 13; V6, 271.
\textsuperscript{335} V13, 168.
\textsuperscript{336} V1, 28.
As I pointed out above, Newman also linked personhood with freedom and activity in his brief, direct foray into metaphysics. One of his recurrent emphases, too, was that “life is for action,” and that the quality of one’s reception of divine revelation was measurable by how much it manifested itself in action. However, when he referred to the concepts of personhood and revelation together, Newman tended to focus more on the revelatory effectiveness of personal manifestation, which he considers “that most efficient incentive to all action,” than on attributing God’s revealing activity, and the human being’s active reception of revelation, to their status as persons. As Walgrave has pointed out, Newman did not clarify why he regarded the personal as such an effective impetus to action (see notes 49 and 50). In addition, John Crosby’s chapter on Newman’s “personalism” unintentionally shows how little sustained theological and philosophical attention Newman gave to the concept of the person in spite of his frequent invocation of it. Here Florovsky’s link between personhood and the image of God may be helpful, for it provides theological support for Newman’s emphasis on the person. Newman does not devote much reflection to the concept of the image of God, even in his *Lectures on Justification*. However, it further bolsters his contention that human beings are fundamentally acting persons who image God’s own personal activity.

One of the principles of Newman’s theory of development is that developments of ideas are often catalyzed by the circumstances of one’s context. Newman’s theology of revelation exhibits many hallmarks of Eastern Orthodoxy due to his reading of the Eastern Church Fathers. Indeed, the patristic emphasis of many twentieth and twenty-first century Orthodox theologians such as Florovsky is in some ways indebted to

Newman’s return *ad fontes* in the nineteenth century. However, Newman’s theology of revelation was also circumscribed by his Anglican and Roman Catholic contexts, which included a particular theological vocabulary and the pressing issues of the day.

Some of Florovsky’s catalysts were not his own. One must remember that while Florovsky claims patristic provenance for his understanding of personhood, he is also indebted to modern scholarship such as the philosophy of personhood in Charles Renouvier. Both Florovsky’s and Renouvier’s links between personhood, freedom, and activity were spurred on by the determinism they perceived in German Idealism and its theological and philosophical offspring. Newman, on the other hand, was by and large ignorant of German Idealism save for his brief exposure to it *via* a secondary source.

Largely contributing to his ignorance of Idealism was his ignorance of the German language.

The patristic influence on Florovsky’s particular understanding of personhood is evident in his Christocentrism and his paralleling of creation and revelation. The Christocentric character of personhood is obviously evident in Chalcedon’s dogma of the hypostatic union. However, it is also discernible in the earlier Christological controversies in which the Fathers defended the divinity of Christ by distinguishing between God’s *θεολογία* and *οἰκονομία*, or, His essence and energies. The Fathers’ defense was an attempt to successfully navigate the heresies of Arianism and Sabellianism, and consisted in them clarifying that the begetting of the Son was an act of...

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339 P.N., 1: 227-234. The secondary source was Dr. H.M. Chalybäus’s *Historical Development of Speculative Philosophy from Kant to Hegel*, trans. Rev. Alfred Edersheim (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1854).
God’s essence, whereas historic events such as creation and revelation were the result of God’s personal, and thus free and creative, activity. Florovsky can thus claim that all the truths of creation are contained within the Church’s understanding of revelation, and vice versa, because both creation and revelation testify to a personal God who freely acts in history.

At the heart of the early Christological controversies was also the question of men’s and women’s eschatological destiny. The Chalcedonic defense of Christ’s divinity and humanity was also a defense of the possibility of theosis, for if God did not truly become human, men and women could not truly participate in God. The distinction between God’s essence and energies was also a defense of the character of theosis itself, for in distinguishing between acts of God’s essence and acts of God’s person, the Fathers assured that men’s and women’s deification was conceived as a union of persons without confusion.

Florovsky’s understanding of revelation is both synthetic and cosmic, connecting the concepts of divine personhood and freedom with the historic events of creation, the Incarnation, and the eschaton. The clear link between the Incarnation, creation, and eschatology in Florovsky’s theology of revelation is in part attributable to the influence of Maximus the Confessor on his thought. As I pointed out above, Florovsky classified the theology of Maximus as a “theology of revelation” that similarly regarded the Incarnation as the thread that held together the fabric of the created world. He elsewhere described Maximus as providing a “magnificent theological synthesis” of Byzantine thought up to that point in history.340 Maximus’ synthesis included a developed

340 V2, 127.
understanding of revelation that drew upon the Church’s understanding of creation formulated in the Christological controversies of the previous centuries.

Florovsky’s link between revelation and creation was also catalyzed by his perception that a challenge to the orthodox doctrine of creation was at the heart of modern forms of de-Hellenized Christianity such as German Idealism and Romanticism, and their manifestation in Russian Sophiology. Florovsky believed the challenges faced by the Fathers were similar to those we face today, and saw his role as not that different from Athanasius who was forced to defend the doctrine of creation against the “Hellenisms” manifest in Origenism and Arianism. As a result of this conscious link, Florovsky’s theology of revelation clearly bears those fruits won when orthodoxy emerged at the councils.

Newman does not similarly link revelation with creation in his writings. But this lack is not due to a failure to perceive the nuances, or antinomies, of the Christian doctrine of creation, as witnessed to by Arians, Volume Two of his Select Treatises of St. Athanasius, and his lengthy essay “Causes of the Rise and Successes of Arianism.”

Newman, like Florovsky, also recognized that the divine act of creation was a paradigm for the rest of God’s actions in history: “For that first act of creation could not stand alone; other acts necessarily followed. Creation and conservation must go together.” And, as I pointed out, Newman had recourse to the eschatological model of deification,

341 Newman wrote “Causes of the Rise and Successes of Arianism” (T.T., 137-330) as a Catholic in 1872. In this essay, Ker notes that Newman refers to the Eastern Church Fathers in order to explain the dogma of the Trinity. Newman confided to William Bright that, because of the Eastern flavor of the essay, “I fear it will not altogether please, I won’t say Anglican Divines, but even my own people” (L.D. XXVI, 276; Ker, Newman and the Fullness of Christianity, 85).

which was unusual in his context. However, he does not establish the link between creation, revelation, and men’s and women’s deification as clearly as Florovsky.

It is fair to say, then, that Newman lacks Florovsky’s explicitly formulated synthetic and cosmic understanding of revelation. I wrote above that Florovsky was primarily a theologian and not an apologist. Newman, on the other hand, was primarily an apologist and not a theologian in the sense he understood the term. Like Florovsky, Newman wished to defend Christian orthodoxy against modern threats. But the battle Newman waged was primarily on the ground of first principles, where he sought to bring to light the erroneous premises of his opponents. Unlike Florovsky, Newman’s opposition did not usually involve the reassertion and reinterpretation of the Church’s dogmatic tradition. Newman engaged in a historical retrieval of the Fathers, and, as Brian Daley writes, “felt a deep religious kinship” with them, but their influence on his understanding of revelation was seemingly indirect. It is perhaps also noteworthy that Newman was not well versed in the works of Maximus the Confessor, who exercised such a great influence on Florovsky’s view of revelation.

In spite of being less developed, Newman’s understanding of revelation exhibits some of the same emphases as Florovsky’s. The similar emphases are a testament to Newman’s and Florovsky’s common foundation in the patristic ethos, which is marked by a thoroughly incarnational character. Florovsky’s theology of revelation offers the opportunity for the development of the understanding of revelation that acts as the foundation for Newman’s idea of doctrinal development. It does so by representing a fuller expression of the patristic theology that is at the heart of Newman’s understanding of revelation.

As I showed in the first two sections of Chapter One, Newman’s and Florovsky’s shared focus on the centrality of the Incarnation is connected with their shared focus on the historical character of revelation. Newman described God as revealing Himself through concrete “facts and actions.” Florovsky was even more concerned with asserting the historical character of revelation. He also used the terms “facts” and “actions” to classify God’s entrances into history, but above all he described them as “events.” Both Newman and Florovsky also stressed that God continues to act in history through His Church, the Body of Christ, through its actions of Liturgy, the sacraments, prayer, and theology. Indeed, the “Body of Christ” is a dominant motif of both Newman’s and Florovsky’s ecclesiologies, a fact that leads one to surmise an intimate connection between a corporate ecclesiology and a strong emphasis on God’s continued activity in ecclesiastical history.

Both Newman and Florovsky also perceived threats to the historical integrity of Christian revelation in their times that they attributed to Protestantism and its effects. Newman’s lifelong battle against “the spirit of liberalism in religion” included a defense of Christian revelation against those who reduced divine revelation to its moral implications, or, like William Paley, reduced it to numerous “evidences” whose miraculous nature pointed toward the existence of God. Newman opposed, and what he saw as a component of a historical revelation, is the fact

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344 William Paley (1743-1805) was a British philosopher known for arguing for God’s existence based on the design evident in the universe. Newman did not disagree with the general thrust of Paley’s arguments, but maintained that men and women are not primarily moved to faith in God through logic: “I say plainly I do not want to be converted by a smart syllogism…” (G.A., 330). Newman was also uncomfortable with Paley’s position, laid out in his A View of the Evidences of Christianity (1794), that divine revelations must be attended with credentials that “are necessarily in their nature miraculous.” Newman, on the other hand, held that the assent of faith on the part of the human person is what recognizes the divine agency behind revelations: “I think, then, that the circumstances under which a professed revelation comes to us, may be such as to impress both our reason and our imagination with a sense of its truth, even though no appeal be made to strictly miraculous intervention…” (G.A., 331, 333)
that God’s actions were revelatory precisely because they accomplished something in history. Florovsky saw a denial of revelation as “event” in the pantheism of Idealism and Romanticism, which conceived of history as the gradual unveiling and realization of an ideal according to a pre-formed structure. To the Idealist and the Romantic, events were not dramatic irruptions of time in which God acted in history and effected change in that history, but instead, were the periodic, symbolic manifestations of the “Absolute Reality.” Newman famously wrote in the *Essay on Development* that “To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.” In the text, he directed this statement toward the Protestant “neglect of ecclesiastical history.” However, it also serves as a fitting summary of Newman’s and Florovsky’s shared emphasis upon revelation as consisting of historical actions.

But a de-emphasis upon revelation as event is not solely a Protestant phenomenon. It marked the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic characterization of revelation as a number of propositions about God. It is also evident in the works of Vladimir Lossky, whose neo-Palamite, apophatically-focused presentation of the Orthodox faith has been so influential in modern Orthodox theology. When Lossky treats of revelation, it is mainly revelation in the abstract. He refers in various places to the “facts” and “data” of revelation, but notably absent from these references is any extended description of the content of these facts and data. The particular datum of revelation that receives Lossky’s recurring attention is that of the Holy Trinity, the dogma that he terms “the highest point of revelation.” Yet, Lossky does not devote attention to the historical means, or mode, by which this dogma was revealed. In contrast to Florovsky’s

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345 *Dev.*, 7, 8.
theology of revelation that begins with events, Lossky begins with the believer’s experience, which is the starting point for the believer’s ascent toward the “divine darkness” of union with God.

I have showed that the historical character both Newman and Florovsky ascribe to revelation follows from the central place of the Incarnation in their respective theologies. It is therefore telling that Florovsky criticizes Lossky’s *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* for its lack of a Christological approach to theology. In his review of Lossky’s *Mystical Theology*, Florovsky praises it as an “excellent” book that “is an essay in what can be described as a ‘neo-patristic synthesis.’” However, he describes its most “substantial weakness” as “its basic structure,” which follows “a rather ‘philosophical’ order of thought: God, creation, Created Being, and *Imago Dei*, etc., so as to arrive at Christology only in the middle of the road.” He furthermore writes that “the christological chapter of Lossky’s book (chap. vii, ‘The Economy of the Son’) is the most controversial…”

Florovsky seems to implicitly apply to Lossky a criticism of Soloviev he originally made to Bulgakov, namely, “[T]he road to discovering [the main thing] lies through Christology, not through Trinitology, since only with Jesus Christ did the worship of the Trinity become reality.”

I have furthermore argued that a theology marked by a strongly incarnational and historical focus is amenable to the idea of doctrinal development. It is thus noteworthy that the lack of an incarnational and historical focus in Lossky’s theology is accompanied by a rejection of doctrinal development. Newman’s and Florovsky’s portrayal of revelation as consisting of God’s actions and events in history leads them to emphasize

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the active human reception of revelation in thought, which I have deemed the essence of doctrinal development. Conversely, as I will show in Chapter Two, Lossky’s lack of emphasis upon revelation as event results in his lack of emphasis upon the active role played by human thought in receiving revelation. Aidan Nichols has noted that Lossky’s focus on the mystical at the expense of the historical has had a negative impact upon modern Orthodox theology: “Lossky’s dictum that all theology must be mystical theology has given a certain anti-historical bent to contemporary Orthodox writing…”349 One wonders if the Orthodox rejection of doctrinal development is a casualty of this “anti-historical bent.”

Newman’s and Florovsky’s respective answers to the question of when divine revelation ended seemingly signal a divergence in the historical character of their theologies of revelation. Newman appears to retreat to a more static understanding of revelation by invoking the formula that revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle. This formula was a fixture of the Roman Catholic theology of Newman’s time, and is today typically associated with theories that primarily regard revelation as the communication of divine truths, rather than a series of divine acts. Florovsky appears more faithful to an event-based understanding of revelation in claiming that Pentecost represents the last revelatory event until Christ’s Second Coming. However, a closer examination reveals that Newman’s invocation of this formula is entirely consistent with an understanding of revelation as event.

Newman believed revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle not simply out of deference to Roman Catholic school theology, but because it conformed to his doctrine of inspiration. He understood the Apostles to be inspired in the sense that they

349 Nichols, Light from the East, 32.
had a special grace, a special presence of the Holy Spirit, by which they possessed “the fullness of revealed knowledge.”

In his sermon “The Indwelling Spirit,” Newman describes the interpretation of “the birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Christ” as a collaboration of divine and human activity whose actors are the Holy Spirit and the Apostles. Then, in a remarkable phrase, he writes that the Holy Spirit “has made history to be doctrine” through inspiring the Apostles in their interpretive work. Newman here maintains that the Apostles’ interpretation of the divine actions in history is also part of revelation, and thus implies that these acts of interpretation also constitute revelatory events.

Unlike Newman, Florovsky has no extensive treatment of the doctrine of inspiration, and mentions it only sparingly in his writings. He writes in “Revelation and Interpretation” that he considered it theologically appropriate to remain apophatic about the nature of inspiration, since “what is the inspiration can never be properly defined—there is a mystery therein.”

It is therefore understandable that he would dismiss the death of the last Apostle formula as an arbitrary construction. In addition, Florovsky does not appear to believe that the Apostles possessed a special grace of interpretation, though he regarded them as privileged witnesses of the Christian faith. He would certainly not claim, as Newman does, that the Apostles were inspired in a way that the Fathers were not. However, what Newman otherwise implicitly affirms in the formula—that human actions and events are integral to divine revelation—absolutely

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351 P.S., 2: 227. Many commentators on Newman have been intrigued by this quotation, and with good reason: it could well act as a summary statement of Newman’s understanding of divine revelation.
352 V1, 27.
353 Newman, “Flanagan,” 156. As a retort to Newman’s position, see Florovsky in V1, 101: “Apostles and Fathers—these two terms were generally and commonly coupled together in the argument from Tradition, as it was used in the Third and Fourth centuries. It was this double reference, both to the origin and to the unfailing and continuous preservation, that warranted the authenticity of belief.”
conforms to the historical tenor of Florovsky’s understanding of revelation. Indeed, within the context of his mention of biblical inspiration in “Revelation and Interpretation” Florovsky writes, “God spoke to man indeed, but there was man to attend and to perceive. ‘Anthropomorphism’ is thus inherent in the very fact.” Thus, both Newman and Florovsky affirm that human actions are constitutive of divine revelation.

**B. Newman and Florovsky on Human Persons’ Receiving Activity**

In both Newman’s and Florovsky’s understanding of revelation, the way in which God reveals Himself to men and women serves as a model or pattern of the human reception of revelation. They portray revelation as God’s personal and free entrance into history through actions and events in order to redeem men and women so that they may participate in His divine life. Accordingly, men and women are called to receive God’s revelation through their own creative activity. Newman and Florovsky usually delineate this active reception in categories such as thought, word, and deed, though really they regard the entire Christian life as a reception of God’s revelation.

Using the vocabularies particular to their backgrounds, both Newman and Florovsky portray the human reception of revelation as active from the beginning. Newman primarily uses the empiricist term “impression” to describe the initial human reception of revelation, while Florovsky primarily describes it as an “experience.” These different terms refer to what appears to be a similar reality in Newman’s and Florovsky’s thought. Both Newman and Florovsky understand this “impression” or “experience” to originate in a human person’s contact with an external reality. In fact, Newman writes that the impression of God through revelation is “an experience of something in the

354 V1, 27.
Similarly, both Newman and Florovsky emphasize that the human person’s impression or experience of revelation derives from the concrete events, facts, and actions of God in history, which are now communicated through the life of the Church.

In addition, both Newman and Florovsky affirm that the whole of revelation is contained within the human person’s impression or experience of it. “[I]ts truths were given once for all at the first,” writes Newman. Newman provides a metaphysical basis for this wholeness, or unity, of the impression in writing that “surely, if Almighty God is ever one and the same, and is revealed to us as one and the same, the true inward impression of Him, made on the recipient of the revelation, must be one and the same…” (see note 47). Florovsky, on the other hand, tended to characterize revelation as a historical unity, rather than a metaphysical (or, ontological) unity. That is, Florovsky regarded revelation as a unity primarily because all revelation concerns the divine purpose—the deification of men and women—that began at creation and will be consummated at the end of time. Thus, one could say that Florovsky regards revelation as not only a historical, but an eschatological unity.

Interestingly, both Newman and Florovsky seemed reticent to identify revelation, or its impression or experience dwelling within the human person, as God. According to Paul Misner, such an identification would have provided Newman with a more “adequate” and “comprehensive present-day concept of revelation.” Such an identification on the part of Florovsky would also link him with many neo-Palamite Orthodox theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, who emphasized that revelation was a form of God’s energies, which are truly God. However, Newman’s firm

355 G.A., 23.
356 Idea, 52.
357 Misner, “Newman’s Concept of Revelation,” 47.
insistence on the principle of mediation led him to avoid identifying revelation and its impression with God. Florovsky, on the other hand, opposed any interpretation of revelation that smacked of pantheism or seemingly limited God’s freedom. Neo-Palamism and its excessive focus on the essence-energies distinction seems susceptible to this charge of pantheism, as it sometimes fails to differentiate between God’s actions and His modes of presence in the world.\(^{358}\) This susceptibility is ironic, to say the least, since neo-Palamites perceive this distinction as necessary to avoiding such a lapse into pantheism.

Both Newman and Florovsky recognize that, as God is inexhaustible, so also is His revelation as known by the believer through his or her impression or experience. Though it exists as a whole in the human person, it can never be wholly known by that person. Newman holds that “mystery is the necessary note of divine revelation,” and describes the “original impression” as existing within us in “dimness and confusion.”\(^{359}\) Florovsky describes how the experience of revelation “is received in the silence of faith, in silent vision—this is the first and apophatic step of the knowledge of God” (see note 258).

But neither Newman nor Florovsky holds that the apophatic character of the impression or experience means that its communication to, or existence in, the human person is non-cognitive. The impression or experience is received via historical actions

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\(^{359}\) *Ath.*, 2: 92; *Dev.*, 60.
and events that are cognitively processed by the human mind, “spontaneously, or even necessarily, becom[ing] the subject of reflection on the part of the mind itself.”\footnote{U.S., 320.} In spite of his misreadings of Newman’s religious epistemology, Owen Chadwick has astutely observed that Newman believed “the ‘sacred impression’ which can be described as prior to propositions is in part a proposition-bearing impression” (see note 164). The same could be said of Florovsky, whose philosophical essays show that he understands the believer’s experience to be immediately regulated by numerous mental relations, and is followed by further cognitive examinations that attempt to draw out the contents of the experience. Newman and Florovsky thus both exhibit a religious epistemology nuanced enough to know that because the impression or experience is beyond reason, it does not mean it is non-rational.

Importantly, both Newman and Florovsky believe the impression or experience that represents the whole of revelation must be expressed. This need for men and women to give expression to the impression or experience constitutes the impetus and justification of doctrinal development. For Newman and Florovsky, the active cognition that marks the person’s initial reception of revelation is a harbinger of the process that is to mark his or her life in the Church. Writes Newman, “[T]he increase and expansion of the Christian Creed and Ritual… are the necessary attendants on any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart…”\footnote{Dev., 29.} Florovsky regards the act of giving expression to the experience of faith as the fulfillment of men’s and women’s personhood and their vocation to askesis. “But Truth must still be expressed and pronounced,” he writes. “Because man is called not only to receive Truth attentively, but
also to witness of it. *Silencium mysticum* does not exhaust the complete calling of man. He is called to creative activity…”

Newman and Florovsky both consider the active cognition of the impression or experience as involving men’s and women’s rationality, or, their abstract thought. As Florovsky puts it, the members of the Church are called to contribute to the growth of “Christian philosophy.” However, Newman and Florovsky also claim that the impression or experience is something that is lived, and that the individual Christian’s entire life contributes to his or her cognition. I have hinted at something in Chapter One that will become clearer in Chapter Two, namely, the inadequacy of the distinction between life and thought, or faith and reason, when characterizing the thought of Newman and Florovsky. Assuredly, both of these authors employed these categories in their writings. But at the same time, these categories also obscure the mutual coinherence between life and thought affirmed by Newman and Florovsky. They both imply that rationality is an integral part of one’s life in Christ, and that one’s life in Christ conditions one’s rationality.

Also pertinent to the subject of doctrinal development is Newman’s and Florovsky’s claim that the impression or experience of faith is not only a reality at the individual level, but at the level of the entire Church, as well. They both describe this communally held knowledge of revelation as existing in the “mind of the Church.” There are a few issues in regard to Newman’s and Florovsky’s respective understandings of the mind of the Church that pertain to doctrinal development. Both Newman and Florovsky agree in affirming that the impression or experience of revelation is committed to the “mind of the Church” in its fullness. The term “deposit” is equivalent to this impression

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or experience in Newman’s and Florovsky’s writings. Significantly, neither Newman nor Florovsky regard the deposit committed to the mind of the Church to be reducible to propositions. It is, as Newman writes, “a Divine philosophy… not a number of formulas such as a modern pedantic theologian may make theology to consist in, but a system of thought…”363 Florovsky describes the deposit as “an existential attitude, as a spiritual orientation.”364 According to both Newman and Florovsky, the task of the members of the Church is to give expression to the deposit committed to it through “word and deed.” In this sense, they regard the deposit as a living thing, or, according to the phrase of Irenaeus that Florovsky frequently referenced, a depositum juvenescens.365 Newman and Florovsky, as I will argue in Chapter Two, see the idea of doctrinal development as testifying to the living character of the deposit as held within the mind of Church.

On first examination, it appears that Newman and Florovsky part ways on the question of where the mind of the Church resides. Newman speaks of the members of the Church having a common consciousness and phronema, but then declares that the mind of the Church does not habitually reside in any of its members, and refers to the mind of the Church as the “mind of the Spirit.” Florovsky, on the other hand, insists that the Church—the Body of Christ—is most fundamentally a “symphony of personalities,” and would not countenance the idea that the Church’s mind at any time exists outside of its members. For him, that would be the equivalent of saying that the mind of the Church existed outside of the Church.

However, further examination reveals that this seeming difference in Newman and Florovsky is reconciled by the connection they both make between the mind of the

364 V1, 113.
365 V1, 12, 79, 106.
Church and theosis. Above, I attempted to show that Newman’s dual understanding of the mind of the Church seems to imply that it involves a dialogue between the individual members of the Church and the Spirit who dwells within the Church. Florovsky emphasizes that the Church is a “symphony of personalities,” but in no way would he claim that the mind of the Church exists in these personalities irrespective of their union with Christ. They participate in the mind of the Church inasmuch as they are “in direct and immediate union with Christ and His Father,” or, one might say, inasmuch as they are in union with the mind of Christ. Furthermore, Newman and Florovsky converge in holding that the activity of the Church’s members contributes to the explication of the deposit committed to the mind of the Church, but that this process of activity cannot be separated from their union with Christ.

The real parting of ways between Newman and Florovsky comes on the issue of who can legitimately speak from the fullness of the mind of the Church. According to Newman, it is the pope when he pronounces either ex cathedra or in the context of a council when he is surrounded by his bishops. At that time, Newman maintains, the mind of the Church “is capable of being presented to their mind with that fullness and exactness, under the operation of supernatural grace… with which it habitually, not occasionally, resided in the minds of the Apostles…” Thus, Newman holds that the fullness of the mind of the Church is a “temporary illumination of Divine Grace” brought out only at those times it is required.

Florovsky, on the other hand, portrays the mind of the Church as something that can be achieved in its fullness only through askesis. Accordingly, those most qualified to

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366 V1, 67.
368 Ibid., 160.
speak from the mind of the Church in any given age are its saints, those who have existentially appropriated the experience of faith. This is not to say that Florovsky attributes no role to Church authority. Rather, his emphasis on the enacted character of the mind of the Church leads him to claim that Church authorities are competent to speak from this mind only insofar as they remain united with Christ. I will return to this issue in Chapter Three when I deal with the relation between doctrinal development and authority.

My goal in Chapter One has been to show that Newman and Florovsky believe this active reception of revelation mirrors the active character of God’s revelation to men and women. In other words, I have attempted to establish that the concept of doctrinal development follows from a particular concept of revelation that views revelation as comprised of the personal, free, and historical actions of both God and men and women. Such a concept of revelation is concomitant with a view of the history of the Church as comprised of men’s and women’s free and active reception of this revelation in their life and thought.

The character Newman and Florovsky ascribe to the active reception of the impression or experience of faith will be the focus of the next chapter on Tradition. There I clarify that “doctrinal development” is nothing other than Newman’s nomenclature for this process of active reception, and that the idea of “doctrinal development” is therefore consonant with Florovsky’s theology. To use Florovskian language, doctrinal development is the process in which thought witnesses to the experience of faith.
CHAPTER TWO: NEWMAN AND FLOROVSKY ON TRADITION AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

In Chapter Two I will examine selected aspects of Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of Tradition as they relate to the idea of doctrinal development. If Chapter One on revelation was a more indirect, though highly pertinent, consideration of doctrinal development, Chapter Two will involve a more direct consideration of it. The concept of Tradition typically refers to the Church’s preservation and handing on of revelation through, among other things, its theology, which manifests itself in, among other things, the definition of doctrines. The Church’s Tradition thus constitutes the special realm of doctrinal development, which is why many authors treat the latter as a function of the former. 369

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a general overview of Newman’s and Florovsky’s respective understandings of Tradition. Instead, I will focus on each author’s understanding of Tradition as it relates to doctrinal development. In particular, I will concentrate my discussion on the following aspects: the place and role of Scripture and dogma in Tradition, the nature of theology, and the fittingness of the organic metaphor as a descriptor of the process of Tradition. I have also chosen to focus on these aspects because, as will become apparent, most of the Orthodox objections to doctrinal development touch on them in some way.


Throughout the section summarizing his understanding of Tradition, one will note the fact that Florovsky both affirms and rejects the idea of doctrinal development, the rejections outweighing the affirmations. The rejections are located in essays from both Florovsky’s earlier and later career, while a clear, direct affirmation of doctrinal development is contained in only one published work of Florovsky’s, namely, *Ways of Russian Theology*. I will seek to address this seeming contradiction in the dialogue portion of this chapter. There I will contextualize Florovsky’s rejections of doctrinal development, showing that his objections to it do not conflict with the principles of Newman’s theory. More importantly, I will argue that Florovsky’s theology of Tradition is in agreement with these principles, so much so that his calls for a Neo-patristic synthesis seemingly imply a call for authentic doctrinal development of the Orthodox Tradition. A consequence of this agreement is that Florovsky’s theology of Tradition diverges in significant ways, both implicitly and explicitly, from those contemporary Orthodox theologians who reject doctrinal development. At the same time, however, I will point out the ways in which Florovsky’s theology of Tradition offers important correctives and supplements to Newman’s theory of development, and thus, contributes to the development of the theory itself.

### 2.1: Newman on Tradition

**A. The Principles of Newman’s Understanding of Tradition**

Newman described the development of an idea as the “process… by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form.”

This process requires time and the idea’s exposure to different contexts, which draw out its various aspects.

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371 *Dev.*, 38.
Newman’s concept of Tradition itself was an idea that underwent development. During his Anglican years he uncovered various aspects of the idea of Tradition, and thus deepened his understanding of it, with the aid of numerous influences and historical circumstances. It is therefore fitting that I accompany a description of Newman’s doctrine of Tradition with an account of the persons and events that catalyzed its development. This development resulted not only in his theory of doctrinal development, but also in his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church.

In the Apologia, Newman attributes an 1818 sermon by Edward Hawkins as among the earliest influences on his doctrine of Tradition. In particular, Newman recounts that he gleaned from Hawkins’ sermon the principle “that [Scripture] was never intended to teach doctrine, but only to prove it, and that, if we would learn doctrine, we must have recourse to the formularies of the Church; for instance, to the Catechism, and to the Creeds.” Hawkins’ sermon thus cemented for Newman an understanding of Tradition in opposition to the Protestant doctrine of sola Scriptura. Newman further developed his opposition to sola Scriptura through his participation in the Oxford Movement.

Aiding Newman in this development were the Church Fathers, whose understanding of Tradition further convinced him in the “safe truth” that “the Christianity of history is not Protestantism.” In the second volume of his Treatises of St. Athanasius, Newman describes Athanasius’ view of Tradition as encompassing Scripture

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372 Edward Hawkins (1789-1882) was a fellow of Oriel College at Oxford and vicar of the university church of St. Mary’s before Newman, who became vicar in 1828. The sermon in question was entitled A Dissertation Upon the Use and Importance of Unauthoritative Tradition as an Introduction to the Christian Doctrines (New York: E. and J.B. Young, 1889).

373 Apo., 29-30.

374 Dev., 7.
and having the authority to interpret it: “The fundamental idea with which [Athanasius] starts in the [Arian] controversy is a deep sense of the authority of Tradition, which he considers to have a definitive jurisdiction even in the interpretation of Scripture.”

Indeed, Newman notes that Athanasius viewed the recourse to Scripture alone as a characteristic of the Arians.

Newman also employed the patristic term *regula fidei* (“rule of faith”) to describe this interpretive function of Tradition. The *Via Media* (1837) represents Newman’s attempt to provide a positive elaboration of the teachings of the Anglican Church, which necessarily included its teaching on Tradition. He defines the *regula fidei* as “the Bible and Catholic Tradition taken together. These two together make up a joint rule; Scripture is interpreted by Tradition, Tradition is verified by Scripture; Tradition gives form to the doctrine, Scripture gives life; Tradition teaches, Scripture proves.”

In this work of his Anglican years, Newman then subdivides Tradition into two categories: Episcopal Tradition and Prophetic Tradition. Benjamin King refers to this division as Newman’s “twofold system of doctrine.” For Newman, Episcopal Tradition corresponds to the Creeds, which he describes as “a collection of definite articles set apart from the first, passing from hand to hand… forced upon the attention of each Christian, and thus demanding and securing due explanation of its meaning.”

It includes those teachings that conform to the criteria of the Vincentian Canon, and thus, have been held *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus* (“always, everywhere, and by all”) since the Church’s inception.

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375 *Ath.*, 2: 51.
376 *V.M.*, 1: 274.
377 *V.M.*, 1: 249.
378 Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 2.3. References to the *Commonitorium* refer to the text in *Corpus Christianorum*, vol. 64, ed. Rolandus Demeulenaere (Turnholti: Brepols, 1985).
Newman regarded the dogmas of Episcopal Tradition as necessary to the individual Christian’s faith.

Prophetic Tradition includes those other teachings that are part of the Church’s patrimony, but not strictly necessary for belief. Newman describes the contents of Prophetic Tradition as “partly written, partly unwritten, partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture, partly preserved in intellectual expressions, partly latent in the spirit and temper of Christians; poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in sermons, in popular prejudices, in local customs.”

Prophetic Tradition is for Newman the equivalent of theology. It represents all those elements that are the product of the Church’s reflection on revelation such as defined, non-creedal doctrines, theological and devotional works, liturgy, art, and various other practices.

Newman’s description of Prophetic Tradition in the *Via Media* contains the seeds of his later and fuller understanding of Tradition. Though Newman principally describes Tradition as content, he also describes it as a lens through which the Church views revelation, as “consisting of a certain body of Truth, pervading the Church like an atmosphere.” He writes that this Tradition “exist[s] primarily in the bosom of the Church itself”—a passage that illustrates his view of Tradition as an ecclesial reality.

What is more, he quotes Irenaeus in support of this view of Tradition. Irenaeus had spoken of the “barbarous nations” who were able to believe in Christ without having the privilege of written Scriptures, instead “having salvation impressed through the Spirit on

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379 *V.M.*, 1: 250.
380 *V.M.*, 1: 250.
381 *V.M.*, 1: 250.
their hearts.” Newman here claims that Christians have the power to discern the truth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This power is the basis for the position Newman later enunciates as a Catholic in his *Rambler* article “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,” namely, that the faithful act as a witness of Tradition.\(^3\)

The further development of Newman’s understanding of Tradition resulted in the collapse of his twofold system of doctrine. To repeat, Newman held that the teachings comprising Episcopal Tradition—those considered necessary to the individual believer’s faith—were all traceable to Apostolic times. However, through his continued reading of the Fathers, Newman came to recognize that some of these teachings could not claim even a minimal consensus in the early Church, and thus, could not claim to pass the test of the Vincentian Canon.\(^4\) Such, for instance, was the case with the dogma of the Trinity, which one cannot locate in the pre-Nicene Church without a creative interpretation of history.

Newman did not consider the falling back upon the *Disciplina Arcani* (“discipline of the secret”) as a solution to this problem, either. The *Disciplina Arcani* refers to the early Church’s occasional practice of keeping certain Church teachings secret from pagans lest the latter profane them, and has been used by some to explain the paucity of textual evidence for certain dogmas.\(^5\) Newman therefore postulated the theory of the

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\(^{3}\) Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 4; quoted in *V.M.*, 1: 244.


\(^{5}\) Already in the *Via Media*, Newman acknowledged that the “The Rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it” (*V.M.*, 1: 55).

\(^{6}\) Against the idea that the existence of the *Disciplina Arcani* argues for a continuity between the earlier and later churches, Newman points out that “the variations continue beyond the time when it is conceivable that the discipline was in force,” and also, because the teachings appear gradually, not suddenly, as one would expect them to be if they were suddenly revealed (*Dev.*, 29).
development of doctrine, which was “an hypothesis to account for a difficulty.”

According to this hypothesis, even some of the fundamental dogmas of the Church were the result of human thought reflecting on God’s revelation and unfolding its contents over time. The distinction between what Newman had termed “Episcopal Tradition” and “Prophetic Tradition” having become blurred, the idea of doctrinal development took on a normative role in his understanding of Tradition.

**B. Tradition as the Development of the Idea of Christianity**

Newman’s broadening of the notion of Tradition with the concept of the development of doctrine resulted in his use of a broader vocabulary for Tradition. In his fifteenth Oxford University Sermon (1843) Newman began referring to the “idea” of Christianity. He continued to use this terminology throughout his Catholic years. I previously outlined in Chapter One the empiricist schema of revelation operative in Newman’s writings, namely, object-impression-idea. I have already expounded upon the first two portions of this schema, which, briefly, refer to God as the object of revelation, and the impression as both God’s activity of revealing Himself and the initial, active human reception of this revelation. Here I turn to the meaning of “idea” in the schema.

The difficulties of determining what exactly Newman meant by referring to Christianity as an “idea” are the same as those previously encountered when treating Newman’s use of the term “impression.” Newman did not write theology in a systematic fashion, and thus, he did not always use the term in a consistent manner.

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386 *Dev.*, 30.
387 Owen Chadwick writes, “Newman’s inconsistent usages of the word *idea* have caused hours of work to his commentators” (*From Bossuet to Newman*, 149).
Newman described revelation itself as the “initial and essential idea of Christianity.” Nicholas Lash thus interprets Newman’s “idea” as “God’s saving revelation, His self-disclosure in history, which is the ‘vital principle’ of that Church which is its visible expression.”

Upon examination of Newman’s entire corpus, however, one cannot so simply identify the “idea” of Christianity with revelation. By applying the term “idea” to Christianity, Newman conveys the essential unity of revelation, a unity derivative of the oneness of God and the oneness of the impression He makes on those who receive His revelation. Thus, according to Newman, the idea of Christianity, like other ideas, “is commensurate with the sum total of [the object’s] possible aspects, however they may vary in the separate consciousness of individuals.”

Perhaps because of the link between the oneness of the “idea” of Christianity and the oneness of God and His revelation, it is tempting to identify this idea with Christ himself, who is the fullness of revelation. Lash sees this implication in Newman whom, he writes, has a tendency “to express the transcendence of the ‘idea’ by hypostasizing, or personalizing it.” Merrigan does not directly challenge Lash’s position, though what it implies is not that different from Paul Misner’s desire that Newman would have treated God’s revelation as communicating “His very Self.” What both Lash and Misner fail to acknowledge is that Newman did not consider the “idea” to be revelation itself, but

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388 V.M., 1: xlvii.
390 Dev., 34.
391 Lash, Change in Focus, 92; “Faith and History,” 232-233; Newman on Development, 74-75; Merrigan, Clear Heads, 73.
392 Misner, “Newman’s Concept of Revelation,” 45; Merrigan, Clear Heads, 92.
As Merrigan writes, “The idea is not, properly speaking the object of faith. It is however, by means of it that the object of faith is apprehended.”

To repeat the quotation in the paragraph above, Newman held that the “idea” of Christianity is “commensurate” with God’s revelation. But the qualification “commensurate” implies that it is not God Himself. Nor is it God’s revelation itself, which refers to the divine communicating activity. The idea of Christianity is the human reflection upon God, upon revelation, as present within the impression made by God’s revealing activity—an impression that “spontaneously, or even necessarily, becomes the subject of reflection on the part of the mind itself.” Newman furthermore held that the individual Christian gains access to the idea through the existence of the Church, which possesses the idea in its “mind.” It is “preserved, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in the living tradition of the Church.” Given, then, that Newman most consistently characterizes the idea not as revelation itself, but as revelation possessed and preserved by the Church, it seems more accurate to identify it with what Roman Catholic theology classifies as “Tradition.” Tradition, thus understood, is not revelation per se, but revelation as received by the Church.

According to Newman, the Church’s reception of revelation consists of not only reflection and preservation, but also development. Indeed, Newman uses the term “idea” to describe Christian Tradition precisely because it allows him to posit the theory of doctrinal development. In chapter one of the Essay on Development, Newman sets up an analogy between the Christian “idea” and other human ideas by describing the latter’s

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393 Merrigan, Clear Heads, 73.
394 U.S., 320. See also Dev., 33: “No sooner do we apprehend than we judge: we allow nothing to stand by itself: we compare, contrast, abstract, generalize, connect, adjust, classify…”
395 Merrigan, Clear Heads, 98.
process of formation. Over the course of time, an idea that takes hold of the minds and hearts of men and women is variously contemplated, interpreted, and applied. The ideas Newman has in mind are complex, such as “the doctrine of the divine right of kings, or of the rights of man, or of the anti-social bearings of a priesthood, or utilitarianism, or free trade…”\(^3\)

At first, holds Newman, the idea will be understood only vaguely. However, with the passage of time, the reflection of numerous minds, and the manifestation of the idea in various forms, the complexity and richness of the idea will take greater shape. “This process,” writes Newman, “whether it be longer or shorter in point of time, by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form, I call its development, being the germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field.”\(^3\)

Newman considers Christianity to have undergone such a process. He writes, “If Christianity is a fact, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds and is a subject-matter of exercises of the reason, that idea will in course of time expand into a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, and in themselves determinate and immutable, as is the objective fact itself which is thus represented.”\(^5\)

Such has been the history of Christianity. It began as an impression upon the Apostles and those in the milieu in which Jesus’ ministry took place. There was from the beginning much question about the identity of Jesus and the nature of his mission. Gradually, over the course of Jesus’ ministry, people began to ascribe various titles to him, and the nature of the kingdom that Jesus preached became more fully revealed. In the years following the Christ-event this reflection on the person of Jesus

\(^3\) Dev., 36.
\(^5\) Dev., 38.
\(^5\) Dev., 55.
and his mission continued, and resulted in the clarification of certain aspects of what came to be known as Christianity, but also the raising of further questions to which men and women sought answers. This process was aided by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and its members.

The Christian idea also came to manifest itself in Scriptures, liturgy, devotional practices, art, and an ethical system. The aspects associated with Christianity were also applied to other ideas: particular philosophies, governments, moralities. This engagement, or application, resulted in the further plumbing of the aspects of the Christian idea. This process I have described is essentially what Newman understands to be the development of the Christian idea, i.e., the development of Christian doctrine. It is a process that continues to occur, and will occur until the eschaton. In the section that follows, I will consider what Newman regards as the two principal manifestations of the Christian idea: Scripture and Dogma.

C. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA

1. SCRIPTURE

Scripture represents one of the manifestations of the Christian idea. Because it is inspired, Newman regards it as the privileged manifestation of the Christian idea. Above, I explained that Newman interprets the history of the Christian idea as one of doctrinal development. But, in his Essay on Development, Newman not only wishes to argue that Christianity has experienced doctrinal development, but also that there is a need for doctrinal development. In particular, and against the Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura, he argues that the need for doctrinal development follows from the nature of Scripture.
More specifically, Newman sees the need for doctrinal development following from the character of Scripture as mystery. According to Newman, as I previously quoted in Chapter One, “mystery is the necessary note of divine revelation, that is, mystery subjectively to the human mind.” Newman predicates the term “mystery” of divine revelation in order to recognize that it is comprehensible, but not fully so; that it is conveyed in ways that have meaning to men and women, but that it has meanings that will never be uncovered due to its infinite nature. Inasmuch as it is comprehensible, Scripture represents a portion of the divine economy; inasmuch as it remains incomprehensible, Scripture represents a mystery. In a famous passage Newman writes of Scripture that “it cannot, as it were, be mapped, or its contents catalogued; but after all our diligence, to the end of our lives and to the end of the Church, it must be an unexplored and unsubdued land, with heights and valleys, forests and streams, on the right and left of our path and close about us, full of concealed wonders and choice treasures.” The exploration of Scripture is left to the work of doctrinal development, where men and women seek to grow in their understanding of the mystery while at the same time acknowledging that they can never fully grasp the mystery.

Secondly, Newman believes Scripture entails the need for doctrinal development because it does not exhibit self-sufficiency. Scripture does not provide direct answers to questions that are crucial to the identity, explanation, and living out of the Christian faith: “great questions exist in the subject-matter of which Scripture treats, which Scripture

\[399\] *Ath.* 2: 92.
\[400\] *Dev.*, 71. See also *Dev.*, 59-60: “But as a mystery implies in part what is incomprehensible or at least unknown, so does it in part imply what is not so; it implies a partial manifestation, or a representation by economy. Because then it is in a measure understood, it can so far be developed, though each result in the process will partake of the dimness and confusion of the original impression.”
Among such questions Newman includes the question of the Canon of Scripture, of the nature of its inspiration, whether or not infant baptism is permissible, and purgatory. Moreover, there are a number of other issues of great pertinence to the faith that arise with the passage of time, the change of context, and the complexity of human life. These issues require answers that Scripture does not immediately provide. Newman also points out that Scripture is not self-interpretive, which further demonstrates its lack of self-sufficiency. He uses as an example Jn 1:14: “The Word became flesh.” Newman poses three questions that inevitably arise if someone tries to discern the meaning of this passage: “What is meant by ‘the Word,’ what by ‘flesh,’ what by ‘became.’” While the answers to these questions require engagement with the biblical text itself, one also must have recourse to concepts and uses of these terms that have been learned elsewhere. For instance, in order to answer the first question (“What is meant by ‘the Word’”), one might look to Prov 8:22-31, which describes the “first-born” of the Lord who was with Him at creation. But such a connection is not immediately justified, and even if it was, a fuller understanding of the term “Word” (Logos) would require a study of its origins in Greek philosophy. As Newman rightly concludes, “The answers to these involve a process of investigation, and are developments.”

