

Cardinals Newman and Scheffczyk on the Development of Dogma

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1. Introduction

The affinity that Cardinal Scheffczyk had for St. John Henry Newman is no secret. One scholar points to «the influence of John Henry Newman» which enabled Scheffczyk «to construct a modern theology characterised by a mode of thinking that took both salvation history and the individual person seriously»¹. Another scholar has suggested that for Scheffczyk, «der deutsche Newman» might be a fitting moniker². To corroborate such a suggestion would require a more thorough familiarity with the work of Scheffczyk than I possess. But the moniker is suggestive and, at the very least, *prima facie*, corroborated by (1) Scheffczyk's sympathetic reading of Newman and (2) some major tendencies they have in common, which include a theology that attempts to hold tensile poles together and a dual sensitivity to both history and human experience.

The second point is easily corroborated if one accepts an interpretation of Newman in terms of polarity³. It is indisputable that Newman works with some dichotomies and tensions to great effect. The categories of the «real» versus the «notional» comes to mind, as do his reflections on the tensions between the Church's priestly,

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¹ J. NEBEL, *Cardinal Leo Scheffczyk: a brief theological and biographical portrait*, in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10/1 (2010) 13-18 (14).

² M. HAUKE, *Nachruf auf Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk*, in *Theologisches* 36/1-2 (2006) 5-28 (22).

³ One of the foremost interpreters of Newman on this line is my own *Doktorvater*, T. MERRIGAN, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 7), Louvain 1991, esp. 1-19.

prophetic, and kingly offices. Where he and Scheffczyk alike keep tension-in-unity extends to the spheres of faith and reason, God and world, Scripture and tradition, grace and nature, faith and works, creation and redemption, and the common priesthood and teaching office⁴.

As it is, then, the goal of this essay is quite humble. I simply hope to show (1) that Newman and Scheffczyk have more in common than their birthday of 21 February. In fact, I will show that Newman was a privileged resource for Scheffczyk on the question of doctrinal development! And (2) that the two cardinals together offer useful resources for upholding what I believe to be the single most important principle for development theory today, which has been repeatedly under attack (today, mostly by historicism and radical hermeneutics): namely, the dogmatic principle. I cannot manage to give a full and direct response to historicism and radical hermeneutics. But I will argue that historicism and radical hermeneutics undercut Newman's dogmatic principle and therefore are ultimately incompatible with theological faith and the demands of Christian discipleship as Newman understands them. To do so, I will appeal to Newman's teaching on conscience, which is, admittedly, not a common point of reference for discussions on dogma and doctrinal development, but one which I hope offers helpful insight into them. Without the dogmatic principle, Newman, his theory, his *Notes* of authentic development, are all obsolete.

2. Scheffczyk's Reception of Newman

While Newman's influence might be discerned in the many other theological areas of interest for Scheffczyk, such as his ecclesiology, Newman occupies a privileged place in Scheffczyk's treatments of fundamental-theological topics such as doctrinal development. Like most presentations of development theory, Scheffczyk's briefly treats the logical theories of scholastic theology⁵. But unlike other scholars, Schef-

⁴ E. DE GAÁL, *The Contributions of Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk to Mariology after Vatican II*, in *Marian Studies* 65 (2014) 113-138 (122-123). Gaal continues: «He discovers "a gravitation to the stronger pole, towards the divine, the absolute, to the everlasting, without suppressing the other pole", but rather, seeing its value precisely as originating from the Divine and intended for glorification, by magnifying God with Mary». Also, L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Sensus fidelium – Witness on the part of the community*, in *International Catholic Review Communio* 15 (1988) 182-198 (186).

⁵ The most sophisticated exposition of this theory belongs to the Spanish Dominican Francisco Marín-Sola. Scheffczyk summarizes these theories briefly and fairly, but ultimately dismisses them. [On a personal note, while I agree with some of the shortcomings Scheffczyk points out of certain logicist theories, there has been more recently a renewed appreciation for some of the methodological virtues employed by theorists such as Marín-Sola and these more sympathetic readings of Marín-Sola will appear in a future issue of the English Edition of *Nova et Vetera*.] See Guy Mansini, Andrew Meszaros and Reinhard Huetter's upcoming contributions in *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition), *forthcoming*, dedicated to Newman, Aquinas, and doctrinal development.

fczyk does not lump together the Tübingen School with Newman over against the logicians, on the one hand, and theological liberalism and modernism, on the other. Rather Scheffczyk distinguishes between the «Historical-Dynamic Type» [*Der geschichtlich-dynamische Typ*] (i.e., Tübingen) and the «Historical-Psychological Explanation» [*Die geschichtlich-psychologische Erklärung*] (i.e., Newman). Scheffczyk's differentiation of the two reveals something about his understanding of Newman's unique contribution.

On Scheffczyk's narrative, the Tübingen school was able to see the foundation or heart [*Grundlegung oder Kern*] of the dogmatic system, and its development, as the work of God's Spirit⁶, with variations on how to explain the relationship between the Spirit and the historical factors in the drama of doctrinal development⁷. Ultimately, however, Tübingen, along with the Roman theologians, Scheeben, and the regressive method which they employed, did little to uncover the historical genesis and movement of dogma⁸. «Diese Frage», writes Scheffczyk, «schien in der Theorie J. H. Newmans besser beantwortet zu sein»⁹.

And in a similar fashion, in his essay on *Dogmengeschichtsschreibung*, Newman yet again stands apart from the Roman school, the Tübingen school, and Matthias Scheeben. «Einen gewissen Höhepunkt erfuhr die theoretische Arbeit am Problem der Dogmenentwicklung im 19. Jahrhundert durch John Henry Newman»¹⁰. And again in his essay on the *sensus fidelium*, he treats of the scholastics, the Tübingen school, the Roman School and Scheeben, but then writes, «But the most vital and most original application was given by John H. Newman, who on the basis of his own path of faith and a mystical, interiorized understanding of the Church, held the *sensus fidelium* in high esteem»¹¹. For Scheffczyk Newman's theory better accounts for how the Church comes to teach something that is both new and at the same time homogenous with the deposit of faith. Scheffczyk relies heavily on Newman's seven notes as tools to illustrate the same sense or meaning of dogma despite changing historical contexts¹².

Newman's *Notes* demonstrate the *Erbaltung des Sinnes*, which can be deepened,

6 L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung: Tendenzen – Versuche – Resultate*, in W. LÖSER – K. LEHMANN – M. LUTZ-BACHMANN (hg.), *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie*, Würzburg 1985, 119-147 (123).

7 SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 123-127.

8 *Ibid.*, 127: «in einer Art Regressionsmethode die geschichtlichen Fakten interpretiert wurden – ein durchaus legitimes theologisches Verfahren, das jedoch zum Verständnis des Werdens und der geschichtlichen Bewegung des Dogmas nichts Wesentliches beiträgt».

9 L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Grundlagen des Dogmas. Einleitung in die Dogmatik* (Katholische Dogmatik I), Aachen 1997, 165 [hereafter, *Dogmatik*].

10 SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 127.

11 SCHEFFCZYK, *Sensus fidelium*, 189.

12 SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 170ff.

newly dressed up, but always must be maintained¹³. Scheffczyk gives some examples of how when one speaks about Christ or the Trinity in a more contemporary idiom, it is still necessary that those statements be understood in a way that upholds that which preceded them¹⁴. He observes that Newman's first note of authentic development, Preservation of Type [*die Erhaltung des gleichen Typus*] is the note that immediately rules out any abandonment of the original *Sinn* or meaning of a dogma established by the Church. It is, in a sense, the note that holds up the Lerinian rule on continuity authoritatively taught by Vatican I's *Dei Filius*, that dogmatic growth is legitimate only so long as the same dogma maintains the same meaning and same understanding, «*in derselben Lehre, in demselben Sinn und in derselben Bedeutung*»¹⁵. To this I would also add Newman's sixth note, 'Conservative Action Upon the Past' as a note that reinforces this same rule, albeit in a different way. A newer development not only *maintains* what preceded it, but also *strengthens* or *solidifies* it. Chalcedon not only maintains Nicea's «true God and true man». It strengthens it. Perhaps the most important note in this regard is the second, Continuity of Principles, because one of the key principles of Christianity that is to continue, for Newman, is the dogmatic principle.