Newman considers development a principle intrinsic to the biblical narrative. “The whole Bible,” he writes, “not its prophetical portions only, is written on the principle of development.” Newman holds that prophecy in the Old Testament wonderfully illustrates development, since what is initially a mysterious, obscure text, has light progressively shone on it with the passage of time, even after its historical

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401 Dev., 60.
402 Dev., 59.
403 Dev., 65.
fulfillment. Such is most famously the case with the messianic prophecies. But Newman sees this development in numerous other instances in Scripture. Thus, he regards the entire history of Israel as “the growth of an idea” in which God gradually revealed Himself to the chosen people, continually perfecting their understanding of Him that they were to exhibit in their words and deeds.\(^{404}\) In the New Testament, too, Newman points out that the sayings of Christ are “characterized by mingled simplicity and mystery,” and thus, seemingly require development in order that their meaning be understood and thereby lived.\(^{405}\)

II. DOCTRINE

Newman held that doctrinal definitions constitute another manifestation of the Christian idea. He primarily attributed the development of these definitions to the work of theology.\(^{406}\) Therefore, it is unsurprising that Newman describes theology and doctrinal development in a similar fashion. In the *Idea of a University* Newman defines theology as “one idea unfolded in its just proportions… the evolution, not of half-a-dozen ideas, but of one.”\(^{407}\) It is also significant that Newman identifies theology with the prophetical office of the Church, as opposed to its priestly and kingly offices.\(^{408}\) As shown above, Newman regarded the gradual realization of prophecies as one of the clearest examples of doctrinal development. The example of the prophet, according to Newman, best embodies the vocation of the theologian, for “Apostles rules and preach, 

\(^{404}\) *Dev.*, 68-71.

\(^{405}\) *Dev.*, 67.


\(^{407}\) *Idea*, 50.

\(^{408}\) *V.M.*, 1: xlvi-xlvii.
Prophets expound. Prophets… are the interpreters of the revelation; they unfold and define its mysteries, they illuminate its documents, they harmonize its contents, they apply its promises.”\textsuperscript{409} Finally, Newman refers to theology and its developments as “commensurate with Revelation,”\textsuperscript{410} and thus, as authentic manifestations of the Christian idea, i.e., Tradition.

Newman understood theology in the traditional Catholic sense as the application of human reason to revelation. It seeks to know the contents of revelation through abstractions, generalizations, and categorizations. It therefore belongs to the realm of notional apprehension and knowledge. Faith, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of real apprehension and knowledge, as it involves giving assent to God—a concrete, particular person who contains all the aspects sought by notional knowledge.\textsuperscript{411}

Newman unabashedly affirms the important role played in religion by the notional work of theology. One could argue that much of his life’s work was devoted to giving an apologia pro theologia. Since the Reformation many have presupposed (or constructed) a dichotomy between the real and the notional, faith and reason, spirituality and theology. This dichotomy has been particularly unfavorable to theology, which is often characterized as cold, sterile, and peripheral to one’s growth in faith. But, as Newman explains, theology is necessary to the flourishing of faith for a number of reasons. For one, the notional is the means by which men and women grow in the knowledge of their faith: “To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative

\textsuperscript{409} V.M., 1: 250. See also Ari., 58: “No prophet ends his subject: his brethren after him renew, enlarge, transfigure or reconstruct it.”
\textsuperscript{410} V.M., 1: xlvii.
\textsuperscript{411} V.M., 1: xli; G.A., 108.
principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement.”\textsuperscript{412} This quotation contains a crucial insight. As “the principle of [knowledge’s] advancement,” the notional realm of knowledge is the realm of doctrinal development. Put another way, Newman regards the development of doctrine as a development of the Church’s notional understanding of revelation. This growth in the Church’s understanding of the Christian idea is brought about through the activity of human reason.\textsuperscript{413}

What is more, Newman held that this notional development in the knowledge of revelation is the rule not only for the Church as a whole, but for each individual Christian. “Every religious man is to a certain extent a theologian,”\textsuperscript{414} writes Newman, because all possess a reasoning intellect, and thus, come to understand revelation through abstractions. According to Newman, it is the duty of all Christians to ponder on the mysteries of faith, and to grow in their understanding of them. He sees Mary as the preeminent witness to this duty, for she “kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” (Lk 2:19), thus demonstrating that “she does not think it enough to accept [Divine Truth], she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she develops [sic] it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it.”\textsuperscript{415}

The above quotation also shows that Newman viewed the real and the notional, faith and theology, as intimately connected with one another. Indeed, Newman viewed faith as an act of reason, and reason as needing to make faith-like ventures and

\textsuperscript{412} G.A., 47. See also U.S., 207: “[Reason’s] act is usually considered a process, which, of course, a progress of thought from one idea to the other must be…”
\textsuperscript{413} It is noteworthy that Newman includes the principle of development in his description of human reason: “All men reason, for to reason is nothing more than to gain truth from former truth…” (U.S., 258)
\textsuperscript{414} G.A., 93
\textsuperscript{415} U.S., 313.
assumptions in its pursuit of knowledge. Beyond their intermingled nature, faith and theology perform important functions for each other. “Reason (or theology),” writes Newman, “has not only submitted, it has ministered to Faith; it has illustrated its documents; it has raised illiterate peasants into philosophers and divines; it has elicited a meaning from their words which their immediate hearers little suspected.”

Theology’s ministry to faith thus primarily consists in helping the Church to grow in its knowledge of God. As Newman points out, such knowledge is inseparable from the love of God: “We love our parents, as our parents, when we know them to be our parents; we must know concerning God, before we can feel love, fear, hope, or trust towards Him.” Theology also ministers to faith by serving as “the fundamental and regulating principle of the whole Church system.” Theology “regulat[es]… the whole Church system” by not only ordering and developing the truths of revelation, but also by providing a check on both the excesses of the intellect that manifest themselves in heresy, and the excesses of devotion that manifest themselves in superstition and sentimentality. Newman thus implies that a religion that does not notionally develop jeopardizes its grasp upon the real.

In their mutually interpenetrative relationship, the real also ministers to the notional: faith minsters to theology. Admittedly, Newman did not see an exact parity

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416 *U.S.*, 204, 215, 239. See also *V.M.*, 1: xl, where Newman writes of the three offices of the Church (“teaching, rule, and sacred ministry”) that they are “indivisible, though diverse.” Newman assented to Butler’s maxim that “probability is the very guide of life”—not only in faith, but also reason. He describes reason as “the faculty of gaining knowledge upon grounds given,” but when it comes to reproducing these grounds, “there must ever be something assumed ultimately which is incapable of proof, and without which our conclusion will be as illogical as Faith is apt to seem to men of the world” (*U.S.*, 207, 213). Faith, similarly, is simply the acceptance of certain “given grounds,” namely, the “testimony offered for a Revelation” (*U.S.*, 213).


419 *V.M.*, 1: xlvii.
between the real and the notional. He held that “Theology may stand as a substantive
science, though it be without the life of religion; but religion cannot maintain its ground
at all without theology.” Nevertheless, a notional knowledge that does not remain
rooted in the real is also subject to its own errors. For example, a business professor who
has a solely notional knowledge might be able to discourse about the principles of his or
her discipline as contained in a textbook. However, he or she cannot apply these
principles to particular examples of success and failure in contemporary business models.
The principles will survive, but their existence will be shadowy, losing their force and
vigor as a result of their failure to be enacted. In theology, one sees this phenomenon
occur with the professor who teaches the truths of the faith, but has lost his or her faith.
When theology becomes increasingly disconnected from the realities that are the basis of
its notions, its abstractions become less relevant to the concerns of the Church and its
faithful, and it devolves into a science pursued for its own end. What is more, it ceases to
be a living theology, since the real, for Newman, is the principle of action.  

The notional work of theology manifests itself, among other things, in the
formulation of dogmas. Newman defines a dogma as “a proposition [that] stands for a
notion or for a thing; and to believe it is to give the assent of the mind to it, as it stands
for the one or for the other.” Since the time of the Reformation, the expression of
revelation in propositional form has come to be associated with a static understanding of
religion. Newman was aware of this association, referring to the existence of “people…
[who] object that such propositions are but a formal and human medium destroying all
ture reception of the Gospel, and making religion a matter of words or of logic, instead of
having its seat in the heart.” But to Newman, doctrinal propositions were simply necessary to the continuance and growth of a human religion: “If there is a Revelation, there must be a doctrine; both our reason and our hearts tell us so.” Men and women, due to their own finitude, cannot reflect upon the whole of a reality such as the Christian idea without breaking it into its separate aspects or notions. Dogmas, in spite of the new wording they may sometimes utilize, are not new revelations, but are aspects or notions of the original idea of Christianity. They are those aspects that the Church has previously held implicitly within its “mind,” but is now able to hold explicitly through their having been clothed with human expression. Dogmas are none other than incarnations of the Christian idea.

Newman held that defined dogmas help the Church better communicate the Christian idea to the faithful. Writes Newman, “…they are necessary to the mind in the same way that language is ever necessary for denoting facts, both for ourselves as individuals, and for our intercourse with others. Again, they are useful in their dogmatic aspect as ascertaining and making clear for us the truths on which the religious imagination has to rest.” As Walgrave points out, it is only the realm of the notional that is communicable. The real is the level of the personal, based in one’s individual experience, and therefore cannot be imparted to another. Walgrave’s contrast between the real and the notional is perhaps too stark, as the Holy Spirit, who dwells within each member of the Church, is perhaps able to effect a shared experience among them. However, he is right in maintaining that dogmas specially function to give expression to

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424 D.A., 132, 234.
425 Dev., 55.
this experience, and enable the Church to both preserve and transmit this experience to others.\footnote{Walgrave, Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 45-46.}

Newman’s position that dogmatic definitions concretize aspects of Christian revelation is balanced by an apophatic attitude toward them. In Western expressions of Christianity, the term “apophaticism” is usually synonymous with what is known as “negative theology.” Negative theology holds that finite, human statements can never quite adequately express truths about the infinite God, and indeed, are more unlike than like Him. Modern Orthodox authors, however, have contended that the Eastern tradition of Christianity has a fuller and richer understanding of apophaticism that goes beyond mere negative theology. Vladimir Lossky sums up the Orthodox position well when he writes that apophaticism “is not simply a question of a process of dialectic but of something else: a purification, a κάθαρσις... It is an existential attitude which involves the whole man.”\footnote{Lossky, Mystical Theology, 27, 39.}

It is therefore significant that C. Stephen Dessain holds that Newman’s writings illustrate an apophaticism characteristic of the Eastern Tradition. Dessain writes that the “sense of reverence, of God’s transcendence and of the mystery in Christianity is characteristic of all Newman’s religious writings.”\footnote{Dessain, “Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition,” 88. Interestingly, Newman saw the lack of emphasis on mystery as one of the characteristic marks of heresy. Whereas he regarded mystery as the “necessary note of divine revelation,” he regarded the lack of mystery as the necessary note of what was not. Thus, Newman writes of the Arians that “they did not admit into their theology the notion of mystery,” as illustrated by their inability to conceive of God as Trinity (\textit{Ath.}, 2: 44) Similarly, as a result of their inability to admit mystery, Sabellianism “denied the distinction of Persons in the Divine Nature,” while Paulinism and Apollinarism “denied the existence of two Intelligent Principles at once, the Word and the human soul, in the Person of Christ” (\textit{Ari.}, 221).}

428 Lossky, Mystical Theology, 27, 39.  
429 Dessain, “Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition,” 88.}
Dogmatic propositions seek to approach a truth of divine revelation, but they never quite encompass that truth. Once they are formulated, there is a feeling that they correspond to the intended truth in some way, but there is coterminously a “difficulty of recognizing them… as the true representation of our meaning.” They are, writes Newman, “approximation[s] to the truth,… expedient[s],… the truth as far as they go.” Newman elsewhere terms them “symbols of a Divine fact which cannot be compassed by them,” and which serve to represent our assent to the reality behind them.

Yet, for all his emphasis on mystery, Newman was sanguine about how much recourse theology should have to the idea of it. To repeat, Newman held that the task of theology is to abstract from the concrete realities of revelation, breaking them into separate notions so that we may grow in our understanding of these realities. He maintained that the term “mystery” is also a notion, as it is “not part of the Divine Verity… but in relation to creatures and to the human intellect.” In this passage from the Grammar, Newman is responding to those who have disdain for the endless number of propositions that human beings attach to God; in other words, to those who have disdain for theology. The error Newman perceives in those who frequently invoke the term “mystery” for God is that they believe it somehow enables them to behold God as a whole, per modum unius. Newman believes we can experience God as one through our

430 “Mystery,” writes Newman, “is the necessary note of divine revelation” (Ath., 2: 92).
431 U.S., 325.
433 U.S., 332; G.A., 229. That Newman considers dogmas to be symbols of our assent—both real and notional—seems to argue against Benjamin King’s characterization of Newman as claiming “that while the ‘declarations’ of the Creed can be broken down into three parts and a real assent made separately to Father, Son, and Spirit, yet God the Three-in-One can receive only notional assent” (Benjamin King, Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers: Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 63).
434 G.A., 114. See also Ath., 2: 93.
personal relationship with Him; in other words, through real knowledge. He also believes that the faculty of the imagination enables the intellect to associate a number of separate propositions with a single object, such as God.\textsuperscript{435} But he does not believe we can understand God as one through the invocation of the term “mystery,” which he simply considers to be a substitution of one notion at the expense of innumerable others.\textsuperscript{436}

Rather than being a theological safeguard of the ineffability of the one God, Newman sees mystery more as an existential attitude: an experience of the infinite God who remains far beyond the grasp of any human words and concepts.\textsuperscript{437} In this way Newman exhibits that deeper understanding of apophaticism that lies beyond mere negative theology, and regards such an apophatic attitude as crucial to faith. However, it is important to note that Newman did not think this attitude a substitute for theology, nor did he think it identifiable with theology. As I will discuss in the Dialogue section of this chapter, this substitution or identification of apophaticism and theology factors into some Orthodox authors’ rejection of doctrinal development.

Newman recognized that human words will always fall short of the divine reality, but he at the same time recognized that we must nevertheless use these words: “We are aware, while we do so, that they are inadequate, but we have the alternative of doing so, or doing nothing at all.”\textsuperscript{438} The idea of economy is a two-sided coin: on one side, it deems human formulations of divine truth as inadequate, and God’s deigning to be

\textsuperscript{435} See Chapter One for an explanation of the function of the imagination in Newman’s religious epistemology.
\textsuperscript{436} As an illustration that the concept of mystery is not an aid in the notional apprehension of God, Newman points out that the Councils have not used it in their formulations of the dogma of the Trinity (\textit{G.A.}, 118).
\textsuperscript{437} \textit{G.A.}, 115-117.
\textsuperscript{438} \textit{T.P.}, 1: 102.
expressed by the human as a form of *kenosis*. But on the other side it affirms that these formulations do indeed convey divine truth. Therefore, concludes Newman, theology proceeds “by saying and unsaying, to a positive result.”

In sum, we have here Newman’s acknowledgement of the need for both cataphatic and apophatic theology.

In his attitude toward doctrinal definition, Newman attempted to maintain a tension between the cataphatic and apophatic throughout his life. Perhaps his attempt is consistent with the tension inherent in the categories themselves. While Newman was an Anglican, Rowan Williams argues, he predominantly viewed definitions in a negative light. Williams interprets Newman as implying in *Arians* that it would be preferable for the Church to not have recourse to the technical language of definition, instead being able to behold God using the simple words and images of revelation in its infancy. However, heresies forced the Church’s hand, compelling it to define doctrines when it would have rather remained reticent. Williams characterizes Newman as regarding these definitions as “necessary evils,” and writes, “Newman comes close to a *Verfallstheorie* of dogmatic language, the notion of formulation itself being a kind of betrayal of some richer truth; but it is a necessary fall, a *felix culpa*, given that the Church lives in a history of change, contingency, and human sinfulness, and that the gospel must be preached in a variety of contexts.”

Thus, from the “necessary evil” of definition arise consequent goods.

Newman’s seemingly negative view of definition is not, however, limited to *Arians*. In the *Essay on Development*, Newman defends the lack of officially defined teachings on the papacy in the early Church with the statement: “No doctrine is defined

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till it is violated.”\footnote{Dev., 151.} Newman appears here to once again express the belief that doctrinal definition only follows close upon the heels of heresy. He later expressed this same sentiment as a Catholic when the First Vatican Council was threatening to define papal infallibility as a dogma. Writing in confidentiality to Bishop Ullathorne, Newman asks, “When has definition of doctrine \textit{de fide} been a luxury of devotion, and not a stern painful necessity?”\footnote{L.D., 25: 18-19.}

This negative view of doctrinal definition, however, appears inconsistent with Newman’s view that definition is a natural result of the application of human reason to revelation. It also seems inconsistent with Newman’s belief that definitions represented a term in the process of development; in other words, that they are the fulfillment of doctrinal development.\footnote{U.S., 329; Lash, \textit{Newman on Development}, 77-78.} One must also take into account Newman’s consistently positive attitude toward the dogmatic proclamation of the Immaculate Conception (1854), which was not a response to a particular heresy. In 1849 he described Pius IX’s encyclical foreboding it as “very joyful news” and “a wonderful time,”\footnote{LD., 13: 84.} and his subsequent writings testify that he did not waver in this initial sentiment throughout his life. Newman also recognized that the definition on the Immaculate Conception would potentially represent a confirmation of his theory of doctrinal development, and even contrasted it with previous definitions that had arisen because of heresy:

The Bull \textit{Unigenitus} has generally been appealed to on the question of the Pope’s Infallibility—but there what was doctrinal was indirect, viz. from the necessity of putting down a heresy which had risen; but now the Pope comes forward proprio motu, directly to decree a point of faith, which is demanded by the growth

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\item\footnote{Dev., 151.} Newman, \textit{Dev.}, 151.
\item\footnote{LD., 13: 84.} Newman, \textit{LD.}, 13: 84.
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of opinion. Its bearing upon the doctrine of development is equally striking…445

In this letter, Newman expresses the remarkability of a pope defining a dogma as a result of devotion rather than heresy, but he does not express a theological objection to it.

A second look at those places where Newman appears to espouse a negative view of doctrinal definition reveals the need for qualification. I grant Williams that the Newman of Arians seems to have some nostalgia about the pre-Nicene Church, and views heresy as the principal historical impetus for doctrinal definition. However, Williams ignores Newman’s more balanced attitude toward definition in this work. Indeed, one finds this balance exhibited amidst those statements that Williams terms Newman’s near “Verfallstheorie of dogmatic language.” Newman writes,

As the mind is cultivated and expanded, it cannot refrain from the attempt to analyze the vision which influences the heart, and the Object in which that vision centres; nor does it stop till it has, in some sort, succeeded in expressing in words, what has all along been a principle both of its affections and of its obedience… Much as we may wish it, we cannot restrain the rovings of the intellect, or silence its clamorous demand for a formal statement concerning the Object of our worship. If, for instance, Scripture bids us adore God, and adore His Son, our reason at once asks, whether it does not follow that there are two Gods; and a system of doctrine becomes unavoidable; being framed, let it be observed, not with a view of explaining, but of arranging the inspired notices concerning the Supreme Being, of providing, not a consistent, but a connected statement. There the inquisitiveness of a pious mind rests, viz., when it has pursued the subject into the mystery which is its limit. But this is not all. The intellectual expression of theological truth not only excludes heresy, but directly assists the acts of religious worship and obedience; fixing and stimulating the Christian spirit in the same way as the knowledge of the One God relieves and illuminates the perplexed conscience of the religious heathen.—And thus much on the importance of Creeds to tranquilize the mind; the text of Scripture being addressed principally to the affections, and of a religious, not a philosophical character.446

In this passage are the seeds of Newman’s theory of doctrinal development. Though definition most often comes about as a result of heresy, Newman also admits that it

446 Ari., 144, 146.
serves a demand of reason for “formal statements,” and thus satisfies the constitution of the human intellect. It is not the definition that is the *felix culpa*, but the heresy.

In addition, one must further contextualize Newman’s statement about *de fide* definitions being “a stern painful necessity.” It is well documented that Newman was concerned not about the orthodoxy of papal infallibility *per se*—whose impending definition precipitated Newman’s statement—but about the opportuneness of its dogmatic definition. 447 More specifically, he was concerned that the ultramontanes—who seemingly desired that definitions become “as plenty as blackberries” 448—were pushing the definition through without due regard for a proper period of reception. He contrasted the definition of papal infallibility with the definition of the Immaculate Conception, which had been preceded by “many steps… [and] many centuries… before the dogma was ripe.” 449 He thought, in other words, that the coming-to-be of the definition of the Immaculate Conception illustrated the process of doctrinal development, whereas the definition of papal infallibility did not. If he had indeed thought that dogmas could be legitimately proclaimed only as a result of heresy, his unabashed approval of the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception would be unintelligible, since there was no immediate heresy against which it was directed.

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448 L.D., 25: 174. Around the time of Vatican I, Newman recalled a saying of Monsignor Talbot—the papal chamberlain who had named Newman “the most dangerous man in England” (Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 2 [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913], 147)—that “what made the definition of the Immaculate Conception so desirable and important was that it opened the way to the definition of the Pope’s Infallibility.” His response to such “crooked ways” was to quote “our Lord’s terrible warning ‘Vae mundo à scandulis! Quidiscandalizaveritunumexhispusilliscredentibusinme, bonum est ei magis si circumdaretumolaasinaria collo ejus, et in mare mitteretur’” (L.D., 25: 94).

Newman’s concern that the definition of papal infallibility did not have a heretical impetus also appears to be related to his understanding of the function of ecumenical councils. In the same letter in which he claims that dogmas should only arise as a result of “a stern painful necessity,” he writes that “a Council’s proper office is, when some great heresy or other evil impends, to inspire the faithful with hope and confidence.”

Two months earlier, in a letter to Mrs. William Froude, Newman had further elaborated his position with historical examples: “In the early times the Nicene Council gave rise to dissensions and to confusions which lasted near a century. The Council of Ephesus opened a question which it took three centuries to settle. Well, these Councils were NECESSARY—they were called to resist and to defend opposition to our Lord’s divinity—heresies—They could not be helped.”

Thus, Newman regards an ecumenical council as a moment of crisis, called to respond to teachings that pose an imminent threat to the faith. This response occasionally comes in the form of dogmatic definitions. Such definitions are somewhat lamentable not because they define what should remain undefined, but because they define what has not necessarily undergone a due course of development in the mind of the Church. They hastily require the assent of the faithful to an aspect of the Christian idea that has not yet matured in their understanding.

Having established Newman’s positive view of doctrine, and qualified his reservations about it, I turn now to another aspect of Newman’s understanding of theology, namely, its systematic thrust. He regards theology as systematic by nature: “the Science of God, or the truths we know about God put into system.”

This systematic character belongs to theology inasmuch as it is a science whose instrument is human

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452 Idea, 46.
reasoning, which seeks to order the various notions and aspects of ideas into a unity that is an image of what it cannot comprehend as a whole. The goal of all sciences is to “raise… a conceptual construct which is able to house the whole world of human experience,” i.e., a system. Theology is no different, for it is a conceptual, notional construct of the Church’s experience of revelation, “and the notional is the general and systematic.”

Newman viewed a theological system as a fruit of the development of doctrine. His very summary of the idea of doctrinal development in the Essay on Development serves as a summary of his understanding of a system: “This process, whether it be longer or shorter in point of time, by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form, I call its development, being the germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth of a large mental field.” Just as there is an inevitability to the development of the Christian idea due to the nature of human reason, so there is an inevitability that human reason will order this development into a system.

Benjamin King points out that Newman considered what he called the “Catholic system” to exist in the Apostles, and to have been transmitted to their disciples. While granting the occasional nature of the Fathers’ writings, Newman maintains, “It is hardly too much to say that almost the whole system of Catholic doctrine may be discovered, at least in outline, not to say in parts filled up, in the course of [the Fathers].” As an Anglican, Newman considered the Roman Catholic Church to have a definite system, though he rejected its identity with the system of the Fathers. He at the same time

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453 Merrigan, “Newman the Theologian,” 111. See also G.A., 122: “theology has to do with what is notional, and the notional is the general and systematic.”
454 G.A., 122.
455 Dev., 38, 92.
acknowledged that the Anglican Church was missing a positive system. Its identity, he perceived, was principally constructed from the negative: anti-Protestantism and anti-Romanism. He set out in the *Via Media* to construct a positive system to supply a need for the lack of one in the Anglican Church.\(^{457}\) Eventually, Newman came to see that the Anglican system he had constructed (which, he admitted, existed only on paper) was in fact not in conformity with the theological system present in the Fathers.\(^{458}\) Instead, he came to see the Roman Catholic Church as the nearest approximation to the Church of the Fathers. Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism thus consisted of an assent to one theological system (the Roman) over another (the Anglican).

Lash describes a two-stage process to the process of the development of the Christian idea: “The first stage is the development from implicit awareness to explicit articulation in a body of doctrine. The second stage is the further elaboration and expansion of that body of doctrine.”\(^{459}\) Dogmas are thus both the fruits and vehicles of doctrinal development. However, Newman understood that the mode and manifestation of development was not limited to dogmatic definitions. Lash puts it well when he remarks, “One of the more striking feature of the *Essay*, in contrast to most catholic studies of doctrinal development, consists in the fact that the range of data to which, in principle, Newman appeals, includes all aspects of the church’s life, thought, structure and experience.”\(^{460}\) Of the aspects of the Church’s life that play a role in the development of doctrine, Newman accords a special place to worship. Thus, Newman considers that the dogmatic statements on the Trinity developed in large part due to the

\(^{457}\) *V.M.*, I: xv-xxxv, 24; *Apo.*, 105-106.
\(^{458}\) *V.M.*, I: xxiv.
\(^{459}\) Lash, *Newman on Development*, 78.
\(^{460}\) Lash, *Change in Focus*, 90.
worship the early Church directed toward the Son and the Spirit. This development, writes Newman, “fulfill[ed] the maxim, ‘Lex orandi, lex credendi.’”\textsuperscript{461} Newman also implied that developments of doctrine can result from praxis. Such is the case, for instance, with the Church’s allowance for infant baptism, which “would be the practical development of [a father’s] faith in Christ and love for his offspring.”\textsuperscript{462}

To summarize, Newman holds that the notional is the principle of development, and helps us to grow in our knowledge of what we know \textit{really} through our experience. The examples above, however, testify that Newman also believed that the real should be a cause of notional development: that experience and concrete actions should lead men and women to reflect more deeply on ideas. It remains to be seen whether or not Newman believed that notional development can cause real development: whether the development of doctrine results in the development of faith, or whether growth in theological understanding can cause growth in holiness, both in the individual Christian and the corporate Church. I will examine this question further in the next section.

\textbf{D. DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ORGANIC METAPHOR}

One of the most consistently invoked reasons for rejecting Newman’s understanding of doctrinal development is its seeming dependence on the organic metaphor. Newman claimed that the manner in which the Christian understanding of revelation developed was analogous to the way in which biological phenomena developed, beginning as a seed or embryo and progressively growing to full maturity. The rejection of doctrinal development for its organic reading of Church history and doctrine is a point of convergence between Orthodox and Protestants. The Orthodox

\textsuperscript{461} \textit{G.A.}, 118; \textit{Dev.}, 47-48. Italics are mine.
\textsuperscript{462} \textit{Dev.}, 61.
theologian Andrew Louth rightfully acknowledges a place for organic metaphors applied to ecclesiology, but balks at applying the metaphor to doctrinal history, and criticizes Newman’s theory for its parallels with Darwin’s theory of evolution. Lossky rejects an organic conception of dogmatic history because he believes it would imply “an inner necessity, which would effect a progressive increase in the Church of the knowledge of revealed Truth.” George Lindbeck claims to represent the Protestant consensus when he writes that “organismic analogies [of Christian history] are sharply rejected.” In the Dialogue portion of this chapter, I will respond in greater detail to the principles operative in these allergies to the organic metaphor. In this section, I will limit myself to summarizing what Newman’s use of the organic metaphor implies about his understanding of doctrinal development.

Newman identifies the chief contemporary influence behind his application of the organic metaphor to doctrinal development: Joseph Butler’s Analogy. The hypothesis operative in Butler’s Analogy is that the Christian religion acts in a manner analogous to “the whole natural world.” This world, according to Butler, is a “progressive…system,” as exhibited by “the change of seasons, the ripening of the fruits of the earth, the very history of a flower…and…human life.”

While Newman was influenced by Butler’s Analogy, there are some differences in his application of the organic metaphor to his theory of doctrinal development. Owen Chadwick has examined some of these differences. Among the differences Chadwick

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perceives is that Butler did not allow that the progress exhibited in nature could be used as an *a priori* argument for a similar progress in our understanding of God’s revelation, whereas Newman did. But Chadwick misrepresents Newman by exaggerating the importance of *a priori* reasoning to his theory of doctrinal development. *A posteriori* reasoning is much more crucial to Newman’s theory: most of his *Essay on Development* is devoted to arguing that the pattern of doctrine in the Christian Tradition has indeed shown development much like the development we witness in the realm of nature. Chadwick also ignores the Scriptural warrant for Newman’s use of the organic metaphor, a warrant that Newman himself refers to in the *Essay on Development* when he recalls the parables of Jesus that anticipate the growth of the Kingdom of God. Newman sees the development of doctrine as intrinsic to the growth of this Kingdom.

Chadwick ultimately rejects the supposition that there were other direct modern influences behind Newman’s use of the organic metaphor. It is perhaps tempting to suppose a connection between Newman’s theory of doctrinal development and Darwin’s theory of evolution, which both came out of nineteenth-century England. Or, if one were to look for a more theological influence on Newman’s theory, Möhler’s *Die Einheit in Der Kirche* (1825) would be the most likely candidate. Yet, though Newman knew of Möhler, there is no evidence that he ever read him. Chadwick concludes that, though the idea of development “was in the atmosphere which surrounded Newman at Littlemore,” “the line of thought, the expression of ideas, the use of analogies, the form and argument were Newman’s, original to him, individual, stamped with the impress of that unusual

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467 Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 93-95.
468 *Dev.*, 73-74. Lash recognizes the organic analogies in the Bible as an influence on Newman’s use of the same for doctrinal development (*Newman on Development*, 74-75).
cast of mind.”

But Henry Tristram overstates when he writes that “We can affirm without hesitation that Newman derived the idea of development from no other source than his own mind.”

As Chadwick points out after an examination of the notebooks and drafts Newman used to write the *Essay on Development*, “There are his authorities and the ideas which they suggested to him—and… they are patristic authorities. He was not reading Möhler, nor Wiseman, nor Perrone, nor even Petau. He was reading Justin Martyr, Athanasius, Tertullian, Ambrose, Lactantius, Cyril.”

Thus, Newman’s use of the organic metaphor was primarily theological, derived from Scripture and Tradition as expressed in the works of the Fathers.

Before I describe Newman’s use of the organic metaphor for the development of doctrine, a clarification is necessary. Newman viewed the organic metaphor as just that: a metaphor. Like all metaphors and analogies it is limited, and does not fully conform to the reality to which it is applied. That said, one needs ask: in what manner did Newman believe the idea of Christianity to be like an organism? For one, Newman describes an idea as “living.” Indeed, Newman claims in a letter of 1846 that he was “the first writer to make life the mark of a true church.”

In a passage that reinforces the metaphorical character of his use of organic terminology, Newman explains what he means by a living idea: “When an idea, whether real or not, is of a nature to arrest and possess the mind, it may be said to have life, that is, to live in the mind which is its recipient.”

The history of the Christian idea—its beginnings in the time of Christ, its persistence through times

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469 Chadwick, 118, 119.
471 Chadwick, 118-119.
473 *Dev.*, 36.
of persecution and heresy, its triumphs in spite of tribulations, and its continuing ability to dwell in the minds and hearts of men and women—bears witness to its living character.

According to Newman, the Christian idea is also living precisely because it has undergone change. In a famous statement that has more theology in it than most initially suspect, Newman writes, “In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”474 Behind this passage is one of the fundamental principles of Alexandrian and Cappadocian patristic theology, namely, that the mark of the uncreated is immutability, while the mark of the created (what Newman means by “living” in the context of this quote) is change. This distinction was one of the hinges on which turned the Christological dogmas produced by the patristic age. The change Newman predicates of the Christian idea once again illustrates the received nature of revelation: its origin is in the unchanging God, but it is received by changing creatures, and as such, its reception is subject to change.

Newman predicates not only life and change of organic realities, but progress and development. He holds that the sign of a truly living reality is that it exhibits progress. Thomas Scott’s aphorism “Growth the only evidence of life” acted as a first principle for Newman.475 This principle also serves to demonstrate the patristic character of Newman’s theology. Newman’s identification of progress as a sign of life is consonant with the ascetical character of patristic theology. The Church Fathers deemed persistence

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474 Dev., 40.
475 Apo., 26. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) was a famous preacher and convert from Unitarianism to Calvinist Christianity, and is most known for his autobiography (The Force of Truth [1779]) and his commentaries on the Bible (Apo., 521n16). His works had a tremendous influence on the young Newman. Newman writes, “It was he who first planted deep in my mind that fundamental truth of religion.” Newman went so far as to say that “(humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul” to Scott (Apo., 26)
in a life of *askesis* to be the mark of a true Christian. Though most often associated with acts of renunciation and self-discipline, the word *askesis* refers to any Christian practice directed toward increasing one’s participation in God. Like the Church Fathers, Newman also held that “[man] is a being of progress with relation to his perfection and characteristic good.”\(^476\) His *Parochial and Plain Sermons* are perhaps the best illustrations of the ascetical character of his theology. He claimed that he attempted in these sermons to “lead his hearers to the Patristic Church”\(^477\) by encouraging the practices of prayer, fasting, and watchfulness.

Likewise, Newman deems the Christian idea to be living (organic) precisely because the Church has exhibited progress in its understanding of it. Once again, the progress he predicates of the Church is a notional progress in its understanding of revelation. He claims that such notional progress naturally occurs over time with any idea that captures the attention of men and women. This process can be described as organic inasmuch as it is a function of the nature of the human mind: “the increase and expansion of the Christian Creed and Ritual… are the necessary attendants of any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart… that from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas…”\(^478\) Because human beings are rational animals who require time in order to understand, and because time has indeed passed since the Christian idea took hold of the Church’s mind, Newman holds that the progress of the Christian idea has necessarily taken place in the Church.

\(^{476}\) *G.A.*, 274.
\(^{477}\) *L.D.*, 5: 40.
\(^{478}\) *Dev.*, 29. See also *Dev.*, 30, 56.
Interestingly, Newman does not ascribe the same necessity to notional progress on the individual level as he does to notional progress on the collective level of the Church. Of individual progress he writes, “Nor is this progress mechanical, nor is it of necessity; it is committed to the personal efforts of each individual of the species…”479 Newman is not referring here in the Grammar toward a more holistic form of progress of the individual; he is indeed referring to the “law of progress…carried out by means of the acquisition of knowledge.”480 Whereas he claims that the individual’s progress in knowledge is contingent on his actions, he claims that the Church’s progress in the understanding of the Christian idea, like other ideas, necessarily happens with time. Newman here fails to simultaneously hold in tension the Church’s unity and diversity: that the Church is one, but that its oneness is comprised of a number of individuals.

Newman’s doctrine of Providence is perhaps behind the necessity he predicates of the Church’s progress in its understanding of the Christian idea. As the title of Merrigan’s essay on this subject points out, Newman considered Providence to be that “momentous doctrine or principle which enters into my own reasoning” that served a “unitive function” in his theology.481 In the Essay on Development, Newman assigns a special role to Providence in watching over and directing the development of doctrine. He holds that God, in His providential design, has left “gaps… in the structure of the original creed of the Church” that He intended to be filled up through the application of human reason. “Thus,” writes Newman, “developments of Christianity are proved to

479 G.A., 274.
480 G.A., 274.
have been in the contemplation of its Divine Author.” The providential guidance of the development of doctrine is consonant with God’s providential guidance as illustrated in Scripture: He does not reveal Himself all at once, but “works out gradually what He has determined absolutely…” As in the Bible, so in the Church: God leads human beings step-by-step toward a fuller understanding of Him, allowing room for the operation of their own free will and reason.

Newman’s understanding of Providence, applied to doctrinal development, rightly maintains a tension between necessity and freedom. God guides His Church toward a fuller understanding of revelation, but incorporates the activity of human reason into His guidance. Such a tension between necessity and freedom is arguably the litmus test for a truly Christian use of organic metaphors. Unfortunately, Newman does not seem to maintain this tension within human reason itself. His consistent tendency is to emphasize that developments are the results of human nature, rather than human will.

Newman’s position that the Church’s progress in its understanding of revelation is not altogether smooth does not necessarily mitigate this tendency. In the “Letter to Flanagan,” Newman describes the episodic character of doctrinal development in the Church, which answers questions that arise “intermittently, in times & seasons, often delaying and postponing, according as she is guided by her Divine Instructor.” Even before he formally posited his theory of doctrinal development, he had come to understand such development as occurring in “fits and starts.” Because doctrinal

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482 Dev., 63.
483 Dev., 70.
development happens intermittently, Newman holds that the most one can predict is "that it will occur, but not *when* or *how* it will occur: "we will triumph in the leave given us to go forward, ‘not knowing whither we go’…" At first glance, this position seems to argue against a purely organic development that happens naturally and continuously: it seems to accord a place for contingent, unpredictable, and free human actions. But Newman is here only referring to the type of development that is catalyzed by historically contingent heresies and results in doctrinal definitions. He is not referring to that more general type of development of the Christian idea, that inevitable development for which he does not adequately incorporate human freedom. Thus, positing an episodic character to doctrinal development does not necessarily represent a qualification of the organic metaphor.

The allowance for occasional regressions in the Church’s understanding of revelation would seemingly have more promise as a qualification of the organic metaphor. In other words, one could hold that the Church has experienced not only periods of doctrinal development, but also periods of doctrinal regression, when the Christian idea grew dim in the minds of men and women. That there have been occasional regressions seems justified by history. Lash echoes the thoughts of many others when he asks, “Is a ‘linear’, ‘cumulative’, ‘progressive’ view of doctrinal history demanded by the claims of christian belief, and justified by history?” There is no way to definitively determine which periods might constitute regressions in the Church’s understanding of revelation, though there seems to be a consensus of scorn for certain periods. Just as it is popular to regard the patristic age as one noteworthy for its

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486 *P.S.*, 2: 216.
487 Lash, *Change in Focus*, 28.
development of the Christian idea, so it is also popular today to regard the ages of late
scholasticism and manual theology for their desiccation of the Christian idea.

Newman, however, does not admit of such regressions in his theory of doctrinal
development. His immediate reason for not doing so is theological rather than biological:
it is rooted in the providential relationship between God and His people as revealed in
Scripture. According to Newman, the entire Bible illustrates the principle of
development, as God gradually leads His creatures to a fuller understanding of Him. In
this relationship, writes Newman, “[God] does not reverse, but perfect, what has gone
before.”488 Because of his doctrine of Providence, and his understanding of the limits of
historical retrospection, Newman would have been untroubled by the seeming difficulty
of affirming doctrinal progress throughout all eras of the Church’s history. While
allowing for trials and tribulations in the Church’s doctrinal history, Newman would still
claim that the overall movement of this history was one of progress. Indeed, as I have
shown, Newman believed these apparent regressions were but temporary, as they soon
themselves became the means for doctrinal progress.

Most importantly, though, the way in which Newman understands doctrinal
development means that he does not need to entertain the hypothesis of regressions. For
Newman, doctrinal development means notional development. It means the process of
men and women uncovering various aspects of the Christian idea. It occurs merely as a
result of mental engagement over the course of time and place. Given this understanding
of doctrinal development, a regression could in theory only occur with the complete and
utter abandonment of an idea, or the cessation of time.

488 Dev., 65.
The notional character Newman attributes to doctrinal development also serves as a response to those who claim that the theory implies the superiority of the present-day Church to the Church of the past. Newman indeed affirms a superiority, but he clarifies that it is a “particular superiority,” namely, a notional superiority. That is, the Church of today is superior only inasmuch as it has the benefit of two-thousand years of reflection on the Christian idea from which it may draw in trying to deepen its own understanding of the idea. It is able to benefit from the questions, challenges, and controversies to which the Church has responded with new terminology, new ideas, and new comparisons, all of which have served to “throw the [Christian] idea into fresh forms” and thus reveal its previously undiscovered aspects. This “particular superiority” needs further qualification. It does not refer to the quality of mind or understanding. Thus, it does not necessarily follow that there are members of the Church today superior to Augustine or Aquinas in their comprehensive vision of revelation. Nor does it follow that the Church today necessarily unites all of the uncovered aspects of the Christian idea into a better synthesis than the Church of, say, the patristic age.

Nor does Newman intend to claim that doctrinal development means the Church today is necessarily holier than the early Church. However, there is some question about whether Newman’s theory in principle implies that the Church’s doctrinal development is attended by a concomitant development in holiness. Previous Newman scholars have discussed this implication only briefly, and often hesitatingly, lest they take a position

490 U.S., 317.
491 In “Flanagan,” Newman explains the difference between Aristotle and an Aristotelian. The latter has an “advantage” over Aristotle inasmuch as he/she is able to apply Aristotelian principles to questions and problems that “Aristotle would have answered, but for the want of the opportunity did not.” However, Newman holds that this advantage does not mean that the Aristotelian’s grasp of philosophy is “more vigorous than Aristotle’s grasp, because of the superiority of Aristotle’s vigorous creative intellect” (157).
that places them outside the bounds of Christian orthodoxy. Lash has seen this implication in Newman, though he agrees that Newman himself did not countenance it. Lash bases his position on the supposition that “Throughout his life, Newman insisted that growth in holiness is a necessary condition of growth in the knowledge of God.” Unfortunately, Lash does not support this supposition with examples from Newman’s works. Nevertheless, he goes on to write, “In view of this, it would seem possible to claim that the contemporary church had a deeper grasp of God’s revelation than had the primitive church only if, at the same time, it could be claimed that the church had grown in holiness.”

Ian Ker opposes Lash’s position in an essay entitled “Newman’s theory—Development or continuing Revelation?” Ker, like Lash, points out that, according to Newman, “the development of ideas whether in the individual’s intellect or in the mind of the Church has no necessary connection with virtue or holiness.”

However, Ker fails to ask whether or not Newman’s writings might themselves imply this connection.