What seems to appeal to Scheffczyk are not only Newman's criteriology of the *Notes*, but also his unique «historical-existential thought suffused with a strong spirituality». In other words, Scheffczyk observes that Newman's approach to development is founded not only upon his *wissenschaftliche Neigung* but also, and just as importantly, on the religious-existential problem he faced as an Anglican whose Christian self-understanding was called into question¹⁶. Newman's sensitivity to history is coupled, not with grand theories about some momentous *Geist* traversing history, but with a spiritual and personalist interiority – expressed by his cardinalate motto: *cor ad cor loquitur* – that makes this attention to history existentially relevant. *To Whom am I accountable? Where do I find the truth? What must I believe? What institution can offer me salvation?*

In my judgment, however, what is most important in Scheffczyk's reception of Newman is its insight into the deeper principles behind Newman's theory of development, an insight made possible by Scheffczyk's engagement with contemporary theological-historicist and -hermeneutical tendencies emerging in the 1970's and 80's, which threaten the Catholic understanding of revelation. Scheffczyk sees how theories of doctrinal development are informed by how doctrine itself is understood. If our understanding of doctrine changes, so must the theory.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

¹⁵ *Comm.* 23, 4; *Dei Filius*, 4.

¹⁶ SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 128.

Scheffczyk, for example, observes that the Modernist (mis)appropriation of Newman failed ultimately because they tried (wrongly) to identify intuitive religious experience with revelation while reducing dogma to a symbol of an ungraspable reality¹⁷. Scheffczyk proceeds to point out how the Modernistic view of experience, revelation, and doctrine is fundamentally at odds with Christianity:

«Aber dieser Versuch einer Identifikation scheidet einmal an der Tatsache, daß der Mensch nur vermittle der übernatürlichen Wortoffenbarung, die durch Schrift und Tradition bezeugt wird, mit der Idee des Christentums in Kontakt kommt, dass ferner das explizierende Denken im Dogma einen bleibenden und verbindlichen Ausdruck der göttlichen Wahrheit darstellt und dass die Entwicklung sich nicht nach den Bedürfnissen des religiösen Menschen richtet, sondern nach den in seiner geistigen Natur eingesenkten Gesetzen und nach dem sich uns als ein und derselbe offenbarenden Gott»¹⁸.

Scheffczyk's understanding of revelation articulated here, one that involves permanent and binding expressions of revealed truth, is crucial for any useful – and indeed coherent – application of Newman's theory of development. Such an understanding of revelation, however, is precisely what contemporary historicists and hermeneutical theologians undercut.

The problem of historicism has been with Catholic theology for much longer than hermeneutics. The consequence of historical reductionism is «*Daß nichts mehr selbstverständlich ist, nicht mehr feststeht, nichts mehr außerhalb einer möglichen Neugestaltung ist*»¹⁹. Its challenge to the Catholic faith is quite basic: faith involves an intellectual assent to a revelation that is divine; but the propositions one is asked to assent to are the products of a long series of historical contingencies. Without an emperor who wanted to solidify imperial peace, there would be no *homoousion*. Without Greek philosophy, there would be no great Christological and Eucharistic dogmas, etc. History *could have been otherwise*. Revelation, ostensibly, cannot. Therefore, nothing that is the product of history – which is by nature contingent *and therefore changeable* – can claim absolute truth.

¹⁷ SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 167-168: «Diese von einer ganzheitlichen Psychologie des Erkennens bestimmte Theorie, die dem modernen Entwicklungsgedanken Raum gibt auf der Basis einer konkreten intuitiven Erkenntnis, haben Vertreter des Modernismus für sich beansprucht, wie auch Newman selbst den Vorwurf des Modernismus auf sich zog. Er schien darin begründet, dass man die grundlegende und bleibende-konkret-intuitive Glaubenserkenntnis mit der permanenten religiösen Offenbarung und der *scientia christiana* identifizieren zu können glaubte und das Dogma mit dem zeitgemäßen Ausdruck im expliziten Denken, ein Ausdruck, der das innere Erlebnis überhöhe und eine letztlich symbolische Deutung der unerkennbaren Wirklichkeit meine».

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 168.

¹⁹ G. Krüger quoted by SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 159. Scheffczyk also quotes Wilhelm Dilthey: «*das historische Bewußtsein von der Endlichkeit jeder geschichtlichen Erscheinung*» zur «*Relativität jeder Art von Glaubensführe*».

The historicist approach uses the contingencies of history to relativize particulars of doctrine in favour of more general, universal truths. A radical hermeneutical approach – which we discuss in more depth below – also relativizes doctrine, but not by excluding the divine like the historicists, but by inflating the significance of contemporary context and experience for discerning the meaning of doctrine. Both hermeneuticists and historicists have an aversion to admitting, or don't feel the need to identify, the enduring truths of revelation. Without an understanding of truth that is articulatable, identifiable, and enduring, Newman's theory – as well as *Dei Verbum* (esp. no. 8) – is hopelessly outdated²⁰. This is also why historicism and hermeneutics are so problematic²¹. Describing the hermeneutical challenge to dogma, Scheffczyk observes:

«Soweit dem Dogma für die neue Situation noch eine Bedeutung belassen wird, muß es nicht genetisch erklärt, sondern für den neuen Verstehenshorizont interpretiert werden. An die Stelle der Erklärung des Dogmenfortschritts tritt eine Hermeneutik, die nicht so sehr am unveränderlichen Bestand des Dogmas interessiert ist und an der Übereinstimmung mit dem Ursprung, als vielmehr an seiner heutigen Verstehbarkeit. So wird die Situation zum Auswahl- und Selektionsprinzip der dogmatischen Gehalte, über deren Sinn von der wissenschaftlich-hermeneutischen Theologie entschieden wird. Darum muß (nach einer eigentlich nicht ausgewiesenen modernen Erkenntnisnotwendigkeit "Transsubstantiation" als "Transfinalisation" verstanden werden, "Ersünde" als "Sünde der Welt", die "Unbefleckte Empfängnis Mariens" als bloße Aussage über die Möglichkeit der Bewahrung vor der Sünde, ohne daß das "neue Verständnis" am Inhalt des Originals nachgeprüft würde. Offensichtlich führt so das Desinteresse an der Entwicklung des Dogmas faktisch zu seiner Preisgabe»²².

Is Scheffczyk exaggerating?

Because of the hermeneutical circle, hermeneutical theologians such as the post-conciliar Schillebeeckx hold that we «can never establish once and for all the truth or content of the word of God»²³. The unchangeable element of faith can never be isolated from the contingent human context in which it is embedded²⁴. And for

²⁰ SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 169: «Bei solcher Absicht muss der Nachweis einer kontinuierlichen Entwicklung des Dogmas in der Spannung von Unwandelbarem und geschichtlich Wandelbarem an Interesse verlieren».

²¹ SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 143: «Aber an dieser neuartigen Deutung erhebt sich gegenüber der klassischen Christologie die Frage, ob sie den Sinn der Konzilslehre trifft oder sie nicht so in das moderne Verständnis einschmilzt, dass das ursprünglich Gemeinte seine Normativität einbüßt. Hier werden Grenzen der Anwendung der hermeneutischen Methode sichtbar, die neuerdings noch weiter überschritten werden, wenn die je neue soziokulturelle Erfahrung zum entscheidenden Grundprinzip der Deutung der Glaubenstradition gemacht wird oder wenn, in falscher Auslegung der "Geschichtlichkeit" der Wahrheit, das Dogma einem "metadogmatischen" Verständnis geopfert werden soll».

²² SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 169-170.

²³ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *God the Future of Man*, London 1969, 7-8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

that reason, it is not the identified substance or content of a dogma that has to be transmitted to subsequent Christian generations, but the experience of faith which those doctrines elicited. This is presumably why Schillebeeckx later in his career uses the phrase «Christian experiential tradition» where «Christian *doctrinal* tradition» would have been expected²⁵. Today contextual theologians have simply radicalized Schillebeeckx's method of correlation so as to fit into a contemporary post-modern context²⁶. Post-modern hermeneutics alleges that «There is no such thing as a core of truths that can be distinguished as such from every form of mediation, which is given expression in ever changing historical frameworks... On the contrary, theological truth is *co-constituted* by the all-too-human, by concrete history and context»²⁷. This idea that history, context, and experience co-constitute the truth is a theme being taken up by others in the post-modern theological school²⁸. We will address it towards the end of this paper. Suffice it to say for now that, for Schillebeeckx, every dogma requires «an experiential basis»²⁹.

«The dialectics between (new) experiences (in new contexts) and (old) interpretations (stemming from older contexts) fosters a continuous process of tradition development, in which ruptures do not threaten the continuity of tradition, but may be urged precisely to guarantee this continuity»³⁰.

²⁵ E.g., E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Theological Quests*, in *Essays. Ongoing Theological Quests* (The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx XI), London 2014, 111-162 (136).

²⁶ Schillebeeckx's appeal to a universal experience has come under critique by theologians who accept a certain normativity to the post-modern worldview. See D. ROCHFORD, *The Theological Hermeneutics of Edward Schillebeeckx*, in *Theological Studies* 63 (2002) 251-267 (267). Rochford writes, tellingly: «While he [Schillebeeckx] intends to maintain the primacy of experience, he remains accountable to the role of tradition and its frames of reference, especially the New Testament language and conceptual-ity that, after secularization and de-traditionalization, shows increasingly less overlap with present-day cultural experiences».

²⁷ L. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, New York-London 2007, 177.

²⁸ E.g., C. CIMORELLI – D. MINCH, *Views of Doctrine: Historical Consciousness, Asymptotic Notional Clarity, and the Challenge of Hermeneutics as Ontology*, in *Louvain Studies* 37 (2013) 327-363: «It is not productive to claim a purely extrinsic source for faith, since what is heard is always a word that is spoken, an image received, or an event that is witnessed, all of which falls under the category of human experience» (355). «There is no constant, asymptotic progression towards Truth or full possession of the divine through certain knowledge of revealed truths... Rather than moving ever closer, we are constantly caught in the back-and-forth movement between the past and present, while also anticipating and working towards a future. This should prompt us to perhaps shift from a quantitative understanding of doctrines and their function to determine aspects of truth, to a more relationship-based idea of perpetual mediation, rethinking, and re-presentation» (358).

²⁹ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Discontinuities in Christian Dogmas*, in ID., *Essays. Ongoing Theological Quests* (The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx XI), London 2014, 85-110 (102).

³⁰ L. BOEVE, *Experience According to Edward Schillebeeckx*, in *Divinising Experience: Essays in the History of Religious Experience from Origen to Ricoeur*, eds. L. Boeve – L. Hemming (Studies in Philosophical Theology 23), Leuven 2004, 199-225 (210).

At first sight, this sounds as if Schillebeeckx is echoing Newman's famous words: «It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often»³¹. These two soundings from Schillebeeckx and Newman echo one another, but the difference between the two is fundamental: Newman accepts the dogmatic principle; Schillebeeckx does not. For Newman, continuity lies in the dogmatic content of the Christian idea; for Schillebeeckx it lies in Christian experience.

3. Scheffczyk's and Newman's Maintenance of the Dogmatic Principle

Newman and Scheffczyk, like Schillebeeckx and other historicist-hermeneuticists, fully own the historical contingencies of dogmatic teaching. They also would affirm that all dogmatic expressions are steeped in a particular context. The question is not whether or not dogma is thoroughly historical, but rather whether or not its historicity is a vehicle used by God to communicate something absolutely and enduringly true. Newman and Scheffczyk both answer "Yes".

According to Scheffczyk, «when by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church [an] aspect of truth is expressed, then its accuracy and soundness can no longer be queried»³². Scheffczyk's argument is more theological and indeed soteriological than philosophical or apologetic. He appeals to the Spirit-filled Church who teaches. Doctrine is intelligible because the Church who teaches it is capacitated to mediate effectively God's revelation for us. If the Church were not so capacitated, divine revelation would not be transmitted successfully, and would therefore not actually be revelation. And if doctrine does not contain – or express in any definite way – the content of revelation, then God has failed to reveal himself. While *Dei Verbum*, for example, makes much of Christ's deeds (and not simply his words), there are some deeds of Christ that cry out for an explanation. It is one thing to ascertain the meaning of Christ's healings without a word of explanation, i.e., a doctrine. It is quite another to ascertain the meaning of the crucifixion without a word of explanation, i.e., a doctrine.

Doctrines are an integral component of God's salvific plan, which is why, ultimately, Scheffczyk takes issue with Schillebeeckx's relativization of johannine Chris-

³¹ NEWMAN, *Dev.*, 40. (Unless otherwise stated, I use the Uniform Edition from Longmans & Green with the abbreviations from the Rickaby Index).

³² L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Newman's Theory of the Development of Dogma in the Light of Recent Criticism*, in M. K. STROLZ (ed.), *In Search of Light. Life – Development – Prayer. Three Essays on John Henry Newman*, Rome 1985, 37-59 (52).

tology as one Christological model that has been gradually developed in Nicaea, but which is unnecessary to recognize as perennially valid and true³³. While Scheffczyk takes aim at Schillebeeckx, he acknowledges that there are other theologians who are even more extreme and unabashed about the fluidity of dogma's meaning³⁴.

One of the difficulties that Scheffczyk acknowledges is that the development of some dogmas at times requires a distillation of what is historically «attached» as it were, to the dogma, from what is at the heart of the dogma, or integral to it. The proper historical legwork is crucial for this project³⁵. For example, what were some of the real historical assumptions «attached» to the patristic understanding of *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* which, though accompanying the dogma at, say Florence, were not, as we now know, integral to it? (One answer is the assumption that those outside the Church were outside of it *culpably*).

In his endeavour to safeguard the existence of dogma itself and its meaning while at the same time affirming their historicity, Scheffczyk sees in Newman an ally, especially with the latter's *Notes* of authentic development. Newman's notes presuppose the historical – and hence contingent – journey of dogmas. «When developments in Christianity are spoken of», writes Newman,

«it is sometimes supposed that they are deductions and diversions made at random, according to accident or the caprice of individuals; whereas it is because they have been conducted all along on definite and continuous principles that the type of the Religion has remained from first to last unalterable»³⁶.

³³ SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 170.

³⁴ For example, Karl Heinz Ohlig, professor of Catholic theology in Saarland, is quite clear about the provisionality of dogmatic content: «Neue Kulturen» müssen «die überkommenen Begriffe mit neuen andersartigen Inhalten füllen und ihnen bisher unbekannte Funktionen zuweisen» (Ohlig quoted by SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 171). The meaning that the dogma expresses is actually no longer necessary. The continuity lies not in some point of content expressed or implied in the dogmatic statement, but in «die Relevanz des Menschen Jesus als Sinnträgers menschlicher Heilssehnsucht». What is developing is not dogma, or our understanding of the deposit of faith, but a human culture that produces ever-newer conceptions of Christ which offer meaning, or with which man can construct some meaning to life.