Like Lash and Ker, I also cannot find evidence that Newman explicitly maintained that the development of doctrine corresponded to a development in holiness. From his explicit statements, the most one can maintain is that he acknowledged the mutual interpenetration of the real and the notional, of faith and theology. Though Newman assigned a crucial place to theology in the practice of religion, his emphasis remained on the negative function of theology as a protective against heresy and spiritual excess. He did not draw out the implications of the positive role theology played in religion, and the possibility of theology’s intimate connection with the individual’s, and

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492 Lash, Change in Focus, 93-94.
493 Ker, “Newman’s Theory—Development or Continuing Revelation?” 158.
the Church’s, progress in holiness. Newman did not have his thought on development
catalyzed by this question, a question Newman thought was necessary to the drawing out
of the implications of an idea. In the Dialogue section of this chapter, I will examine
whether Newman’s theology contains the principles that enable one to make the leap of
claiming a necessary connection between doctrinal development and development in
holiness. In other words, I will examine whether this aspect of Newman’s theory of
doctrinal development is itself capable of development.

In this section, I have shown how Newman’s theory of doctrinal development was
much more than “an hypothesis to account for a difficulty” (namely, the difficulty of
defending the orthodoxy of doctrines not ostensibly taught in either Scripture or the early
Church). Rather, it was a description of the process by which the Church actively
receives the revelation God has impressed upon it. This process is otherwise known as
Tradition, and represents the reasoned reflection of the Church on the Christian “idea,”
informed by faith, and concretely incarnated in Scripture and Dogma. Newman
understands theology to be this dual work of reason and faith, notional and real
knowledge. It is the means by which the Church grows in its knowledge of God, and it is
how the Church manifests its living, organic identity as the Body of Christ. While
dogmatic definition undoubtedly performs both a preservative and a protective function,
it also serves to give concrete shape to the notional reflection of the Church, which is
ordered toward systematization. Definitions and systems represent the fruits of this
reflection, and thus, the fruits of doctrinal development.

494 Dev., 30.
2.2: Florovsky on Tradition

A. The Contours of Florovsky’s Understanding of Tradition

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed an enrichment of the concept of Tradition by both Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) responded to the Protestant reliance on Scripture alone with a two-source theory of revelation comprised of Scripture and Tradition. Tradition was understood to represent those teachings Christ communicated to the Apostles that were not recorded in Scripture, but were just as binding as Scripture on the Church.\(^495\) However, such an understanding of Tradition, while useful as an initial rejoinder to sola scriptura, itself has limitations. Without further supplementation, it seems to imply a solely propositional model of revelation, and does not convey a fuller, theological understanding of the concept. Florovsky was among the Orthodox theologians who contributed to a developed understanding of the concept of Tradition, one that he considered more consonant with the patristic ethos. Perhaps because of its supposed patristic character, many contemporary Orthodox have received Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition as representative.\(^496\)

Part of the richness of Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition derives from its integration with other areas of theology. Aidan Nichols points out that Florovsky considers Tradition to be a “dimension of ecclesiology.”\(^497\) In the first chapter, I

\(^{495}\) Council of Trent, Session IV; referenced in Dei Verbum 7-10.

\(^{496}\) Lossky’s essays on Tradition—“Tradition and Traditions” and “Concerning the Third Mark of the Church: Catholicity” (In the Image and Likeness of God, 169-182)—bear many similarities to Florovsky’s “Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church” (in The Church of God: An Anglo-Russian Symposium, ed. E.L. Mascall [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934], 53-74), and “Le Corps du Christ vivant.” Above all, the widespread acceptance of Florovsky’s “Neo-Patristic synthesis” hermeneutic testifies to the positive reception of his understanding of Tradition among Orthodox theologians.

\(^{497}\) Nichols, Light from the East, 137.
elaborated on Florovsky’s understanding of revelation as events that are appropriated by human experience. Since Pentecost, this experience of God’s revelation in all its fullness now lives in the Church. Indeed, if one is to reduce Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition to one idea, it is that Tradition is fundamentally “the life of the Church”—it is revelation and the human response to revelation “ever re-enacted” in the numerous modes of the Church’s existence. Through membership in the Church, the Christian has access to the experience of revelation in all its fullness: “Revelation has been granted to the Church not to individuals.” It is primarily this experience—this faith—that is tradunt, or “handed on,” to subsequent generations in the Church.

According to Florovsky, Christians’ ecclesial experience of revelation is the basis of the regula fidei (“rule of faith”) by which they judge the orthodoxy of interpretations of revelation, or, “the true meaning of Scripture.” For him, the regula fidei is the equivalent of the “mind of the Church”—the concept I elaborated on in Chapter One. Drawing from numerous Fathers, Florovsky regards the patristic understanding of the regula fidei as “first of all, a hermeneutical principle and method,” by which Christians interpret revelation according to the “common mind of the Church,” or, the υρόνημα ἐκκλησιαστικόν. They are “initiated… by their baptismal profession” into the rule, which consists of “the witness and preaching of the Apostles, their κήρυγμα and

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498 V6, 296. See also V1, 80.
499 V1, 26.
501 V1, 74-75. Hence Florovsky’s oft-referenced maxim that Tradition is “Scripture rightly understood” (V1, 75). This definition of Tradition, however, does not conflict with his other definition that Tradition is “the life of the Church,” for Florovsky understands the right interpretation of Scripture to involve a “continuous life in the truth” that is “reflected in [the Church’s] life and structure” (V1, 80, 84). In other words, Florovsky does not regard the right understanding of Scripture as “just a transmission of inherited doctrines” (V1, 80).
502 V1, 74, 89. It is interesting to note that Florovsky quotes Newman in support of his explanation of the regula fidei: “As Cardinal Newman has rightly observed, St. Athanasius regarded the ‘rule of faith’ as an ultimate ‘principle of interpretation,’ opposing the ‘ecclesiastical sense’… to ‘private opinions’ of the heretics” (Ath., 2: 250-252; quoted in V1, 82).
praedicatio”—in other words, the teaching of the Apostles based upon their experience of revelation. Florovsky even refers to “faithfulness to Tradition” as “a participation in Pentecost,” and Tradition itself as “a fulfillment of Pentecost.” Through the regula fidei, the members of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, preserve and transmit the faith. Though all the members have a share in this process of the preservation and transmission of the faith, it is especially entrusted to those who have been given the authority to teach through their succession from the Apostles.

As an ecclesiological phenomenon, Tradition for Florovsky is also a Christological phenomenon, for “ecclesiology, in the Orthodox view is an integral part of Christology.” Florovsky believed that the “Body of Christ” is the preeminent image for the Church, but he effectively accounted for the Spirit’s role in the Body in his descriptions of Tradition. Thus, he defines Tradition as “the witness of the Spirit” and “the constant abiding of the Spirit” who “lives and abides ceaselessly in the Church.” But in what he considered a faithful witness to the theology of the Fathers, and in reaction to Joachimite tendencies manifest in an overemphasis on the pneumatological character of the Church, Florovsky never separated the work of the Holy Spirit from that of the Son; in other words, he never separated the Spirit from the Body. He affirmed that the Church is where the Spirit dwells, but that one must always keep in mind that the

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503 V1, 78. See also Florovsky, “Scripture and Tradition: An Orthodox Point of View,” Dialog 2:4 (Fall 1963): 291: “The apostolic tradition, as it was maintained and understood in the early church, was not a fixed core or complex of binding propositions, but rather an insight into the meaning and power of the revelatory events, of the revelation of the ‘God who acts’ and has acted.”
504 V3, 194.
505 V1, 78-79.
506 V4, 25. See also Florovsky, “Le Corps du Christ vivant,” 12: “The theology of the Church is not only a chapter, but is a major chapter, of Christology.”
507 V6, 195; V1, 67.
508 Florovsky, “Sobornost,” 64, 65; V1, 37.
dwelling place is the Body of Christ. Consequently, Florovsky maintains that the Tradition of the Church is a pneumatological reality only inasmuch as it is a Christological reality.

Finally, inasmuch as Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition is ecclesiological and Christological, it is also eschatological. “Eschatology,” writes Florovsky, is not just one particular section of the Christian theological system, but rather its basis and foundation, its guiding and inspiring principle, or, as it were, the climate of the whole of Christian thinking.” Florovsky regarded the telos of the Church, the Body of Christ, as its progressive deification, which will be completed at the end of time. In a statement that perhaps best summarizes his theology of history Florovsky writes, “History goes on because the Body has not yet been completed.” He also emphasized that the deification of the Church is contingent upon the freely-willed response of men and women. The Spirit’s mission is to guide the Church toward its deification through His presence in the Church, His constant revelation of Christ to men and women, and His preservation of this revelation and the Church’s access to the sanctified means by which

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509 The work of Zizioulas, Florovsky’s student, represents one of the better-known modern Orthodox attempts to hold the Christological and pneumatological character of the Church in tension. Zizioulas defends Florovsky against interpretations of his ecclesiology as too Christologically-focused when he writes, “Christology as the starting point in ecclesiology in general has been stressed by G. Florovsky… and should not be understood as a negation of the pneumatological or the triadological aspect of the Church” (Being as Communion, 158n67). See also Yves-Noel Lelouvier, Perspectives russes sur l’Eglise: Un théologien contemporain, Georges Florovsky (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1968). For an interpretation of Florovsky’s ecclesiology as lacking a proper pneumatological focus, see Lucian Turcescu, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?” in Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology, ed. Turcescu (Iași, Romania: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 91-92.

510 V4, 63.

511 V4, 66. Florovsky draws upon John Chrysostom’s interpretation of Ephesians for his view of history as the completion of the Body of Christ: “In this manner St. John Chrysostom explains the words of the Apostle: ‘The Church is the fulfillment of Christ in the same manner as the head completes the body and the body is completed by the head. Thus we understand why the Apostle sees that Christ, as the Head, needs all His members. Because if many of us were not, one the hand, one the foot, one yet another member, His body would not be complete. Thus His body is formed of all the members. This means, that the head will be complete, only when the body is perfect; when we all are most firmly united and strengthened’” (John Chrysostom, In Ephes. Hom. 3,2, Migne, P.G. lxi., c.26; quoted in Florovsky, “Sobornost,” 54).
men and women may participate in the divine life. Tradition is then both this guiding action of the Spirit directed toward deification, in addition to the human response to Christ’s revealing and sanctifying acts. Tradition, for Florovsky, is thus a synergetic reality.\textsuperscript{512}

If doctrinal development does indeed have a place in Florovsky’s theology of Tradition, it, too, must exhibit the characteristics described above. That is, it must be ecclesiological, Christological, and eschatological. It must be intimately connected with the life of the Church, it must have an incarnational character, and it must be directed toward, and contribute to, the completion of the Body of Christ.

\textbf{B. Tradition as Theology}

That Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition has been favorably received by other contemporary Orthodox theologians is in part due to the quality of its exposition and its consonance with the patristic mind. It is also perhaps due to its partial dependence on Slavophilism—the Russian intellectual movement of the early nineteenth-century, led by thinkers such as Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), and Yuri Samarin (1819-1876), which sought to combat Russia’s imposed Westernization through a return to its original national and ecclesiastical consciousness. Lewis Shaw has rightly dubbed Slavophilism the “common ancestor” of modern Russian ecclesiological thought.\textsuperscript{513} As Rowan Williams notes, “Florovsky, as much as Lossky, cannot but read the Fathers through spectacles faintly tinged with Slavophil interests.”\textsuperscript{514} The Slavophile

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\item \textsuperscript{512} V6, 158.
\item \textsuperscript{513} Shaw, “Introduction,” 175-176.
\item \textsuperscript{514} Rowan Williams, “Eastern Orthodox Theology,” in \textit{The Modern Theologians}, 166.
\end{itemize}
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doctrine most evident in Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition is that of sobornost, a Slavic term that Florovsky typically translates as “catholicity.”

As is frequently pointed out, the term sobornost does not have an English parallel that can convey the richness of the Slavic term. For Florovsky, the term refers to the fullness of the life of the Church: all that constitutes the unity and identity of the Church, in all ages, and contributes toward the fulfillment of its mission. Florovsky basically considers sobornost, then, as the equivalent of Tradition. Such an equivocation is evident in the following definition of Tradition: “It is the unity of the Holy Spirit, the communion of the sacraments… [O]nly in the Church is authentic tradition possible. Only in the Church does the Grace of the Holy Spirit pour forth revealed truth in an unbroken stream and admonish with it.”\(^{515}\)

Yet, the Slavophile term sobornost is also the axis on which Florovsky’s critique of Slavophilism turns. As much as Florovsky was indebted to Slavophilism, the beau idéal for his understanding of Tradition was Philaret (Drozdov), the Metropolitan of Moscow (1782-1867) whom Shaw dubs Florovsky’s “nineteenth-century hero.”\(^{516}\) “With Philaret,” Florovsky claims, “begins the real liberation of Russian theology not only from Western influences but from Westernization in general… by a creative return to Patristic foundations and sources…”\(^{517}\) Florovsky criticizes the Slavophile understanding of Tradition for its primarily passive character—a criticism latent in his contention that

\(^{515}\) V5, 214. In addition to being a very holistic description of Tradition, this passage partially acts as a foil to Lewis Shaw’s contention that Florovsky’s writings lack a sufficient treatment of grace (“Introduction,” 189-190). As George Williams rightly points out, it is an assumption in Florovsky that the Church is the realm of grace (“Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 60). The entire life of the Church, its life in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, is “an unbroken stream” of grace. Thus, the concept of grace underlies all of Florovsky’s discussions of the Church. Nevertheless, Shaw’s contention does have some merit inasmuch as it alerts one to the fact that Florovsky’s theological vocabulary was inconsistent. He did not frequently have recourse to terms such as “grace,” “nature,” “synergy,” or “energies,” even though these ideas permeated his theology.\(^{516}\) Shaw, “Introduction,” 53.

\(^{517}\) V4, 173.
“[Slavophilism’s] entire pathos lies precisely in its escape or even retreat from history.”\textsuperscript{518} Khomiakov and others rightly described Tradition as a fullness and a unity rooted in the presence of the Spirit in the Church. But at the same time they failed to adequately describe the human role in Tradition, holding that it was “generally not a human, but a divine characteristic of the Church.”\textsuperscript{519} One of the main tenets of Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition is that it is not only constitutive, but creative, as well: “Tradition is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration.”\textsuperscript{520} Florovsky considered Philaret as better accounting for the active, creative role of men and women in Tradition, perhaps most uniquely in the dignity that he accorded to the work of theology. According to Florovsky, “Filaret always emphasized the necessity to engage in theology as the single and immutable foundation for a complete religious life.”\textsuperscript{521}

As I pointed out above, Florovsky believed the entirety of God’s revelation is contained in what he terms the “experience” of that revelation. The Christian has access to this experience through membership in the Church, whose Tradition preserves and communicates this experience in its fullness. Yet, according to Florovsky, this experience requires men and women to bear witness to it, to freely respond to it through word and deed. Theology—the reflection on divine revelation through the use of human reason—constitutes the human response to God \textit{in word}: “It is the human response to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{518} V6, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{519} V6, 45. Florovsky here quotes Khomiakov as saying, “It is not the person or the multitude of persons, but the Spirit of God living in the totality of the Church who preserves and writes tradition in the Church.”
\item \textsuperscript{520} V1, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{521} V5, 208.
\end{itemize}
God, who has spoken first. It is man’s witness to God who has spoken to him, whose word he has heard, whose words he has kept and is now recording and repeating.\footnote{V1, 28.}

Florovsky perceived both a positive and a negative need for this response. The positive need for it follows from his theology of personhood, which places importance on the free and creative response of human beings to revelation. The importance Florovsky attached to this response is evident in his emphasis on podvig, or, askesis. In accord with what he described as the “existential character” of patristic theology, Florovsky regarded theology as an ascetical endeavor. He looked especially to the example of Maximus the Confessor, in whose system he saw “dogmatics and ascetics… organically and inseparably brought together.”\footnote{V10, 136.} As I pointed out above, Florovsky used the term asceticism in its commonly understood sense to refer to the activities of prayer and self-denial. These activities, according to Florovsky, are inseparable from the work of theology: “The theologian must learn to discover himself continually within the Church through ascetic trial and self-discipline.”\footnote{V6, 295.} Yet he also used the term in a wider sense to refer to any free and creative response to revelation that is proper to human beings as persons. His understanding of theology is a marriage of these two senses of asceticism: it is a freely-willed activity, on the part of men and women, purified by their prayer and self-denial.

The “negative” need for theology follows from the limitations of human epistemology. Florovsky holds that the “fullness of knowledge and understanding is given, but this fullness is only gradually and partially disclosed and professed…” due to
the fact that “knowledge in this world is always only a ‘partial’ knowledge.” He thus holds that the finite nature of the human intellect requires the rational elaboration of revelation by men and women in the Church.

Matthew Baker believes that Florovsky is particularly to be lauded among Orthodox for the positive role he assigns to reason in theology. He holds that “Florovsky’s positive account of the place of rationality in theological enterprise remains relatively unique amongst modern Orthodox theologians; the only major figure whose thought bears comparison on this question is Dumitru Staniloae.” Baker argues that there has been a prevalent tendency in modern Orthodox theology (though by no means is it limited to Orthodox theology) to regard experience, or faith, as opposed to reason. Indeed, Florovsky himself exhibited signs of this tendency early in his publishing career when reacting against Neo-Kantian rationalism. This tendency manifests itself in some modern Orthodox theologians’ predilection for apophatic theology and their characterization of it as a path of theandric ascent that seeks to move beyond discursive thought. I will elaborate further on the nature this Orthodox predilection for apophaticism, and its consequences for theology, later in this chapter.

Though Florovsky’s earlier writings may at times privilege experience at the expense of reason, his later writings clearly accord a positive role to reason in making experience intelligible. Florovsky, like Philaret, viewed the vocation of all Christians as

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525 V3, 35.  
527 Baker, “Theology Reasons.” Baker’s article is particularly valuable because he cites a number of untranslated Florovsky texts, in addition to material contained in the Princeton library’s archives of Florovsky’s papers.
a theological one. According to Florovsky, “Filaret of Moscow was the first person in the history of modern Russian theology for whom theology once more became the aim of life, the essential step toward spiritual progress and construction.”\(^{528}\) Florovsky was even wont to quote the Anselmian definition for theology in referring to the Christian vocation as “fides quaerens intellectum.”\(^{529}\) Unabashedly supporting the place of reason in the religious realm, Florovsky refers to theology as “a kind of Christian philosophy.”\(^{530}\) Of course, he qualifies in a number of places that the use of reason in theology must always remain rooted in the living experience of the Church. He writes that one who theologizes without faith “risks remaining outside and not really finding anything.”\(^{531}\) Yet, he also does not reduce theology to the experience that belongs to the Christian by faith. Instead, as Baker emphasizes, Philaret’s aphorism that “theology reasons” encapsulated for Florovsky the proper relationship between reason and experience.\(^{532}\)

The positive role Florovsky accords to reason and theology is a function of his positive view of history, and men’s and women’s roles in history. Through their reasoning, men and women perform an important and necessary task in making concrete the various aspects of revelation contained within Christian experience. This application of human reason to divine revelation in order to progressively unfold its contents constitutes the heart of Florovsky’s understanding of theology. And theology, in turn,

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\(^{528}\) V5, 212.

\(^{529}\) V3, 31; V5, 208; Florovsky, “Le Corps du Christ Vivant,” 47. See Baker, “‘Theology Reasons,’” n140, for a discussion of the potential Barthian influence behind Florovsky’s use of the Anselmian formula, in addition to the differences between Barth’s and Florovsky’s understanding of the formula.

\(^{530}\) V7, xiv.

\(^{531}\) Florovsky, “Sobornost,” 69.

\(^{532}\) V6, 208. Baker regards this aphorism as emblematic of Florovsky’s call for a Neopatristic synthesis, which Florovsky understood to involve a creative application of reason to the truths of Christian experience. The goal of this rational enterprise is the eventual formation of a new theological system, or, as Baker puts it, “Florovsky’s call for a Neo-Patristic synthesis is in essence a summons to a newly articulated Christian philosophy” (“Neo-Patristic Synthesis,” 107).
constitutes the meaning of history as it fulfills the vocation of men and women to respond to God’s revelation through creative activity.

Given the connection Florovsky posits between theology and history, it is no surprise that he also saw an intimate connection between theology and culture. Florovsky understood culture as the entire matrix of “aims… concerns… habits… and values” that constitute the identity of a civilized group of human beings. It is “produced and accumulated in the creative process of history, and tend[s] to obtain a semi-independent existence, i.e., independent of that creative endeavor which originated or discovered these ‘values.’”533 Both theology and culture thus testify to the “creative vocation of man”: “that Man was created by God for a creative purpose and was to act in the world as its king, priest, and prophet.” The redemption accomplished by Christ has allowed man “to resume his [original] role and function in the Creation.” Christian men and women are thus called not only to “display obedience, but also… to accomplish the task which was appointed by God in his creative design precisely as the task of man.” They accomplish this task through their creative activity, which includes, among other things, their application of reason to revelation and their Christianization of the world. These tasks of theology and the building up of culture fulfill the vocation of Christian men and women only if they are eschatological—only if they are ordered toward deification and the completion of the Body of Christ. Thus, Florovsky writes that “the cultural process in history is related to the ultimate consummation, if in a manner and in a sense which we cannot adequately decipher now.”534

533 V2, 11.
534 V2, 21.
To those who do not attach such a positive role to theology, one has to pose the same question Florovsky posed in “The Predicament of the Christian Historian”: “Has history any constructive value, now after Christ? or any ‘meaning’ at all?” Is it, asks Florovsky, merely “an enigmatic interim between the Mighty Deeds of God, for which it [is] difficult to assign any proper substance,” or is it the forum for human creativity? Are men and women to respond to revelation by turning inward, by resting in the experience of faith? Or, are they to apply the reason that is proper to their natures to more fully elaborate this revelation? Is theology only preservative and elaborative, or is it also creative and transformative? According to Florovsky, the answers to these questions have implications not only for theology, but also for history and eschatology.

**C. The “Responses” to Christian Experience—Scripture and Dogma**

Florovsky holds that Sacred Scripture represents men’s and women’s “primary response” to revelation. Its status as the “primary response” follows from the fact that it is also inspired: it is “at once both the Word of God and the human response—the Word of God mediated through the faithful response of man.” Because Florovsky regards theology as the human response to God, and because Scripture constitutes such a response, one could claim that he regards Scripture as a work of theology. Like many of the Church Fathers, whom Florovsky considered to be exemplar theologians, the contents of Scripture permeate his writings rather than being the subject of direct commentary. When he directly treats of Scripture as a whole, he repeatedly qualifies its place within the Church’s Tradition. It appears that his qualifications are in large part a reaction to the

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535 V2, 61.
536 V2, 20.
537 V1, 28.
Protestant identification of the Word of God with Scripture, and perhaps also the past
Roman Catholic tendency to separate Scripture from Tradition. Thus, he clarifies in a
number of places that experience is temporally and hierarchically prior to Scripture; that
while the Bible flows from the Christian experience of revelation, it does not exhaust
it; and that the Church, as the bearer of experience, “stands mystically first and is fuller
than Scripture.” Unfortunately, Florovsky does not devote enough attention to giving a
positive account of Scripture. In addition, he does not provide a sufficient account of the
doctrine of biblical inspiration, and thus, it is unclear what he views as the qualitative
difference between Scripture and other theological responses.

Dogma constitutes another theological response to God’s revelation. Like
Scripture, it proceeds from the experience of the Church while not exhausting that
experience. Though Florovsky refers to Scripture as “the primary response” to
revelation, dogma is the response that receives the primary focus in his oeuvre. Indeed,
in Florovsky’s writings one finds a particularly remarkable theology of dogma that
includes many insights apropos to contemporary theological discussions.

Florovsky uses a variety of terms and images to describe the nature and function
of a dogma. Chief among these terms is that dogma is “a witness of experience.” This
witness, which takes the form of “definitions and conceptions,” is a function of the
active response to revelation that God requires of men and women qua persons; it is the
result of men’s and women’s creative activity through thought as applied to Christian
experience. Florovsky also sees this witness in “definitions and conceptions” as a

538 V3, 29.
539 V1, 48.
540 V3, 29.
function of human epistemology, of men’s and women’s need for abstraction in order to understand:

Revelation is received in the silence of faith, the silence of contemplation—such is the first silently receptive moment of theology. And in this receptive silence of contemplation the whole fullness of Truth is contained and given. But *Truth must still be expressed and pronounced*. Because man is called not only to receive Truth attentively, but also to witness to it… He is called to creative activity, above all, to the building up of his own self.\(^{542}\)

In deeming revelation as first “received in the silence of faith,” Florovsky here perhaps unnecessarily assumes a schema of temporal succession where experience precedes expression, as if expression was not concomitant with the experience, or the cause of the experience. However, his truth consists in affirming the positive character of the abstract language of doctrinal definitions. Against all such Harnackian characterizations of dogmas as representative of a compromise of Christianity’s original simplicity, Florovsky claims that dogmas represent precisely Christianity’s fulfillment.

Using the language particular to the Orthodox tradition, Florovsky also refers to dogma as an “ikon” of Christian experience.\(^{543}\) In Orthodox theology, the icon is a visual sacrament through which one may enter more deeply into the divine reality. By referring to dogma as an icon, Florovsky implies that it is a *verbal* sacrament through which one may enter more deeply into the divine reality. He allows the possibility that one may come to a fuller participation in God—the reality within Christian experience—the more he or she grows in his or her understanding of a dogma.\(^{544}\)

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\(^{542}\) Ibid.

\(^{543}\) Paul Evdokimov also describes dogma as a “verbal icon of truth.” See Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*; quoted in Nichols, *From Newman to Congar*, 279.

\(^{544}\) Coincidentally, Walgrave also characterizes Möhler as recognizing this connection between dogma and experience: “That which is believed and afterward analyzed by reflection must become a part of the Christian’s being. It is not enough that it should be present to the mind in the way of objective information. The message has to be converted into existential truth…” (Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation*, 288). Walgrave is here interpreting Möhler’s view of dogma in *Die Einheit der Kirche*. 157
Florovsky’s use of “ikonic” language for dogma also implies the Christological sanction of dogma. Through the Incarnation, Christ became the ultimate icon of God, and the human became the means by which one could depict and come to know God.\textsuperscript{545} This sanction applies not only to the writing of icons, but also to the formulation of dogma. “Knowledge of God,” writes Florovsky, “has become possible through that renewal of nature which Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection.”\textsuperscript{546} With Christ’s redemptive renewal of nature and transformation of the world, dogma can now serve as “a ‘logical icon’ of divine reality”\textsuperscript{547} that adequately expresses this reality.\textsuperscript{548} What is more, Florovsky holds that men and women participate in Christ’s redemptive activity through their formulation of revelation into dogma: “When divine truth is expressed in human language, the words themselves are transformed.”\textsuperscript{549} Theological activity itself then becomes transformative for the human participants, as “the very realm of thought becomes transfigured, sanctified, and renewed.”\textsuperscript{550}

Florovsky’s application of the term “icon” to dogma also implies the limitedness of dogma. An icon is an image of a reality, and therefore does not capture the fullness of the reality it portrays. Similarly, a dogma is an image, or witness, of a truth of revelation, and thus, it does not capture the fullness of that truth. In Western theology it has become popular to use the “substance-expression” distinction to convey the economic character of dogmatic language. This distinction implies that the humanly-formulated expression

\textsuperscript{545} V3, 210. 
\textsuperscript{546} V3, 28. 
\textsuperscript{548} V3, 22; “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 12. 
\textsuperscript{549} V3, 33. 
\textsuperscript{550} Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 13. Florovsky’s belief that Christ’s redemption effected the renewal of human language and knowledge is behind his contention that “knowledge of God has [now] become possible” (V3, 28). While this contention bespeaks an important truth, there is an admittedly Barthian tone to it inasmuch as Florovsky here fails to sufficiently clarify the nature of men’s and women’s knowledge of God prior to Christ’s redemption.
of a dogma can never adequately, or accurately, describe a dogma’s divinely-revealed
substance. Among the supposed advantages of this distinction is that it allows for some
wiggle-room in the reception of a dogma. Thus, for instance, in his well-known work on
the subject, Francis Sullivan argues that Lateran IV’s formulation (expression) of *extra
ecclesiam nulla salus* (“there is no salvation outside of the Church”) still remains valid,
even if the Church’s present interpretation of it is vastly different than in 1215. The
expression, explains Sullivan, inadequately conveyed the substance of the teaching that
has been held by the Church from the beginning.551

My raising of the substance-expression distinction perhaps pre-emptively takes
this chapter into the dialogical realm. I nevertheless raise it because it helps illuminate
Florovsky’s own understanding of dogma. Though Florovsky does not address this
distinction in his writings, he most assuredly would have been uncomfortable with it for a
number of reasons. For one, Florovsky shirked the use of “essentialist” language for any
human, created realities. As already discussed, he was at pains to curb the Idealistic
influences that had crept into Christianity, which included a pantheism that blurred the
distinction between God and His creation. Against this pantheism, Florovsky reaffirmed
the patristic (and biblical) distinction between created and uncreated realities.

The expression of revelation in dogma, while certainly speaking truly of God, is
nevertheless a created, economic reality: it is “the Word of God that has been heard by
us.”552 Only through affirming this does Florovsky believe that one can avoid a kind of
pantheism—a “pan-logism”—that identifies “the thought of a thing and the Divine

551 See Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic
Response* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).
thought-design concerning a thing.” Just as a pantheistic Idealism reduces the importance of free and creative human actions (as discussed in Chapter One), so also a dogmatic pan-logism that highlights the “essences” of dogmas relativizes their wording, and in principle constitutes the death of theology. Thus, Florovsky preferred to speak of the “truth” of a dogma rather than its “essence” or “substance.”

Secondly, the implication behind the substance-expression distinction seems to be that the substance, or essence, of a doctrine is separable from the human terms in which it has been expressed. Florovsky repeatedly fought against this assumption as manifested in those who, like Harnack, called for the de-Hellenization of Christianity and its dogmatic language in an attempt to once again return Christianity to its original purity. For Florovsky, Christian revelation is inseparable from the milieu in which it emerged in history, and this milieu was Hellenism. In solidarity with others who have made a similar point, Florovsky reminds us that the New Testament was originally written in Greek, and is thus eternally tied to the conceptual framework of the Greek language. According to Florovsky, the formulation of Christian dogmas in the language of Hellenistic philosophy did not place limitations on Christianity, but instead, enabled it to increase its influence. In fact, Florovsky believed that the attempt to abstract truth from its historical framework results not in the ability to behold truth in a more unadulterated state, but in the abolition of the truth.

His belief that we must take the original context of Christian dogmatic

553 V3, 62.
554 V3, 30, 62. Florovsky’s emphasis on the “truth” of a dogma is also connected with his attempt to maintain the relational character of revelation: “For the Truth is not an idea, but a person, even the Incarnate Lord” (V1, 20).
formulation seriously is what prompts his bold (and often misunderstood) comment that we must “become more Greek in order that we may be more Catholic.”

Third, Florovsky believed the Church’s dogmatic language adequately conveyed the truth of Christian experience. Partly in reaction to the perceived, negative influence of Western Neo-Scholasticism on Eastern Orthodox theology, partly due to their particular recovery of Pseudo-Dionysius, many Orthodox theologians in the twentieth century exalted apophatic theology as the preeminent means of Christian spiritual ascent. The most influential promoter of apophaticism among these Orthodox theologians was Vladimir Lossky. According to Lossky, apophaticism does not simply refer to the intellectual exercise known in the West as negative theology, but is “an existential attitude which involves the whole man.” This existential attitude requires one to acknowledge the impossibility of knowing God in His essence, and to eventually abandon human concepts of God in order to grow in divine participation through prayer and askesis. Taking Gregory of Nyssa’s Life of Moses as illustrative of the apophatic way, Lossky emphasizes that the “light” that shone forth from the burning bush (Ex 3) was not as great a theophany as the “divine darkness” that later enveloped Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24). He interprets the former theophany as signaling that cataphatic, rational thought was still predominant in Moses, while the latter theophany illustrates God showing Moses that the apophatic way is greater.

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556 Florovsky, “The Christian Hellenism,” 10. The most well-known of recent defenses of the Hellenistic categories present in Scripture and the Church’s dogmas is Pope Benedict XVI’s “Regensburg Address.” Shaw is perhaps right, however, that Florovsky did not adequately deal with how the Church should accommodate non-Greek expressions of Christianity (“Introduction,” 223).


558 Lossky, Mystical Theology, 39.
A consequence of the modern Orthodox emphasis on apophaticism has been a marked de-emphasis on the ability of doctrinal statements to convey truths of religious experience. This de-emphasis in two particular Orthodox authors—Lossky and Andrew Louth—is related to their rejection of doctrinal development. By no means do Lossky and Louth go so far as to deny the relation between doctrinal definitions and experience. Lossky recognizes that, as a function of the fullness of faith he or she possesses, “the Christian knows all, but theology is necessary to actuate this knowledge.”\(^5\) And Louth describes theology as “a search for truth, because we are seeking to find ways of expressing that truth, using the historically conditioned categories available to us.”\(^6\) What they deny, however, is the ability of theology (understood as the application of reason to revelation) to continually contribute to an ever-deeper knowledge of experience. In other words, they deny that theology is a handmaiden in our ascent toward God.

Illustrative of their denial is their position that new doctrinal language does not contribute to a greater understanding of revelation either for the individual Christian or the entire Church. Lossky acknowledges that the Church must preserve its dogmatic tradition by occasionally renewing the language in which it communicates this tradition, but that “‘to renew’ does not mean to replace ancient expressions of the Truth by new ones, more explicit and theologically better elaborated.”\(^7\) A doctrine, according to Lossky, only “each time opens anew an access towards the fulness outside of which the


\(^{6}\) Louth, “Is Doctrinal Development a Valid Category?” 59.

\(^{7}\) Lossky, “Tradition and Traditions,” 160.
revealed Truth can be neither known nor confessed.‖ 562 Louth echoes Lossky through the words of his former student, Mihail Neamțu:

The profound dogmatic elaborations of the fourth century, on the side of the orthodox theologians, did not bring the apostolic faith somewhere further, on to a deeper level of understanding. Given their relative flexibility regarding the language, the champions of orthodoxy in the fourth century only provided new means of conceptualization of what is essentially encapsulated in the proclamation of Christ’s lordship and divinity… 563

For Lossky and Louth, then, theology makes explicit certain aspects of the implicitly-held mystery of revelation without ever penetrating that mystery. Doctrines “open an access” toward understanding revelation, but do not reveal a path toward further understanding after the initial access. They are merely points along the circumference of the mystery of revelation which do not afford one the ability to progress toward the center. According to them, the formulation of doctrine does not lead to any sort of development. 564

For Lossky and Louth, doctrinal definition mainly performs a negative function. Such a view of doctrine is operative in their belief that doctrine’s main purpose is to serve as a protective measure against heresies. According to Louth, “The main concern of theology is not so much to elucidate anything, as to prevent us, the Church, from dissolving the mystery that lies at the heart of the faith.” 565 In Lossky’s words, doctrines therefore function as “boundaries,” as Tradition’s “external limit,” outside of which lie false interpretations of revelation. 566 The implication in this view is that doctrine primarily serves as a bulwark against heresies; that it is merely a necessity imposed upon

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562 Ibid., 162.
564 For a fuller discussion of this issue, see my article “The Orthodox Rejection of Doctrinal Development,” *Pro Ecclesia* 20:4 (Fall 2011): 389-410.
566 Lossky, “Tradition and Traditions,” 162, 163.
the Church, at certain times in its history, when faith has dwindled, and the experience of faith is not enough to sustain the faithful.

Florovsky differs sharply from his fellow Orthodox theologians in his positive attitude toward doctrinal definition.\(^{567}\) As I pointed out above, Florovsky affirms that “the Word of God may be adequately and rightly expressed in human words” as a result of men’s and women’s possession of the *imago Dei* and Christ’s redemption of human nature, which included the redemption of human knowledge.\(^{568}\) This affirmation serves to counter an overemphasis on apophatic theology and the inability of human words to convey divine truth. Florovsky’s positive attitude toward doctrinal definition implies that an overemphasis upon apophaticism fails on two accounts: one, it fails to respect the dignity of human knowledge in spite of the fall. Or, perhaps more accurately, it fails to adequately incorporate rationality into the understanding of the *imago Dei* which, writes Florovsky, “is in the whole man… and not just one part of man.”\(^{569}\) Two, an overemphasis upon apophaticism fails to account for the redeemed, and thus transformed, character of human knowledge following Christ’s salvific acts. As Florovsky writes, “The resurrection is the true renewal, the transfiguration, the reformation of the whole creation. Not just a return of what has passed away, but a heightening, a fulfillment of something better and more perfect.”\(^{570}\) Florovsky’s positive view of doctrine is thus connected with his conviction of the reality of Redemption.

\(^{567}\) Louth hints that he is aware of this difference: “Lossky’s understanding of the Neo-Patristic synthesis seems to me very different from Florovsky’s both in the prominence given to Gregory Palamas and in the related emphasis on the essentially apophatic nature of theology” (Louth, review of *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion*, by Aristotle Papanikolaou, *SVTQ* 51:4 [2007]: 446).

\(^{568}\) V1, 27.

\(^{569}\) V4, 120.

\(^{570}\) V3, 120.
Moreover, Florovsky believes that doctrines, once defined, have a perennial and eternal character. “The words of dogmatic definitions,” he writes, “are not ‘simple words,’ they are not ‘accidental’ words which one can replace by other words. They are eternal words, incapable of being replaced. This means that certain words—certain concepts—are eternalized by the very fact that they express divine truth.”

They represent, as it were, the *termini* of certain truths of Christian experience that will not be superseded by improved expressions for the same truths. Unfortunately, Florovsky did not devote extensive attention to this point, but it is a point that could provide balance to the modern theology’s tendency to over-hermeneuticize doctrinal definitions.

It is interesting to note that Florovsky himself perceived the exaggerated apophaticism evident in Lossky and Louth operative in those Russian theologians who objected to doctrinal development in the nineteenth-century. Responding to P.I. Leporskii’s position against development on the ground that “a deeper apprehension of the mystery [doctrines] contain was [im]possible,” Florovsky writes, “He exaggerated the incomprehensibility of revelation, leaving an aftertaste of an unexpected agnosticism.”

What is more, Florovsky sees in this form of apophaticism the seeds of relativism and the reduction of religion to morality—dangers perennially present in the a-dogmatism of Protestant theology. Thus Baker’s perceptive comment that an Orthodox overemphasis on apophaticism, and their supposition of a dichotomy between experience and reason, “threatens a retreat of Orthodox thought and culture into a form of masked

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571 V3, 33; See also V1, 10; V3, 30; Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 13.
572 V6, 255. Florovsky’s footnote in *Ways* informs us that “Leporskii (b. 1871) was a professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.”
573 V6, 255-257, 272.
fideism having more in common with the spirit of Luther than that of the Greek Fathers.”574

Florovsky’s optimistic estimate of human reason is manifest in his belief that the formulation of new doctrines—usually done at ecumenical councils—does indeed result in new understanding. He saw this principle affirmed by Vladimir Soloviev’s understanding of dogmatic development. Such support for Soloviev on this point of dogmatic development is surprising given that Florovsky opposes much within Soloviev’s system, including the understanding of history present within that system.575 Florovsky interprets Soloviev’s endorsement of dogmatic development as an affirmation that “the ecumenical councils defined and described with new precision and binding authority that Christian truth which had existed from the beginning, and their importance and novelty lies in this precision and authoritativeness—this new degree or stage of exactness.”576 Florovsky characterized those who assigned only a preservative and protective, rather than a constructive and illuminative, role to doctrinal definitions as having a negative view of history. The opponents of Soloviev’s idea of doctrinal development, according to Florovsky, held that “the councils only protected tradition and clarified it relative to the ‘passing needs of the Church at that moment,’” and that

574 Baker, “‘Neo-Patristic Synthesis,’” 200.
575 Baker notes how remarkable Florovsky’s support for Soloviev’s understanding of dogmatic development is in “‘Neo-Patristic Synthesis,’” 84-88.
576 V6, 158. Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development is located in his lengthy essay, “Dogmaticheskoe razvitie tserkvi v sviazi s voprosom o soedinenii tserkvei.” Valliere translates this as “The Development of Dogma in the Church in Connection with the Question of Church Union,” and summarizes its contents in Modern Russian Theology, 178-192. The essay also exists in French translation as Le Développement Dogmatique de L’Église (Paris: Desclée, 1991). Jean-Marie Tillard lists it, along with Newman’s Essay on Development, as one of “the two classical theological explications of doctrinal development” (Tillard, “Dogmatic Development and Koinonia,” in New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff, ed. Bradley Nassif [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], 173). In his essay endorsing the orthodoxy of doctrinal development, Staniloae echoes this belief that new doctrinal language brings about new understanding: “It is not only a question of an exterior renewal, or of an ‘aggiornamento’ of language. It is impossible to separate language and content so clearly as that” (“The Orthodox Conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine,” 660).
“ecumenical testimony has largely a negative significance: the condemnation and exclusion of definite heresies or errors.” Florovsky perceived in such a view of doctrine a rather pessimistic view of Church history that considers doctrines as evidence of particular lapses in Christian faith. “The entire discussion,” writes Florovsky, “is a variation on the typical theme of Protestant historiography: church history as decay.” I will further examine Florovsky’s endorsement of Solovev’s understanding of dogmatic development in the Dialogue section of this chapter.

Florovsky also differs from Lossky and Louth inasmuch as he views the role of human reason in theology as inseparable from the ascent to God. Once again, in holding this position he mirrors Philaret, who “was the first person in the history of modern Russian theology for whom theology once more became the aim of life, the essential step toward spiritual progress and construction.” He also sees himself as following the example of the Church Fathers, whose theology was of an “existential” character that informed the character of Christian life. Just as Florovsky’s ecclesiology is rooted in the totus Christus, one might say his anthropology is rooted in the totus homo. According to Florovsky, the entire man—including his thought—becomes progressively united with Christ in the process of the human person’s deification. He sees theology, too, as part of the theanthropic process that culminates in men’s and women’s deification.

577 V6, 158.  
578 V6, 159.  
579 V5, 212.  
580 V1, 108.
Ironically, Florovsky congratulated Lossky above all else for “his insistence that doctrine and spirituality were intimately correlated.” Yet, Lossky’s strength is also the source of his weakness, for in affirming the inseparability of theology and spirituality he at the same time conflates them by not according an adequate role to knowledge in deification. Florovsky, too, notes this weakness in his review of Lossky’s *Mystical Theology*. He concedes to Lossky that “the ultimate knowledge of God is available ‘by faith’ only, in an ‘experience’ which transcends ‘logical reason.’” “But,” he qualifies, “‘knowledge’ is still an integral part of this beatific ‘life’”—an insight he ascribes to the Cappadocian Fathers.  

On a final note, I wish to point out that Florovsky’s positive evaluation of doctrine and theology is balanced by his own recognition of the apophatic character of theology. Louth is right in noting that Florovsky “makes little of the language of apophaticism.” George Williams also notes this lacuna, but points out that Florovsky’s oeuvre is permeated by a “profoundly apophatic” character. The apophatic character of Florovsky’s theology is sufficiently evident in his position that experience contains a fullness that can never be exhausted by Scripture and dogma. He also employed the traditional distinction between theology and economy in order to distinguish between knowledge of God’s essence (which is impossible) and that known

582 Florovsky, review of *Mystical Theology*, 207.
583 Louth, review of *Being with God*, 447.
585 V3, 35.
through God’s revelation through His energies. Indeed, Florovsky admitted that “theology itself is bound to be ultimately rather an ‘apophatic theology,’ just a symbol of the unfathomable mystery of God…” Furthermore, Florovsky repeatedly acknowledged that there are times when theology reaches its limit, and where silence must take over in the face of mystery.