³⁵ SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 145: «Das Werk, das zunächst den Stand der heutigen Forschung wiedergeben will, strebt doch über die bloße wissenschaftliche Information und Belehrung hinaus und beabsichtigt die Darstellung des Weges, "auf dem das heutige kirchliche Lehrgut entstanden ist". Der Weg—und Entwicklungscharakter des Dogmas wird an solchen Kennzeichnungen deutlich. Damit hängt zusammen, dass das Dogma nicht im engsten Sinne verstanden und nicht mit der definierten Aussage des außerordentlichen Lehramtes gleichgesetzt wird. Ein Weg beansprucht eine gewisse Breite, die Raum für die Bewegung verschiedenster Güter und Materialien bildet, die mit dem Dogma zusammenhängen, ohne doch mit ihm zusammenzufallen». It should also be noted that Scheffczyk does believe in an identifiable «core» of the faith and it can be expressed in *formulae*. «The core content of faith conforms to revelation» and the preaching of the church must express the faith in «ways that are commensurate with a given situation and contemporary demands yet without relinquishing their rootedness in the source and core of the faith». See L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Faith and Witness: Confessio and Martyrium*, in *Communio* 22 (1995) 406-417 (410, 411).

³⁶ NEWMAN, *Dev.*, 323-324.

Newman's point is that the temptation to see development as completely random or accidental stems from its historical nature. The rationale behind Newman's notes is precisely to show that the thoroughly historical life of dogmas indeed has a "logic" behind it; it proceeds according to certain principles; it is therefore, thoroughly historical, *but not random*.

What set Newman apart from the religious liberalism of his day was his affirmation of the dogmatic principle, according to which «supernatural truths» [are] irrevocably committed to human language, imperfect because it is human but definitive and necessary because given from above»³⁷. The dogmatic principle, for Newman, means that human propositions can communicate divine truth. They are definitive (i.e., irreformable) and necessary not only for the practical reason that the Church needs a grammar or language rules according to which it can talk about God. For Newman, they are definitive (i.e., irreformable) and necessary because they are «given from above», that is to say, they have God as their ultimate author. This lies in stark contrast to Schillebeeckx's understanding of dogma, which is ultimately an expression of an interpreted experience whose relationship to God is ambiguous. Crucially, the interpretation, for Schillebeeckx, «does not come from above but rather, as the self-expression of the experience, is deeply interwoven in the actual experience»³⁸. Schillebeeckx seems to have abandoned the idea that when the Church dogmatically defines, Christ the head is teaching through his body, the Church: «He who hears you hears me» (Lk 10,16). There is little sense in which the dogma believed is a definite teaching «from above».

By contrast, Scheffczyk, like Newman, acknowledges both the human and divine dimensions of dogmatic statements. Their human dimension obviously implies that the divine mystery cannot be exhausted or captured entirely by human words. But their divine dimension renders these same human words as effective communicators of divine truth.

Scheffczyk articulates this very same principle in his own words:

«In the present situation, it is appropriate to remind ourselves that the truth which is meant, which the sense of the faithful serves in the final analysis, is a substantially definite truth, filled with objective content, that it thus encompasses dogmatic faith and does not imply merely a feeling of human solidarity or pietistic edification»³⁹.

Scheffczyk's affirmation of the dogmatic principle does not preclude an acknowledgment of the limitations of human language and the inexhaustible mystery that is

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 325.

³⁸ BOEVE, *Experience According to Edward Schillebeeckx*, 209.

³⁹ SCHEFFCZYK, *Sensus fidelium*, 198.

God⁴⁰. Not only does Scheffczyk acknowledge the limitations of language, but he also avoids any kind of simplistic identification between God's Word, Scripture, and dogma.

Scheffczyk's nuanced understanding of inspiration avoids two false alternatives not uncommonly found in some protestant theologians. The one extreme is a perfect identification between the Word of God and the Bible; the other extreme is subjectivist reduction of inspiration to the spirit-filled hearer or reader. Appealing to the Chalcedonian principle that the unity of the Christ's two natures does not eliminate their distinction, Scripture, in a parallel sense, cannot be formally identified with either the divine word, nor with the human word. Scheffczyk, following *Dei Verbum* 24, claims that Scripture not only contains, but is indeed the word of God, not *simpliciter*, but precisely as an «authentic and infallible witness of God's words»⁴¹. The Church's subsequent authoritative judgements that terminate in dogma are also not identical with Scripture, but interpret it in a way that is free of error and thereby witnesses to it. This witness to the written word by the Church's authoritative proclamation, and to God's Word by Scripture, contains and makes present that to which it bears witness in a quasi-sacramental way. So just as a sacrament communicates grace effectively using visible things, so the Scriptures, and by extension the Church's authentic interpretation of it, communicates divine truth effectively using words, images, analogies, and concepts.

The difficulty in drawing a developmental line between the data from Scripture to the Church's developed teaching is not lost on Scheffczyk. Scripture sometimes

⁴⁰ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Von der Heilsmacht des Wortes*, München 1966, quoted in M. SCHMAUS, *Dogma*, I: *God in Revelation*, London 1968, 191: «As regards the reality of the relationship between God's word and man's word, we can conclude that neither the individual nor the Church can dispose of the true power of God's word when they have this word in the finite form of a human word. God's word, although really present in human words, always remains the unreachable, the inexhaustible, which we must enter into as if into an immeasurable space, even though we already stand in it and possess a section of it. This incommensurability is not due only to the imperfection and weakness of human testimony and expression. It lies in the nature of God and of his perfect word of revelation, which can be given expression only inadequately even by the most perfect of human words». Cfr. C. LUTZ, *Theologie in der Kirche: eine Untersuchung der methodologischen Grundlagen der Theologie und des Verständnisses der Katholizität der Kirche bei Avery Kardinal Dulles und bei Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk* (Europäische Hochschulschriften – Theologie XXIII, 904), Frankfurt am Main 2010, 230: «... Kirche immer inadäquat sein muss und geschichtlich formulierte Glaubenssätze letztlich nicht die bleibende Wahrheit fassen können. Das steht allerdings in gewisser Spannung zu Scheffczyks Konzept des analogen Charakters der theologischen Sprache: So sehr die Dogmen der geschichtlich verfassten Kirche auch im analogen Sprechen als inadäquat eingestuft werden müssen (es gibt ja schließlich eine größere Unähnlichkeit in der Ähnlichkeit), so muss doch von diesen Dogmen auf die bleibende Wahrheit geschlossen werden können».

⁴¹ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Sacred Scripture: God's Word and the Church's Word*, in *Communio* 28 (2001) 26-41 (38). Also 39: «Just as Sacred Scripture is not simply identical with the word for revelation, but rather represents the infallible witness of that revelation, so too the Church's proclamation is not identical with Sacred Scripture. Sacred Scripture contains and is the Word of God in the mode of an inspired witness» (my emphasis).

offers more and oftentimes offers less than obvious grounds for a given teaching. But given Scheffczyk's sacramental ecclesiology, of a living Church that continues Christ's saving work *here and now*, he can, in a way reminiscent of Ambrose Gardeil and Newman, use a «regressive method», that is, a method which begins with the Church's present faith and work backwards⁴².

«In many cases it will only be possible to demonstrate in Scripture the starting-points, the traces, and the organic seeds out of which the dogma slowly developed. However, we must always bear in mind that often the way in which these truths are found in their scriptural context is quite different from that in which they have developed in the soil of systematic thinking, so that they may be difficult to recognize in the later dogma»⁴³.

This difficulty is acknowledged by Scheffczyk and so is the danger of wanting to prove from Scripture more than what the text can give, or with the Church's faith, «reading into» the scriptures more than what is actually contained in them. One can, however, be cautious in not claiming too much argumentative weight for single passages from Scripture, while at the same time acknowledging that the Church's penetration of the deposit involves more than scientific exegesis⁴⁴.

Newman and Scheffczyk, then, share the basic presupposition that both historicists and hermeneuticists call into question: namely, that God communicates to us

⁴² A. MESZAROS, *The Regressive Method of Ambrose Gardeil and the Role of Phronesis and Scientia in Positive and Speculative Theologies*, in ETL 89/4 (2013) 279-321.

⁴³ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, in E. NEUHÄUSLER – E. GÖSSMANN (eds.), *Was ist Theologie?*, München 1966, 190-213 (202).

⁴⁴ See the helpful commentary here by M. SCHMAUS, *Dogma*, I, New York 1968, 290-291: «In doing this it must not restrict itself simply to describing phenomenologically changes which have taken place in forms of thought and expression. It has to show the agreement of the later with the earlier. And here the danger arises of wanting to prove more than can be proven. Therefore the dogmatic theologian must continually ask himself whether, through habits of thought or through the justified a priori conviction that the dogmas of the Church do have a basis in Scripture, he is not perhaps allowing himself to be misled into reading more into the texts than they can bear. In view of the difficulties of the situation, caution is to be recommended, such as that shown by L. Scheffczyk when he maintains on the one hand the living continuity between dogma and Scripture, but on the other hand endeavors to explain this in terms of "points of departure" (*Ansätze*) which Scripture offers for dogma. He states that dogmatic theology has the task of comparing the points of departure which Scripture offers with the developed dogma, in such a way as to show the possibility of a legitimate development of the one from the other. The points of departure, he says, can only be recognized as such if they are sought, not in individual passages, but in the total context of Scripture. As an example he gives Christology: one ought not to look to individual passages to provide a biblical proof for the divinity of Christ. All the Christological statements of the New Testament must be taken into account, for example the titles applied to Jesus, such as prophet, servant of God, Messiah, Son of Man, and Kyrios. If we look at all of these together, he says, we will see the development of a climax, pointing to a belief that Christ possesses a position of extraordinary closeness to God. Later, when the question of Christological heresies arose, this could be formally defined by the Church as the divinity of Christ. Scheffczyk rightly points out that the path of the development from Scripture to dogma must correspond to the path traced back from the dogma to its original form in Scripture».

divine truth in human words, and that these human words, first recorded in Scripture and then authentically interpreted by the Church in her dogma, correspond, even though not at all exhaustively, to limited but real aspects of supernatural reality. Only in this way can we begin to talk about the proper understanding of doctrinal development, its laws, its *Notes* of true, authentic development versus corruption. But this presupposition is precisely what is challenged today, despite the crucial teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*: «Die Kirche bekennt überdies, daß allen Wandlungen vieles Unwandelbare zugrunde liegt, was seinen letzten Grund in Christus hat, der derselbe ist gestern, heute und in Ewigkeit» (GS, 10)⁴⁵.

With an epistemic and metaphysical realism in hand, development theory for Scheffczyk is tantamount to establishing the right relationship or coordination between established, enduring doctrinal truth from the tradition, on the one hand, and the progress involved in unpacking the newer, more precise meanings of this truth in a novel historical moment:

«An der gleichzeitigen Behauptung von Beharrung und Fortschritt im Dogma, von bleibendem Wesenssinn und geschichtlicher Anwendung und Interpretation, von Treue zur Tradition und Offenheit für das geistgewirkte Neue wird aber auch das Problem der rechten Abstimmung beider Momente aufeinander sichtbar. Es stellt sich konkret als Frage nach der rechten, legitimen Dogmenentwicklung. Diese kann nur einsichtig gemacht werden, wenn man um die in ihr wirksam werdenden Faktoren, aber auch um die Bedingungen und Gesetzmäßigkeiten der wahren Entwicklung weiß»⁴⁶.

In Newman's time, there was no Wittgenstein, Gadamer, or Schillebeeckx. Neither hermeneutics nor the linguistic turn were issues Newman faced. So it would be impossible to marshal forward a response of Newman's directed precisely to these challenges. But if the dogmatic principle is the fault line, then what I can offer are a few Newmanian justifications for that dogmatic principle based on his own understanding of experience, as experience seems to be the preferred theological category of the day.

Newman's appeal to experience qualifies him as a quintessentially modern thinker. And, ironic as it may be, his reflections on religious experience have quite a bit in common with Schillebeeckx's. In his fundamental theology, Schillebeeckx appeals to what are called negative contrast experiences – experiences of suffering and injustice, which arouse in us a stubborn “No!” to everything that dehumanizes. In a parallel

⁴⁵ If dogma is an expression of the God's word revealing itself, then a Catholic interpretation of dogma means that all Christian dogma is in some sense Christological in that it participates in the immutability that is the divine word. This of course presupposes that one accept the existence of truth and that this truth is knowable. SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 160. «Die philosophische Voraussetzung für diese Auffassung liegt in der Anerkennung der Tatsache, dass es Wahrheit überhaupt gibt und dass sie vom Menschen erkannt werden kann».

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

fashion, Newman's religious apologetic also appeals to the disorder we see in a world which elicits in us a desire and even an expectation that God should come and heal a broken world. Both Newman and Schillebeeckx, then, appeal to the negative experiences of a fallen world in order to open up a way towards something higher⁴⁷. In what follows, I hope to unpack a bit Newman's understanding of conscience in order to identify the ways it bears relation to doctrinal development and, more fundamentally, how it undergirds the dogmatic principle.

4. Newman's Teaching on Conscience and Its Implications for Doctrinal Development

Relating Newman's teaching on conscience to doctrinal development is not an obvious relationship to be explored, even by Newmanists. I hope to show, however, that Newman's teaching on conscience gives access to seminal principles for a sound theory of doctrinal development.

The most authoritative summary of conscience comes to us in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, where it quotes Newman's description of conscience:

«Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ»⁴⁸.

For Newman conscience is the human faculty that (1) guides us in moral matters and (2) puts us in touch with our Creator. In other words, it is through one's moral experience that one comes to know God. It is not entirely dissimilar from inferring a supreme Law-giver from the experience of the moral law. But Newman's variation is more existential, more personal. The quick version is this:

Conscience involves two senses: a moral sense and a sense of duty. The moral sense tells us: «This is wrong; that is right.» The sense of duty tells us «Do this; Don't do that». The moral sense is «a judgment of the reason»; the sense of duty is a «magisterial dictate»⁴⁹. It is when this magisterial dictate or this sense of duty is ignored

⁴⁷ The fundamental difference, however, is that Newman's experience is religious from start to finish in that the experience of conscience impresses upon us an image of God, and the disorder we experience cries out for rectification precisely because we know God exists.

⁴⁸ J. H. NEWMAN, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, V, in *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* II, London 1885, 248. Quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778.

⁴⁹ NEWMAN, *G.A.*, 105.

that, in a person with a well-formed conscience, the moral alarm bells start to ring. Alternatively, when one's conscience is obeyed, one feels peace or serenity.

«Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons. If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear... These feelings in us are such as require for their exciting cause an intelligent being: we are not affectionate towards a stone, nor do we feel shame before a horse or a dog; we have no remorse or compunction on breaking mere human law...»⁵⁰.

Other passages could be given. This one, however, is representative of how, for Newman, it is through the experience of moral deliberation and action that one intuitively discerns God's existence. *Habeo conscientiam, ergo Deus est*⁵¹ is more of an intuition than an inference. Such an intuition is deeply personal, but Newman believes to be universal because all humans are endowed with the same faculty. For Newman personally, however, his intimate experience of God is recorded in his *Apologia* with the famously celebrated image of «two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator»⁵².