But Florovsky was also cautious about the emphasis one should give apophatic theology. “I am for apophatic theology,” writes Florovsky, “but its use must be regulated very carefully…” As Florovsky saw it, the consequence of a one-sidedly apophatic theology was the eventual devaluation of the dogmatic element in theology, “to a renewal of the heresy of the ‘antisophoi,’ ‘gnosimachoi.’” Moreover, Florovsky would have seen it as devaluing the anthropological character of revelation. As I have pointed out above, Florovsky believed that divine truth could be adequately communicated in human language because men and women have been created in the image of God. He also believed that Christians had a vocation to use their gift of reason to unfold and clarify the experience of revelation in the course of human history. Florovsky understood theology to constitute this rational unfolding and clarifying of revelation. He thus regarded an exaggerated apophaticism as devaluing the rational element within human beings, and as fatal to theology. He regarded an exaggerated apophatic theology as really no theology at all.

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586 V3, 62-63.
587 V13, 11.
588 V3, 183.
590 V4, 187; quoted in Baker, “‘Theology Reasons.’”
D. THEOLOGY AND THE ORGANIC METAPHOR

Both George Williams and Matthew Baker interpret Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development as a function of his rejection of certain organic models of history. Florovsky opposed biologistic historical models that interpret the course of temporal events as identical to that of the life of an organism, which develops (or “evolves,” as he terms it elsewhere) according to a structure that pre-exists in the organism itself. Such a conception of doctrinal history would mean that revelation develops, or unfolds, its contents in history as a realization of its own innate power. Florovsky reacts against this type of historical model—which he saw as endemic to the historiographies of both Idealism and Slavophilism, in addition to that of Soloviev—because, again, he believed that it failed to provide a role for the free divine and human creativity that belongs to personhood. A biologistic reading of history means, for Florovsky, that history is the realization of a process from a beginning to an end that is achieved without, or in spite of, the irruptions of divine and human acts. As Williams implies and Baker argues, Florovsky considered the word “development” as synonymous with such a reading of history, a fact that colors his attitude toward the idea of doctrinal development.

In his Masters’ thesis, Baker has already provided a softening of Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development as it relates to the organic metaphor. Baker, as did George Williams before, explains that Florovsky preferred the term “epigenesis” to “evolution” or “entwicklung” (“development”) as a historical model. “Epigenesis” refers, in general, to the genetic changes in organisms that take place as a result of factors

not present within the genes themselves, e.g., through environmental factors. Florovsky believed this term better accounted for the unpredictable character of history, where unforeseen and freely-willed divine and human actions help contribute to the achievement of creation’s telos. He associated entwicklung, on the other hand, with non-volitional biological processes. Baker also points out that Florovsky did not associate all theories of doctrinal development with a biologistic conception of history, as evidenced by his support for Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development in Ways. Indeed, Florovsky seemingly qualifies his objection to doctrinal development in Ways when he explains that he does not oppose what doctrinal development claims about the human reception of revelation; rather, he objects to the imprecision of the term.\(^\text{594}\)

Baker notes that while Florovsky opposed organic conceptions of history, he at the same time utilized organic metaphors in expressing his theology of history. “Epigenesis” is itself an organic metaphor. Indeed, one could characterize Florovsky as holding that an authentically Christian theology of history is necessarily an organic theology of history. As already pointed out, Florovsky’s preferred image for the Church was the “Body of Christ”—an image whose reestablished preeminence in theology he attributed to Möhler and Khomiakov, in addition to Philaret.\(^\text{595}\) As Florovsky recognizes, the Church is an organic reality inasmuch as it is a body: “The Church is a body indeed, an organism, much more than a society or a corporation. And perhaps an ‘organism’ is the best modern rendering of the term to soma, as used by St. Paul.”\(^\text{596}\) Baker points out that Florovsky recognizes limitations to the organic metaphor as applied to the Church:

\(^{594}\) V6, 49, 149. Both Lossky, on the Orthodox side, and Tillard, on the Roman Catholic side, also criticize the term “development” for inaccurately describing the process of Tradition. (Lossky, “Tradition and Traditions,” 160; Tillard, 176)
\(^{595}\) V2, 200-202.
\(^{596}\) V1, 63.
that the unity implied in the corporate imagery needs to be held in tension with “the idea of [the Church as] a symphony of personalities.”\textsuperscript{597} The Church as the “Body of Christ” is, as Baker rightly qualifies, a “spiritual analogy.”\textsuperscript{598}

At the same time, however, Florovsky reminds us of the realism that the Fathers attached to the image of the Church as the Body of Christ. “It is,” he writes, “a real and ontological unity, the realization of a single organic life in Christ… The ancient fathers did not hesitate to speak of ‘natural’ and ‘physical’ union…”\textsuperscript{599} Admittedly, the organic imagery as applied to the Church suffers from the same limitations as all analogies that attempt to express divine realities. However, some of the characteristics that Florovsky attributes to the Church are also those of physical, organic bodies. And he very much saw the Church, in accordance with the Chalcedonian doctrine, as a theanthropic reality.

Florovsky recognized that the organic character of the Church as the Body of Christ has consequences for its theology. Thus, he attributes a living character to the theology of the Church. Shaw summarizes this recognition, quoting Florovsky: “As the Church is an organism, so its articulation of its pilgrimage, its theology and sense of unity, are ‘inner, intimate, organic.’”\textsuperscript{600} In \textit{Ways}, Florovsky attributes the truth of Soloviev’s theory of doctrinal development precisely to his “living sense of the sacred reality of history in the Church.”\textsuperscript{601} The living character of theology is cognizable in its bearing of “fruit”: “The Word of God is preserved in the human spirit as a seed which sprouts and brings forth fruit.”\textsuperscript{602} \textit{Pace} those Orthodox theologians who primarily

\textsuperscript{597} V1, 67.
\textsuperscript{598} Baker, “Neo-Patristic Synthesis,” 81, 165.
\textsuperscript{599} V13, 48.
\textsuperscript{600} Shaw, “Introduction,” 104; V1, 39, 63.
\textsuperscript{601} V6, 156.
\textsuperscript{602} V3, 26.
characterized dogmas as boundary markers and inadequate formulations of Christian experience, Florovsky regarded them as necessary fruits born by human reflection on revelation.603

Even more remarkable for a modern Orthodox theologian, Florovsky viewed a “system” as one of the fruits born by a living theology: “Revelation must unfold within human thought, must develop into an entire system of believing confession, into a system of religious perspective—one may say, into a system of religious philosophy and a philosophy of Revelation.”604 I say this is remarkable, for the dominant school of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century, in which Florovsky is usually included, generally considers the idea of theological systems as anathema. They are associated with the rationalizing character of the West, as especially embodied in the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and are considered to be the signs of a decadent theology.605

A word closely associated with “system” in Florovsky’s thought is “synthesis.”606 There have been some attempts to identify what Florovsky himself means when he uses the terms “system” and “synthesis.” Lewis Shaw describes it as the search for “the ‘code’ underlying the ‘ecclesial mind’ expressed in the Church’s literary classics,

603 Valliere uses the category “Neo-Patristic” to refer to theologians such as Florovsky, Lossky, and Meyendorff, among others, whom he views as promoting a traditional form of Orthodoxy that seeks to merely repeat the insights of the Fathers. Baker locates the distinction between the “Russian” and “Neo-Patristic” schools of Orthodox thought as originating with Schmemann. See Schmemann, “Russian Theology,” 190-191; Baker, “‘Neo-Patristic Synthesis,'” 8n11.

604 V3, 27.


606 On the close association, or equivocation, between “synthesis” and “system” in Florovsky’s thought, see Baker, “Theology Reasons.”
iconography and liturgy.” Baker, whose thesis is concerned with exegeting Florovsky’s understanding of “synthesis,” sees the term used by Florovsky in a twofold sense: as the entirety of the Church’s theological tradition, and as the summaries of the faith provided by individual Fathers addressing their particular contexts. I wish to add to this second sense. Florovsky seemed to understand a system, or synthesis, as an attempt by human reason, informed by faith, to order the truths of the experience of revelation into a unified whole. This ordering function is usually accomplished by assigning centrality to certain truths of the faith (such as Florovsky’s Christocentrism), or by describing these truths in a particular idiom (such as the Aristotelianism permeating Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*).

Baker’s thesis argues that Florovsky’s famed call for a “Neo-Patristic synthesis” must be considered precisely as a call to construct a new theological system appropriate for the modern context. Baker also points out that Florovsky did not believe this call was unique; rather, he believed that it was simply a general method for how theology should be done. “Orthodox theology…,” writes Florovsky, “must not only retain the experience of the Fathers, but moreover develop it while discovering it, and use it in order to create a living work.” This method was the same one he saw supported by Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development, though he was critical of Soloviev for

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608 Baker, “Neo-Patristic Synthesis,” 37. Later in his thesis, Baker points out that Florovsky also applied the term “synthesis” to the contemporary hermeneutical appropriation of the patristic syntheses, in addition to his desired ecumenical reintegration of Tradition.
609 It is a commonplace to clarify that Florovsky never attempted to create a system (Shaw, *Introduction*, 88). In this omission, he perhaps saw himself as emulating his master, Philaret, about whose lack of a system Florovsky remarks in *Ways*, 208, 217. Florovsky realized that his writings tended to have an *ad hoc* character to them, as being responses to a particular need or issue that arose. George Williams is wrong, however, in holding that Florovsky had “a logical distrust of all systems” (“Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 106).
610 V4, 200.
attempting to construct a synthesis based on non-ecclesiastical experience. In sum, the creation of systems—a process that cannot reach perfection on this side of the *eschaton*—is for Florovsky the sign of a living faith, a manifestation of the Church’s nature as an organism. It is a sign of a faith that is truly engaging with Christian experience in all its fullness, which “is only gradually discerned, dissected, and described in necessary definitions.”

The organic character of the Church as the Body of Christ has other consequences for its history. Growth is a sign of a body’s life, and thus, as Florovsky acknowledged, “the truth of the [New Testament] is revealed and vindicated by the growth of the Body.” George Williams qualifies that Florovsky’s opposition to organismic readings of history was in part an opposition—shared with the French philosopher Charles Renouvier (1815-1903)—to “theories of inevitable progress in history” that failed to account for human acts in the historical process. That qualification aside, Florovsky believed that history was indeed characterized by progress. In fact, he believed that the concept of history as a “sacred process” was a revealed truth: “Our modern concept of the *linear time*, with a sense of direction or vectorality, with the possibility of progression and achievement of new things, has been derived from the Bible and the Biblical conception of history.” What is more, Florovsky considered the view that history did not exhibit progress as one of the principle marks of Hellenism: “there was no room for

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611 V6, 85, 159.
612 V6, 159.
613 V1, 26.
615 V2, 25-26, 130.
any progress, but only for ‘re-volutions,’ re-circulation, *cyclophoria* and *anacyclosis.*

Because Florovsky viewed most Christian heresies as returns to a pre-Christian Hellenism, he was particularly attuned to this unprogressive view of history in many of the past and present threats to Christian orthodoxy.

But of which realms of the Church’s history can one predicate this progress? For one, Florovsky believed it characterized the Church’s theological work. My contention that Florovsky considered the Church’s unfolding of revelation to be progressive throughout time will seem erroneous to those who have associated his call for a Neo-patristic synthesis with a derisive attitude toward all post-Patristic theologies. Florovsky exalts the Fathers for the model they provided us for our own performance of theology, namely, an “existential theology.” But he certainly did not countenance a “theology of repetition” that merely preserved the Patristic theology in a pristine state, nor did he believe that the content of Patristic theology reached an apex that theology could not possibly improve upon. Instead, he held that Tradition is not so much a safeguarding and conservative principle, as a progressive and adducible one—the beginning of life, renewal, and growth.

Again, Florovsky did not believe Christians today can know more than the Church Fathers in terms of having a greater experience of the truth. However, he did believe that the Church’s theology in each age “testifies of greater things.” “In its definitions,” he writes, “it always unchangeably describes the same thing, but in the

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616 V2, 56. See also V4, 69.
617 For example, Florovsky criticized Protestantism of viewing “the history of Christian [as] a history of decline, of fall” (V12, 39). He also perceived a cyclical view of history in Idealism: “Hegel rejects the progressing infinity as something ‘bad’ and tries to present the world as a complete whole” (V12, 26; see also V12, 33).
618 V1, 110, 111.
619 V3, 194-195.
unchanged image ever new features become visible."\textsuperscript{620} The Church’s faith today is the same as yesterday, "but now, as it were, properly and fully articulated."\textsuperscript{621} Thus, Florovsky did not believe theology today had progressed beyond the theology of the Fathers in terms of quality or method, but he did believe it had progressed inasmuch as more aspects of Christian experience had been articulated through reason. As I showed above, Lossky and Louth deny theology even this kind of progress.

To repeat, Florovsky held that theology was intimately connected with one’s participation in God, or, with one’s growth in holiness. To once again play upon the phrase of Augustine, one may ascribe this belief to Florovsky’s doctrine of the \textit{totus homo}, which takes into account the interconnectivity of faith, or experience, and reason. Lossky did not wish to make the leap from what is true for the individual to what is true for the Body: he did not wish to claim that what takes place in a person’s life of faith—where growth in holiness is attended by growth in knowledge—also takes place at the corporate level. In opposing the idea of doctrinal development, he allowed that “this knowledge of the Truth in the Tradition thus will be able to increase in a person, in company with his increase in sanctification (Col 1:10): a Christian will be more perfect in knowledge at the age of his spiritual maturity.” But then he asks, “Would one dare to speak, against all the evidence, of a collective progress in the knowledge of the Christian mystery, a progress which would be due to a ‘dogmatic development’ of the Church?”\textsuperscript{622}

\textsuperscript{620} V1, 49.
\textsuperscript{621} V1, 107. See also Florovsky, “Types of Historical Interpretation,” 95: “A knowledge of the past is always richer than the ‘past itself,’ because it is a renewed experience of the past, as a living tradition and its appropriating and clarifying interpretation.” This article originally appeared in Russian in 1925.
\textsuperscript{622} Lossky, “Tradition and Traditions,” 162. Behind Lossky’s use of the phrase “against all the evidence” is his belief that the history of the Church has been marked by a decline in the quality of theology since the Patristic era. He writes, with not merely a twinge of sarcasm, “Would this development have started in ‘gospel infancy’ to end today—after a ‘patristic youth’ and a ‘scholastic maturity’—in the sad senility of the manuals of theology?” It is interesting to note here that, in spite of Lossky’s persistent emphasis on
Does Florovsky make this leap? Does he claim that the Church, the Body of Christ, progressively grows in holiness throughout history in a parallel fashion to its theological growth? The answer is yes, because he takes seriously the reality of the Church as the Body of Christ, as the *totus Christus*. According to Florovsky, it is not only the deification of individuals that is taking place in history, but the deification of the Church, as well. History now is the history of the completion of the Body of Christ. In one of his most impassioned pieces of writing—the concluding chapter to *Ways*—Florovsky describes the history of the Church “as the ‘process of God-manhood,’ as a departure from time into grace-filled eternity—the formation and creation of the body of Christ.”

Thus, because Florovsky affirms that the Body of Christ is continually growing, is progressively being deified according to the pattern of Christ’s own life, and because he believes this deification is inseparable from the Church’s dogmatic profession, it follows that he would hold that the Church’s growth in theological understanding is inseparable from its growth in holiness. Indeed, he directly makes the connection in his essay “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Revelation”: “The fullness of Revelation is assimilated by the Church in the measure of its spiritual growth. And this gradualness in the profession of faith is connected with the dynamic growth of Church existence, with the process of vital salvation, sanctification, and transfiguration.”

It is important to ask whether or not Florovsky would also allow for a regression in the Church’s growth, both in the understanding of doctrine and in its holiness. Both

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623 V6, 296. I refer to this conclusion as one of Florovsky’s “most impassioned pieces of writing” because he wrote all forty pages of it in one sitting, and it remains in its unedited form (See Blane, 53).

624 Staniloae shares this belief with Florovsky, namely, that the development of doctrine is connected with the progress of the Church, and all humankind, in its participation in Christ. See Staniloae, “The Orthodox Conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine.”

Staniloae and Jean-Marie Tillard believe that the theory of the development of doctrine must leave room for such regress. Staniloae recognizes that “Humanity as a whole, and Christian humanity in particular, has its halts and setbacks in the course of history. There are many temporary deviations on to wrong roads, dark sides in this journey towards the light.”\(^{626}\) Interestingly, both Staniloae and Tillard connect their postulation of regresses in the Church’s development of doctrine with their qualification of the organic metaphor. Thus, Staniloae writes, “We are dealing here not with an organic, but with a spiritual level.”\(^{627}\) Tillard qualifies the organic metaphor as follows:

But this concrete existence shows that the condition of this truth is not that of a seed led by its inner force toward an always more perfect development. It is the condition of a transcendent reality, delivered once for all (ephapax) with its whole richness (its *katholou*) in the *kairos* of Christ Jesus, always re-received in the *communion* of all the local churches of God, remaining the same in its inner perfection (its *katholou*) but expressed in the complex and constantly changing situation of humanity, sometimes advancing, sometimes regressing.\(^{628}\)

In allowing for the possibility of regressions in the Church’s development of doctrine, both Staniloae and Tillard are concerned with leaving room for human freedom in the historical process. Florovsky of course shares this concern, which is why he prefers the historical model of “epigenesis.” This model seems to allow for possible regressions in the Church’s development of doctrine and its progressive participation in the life of Christ. Florovsky’s Christological theandrisim implies that there must be an overall growth and progression in the history of the Church, but between these “leaps” there may very well be perceptible ebbs in the doctrinal and spiritual life of the Church.\(^{629}\)

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\(^{626}\) Staniloae, “The Orthodox Conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine,” 660.

\(^{627}\) Ibid., 661.

\(^{628}\) Tillard, 185.

\(^{629}\) See also Staniloae, “The Orthodox Conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine,” 660: “It is only in its major outlines that the spiritual path of mankind, with the aid of God, records an advance.”
Florovsky regards the “pseudomorphosis” of Russian theological thought as one of these ebbs. He contends that the pseudomorphosis brought about through Russia’s rash appropriation of Western categories of thought was a schism in the Russian soul between theology and experience—between the tradition of liturgy, prayer, worship, or, the Russian people’s life in Christ, and the rational expression of that life. According to Florovsky, Russia’s pseudomorphosis was especially embodied in, and brought about by, the Romanizing tendencies of Peter Mogila (1596-1646) and the Protestant and secularizing reforms of Czar Peter I (1672-1725). Florovsky regarded “a creative return to Patristic foundations and sources”—a return already signaled by Philaret—as the only way to combat this pseudomorphosis. In other words, Florovsky regarded a Neo-patristic synthesis resulting from both rational and ascetical activity as the antidote.

Consistent with the concerns of Staniloae and Tillard, Florovsky considered Russian theology’s pseudomorphosis to be a regression in its tradition because it was not indicative of a free human response to revelation. The post-Reformation Russian response to Western theology was not, according to Florovsky, one that proceeded from the depths of its experience as informed by the wealth of its patristic and Byzantine forebears. Such would have constituted a free and dialogical engagement with Western ideas and categories. Instead, the Russian response to Western theology bore the marks of a hasty adoption and a servile imitation. As a result, writes Florovsky, “no true

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630 V4, 167, 178.
631 V5, 64-85, 114-161.
encounter with the West has yet taken place. That could only happen in the freedom and equality of love.”

Contrary to the claims of some modern Orthodox authors, Florovsky’s diagnosis of pseudomorphosis was not a call for a reestablishment of Orthodox isolationism. Quite the contrary, in fact, for Florovsky believed that “a complete break with the West does not give a true and authentic liberation.” It was instead a call for a free encounter with the West, from which a true synthesis may come about. In fact, the call for a true synthesis was at the same time a call for true “development” to come about. “Did not the rupture with the eastern part result in the grafting on of an alien and artificial tradition which would inevitably block the path of creative development?” asks Florovsky. Through a Neo-patristic synthesis, Florovsky hopes that the Russian Church will once again return to a theological path in organic continuity with Byzantinism and the Patristic age. Such a path leads to freedom, to synthesis, and to development.

Given Florovsky’s emphasis on human beings’ creative activity—which is able to effect changes in history toward the achievement of creation’s telos—one might well conclude with Rowan Williams that there is “a rather voluntaristic flavor to some of his writings.” However, Williams is among a number of commentators on Florovsky, including Baker, who do not balance Florovsky’s critique of organic readings of history.

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633 V6, 300-301.
634 Examples of this interpretation include: Gallaher, “‘Waiting for the Barbarians’”; Pavel Gavrilyuk, “О полемическом использовании категории «запад» в православном богословии на примере неопатристического синтеза прот. Георгия Флоровского,” delivered at St. Tikhon's University, Moscow, Sept. 4, 2009; Dorothea Wendebourg, “‘Pseudo-morphosis.’” All of these references come from Baker, “‘Neo-Patristic Synthesis,’” 134n430, 431.
635 V4, 181.
636 V5, 74.
637 V4, 174; V5, xvii.
638 Rowan Williams, “Eastern Orthodox Theology,” in The Modern Theologians, 166. See also Shaw, “Philosophical Evolution,” 239.
with a treatment of the role he assigns to Providence in history. True enough, against interpretations of history that relegate men and women to a position of passivity, Florovsky wished to accentuate that the ascetic activity (podvig) of human beings does truly contribute to the achievement of history’s end. But he was also clear that God retains an active role in the historical process in guiding his creation “toward the accomplishment of His ultimate purpose,” which is the predetermined end of the completion of the Body of Christ. Though Baker unfortunately left Florovsky’s understanding of Providence unexplored, he makes clear elsewhere in his thesis that Florovsky ultimately understood the historical process as a synergy between God’s grace and human freedom.

This same idea of synergy pervades Florovsky’s understanding of theology. In history, God guides the Church toward a greater knowledge of His revelation. How this knowledge unfolds, however, is in part the result of the various persons, events, thoughts, and contexts that make up the historical matrix. Interestingly, Florovsky recognizes that one’s ascription to the doctrine of Providence is intimately connected with the idea of doctrinal development. Among his critiques of the opponents of Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development is the following: “It is precisely divine assistance that is not a thread in the historical fabric.” Florovsky characterizes Soloviev’s opponents as regarding theology and ecumenical councils as purely human affairs that served a purely negative purpose, namely, the putting down of heresies that threatened

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639 V3, 244.
641 V6, 158.
the true interpretation of Christian revelation. Florovsky regarded such extreme
voluntarism, like exaggerated apophaticism, as also fatal to theology.642

In conclusion, Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition represents a faithful
synthesis of Orthodox thought on the subject. Inspired by the Church Fathers, he
attempts to elaborate a doctrine of Tradition that is Christocentric, and thus, Chalcedonic,
leaving room for the operation of both the human and divine in the transmission of
revelation. In its Christocentrism, Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition is also
pneumatological, ecclesiological, and eschatological. Like his other Orthodox
contemporaries, Florovsky’s understanding of Tradition is also indebted to the heritage of
Slavophilism, which manifests itself, for better or worse, in his inclusion of all aspects of
the Church’s life in the concept of Tradition.

Yet, Florovsky also parts ways with some of his Orthodox contemporaries on
aspects of Tradition. Most strikingly, he assigns a more positive role to reason and
theology within the domain of Tradition. He does not believe that men and women are
called to merely preserve revelation in an apophasic experience, begrudgingly
formulating this experience in propositions only when heresy forces the issue. Rather, he
believes propositional formulation is one of the expressions of the theological vocation of
all men and women of the Church, who are called to apply their reason to the experience

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642 Though Florovsky acknowledged the role of Divine Providence in history, I must lend some credence to
Emil Brunner’s perceptive critique of Florovsky: “I for my part would conjecture a certain Hegelianism in
him, paying too little attention to the diabolical traces in the course of history” (Emil Brunner, “Reply to
344). Though I agree with George Williams that Brunner’s charge of Hegelianism in Florovsky is
superficial, I agree with Brunner that Florovsky fails to account for the role of angelic beings in the
historical process (Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 93-94). The significance he accords the
free actions of God and man on history is accompanied by a reticence about those other creatures
possessing free will who also affect history for good or ill. Granted, Florovsky’s opposition to apocalyptic
excess is valid. And his caution about attempting to detect the “hand of Providence” in actual history is
applicable to the influence of angelic beings on history, as well (V2, 65). But a thoroughly Christian
history should be not only Christological and anthropological, but also angelological.

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of revelation in order to grow in their understanding of the latter. What is more, he believes that this growth in understanding is intimately connected with the building up of the Body of Christ. In the Dialogue section, I will attempt to answer whether or not this understanding of theology amounts to an acceptance of doctrinal development as Newman understands it.

2.3: Dialogue

I begin this dialogue section by returning to the question of Florovsky’s apparently inconsistent position on the development of doctrine. His rejections of doctrinal development provide a convenient framework for this section of Chapter Two. As I have already shown, his tendency was to reject the idea of doctrinal development. Yet, in Ways, Florovsky explicitly endorses doctrinal development and at the same time criticizes those who reject the idea. In addition, positive references to “development” are scattered throughout his writings, leaving one wondering whether he does indeed believe development is the pattern of the Church’s doctrinal history. How, then, is one to negotiate these seemingly contradictory positions?

In searching for an answer to this question, one must begin by simply acknowledging that Florovsky’s assessments of dogmatic development are confused, and often cryptic. He never at any point directly defines what he understands dogmatic development to mean. His opinions on the matter are situated in general essays on revelation and the Church, and lack sustained attention. With the exception of Soloviev’s
understanding of dogmatic development, he does not indicate in his writings an in-depth knowledge of particular treatments of the subject.\textsuperscript{643}

Florovsky’s objections to dogmatic development appear in large part to involve terminological issues. That is, Florovsky seemed to be operating with a very particular understanding of the phrase “dogmatic development” that conditioned his reaction against it. Indeed, I believe that terminological issues are one of the principal factors operative in the Orthodox reaction against doctrinal development in the twentieth, and the now the twenty-first, century. It is often the case that the Orthodox understandings of the term “doctrinal development” do not correspond to the principles of Newman’s theory of doctrinal development, which has been received by Christian scholars as the representative theory.

A number of modern Orthodox theologians have rejected doctrinal development under the guise that it would allow for new revelation, or a development of Tradition itself. Such is the understanding of doctrinal development provided by Paul Valliere in Modern Russian Theology, and the one he portrays as true to an Orthodoxy unafraid of engagement with the modern world. He describes the point of contention with Orthodox theology today as follows: “The issue concerns that which is added to the foundation. Does it involve substantive additions and new discoveries, or does it simply entail new ways of expressing, articulating or defining that which the church has always known and preached?”\textsuperscript{644} Those Orthodox who oppose doctrinal development on the supposition that it hypothesizes changes to the substance of revelation include John Behr, who writes

\textsuperscript{643} As I indicated in the Introduction to this dissertation, Florovsky clearly had knowledge of Newman’s works. In fact, all his citations of Newman indicate that a favorable attitude toward him. However, Florovsky never cites Newman’s Essay on Development. I have since discovered that former students of Florovsky heard him speak positively of Newman’s theory of development.

\textsuperscript{644} Valliere, Modern Russian Theology, 376.
that “from an Orthodox perspective there is no such thing as dogmatic development,” for “a tradition with potential for growth ultimately undermines the Gospel itself; it would leave open the possibility for further revelation, and therefore the Gospel would no longer be sure and certain.” Florovsky, however, does not appear to interpret doctrinal development as making the claim that Tradition itself develops. In his mentions of doctrinal development he indeed clarifies that dogmatic definition does not amount to new revelation, but it does not constitute part of his rejection of the idea of doctrinal development. And of course, as I have already established, Newman does not claim that doctrinal development implies the development of revelation or Tradition.

Matthew Baker argues that Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development was principally a function of his rejection of organismic readings of history. Baker’s argument is clearly dependent upon George Williams’ position that “Florovsky formally rejects the idea of ‘the development of dogmas’ in the course of Church history; but this must be understood in the specialized sense which the word ‘development’ (*entwicklung*) has long since acquired in his systematic rejection of organismic views of ecclesiastical history.” Both Baker and Williams take Florovsky’s essay “Evolution und Epigenesis” (1930) as the lens through which they evaluate Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development. They argue (Baker in considerably more detail) that Florovsky’s opposition to *entwicklung* (“development”) as a historical model—which represented for Florovsky a model that failed to take into account free divine and human actions as

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645 Behr, “Scripture, the Gospel, and Orthodoxy,” 247, 248.
646 See also Florovsky’s comment in *Ways* II on the debates on dogmatic development at the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Meetings (1901-1903): “It was noted in the debates that ‘development’ does not mean ‘fundamental change,’ although this was not clear to everyone” (V6, 255).
647 G. Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 99-100.
affecting the historical process—colored his attitude toward the theory of doctrinal development.

Florovsky’s latest mention of doctrinal development in his *oeuvre* supports Baker’s and Williams’ contention. In his 1961 essay “The Quest for Christian Unity and the Orthodox Church,” Florovsky at one point attempts to navigate between both excessively static and excessively dynamic views of Tradition. With the advent of historical consciousness in the modern era, Florovsky expressly approves that a more dynamic understanding of Church history has come to predominate, which included acceptance of the idea of development. But, he laments,

> when the pattern of “development” was finally adopted in the interpretation of Church history, it came to be used without adequate discrimination and without proper attention to the nature of the Church. “Development” was often equated with “evolution” or was interpreted in the terms of Hegelian philosophy, and in all cases it was regarded as something exclusively “human” and “all too Human,” and for that reason inextricably relative.\(^{648}\)

Once again, Florovsky does not name any specific perpetrators of this type of view of doctrinal development—one might hypothesize that he has in mind Möhler and the Tubingen school, whose theology was formed in dialogue with Idealism, and who viewed the history of dogma as a dialectical process.\(^{649}\) Nevertheless, this passage clearly shows Florovsky’s concern lest the Church’s doctrinal history be viewed in a biologistic sense.

However, neither Baker nor Williams directly address what Florovsky ostensibly reacts against in his other mentions of doctrinal development, namely, the idea of “logical development.” Logical theories of development were first explicated in the Counter-Reformation and Baroque eras, and were employed in the works of Luis de Molina

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\(^{648}\) V13, 141-142.  
(1535-1600), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), and John de Lugo (1583-1660), among others. Advocates of logical development in the twentieth century included the Dominicans Francisco Marin-Sola (1873-1932) and Marcolinus Maria Tuyaerts (1878-1948), and the Jesuit Charles Boyer (1884-1980).\textsuperscript{650} Employing a number of distinctions such as the “explicitly” versus the “implicitly” revealed, or the “formally” versus the “virtually” revealed, logical theories implied that Tradition can be said to “develop” only inasmuch as the Church comes to name an aspect of revelation through a syllogistic process involving already acknowledged premises. Thus, for instance, the Roman Catholic Church could be said to “conclude” the dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception from the already acknowledged (revealed) truths that Jesus was without Original Sin, and that Original Sin is transferred through generation.\textsuperscript{651}

Florovsky’s rejection of logical forms of development is the catena linking his earlier rejections of dogmatic development in “The House of the Father” (1927), “Revelation, Philosophy and Theology” (1931), and “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Revelation” (1932), with his later rejection in “Le Corps du Christ vivant” (1948). One must recall that Florovsky understood theology as reasoning from the fullness of Christian experience, and that this reasoning must always stay rooted in this experience if it is to remain a true theology. I have already pointed out Florovsky’s approval of Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development. Interestingly, Florovsky also

\textsuperscript{650} These authors’ major works on doctrinal development are, respectively: M.M. Tuyaerts, O.P., \textit{L’Évolution du dogme. Étude théologique} (Louvain, 1919); Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P., \textit{L’Évolution homogène du dogme chrétien} (Fribourg, 1924); and Charles Boyer’s articles, “Qu’est-ce que la théologie?” Réflexions sur une controverse,” \textit{Gregorianum} XXI (1946), “Relazione tra il progresso filosofico, teologico, dogmatico,” \textit{Gregorianum} 33 (1952): 168-182, and “Lo sviluppo del dogma,” in \textit{Problemi e orientamenti di teologia dogmatica} (Milan 1957), 359-380. The Boyer references are from Nichols, \textit{From Newman to Congar}, 185n9, 12.

\textsuperscript{651} For a summary of logical theories of development, see Chadwick, \textit{From Bossuet to Newman}, 21-48, and Walgrave, \textit{Unfolding Revelation}, 135-178. For a critique of the theory of development employed by these latter two authors, see de Lubac, “The Problem of the Development of Dogma.”
approves of an understanding of doctrinal development he perceives in Khomiakov 
precisely because it preserves the inseparability of theology and experience. Florovsky 
portrays Khomiakov’s view of development as forged in the latter’s debate with his 
fellow Slavophile Iurii (Yuri) Samarin. Khomiakov criticized Samarin for supporting a 
Hegelian view of “ecclesiastical-dogmatic development” that “made too sharp a 
distinction between… the Church as the life of the sacraments (and he admitted no 
development of this aspect), and the Church as a school… and for “erect[ing] a firm 
border between reason and faith.”

On the contrary, Florovsky writes that Khomiakov operates from an “organic 
point of view” that “predicate[s]… an original wholeness.” More specifically, 
Khomiakov saw the Church as a living organism “of truth and love”: one that affirmed 
the unity of reason and experience. According to Florovsky, “the entire uniqueness of 
Khomiakov’s doctrine on the development of the Church is rooted in [the following] 
statement”: “The mystery of life and its inner sources are inaccessible to science and 
belong only to love.” In spite of Khomiakov’s proneness to exaggeration, this 
statement contains the important truth that the Church’s theology can never be divorced 
from its experience, or, its life. In an aphorism that acts as a fitting complement to 
Philaret’s maxim that “theology reasons,” Florovsky quotes Khomiakov’s reminder that, 
in the Church, “teaching lives and life teaches.”

Florovsky considers that those who promote logical development assume that 
theology and experience can be separated. Thus, he quotes Khomiakov as saying, “The

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652 V6, 49-50.  
653 V6, 49.  
654 V6, 53.  
655 V6, 51.  
656 V6, 49.
decision of the Church flows out of an inner sense proceeding from God, and not from logical argumentation.”

He also notes that “Khomiakov hesitated to acknowledge dogmatic terminology as self-sufficient and adequate outside of experience, that is, as a demonstrative exposition.” Thus, Florovsky rejects a logical understanding of dogmatic development because he sees it as implying that dogmas, once defined, have become separable from Christian experience and are accessible to further development by reason irrespective of one’s faith. Such a view is in contradistinction to both Florovsky’s and Khomiakov’s view of theology as a necessarily existential and living endeavor.

Furthermore, Florovsky rejects logical development because he believes it imposes a mathematical model of knowledge onto theology. One might say that such an imposition results in the “pseudomorphosis” of a truly Christian theology. If one is in search of a lens through which to view Florovsky’s rejection of dogmatic development, it is his 1924 essay “On the Substantiation of Logical Relativism.”

“When a geometer,” Florovsky writes, “ascribes ‘truthfulness to any theorem… in essence he is asserting only that the given proposition flows with logical necessity from the series of preceding ones, from axioms and theorems.” In other words, the geometer, or the logician, creates a conceptual construct or system based upon laws derived from nature considered in the abstract, and all subsequent occurrences of necessity conform to these laws. “Dogmas,” on the other hand, writes Florovsky in “Le Corps,” “are not theoretical axioms from which one can deduce new theorems. A dogma is precisely a witness, a rational sketch of

\[657\] V6, 51.
\[658\] V6, 52.
\[659\] V12, 143-169.
\[660\] V12, 142.
a mystery of the faith.”661 Its formulation is not a conclusion flowing from necessity, but is an interpretation “based on a particular, immediate, living relation to what occurs on [the Church’s] direct understanding of the experience.”662

Florovsky’s rejection of a logical understanding of doctrinal development is also related to his view of the adequacy of dogmatic language. Again, he emphasized the ability of human words to adequately express truth: an ability he believes is rooted in the human possession of the imago Dei. He characterized the dogmas of the Church as adequate expressions, or “witnesses,” of certain aspects of the Christian experience of revelation. They are, as it were, termini of the Christian process of reasoning that cannot be “developed” into more improved expressions in the future. Thus, Florovsky rejects the possibility that the dogmatic formulas surrounding the Trinity, the hypostatic union, or the essence-energies distinction are replaceable, or can yield to greater truths through a process of deduction: “As strange as it may appear, one can indeed say: dogmas arise, dogmas are established, but they do not develop. And once established, a dogma is perennial and already an immutable ‘rule of faith’ ["regula fidei;" ho kanón tis pisteós].”663 In other words, Florovsky rejects the idea that there is a process of development going on within the defined dogma, or truth of Christian experience, itself.

It is likely that Florovsky had in mind modern theories of logical development in his rejections of doctrinal development. Though Newman’s theory is today considered synonymous with doctrinal development, it was not so with the Neo-scholastic, Roman Catholic theology of the first half of the twentieth century. Then it was logical theories of development—articulated, in part, against modernist theories of doctrine—that were

662 Florovsky, “Types of Historical Interpretation,” 93.
663 V3, 30.
considered as faithfully representing a Catholic understanding of how new doctrines are defined.\textsuperscript{664} It was in this climate that Florovsky wrote on doctrinal development, and there is some evidence that he knew the works of the above-mentioned advocates of logical development.\textsuperscript{665}

My pointing out of Florovsky’s objections to logical development is intended to act as a complement to Baker’s and Williams’ argument that Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development was a rejection of evolutionary and deterministic historical theories. Indeed, Florovsky’s reservations about predominantly logical epistemologies are intimately connected with his theology of history. To repeat, the idea that growth in theological understanding comes about solely through a syllogistic process implies the separation of theology and experience. For Florovsky, of course, the Church’s experience originates in the historical events of revelation, and is further constituted by the Church’s creative reception of revelation in thought and deed throughout history. Theology, according to Florovsky, is conducted “from the living experience of the Church.”\textsuperscript{666} In logic, however, “time stands still,” as knowledge comes about through an \textit{exitus} of abstraction from historical events and persons without a corresponding

\textsuperscript{664} Thus, Owen Chadwick referred to Marin-Sola’s \textit{L’Évolution homogène du dogme chrétien} (1924) as “the most able, and perhaps the most influential thesis upon the theory of development written during the twentieth century” (\textit{From Bossuet to Newman}, 204n2).

\textsuperscript{665} I need to thank Matthew Baker for doing some detective work on this issue. Baker has pointed out to me that Florovsky was personally acquainted with Boyer, and that both were at the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly. Also, Florovsky’s 1948 essay “\textit{Le Corps du Christ vivant}” illustrates that he was reading Henri de Lubac around that time. Earlier that year, de Lubac had published an essay entitled “\textit{Le problème du développement du dogme}” (\textit{Recherches de science religieuse} 35 [1948]: 130-160) in which he had criticized modern theories of logical development (and specifically that of Boyer) on the basis of Newman’s principles of development. And, while at Harvard in the early 1960s, Florovsky directed a dissertation by John Gunther entitled \textit{Papal Views on Authority and Doctrinal Development}, in which Gunther refers to Marin-Sola and Johann Franzelin. (Florovsky had pointed Gunther toward Franzelin in his corrections of Gunther’s dissertation abstract.) Finally, Florovsky’s 1968 talk, “The Patterns of Historical Interpretation,” shows that he knew of Chadwick’s \textit{From Bossuet to Newman}, in which the latter discusses logical development.

\textsuperscript{666} V6, 137.
A theory of knowledge as a purely logical system means “the thought process... is exclusively ‘substantial,’ and everything follows modo aeterno, purely logically, through immanent movement. There is no place for acts or heroic ‘feats.’”

Men and women are subsumed within this system, and thus, their actions are in no way constitutive of their knowledge. Ironically, Florovsky regards logical theories of doctrinal development, then, as implying that there is no development in history.

But Newman’s theory is certainly not a theory of logical development in which new dogmatic formulations come about through a syllogistic process. In fact, it is quite the opposite, which causes Chadwick to comment: “For centuries Catholic theologians had explained doctrinal development by the use of logical inference. Yet the Christian public now associates the idea of development with a thinker whose suspicion of Dr. Hampden or the Reverend Charles Kingsley was as nothing compared with his distrust of the syllogism.” Walgrave effectively distinguishes Newman’s theory of development from logical theories, while at the same time explaining the place of logic within it:

Development of doctrine, then is a continuous organic process of life by which the realizing faith of the Church expands itself into intellectual consciousness under the guidance of its illative sense, which is itself guided by the all-penetrating presence of the Holy Spirit... Such a development is to be distinguished from an application of logical devices to a set of original propositions. The process uses reason but largely goes beyond it. There are spontaneous processes in it that later will be found to be in accordance with the rules of formal logic. For ‘we think in logic as we talk in prose.’ But the process as a whole cannot be described in terms of verbal logic, and some movements in it may seem incongruous for a time but will be corrected afterward. ‘Nor do those enunciations become logical, because theologians afterwards can reduce them to

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667 V12, 33.
668 V12, 90.
669 V12, 33, 87.
their relations to other doctrines or give them a position in the general system of theology.\textsuperscript{671}

Newman himself directly distinguishes his theory of the development of doctrine from mathematical and logical deduction in the \textit{Essay on Development}.\textsuperscript{672} However, his \textit{Grammar of Assent}, which many view as a continuation of his theory of doctrinal development, is a \textit{tour de force} against the assumption that the human thought process operates in a purely logical manner. Indeed, on the title page of the \textit{Grammar}, Newman cited a phrase of St. Ambrose: \textit{“Non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum”—“It is not by logic that it has pleased God to save His people.”}\textsuperscript{673} In the \textit{Grammar}, Newman elaborates his view of knowledge as a personal and historical process in which an interplay between the real and the notional continually takes place. This view of knowledge as both personal and historical is a shared first principle between Newman and Florovsky.

In \textit{“Le Corps du Christ vivant,”} Florovsky endorses the essence of Newman’s theory of development in the same breath in which he condemns logical development:

\begin{quote}
The truth is in effect given in its entirety at once. But the apprehension of the truth is progressive. That which develops in the ages of Christian existence is not the truth itself, but the witness of the Church… The witness of the Church becomes more explicit with time, or is transmitted in a new vocabulary, but it is always a witness of the same reality.\textsuperscript{674}
\end{quote}

While endorsing such an understanding of development in relation to revelation, however, Florovsky rejects “dogmatic development” because he believes “the term is

\textsuperscript{672} See Section II of Chapter 1, “On the Kinds of Development in Ideas,” in \textit{Dev.}, 41-54.
\textsuperscript{673} The phrase comes from Ambrose’s \textit{De Fide ad Gratianum Augustum}. For Newman’s understanding of this phrase, and his attitude toward logic, see also \textit{G.A.}, 158-159.
\textsuperscript{674} Florovsky, \textit{“Le Corps du Christ vivant,”} 45.
contradictory.” The difference between Newman and Florovsky’s understandings of development is thus principally terminological.675

Ironically, the only form of development Lossky appears to endorse is logical development. Thus, Lossky writes that “one can speak of dogmatic development only in a very limited sense: in formulating a new dogma the Church takes as her point of departure already existing dogmas, which constitute a rule of faith that she has in common with her adversaries.” He then goes on to describe this process: “Thus, the dogma of Chalcedon makes use of that of Nicaea and speaks of the Son consubstantial with the Father in His divinity, to say afterwards that He is also consubstantial with us in His humanity…” Lossky also claims that the dogma of Christ’s two wills at the Third Council of Constantinople (681) logically followed upon Chalcedon’s determination that Christ possessed two natures, and that Palamas’ essence-energies distinction follows upon III Constantinople.676 Florovsky would of course agree that past dogmas help frame the Church’s approach to new questions or contexts, but he would maintain that the “departure” point is always the experience and life of the Church, which is “mystically more primary” and “broader and fuller than definitions.”677

Florovsky’s insistence on the irreplaceability of dogmatic definitions does not constitute sufficient grounds on which to reject Newman’s theory of doctrinal

675 Others who have taken issue with the term “dogmatic development” include Lossky, who describes it as “ambiguous” (“Tradition and Traditions,” 160), and Tillard, who prefers the term “unfolding” to “development” for reasons in harmony with Newman’s and Florovsky’s concerns: “But ‘development is usually associated with the idea of progress, of stepping forward to increase the precision of former steps. ‘Unfolding’ means only the spreading out or unfurling of a rich reality that is already fully realized. Thanks to this operation it is evident that the knowledge people have of this reality is increased even when the reality itself does not necessarily change. This is why we believe that the idea of unfolding is more in harmony with the nature of Christian truth than the idea of development as it is usually defined” (“Dogmatic Development and Koinonia,” 176).
677 V13, 71, 75.
development, but it is a worthy dialogical point. Newman does not seem to entertain the notion that the development of the Christian idea could result in a dogmatic formulation eventually being replaced in favor of an improved formulation. As Lash points out, a two-stage process of development emerges from Newman’s writings: “The first stage is the development from implicit awareness to explicit articulation in a body of doctrine. The second stage is the further elaboration and expansion of that body of doctrine.”

Thus, once an aspect of the Christian idea is formulated in an explicit dogmatic statement, the only future development Newman sees it undergoing is a deepened understanding of it in the minds of men and women. Indeed, Lash, who advocates for the possibility of either altering or sometimes eradicating certain dogmatic formulations, accuses Newman of “betray[ing] an inadequate appreciation of [doctrines’] historically conditioned nature” by “regarding their crystallisation in dogmatic statements as the term of a process of ‘metaphysical development.’”

One might also point to Newman’s famed “seven notes” of an authentic development in establishing that he did not believe such development could result in the replacement of a dogmatic definition. “I venture to set down,” writes Newman, “seven Notes of varying cogency, independence and applicability, to discriminate healthy developments of an idea from its state of corruption and decay.” These “notes” constitute criteria by which one may judge historically, though not with certainty, whether or not a proposed development is, in fact, a development or a corruption. The “notes” are: 1) preservation of type: that a true doctrinal development maintains a

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678 Lash, Newman on Development, 78.
679 Ibid. “Metaphysical development” is the term Newman uses in the Essay on Development to refer to “a mere analysis of the idea contemplated, [which] terminate[s] in its exact and complete delineation” (Dev., 52). Dogmatic developments thus constitute this type of development.
680 Dev., 171.
recognizable unity with the Christian idea; 2) continuity of principles: that a development is consistent with those principles discernible in the Christian idea (such as the incarnational principle); 3) power of assimilation: a development demonstrates its truth by its ability to be exposed to other ideas without fear of corruption; 4) logical sequence: that one can retrospectively discern that a development conforms with the proper rules of reason, without holding that the development came about through strict logical procedures; 5) anticipation of its future: that one can retrospectively discern earlier historical evidence of what was later to be deemed a development; 6) conservative action upon its past: that a true development does not reverse, but protects, the course of doctrine that proceeded it; and 7) chronic vigour: that a true development will stand the test of time, whereas a corruption exhibits a process of decay.\footnote{On these notes and Newman’s application of them to the Church’s doctrinal history, see Dev., 169-445; Gerard McCarren, “Are Newman’s ‘Tests’ or ‘Notes’ of Genuine Doctrinal Development Useful Today?” Newman Studies Journal 2 (Fall 2004): 48-61. I should point out that Newman’s fourth note of “Logical Sequence” does not conflict with his position against a logical understanding of doctrinal development. He is here using “logic” in a general sense to refer to “the organization of thought,” or, reasonableness. As applied to a newly formulated dogma or doctrine, Newman would apply the note of logical sequence to determine whether or not it conflicted with accepted principles of Christianity. He does directly address the hypothetical question of whether this note implies a logical understanding of development as follows: “The question indeed may be asked whether a development can be other in any case than a logical operation; but, if by this is meant a conscious reasoning from premisses to conclusion, of course the answer must be in the negative” (Dev., 189).} Taken together, these “notes” seem to point to the conclusion that Newman did not believe the Church could overthrow or reverse a previously defined doctrine either in its wording or its meaning.

But Newman did not provide a positive theological defense of why the dogmatic formulation of an aspect of the Christian idea constituted a term in the process of development, and what would prevent its replacement in the future. Plus, his persistent stress on the inadequacy of dogmatic language leaves his theory open to the suggestion that it allows for such replacements. Rowan Williams has used Newman’s stress on the
inadequacy of dogmatic formulations, and Newman’s view that these formulations are merely the necessary and unfortunate residue of the Church’s response to heresy, to argue for a “doctrinal ecology” in which “doctrinal definition is [considered]… itself a response to narrowing over-definition… and is itself open to potential critique in the name of a better sense of doctrinal ecology.”\[682\]

It is perhaps no coincidence that Williams, who advocates for a doctrinal ecology, is an astute commentator on Eastern Orthodox theology. Indeed, he wrote his dissertation on Vladimir Lossky, whose understanding of apophaticism is still representative in Orthodox theology today.\[683\] Williams and Lossky share a predominantly negative attitude toward dogmatic formulation. Neither Lossky, nor the overwhelming majority of Orthodox theologians today, would advocate for the replacement of the dogmatic formulations of the past. Nevertheless, the seeds of a doctrinal relativism are present in an exaggerated apophaticism, and even though other strengths of Orthodoxy (such as its emphases on Liturgy and asceticism, and its commitment to the patristic tradition) may keep these seeds from sprouting into outright relativism, they may nevertheless sprout in other ways. Indeed, I maintain that they have sprouted and manifested themselves in a negative attitude toward theology among many Orthodox.

Florovsky’s emphasis on the ability of human thought to convey divine truth constitutes a positive response to such negative attitudes toward dogmatic formulation—one that does not merely rely on recourse to authority. He roots this ability in human beings’ creation in the image of God and redemption accomplished in Christ.

\[682\] R. Williams, “Newman’s Arians,” 285. Williams does admit that his conception of a doctrinal ecology involves “go[ing] well beyond Newman.”

\[683\] R. Williams, “The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky: An Exposition and Critique.”
Admittedly, Florovsky does not develop this connection between the *imago Dei*, redemption, and human language in his later writings. However, it certainly underlies his persistent defense of the Hellenistic categories in which Christianity was first expressed, in addition to his qualification that theologians must be careful about exaggerating the economic character of revelation.

Florovsky’s estimation of dogmatic language was not purely cataphatic, as he acknowledged the apophatic character of theology. Unlike others, however, Florovsky better held in tension the cataphatic and apophatic elements of theology, as he did not use the divine ineffability as an excuse for denigrating the cataphatic. In holding these in tension, Florovsky illustrates an incarnational dogmatic theology. The principle operative in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity is that human flesh can be made to communicate the divine to men and women. This same principle is operative in Florovsky’s affirmation that dogma is able to convey the truths of Christian experience. Both the over-qualification of human dogmatic formulations in an exaggerated apophaticism, and the relativizing of dogmatic formulations under the assumption that they are replaceable, ends up denigrating that which is human.

In conclusion, Florovsky’s concern that dogmas be acknowledged as “eternal and inviolable ‘rule[s] of faith’” does not necessitate a rejection of Newman’s theory of doctrinal development. In fact, it represents a development of an aspect of Newman’s theory that Newman himself did not take into account. While Newman affirmed that dogmatic formulations represented the terms of the process of development, he did not consistently emphasize the adequacy of these formulations. Such an emphasis is a *sine qua non* of the judgment that development has taken place, for such a judgment assumes

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a non-relativistic valuation of human language. It also protects developments that have been defined from one day being deemed the opposite, namely, regressions in the Church’s understanding of revelation.

Newman’s use of the organic metaphor in describing doctrinal development also would not constitute grounds for Florovsky’s rejection of Newman’s theory. As I have explained, Florovsky’s rejection of certain applications of the organic metaphor to history was not equivalent to a whole scale rejection of that metaphor. What he rejected was a biologistic conception of creation that viewed history as the pre-determined and necessary evolution of creation irrespective of the free choices of persons. But such is not the only application of the organic metaphor to history. Florovsky’s writings illustrate his consistent recourse to a biblically and patristically-inspired organic view of history, namely, history as the completion of the Body of Christ. He regards this completion as a synergetic process that is composed of both divine and human actions. Significantly, he includes the work of theology among the human actions that contribute to the completion of the Body of Christ, thus assigning an organic character to theology, as well.

Again, Florovsky understood theology as the application of human reason to the Christian experience of revelation—as the gradual disclosure and profession of that which the Church possesses in its fullness. George Williams, seemingly aware of the various understandings of the idea of doctrinal development, qualifies Florovsky’s rejection of doctrinal development as follows: “Insofar as the Church is for him in fact a supernatural organism as a congeries of redeemed persons, he obviously acknowledges, indeed works continuously with, the idea of development in the sense of renewal,

\[\text{685 V3, 35.}\]
clarification, and exfoliation…"\(^686\) As I have shown, Florovsky believed theology’s unfolding of Christian experience manifested itself in organic results such as “growth” in the Church’s understanding of this experience, in addition to “fruits” such as dogmas and systems. These latter fruits spring from both the need for a free human response and witness to God’s revelation, in addition to the human epistemological need for the rational elaboration of faith.\(^687\) Once again, Newman regards doctrinal development as the unfolding of the idea of Christianity in the minds and hearts of men and women. This process of unfolding is manifested in, among others things, dogmatic definitions, which are then ordered into a system.

I submit that what Florovsky regards as theology is essentially what Newman regards as doctrinal development: it is the unfolding of the Christian idea in the mind of the Church. It is therefore unsurprising that Florovsky commends Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development for “establish[ing] a method for dogmatic theology.”\(^688\) I wrote above that Florovsky’s call for a Neo-patristic synthesis was simply a call to return to a proper method of theology—one that did not merely repeat the answers of the Fathers, but existentially and rationally appropriated them. Because Florovsky equated theology with doctrinal development, and because he equated a Neo-patristic synthesis with theology, it is also therefore unsurprising that he equated a Neo-patristic synthesis with doctrinal development. He writes,

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\text{This call to “go back” to the Fathers can be easily misunderstood. It does not mean a return to the letter of old patristic documents. To follow in the steps of the Fathers does not mean “jurare in verba magistri.” What is really meant and}
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\(^686\) G. Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 100.
\(^688\) V6, 159.
required is not a blind or servile imitation and repetitions but rather a further development of this patristic teaching, but homogeneous and congenial.  

Florovsky then goes on to quote Newman in support of this call for a theology that creatively appropriates and develops the work of the Fathers: “As Cardinal Newman said on one occasion: ‘The Fathers are our teachers but not our confessors or casuists; they are the prophets of great things, not the spiritual directors of individuals.’” It would be a stretch to assign any constructive role to Newman’s work in Florovsky’s call for a Neo-patristic synthesis. However, Florovsky’s association here of Neo-patristic synthesis, development, and Newman perhaps shows that he viewed Newman’s theory of development as harmonious with that call for a Neo-patristic synthesis that has been so influential in modern Orthodoxy.

Newman’s principal purpose in using the organic metaphor in the Essay on Development was to argue that the growth exhibited by organisms analogously pointed toward the Church’s growth in its understanding of the Christian idea. Florovsky, as I have shown, does not disagree with this basic and essential idea that the Church grows in its understanding of the Christian idea, or, revelation. That said, I believe that Florovsky’s particular organic understanding of Church history has the potential to give a greater theological grounding to Newman’s theory of development. It would be wrong to claim that Newman’s theory needs “baptism,” since it is already written within the Christian tradition, and its object is the doctrinal history of that tradition. In addition, Newman shows a concern with establishing that development is a process illustrated not only in nature, but also revelation.

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689 Florovsky, “Patristics and Modern Theology,” 240.
690 Ess., 2: 371. Florovsky also quotes this passage in his 1937 “Ways of Russian Theology” essay (V4, 191), showing his even earlier connection of Newman and his work with a creative appropriation of the Fathers.
Pushing the sacramental analogy, however, one might claim that Newman’s theory could use “chrismation”—that is, a further garbing in the theological language of the Church. Newman was a controversialist and an apologist. His immediate purpose in positing the theory of doctrinal development was to argue for the probability of such development: that it is reasonable to believe that “new” doctrines would arise as a result of the Church’s growth in the understanding of revelation. The impetus behind this purpose was the Protestant charge that certain Roman Catholic doctrines were corruptions since there was no definitive evidence of their having been held by the early Church. Having argued for the probability of developments, Newman did not concern himself with the full theological implications of his theory.

Later commentators on Newman’s theory of doctrinal development have also not yet explored many of its theological implications. Instead, the process of its reception has been mainly historical, confined to the attempt to determine whether or not the history of Christian doctrine justifies it. The theological treatment of it has principally involved establishing whether or not it expresses an orthodox view of revelation, Tradition, and the Spirit’s guidance of the Church. This dialogue with Florovsky provides an opportunity for doctrinal development to further pass through the sieve of Christian Hellenism.

Florovsky’s emphasis on askesis offers an important critique of Newman’s organic view of the epistemology of development. Newman held that the notional development of an idea was an inevitable result of the nature of human reason, which judges, classifies, and abstracts when confronted with an object. This development, writes Newman, “is not an effect of wishing and resolving, or of forced enthusiasm, or of
any mechanism of reasoning, or of any mere subtlety of intellect; but comes of its own innate power of expansion within the mind in its season, though with the use of reflection and argument and original thought…" 691  

Newman’s qualification at the end of this statement is instructive, for though he assigned a place for human action in the process of development, his emphasis was on development as a function of nature rather than will.

Florovsky opposed any understanding of history that did not adequately accord a role for human action and freedom. Thus, he would also oppose any understanding of theology, or, doctrinal development, that did not incorporate human freedom in the Church’s growth in the understanding of revelation. He accordingly would not regard the doctrinal developments of the Church as mere inevitabilities of time and changed circumstance. Nor would he regard them solely as necessities flowing from the nature of human reason. Instead, he would regard them as results of human ascetical activity, as well.

Such an ascetical understanding of doctrinal development is in continuity with the principles of Newman’s theology. Though Newman did not have a developed theology of personhood (from which Florovsky’s ascetical emphasis springs), he affirmed the ability of human beings to contribute to their salvation through their actions as attested to by his recommendation of the practices of prayer, fasting, and watchfulness in his Anglican sermons. Perhaps Newman would have better clarified the role of human freedom in a later edition of the Essay on Development if not for his conformity to Roman Catholic custom upon his acceptance into its fold. In Newman’s understanding, the Roman Catholic Church considered ascetical speculations to be the purview of trained theologians, which Newman was not. He therefore confined himself to both preaching

691 Dev., 74.
and practicing the ascetical disciplines officially recommended by the Church. By his own admission in 1857 Newman said, “I have not written on dogmatics or asceticism since I have been a Catholic, and I suppose never shall—because I gave up private judgment when I became one.”

The ascetical corrective provided by Florovsky enables Newman’s theory of doctrinal development to be not only descriptive, but prescriptive. Doctrinal development describes not only the history of the Church thus far, but what that history should be. The prescriptive character of doctrinal development follows from the views that such development is consonant with human beings’ creation in the *imago Dei* and their redemption in Christ. God’s revelation is not merely to be passively received and preserved by men and women; rather, revelation is given in order they may creatively appropriate it through their reason and faith. This appropriation results not only in defined dogmas, but in other creative expressions that make up the life of the Church. The theory of doctrinal development is thus a theology of history, and the history of the Church is theology. The ascetic activity of the Church, as exercised in Christian rationality, testifies that “the future is more truly and profoundly revealed when seen as an obligation rather than as an expectation and premonition. The future is not merely something exacted or awaited—it is something created.”

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693 V6, 308. It would be interesting to put Florovsky’s theology of history in dialogue with Ratzinger, who maintains that “The human attitude which corresponds appropriately to the relation of the risen Lord to the time of the world is not the working out of a philosophy or theology of history but rather ‘watchfulness’” (*Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Dogmatic Theology, vol. 9, 2nd ed. [Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1988], 195). The truth probably lies in a synthesis of these two perspectives. Frances Young’s position elaborated in her well-known article, “A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology” (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971): 103-114), might perhaps provide a mediatory role. In this article, she
Florovsky’s belief that theology is an integral part of the growth of the Church, the Body of Christ, also offers potential for the development of Newman’s theory, as well as a critique of certain Orthodox understandings of theology today. In Florovsky’s assessment, “Dogmatics and asceticism are organically and inseparably brought together in the system of St. Maximus.” For Maximus, men’s and women’s *askesis* is ordered toward deification. Florovsky interprets Maximus as holding that knowledge is an integral part of men’s and women’s deification, and thus, the deification of the Church and all creation. Florovsky writes, “And knowledge is man’s reply, man’s response. Cognition of nature as God’s creation has its own special religious significance. In contemplation the soul is pacified—but contemplation itself is possible through *apatheia*. A new motive is creatively introduced into the harmony of the cosmos.” According to both Maximus and Florovsky, then, the priestly and prophetic offices are interrelated: the work of theology is part of men’s and women’s sanctification of the world. In *Ways*, Florovsky quoted Archpriest I. Slobodskoi as saying, “The development of dogmas is nothing other than the development of our whole life, of man himself, in the image of Christ.” Because Florovsky also regards men and women as microcosms of the Church, he holds that, inasmuch as dogmatic development involves the development of men and women into the image of Christ, it also describes the development of the life of the entire Church. In other words, he holds that dogmatic development—the Church’s addresses modern reproaches of the Alexandrian school of theology, which accuse it of not assigning any significant salvific role to Christ’s human nature. She answers these reproaches by pointing out that the Church Fathers regarded human receptivity to the divine as a form of activity.

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694 V9, 222.
695 V6, 256.
growth in the understanding of revelation—is ordered toward, and inseparable from, the Church’s growth as the Body of Christ. ⁶⁹⁶

Florovsky saw the separation of dogmatics and asceticism, in addition to their conflation, as one of the main indicators of the decline of modern Russian theology. “In any event,” he writes, “one cannot substitute asceticism for dogmatics, and neither can one dissolve dogmatics in asceticism. Such a temptation is always an indication of a theological decline.”⁶⁹⁷ Florovsky perceived this temptation in those who rejected the idea of doctrinal development. He cautioned that its rejection was the precursor to, if not the indicator of, relativism and the reduction of religion to morality. What is more, informed by the Maximian cosmology, he implies that the rejection of doctrinal development introduces a division into the totus Christus inasmuch as it does not give any meaningful role to rational activity in the building up of the Body of Christ and the deification of the world.⁶⁹⁸

In order to be fair to those Orthodox whose rejections of doctrinal development have received the most attention in this dissertation—Lossky and Louth—I do not think that either of them would directly claim that theology plays no role in one’s deification.

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⁶⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that Florovsky’s description of the origin of the “Body of Christ” imagery also serves as a description of the process of doctrinal development: “One Body, the excellent analogy so emphatically used by St. Paul when describing the mystery of the Christian existence, is the best witness to the intimate experience of the early Church. There is no special theory here. The analogy is born of a living experience. It grew in the Christian mind from the sacramental experience of Baptism as an incorporation, and of the Eucharist as a mystery of community” (V13, 81). Furthermore, this passage wonderfully illustrates that the Church’s sacramental life acts as a “mode” of doctrinal development. See also Florovsky’s description of Maximus’ speculation about the motive of the Incarnation: “The nature of the Incarnation, of this union of the Divine majesty with human frailty, is indeed an unfathomable mystery, but we can at least grasp the reason and the purpose of this supreme mystery, its logos and skopos. And this original reason, or the ultimate purpose, was, in the opinion of St. Maximus, precisely the Incarnation itself and then our own incorporation into the Body of the Incarnate One” (V3, 168).

⁶⁹⁷ V6, 214.

⁶⁹⁸ V13, 72-73: “Both understanding and acceptance of the tradition is closely connected with the faith and the physicality of the immutable beneficial presence of the Lord in the Church… Denial of the significance of tradition is in essence a denial of the Church as the Body of Christ, is insensitivity, denigration and nonacceptance of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.”
Nor do I think they desire that human categories of thought be done away with in favor of experience. Their rejection of doctrinal development appears to be largely a result of their lack of familiarity with the theory itself (at least in the case of Lossky), in addition to a reaction against Western rationalism. But ideas have consequences, and the negative attitudes toward theology in which their rejections of doctrinal development are couched are indicative of anti-intellectualistic tendencies present among some Orthodox today. As Florovsky demonstrates, the proper response to rationalism is not the rejection of reason, but the cultivation of Christian rationality.

I have already pointed out that the mutual interpenetration Newman attributed to the relationship between real and notional knowledge offers the potential to posit a closer link between doctrinal development and the spiritual growth of the Church (assuming the difference for now). Though Newman maintained that doctrinal development was of the notional realm, he also maintained that the notional affects the real. In the *Grammar of Assent*, he limited his discussion to the purifying effect that the notional has on the real. That is, he regarded the notional work of theology as preventing religion from falling into the errors of superstition and devotional excess. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the notional could have more than a preventative role to serve in its relation with religion. Religion, as represented by the real, aims at the growth in its members’ relationship with God. This growth is expressed by Roman Catholics and Orthodox alike as a growth in

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699 Louth is clearly well-versed in Newman’s theology, and thus, the theory of doctrinal development. In addition to his articles on Newman I have already referenced, one should note that he devotes the conclusion of his *Discerning the Mystery* (132-147) to praising Newman’s understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, and thus, his understanding of theology. Therefore, his more recent, cursory treatments of Newman’s theory of development (such as his dismissive statement in the foreword to John Behr’s *Formation of Christian Theology* series: “Orthodox theologians ought to have more problems with [the idea of the development of doctrine], a fruity of Romanticism, popularized by Cardinal Newman, than they often seem to” [Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001), xii.] are puzzling, to say the least.
the participation in God, or, deification. If the notional continually helps maintain the integrity of religion, and if religion is ordered toward participation in God, it follows that the notional work of theology has a contributive role to play in deification.

However, the idea that doctrinal development is connected with the spiritual growth of the Church is in more direct harmony with the principles of Newman’s theology. Newman’s reading of the Eastern Fathers led him to characterize the goal of the Christian life as deification. Though now an opponent of Newman’s theory of development, Andrew Louth argues that deification was the central theme of Newman’s 1838 Lectures on Justification. As too was the case with the Fathers, Newman’s path to his emphasis on deification was through Christology. C. Stephen Dessain, in his essay on “Cardinal Newman and the Eastern Tradition,” expresses the connection between deification and the Christological dogmas well: “One of the reasons why the Greek Fathers of the fourth century defended so firmly the divinity of Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit, was the connection of these truths with the divinization, the deification of the Christian.”

Benjamin King shows that Newman’s Christology did not remain stagnant during his Anglican years, but underwent considerable development. Certainly, as King argues, Newman’s study of the early Church’s Christological controversies and the struggle for appropriate theological language provided him with a model of the doctrinal development that is ever taking place in the Church. Yet, it is also likely that Newman’s Christological reflections contributed to his formulation of the theory of doctrinal development. More

700 King, 130.
specifically, Christ’s deification of human nature, and subsequently all creation, acts as a pattern for the development of doctrine. Newman held that the entire life of Christ constituted the progressive deification of human nature.\textsuperscript{702} As especially instanced in Lk 2:52—“and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and men”—Newman held that this process included the deification of the human intellect. What is more, Newman affirmed that Christ would accomplish within each of us the progressive deification he accomplished through his Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection: “Christ Himself vouchsafes to repeat in each of us in figure and mystery all that He did and suffered in the flesh.”\textsuperscript{703} Our progressive deification, modeled after Christ’s deification of human nature, also includes the deification of our intellect. King notes that “Newman followed Origen in making the resurrected Christ his intellectual pattern of life.”\textsuperscript{704}

There is an interesting, and perhaps unmistakable, parallel when one considers Newman’s understanding of revelation and deification in the light of development. Newman asserts that revelation has been given in its fullness, but one can grow in his or her understanding of it over the course of time. So also, Newman holds that deification (or justification) has been achieved in its fullness through the salvific actions of Christ, but the individual Christian can grow in his or her participation in God:

The fact that we are the temple of God does not admit of more or less; such words have no meaning when applied to it… But when we compare the various orders of just and acceptable beings with one another, we see that though they all are in God’s favour, some may be more ‘pleasant,’ ‘acceptable,’ ‘righteous,’ than others, and may have more of the light of God’s countenance shed on them; as a glorified Saint is more acceptable than one still in the flesh.\textsuperscript{705}

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\textsuperscript{702} P.S., 2: 32.
\textsuperscript{703} P.S., 5: 139.
\textsuperscript{704} King, 148.
\textsuperscript{705} Jfc., 151-152.
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The Orthodox theologian George Dragas also sees this connection between Newman’s principle of development and the deification of the Christian:

Newman developed catholically and believed in catholic development. He was concerned with human development in God’s grace, rather than the development of abstract forms… [M]ankind is given in the pentecostal gift the ability to participate in [the resurrection] and taste its powers so that it may transform the old history and proceed through death to the pleroma of the resurrection. Christians are catholics in via, in development and growth. They seek to integrate themselves with the whole world, because they know that all belongs to Him who makes, redeems from sin and gives the gift of eternal and blessed life. Christians know that He is constantly coming to make them whole in His wholeness and integrate the world with catholicity. This is what Newman has bequeathed to the modern Roman Church and through her to all the Christian churches everywhere—the catholic truth of the Risen Lord with all its implications for Christian life and growth in history.706

Dragas here interprets Newman’s work as affirming the truth that men and women are microcosms—that the development that happens within Christian men and women helps bring about the transformation of the world. The deification of the Christian, which includes the deification of the intellect, also serves as a microcosm of the progressive deification of the Church. As Newman writes, “[T]he heart of every Christian ought to represent in miniature the Catholic Church, since one Spirit makes both the whole Church and every member of it to be His Temple.”707 A number of commentators on Newman have observed that he believed doctrinal development to represent not only a development of the minds of individual Christians, but also a development of the “mind of the Church.” Because Newman regarded the development of the mind as part of the process of deification, and because he held that doctrinal development represented a development in the mind of the entire Church, it follows that a correlation between

707 S.D., 132.
doctrinal development and the deification of the Church is consistent with the principles of Newman’s theology.

Framing Newman’s theory of doctrinal development in terms of the Church’s growth as the Body of Christ perhaps provides a solution to the query about whether or not doctrinal development corresponds to the growth of the Church in holiness. Newman scholars have struggled with this question, and have more often than not rejected the link, because they seem to be operating with a predominantly voluntaristic notion of holiness. One would search in vain for historical proof that the Church has cumulatively developed in such holiness. But holiness belongs to the Church primarily as a result of its status as the Body of Christ which is permeated by the Holy Spirit. It is primarily an ontological, rather than a moral, characteristic. Florovsky rightly maintains that “[h]oliness comes from the Holy One, i.e. only from God. To be holy for a man means to share the Divine Life. Holiness is available to individuals only in the community, or rather in the ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit.’”708 As one of Newman’s sermon titles puts it, “Righteousness [is] not of us, but in us.”709 Certainly the actions of the members of the Church contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ, but the Divine Actor is also at work in ways that cannot be measured. Because knowledge is intrinsic to deification, one can safely affirm that doctrinal development contributes to the Church’s growth in holiness, even if such growth is often imperceptible. Such an affirmation is theological, if not always empirical.

708 V1, 62.
709 P.S., 5: 128-142.
It is interesting to note that Dessain, who has written on the Eastern character of Newman’s theology, sees a parallel between Newman and Florovsky precisely in regard to their Christocentric conceptions of the Church:

Newman held to what he had learned from the Fathers, in spite of the predominant opinion of the theologians and those in high places at the time. It is only when Newman’s view of the Church as a communion and not merely an institution is recognized, as it has been in *Lumen Gentium*, the Decree on the Church at the Second Vatican Council, that the way is properly prepared for the complete reunion of East and West. Newman’s teaching and that of one of the most authoritative of the modern exponents of Orthodox ecclesiology, Father George Florovsky, seem to be in entire agreement in this matter. Khomiakoff and the doctrine of Sobornost treat the Church *only* as a communion and base ecclesiology too exclusively on the Holy Spirit, just as at times the Latins have based it too exclusively on Christ and the authority he conferred. Surely the genuine and traditional ecclesiology is that in which Newman and Florovsky agree, which tries to be faithful to the actual plan of salvation, in which the work of the Holy Spirit in forming the Church derives from the work of Christ. He gives the Spirit, and our life in him results from the gift of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{710}

Dessain’s statement about the identity between Newman’s and Florovsky’s ecclesiology certainly needs qualification, and his estimations about the ecumenical potential of communion ecclesiology are perhaps a bit grandiose. However, contained within his statement is also a truth, namely, that Newman and Florovsky both viewed the Church as one because it is the Body of Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Church is also one in its eschatological goal, namely, its participation in the divine nature. All the activity of the Church—including its theological activity—if it is meaningful, is ordered toward the accomplishment of this goal.

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that Florovsky could only accept the idea of doctrinal development if it displayed the characteristics of a truly Orthodox understanding of Tradition: if it was Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological.

As I have shown, these characteristics are indeed implicit in Newman’s understanding of

doctrinal development. He simply did not have the wherewithal, or opportunity, to make them explicit during his lifetime. In *Unfolding Revelation*, Walgrave provides a taxonomy of theories of doctrinal development in the Church’s history, categorizing them as either “logical,” “transformistic,” or “theological.” He designates Newman’s theory as a “theological theory of development.” It is my hope that further dialogue with Florovsky and Eastern Orthodox theology will help Newman’s theory to realize this designation.

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CHAPTER THREE: NEWMAN AND FLOROVSKY ON THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY IN DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

Inevitably, it seems that all roads of ecumenical investigation lead in some way to that “greatest obstacle” to ecumenical reunion: the papacy. It is no different with an Orthodox-Catholic dialogue on the concept of doctrinal development. I have thus far argued that Newman and Florovsky share many similar emphases in their respective understandings of revelation and Tradition, and thus, that the understanding of revelation and Tradition operative in Newman’s theory of development is harmonious with the Orthodox understanding of the same. Furthermore, I have shown that Florovsky accepted the idea of doctrinal development, and that his objections to it were not directed toward the principles of Newman’s theory.

However, there remains the question of whether or not Newman’s theory of development is inextricably bound to a particular, Roman Catholic conception of authority embodied in the papacy. In the Essay on Development, Newman maintains that admission of the principle of doctrinal development leads to the further admission that “an infallible developing authority [is] to be expected.” As one might expect, Newman’s description of the characteristics belonging to this infallible authority resemble those the Roman Catholic Church locates in the pope and the Magisterium. Shortly after the publication of the Essay, Anglican critics such as James Mozley and Frederick Maurice saw Newman’s understanding of authority as central to his idea of doctrinal development. Mozley went so far as to write, “The doctrine of the Papal Infallibility comes out as the
keystone of Mr. Newman’s whole argument, and according as he proves, or fails to prove, that doctrine, that argument stands or falls.\textsuperscript{712}

The Orthodox theologian Andrew Louth also makes this charge in his aforementioned essay, “Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category for Orthodox Theology?” He holds that Newman’s theory of development “involves at least three specific senses, or connotations or entailments” that dovetail with each other. These three “senses” are as follows: one, Newman’s use of the organic metaphor to claim that the Church actually grows, or develops, in its understanding of revelation; two, that the occurrence of these developments is unpredictable; and three, that the unpredictability of these developments requires a clearly-recognized infallible authority who has the power to judge what constitutes a development and what does not.\textsuperscript{713}

Louth’s charge on this third point—that Newman’s theory requires an infallible authority—is worth quoting in full, for it provides a fitting summary of the issue at the heart of this chapter:

Newman’s idea of development entails an infallible teaching office to adjudicate. Here Newman abandons his reliance on the organic model. For him, there needs to be some definite way of distinguishing authentic development from corruption. Newman is no longer prepared to stick to his organic metaphor, and makes it clear that recognition of authentic development ultimately needs an unquestioned and unquestionable authority, such as developed in the teaching office of the see of St Peter (though there is a certain circularity in the argument here, as the development of the teaching office of the pope is an example of development).

These three specific points are linked. The organic idea opens up the notion of development, taking it beyond mere logical development; this is emphasized in the second point, which makes a great deal (particularly in the examples Newman


\textsuperscript{713} Louth, “Is Development of Doctrine a Valid Category?” 49-52.
gives from church history) of the way in which these developments could hardly have been predicted; which opens the way for Newman’s final point, that an infallible teaching authority is necessary to distinguish authentic development from corruption. It is important to realize that this final point is essential for Newman. Discussions of development, often forgetting that this was where his argument was leading, simply recount the various tests he gave for distinguishing authentic development from corruption—Preservation of Type or Idea, Continuity of Principles, Power of Assimilation, Early Anticipation, Logical Sequence, Preservative Additions, and Chronic Continuance (to use the terminology of the first edition of the Essay). But these tests need to be applied, and Newman was not prepared to leave their application to scholars and theologians.  

Louth’s charge is significant for a couple of reasons. For one, Louth is an astute scholar of Newman. In an earlier work he wrote while still an Anglican—Discerning the Mystery—he even celebrated Newman for his “stress on performance, doing, act, [as] central to the understanding of the notion of faith.” This stress, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, is central to Newman’s and Florovsky’s understanding of doctrinal development. Thus, one cannot so easily chalk up Louth’s perception of a necessary link between doctrinal development and the particular Roman Catholic understanding of authority to a failure to thoroughly engage with the works of Newman, as is perhaps the case with other Orthodox authors. Louth has rightly recognized that “To understand Newman we must read lots, not just the great books, but sermons, essays, letters, and so on.”  

Two, Louth’s charge goes beyond a mere hermeneutics of suspicion that condemns doctrinal development because of guilt by association with the nineteenth-century ultramontane climate of the Roman Catholic Church from which it emerged. Undoubtedly that association is in the back of Louth’s mind, as is perhaps his knowledge.

714 Ibid., 51-52.
715 Louth, Discerning the Mystery, 137.
that Soloviev’s essay on dogmatic development was part of his larger volume—The History and Future of Theocracy—which attempted to justify a Christian theocracy with the pope as its head and center. Nevertheless, Louth confines himself to arguing that the Roman Catholic understanding of the papacy is intrinsic to Newman’s understanding of doctrinal development; that a centralized, infallible authority who can label some formulations of the Christian idea developments, and others perversions, is necessary if the theory of doctrinal development is to exist as anything more than a theory.

Florovsky clearly did not see such a necessary link between doctrinal development and the Roman Catholic understanding of authority. He notes the connection in Ways, but it does not dissuade him from perceiving doctrinal development as “a method for dogmatic theology” that affirmed human persons’ ascetical vocation to witness to revelation in thought and life. But, as I will show, Florovsky recognizes that the issue of authority is indeed intrinsic to the idea of doctrinal development. At the same time, he does not accept the Roman Catholic understanding of authority. Therefore, an examination of Florovsky on the relation between doctrinal development and authority provides an interesting counter to both Newman and Louth.

Much has been written on Newman and his views of authority and the papacy, necessitating that I establish some parameters for my discussion in this chapter. I will mostly deal with Newman’s views on infallibility. More specifically, I will explain why Newman believed an infallible authority was necessary to pronounce upon developments of doctrine. In the first two chapters I attempted to clarify the theological principles present in Newman’s understanding of revelation and Tradition that relate to doctrinal development. I will do the same in this chapter on Newman’s understanding of authority.

\[717\] V6, 155-156, 159.
Accordingly, I will show that the role Newman assigns to authority in the process of development conforms to his view of Christianity as an incarnational, historical, and living reality that retains a place for both divine and human activity. In so doing, I hope to offer a perspective on Newman’s understanding of authority that differs from previous historical surveys of his view of infallibility.718

As I will demonstrate, Florovsky also shows a concern that his understanding of authority conform to the Christocentric, or Chalcedonian, hermeneutic. He affirms that the hierarchy has a visible, concrete role in the process of doctrinal development. Yet he parts ways with Newman in holding that doctrinal developments require no further “enfleshment” through formal guarantees of their truth provided by authorities invested with infallibility. Instead, Florovsky holds that the very life intrinsic to the process of doctrinal development constitutes the only such guarantee of the truth of developments for each Christian person. In the Dialogue portion of this chapter, I will evaluate Newman’s and Florovsky’s views of authority and doctrinal development by the same Christological litmus test to which they subject themselves.

3.1: Newman on Doctrinal Development and Authority

A. Doctrinal Development and the Need for an Infallible Authority

Newman maintained that all the members of the Church participate in the process of doctrinal development. But he also maintained that there must be an authority that assists them in distinguishing true developments from false ones. Thus, Chapter 2,

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Section 2 of his *Essay on Development* is entitled “An Infallible Developing Authority to be Expected.” Newman’s language in this section is primarily apologetic, concerned with arguing that a divinely-bestowed authority is a consequence of a divinely-given revelation. Like the idea of doctrinal development, Newman’s argument for the need of such an authority temporarily served in the *Essay* as a “hypothesis… required by the facts of the case, and reconciling them with each other.” However, Newman’s theological convictions undergird his apologetics. In the paragraphs below, I will try to further clarify the theological themes that lead Newman to expect such an authority.

I established in Chapter One of this dissertation that Newman’s theory of doctrinal development followed from his particular understanding of the mode and character of revelation. So also, Newman believes the need for an authority in the process of development follows from the mode and character of revelation. He writes, “…[S]ome authority there must be if there is a revelation given, and other authority there is none but she. A revelation is not given, if there be no authority to decide what it is that is given.”

According to Newman, if developments of doctrine are to be expected, so is an authority that can guarantee that they are, in fact, developments. The admittance of doctrinal developments, he writes, leads to “the next question… *What* are they?” In order to answer this question, Newman holds that “some rule is necessary for arranging and authenticating these various expressions and results of Christian doctrine.” This rule, which he identifies with authority, is to have a dual function: one, it will serve to discriminate true from false developments; two, it will serve to discriminate the greater

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719 Dev., 30, 91.
720 Dev., 89-90
from the less, since “no one will maintain that all points of belief are of equal importance.” In summary, Newman writes, “If the developments… are to take place to any great extent, and without them it is difficult to see how Christianity can exist at all… surely an authority is necessary to impart decision to what is vague, and confidence to what is empirical, to ratify the successive steps of so elaborate a process, and to secure the validity of inferences which are to be made the premisses of more remote investigations.”

Newman not only holds that there must there be an authority to “ratify” developments of doctrine, but also that this authority must be infallible. He defines infallibility as “the power of deciding whether this, that, and a third, and any number of theological or ethical statements are true.” By an infallible authority, Newman writes, “we mean no more than that what he says is always true, always to be believed, always to be done.” According to Newman, the infallible character of the authority is a corollary of the infallible character of revelation. Just as revelation comes with “a profession of infallibility”—inasmuch as it comes from the divinely-infallible authority of God—so also it is probable that God would provide His Church with an infallible authority to guarantee the truth of those doctrines that Newman deemed “commensurate with revelation.”

As is still the case today, the idea of infallibility was misunderstood and much-maligned during Newman’s time. In response, he further explicated the notion of infallibility by clarifying what it was not, thereby illustrating some of the limits of

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721 Dev., 75, 77-78.
722 Dev., 78-79.
723 Dev., 81.
724 V.M., 1: xlvii.
infallibility. For instance, he distinguished the gift of infallibility from the inspiration enjoyed by the biblical authors. Newman characterized inspiration as “positive,” for it refers to the fact “that the Divine Inspirer… acted, not immediately on the books themselves, but through the men who wrote them.” He characterized infallibility, on the other hand, as “negative,” for it merely guarantees that the “out come” (the definition) of the process of doctrinal development was a true representation of revelation. “[A] definition,” he writes, “may be absolute truth, though the grounds suggested for it in the definition, the texts, the patristic authorities, the historical passages, are all mistakes.” Moreover, Avery Dulles points out that Newman did not consider infallibility to be “a distinct charism or infused gift…” Whereas inspiration was such a charism or gift, enabling the inspired authors to faithfully communicate divine revelation in cooperation with God’s guiding hand, infallibility does not dwell within any of the Church’s members; it is an occasional, external assistance.

Newman also distinguished infallibility from certitude, since these two concepts were often confused in religious controversy. “A certitude,” according to Newman, “is directed to this or that particular proposition; it is not a faculty or gift, but a disposition of mind relatively to a definite case which is before me.” It is an act of the mind that has arrived at a state of “peacefulness,” or, “of security and of repose” in its assent toward the truth of a proposition. Newman explains that this state of certitude follows a process of reasoning, in which a person has investigated the truth of a proposition through real and notional means. He famously referred to each person’s process of reasoning as the

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“Illative Sense,” and held that it is the responsibility of each man and woman to cultivate this process so that it reaches true certitudes.  

Newman sees an analogy between certitude and conscience in men and women, the former being the act of the “intellectual sanction” and the latter being the act of the “moral sanction.” Whereas one’s mind arrives at certitude after engaging in “examination and proof” about the truth of a particular proposition, one’s conscience arrives at a judgment of right conduct after examining what “hic et nunc is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.” According to Newman, “[Conscience] is the loud announcement of the principle of right in the details of conduct, as the sense of certitude is the clear witness of what is true.” He admits that the judgments of both certitude and conscience may be based on faulty reasoning. Nevertheless, Newman holds that one is bound to follow them as the supreme authorities in the realm of the particular.

“Infallibility, on the contrary, is just that which certitude is not; it is a faculty or gift, and relates, not to some one truth in particular, but to all possible propositions in a given subject-matter,” writes Newman. Whereas certitude is particular and directed to definite propositions, infallibility is general and encompasses numerous propositions—past, present, and future. Newman reasons that if persons are infallible, it means that

728 For Newman on the Illative Sense, see G.A., 270-299. Merrigan provides a helpful summary of what Newman means by the “Illative Sense”: “As Newman describes it, the illative sense is able, on the basis of a complex process of largely implicit reasoning involving the whole person, to discern the upshot of a series of converging probabilities, and to facilitate the mind’s unconditional assent to a proposition apprehended as an object of real experience” (Clear Heads, 229).
730 G.A., 190.
731 G.A., 183.
whatever they pronounce on propositions within a given sphere—assuming certain formal procedures are followed—will fall under the rubric of infallibility: “An infallible authority is certain in every particular case that may arise; but a man who is certain in some one definite case, is not on that account infallible.” According to Newman’s logic, if God has graced His Church with such an infallible authority, individual members of the Church may have certitude about the truth of all propositions within the sphere of dogma that the Church has proclaimed and will proclaim.

I have above generally sketched out why Newman believed that divine revelation and doctrinal development required an infallible authority. He saw that the particular mode and character of revelation required doctrinal development, but that not all of the members of the Church can be certain about which developments are true representations of revelation, nor can they be certain about the hierarchy of authentic developments. Therefore, an authority is needed who can infallibly guarantee the truth of doctrinal developments and their place within the larger system of Christian truth. But Newman’s argument raises questions: whence the need for such a guarantee? Why is it important that the members of the Church have certitude about doctrinal developments? And why is it necessary that an infallible authority supply this certitude through ratifying doctrinal developments?

Some commentators on Newman’s thought characterize the longing for certitude as a phenomenon peculiar to post-Reformation history. In “St. Augustine and the Modern World,” Erich Przywara describes the pathos of Western thought since the Reformation as a “terrified longing for assurance”: from Descartes’ belief that men and women can achieve subjective certitude in “clear and distinct ideas,” to Hegel’s

732 G.A., 184.
pantheistic identification of human thought with divine thought, to Kierkegaard’s abandonment of the search for certitude in favor of a fearful resignation to God in His absolute transcendence. More recently, in Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue, Mark Powell has proposed that the Roman Catholic definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I “represents the culmination of the desire for religious epistemic certainty that has characterized the West at least since the Reformation.”