What is often unnoticed in this passage from the *Apologia* is that Newman is describing this intense religious insight into his relationship with God at a time, he writes, «When I was fifteen, (in the autumn of 1816), ... I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured»⁵³.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 109-110. The quotation continues: «The wicked flees, when no one pursueth;« then why does he flee?... If the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the Object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine; and thus the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the Moral Sense is the principle of ethics». See also NEWMAN, *Call.*, 314-315: «"Well", she said, "I feel that God within my heart. I feel myself in His presence". He says to me, "Do this: don't do that". You may tell me that this dictate is a mere law of my nature, as is to joy or to grieve. I cannot understand this. No, it is the echo of a person speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me that it does not ultimately proceed from a person external to me. It carries with it its proof of its divine origin. My nature feels towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a soreness—just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend. So you see, Polemo, I believe in what is more than a mere "something". I believe in what is more real to me than sun, moon, stars, and the fair earth, and the voice of friends. You will say, Who is He? Has He ever told you anything about Himself? Alas! no!—the more's the pity! But I will not give up what I have, because I have not more. An echo implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That speaker I love and I fear».

⁵¹ J. H. NEWMAN, *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman*, ed. E. Sillem, 2 vols., Louvain 1969-1970, II, 59. See the commentary by T. MERRIGAN, *Revelation*, in *Cambridge Companion for John Henry Newman*, eds. I. Ker – T. Merrigan, Cambridge 2009, 47-72 (49).

⁵² NEWMAN, *Apo.*, 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Of course, Newman's assent to particular dogmas came and went as his religious convictions developed. In this very passage in the *Apologia* he describes how it was actually the dogma of final perseverance that possessed him at 15, but which gradually faded by the age of twenty-one. When Newman says that impressions of dogma have never been effaced or obscured, he means that dogmatic religion, or a religion with objective truths to which one must conform himself, has always remained with him, even as his religious opinions developed over time.

«From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion; religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery»⁵⁴.

What I would like to point out here is not simply Newman's affirmation of the dogmatic principle, but that his intense – but mediate – experience of his Creator through his conscience is *an experience that coincides at a moment in his life with an affirmation of dogma*. Newman does not see any problem or tension here. In fact, one can be said to imply the other: conscience implies an Other, Someone external to oneself to whom one feels responsible. This Other is an objective reality, existing outside of, and independently from, my own being, thoughts, or sentiments. There is an implicit objectivity here. Conscience brings home to us a sense of responsibility towards the One, and this sense of responsibility involves a conformity or submission to the One [God] and all that the One [God] reveals. Conscience not only coheres with the dogmatic principle, but one can make an even stronger claim: that the experience of conscience implies the dogmatic principle.

4.1. Conscience and Certitude against Ambiguity

Conscience, again, is much more than a moral faculty. It is an urge to please one to Whom we are responsible, to be in communion with our Creator. A religious relationship develops from conscience and such a relationship, for Newman, implies a certain indefectible trust on our part. For such a relationship to develop, it requires, to use the classical theological language of Vatican I, the conviction that God is one who can neither deceive nor be deceived. And for this reason, faith requires a personal certitude on our part, or an absolute assent to a truth that leaves no room for doubt. According to Catholic theology, this is objectively grounded in God who is

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 49. Continuing: «As well can there be filial love without the fact of a father, as devotion without the fact of a Supreme Being. What I held in 1816, I held in 1833, and I hold in 1864. Please God, I shall hold it to the end. Even when I was under Dr. Whately's influence, I had no temptation to be less zealous for the great dogmas of the faith, and at various times I used to resist such trains of thought on his part, as seemed to me (rightly or wrongly) to obscure them. Such was the fundamental principle of the Movement of 1833».

the *veritas prima* who can neither deceive nor be deceived. When God, the *veritas prima* speaks we can assent with certitude. Traditionally, we assent to dogmatic truth because it is the *veritas prima* who reveals it to us through the Church.

But if, as the hermeneuticists allege, dogmatic truth is “co-constituted” by history, context, and interpreted experience, then *Who* is speaking? And if a dogma’s core truth cannot be dislodged from the context of its expression, how are we to know whether it has been successfully “translated” into a contemporary idiom? And to whom are we to turn for assurance in this regard? Theologians? Bishops? Our parish reading groups?

The Catholic answer to this question is the authoritative teaching office of the Church, who teaches in the name of Christ. In Newman’s words, «If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must humanly speaking have an infallible expounder»⁵⁵. But to define something infallibly makes no sense if what is defined is so culturally contextual, so historically embedded, that it can only speak to those contemporaneous with it. Neither would it make sense, then, to exhort Christians to «stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter» (2 Thess 2,15)⁵⁶.

Our certitude with respect to the articles of the faith relies on a Church that can teach us *here and now* a deposit of faith that has been delivered by Christ to the apostles. Again, her capacity to do so, Scheffczyk reminds us, is based on her being the Spirit-filled bride, indissolubly linked to Christ, and so able to teach in his name⁵⁷.

Newman’s personalist understanding of faith, beginning with the experience of responsibility before one’s Creator, does not allow for such uncertainties or probabilities. The convictions about God require more to sustain the human-divine relationship.

«Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion. A conclusion is but an opinion; it is not a thing which is, but which we are “quite sure about”; and it has often been observed, that we never say we are sure and certain without implying that we doubt. To say that a thing must be, is to admit that it may not be. No one, I say, will die for his own calculations: he dies for realities».

⁵⁵ NEWMAN, *Dev.*, 90.

⁵⁶ There is, then, a soteriological reason for doctrine’s efficacious communication. If human words cannot deliver divine truth, no revelation has been given. In such a case, we would also be asked to entertain the hypothesis that God never intended for the Church to appeal to Scripture or give a definitive interpretation of it as a record of divine testimony, but rather intended for the Church to enter into an endless hermeneutical circle incapable of laying hold of any enduring trans-temporal truth. When St. Paul argues for Jesus’ divine sonship from what he took the meaning of the centuries-old scriptures to be (e.g., Acts 17-18), was he guilty of a «naïve hermeneutics» according to which he was deluded into thinking that subsequent generations of Christians could decipher his original intention behind his writings in the same way that he had done with the Hebrew scriptures?

⁵⁷ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *The Church as the universal sacrament of Jesus Christ*, in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10/1 (2010) 18-45 (22).

One can die for a dogma if a dogma conveys realities. If a dogma, on the other hand, is an expression of contextualized experience subject to reinterpretation and recontextualization, why submit to it with an absoluteness that could incur the ultimate sacrifice? It goes without saying that, for Newman, the gravity with which the Church guards the deposit, and the jealousy of error that the faithful exhibited in their adhesion to the Nicene faith during the Arian crisis can only make sense if dogma puts us in touch with reality and does so in way that leaves no room for doubt.

Scheffczyk also sees the necessity of certitude in faith, a certitude which cannot exist if the secondary objects of faith are constantly in flux. Scheffczyk argues that faith comes to its fullness only in confession and martyrdom. If faith is the fundamentally internal, personal and existential acceptance and recognition of the word of God, confession constitutes faith in its visible, verbal, external, incarnate form. Confession or profession cannot be separated from faith and is no optional “add-on” to it. Significantly, Scheffczyk describes confession as sacramental: «[The faithful] must elevate [the event of faith] to the level of a visible, so to speak, sacramental sign, an act effected through the confession of faith»⁵⁸. «In profession, faith achieves maturity and completeness»⁵⁹. And as Scheffczyk proceeds to argue that the culmination of confession is martyrdom, he quotes Newman: «it is faith that makes Martyrs. He who knows and loves the things of God has no power to deny them»⁶⁰. And what precedes this quotation used by Scheffczyk is Newman declaring: «Was the religion of Christ propagated by the vehemence of faith and love, or by a philosophical balance of arguments? ... No one is a Martyr for a conclusion, no one is a Martyr for an opinion».