Newman, however, understands men’s and women’s desire for certitude as a function of human nature. He writes, “It is the law of my mind to seal up the conclusions to which ratiocination has brought me, by that formal assent which I have called certitude.” He locates the activities of reason and conscience in the order of nature (not grace), and claims that reason is ordered toward a guarantee of the truth of its assents, just as conscience is ordered toward the rightness of its judgments. Faith, which for Newman is a function of reason, especially requires this certitude, since it is an assent to the truth of the Object whose existence grounds the existence of all other objects. “The human mind wishes to be rid of doubt in religion,” writes Newman. Indeed, a doubting faith is really an oxymoron for Newman. He understood the epistemological seal provided by certitude to be a condition of action, both in knowledge and in life. What he writes of notional knowledge may be appropriately applied to certitude: without it “we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge…”

734 Mark E. Powell, Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 3.
735 G.A., 186.
736 Mix., 151-152.
737 V.M., 1: 117; Dev., 88.
a state of skepticism.\textsuperscript{738} Skepticism does not admit the possibility of certitude, and is thus, for Newman, the enemy of action.\textsuperscript{739}

Newman believes that men and women are capable of reaching authentic certitude through their reason. However, he also believes that this ability has been considerably compromised by sin, which makes fitting the assistance of an infallible authority. “The initial doctrine of the infallible teacher must be an emphatic protest against the existing state of mankind,” writes Newman. He furthermore describes an infallible authority as that “suitable antagonist” that God has provided to combat “the intensity of the evil which has possession of mankind.”\textsuperscript{740}

Newman characterizes the particular evil of the human intellect as “rationalism,” and holds that it is this “giant evil” that an infallible authority in the Church was appointed to “master.”\textsuperscript{741} His working definition of rationalism is at the same time both broad and nuanced. He understands rationalism as the subjugation of truth to the standards of human reason, so as to even circumscribe the Source of Truth by human axioms and categories of thought. The one who subjugates all truth to human standards has an inability to admit mystery, which Newman regarded as a necessary attitude when the object of one’s thought is God and His revelation.\textsuperscript{742} In Newman’s understanding, the Christian who makes reason his ultimate standard fails to reason from his “real apprehension” of Christ and revelation, i.e., from the experience of the Church. Newman thus regards rationalism as a hermeneutical sin.

\textsuperscript{738} G.A., 47.
\textsuperscript{739} D.A., 295.
\textsuperscript{740} Apo., 218, 221.
\textsuperscript{741} Apo., 224.
\textsuperscript{742} Ess., 1: 31.
Because Newman lived in the Age of Reason, one could argue that he felt the effects of rationalism on the Church more so than past ages, which led him to offer an apology for an infallible authority to combat it. Such is Mark Powell’s aforementioned contention. Newman himself admits that “the absolute need of a spiritual supremacy is at present the strongest of arguments in favour of the fact of its supply.”

But Newman viewed the entirety of Christian history as a battle against rationalism, and the heretic as embodying a rationalist temper. His broad definition of rationalism acts as an effective counter against those who might dismiss this view of history as merely Newman’s creative projection of post-Enlightenment rationalism onto the past. Stephen Thomas points out that, “In The Arians of the Fourth Century, for the first time, there appears clearly enunciated, the analogy between heresy and the forces of Newman’s own time which he regarded as enemies of Church and Christianity.” With the Fathers, Newman “identifies rationalism as the intellectual origin of Arianism,” and takes up their charge that Aristotle was the “bishop” of the Arians. The rationalism of the Arians was most famously evidenced in their contention that, according to logical principles, a Son could in no way be co-eternal with a Father: that “there was a time when [the Son] was not.” Newman also writes of the Arians that “they did not admit into their theology the notion of mystery.”

The rationalism of the Arians serves for Newman as a type of other heresies that the Church has been forced to combat. Benjamin King gleans from Newman’s unpublished paper on the Apollinarian heresy that Apollinarius opposed Arianism “with

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743 Dev., 89.
745 Ath., 2: 44.
sophistry of his own, ignoring the Rule of Faith as much as any nineteenth-century rationalist.”746 In the Essay on Development, Newman writes of the Nestorian heresy that “Its spirit was rationalizing, and had the qualities which go with rationalism.”747 Similarly, the Monophysites displayed “an allowance of abstract reasoning, in other words, that is, maintenance of intellectually conceived first principles in a matter which was purely of faith.”748 Of the Eusebians Newman writes, “In this at least, throughout their changes, [they] are consistent—in their hatred of the Sacred Mystery.”749

Newman portrays Protestants, too, as rationalists. I have already described his charge, elaborated in Tract 73—“On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Revealed Religion”—that Protestants such as Richard Whately and Thomas Erskine arbitrarily made ethics the standard by which to judge the truth of doctrines (Chapter One, 27-28). Newman also saw the Protestant principle of sola scriptura as an example of rationalism, for it attempted to logically deduce doctrine from Scripture, thus using Scripture for a purpose for which it was not intended.750

In a footnote of his essay “Newman and the Modern World,” Christopher Dawson wrote that the last chapter of the Apologia “is essential to the understanding of Newman’s doctrine of development and of his philosophy of history.”751 The philosophy of history that emerges from this chapter of the Apologia is one in which Christ has provided his Church with an infallible authority that has repeatedly had to stem the tide of rationalism in the Church’s pursuit of knowledge and holiness. “What have been [this authority’s]...

746 King, 150. King is here referencing Newman’s article entitled “Apollinarianism,” which is contained in the Birmingham Oratory archives.
747 Dev., 316.
749 Ari., 272.
750 King, 18, 34-35.
great works?” Newman asks. “All of them in the distinct province of theology:—to put
down Arianism, Eutychianism, Pelagianism, Manichaeism, Lutheranism, Jansenism.
Such is the broad result of its action in the past…”⁷⁵² An infallible authority within the
Church, according to Newman, is “a supply for a need.” Newman primarily emphasizes
that this need is the result of original sin and the darkening of the human intellect.

However, Newman also seemed to regard an infallible authority as “a supply for a
need” rooted in human finitude.⁷⁵³ His attitude toward historical investigations of
developments of doctrine serves as evidence of this position. He was an advocate for
such investigations; after all, they constitute the bulk of his Essay on Development. But at
the same time, Newman cautioned readers that they should not “expect from History
more than History can furnish.”⁷⁵⁴ He did not believe that historical investigation was the
normative path to doctrinal certitude for most men and women. Such investigation into
the historical veracity of doctrines may guide them in their search for certitude, but are
more often than not the “instruments rather than warrants of right decisions,” and better
serve “as answers to objections brought against the actual decisions of authority, than are
proofs of the correctness of those decisions.”⁷⁵⁵

Furthermore, Newman believed that the historicity of human persons told against
their reaching unanimity in their historical investigations:

Considering that Christians, from the nature of the case, live under the bias of the
doctrines, and in the very midst of the facts, and during the process of the
controversies, which are to be the subject of criticism, since they are exposed to
the prejudices of birth, education, place, personal attachment, engagements, and
party, it can hardly be maintained that in matter of fact a true development carries

⁷⁵² Apo., 226.
⁷⁵³ Walgrave, Newman the Theologian, 187-188.
⁷⁵⁴ Diff., 2: 311-312.
⁷⁵⁵ Dev., 78. See also Note 1 in Diff., 2: 222: “History never serves as the measure of dogmatic truth in its
fulness.”
with it always its own certainty even to the learned, or that history, past or present, is secure from the possibility of a variety of interpretations.\textsuperscript{756}

Thus, according to Newman, recognition of the role played by hermeneutics in knowledge should lead one to acknowledge the need for an authority. Rationality, even Christian rationality, is subject to the first principles of its human purveyors. Not all of these first principles have their source in revelation; some are the products of each individual Christian’s circumstance. Even those first principles that claim revelation as their source are differently interpreted by those men and women in whom they dwell, as the history of Christianity illustrates.

The hermeneutical issue is further exacerbated by the Catholic Church’s universal call. “[I]ts very badge,” writes Newman, “[is] to be ever making converts all over the earth, whereas other religions are more or less variable in their teaching, tolerant of each other, and local, and professedly local, in their \textit{habitat} and character.”\textsuperscript{757} But the Church encounters a difficulty when it attempts to fulfill this call, as its efforts to “baptize the nations” and unite them with the Body of Christ include negotiating the barriers of language and culture. According to Newman, only an infallible authority can act as an arbiter between the various interpretations that result from the different hermeneutical influences on the members of the Church.

The lack of such an authority to mediate these hermeneutical differences indicates a void within an ecclesial community. Newman writes, “If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must humanly speaking have an expounder. Else you will secure unity of form at the loss of unity of doctrine, or unity of doctrine at the loss of unity of form; you will have to choose between a comprehension of opinions and

\textsuperscript{756} Dev., 76.
\textsuperscript{757} G.A. 196.
a resolution into parties, between latitudinarian and sectarian error.” Unfortunately, this statement is typically used only as a punctuation mark to treatments of Newman’s understanding of authority and infallibility, rather than being subjected to interpretation. The stark either-or Newman here offers appears to be based upon his belief that only a personal, infallible authority can act as a “center of unity” who secures both form and doctrine, and maintains a unified tension between them. Von Balthasar has rightly said that “Authority per se is never in question…. An established authority is only attacked with troops that are in the service of some other authority.” Without a personal center of unity, a religion must exalt something else into a place of authority: either form or doctrine. And whatever is exalted ultimately suffers from the weight of its new crown. Thus, Newman writes that “By the Church of England a hollow uniformity is preferred to an infallible chair; and by the sects of England an interminable division.” According to Newman, the Anglican Church chose form over doctrine: it retained certain external characteristics such as its liturgy, its Prayer Book, and Apostolic succession, but these externals did not prevent Anglicanism from lapsing into the divisions that have plagued Protestantism since its inception. Protestantism, on the other hand, chose to secure unity of doctrine over form. However, Protestantism accomplished this unity in doctrine through reducing both the number and sources of doctrine. As a result, in Newman’s estimate, “Germany and Geneva began with persecution, and have ended in scepticism.”

758 Dev., 90.
760 Dev., 91.
Christianity’s character as a system, combined with the limits of the human intellect, also impressed upon Newman the need for an infallible authority. “A religion,” writes Newman, “is not a proposition, but a system,” and a system represents a number of propositions that imply “various kinds of assents.” Assuming that the human intellect desires certitude about truths, especially religious truths, and that certitude is usually gained by investigation, how can a Christian possibly achieve certitude about the infinite number of propositions implicit within the Christian system?

Newman’s answer is that certitude about these individual propositions is included in a Christian’s certitude that “the Church is the infallible oracle of truth,” which is why Newman refers to the Church’s infallibility as “the fundamental dogma of the Catholic religion.”\(^{761}\) Newman claims that the statement “‘I believe what the Church proposes to be believed’ is an act of real assent, including all particular assents, notional and real…”\(^{762}\) On the other hand, he reasons, one doubts a defined dogma of the Church never gave his or her certitude to the infallibility of the Church, and thus, never had faith in the Catholic Church, for “to deny one [dogma] is to deny all.”\(^{763}\) (Granted, Newman is here speaking about the infallibility of the Church rather than an infallible authority within the Church. But, as I will show in the next section, Newman held that an infallible authority manifests the infallibility of the entire Church.)

Even if the propositions in the Christian system were few in number, the very act of abstraction involved in formulating propositions presents difficulties in achieving certitude. Newman acknowledges that the mind’s attempts to make notionally explicit

\(^{761}\) G.A., 131.
\(^{762}\) G.A., 131.
what it really and implicitly knows is a strained and tenuous process.\textsuperscript{764} He concedes that some of the erroneous opinions found in the Fathers were merely the results of deficiencies in language.\textsuperscript{765} If the formulator has difficulties being certain about whether or not his or her notions correspond to his or her own faith, one can imagine that the difficulties are even more pronounced for those who attempt to reach this certitude secondhand by recreating the reasonings of another. These “dangers of abstraction,” as Walgrave refers to them, must therefore be supplemented by an infallible authority who can ratify them.\textsuperscript{766}

As an astute interpreter of Newman, Walgrave recognizes that the perennial issue of nature versus grace is central to Newman’s position that an authority who can ratify doctrinal developments in the Church is necessary. He interprets Newman as follows:

The Spirit which guides the Church is active, in varying degrees, both in the community of the faithful and in all orthodox theology, but not in such a way that the collaboration of these two can be a sufficient guarantee of lasting unity of faith in the entire Church alongside the fertile and varied expansion of tradition. Here, as in other spheres, the grace of God acts in a secret and unobtrusive manner. It may foster in a few souls a supernatural force and purity, together with an almost infallible clear-sightedness into the faith, but the rest of men remain far below that level. In spite of the persistent working of grace, human nature is ever hostile to supernatural light. Just as healing grace cannot at once remedy the evil tendencies of the heart, so the illuminating grace of faith does not suddenly remove the intellectual prejudices and bias of the ordinary man or the theologian. Consequently, the natural course of historical development, however purified and led by grace, is not the means God chose for keeping tradition unchanged as it developed.\textsuperscript{767}

Walgrave interprets Newman as holding that the human intellect desires certitude in all its reasonings, but such certitude is not intrinsic to human nature. Walgrave here emphasizes that “human nature is ever hostile to supernatural light”; in other words, that

\textsuperscript{764} \textit{Ath.}, 2: 92-93.  
\textsuperscript{766} Walgrave, \textit{Newman the Theologian}, 113-114, 164, 182.  
\textsuperscript{767} Ibid., 195.
sin prevents even the redeemed men and women who comprise the Church from achieving certitude without divine provision.

However, it seems that Newman may have believed that this divine provision was necessary irrespective of original sin. One does not find in Newman much speculation about the character of prelapsarian human rationality. If infallibility was only a “supply for a need” of fallen men and women, one might think that Newman would clarify that they could achieve certitude about truth through internal means before the Fall. He indeed admits that “certitude does not admit of an interior, immediate test, sufficient to discriminate it from false certitude,” and lamented that his inability to provide such a test was the chief weakness of his Grammar. But he stopped short of claiming that this lack of an interior test was solely a consequence of sin.

Newman seemed to subscribe to the view that the Incarnation would have taken place even if there had been no original sin (see pg. 22). Behind this view is the understanding that men and women were not born in a state of perfection, but needed to grow into the likeness of God. The Incarnation was ultimately necessary for men and women to achieve this likeness through their participation in the divine life. The original sin and its effects perhaps impressed upon men and women the need for redemption, but it was not necessarily the efficient cause of the Incarnation.

Similarly, sin impresses upon men and women the need for an authority who can confirm truth, but sin was not necessarily the cause of God providing such an authority.

768 An exception is his Anglican sermon “The State of Innocence,” preached on February 11, 1838. In this sermon, Newman makes the point that the fall consisted in the exaltation of reason above faith, and thus, the abandonment of reason’s “due place in man’s nature” (P.S., 5: 114). But he does not here speak about the nature of prelapsarian certitude.
Men and women are finite beings who were not created with perfect intellects. Their intellects cannot perceive things as wholes, but must break them into parts and aspects in order to grow in knowledge of them. Also, their intellects are subject to the vicissitudes of time and circumstance, which condition their knowledge and make difficult the task of arriving at unanimity, in spite of the unity of their nature and, for those in the Church, their unity in Christ. These features of finitude persist even among the redeemed members of the Church. Though human nature has been redeemed, and the healing of its imago has been accomplished, men and women must struggle to grow further in the likeness of God. Their intellects share in this process of transformation, and certitude is an essential element of this process.

Thus, God, in His Divine Providence, has provided His Church with the gift of an infallible authority so that its members may be one in both mind and heart. Indeed, the character of Divine Providence is the starting point for Newman’s argument for the likelihood of an infallible authority in the Essay on Development. Inasmuch as developments of divine revelation “were of course contemplated and taken into account by its Author,” so also, reasons Newman, must “the Divine Scheme” secure these developments “from perversion and corruption.”

In this providential act of securing the Church’s doctrinal developments, God aids the members of the Church in stretching toward that certitude that they desire by nature, but which they achieve by grace. The grace of authority thus builds upon and elevates the nature of the human intellect.

I wish to once again return to Przywara’s essay “St. Augustine and the Modern World.” At the end of the essay, Przywara attempts to portray Newman as “Augustinus redivivus” inasmuch as Newman, like Augustine, also accounted for the place of both

770 Dev., 75, 92.
interiority and exteriority in knowledge. According to Przywara, Newman’s theory of real and notional apprehension overcame both the subjectivity of Descartes and Hegel, and the “tragic agnosticism” of Kierkegaard and Pascal. But Przywara does not take into account the fact that Newman was sympathetic to the “terrified longing for assurance” of Western thought since the Reformation; indeed, Newman viewed this longing as a natural desire. Moreover, Newman overcomes Descartes and Hegel, Kierkegaard and Pascal, not through his theory of the interdependence between real and notional apprehension, but through his recognition that reason is right in longing for assurance, or certitude, while at the same time knowing that it is not ultimately capable of sating that longing. For that, one needs a divinely-appointed infallible authority. The longing for assurance only becomes “terrified” when one throws off this authority, as did the Reformers.\(^{771}\)

I also wish to again refer to Mark Powell’s *Papal Infallibility*. Powell proposes that Newman’s emphasis on certitude and the need for an infallible authority, though moderate, is indicative of “a strong epistemic conception of the Christian faith and ecclesial canons.” He relies on William Abraham’s thesis that dogmas (or doctrinal developments) “properly belong in the field of soteriology, not epistemology,” as they are “primarily means of grace that lead one to salvation.” Abraham maintains that dogmas are not intended to serve as epistemological norms from which we derive or defend truth claims; rather, they are intended to “bring about the salvation and transformation of individuals and communities.”\(^{772}\)


However, Powell’s and Abraham’s distinction between soteriology and epistemology represents a dichotomy incongruous with Newman’s thought. As I argued in Chapter Two, Newman had a holistic view of the human person, and viewed knowledge of the faith as intimately connected with salvation. For Newman, certitude and an infallible authority are not merely stopgaps in response to rationalism and theological liberalism but, to use Powell’s words, are also “means of grace that lead one to salvation.”

B. THE INCARNATIONAL CHARACTER OF AUTHORITY

Having established Newman’s belief that the Church requires an authority who can provide certitude about doctrinal developments, I now turn to Newman’s understanding of the locus of this authority. In Chapters One and Two, I argued that the incarnational character of Newman’s theology manifested itself in his portrayals of both revelation and doctrinal development as personal, free, living, and historical realities. These same characteristics mark his descriptions of an infallible authority and its role in the Church.  

Newman portrayed this infallible authority as a personal, concrete guarantor of freedom and activity in the Church, and an emblem of a living and historical...

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773 Interestingly, Newman scholars who argue for the centrality of the Incarnation in Newman’s thought typically do not apply it to his understanding of authority. Walgrave recognizes that Newman saw the first principles of Christianity as “rooted in the dogma of the Incarnation,” and evidences an impressive grasp of the role Newman assigned to authority in the Church. However, he does not explain how Newman’s understanding of authority is rooted in the Incarnation (Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian*, 164). Lash argues that the Incarnation exercised a determinative influence in Newman’s epistemology in the same chapter in which he discusses the place of authority in Newman’s theory of development, but curiously does not connect the two (See Chapter 6—“The problem of the normative standpoint”—of Lash’s *Newman on Development* [114-145]). Dulles rightly elaborates Newman’s understanding of the role of authority by framing it, as Newman did in his Preface to the third edition of the *Via Media*, within the threefold office of Christ, who was priest, prophet, and king (Newman locates authority in the kingly office). But he does not go on to examine whether there are any further implications behind his Christocentric, or incarnational, framework. (See, for instance, Dulles, “The Threefold Office in Newman’s Ecclesiology,” in *Newman After a Hundred Years*, 375-399; and “Authority in the Church,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Newman*, 170-188).
religion. He implies that this infallible authority gives further concreteness to doctrinal developments through authoritative ratification of them.

Newman’s tendency as both an Anglican and a Catholic was to emphasize the infallibility of the entire Church. He affirmed that the Church’s infallibility derives from its identity as the Body of Christ indwelt by the Spirit, and that Christ and the Spirit are the true sources of the Church’s infallible authority.\footnote{774 “Newman-Perrone,” 420.} The “mind of the Church,” or the \emph{consensus fidelium}, is made up of all those members who actively participate in the life of these true authorities through their life in the Church. Through their participation in the divine life, the members of the Church come to a fuller understanding of the truths of revelation, and the objects of faith increasingly become as “objects of sight.”\footnote{775 G.A., 62.} As I discussed in Chapter Two, all these members have an active role in the process of doctrinal development.

But Newman also came to recognize that the infallibility of the entire Church needed representation in the form of a visible, personal, and living authority. The Church as a whole is infallible, but its infallibility needs concrete manifestation in accordance with the incarnational character of Christianity. For the reasons outlined in the previous section, Newman maintained that each individual person cannot serve as his or her own authority. Christ and the Spirit are indeed the ultimate authorities in the Church, but they are invisible.\footnote{776 P.S., 4: 202-203, 248-249.} In his Anglican sermon “Submission to Church Authority,” Newman defends the idea that the invisible authority of Christ and the Spirit is visibly represented in particular persons within the Church. “God distributes numberless benefits to all
men,” writes Newman, “but He does so through a few select instruments.” Newman’s defense proceeds from the principle of mediation that God abides by in His dealings with the world. It also proceeds from his Christocentric ecclesiology, which regards “the Church now” as “what His material Body was when [Christ] was visible on earth.”

This Body is made up of various parts, some of which have the particular responsibility of “channel[ing] out to the many” the authority of Christ and the Spirit.

Newman regards the Magisterium, comprised of the pope and bishops, as the “few select instruments” on whom Christ bestows, or by whom he communicates, his authority both in and to the Church. Their particular and definite role in the process of doctrinal development is the act of occasionally proclaiming an official definition of a development, or less officially, discerning between true and false developments.

Newman uses a variety of terms in different writings to convey this function that is particular to the Magisterium in the process of doctrinal development. In using these terms, he also qualifies the roles played by the other members of the Body of Christ in this process. What is more, he understands that the members of the Magisterium participate in these roles, as well, while not denying their specific power of defining.

In “Consulting the Faithful,” Newman employs the traditional distinction between the ecclesia docens and the ecclesia discens in order to clarify the role of defining specific to the bishops. Writes Newman, “… the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition [of the Apostles, committed to the whole Church] resides solely in the Ecclesia docens,” which is made up of the bishops. In an important letter of 1875 to Isy Froude (daughter of William

__777__ P.S., 3: 194.
__778__ P.S., 4: 250.
__779__ P.S., 3: 194.
Froude), Newman refers to this same “gift” as the “active infallibility” of the Church, as opposed to the “passive infallibility” of the faithful.\(^{780}\) Lastly, in his Preface to the third edition of the *Via Media*, Newman describes the Church according to the pattern of Christ’s threefold office as priest, prophet, and king. He implicitly locates the power of defining and approving doctrinal developments in the “Regal function (or office) of the Church” when he notes that its “special centre of action” is “the Papacy and its Curia.”\(^{781}\)

As Dulles points out, Newman’s use of the adjective “passive” to describe the infallibility of the faithful is misleading, for they are anything but passive in the process of doctrinal development.\(^{782}\) In the *Apologia*, Newman writes that a definition of a development is but a pronouncement on “a decision, which has already been arrived at by reason.”\(^{783}\) The activity of the faithful continues in the aftermath of a definition through the process that has come to be popularly known as “reception.” Many largely credit Yves Congar with giving the idea of reception greater prominence in modern theology. But, as Dulles writes, “In many respects Newman’s doctrine concerning reception as a criterion for the valid exercise of the infallible teaching office, and as a principle for the interpretation of hierarchical teaching, anticipates the insights of contemporary theologians such as Yves Congar.”\(^{784}\)

In the Preface to the *Via Media*, Newman designates the process of reception that takes place before and after a definition as a function of the Prophetic, or Teaching, Office of the Church, whose “special centre of action” is the “schola Theologorum.”

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\(^{780}\) *L.D.*, 27: 338.

\(^{781}\) *V.M.*, 1: xl, xlv.

\(^{782}\) Dulles, “Newman on Infallibility,” 442-443. Dulles mentions that the terms “active” and “passive” infallibility were used by Continental theologians of Newman’s time, but he does not investigate the genealogy of the terms.

\(^{783}\) *Apo.*, 237.

Indeed, one of the most remarkable and laudatory aspects of the Preface is that Newman does not conflate the ruling and teaching offices of the Church, which was characteristic of the ultramontanes of his own time. This resistance to conflating the two was also evidenced in “Consulting the Faithful,” where Newman describes the process by which a definition comes about as a “pastorum ac fidelium conspiratio”—a “symphony of the pastors and the faithful.” Samuel Femiano describes Newman as holding that “The bishops, by their particular title, were the judges of the faith, but by no means the guardians in an absolute sense.” Newman’s principal purpose in distinguishing between the active infallibility of the bishops and the passive infallibility of all the faithful was not to diminish the theological role of the latter, but to specify the defining role of the former. In the act of defining doctrinal developments, the bishops incarnate the infallibility of the entire Church.

According to Newman, the Magisterium’s exercise of their “active infallibility” plays an important role in that it provides an aid to the faithful in attaining certitude about the truth of doctrinal developments. Newman holds that the infallible guarantee attached to the bishops’ act of defining serves as a “form” or a “rule” in relation to the “matter” or revelation, giving further concreteness to revelation by “arranging and authenticating these various expressions and results of Christian doctrine.” Its enactment of Christ’s promise to preserve his Church from error “secures the object, while it gives definiteness and force to the matter, of the Revelation.” While Newman remains open to the

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785 One might also regard the conflation of the ruling and teachings offices as characteristic of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Advances in the forms of mass communication have seemingly increased the temptation toward centralization in the dogmatic realm, as perhaps evidenced by the proliferation of official Church documents produced by the Vatican in the last few decades.
786 Femiano, 120.
787 Dev., 77.
788 Dev., 91.
environs in which this active infallibility is exercised, he consistently held that its “normal seat” was “the Pope in Ecumenical Council.”

In guaranteeing the truth of doctrinal developments through their exercise of active infallibility, Newman also emphasizes that the Magisterium preserves and promotes the life of doctrine in the Church. In Chapter Two, I pointed out that Newman saw the Church’s growth in the understanding of revelation as a function of its organic identity as the Body of Christ. But he understood that some pruning is necessary if one is to preserve and promote the growth of a living thing. In his *Letter to Pusey* Newman writes,

Life in this world is motion, and involves a continual process of change. Living things grow into their perfection, into their decline, into their death. No rule of art will suffice to stop the operation of this natural law, whether in the material world or in the human mind. We can indeed encounter disorders, when they occur, by external antagonism and remedies; but we cannot eradicate the process itself, out of which they arise. Life has the same right to decay, as it has to wax strong. This is specially the case with great ideas.”

Contrary to those who perceived an emphasis upon forms as indicative of a static faith, Newman wrote that they “are the very food of faith.” He deems formal authority in particular as “the animating principle of a large scheme of doctrine.” In Walgrave’s estimate of Newman, it is “the fundamental principle controlling the growth of the life of the faith,” which “has to intervene to restrain rationalistic trends which are a constant danger to the faith, the tares which are always mixed with the wheat in the fields of God.”

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789 *Apo.*, 228.
790 *Diff.*, 2: 79.
792 *Dev.*, 91.
Newman also holds that this authority who protects the life of doctrine within the Church must be living: “A living, present authority, himself or another, is [a man’s] immediate guide in matters of a personal, social, or political character.”\textsuperscript{794} Once again, Newman sees the demand for a “living, present authority” as dictated by needs proceeding from both human sinfulness and finitude. He maintains that only a living authority has the power to “make a stand against the wild living intellect of man,” and not “the dead letter of a treatise or a code.”\textsuperscript{795} “Heart speaks to heart,” and thus, Newman considers a living authority to be “the immediate motive in the mind of a Catholic for his reception of doctrines.”\textsuperscript{796} Newman wrote that he did not wish to be converted by a “smart syllogism.” One could also safely claim that Newman did not wish his living faith to be sustained by a non-living principle. He had witnessed in Protestantism and Anglicanism “the ineffectiveness of those norms of authority substituted by other religions for the infallible living authority.”\textsuperscript{797} For Newman, only the living Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church serves as a sufficient fulfillment of men’s and women’s need for a living authority.

Some may claim that the pruning performed by an authority is stifling, and threatens not only the life, but the freedom of the members of the Church. “It will at first sight be said,” supposes Newman, “that the restless intellect of our common humanity is utterly weighed down, to the repression of all independent effort and action whatever…”\textsuperscript{798} In response, Newman points out that “infallibility does not interfere with

\textsuperscript{794} G.A., 279. See also Dev., 87, 88.
\textsuperscript{795} Apo., 219; G.A., 279.
\textsuperscript{796} Diff., 2: 313.
\textsuperscript{797} Walgrave, Newman the Theologian, 252.
\textsuperscript{798} Apo., 225.
moral probation; the two notions are absolutely distinct.”\textsuperscript{799} Newman here means to point out that there is a difference between the infallibility that attends divine revelation and its commensurate doctrines, and the human reception of these realities. A doctrine may be infallibly defined, but men and women are still free to interpret it, to inquire into it, to doubt it. Therefore, the infallibility of the Magisterium as exercised in the ratification of a doctrinal development presents no initial, ostensible threat to freedom.

On the contrary, Newman considers it a first principle that the Magisterium’s infallible authority is the very champion and guarantor of freedom. He insists that the human intellect, the instrument of theology, must be given room to breathe. But given that it “tends to rationalism,” it is only free if it does not remain unbridled in its reasonings.\textsuperscript{800} Just as it is no sign of a free conscience to “dispense with conscience,” so it is no sign of a free intellect to abandon itself to its “suicidal excesses” by dispensing with authority. According to Newman, “[An infallible authority’s] object is, and its effect also, not to enfeeble the freedom or vigour of human thought in religious speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance.” Given both human finitude and original sin, Newman considers submission to authority necessary for the \textit{askesis} of the human reason: “The energy of the human intellect ‘does from opposition grow;’ it thrives and is joyous, with a tough elastic strength, under the terrible blow of the divinely-fashioned weapon, and is never so much itself as when it has lately been overthrown.”\textsuperscript{801} In Newman’s view, Magisterial authority is therefore ordered toward perfecting the reason of the Church’s members, and thus, both preserves and promotes their free activity.

\textsuperscript{799} \textit{Dev.}, 83.
\textsuperscript{800} \textit{V.M.}, 1: xli.
\textsuperscript{801} \textit{Apo.}, 220, 225, 226.
Newman further specifies the nature of the Magisterium’s infallibility by qualifying what it is not. Dulles accurately characterizes Newman’s understanding of the *Ecclesia docens*’ power of defining when he writes, “[Newman] viewed it not as a distinct charism or infused gift, but as a set of providential dispositions by which God brings about a determinate effect: the preservation of the truth of revelation in the Church’s definitive teaching.”

According to Newman, the bishops comprising the Magisterium do not possess a special ability to tap into the mind of the Church by virtue of their ordination. They have not been granted “the gift of impeccability,” nor have they been given “an inward gift of infallibility [i.e., inspiration]…such as the Apostles had.” Rather, they freely operate from their own knowledge informed by their faith in discerning true and false developments, and their discernment (like the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*) is bound by the Rule of Faith as held in the mind of the Church.

Indeed, Newman even hypothesizes in “Consulting the Faithful” that “there was a temporary suspense of the functions of the ‘Ecclesia docens’” at certain times in history, such as during the Arian crisis following the Council of Nicaea, when “the body of Bishops failed in the confession of faith… [and] spoke variously, one against another…” Newman qualifies, “I am not denying that the great body of the Bishops were in their internal belief orthodox.” What he does deny, however, is that the *Ecclesia docens* actively exercised their proper function of concretely proclaiming true doctrine during the Arian crisis.

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803 *V.M.*, 1: xliii; *Diff.*, 2: 328.
804 *Cons.*, 213, 214. Newman responded to objections about this point in an appendix to the 1876 edition of *Arians*, in which he wrote, “On that occasion I was writing simply historically, not doctrinally, and while it is historically true, it is in no sense doctrinally false, that a Pope, as a private doctor, and much more Bishops, when not teaching formally, may err, as we find they did err in the fourth century” (*Ari.*, 464).
Newman thus refers to the Magisterium’s power to guarantee the truth of doctrinal developments as an “external guardianship,” and of their authority as an “external authority.”\(^{805}\) Lash rightly points out that, by “external,” Newman “clearly means ‘external’ to the mind of the individual believer,” and not external to the Church. Lash interprets Newman’s use of the term “external authority” in the *Essay on Development* to refer to “Episcopal Tradition”—Newman’s term in the *Via Media* for those creedal teachings considered necessary to the individual believer’s faith. Lash maintains that this interpretation is borne out by Newman’s *Letter to Perrone*, and Newman’s occasional identification of the term “external” with “objective.”\(^{806}\) Contrary to Lash, however, *Perrone* appears to support the idea that the “external authority” is the Spirit, “in whom,” Newman writes, “[the Church] is infallible.”\(^{807}\) According to Newman, the authority of the Magisterium is thus an instrumental authority. The bishops are the “organs” of the Spirit, who “carry into effect the promise made by Christ to the Church” in their pronouncements on doctrinal developments.\(^{808}\) Through their pronouncements, they incarnate the infallibility of the entire Church, and also make developments of doctrine concrete by guaranteeing their truth.

**C. The Incarnational Character of Papal Infallibility**

To repeat, Newman principally emphasized the infallibility of the entire Church and the role of the entire Magisterium in ratifying doctrinal developments through definition. But, as is well known, Newman also assented to the dogma of papal

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\(^{805}\) *Diff.*, 2: 328; *Dev.*, 86.


\(^{807}\) “Newman-Perrone,” 420.

\(^{808}\) *Diff.*, 1: 218; Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian*, 194-195.
infallibility defined at Vatican I, which stated that the pope, when he speaks *ex cathedra*,
can infallibly define dogmas that are irreformable “*ex sese, non ex autem consensu ecclesiae.*”\(^809\) Much literature has been devoted to qualifying that Newman’s assent to
the definition of papal infallibility was not without its difficulties. He was critical of the
ultramontane spirit that had called for the definition, he did not think the definition
necessary, and he was concerned about the possible scandal it would create among the
faithful.

But, in Newman’s own words, “Ten thousand difficulties do not make one
doubt,” and he believed that his faith in the infallibility of the Church demanded
acceptance of the definition of papal infallibility if such a definition did emerge from the
council.\(^810\) Moreover, Newman wrote, “For myself, ever since I was a Catholic, I have
held the Pope's infallibility as a matter of theological opinion.”\(^811\) Plus, in spite of his
previous reservations, once papal infallibility was officially defined, Newman expressed
relief at its moderation, aware that Pope Pius IX had wanted a much wider power than
that allowed by the definition.\(^812\)

Newman accepted papal infallibility as an authentic development of doctrine
because he believed that it was a true fulfillment of Scripture testified to by the Tradition
of the Church. But what is more, I believe that papal infallibility accords with Newman’s
incarnational principle. As J. Derek Holmes argues, “[Newman’s] assent to papal
infallibility as a Catholic was simply a logical development of his former Anglican

\(^809\) *Pastor Aeternus* 4.
\(^810\) *Apo.*, 214; *G.A.*, 131.
\(^811\) Diff., 2: 304. J. Derek Holmes writes that “On another occasion, [Newman] pointed out that he had even
been accused of tacitly accepting papal infallibility in his article on [Jean-Marie de] Lammenais written in
383). Newman’s article on Lammenais is entitled “The Fall of de la Mennais” and is found in *Ess.*, 1: 138-
178.
position when he accepted the infallibility of the undivided Church.”

Assuredly, Newman devoted more attention to providing a vigorous, positive defense of papal primacy (or “supremacy,” as he called it) than papal infallibility, for his context largely dictated that his time was best spent nuancing the latter. However, he located both papal primacy and the power to define within the ruling office of the Church, and I argue that his defense of the pope’s primacy in relation to the other bishops also serves as a defense for the pope’s primacy within the active infallibility of the Magisterium. Indeed, Newman says as much in a footnote in the 1878 edition of the Essay on Development, within the section entitled “An Infallible Developing Authority to be Expected”: “Seven years ago, it is scarcely necessary to say, the Vatican Council determined that the Pope, *ex cathedra*, has the same infallibility as the Church. This does not affect the argument in the text.”

In arguing the above, I am admittedly going beyond what Newman directly maintained around the time of the council. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Louth as pointing to “a certain circularity” in Newman’s argument that acceptance of doctrinal development entailed acceptance of “an unquestioned and unquestionable authority, such as developed in the teaching office of the see of St. Peter.” The circularity, according to Louth, is that “the development of the teaching office of the pope is an example of development.” To call Newman’s argument circular is unfair, since Newman did not see acceptance of doctrinal development as hinging upon acceptance of the pope’s infallible authority. But it is ironic that Newman’s theory was now being “used against [him]” at the council to defend a definition to which he was resistant. One

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814 Dev., 87n3.
of the attendees of Vatican I, Bishop Moriarty, wrote to Newman, “Strange to say, if ever this definition comes you will have contributed much towards it. Your treatise on development has given the key.” In his response to Moriarty, Newman writes, “… nor do I think with your friend that infallibility follows on Supremacy.”\footnote{\textit{LD} 25:57-58; quoted in Page, 95-96.} I will attempt to argue, however, that papal infallibility does indeed follow from the first principles that are at the root of Newman’s assent to papal supremacy (primacy).

Newman held that papal primacy is consistent with what he refers to as the “antecedent probability of a monarchical principle in the Divine Scheme.”\footnote{Dev., 154.} According to Newman, the nature of the Church and its mission requires there to be a monarchical ruler who can preserve its unity. As an Anglican he interpreted the New Testament, and Old Testament prophecies, to mean that Christ intended to found his Church as a kingdom, and a visible kingdom at that, and for the rest of his life he maintained what Paul Misner has referred to as a “kingdom-ecclesiology.”\footnote{Paul Misner, \textit{Papacy and Development}, 54. Writes Misner, “Though the imperial image of the Church yields pride of place to other aspects in Newman’s later Catholic writings, it remains a factor in his ecclesiology, the more disconcerting because it is presupposed rather than defended” (57).} In Newman’s understanding, a visible kingdom involves “a political influence” and “a complex organization….”\footnote{\textit{P.S.}, 2: 245; \textit{S.D.}, 234.} He writes, “A kingdom is an organized body… It is as unmeaning to speak of an invisible kingdom on earth, as of invisible chariots and horsemen, invisible swords and spears, invisible palaces: to be a kingdom at all it must be visible, if the word has any true meaning.”\footnote{\textit{S.D.}, 220.} Moreover, Newman interpreted Christ’s mandate to “baptize all nations” as implying that the Church was to be not only a kingdom, but an “imperial power” having universal jurisdiction. “By an imperial state, or an empire,” writes
Newman, “is meant a power which has wide extent over the earth, and that beyond its limits,” and which has “extended dominion, and that not only over its immediate subjects, but over the kings of other kingdoms…”

Newman reasons that if the Church is truly a kingdom and an empire, then it must be ruled over by a monarch: “If the whole of Christendom is to form one Kingdom, one head is essential.” In his sermon “The Christian Church an Imperial Power,” he asserts that the ultimate kingship over the Church belongs to Christ: “[Christ] truly is the only One, properly speaking, who sits on the throne of the kingdom; He is the sole Ruler in His empire…” But Newman qualifies that Christ is the invisible king of his Church, and affirming that Christ intended his Church to be a visible kingdom and society requires one to affirm the existence of a visible king, namely, the pope. As with all authorities on earth, the pope’s rule is “given from above” (Jn 19:11). He is a representative of Christ; a “regent” or “viceroy” whose rule ultimately derives from, and is sustained by, Christ.

According to Newman, it is only the visible kingship of the pope that can preserve the unity of the visible kingdom of the Church: “We know of no other way of preserving the Sacramentum Unitatis, but a centre of unity… It must be so; no Church can do without its Pope.” Misner believes that Newman’s reference to the sacramentum unitatis is a reference not to the Eucharist, but to “one very particular theology of church unity, that of St. Cyprian and of his Anglican upholders.” According to Misner, “it was

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821 S.D., 228, 234.
822 Dev., 154.
823 S.D., 220-221, 226; Diff., 2: 223.
824 Dev., 154-155. Newman then goes on to show that separated Christians who rejected the pope’s authority very soon thereafter set up a substitute authority: “The Nestorians have had their ‘Catholicus;’ the Lutherans of Prussia have their general superintendent; even the Independents, I believe, have had an overseer in their Missions. The Anglican Church affords an observable illustration of this doctrine. As her prospects have opened and her communion extended, the See of Canterbury has become the natural centre of her operations” (155).
Cyprian who came closest to the episcopal theory of church unity, he who pleaded passionately for unity while at the same time rejecting the pretensions of the pope to be its special protector, and it was he who used the phrase *sacramentum unitatis.*

There is not much textual evidence to support Misner’s position that Newman’s theology of the papacy involved an ongoing battle against a perceived abuse of Cyprian’s ecclesiology, though Newman does note that “St Cyprian is claimed by Protestants as denying the Pope’s Supremacy…” However, Misner is surely right that Newman believes episcopal collegiality alone an insufficient means of preserving the unity of the Church in the midst of a sinful world that tended toward disbelief. A brief reflection on human nature as actually manifested in history suffices for Newman to reject the idea that the Church needs no papacy: “there would be a legion of ecclesiastics, each bishop with his following, each independent of the others, each with his own views, each with extraordinary powers, each with the risk of misusing them, all over Christendom. It would be the Anglican theory, made real. It would be an ecclesiastical communism…” But Newman believes that history also yields a positive justification for the development of the Church’s understanding of papal primacy. The growth of the Church naturally resulted in the need for a greater system of Church government centralized in the See of St. Peter: “As the Church grew into form, so did the power of the Pope develope [sic].” Thus, Newman implies that the *Sacramentum Unitatis* can only be preserved by what one might call a “*sacramentum auctoritatis.*”

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826 *L.D.*, 15: 496. Contra Misner, Newman’s mentions of Cyprian were chiefly in regard to the Eucharist. He also states that Cyprian’s opposition to Rome on a point of discipline (not doctrine) did not constitute a rejection of the pope’s supremacy.
827 *Diff.*, 2: 210-211.
828 *Dev.*, 154. See also the Preface to the third edition of the *Via Media*, xli, where Newman describes how the ruling office of the Church, headed by the papacy, was the last of the offices to be developed in the Church.
In the Preface to the third edition of the *Via Media*, Newman locates papal primacy within the context of his corporate, Christocentric ecclesiology. The Church is “the Body of Christ,” he writes, “and the sovereign pontiff. . .the visible head of that Body.” The implication here and elsewhere in Newman’s writings is that Christ remains active as the invisible head of the Church, but it follows from the sacramental and incarnational principles that Christ’s invisible headship requires visible manifestation. Newman also qualifies that the pope is the head of the Body of the Church only inasmuch as he “belong[s] to it,” meaning that in no way can the term “external authority” discussed above be applied to the pope; his headship is within the Body.