The upholding of the dogmatic principle is something based for Newman and Scheffczyk alike, on an existential principle, a personal, absolute trust in God, a relationship which cannot be sustained without a certitude about God, his being, and his plan for us. Christianity, a key component of which is the cross and, following from that, martyrdom, is incompatible with any lack of certitude or doubt about the object of faith. The dogmatic principle itself does not answer the hermeneutical problem directly, but is simply incompatible with a hermeneutical approach to dogma that cannot identify and articulate concrete and enduring truths about God, and thereby suspends definitive judgments about God.

⁵⁸ SCHEFFCZYK, *Faith and Witness*, 409.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁶⁰ NEWMAN, *Mix.*, 181. [Scheffczyk's quotation of this passage (*Faith and Witness*, 412) is based on a German translation.]

4.2. Conscience and Providence against Historicism

The third lesson that conscience offers us with respect to doctrinal development has to do with a history that is divinely governed. This is because the experience of conscience brings home to us not only a law giver and a judge, but also a providential God, a good God who provides a good law *for our sake*, who has our best interest at heart, and who guides us. As Merrigan points out, the inference to a benevolent and providential ruler or governor is not some major inferential leap from a law-giver. For the goodness of the lawgiver is manifest in the goodness of the law⁶¹. Such an uncorrupted intuition of the goodness of law is most evident in children before something corrupts this⁶².

The experience of conscience brings to us not only a particular providence, but also a general one. An uncorrupted religious mind, accompanied by «certain inward experiences» (of conscience) lead

«the great majority of men to recognize the Hand of unseen power, directing in mercy or in judgment the physical and moral system. In the prominent events of the world, past and contemporary, the fate, evil or happy, of great men, the rise and fall of states, popular revolutions, decisive battles, the migration of races, the replenishing of the earth, earthquakes and pestilences, critical discoveries and inventions, the history of philosophy, the advancement of knowledge, in these the spontaneous piety of the human mind discerns a Divine Supervision...»⁶³.

While this sense of divine providence is, according to Newman, already present in Natural Religion, it is still hazy and obscure. Revealed religion fills out this picture for us with the divine economy or God's plan of salvation.

Providence in Newman's thought is ubiquitous. For example, a sound epistemological realism that does not fall into scepticism depends, for Newman, upon a resignation to divine providence that establishes what Newman calls «the nature of things», including the nature of our minds. Like any idea, the Christian idea for Newman takes time to develop in history. A resignation to providence involves submit-

⁶¹ T. MERRIGAN, «*One Momentous Principle Which Enters Into My Reasoning*»: *The Unitive Function of Newman's Doctrine of Providence*, in *Downside Review* 108 (1990) 254-281.

⁶² See also K. DIETZ, *Newman and Providence*, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition), 21 March 2012, 6. Electronic version available at: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/newman-on-divine-providence-10114>.

⁶³ NEWMAN, G.A., 402-403. The quotation continues: «Nay, there is a general feeling, originating directly in the workings of conscience, that a similar governance is extended over the persons of individuals, who thereby both fulfil the purposes and receive the just recompenses of an Omnipotent Providence. Good to the good, and evil to the evil, is instinctively felt to be, even from what we see, amid whatever obscurity and confusion, the universal rule of God's dealings with us. Hence come the great proverbs, indigenious in both Christian and heathen nations, that punishment is sure, though slow... that pride will have a fall, that honesty is the best policy».

ting not only to the law of the mind, but also the law of development⁶⁴. And if this is the case, then we can be confident, based on the intimate religious experience of conscience, and assured by the word of our Lord, «Behold I am with you...», that this process of development is divinely guided to the end for which God intended it.

The ultimate justification, then, for Newman's use of the regressive method is the doctrine of providence delivered to us in conscience:

«If it be an assumption to interpret every passage of a primitive author which bears upon doctrine or ritual by the theology of a later age, it surely is an assumption also to argue, if his statement is incomplete, that he held no more than he happened to say, or if it is the most ancient testimony now extant, that no one held the same before him. The former is the assumption of those who hold that the developments of Christian doctrine are faithful; the latter of those who consider that the existing creed is the accidental result of various natural causes and human elements»⁶⁵.

Newman is happy to give secondary causes their due. There are «natural causes» and «human elements» behind doctrine. But to say that their effects are «accidental» is a key and, for Newman, illegitimate assumption. To the contrary, if a providential God exists, He has managed all historical factors – the good, the bad, and the ugly – that led to a definite dogmatic end: from the most brilliant theological argument or spiritually profound insight by the pious faithful, to the mundane events, intellectual movements, and political tumults of history. The doctrine of God's providence, then, is seminal for any theory of doctrinal development that refuses to side-step the historical causes of doctrine and its development.

Scheffczyk, as we have already acknowledged, refused to side-step history, which is why he is not afraid of a new historical consciousness deployed in *Dogmengeschichtsschreibung* that traces all of these historical factors⁶⁶.

But attention to these historical factors does not mean that we remain stuck in them as in a quagmire. On the contrary, they open up a new perspective on history, provided that one maintains a belief in God and his providence:

«Die Hinwendung zu den natürlichen Faktoren eröffnet der Dogmengeschichtsschreibung ein weites Feld. „Der Heilige Geist bedient sich“ hierbei „der irdischen Faktoren als seiner Werkzeuge, so dass die menschliche Eigenart der Offenbarungsträger, ihre Weise zu sehen und zu denken, die Begegnung mit neuen geistigen Kräften, veränderte seelische Situationen, neue

⁶⁴ J. WALGRAVE, *Newman the Theologian: The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works*, New York 1960, 223.

⁶⁵ J. H. NEWMAN, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London 1845, 183-184.

⁶⁶ SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 145: «Mit neuartiger Intensität und Bewusstheit wird aber auch das die Entwicklung anregende, sie stimulierende, sie negative wie positive beeindruckende Wirken der natürlich-menschlichen Faktoren in dieser eigentümlichen Geschichte zur Geltung gebracht».

Aufgaben im gesellschaftlichen oder politischen Bereich entscheidende Anstöße für die vom Heiligen Geist bewirkte Dogmentwicklung bringen»⁶⁷.

Newman and Scheffczyk embrace the Church's so-called "historicity"⁶⁸. Together, they affirm the historical factors – contexts, individuals, movements, etc. – that shape doctrine and impel its development, while viewing these historical factors as being subject to divine governance. They thus reject a historical reductionism, not by denying the causality of historical factors or by denying their contingency, but by subordinating them to a higher, primary cause, which causes these historical factors to cause whatever effects the primary cause wills to bring about⁶⁹. «Without the trans-historical and unchangeable element,» writes Scheffczyk, «history and change themselves become meaningless»⁷⁰. Providence that comes to us in conscience, then, is one important breakwater against a historicist erosion of divine truth.

5. Newman and Scheffczyk on the Proper Position of History, Context, and Experience

We can recall from having stated earlier, that, in addition to historicism, the hermeneutical approach to dogma also threatens a Catholic understanding of dogmatic development by relativizing the absolute of dogma, not so much by excluding the divine like the historicists, but by *inflating* the historical, contextual, and experiential. They do this by claiming that revelation or truth is «co-constituted», as it were, by experience, context, or history. Such theologians allege that history or context is not simply a vessel or vehicle for the truth, but is «constitutive» of that truth. And because history or context «constitute» the truth, any claim to *divine truth* is at once relativized, for one cannot, in speech, which is human, historical, and contextual, lay hold of the divine. Doctrines do not *teach* us about God; they «point to, or better still,

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁸ Scheffczyk makes reference to LG 40; GS 44. SCHEFFCZYK, *Dogmatik*, I, 158-159.