Returning once again to the application of Christ’s threefold office to the Church—the distinguishing mark of this Preface—Newman principally locates the activity of the pope within the ruling, or kingly, office. The pope, Newman holds, is the representative of the ruling office. Even more strongly, Newman asserts that “the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ, inherits these [three] offices and acts for the Church in them.” In Newman’s mind, then, the pope acts as a sort of microcosm for the entire Church as “the chief part of the body.” Yet, Newman had earlier stated that the entire Church is “His representative. . .‘His very self below,’” and that the pope’s “special centre of action” is the ruling office of Church. It is within this office that the pope most particularly acts as representative for the whole (office).

One may claim, as does Misner, that this reasoning makes Newman “an ultramontane *sui generis*.” But Newman’s claim that the pope is the special

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829 *V.M.*, I: xl.
830 *Var.*, 197, 283; *Diff.*, 2: 208.
representative of the ruling office also simply follows from his incarnational principle and its corollary principles. It follows from his consistent affirmation that the invisible visibly manifests itself, and that abstract truths such as “rule” and “power” need concrete representation. It is a fulfillment of Newman’s “method of personation,” which affirms that the representation of truths in persons is part of the divine pedagogy. For Newman, expediency demands, and history testifies to, the need for a universal Church to have a universal ruler in the pope.

This need also extends to the issue of papal infallibility, which Newman locates within the purview of the ruling office. The Magisterium, whose special charge it is to exercise their active infallibility in defining a doctrinal development, must also have their concrete representative who can speak for them, who has a real power of “universal jurisdiction.”\footnote{“Letter to Pusey,” quoted in Ward, 2: 223.} The pope acts as a personal manifestation of Christ’s continuing authority over his Church, and when necessary, voices the decisions of the Magisterium through the infallibility with which Christ has endowed his office. A function of the ruling office is to make judgments on doctrinal matters, and the mark of the rightness of such judgments is not always to be found in the majority, of which the Arian crisis affords an instance. According to Newman, the hierarchical constitution of the Church requires that the Magisterium, too, needs its pope. The pope provides what Newman refers to as a “negative assistance,” an \textit{ultimum} aimed merely at ensuring that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against [the Church]” (Mt 16:18).\footnote{L.D., 25: 309.} Positively, Newman holds that the pope’s occasional, official judgments provide a personal, living incarnation of not only the Magisterium’s judgments, but of the infallibility of the entire Church and the
Holy Spirit’s continuing presence in the Church. They serve as a concrete manifestation of the Church’s grasp of revelation, a faithful mirror that the members of the Church can consult in order to assist their certitude about the truth of revelation and the developments in the understanding of that revelation.

3.2: Florovsky on Doctrinal Development and Authority

In the previous section, I explained why Newman believed that the theory of doctrinal development necessitated an infallible authority who could confirm the truth of these developments. I first showed that Newman believed that the human intellect was ordered toward certitude about the truth of developments that it cannot provide for itself. I then showed that his ascription of the power to pronounce on developments to the Magisterium and the pope was consistent with his incarnational theology.

My treatment of Florovsky on the question of authority in relation to dogmatic development will follow an inverse pattern. I will first outline his concern that an orthodox understanding of ecclesiastical authority should conform to the standard of the Incarnation as especially represented by Chalcedon. Florovsky’s Chalcedonian understanding of authority includes a belief that it is the proper role of the bishops to act as the “mouthpiece” of the Church’s understanding of revelation as formulated in dogmas. However, he did not believe that this episcopal role served as an aid to the members of the Church in achieving certitude about the truth of revelation, or, the truth of dogmatic developments. Instead, as I will explain, Florovsky believed that the Church’s members can only achieve such certitude through their free, ascetical living out of the truths of the Christian faith. He thus implied that the Church’s dogmatic
developments do not need further “enfleshment” through formal guarantees of their truth supposedly provided by infallible authorities.

**A. Florovsky’s Chalcedonian Understanding of Church Authority**

Florovsky clearly evidences a concern to present a properly Chalcedonian ecclesiology in his writings. The Chalcedonian hermeneutic is operative in his acknowledgement that the Church is both a “visible” and “invisible” reality. He writes, “The teachings about the Church as visible and invisible at one and the same time, about the greatness and historically given, and sacred, i.e. divine, is a direct continuation and revelation of the Christological dogma in the spirit and meaning of the Chalcedonian dogma.” Elsewhere Florovsky refers to the “double condition” of the Church, which is at the same time the “Church militant” and the ultimate “Church triumphant,” and writes that “this crucial mystery can be adequately conceived only in the categories of the Chalcedonian dogma.” Though Florovsky admitted an “asymmetry” in the Chalcedonian definition (inasmuch as there was no human hypostasis in Christ) he does not apply this asymmetry to his Chalcedonian hermeneutic, and trumpets Orthodox ecclesiology for its “Chalcedonian balance.” He furthermore opposes the Chalcedonian balance of Orthodox ecclesiology to the “hyper-historicism” of a Roman Catholic ecclesiology that places too much emphasis upon visibility, and the “hyper-eschatologism” of a Protestant ecclesiology that has “dismissed” the historic and the visible.

Florovsky seems to evidence a desire that his treatments of Church authority conform to the hermeneutic of Chalcedonian balance between the antinomies of visibility

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833 V13, 61-62.
834 V9, 54-55; V14, 30-31.
835 V14, 31, 52, 57.
and invisibility, the concrete and abstract, and the historical and eschatological. According to Florovsky, it has been the consistent emphasis of Orthodox theology that Christ remains the invisible head of his Body, the Church. In his 1933 essay “The Problematical of Christian Reunion,” Florovsky locates this emphasis in Orthodoxy’s particular interpretation of Christ’s Ascension, which maintains that “through his Ascension into heaven Christ truly and directly (albeit invisibly) abides and governs in the ‘historical’ and earthly Church…” It is interesting that Florovsky here uses the prepositional phrase “through his Ascension” rather than writing “in spite of his Ascension.” His purposeful use of the word “through” is further clarified by a statement he made in a letter to Archimandrite Sophrony in 1958, in which he wrote, “Christ in his ascension is no less man than ‘in his days with us,’ and perhaps more.” In Florovsky’s understanding, Christ’s Ascension did not constitute an exodus from history; rather, it was the means by which Christ became even more fully present in history, in parallel with his becoming more fully human through the anthropological transformation and fulfillment effected through his Resurrection and Ascension. Through his Ascension, Christ continues to function as the ultimate authority of both his earthly and heavenly Church.

836 V14, 57. See also V14, 14. The editor of the *Collected Works*, Richard Haugh, elected to split this essay into two parts and retitle them for some unknown reason. The first part is found in V13, 14-18, under the original title, “The Problematical of Christian Reunion.” The second part, from which this quotation is taken, is entitled “Rome, the Reformation, and Orthodoxy,” and is found in V14, 52-58. I am grateful to Matthew Baker for alerting me to this discrepancy between Florovsky’s original essay and the contents of the essay in the *Collected Works*. The citation of the original Russian essay is “Проблематика христианского возсоединения,” Путь 37 (February 1933): 1-15 (Supplement).

In “The Problematic of Christian Reunion,” Florovsky contends that this particular understanding of the Ascension “has not been completely fortified and expressed” in Roman Catholic consciousness. He writes, “It is as if, in the [Roman Catholic interpretation of the] Ascension, [Christ] left and exited from history until the Second Coming… as if history had been abandoned… Hence the need for and possibility of Christ’s well-known replacement in history—the idea of a ‘deputy,’” i.e., the pope. However, Florovsky qualifies that “it is impossible to reduce all the diversity and fullness of mystical and theological life in Roman Christianity to one particular ‘idea’” such as their interpretation of the Ascension.  

He did not wish to be lumped in with Lev Karsavin (1882-1952) and Vladimir Lossky, who exhibited “the dangers of excessive constructivism” in their attempts “to derive the entire system of Roman Catholicism, directly and one-sidedly, from one particular doctrine, the doctrine of Filioque.” This constructivism is an example of the logical form of dogmatic development Florovsky rejected. But because Florovsky regards revelation and Tradition as originating and rooted in divine events, it is fair to say that he believes the Roman Catholic tendency to perceive the pope as a substitute for Christ’s authority indicates a deficient understanding of that event (the Ascension) that particularly testifies to Christ’s continuing authority in his Church.

Florovsky’s emphasis on Christ’s continuing, invisible headship over his Church is also related to his organic ecclesiology. “Christ the Lord is the only Head and the only Master of the Church,” writes Florovsky, and does not have a visible analogue in the

838 V14, 57.
839 V14, 211. Lev Karsavin was a Russian religious philosopher and medieval historian who was also associated with the Eurasianist movement. After teaching at various universities in Russian, he was eventually exiled and taught in Lithuania until its annexation by Russia. In 1949, he was eventually arrested by Stalin’s regime and died in a workers’ camp.
As pointed out above, Florovsky regarded ecclesiology as “an integral part of Christology,” and frequently invoked Augustine’s “doctrine of the Whole Christ—totus Christus, caput et corpus” as emblematic of his organic ecclesiology. What is more, he saw this doctrine of the totus Christus confirmed by the Chalcedonian dogma. Chalcedon affirmed an intimate relation, without confusion, between the divine and human natures in Christ’s person. So also, Florovsky affirmed an intimate relation between Christ as Head and Christ’s Body (the Church) while at the same time affirming their distinction. It seems plausible that he thought the idea of an earthly head of the Church constituted a confusion between the proper identities of the Head and the Body.

But Florovsky balances this emphasis upon Christ’s invisible headship by maintaining that the bishops serve as visible representatives of Christ’s authority in the Church, even if they do not visibly represent Christ’s headship. He shirks conventional Orthodox avoidance of perceptibly Western categories by unflinchingly asserting that bishops act “in persona Christi,” though it is noteworthy that he nowhere asserted that the bishops act “in persona Christi capitis.” He variously describes the members of the episcopate as “‘representatives’ of Christ Himself,” as “stewards of His mysteries,” and as “standing for Him, before the community.”

According to Florovsky, the bishops’ authority is primarily a “sacramental authority,” and they principally represent Christ’s authority through their place in the Church’s sacramental matrix. Florovsky’s focus on the sacramental nature of the bishops’ visible representation of Christ follows from his position that “the ultimate

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840 V1, 67-68.
841 V4, 25.
842 V1, 65-66; V14, 32.
843 V14, 32.
identity of the Church is grounded in her sacramental structure..." The bishops are initiated into their proper place in the Church’s sacramental structure through ordination. In their celebration of the Eucharist—which Florovsky refers to as “the mystery of the whole Christ”—the bishops image “the Heavenly Bishop,” and help bring about the completion of the Body of Christ. Inasmuch as the performance of the sacraments constitutes the primary identity of the bishops, and inasmuch as the sacraments are the primary means by which Christ abides in the Church, Florovsky invokes his oft-repeated principle that “ministry (or ‘hierarchy’) itself is primarily a charismatic principle... and not only a canonical commission...”

In spite of the central place Florovsky accords the Eucharist in the life of the hierarchy, he avoids a eucharistic ecclesiology (such as that promoted by Nikolai Afanasiev) that fails to integrate the eucharist into the dogmatic and canonical functions of hierarchy. This avoidance is signaled by Florovsky’s affirmation that “there is another and higher office: to secure the universal and catholic unity of the whole Church in space and time. This is the episcopal office and function." Through his sacramental power to ordain—the power that precisely distinguishes bishops from priests, according to Florovsky—“the bishop has his own particular duty in the building up of Church unity,” and serves to make Pentecost “universal and continuous.” Florovsky qualifies

844 V14, 26.
845 V1, 53.
846 V13, 66, 91.
847 V1, 65.
848 Florovsky’s criticisms of Afanasiev, who taught at St. Serge with him, were mainly confined to the latter’s position on ecumenism, which is elaborated in, among other places, his essay “Una Sancta” (in Tradition Alive: On the Church and the Christian Life in Our Time: Readings from the Eastern Church, ed. Michael Plekon, 3-30 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). Pace Afanasiev, Florovsky consistently maintained that “Real unity of love is hardly possible without unity in and of faith” (V13, 16, 144).
849 V1, 66.
that the Apostolic Succession is more than merely the “canonical skeleton of the Church.” But nevertheless, he affirms that this “skeleton” does serve as a visible manifestation of the mystical unity of the Body of Christ with the Head.

Florovsky regards the Roman Catholic teachings on the papacy, on the other hand, as “a false dogma of Church unity.” He implies that the Apostolic Succession is a sufficient visible sign of the invisible unity and identity of the Church as the Body of Christ. And, of course, he firmly reiterates that the unity of the Church must be based in dogmatic unity. The falsity of papal primacy and infallibility as defined in the nineteenth century, according to Florovsky, stems from Rome’s pathological striving for unity “above all else” throughout history. Rome’s perceived need for the pope to secure the Church’s unity demonstrates a lack of trust in God and a “weak[ness] in love.” It shows their failure to recognize that, in addition to the Apostolic Succession, “this unity must be maintained and strengthened by ‘the bond of peace,’ by an ever-increasing effort of faith and charity” on the part of all the members of the Church. In other words, Florovsky believes that Rome creates an imbalance on the Chalcedonian scale of Church authority by striving after further, visible, concrete guarantees of Church unity.

Florovsky maintains that “True ‘sacramentalism’ in the Church ultimately depends upon a ‘doctrinal’ orientation of devotional life… In fact, sacraments are a part and an article of dogma.” As such, Florovsky also holds that bishops have a concrete, visible role in regard to dogmatic definitions. Florovsky emphasized that theology, and doctrinal development, constitutes the vocation of all the members of the Church, and

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850 V3, 190; V14, 32.
851 V14, 55.
852 V14, 54, 55.
853 V14, 32-33.
854 V13, 90.
that all have a role in the coming to be of a dogmatic definition. In addition, all the members actively receive this definition, testing it by the same Christian experience out of which it supposedly sprang. But it is the province of the bishops alone, Florovsky maintains, to act as “the mouthpiece of the Church,” “to speak in a Catholic way… to witness on behalf of the Church… to teach.” Through their teaching, the bishops speak “in personae ecclesiae,” and make visible the experience of the Church and the authority of Christ.  

Louis Bouyer, drawing upon Yves-Noël Lelouvier’s book on Florovsky’s ecclesiology, saw in Florovsky’s ascription of a concrete teaching function to the hierarchy a “double criticism of Khomyakov and his emulators.” Bouyer writes,

[Florovsky] says they confuse—in the letter of the patriarchs on which they rely, as in all the other significant documents of Orthodoxy—the function that is proper to bishops, judging what the authentic truth is or is not, with the function that is indeed common to the whole people of God, in all its members: witnessing to the truth. Behind this primary error, and fully agreeing with Moehler, Florovsky brings out the primary error of an ecclesiology that wishes to be exclusively pneumatic and not christological, which would end fatally by misconstruing the essential attachment of the work of the Spirit in us with the historical work of Christ.  

Thus, according to Bouyer, Florovsky implied that the Slavophile failure to recognize the bishops’ role of making visible, or incarnating, the Church’s interpretation of Christian experience through their authoritative judgments followed from an insufficiently Christocentric, or Chalcedonian, ecclesiology.

But Bouyer makes an unfounded and erroneous leap in the above quotation. Nowhere does Florovsky claim that the bishops’ role of authoritatively voicing the

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855 V1, 53; V3, 198-200; Florovsky, “Le Corps,” 38.  
Church’s teaching is the equivalent of them “judging” the truth of this teaching. In fact, as I will show in the paragraphs below, the absence of this claim in Florovsky actually demonstrates his affinities with the Slavophile position on authority and dogma. What is more, I will show that these affinities are rooted in the tenets of Florovsky’s anthropology and epistemology. In the Dialogue section of this chapter, I will discuss whether or not Florovsky’s position on authority in relation to dogma threatens the balance of his otherwise Chalcedonian ecclesiology.

**B. SLAVOPHILE INFLUENCES ON FLOROVSKY’S VIEW OF AUTHORITY**

One finds Florovsky’s lengthiest direct consideration of Slavophile ecclesiology in *Ways*. There, he classifies Slavophilism as a Romantic reaction against both the Reformation and Idealism; against the isolationist anthropology of Protestantism and the Idealist exaltation of reason. As a fruit of the Romantic milieu, Florovsky recognizes some of the excesses of Romanticism in Slavophilism—excesses that he perennially rejected as being at odds with a properly Christocentric, and Chalcedonian, Christianity. Thus, Florovsky noted that among the Slavophile thinkers one finds “the spirit of dreamy withdrawal from and rejection of the ‘formal’ or ‘external’ in Christianity….”857 In a related vein, Florovsky criticizes the Slavophile tendency to “escape or even retreat from history,” and for a philosophy of history that relies too much upon “a one-sided or exclusively ‘organic’ point of view.”858 In regard to this latter characteristic of Slavophilism, Florovsky cautions, “Society and the Church are not commensurate.”859

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857 V5, 164.
858 V6, 19.
859 V6, 17.
Florovsky maintained that “the failure of the Slavophiles to articulate [the incommensurability of Church and society] did not hurt their theology or their actual teaching on the Church as much as did their philosophy of history, or, more precisely, their philosophy of society.” However, he did offer some criticisms of their ecclesiology. Bouyer (via Lelouvier) rightly pointed out that Florovsky critiqued Khomiakov and Slavophile ecclesiology for their “tendency to over-emphasize the Pneumatological aspect of the doctrine of the Church.” (Bouyer fails to recognize that Florovsky leveled this same critique at Möhler’s Die Einheit in der Kirche, too, though Florovsky admitted that “the balance [between Christology and Pneumatology] was restored in Möhler’s later writings, and already in his Symbolik.”) Florovsky also admits that in Khomiakov—the “Knight of Orthodoxy,” as he terms him—“the self-sufficiency of the Church is presented with such resigned obviousness that its historical reality remains as if in a shadow.”

However, Florovsky did not translate any of these criticisms of Slavophile historiography and ecclesiology to the Slavophile understanding of authority’s role in relation to dogma. In spite of his reservations expressed in Ways and elsewhere, Florovsky qualified that “Slavophilism is not exhausted by ‘romanticism,’” and held that the Slavophile ecclesiology was “completely true to fundamental and ancient patristic tradition.” His estimate seems to apply to Slavophile ecclesiology on the issue of

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860 V6, 18.
862 V6, 38, 41. Florovsky’s title for Khomiakov is derived from Herzen’s description of Khomiakov sleeping “fully armed, like a medieval knight.” Florovsky interprets it to mean that Khomiakov had a systematic mind in spite of the fact that he “wrote only occasionally, fragmentarily, though always in bold strokes.” It is also an apt self-description of Florovsky.
863 V6, 19, 46.
dogmatic authority, which, interestingly, Florovsky implies is closely related to the idea of dogmatic development. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, Florovsky especially lauded Khomiakov in *Ways* for “his understanding and estimation of the historical disclosure and self-realization of apostolic tradition (usually denoted in the West by the imprecise term ‘dogmatic development’)…” Yet, both Khomiakov and Florovsky rejected the idea that the truth of these developments could be guaranteed, or certified, by an “external authority.”

In order to understand Khomiakov’s opposition to the idea of an “external authority” that judges the truth of dogmatic developments, one must start with a brief explanation of that most distinctive and enduring emphasis of Slavophile ecclesiology: *sobornost*. Khomiakov used the Slavic term *sobornost* (which Florovsky, contra today’s theological consensus, maintains is accurately translated by the English term “catholicity”) to characterize the essence of the life of the Church. According to Khomiakov, the Church was above all a unity of life in divine grace to which men and women submit in “free communion and in love.” It was also a life of dogmatic development: “the legacy of an inner life [inherited from the blessed apostles], a legacy of thought, inexpressible yet constantly yearning to express itself.” He held that the unity of the Church, including the unity of its doctrine, is maintained and developed

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864 V6, 49.
865 V6, 44. Writes Florovsky, “Accordingly, this Russian term [*sobornost*] does not mean more than catholicity. There was no need to borrow it and use it in English as if there was a peculiar ‘Russian’ conception of the Church which could be denoted by a foreign neologism… Instead of borrowing a foreign term, it would be more helpful to recover the ancient conception of internal catholicity, which can be adequately denoted by traditional words” (V14, 34).
866 V6, 51. Florovsky is here quoting Khomiakov’s response to the dissertation of Yuri Samarin (1819-1876), a disciple of Khomiakov, but also of Hegel. Samarin’s dissertation was entitled *Stefan Iavorskii I Feofan Prokopovich*, and the footnote in *Ways* cites its location as volume 5 in Samarin’s *Sochinenia* (Moscow, 1880).
“through the mutual love of Christians, and has no other guardian except this love.”\textsuperscript{867} In particular, as Florovsky notes, Khomiakov describes the freedom that marks the life of the Church and its members as opposed to an “external authority,” or, “the formal compulsion of external proofs.”\textsuperscript{868}

For Khomiakov, the phrase “external authority” is a tautology, as he explains that “an authority is something external.”\textsuperscript{869} Though he applies it to the Roman Catholic understanding of the hierarchy, Khomiakov more generally understands “external authority” as any extra-ecclesial principle or rationality that would stand in judgment over the Church and its dogmas. Florovsky recognizes this rejection of “external authority” in another Slavophile thinker, Ivan Kireevskii, as well: “For Kireevskii the entire meaning of western falseness is revealed in the triumph of formal reason or rationality over faith and tradition, by the elevation of the [sic] deduction over tradition.”\textsuperscript{870}

This Slavophile polemic against external authority, especially in Khomiakov, proceeds from an understanding of the Church as a self-sufficient, incommensurable, and organic whole whose truth can only be discerned within. It is also a Romantic reaction against rationalism and its manifestation in Idealism. Florovsky describes Khomiakov as holding that “As an organism of love the Church is not and cannot be subjected to the

\textsuperscript{867} V6, 51. Florovsky notes that “Khomiakov is referring to the famous circular letter of the eastern patriarchs of 1848,” which was in response to Pius IX’s “Epistle to the Easterns” of the same year. However, this passage does not actually appear in the eastern patriarchs’ letter, but is Khomiakov’s interpretation of the “spirit” of the letter. For the passage in Khomiakov’s \textit{Quelques mots}, see \textit{On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader}, ed. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), 112.

\textsuperscript{868} V6, 44.

\textsuperscript{869} \textit{On Spiritual Unity}, 58.

\textsuperscript{870} V6, 24.
Thus, dogmatic truth cannot be determined according to external authorities such as logic and “demonstrative exposition,” but only by the inner experience of the Church. Its determination comes from “not knowledge alone, but knowledge and life at the same time.” It “is based on the holiness of the mutual love of Christians in Jesus Christ.” The supposition that knowledge of dogmatic truth is not dependent on life is, for Khomiakov, the essence of rationalism.

Florovsky strove in his writings to protect the freedom that he saw affirmed in the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo and the distinctive Christian understanding of personality. In fact, freedom is really the underlying theme of all the sporadic treatments of the relation between authority and dogma in his writings. Florovsky saw in Khomiakov’s reflections on authority and dogma a companion in the vigorous defense of Christian freedom. Florovsky wrote at the end of Ways that “Freedom lies neither in rootlessness nor in having roots, but in truth, in the truthfulness of life, in the illumination that comes from the Holy Spirit.” If one were to reverse the terms of this formula to read “truth lies in freedom, in the freedom of life,” one would have a fitting summary of how Florovsky believed Christians were able to come to certitude about dogma.

Florovsky endorsed this Romantic polemic against the “external authority” of extra-ecclesial rationality in his writings of the 1920s and 30s, and it conditions his later views of how the Church determines the truth of dogmatic developments. His 1921 essay “The Cunning of Reason” presents the “crisis of European culture” as one of

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871 V6, 51. As I pointed out above, Florovsky opposed some of Khomiakov’s uses of the organic metaphor, but not his organic understanding of the Church.
872 V6, 51-53.
873 On Spiritual Unity, 61, 72.
874 V6, 295.
There he characterizes rationalism as “the idea of the general accessibility of cognition” that holds that “Truth must be nothing other than a system of reason… accessible to all and not… dependent on the spiritual anointment of the individual.” In opposition to rationalist claims, Florovsky emphasized that the Church’s dogmas can only be understood within the Church and its experience of faith. Similarly, Florovsky holds that one within the Church cannot be convicted of the truth of these dogmas through an “outward authority” such as logical verification, or “historical inquiry,” or even a “consensus patrum.”

Both Khomiakov and Florovsky emphasize that the truth of dogma, including dogmatic developments, can only be perceived through the free activity of the Church’s members: through their *askesis*, or, their lived rationality. “For a person living in the Church,” Florovsky writes, “tradition is completely realized and self-verified…”; “Right life [is] the only efficient test of right beliefs,” not “formal subjection to outward authority.” At the heart of Florovsky’s call for a “Neo-patristic synthesis” was his call for the retrieval of the “existential theology” of the Church Fathers, who perceived, and witnessed to, the mutual coinherence and interdependence of dogmatics and asceticism. One might also say that Florovsky advocated an existential understanding of Church authority in relation to dogma that placed the onus (like Khomiakov) on each Christian’s “responsibility” to come to a more perfect conviction of the “tradition of truth” through an ascetical life, while not denying the teaching role specific to the hierarchy.

According to Florovsky, “The Church treasury of total truth is revealed to each in the

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875 V12, 13.
876 V12 20.
877 V1, 46, 53, 111.
878 V1, 53; V13, 72; V4, 81.
879 V6, 44, 302.
measure of his spiritual growth.”\textsuperscript{880} In affirming that guarantees about dogmatic truth come only through \textit{askesis}, Florovsky holds, “the painful duality and tension between freedom and authority is solved.”\textsuperscript{881}

With their emphasis upon a lived rationality, both Khomiakov and Florovsky seem to be operating with what one might call a participatory understanding of rationality, or, an ontology of rationality. In his “Human Wisdom and the Great Wisdom of God,” Florovsky quotes approvingly Vladimir Ern’s statement that “Truth can be achieved by man only because in man is the place of Truth, i.e. he is the image of God, and to him is accessible endless and continual growth in the realization of the eternal idea of his being.”\textsuperscript{882} Florovsky himself grounded men’s and women’s ability to perceive truth in their creation in the \textit{imago Dei}.\textsuperscript{883} He grounds their ability to grow in the comprehension of truth in their free \textit{askesis}: “\textit{To know the truth means to become true, i.e., to realize one’s ideal, to realize the Divine purpose…”}\textsuperscript{884} Now, Florovsky holds, “knowledge of God has become possible through that renewal of human nature which Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection,” as men’s and women’s \textit{askesis} in reason becomes “a rebirth or transformation, indeed a \textit{theosis} [\textit{θέωσις}].” More specifically, “the knowledge of God has become possible in the Church, in the Body of Christ as the unity of the life of grace.”\textsuperscript{885} Thus, according to Florovsky, men’s and women’s convictions about the truth of dogmatic developments are proportional to their participation in the divine life through and in the Church.

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\textsuperscript{880} V14, 77.
\textsuperscript{881} V1, 44, 54.
\textsuperscript{882} V12, 119. V.F. Ern (1882-1917) was a Russian religious philosopher.
\textsuperscript{883} V3, 22.
\textsuperscript{884} V12, 77, 119.
\textsuperscript{885} V3, 26, 28.
Florovsky applies the concept of “external authority” to Roman Catholic conceptions of the role of the hierarchy in a twofold sense. In the first sense, he rejects the idea that bishops, or the pope, can somehow stand external to, or outside the mind of the Church, in their authoritative pronouncements. “The hierarchy teaches as an organ of the Church. Therefore it is limited by the ‘consent of the Church’ [e consensu ecclesiae],” writes Florovsky, in obvious opposition to the formula of Pastor Aeternus.\(^886\)

It is in this sense that Florovsky critiques Roman Catholicism for “an exaggeration of the notion of hieratical charism… a kind of canonical ‘Montanism’” indicated by the attitude that the pope possesses a special power of discernment by virtue of his office.\(^887\)

The second sense relates to the concept of lived rationality as it applies to both the bishops and the faithful. In regard to the bishops, Florovsky affirms that they are indeed the ones who rightfully “anoint the truth” through acting as the Church’s mouthpiece.\(^888\)

But Florovsky clarifies that in order to perform this function, “the bishop must embrace his Church within himself; he must make manifest its experience and its faith.”\(^889\) In other words, a bishop only functions as a mouthpiece of the Church’s teaching inasmuch as he himself lives an ascetical life. In regard to the faithful, Florovsky holds that the authoritative pronouncements of the hierarchy “cannot be a source of spiritual life” for them. “Loyalty to tradition does not mean loyalty to bygone times and to outward authority; it is a living connexion with the fulness of Church experience.”\(^890\) Just as the hierarchy’s pronouncements on dogmatic developments are “unclear, unconvincing” to

\(^{886}\) V3, 195. In the same vein, Florovsky writes in “Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church,” “[The bishop] must speak not from himself, but in the name of the Church, e consensu ecclesiae. This is just the contrary of the Vatican formula: ex sese, non autem ex consensu ecclesiae” (72).

\(^{887}\) V14, 57.

\(^{888}\) V3, 196.

\(^{889}\) Florovsky, “Sobornost,” 72.

\(^{890}\) V3, 199; Florovsky, “Sobornost,” 63.
those outside the Church, so also, Florovsky holds, will they fail to convince those faithful who do not have the “inner evidence of spiritual life.” For the faithful, on the other hand, “they give secure direction in the intellectual investigation of the faith.”

Florovsky’s belief that dogmatic definitions become authoritative for Christian persons only through their free, existential appropriation of these definitions is intimately connected with the centrality of *creatio ex nihilo* in his thought. As such, his critique of the Roman Catholic understanding of authority in relation to dogma touches upon the particular emphases he sees affirmed in the Christian understanding of creation. According to Florovsky, the “radical contingency” of the created world and its otherness entails that human formulations of the truth have a similar contingency. Though Florovsky claims that dogmas have a “perennial significance,” he at the same time qualifies that they are not identifiable with the divine substance. They are symbols for experience, “the result of a creative imagination applied to facts—once again, the ‘free creations of the human soul.’” Thus, dogmatic definitions are not “necessary,” and cannot have a certitude attached to them that is external to the experience that gives rise to them.

According to Florovsky, the Roman Catholic belief that the pope and the hierarchy are infallible dogmatic authorities who make guaranteed pronouncements represents an attempt to improperly attach necessity to dogmatic definitions. It is a form of epistemological “utopianism” that Florovsky sees as “a continual and inescapable temptation of human thought, its negative pole, charged with great, although poisonous,

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892 Florovsky, “Tradition.”
894 V12, 156, 164.
energy.” Florovsky, “seek logical justification for these ideals not in concrete, living experience, but in uniform norms of ‘reason’ or ‘nature,’ in ‘natural law.’” In the case of papal infallibility, the Roman Catholic Church seeks justification for dogmatic truths in the satisfaction of certain canonical norms, such as when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* on issues of faith and morals. But, as Florovsky holds, certainty about dogmatic developments cannot simply be imposed from above, nor can it be a passive acquiescence to a belief in necessary and final words. Certainty, as a function of cognition, can only be achieved by Christian persons through “heroic acts.” And certainty about dogmatic developments—like the *theosis* to which they are inseparably tied—is an *epektasis*: an infinite “stretching forth” that does not come to a term before the *eschaton*.

Florovsky’s rejection of guarantees of dogmatic truth detached from free *askesis* also manifests itself in an allergy to form as related to authority and dogma. As I discussed in Chapter One, one of the characteristics of Hellenist and Idealist philosophies of history that Florovsky opposed was an overemphasis upon form, which “remains [in these systems] always the final and highest value.” These philosophies conceived of history as unfolding according to a certain preexistent outline or scheme irrespective of the free actions of human persons. Applying these concerns to the issue of authority and dogma, Florovsky believed that formal guarantees of dogmatic truth imply that such truth can be perceived and agreed upon if the obligations of certain forms, or structures, are fulfilled. He thought such a formal circumscription of dogmatic truth represented a threat
to the freedom of the members of the Church belonging to them by virtue of their status as persons.

In particular, Florovsky was apprehensive about attaching canonical status to ecumenical councils as forums for official dogmatic definitions. He frequently reiterated that the authority to determine the truth of dogmatic statements was a “charismatic” and not a “canonical” authority. This distinction reappears throughout his oeuvre, and it is best illuminated in his 1967 essay “The Authority of Ancient Councils.” By this distinction, Florovsky means that the truth espoused within councils is a matter to be determined retrospectively; that the Church attempts to discern whether or not the council has “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit… witnessed to the Truth, in conformity with the Scripture as handed down in Apostolic Tradition.” It was thus a matter of reception. In disavowing any formal status to councils, he labeled them as “occasional charismatic events” as opposed to “a canonical institution,” and used the language of “spontaneous” and “occasional” to describe these events in order to accentuate their origins in free activity rather than structural conformity.899

Interestingly, Florovsky seems to endorse a view promoted by both Vasily Bolotov and Hans Küng, namely, that we should conceive of the entire life of the Church as a great Council, and ecumenical councils as “representations” (perhaps “microcosms”?) of this great Council that is the Church. Such a view appears consistent with Florovsky’s position that “the Council is not above the Church,” but is an event within the life of the Church—the growth of the Body of Christ in history. The attempt to accord formal character to ecumenical councils would be a-temporal and thus a-historical, inasmuch as it implies that councils are somehow able to stand outside the

899 V1, 96, 103.
normal flux of the life of the Church that is Tradition. Such an attempt—which implies for Florovsky that God provides a special, external assistance when certain formal criteria are met—also seems to ignore the fact that “the Church… is indeed a ‘Divine institution,’” and therefore has “the ability to discern the truth in faith.”\textsuperscript{900} Its discernment of the truth is ongoing in history, and is perhaps ongoing even in the eschatological state, making it an infinite \textit{askesis}.

On the contrary, an insistence on “\textit{formal} guarantees in doctrinal matters” makes the Church revert back to the “cyclophoria” of Hellenism. It implies that the Church’s existence in history is marked by a continuous circle of falling away from the faith until God’s external assistance descends upon the Church in the form of an ecumenical council. The insistence on formal guarantees is, for Florovsky, a denial of the Church’s true status as the Body of Christ. It is a denial of the fact that Christ truly dwells within each one of us, through his Spirit, and through this indwelling effects the transformation of our entire selves, including our reason. It is a denial of not only our ability to discern truth, but of the fact that we become truth through our life in Christ.

In the search for formal certitudes disconnected from \textit{askesis}, Florovsky sees not only “a continual and inescapable temptation of human thought,” but indeed, its original sin. Florovsky adopts the view of original sin formulated by the Russian theologian Viktor Nesmelov (1863-1920), whom Florovsky lauds for “his brilliant interpretation of the Biblical story of the Fall.” Florovsky summarizes Nesmelov as deeming that “the ‘fall’ consisted in the fact that people desired to attain [the cognition of good and evil] not through a creative act, through free searching, vital God-serving, but rather by a magical route, mechanically…” Both Nesmelov and Florovsky link themselves with “the early

\textsuperscript{900} V1, 96-97.
Slavophiles, along with the West-European Romantics” in calling this original sin by the name of “rationalism.”901

Florovsky implies that the Roman Catholic understanding of authority is a form of rationalism, as it attempts to guarantee the certainty of dogmatic definitions apart from the creative activities of thought and life. Such was also the position of Khomiakov, who held that “rationalism is more apparent in papism than in Protestantism.”902 To paraphrase the words of Maximus the Confessor (whose understanding of the Fall has affinities with Nesmelov’s), the Roman Catholic Church seeks to provide the faithful with certitude about dogmatic developments “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.”903 Infallible statements thus attempt to provide “external illumination” irrespective of “transfiguration.”904 But, as Florovsky recognizes, “sin and evil come not from an external impurity, but from an internal failure, from the perversion of the will,” and can be “overcome only by inner conversion and change…”905 So also, the conviction that dogmatic developments accord with the truth of inner experience can only be arrived at through askesis.

Relatedly, Florovsky also maintains that the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of authority reveals that “the Resurrection, the victory over decay and death, is insufficiently felt” by them.906 The purpose of the Resurrection was not merely an external satisfaction of sins, but “to unite man with God for ever... a lifting up of

902 On Spiritual Unity, 60.
903 Maximus, Ambigua: PG 91, 1156C.
904 V3, 23.
905 V3, 152.
906 V14, 57.
human nature into an everlasting communion with the Divine Life…” Such a lifting-up—“the ‘deification’ of human nature, the ‘theosis’”—included a transformation of human reason so that knowledge of God is once again possible. In asserting that men’s and women’s certitude about dogmatic truth is only attainable through this truth’s conformity to predetermined forms, Florovsky holds that Roman Catholic theology denies the character of the new, free life in the Spirit, and remains enslaved to the law. Indeed, this law-spirit dichotomy, characteristic of the Slavophile movement, underlies all of Florovsky’s treatments of the issue of authority and dogma.

C. FLOROVSKY’S TEMPERING OF HIS SLAVOPHILE DEPENDENCE

Although Florovsky made clear that it was the prerogative of the bishops alone to give authoritative voice to the Church’s teaching, he did not believe that this action came with an infallible guarantee of the truth of the teaching. To put it within the Chalcedonian framework, Florovsky affirmed that the bishops’ role was to incarnate the Church’s dogmatic developments in their witness on behalf of the Church, but that these developments did not need to be further incarnated through canonical assurances. Rather, like Khomiakov, Florovsky held that the faithful can only obtain such assurances through their free askesis within the Church, or, through their fuller incorporation into the Body of Christ.

But it is a testament to the Chalcedonian balance of Florovsky’s thought that this position was not without qualification. Though Florovsky was clearly indebted to Slavophile eccesiology, its Christological shortcomings meant that it could never exhaust Florovsky’s own thought on eccesiology, including his thoughts on

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907 V3, 31, 95, 97.
ecclesiastical authority and its role in dogmatic definition. One could rightly describe him as having an existential, or ascetical, understanding of Church authority, but he significantly nuanced his thought so as to perhaps separate himself from the purely voluntarist understanding of reason and authority others perceived in Khomiakov.\footnote{V6, 41.}

Florovsky’s turn to the Fathers appeared to balance the Slavophile influence of his understanding of authority. If one were to look for a patristic figure who best represents Florovsky’s own thinking on authority, it would be St. John Chrysostom, “the prophet of charity.” In his analyses of Chrysostom, one finds, in germ, the principles underlying Florovsky’s own understanding of authority. Florovsky finds in Chrysostom’s writings the successful integration of the poles of freedom and authority, of dogma and life. According to Florovsky, “Chrysostom understood pastoral work primarily as a service of teaching and persuading. A pastor is an authority, but his jurisdiction is realized through words which attempt to convince, and this is the basic difference between spiritual power and secular power.”\footnote{V7, 246. See also V4, 79.} The recognition of this “basic difference between spiritual power and secular power” is, of course, one of the principal tenets of Slavophilism, as well. So also was Chrysostom’s characterization of the Church as primarily a life of freedom and charity.

Florovsky never rejects Chrysostom’s, or Slavophilism’s, characterization of the Church and its particular understanding of authority. But the historical work he performs in his patrologies demonstrates his growing appreciation for the need to hold this characterization in tension with the fact that the Church still dwells in the world. He recognizes that “the situation [of the Church] changed with the conversion of the
[Roman] Empire,” which “made the universality of the Church more visible than ever before.”\textsuperscript{910} This increased universality meant that the earlier means of maintaining communion between the churches needed to be supplemented by increased organization, which included the occasional calling of ecumenical councils. In the title of a 1957 essay, Florovsky expressed the tension of the Church’s existence in the world, but not of the world, as a tension between “Empire and Desert.” In this essay, he portrays the Church’s attempt to navigate this tension in history as an ascetic struggle and a lock for which “there is no earthly or historical key… but [only] an eschatological key, the true ‘Key of David.’”\textsuperscript{911} As such, Florovsky does not attempt to offer any solutions to this tension, but his very act of wrestling with the tension perhaps helped move him away from the Romantic notions of authority that marked Slavophilism.

Florovsky’s increased recognition of the need for organizations and institutions within the Church manifested itself in qualifications of earlier, polarizing statements that touched upon issues pertinent to authority. For instance, though Florovsky displayed an allergy toward circumscribing the discernment of truth by any formal criteria, he at the same time affirmed the place of form in the life of the Church. He acknowledges that form is an integral part of a historical Church, and that “there are… permanent structures, both in doctrine, ritual and institution, which belong to the very esse of the Church, and constitute her perennial ‘form.’”\textsuperscript{912} I have already discussed his stance that the verbal forms of defined dogmas have an “eternal, irreplaceable” character that serve as a guide

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{910} V8, 138.
\textsuperscript{912} V13, 142.
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for the faithful.913 “[Christian worship],” he wrote, “is and must be determined in form and content by certain ‘credal’ assumptions.”914 One should also note that his famous diagnosis of the “pseudomorphosis” of Russian theological thought via Western categories implies a recognition of “the truth that form shapes substance…”915

Relatedly, Florovsky also saw in the canonical forms a confirmation of the historical reality of the Church, and one of the visible manifestations of her theology. He reiterated in numerous essays that the current canonical division between different groups of Christians is indicative of a real schism.916 Against Bulgakov and others who advocated limited intercommunion on the supposition that a true, mystical unity existed among certain Christians visibly separated by schism, Florovsky said, “A ‘catholic’ cannot divorce order from faith; a very definite Church order is for a ‘catholic’ an article of his integral Christian faith or dogma.”917 And in spite of his trope that ecumenical councils are not so much canonical institutions as charismatic events, at the end of his essay “The Authority of the Ancient Councils” he adds in passing that “canonical strictures or sanctions may be appended to conciliar decisions on matters of faith.”918 In other words, Florovsky allows that canonical status may be attached to councils as a result of the active reception of the faithful. Finally, though Florovsky repeatedly maintained that there was no “rigid theory” about ecumenical councils in the early Church, he also grants that “the highest authority in the Church was a Council.”919

913 Florovsky, “Work of the Holy Spirit,” 13. See also V14, 45: “The formulation of Christian dogma was one of these permanent events or achievements. We have to take it in that concrete shape and form in which it has been first deposited or delivered unto the Church.”
914 V13, 97.
915 V14, 85.
916 V13, 44, 148.
917 V13, 150.
918 V1, 103.
919 V1, 94; V14, 20, 23.
Ultimately, one sees in these qualifications of the canonical realm that Florovsky wished to protect the concept of freedom so dear to Khomiakov, while at the same time avoiding Khomiakov’s seeming denial of the role of form and order in the life of the Church.

In later years Florovsky also tempered his criticisms of Roman Catholicism, including its understanding of authority, though it would be hasty to view this tempering as a repudiation of the positions he espoused in his philosophical and theological essays from the 1920s and 30s. This change appears to be in part the result of Florovsky’s increased engagement with Roman Catholic theologians, especially those belonging to the Nouvelle Théologie school. It was also perhaps the result of his involvement with Protestant groups in the ecumenical movement, whose “problem of manifold denominationalism” he perceived to be a result of “the rupture of Church authority” that came about with the Reformation.920

Florovsky’s patrologies illustrate a much more balanced estimate of the Roman Catholic claims about the papal office. Throughout his examinations of the patristic age, which attempt to combine Geschicthe and Dogmengeschicthe, Florovsky consistently has no trouble in recognizing that “It is merely a fact that from the very beginning—see Pope Clement’s early letter to the Church at Corinth—there was a certain recognized primacy of the Roman Church,” and that “other churches and individuals were constantly appealing to Rome.” At the same time, he cautions that “this does not establish in any sense the later doctrine of papal infallibility nor does it imply that Rome was always

920 V13, 137; V14, 53. See also G. Williams, “Georges Vasilievich Florovsky,” 80: “Involvement in the ecumenical movement after the Anglo-Russian phase in the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius and his increasingly intense exposure to a classical Protestant and Free-church environment have intensified his catholic sensibilities and possibly brought him to feel more in common with Roman Catholicism than was once the case.”
In regard to papal primacy, Florovsky provides a rather neutral account of how Pope Gelasius I (492–496) attached greater canonical significance to the office of the pope. His only negative commentary was a lament that Gelasius’ actions “managed to deepen the rift between Constantinople and Rome, though Florovsky attributes the deepening of this rift to “Gelasius’ contemptuous attitude to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople,” and not to Gelasius’ primatial claims *per se*.

Florovsky’s more balanced view of Roman Catholic authority is also evident in his 1959 essay “On the Upcoming Council of the Roman Catholic Church,” written on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. In this essay, Florovsky demonstrates a remarkably patient attitude toward the First Vatican Council and its definitions of papal primacy and infallibility. He acknowledges the contextual difficulties surrounding the adoption of the “Vatican Dogma”: that the Council had “disbanded without completing its program”; that the definition “had been rather awkwardly removed from its general context,” namely, a dogmatic constitution on the Church; and that the “‘theological climate’ has changed significantly—in the Roman Catholic Church and in the entire Christian world—since the times of Pius the Ninth.”

At the same time, Florovsky does not believe these contextual issues constitute grounds for hoping that the “Vatican Dogma” will eventually be regarded as mere historical and theological folly. He admits that “Papal primacy and infallibility is now not only historical and canonical fact, but an ‘article of faith’ in the Roman Church.” Nevertheless, his tone is hopeful. Rather than alleging that Vatican I’s definition represented the dogmatization of Rome’s Christological deficiencies, Florovsky points

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921 V8, 227, 228.
922 V9, 87.
the way forward by suggesting that the Vatican Dogma needs to be more clearly and distinctly formulated within the “dogma of the Church.” He thought such a balancing would help “render an authentic interpretation of the ‘Vatican Dogma,’” and restore “theological equilibrium.” While not glossing over the differences in the doctrine of the Church that Orthodox and Catholics must still overcome, Florovsky allows that there is room for “discovery and development.”

He even seems to imply that the definitions of papal primacy and infallibility may one day be able to be synthesized within an orthodox, Chalcedonian hermeneutic.

**D. Conclusion**

An initial glance at Florovsky’s direct mentions of dogmatic development might lead one to think that he does not connect it with the concept of authority. As I established in Chapter Two, Florovsky sees in the idea of dogmatic development an affirmation of the place of both reason and life in the growth of the Body of Christ. But for Florovsky, the idea of authority is implied in this affirmation, as dogmatic developments become more authoritative for Christian persons through their life, or, through their incorporation into Christ. This incorporation constitutes, for Florovsky, the concretization, or incarnation, of dogmatic developments, rather than any hierarchical fiat or other supposed formal guarantee of their truth. Such was also the Slavophile position of Khomiakov, though Florovsky parts ways with Khomiakov in affirming the bishops’ concrete role of giving voice to the Church’s teaching, or, her dogmatic developments. But in solidarity with Khomiakov, Florovsky never held that magisterial pronouncements constituted a beacon for the faithful’s certitude about the truth of these developments.

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923 V14, 202-203.
I have argued that the language Newman used to justify the Roman Catholic understanding of authority in general, and the papacy and Magisterium in particular, flowed from the incarnational principle that characterized his thinking about Christianity. Florovsky, too, works out his version of an orthodox Christian understanding of authority through the lens of the dogma of the Incarnation as mediated through Chalcedon. Newman and Florovsky thus coincide in using the Incarnation as a referent point for their respective understandings of authority in relation to doctrinal development, though they differ on the application of this principle. In this Dialogue section of Chapter Three, I will further examine Newman’s and Florovsky’s application of the incarnational principle, though such an examination involves the unenviable task of engaging in what Heidegger referred to as a “hermeneutics of hermeneutics.”

As I argued, the theme of certitude is at the heart of the strong connection Newman makes between doctrinal development and authority. His argument that “An Infallible Development Authority [is] to be Expected” hinges upon his position that the Church’s members have a natural desire for certitude about revelation and its human exposition in word and deed, and that they are not capable of achieving such certitude, in all cases, through their own efforts. An underlying assumption of his position is that certitude about revelation as a whole is intrinsic to Christian faith.\footnote{\textsuperscript{924} Ward, 2: 218-220; \textit{G.A.}, 129-131, 200; \textit{U.S.}, 336.}

Moreover, Newman held that certitude about the whole of revelation, as traditioned by the Church, is also a prerequisite of Christian growth, lest one forever spin around the circle of skepticism. The idea that it was the responsibility of each Christian
to achieve certitude about every doctrine and development of doctrine on his or her own was ludicrous to Newman. According to Newman, the usual (and proper) pattern of Christian life was to accept such developments based upon one’s prior certitude in Magisterial authority, and to grow in one’s understanding of these developments over the course of time and in a manner proper to each person’s particular vocation. (Newman believed that Catholics’ certitude in Magisterial authority also obliges them to respectfulely regard the less official statements of the Magisterium with an attitude that he referred to as the “pietas fidei.”)\textsuperscript{925} The Magisterium’s acts of defining doctrinal developments aid the certitude, and thus the growth, of the faithful, inasmuch as the gift of infallibility protects and guarantees the truth of their definitions. This guarantee serves to make developments more concrete for the faithful, and makes concrete the promise of Christ to his Church that “the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

Newman regarded the Roman Catholic understanding of authority as a fulfillment of Scripture, and thus, an authentic development of doctrine. But for the most part, Newman’s account of authority is, as he freely admits, more apologetic than theological. Yet in this sense it is incarnational, as it professes to take human beings and history as they are, and argues that the Magisterium and the papacy are effective supplies for humanity’s natural and historical needs. Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism was based on his arrival at the conclusion that its system, which includes its understanding of authority, was more congruent with his first principles than those other systems that claimed to be Christian. These first principles were formed based on his real, concrete experience of revelation, history, and a multitude of other things. Thus,

\textsuperscript{925} Diff., 2: 345-346.
Newman’s account of authority proceeds from concrete experience, and attempts to show that the Roman Catholic understanding of authority accords with this experience.

Like Newman, Florovsky indeed acknowledges that the Magisterium has been granted the power to define dogmatic developments, or, to make concrete and visible the verbal witness of the Church. But he nowhere claims that the bishops’ act of defining is protected by the infallibility that belongs to the entire Church. Thus, Florovsky denies that Magisterial definitions in and of themselves provide any sort of guarantee of their truth. This denial is especially signaled by his rejection of any formal, canonical bounds by which the members of the Church may identify what is, and is not, a true dogmatic witness to the experience of faith. As Florovsky reminds us, history shows that the actions of a pope may very well be condemned, “a large ‘general’ council may prove itself to be a ‘council of robbers,’” and a “numerus episcoporum does not solve the question.”

In solidarity with Khomiakov and Slavophilism, Florovsky holds that guarantees about the truth of doctrinal developments can only come about for each of the Church’s members through their personal askesis. According to Florovsky, the truth of dogma further impresses itself upon the “symphony of personalities” in the Church in proportion to their increased participation in the Truth, namely, Jesus Christ. As they become fuller members of the Body of Christ, they come to more and more think with the “mind of the Church.” It is only in the process of this synergetic relationship between the believer and

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926 V1, 52. The most frequently-invoked example of a pope being condemned for heresy is Pope Honorius (625-638), who was condemned at the 3rd Council of Constantinople for his letter to Patriarch Sergius I defending Monothelitism. It is often used as a test case against the Roman Catholic dogma of papal infallibility. Interestingly, Florovsky demonstrates remarkable fairness in his evaluation of Roman Catholic retorts to the Honorius case: “The best defense on the part of the defenders of the Roman doctrine of papal infallibility is that this letter to Sergius was no more than a private letter... a letter which cannot be construed as coming under the category of public papal definitions of faith” (V9, 188).
Christ that doctrinal developments become more authoritative and more certain for the former. Such certitude does not originate from supposed infallible guarantees provided by the Magisterium. To repeat Florovsky’s words, “Authority (understood here as referring to officially designated authorities within the Church) cannot be a source of spiritual life.”

One could very well argue that Florovsky’s more ascetical understanding of authority is incarnational in that it testifies to the essential unity of faith and life. According to Florovsky’s reasoning, doctrinal developments become more certain for a believer the more he or she “puts on Christ.” However, Florovsky’s dependence on a Slavophile understanding of authority perhaps also make for chinks in the otherwise formidable armor of his Chalcedonian theology. His primary critique of Slavophilism in *Ways* was directed toward its “philosophy of history,” which seemed to represent an “escape or even retreat from history.” Florovsky’s patrologies contain some analysis of the problem of authority in the first millennium when, Newman maintains, the Church’s understanding of authority was still very much nascent. However, Florovsky hardly wrestles with the issues of authority that punctuated the historical path of the Church since the Great Schism of 1054. An exception is his 1960 essay “St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” where he critiques the restrictive periodization of the “age of the Fathers” to the Seven Ecumenical Councils by remarking, “Then, St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory Palamas are simply left out, and the great Hesychast Councils of the fourteenth century are ignored and forgotten. What is their

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927 V1, 54.
928 V6, 19.
position and authority in the Church?" But Florovsky’s answer to this question does not include a role for the official authorities within the Church, the bishops. Nor does Florovsky anywhere provide contemporary examples of the bishops’ exercise of dogmatic authority within the Church. By implication, Florovsky seems to regard the history of the Church’s understanding of authority as a history of decline.

More importantly, Florovsky seems to ignore the possibility that authority might provide any kind of assistance to Christians in their personal askesis. Like Khomiakov, he rejects the idea that the Magisterium’s giving of form to Christian witness through authoritative pronouncement serves as an aid to the faith of the members of the Body of Christ. Florovsky claims that his ascetical understanding of authority solves “the painful duality between freedom and authority.” But really, he does not go beyond Khomiakov’s opposition between freedom and authority. Ironically, Khomiakov’s and Florovsky’s rejection of “external authority” turns back upon them, as they end up characterizing the dogmatic role of Magisterial authority as completely external to Christian askesis.

Lewis Shaw hints that this failure to attribute any discernible role to the bishops’ power of defining within the Christian life threatens the incarnational character of Florovsky’s understanding of authority. According to Shaw, “[Florovsky’s] ecclesiology was one of sustained metaphor and image, rather than one which concentrated on delineating the locus or the matrix of the Church’s authority.” More apropos to the issue of doctrinal development, Shaw writes,

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929 V1, 112.
930 V1, 54.
931 V6, 44.
Florovsky found it difficult to bring any critical standard to bear on his idealized Church. He did speak of a ‘charismatic,’ as opposed to ‘canonical,’ Church, but he never elucidated the distinction. He believed that *kerygma* and *dogma* were mutually elaborative, correlative, and definitive statements of the eternal meaning of the Christian faith, and that *kerygma* could serve as a critical principle for interpreting any later developments within Christianity.”

Thus, as Shaw implies, Florovsky never provided any canonical criteria by which the members of the Church could distinguish true from false developments of doctrine.

Because of this lacuna, Shaw appears to characterize Florovsky’s view of ecclesiastical authority as Romantic—a quality he also attributes to Slavophile ecclesiology which, he writes, portrays “love-held-in-common, ‘the depository and the guardian of faith,’ [as] the Church’s guarantor of truth—not the Bible, not a single bishop acting in the name of the whole Church, nor a council.”

Aidan Nichols, who is admittedly indebted to Shaw’s reading of Florovsky, also remarks that “Florovsky’s marked preference for the inner, over against the outer, in matters of catholicity is not, however, in keeping with the character of Christianity as an incarnational religion.”

As I mentioned above, Florovsky admits that the Church may eventually grant canonical status to councils and their doctrinal statements as a matter of reception, which is but another descriptor for the *askesis* of the members of the Church. Zizioulas has also adopted this position, and in a statement bearing striking similarity to Florovsky’s own position writes, “[A] true council becomes such only *a posteriori*; it is not an institution but an *event* in which the entire community participates and which shows whether or not

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933 Ibid., 228-229. See also his footnote summary on 96-97.
935 Nichols, *Light from the East*, 144.
its bishop has acted according to his *charisma veritatis*. However, while granting that councils must be received (a position Newman holds, as well), it seems that a council must have some *a priori* authority if the Church is to have something to receive. In his dissertation on Florovsky, Shaw made the interesting point that “Florovsky never addresses the philosophical question of givenness; that is, do givens become so because they are grounded in revelation, or do we treat events as revelation because they function as givens in our thought?" In the parallel case of Magisterial statements produced by councils, one may well ask: are these statements received because they already have an authoritative status in the “mind of the Church,” or do they solely become authoritative through the act of the Church’s reception of them? Florovsky does not provide an answer.

Shaw’s evaluations of Florovsky’s understanding of authority indirectly raise the question: is the role of defining doctrinal developments that Florovsky locates in the Magisterium merely an abstract role, having no real, concrete function in the growth of the Body of Christ? While giving credence to the Slavophile understanding of authority endorsed by Florovsky, John Meyendorff unwittingly goes beyond it in estimating that “If Orthodox theology has any contribution to make to the present ecumenical dialogue, it will consist in stressing and showing the *auxiliary* character of authority.” According an auxiliary character to authority in the dogmatic realm seems to imply attributing some real, canonical power to it. Newman, as I pointed out, located the Magisterium’s power

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of infallibly defining doctrinal developments within their role in the ruling office of the Church. He held that the Magisterium has a special responsibility, by virtue of ordination, to not only occasionally define doctrinal developments, but to judge and proclaim the Christian truth for the faithful when the need arises. This responsibility of the Church’s ruling office served, in Newman’s understanding, to protect the unity of the Church and promote its growth.

Florovsky’s writings, on the other hand, contain almost no reflection on the kingly, or ruling, office of the Church and how it functions within Christian life. The linguistic omission is probably due to the limited Orthodox recourse to the model of Christ’s threefold office, which was made popular by Calvin’s Institutes. The conceptual omission, however, appears related to Florovsky’s opposition between freedom and authority. Florovsky primarily characterizes the authority of Christ, like the authority of those deemed Fathers of the Church, as a teaching authority. In the Synoptic Gospels, writes Florovsky, “Jesus is portrayed as having an authority—ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων—hitherto not known, an authority of teaching which astounds the people…”939 When Florovsky does refer to Christ’s “kingly rule” in his essay on the “Redemption,” he speaks of it in terms of regeneration, and clarifies that “No one, so far as nature is concerned, can escape Christ’s kingly rule, can alienate himself from the invincible power of the resurrection. But the will of man cannot be cured in the same invincible manner; for the whole meaning of the healing of the will is in its free conversion.”940 Florovsky then goes on to emphasize the Christian’s union with Christ in Baptism as involving the path of free renunciation. Indeed, the typical modern Orthodox

939 V8, 19-20.
940 V3, 147.
interpretation of Christ’s kingly rule is that it is appropriated by each Christian inasmuch as he or she exercises “rule” over his or her passions. While not denying the truth of this interpretation, which has support in Tradition, it seems that the question of whether or not Christ’s kingly office applies to the episcopate in any specific sense is worth further intra-Orthodox reflection.941

Unlike Newman, Florovsky does not see the bishop’s role of defining as serving to protect the unity of the Church in a visible manner. Rather, he holds that the visible unity of the Church is manifested in the Apostolic Succession, which he regards as primarily a function of the sacramental, or priestly, office of the Church. Florovsky seems to implicitly adopt Constantine’s sharp distinction between the imperial authority of the secular rule and the sacerdotal authority that resides in the episcopacy.942 He affirms an intimate connection between unity in the sacraments and unity in faith. However, he does not claim that the bishops have a specific role, by virtue of their ordination, in preserving unity through their power of defining. He never maintained that the bishops’ definitions necessarily served as authoritative judgments of the mind of the Church, nor that their definitions indicated the ongoing triumph of truth. And he ascribes no canonical or institutional power to the bishop’s dogmatic role.

Florovsky’s failure to attribute a concrete ruling power to bishops in regard to dogma once again raises the issue of the philosophy of history. I established in Chapter Two that Newman and Florovsky both affirm, with qualifications, an organic

941 As Radu Bordeianu points out, Dumitru Staniloae (a thinker close to Florovsky) also predominantly regards the Christian’s fulfillment of the kingly office to consist in his or her rule over passions. Interestingly, Bordeianu argues that Staniloae’s failure to apply it beyond the ascetical sphere is perhaps due to the Communist persecution of the Romanian Church of his time, which removed Church authority from the public square (“Priesthood Natural, Universal, and Ordained: Dumitru Staniloae’s Communion Ecclesiology,” Pro Ecclesia 19:4 [2010]: 427.
942 V8, 141.
interpretation of history. They both view history as the growth of the Body of Christ, and both consider that the Church’s growth in the knowledge of dogma is an indispensable part of its overall growth. But they differ as to how this growth in the knowledge of dogma is preserved and promoted. Newman believes that it is the prerogative of the ruling office of the Church to tend to this growth, pruning when necessary, through their power of defining and authoritatively pronouncing on dogmatic matters. Florovsky, on the other hand, does not claim that the bishops’ power of defining ensures that the Church’s witness to the experience of faith remains faithful. Shaw alludes to a problem that arises with Florovsky’s position: “Strangely, his obsession with free will never obtrudes upon, nor arises within, the context of Church-cum-φρόνημα; e.g., could the Church have chosen Arianism, or does the Spirit dictate her choices?” Florovsky does not seem to regard the Church’s perseverance in faith as a completely open-ended contingency, and thus, one would assume he believes this perseverance involves a synergy between human action and Divine Providence exercised through the Spirit of Christ’s presence in the Church. But he certainly differs from Newman inasmuch as he does not acknowledge that God providentially guides His Church’s adherence to the truth through any of its visible structures.

As a function of his understanding of the ruling office of the Church, Newman furthermore affirms the dogma defined by Vatican I that regards the papacy as endowed with the ability to infallibly define dogmas without the explicit consent of the rest of the Magisterium and Church. As I argued, Newman’s acceptance of papal infallibility was congruent with his belief that there was a need for a “center of unity” in the Church. For him, the dogma of papal infallibility was but an extension of the claims of papal primacy

into a clearer role in the dogmatic realm. Von Balthasar, who studied under Newman scholar Erich Przywara, takes up a similar line of thinking as Newman in his work *Der Antirömische Affekt*. He describes the pope as the “‘head’ within the collegium and the communio as the element instituted by Christ to represent and (what is more) to determine unity… [who] must be able to exercise his legal authority throughout the whole of the united body without being limited by the rights of his fellow bishops.” He furthermore writes that papal infallibility “is not an obstacle to [the pilgrim Church] but the indispensable prerequisite if she is to be communio in the Spirit of Christ here on earth.”

Von Balthasar then goes on to expand on the idea that only a Church with a pope can guarantee the freedom of its members, and has recourse to the thought of Newman and Soloviev. Quoting Soloviev’s *Russia and the Universal Church*, von Balthasar points out that Soloviev opposed the “idle daydreams” of the Slavophiles, who proposed that there existed a unity in faith among the members of the Orthodox Church in spite of visible divisions among them. Because this supposed “unity in faith… is not expressed by any living acts,” Soloviev referred to it as “an abstract formula that produces nothing and has no binding power.” According to Soloviev, it is only the pope, protected by infallibility, who can concretely secure the unity of the Church in truth and freedom.

Florovsky was aware of Soloviev’s line of argument in *Russia and the Universal Church*. In *Ways*, Florovsky had dismissed Soloviev as “[knowing] little more about the West than unionistic ultramontanism and German idealism,” and regarded his theocratic

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hopes as “utopian.” Florovsky seems to adopt a more nuanced criticism of Soloviev in later years, and notes in “Reason and Faith in the Philosophy of Solov’ev” (1955) that “The theocratic conception of [Soloviev’s] ‘Romanizing’ years has not been properly studied up to now.” Florovsky also acknowledges that “in [Soloviev’s] interpretation, it was precisely ‘authority’ of the divine truth, mediated through the hierarchical stewardship of the Church, that could secure true freedom,” but Florovsky does not comment further on this contention. Undoubtedly, Florovsky never wavered in his position that Soloviev’s theocratic proposals exhibited a failure to effectively maintain the tension between “empire and desert.” But he also never wavered in his adulation for Soloviev’s recognition of the unity of faith and reason, which was exemplified in Soloviev’s acceptance of the idea of dogmatic development. Soloviev came to perceive the need for a concrete authority to ensure unity in the Church and the freedom of its members to develop their understanding of dogma. It is unfortunate that Florovsky never examined this corollary of Soloviev’s promotion of dogmatic development, or whether the tension between “empire and desert” is applicable in the dogmatic realm.

Florovsky’s evaluation of Soloviev in “Reason and Faith” contains the indirect critique that Soloviev’s understanding of authority lacked an emphasis on *askesis.* It is important to keep in mind that Florovsky’s anthropology is behind the ascetical character

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946 V6, 302; V11, 108.
948 Florovsky, “Reason and Faith,” 296: “As far as he could see, ‘reason’ spoke in history rather for ‘faith’ than against it. One had to ‘believe’ because it was only through ‘faith’ that one could ‘understand.’ *Credo ut intelligam.* On the other hand, one gets the impression that it was precisely the ‘intelligence’ that supplied him with the ultimate assurance or security.” On the lack of an ascetical component in Russian religious philosophy in general, Sergey Horuzhy writes, “… it was noticed that, however successful the metaphysics of All-Unity, it left out vital aspects of Russian spirituality—above all, anthropology, Orthodoxy’s views on man in relation to God. Here lay the classical themes of Orthodox mystics and ascetics: the flexibility of human nature, the struggle against passions, the purification of the soul, and the deification of many by God’s grace. All this fell outside the metaphysics of All-Unity and could not be described by its concepts” (“Neo-Patristic Synthesis and Russian Philosophy,” *SFTQ* 44 [2000]: 314).
that marks his understanding of authority. To summarize some themes touched upon earlier in Chapter Two, Florovsky believes that Christ’s redemption accomplished the renewal of human reason, and that the Christian person is thus capable of knowing the truth through his or her growth in union with Christ through his body, the Church. Florovsky balances his acknowledgement of the ultimately apophatic character of theology with the affirmation that men and women can really know the truth. As I pointed out, Florovsky’s 1933 essay “The Problematic of Christian Reunion” contains the charge that the Roman Catholic understanding of authority reveals a failure to feel “the Resurrection, the victory over decay and death.”949 This charge is part of a larger Orthodox polemic against a Western theology of the cross that fails to adequately integrate the crucifixion within the entirety of the Paschal Mystery. Though Florovsky was less negative in tone toward Roman Catholic theology in later years, his charge is still worth examination. As Florovsky pointed out at the end of Ways, “Return is possible only through ‘crisis,’ for the path to Christian recovery is critical, not irenical,” though he qualified that this “crisis” must involve not tired polemics, but “a historiosophical exegesis of the western religious tragedy.”950

Newman indeed emphasized that the Church still needs a clear authority with the power to act infallibly due to the sin that ever threatens the Church until the eschaton. I pointed out that there is evidence that Newman thought such authority would have been needed regardless of sin, as a result of human finitude, but it is certainly not an emphasis of his. Though Newman’s retrieval of the salvific model of deification is commendable, he does not give a positive account of how the divine indwelling contributes to the

949 V14, 57.
950 V6, 302.
character of Christian knowledge. Such is also a general trend with the Roman Catholic theology of authority in general. Florovsky’s charge should give Roman Catholics pause, for it points to a need to account for the redeemed character of human knowledge within their understanding of authority and its function in the Church.

Nevertheless, Newman’s account of authority is not devoid of an ascetical component. Newman located the act of defining in the Ecclesia docens, as does Florovsky, but this episcopal act is not intended as a substitute for the active assent of the faithful. Certitude about doctrinal developments cannot be forced upon the men and women of the Church, even if they do have the supposed infallible guarantee provided by the Magisterium. Indeed, in the aftermath of the definition of papal infallibility, Newman famously wrote, “We cannot force things. The Council cannot force things—the voice of the Schola Theologorum, of the whole Church diffusive, will in time make itself heard, and Catholics instincts and ideas will assimilate and harmonize into the credenda of Christendom, and the living tradition of the faithful…”

According to Newman, the formal guarantees provided by infallible authorities constitute “external evidence” of the truth of the Church, but they still require the “internal [evidence]… supplied by the moral sense” of the faithful. Newman portrays the faithful’s reception of defined doctrines as still very much an ascetical act. Through their active reception, the faithful help further draw out the meaning of what has been defined, which sometimes requires a “legitimate minimizing” that serves to “trim the boat” of a definition.

Finally, in Consulting, Newman approvingly quotes a passage from a letter of Bishop Ullathorne (Newman’s ordinary), published after the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception,

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952 U.S., 69.
which makes the claim that those faithful who live truly ascetical lives are the best mirrors of the Church’s faith: “And it is the devout who have the surest instinct in discerning the mysteries of which the Holy Spirit breathes the grace through the Church, and who, with as sure a tact, reject what is alien from her teaching.”

But there is a difference in Newman’s and Florovsky’s models of ascetical reception. Newman portrays the process of Tradition as a dialogue between the ruling and prophetical offices of the Church, between authority and theology, mediated by the Holy Spirit, who serves as the unifying principle. Edward Miller aptly describes Newman’s understanding of this process:

The dialectical movement between the magisterium and the baptized faithful [including the schola theologorum] occurs, of course, at the level of grace, and the process can be described in terms of the original unity that is the Holy Spirit. All dialectical movement attempts to recapture the original unity from which it arose. The faith is externalized into words (i.e., Newman’s principle of dogma), and the words are assimilated, under the action of the Holy Spirit, so that there is proper understanding (internalization) of what had been externalized. The faith of the church returns to itself in more articulated form but not as a stranger. Newman assuredly believes that the priestly office also has a role in this dialectical process, but he did not elaborate on this role in any of his works. He also acknowledges that each member of the Church possesses all of these offices in some mode.

Florovsky, on the other hand, like Khomiakov, does not portray the Christian person’s askesis in truth as a dialogue between different groups within the Church. He views the person’s activity within Tradition as a dialogue, but it is a dialogue with other past and present persons within the Body of Christ, who is the “personal centre” of the

The personal emphasis of Florovsky’s model of the Christian’s *askesis* in truth is, of course, not opposed to Newman’s, since Newman regards the various offices of the Church as made up of persons, and claims that each of these offices belong in some way to each baptized Christian. But Florovsky’s emphasis indicates a phenomenon that marks his understanding of authority. Florovsky’s ecclesiology was an ecclesiology of persons, but he did not always emphasize the functional identity of certain persons within the Church except in the sacramental realm. Accordingly, his model of the Christian’s development in the understanding of doctrine was not the hierarchical schema of the Church, but monasticism, which in the East “cut across the basic distinction between clergy and laity in the Church.” Florovsky acknowledges that “Monasticism could never become a common way of life.” But he never quite incorporated this insight into his understanding of authority, which is characterized by the otherness of the monastic way of life.

In a 1933 essay, Florovsky accused Roman Catholic understandings of authority as evidencing an insufficient feeling of the Resurrection. However, one might very well accuse his understanding of authority at this time as not sufficiently feeling the effects of sin that remain in the Church after the Redemption. Florovsky’s reticence in regard to the continued existence of sin in the Church is perhaps a sign of the “voluntaristic flavor” that Rowan Williams perceives in some of Florovsky’s writings. Shaw, who also sees this voluntarism in Florovsky, notes that the consequence of Florovsky’s emphasis on

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956 V1, 67.
957 V2, 86-87, 98.
958 R. Williams, “Eastern Orthodox Theology,” in *The Modern Theologians*, 166.
“creative freedom… lays him open to the serious charge of undervaluing the role of grace in his salvation history.”\(^9\)

Though Shaw is rightly cautious about making this charge, it does seem that Florovsky failed to consider whether authority could be a form of grace for Christians in their growth in the understanding of Christian experience. According to Newman and the Roman Catholic tradition, the effects of sin continue to thwart the *askesis* of the members of the Church in their knowledge of, and participation in, God, and authority serves as a divinely-provided aid to keep these members on the right path. Some of Florovsky’s later works admit the continued obstacle of sin in the Church’s growth in knowledge, thus blunting the voluntarism that characterizes some of his earlier essays. For instance, in “Religion and Theological Tensions” (1955), Florovsky writes, “Of course, we have to distinguish the inevitable and healthy ‘tensions’ of search, *physiological* tensions, as it were, and the pathological ones, which are implied in our sin, which is remitted and yet not exterminated to the full extent. In our actual practice, the healthy dialectics of search is still dangerously contaminated by the dialectics of error. We still belong to a *fallen* world; it is already redeemed, but not yet transfigured.”\(^{9}\) But he does not here take the further step of asserting that the fallen nature of the world necessitates the guidance of infallible authority within the Church.

Aside from the above reference to “*physiological tensions*,” Florovsky for the most part fails to account for finitude and contingency in the Christian’s *askesis* in truth. Though Florovsky consistently emphasized the limitations and contingencies of human knowledge, he did not seem to acknowledge that these limitations and contingencies

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could represent obstacles to Christian men and women in their growth in knowledge. He is right in affirming that Christians, in their redeemed state, can indeed know the truth, and know it with certainty. But their knowledge and their certitude still remain subject to the contingencies of created existence, and thus, it can falter, as has been historically indicated by the many heresies that have beset the Church. The Incarnation and Redemption indeed brought about the “newness” of created existence, and the members of the Church are members of the new creation who participate in the divine life. But in this participation, which is a true participation, God still remains other. Authority may not be external to the Church, but finite human knowledge still needs an authority that is externally manifested within the Church in order to aid its members in their *askesis*.

I began this chapter by quoting Andrew Louth’s contention that Newman’s theory of doctrinal development is inextricably bound up with the particular Roman Catholic understanding of authority. Florovsky’s carefully nuanced acceptance of doctrinal development demonstrates that Louth’s contention is a bit of overstatement. *Mutatis mutandis*, however, Louth is right in perceiving that the idea of doctrinal development, or Tradition, is inextricably bound up with the question of authority. Both Newman and Florovsky share Louth’s perception, though each has a different answer to where the proper locus of doctrinal authority in the Church lies.

I had written in the beginning of this section that judging the Chalcedonian fidelity of Newman’s or Florovsky’s respective understanding of authority involves engaging in a “hermeneutics of hermeneutics.” Both Newman and Florovsky show a concern with affirming certain categories they see as represented by the poles of the human and divine in the hypostatic union—the visible and invisible, the concrete and
abstract, the historical and eschatological—but these categories are differently applied by them to the issue of the role of Church authority in doctrinal development. Newman sees the infallibility of the entire Church as needing visible and concrete manifestation in the authoritative doctrinal pronouncements of the hierarchy, which guarantee the truth of doctrinal developments and thus aid the certitude of the faithful. Florovsky grants that the hierarchy has the power to visibly represent the teaching of the Church by defining doctrines, but denies that this power serves to aid the faithful in their conviction of the truth of doctrinal developments. Instead, he holds that the truth becomes more concrete for the members of the Church solely through their *askesis*, and neglects to assign the bishops a clearly defined role in this *askesis*.

Furthermore, Newman believes that history testifies to the need for an infallible authority in the process of doctrinal development, and that history has revealed the chaos that ensues without such an authority. Florovsky, on the other hand, interprets history as demonstrating that the Church does not need canonical strictures in order to ensure the continuity of its faithful witness to revelation. How is one to determine which of these accounts of the dogmatic role of Church authority is more faithful to Chalcedon? The answer is tied up with the question.

Though a definitive answer to this question is impossible right now, this examination of authority’s role in the process of doctrinal development nevertheless has the potential to bear fruit. Both Newman and Florovsky recognized the place of first principles in knowledge at the individual and ecclesial levels. Roman Catholics and Orthodox agree that the papacy is the greatest obstacle to reunion, but there are principles underlying the affirmation or rejection of the papacy. Newman’s and Florovsky’s
understandings of the dogmatic role of the papacy in particular, and Church authority in
general, reveal some of these principles. As I have attempted to show, their respective
answers to the question of the role of authority in doctrinal development are conditioned
by their positions on the fundamental issues of nature and grace, freedom and
personhood, faith and reason, the cross and the redemption. And, the incarnational
character of their theologies means their position on these issues is bound up with their
respective answers to Christ’s question to Peter: “Who do you say that I am?”
CONCLUSION

The catalyst for my dissertation was some modern Orthodox authors’ perception that doctrinal development was not, as Andrew Louth puts it, “a valid category for Orthodox theology.” I stated in the introduction that one purpose of this dissertation was to respond to this Orthodox rejection of doctrinal development, whose most recognized exponent is John Henry Newman. Newman’s theory of development has come to be representative of Roman Catholic thinking on the topic. The Orthodox rejection of doctrinal development is in part attributable to the lack of attention they have directed at this theological category. Orthodox authors have engaged in neither a thorough reception of doctrinal development in general, nor of Newman in particular. My response consisted of putting Newman in dialogue with one of modern Orthodoxy’s most representative thinkers—Georges Florovsky—on the question of doctrinal development. In so doing, I hoped to highlight areas of agreement between Newman and Florovsky on the issues of revelation and Tradition that are fundamental to the idea of doctrinal development. I also hoped to frame some of the Orthodox objections to doctrinal development, and at the same time, reveal some of their shortcomings.

The assumed premise of my first chapter was that the way one views the mode and character of divine revelation affects one’s attitude toward doctrinal development, i.e., the Church’s reception of revelation. I showed that both Newman and Florovsky portray divine revelation as a series of personal, and thus free, acts of the living God in history for the sake of men and women’s deification. Significant for doctrinal development, Newman and Florovsky both imply that God’s act of revealing serves as a
pattern for human persons’ act of receiving this revelation. The initial reception of God’s revelation—which Newman terms “impression,” and Florovsky terms “experience”—involves cognitive and creative activity on the part of the human person. What is more, Newman and Florovsky claim that this active reception of revelation takes place not only on the individual level, but on the ecclesial level of the Church’s “mind,” as well. This active reception of revelation marks the life of the Church in history, and constitutes its mandate.

In Chapter Two I took up the subject of Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of Tradition, which represents the Church’s active reception of revelation in history, and which I identified with the development of doctrine. Newman and Florovsky regard Scripture and dogma as two principal manifestations of the reception of revelation, though they also regard the entire life of the Church as manifesting this reception. According to both authors, the dogmatic definitions that are the fruits of development serve a positive function in the Church: for Newman, they are the explicit concretizations of the “idea” of revelation as it exists in the Church’s mind; for Florovsky, they are the Church’s witness to the “experience” of revelation. Furthermore, both claim that the Church’s development of doctrine is ordered toward systematization, and that it is appropriate to employ the organic metaphor in describing this development.

In the Dialogue section of Chapter Two, I attempted to clarify the apparently contradictory statements Florovsky made about the idea of doctrinal development. Florovsky rejected organismic accounts of doctrinal development that portrayed the Church’s growth in the understanding of revelation as the unfolding of an idea irrespective of human action. Relatedly, most of his rejections of doctrinal development
manifest a rejection of logical theories of development. These theories claimed that
growth in understanding of revelation comes about through a syllogistic process
independent of experience. In other words, they implied for Florovsky a disjunction
between faith and reason. On the other hand, Florovsky saw the unity of faith and reason
affirmed in Soloviev’s understanding of doctrinal development, which he commended for
“establish[ing] a method for dogmatic theology.” And Newman’s theory of development
was neither organismic nor logical, which explains why Florovsky never specifically
rejected it, and perhaps even endorsed it in his 1960 encyclopedia article on “Tradition.”

In Chapter Three I examined Newman’s and Florovsky’s understandings of the
role of authority in the process of doctrinal development. I demonstrated that Newman
and Florovsky both believe that the issue of authority is intrinsic to doctrinal
development. However, my focus in this chapter (versus Chapters One and Two) shifted
from trying to establish harmony between Newman and Florovsky on this point, to more
clearly explicating a theme in the theory of doctrinal development that too often remains
unexamined. Newman believed that acceptance of the theory of development
necessitated acceptance of an infallible authority who could give certitude to the faithful
about the truth of developments through definitions. He held that the entire Church is
infallible because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But he also held that this infallibility is
actively exercised in the official decisions of the Magisterium of the Church, whose head
is the pope. Florovsky, too, believed the power to define the teaching of the Church
belonged to the bishops alone, but he did not believe this power was protected with
infallibility. According to Florovsky, the members of the Church could only become
convicted of the truth of doctrinal definitions through their personal, ecclesial askesis, rather than the act of defining itself.

My dissertation’s second goal was to demonstrate that an evaluation of Newman’s theory of development according to Eastern categories of thought, via Florovsky, would lead to that theory’s own development. In Chapter One, I defended Newman against the charge that his theory promotes new revelation. At the same time, dialogue with Florovsky showed that Newman’s recourse to the formula that revelation ended with the “death of the last Apostle” is reconcilable with a dynamic understanding of revelation that affirms that the human response is itself included in that revelation. The fact that both Newman and Florovsky hold that revelation is received by the “mind of the Church” provided an opportunity for examining this term’s place in Newman’s theory. I showed that both authors believe the experience of revelation dwells in the members of the Church, but is not reducible to a collective consciousness of the members alone. I then argued that both authors regard it as a participatory concept, and that the members’ development of doctrine depends upon their union with Christ and his Spirit who dwells in the Church.

Chapter Two included several points on which Florovsky’s theology could potentially contribute to the development of Newman’s theory. Florovsky better emphasized the positive character of dogmatic formulation than Newman, an affirmation that he rooted in men’s and women’s creation in the imago Dei and the redemption of their reason through Christ’s assumption of a human intellect. In addition, Florovsky offers a potential corrective to Newman’s assertion that the idea of revelation, like other ideas, organically develops of its own innate power in conjunction with the innate power
of reason. Florovsky allows for the propriety of organic metaphors for Christian theology, but he clarifies that doctrine develops as a result of the synergistic divine and human activity of the Body of Christ. This clarification is consonant with the significance of human activity and corporate ecclesiology in Newman’s thought. Lastly, Florovsky stressed the inseparability and mutual coinherence of growth in knowledge and growth in holiness, and maintained that this growth constituted the vocation of not only each Christian person, but the Body of Christ as a whole. One finds in the system of Florovsky, as he wrote of Maximus’ system, “dogmatics and asceticism…organically and inseparably brought together.” He provides a patristically-grounded rationale for claiming that the Church’s development of doctrine corresponds with its growth in holiness, which is a claim Newman scholars have typically balked at making.

Because Orthodoxy has not reflected on the question of authority as extensively as Roman Catholicism, Chapter Three yielded more potential areas in which Newman could contribute to some of the ideas present in Florovsky rather than vice versa. Florovsky never quite freed himself from the abstractions and oppositions typical of the Slavophile understanding of authority. Unlike Newman, Florovsky fails to consider that authority’s act of defining may play some role in the faithful’s askesis in truth, though he absolutely believes that dogmatic definitions themselves have an authority that directs this askesis. And though one must conclude that Florovsky did not ultimately oppose the canonical and the charismatic realms, his descriptions of authority remained more in the latter than the former.

In spite of its shortcomings, Florovsky’s reflections on authority offer possible contributions to Newman’s theory. Florovsky’s more ascetical understanding of
authority points toward a need to further account for the theological role of the faithful in the process of development. In addition, Florovsky’s insistence that Christ’s redemption included the redemption of human knowledge deserves consideration given Newman’s emphasis upon the necessity of a clear and distinct infallible authority to compensate for human fallenness and finitude. The more negative statements about Roman Catholic understandings of authority found in several of Florovsky’s earlier essays are also worthy of consideration, for opposition is a stimulant of development.

I believe that the third goal of this dissertation represents the most important development of Newman’s theory: the illustration of its Christocentric character. Newman and Florovsky’s theologies share an incarnational, or Christocentric, orientation, which is most likely attributable to their common reliance on the patristic witness. Newman held that the Incarnation was “the central truth of the gospel, and the source whence we are to draw out its principles.” Florovsky more explicitly and unabashedly sought refuge in a vigorously Christocentric theology, and affirmed that “one can evolve the whole body of Orthodox belief out of the Dogma of Chalcedon.” His Christocentrism is marked by a focus on the hypostatic union as defined by Chalcedon, and the emphases he sees affirmed by this union: personhood, freedom, and the significance of both divine and human action, the concrete and the abstract, reason and faith, the historical and the eschatological.

While Newman’s Christocentrism is not as explicit as Florovsky’s, one finds these realities similarly affirmed in Newman’s works, and particularly in his theory of doctrinal development. As such, I have attempted to show that doctrinal development is something more than “an hypothesis to account for a difficulty.” Rather, it testifies to a
God whose free and active revelation of His person in history beckons men and women to actively respond with their whole beings—in thought, word, and deed. This response characterizes their history in these “last days,” and contributes to the completion of the Body of Christ. “Development of doctrine” is thus a descriptor of a Christian theology of history.

Christocentrism also provides the lens with which one should view objections to doctrinal development leveled by certain Orthodox authors. Florovsky held that Christ’s assumption of human nature represented a mandate to affirm both divine and human activity in the life of the Church. He also emphasized that Christ redeemed the totus homo, and that both reason and faith, or, theology and life, contribute to the progressive deification of the Body of Christ and its members. He perceived this same emphasis affirmed in both Khomiakov’s and Soloviev’s understandings of doctrinal development. I have argued that Newman’s theory also affirms this emphasis, which he makes more explicit in the unity he posits between real and notional knowledge in his Grammar of Assent.

I have instanced Lossky’s and Louth’s objections to doctrinal development as threats to the maintenance of this unity between faith and reason. They both ascribe a role to theology in relation to the believer’s experience of faith. But seemingly in deference to the priority they grant to apophaticism, they deny that theology contributes to a growth in one’s understanding of this experience and, by implication, fail to accord a place to reason in one’s mystical ascent. Concomitantly, Lossky ends up promoting a species of logical development, which Florovsky vehemently opposed for its implied separation of theology and life. Also, Lossky and Louth echo the commonly-held view
that doctrinal definitions are necessary only when heresy threatens the faith. Florovsky believed that such a position indicates not only a negative view of reason, but a negative view of history.

My primary reason in distinguishing between Florovsky and those Orthodox who reject the idea of development is not to erect new walls within modern Orthodox theology, but to call forth further reflection on the category of doctrinal development. As I have argued, this category acts as a nexus for a number of themes of fundamental theology: revelation, Tradition, the role of dogmatic language, the place of reason and faith in the growth of the Body of Christ, and the role of authority in this growth. Greater Orthodox reflection on doctrinal development must entail what Florovsky advocated as a combination and correlation of *Geschichte* and *Dogmengeschichte* of the entirety of the Church’s Tradition. But it should also entail further reception of the thought of Newman, whose entire thought, and not just his *Essay on Development*, represents the *locus classicus* for the question of doctrinal development.

Newman has had a tremendous impact on Roman Catholic thought in the twentieth century, and thus, greater Orthodox reflection on doctrinal development has ecumenical implications. Thus far, the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue (at the official levels) has focused on differences surrounding particular dogmas and doctrines, such as the *Filioque* clause and the Vatican I definitions of papal primacy and infallibility. But, as Florovsky has argued, these differences were preceded by the progressive “disintegration of the Christian mind.” There are thus hermeneutical differences that are operative in, though not entirely determinative of, these differences at the dogmatic level. Florovsky wrote that ecumenism “will require the development of Church doctrines, in all their
entirety and complexity.” This development will involve not only a retrieval of the “common mind” of the first millennium, but also a creative appropriation of that mind through engaging with the questions and concerns of today. Ultimately, reunion can only come about through *askesis*, but it must be an *askesis* of the *totus homo* and the *totus Christus* that ascribes a role to both reason and life. Such a holistic *askesis* is the path of “Neo-patristic synthesis,” and the path of the development of doctrine.
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