⁶⁹ For a longer discussion on the compatibility between primary and secondary causes as it relates to doctrine, see Chapter 6 of A. MESZAROS, *The Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and Yves Congar*, Oxford 2016, esp. 218-239.

⁷⁰ SCHEFFCZYK, *Newman's Theory of the Development of Dogma in the Light of Recent Criticism*, 56. He continues: «The harmonizing of these two realities in a single faith, which speaks of the last things of eternity without omitting the preceding realm of life on earth, is the permanent endowment left by Newman's reflections upon the development of dogma».

testify to God»⁷¹. Truth, it is claimed is «co-constituted by the active participation of the faithful in the present context»⁷².

Truth, according to this view, is

«co-constituted by the context in which a statement arises...Furthermore, for content to be understood, the form of transmission must also have contemporary relevance and meaning, “because only a meaningful statement can be true or false” [Schillebeeckx]. This would place limits on doctrinal statement and explode the propositional realism on which the former model [of revelation] is based»⁷³.

The same author of the passage above has also alleged that Scheffczyk possesses a mistaken view of hermeneutics in his 1984-article on Schillebeeckx's Christology from *The Thomist*⁷⁴. There, one of Scheffczyk's passages reads:

«By a sweeping condemnation of any gross opposition between revelation and experience (which in this form is maintained by no one), and despite occasional protestations to the contrary, the author [Schillebeeckx] moves towards a synthesis of both realities which is theologially and hermeneutically untenable... In these later works of Schillebeeckx, one often gains the impression that he is making human conditions and human receptivity, including all that is human and so all that is experienced, much more than instrumental causes of divine revelation; he is making them its efficient cause in the full sense of the word or even its formal cause»⁷⁵.

Although Scheffczyk goes no further in elucidating this observation, I believe he is shedding light on a crucial point of confusion. While the hermeneuticists are claiming that experience, history, and context all «co-constitute» truth, Scheffczyk is alleging that they are at most instrumental causes. The confusion lies, I believe, in a misconception between a dogmatic formula, on the one hand, and truth itself, on the other, which are two different things. A dogmatic formula, i.e., a proposition, can indeed be said to be «constituted» by, among other things, its historical context by virtue of the terms it uses and the way in which those terms are put together according to the questions it was trying to address. Truth, however, if we take the classical scholastic definition of it, is *not* a proposition, but fundamentally a *relationship* between the state of one's intellect and reality, a relationship of adequation or correspondence to

⁷¹ BOEVE, *Interrupting Tradition*, 160-161. This entire summary is reliant upon a previous summary of mine in MESZAROS, *The Prophetic Church*, 4.

⁷² C. CIMORELLI – D. MINCH, *Views of Doctrine: Historical Consciousness, Asymptotic Notional Clarity, and the Challenge of Hermeneutics as Ontology*, in *Louvain Studies* 37 (2013) 327-363 (345).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 349-350.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 356 n. 124. See also D. MINCH, *Eschatological Hermeneutics: The Theological Core of Experience and Our Hope for Salvation*, London 2018, 140 n. 78.

⁷⁵ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Christology in the Context of Experience on the Interpretation of Christ by E. Schillebeeckx*, in *The Thomist* 48/3 (1984) 383-408 (406).

be precise. It is this relationship of correspondence/adequation that constitutes truth, not the proposition or the history, context, or our experience that shape it. These latter factors are indeed instrumental in helping the intellect form a judgment (in a similar way to which a phantasm, according to Thomistic epistemology, is an «instrument» of the agent intellect or ideas are instruments of the intellect which helps lead it to a judgment). But the *truth* of the judgment lies in whether or not that judgment (regardless of whether it is expressed in a proposition) corresponds to reality. The relationship of adequation itself is trans-historical, trans-empirical. The historical and empirical are instrumental in forming the judgment, but the *truth* – the correspondence – lies beyond them⁷⁶.

The *truth* of dogma is not reduced to a product of, nor is it constituted by, history, context, and our experiences. Our intellects, rather, are brought into correspondence with reality by means of a proposition that is shaped by history, context, and our experiences.

Newman too can be brought to bear on this distinction between history or experience, on the one hand, and its interpretation that issues in doctrine, on the other. Newman has some strong words about history's relationship to doctrine which, at first sight, appear to identify the two. But one must look closer. Newman preaches:

«[The Holy Spirit] came for the purpose of unfolding what was yet hidden, whilst Christ was on earth.. First, He inspired the Holy Evangelists to record the life of Christ, and directed them which of His words and works to select, which to omit; next, He commented (as it were) upon these, and unfolded their meaning in the Apostolic Epistles. The birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Christ, has been the text which He has illuminated. He has made history to be doctrine; telling us plainly, whether by St. John or St. Paul, that Christ's conception and birth was the real Incarnation of the Eternal Word,—His life, "God manifest in the Flesh,"—His death and resurrection, the Atonement for sin, and the Justification of all believers. Nor was this all: he continued His sacred comment in the formation of the Church, superintending and overruling its human instruments, and bringing out our Saviour's words and works, and the Apostles' illustrations of them, into acts of obedience and permanent Ordinances, by the ministry of Saints and Martyrs»⁷⁷.

Revelation is historical not simply because it expresses itself in human language, but because it uses the material of space, time, and free will in order to communicate a higher truth. The «history» that Newman is talking about – the history that becomes doctrine – is the story of Jesus, his birth, his life, death, and resurrection. But when Newman writes that the Holy Spirit made history to be doctrine, he does not mean that history or our experience of it co-constitutes divine truth. Instead,

⁷⁶ While Scheffczyk himself does not spell all this out, I believe my gloss is reasonable. In any case, it is already helpful for him to have raised awareness about the exaggerated role accorded to human experience in terms of causality.

⁷⁷ NEWMAN, *PPS*, II, 227-8.

Newman points out that doctrines communicate truths that are completely beyond our «horizons of experience». There is nothing unique to first-century Palestine that makes that context especially privileged to see in the birth of Jesus the birth of the eternal Word of God. It takes the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to «comment» upon or «illuminate» the meaning of this sacred history. Our doctrine of the Trinity is revealed to us by Christ's birth. Doctrines on God's nature, love, and providence is revealed in Christ's life. The doctrine of atonement and justification are revealed in Christ's death and resurrection. These divine truths (i.e., God's Trinity, his providence, divine-human reconciliation, etc.) transcend history and experience. But they are communicated to us through historical events, which are instruments of God's teaching and therefore require a supernatural interpretation «from above» as it were: it is the Holy Spirit who has «made history to be doctrine».

Scheffczyk, like Newman, sees revelation as primarily a matter of God speaking through history. And this idea of God speaking through history begins already at creation. That the world was created *through the Word of God* has soteriological implications. According to Scheffczyk,

«For human beings, the Word of creation at the same time represents God's first revelation, which already points ahead to salvation, the revelation that is in the New Testament identified with Christ, insofar as "all things exist in him" (Cor 8,6)... All created things are held in being and governed by this Word»⁷⁸.

As Hauke summarizes, for Scheffczyk, «Schon kraft der Schöpfung ruft der Logos, das ewige Wort Gottes, den Menschen zu einer Antwort»⁷⁹. Creation through the Logos conditions humans to receive God's Word and to respond in faith. God uses salvation history, from the beginning to the end, to teach. Creation conditions us for the word; the Incarnation manifests the word, and at the end, we shall see our Teacher face to face.

If my glosses on both Scheffczyk's and Newman's writings be true – that is, if history and experience do not co-constitute divine truth but are instruments in revealing divine truth – then the significance this would have for doctrinal development is that dogma, freed from a modernistic historical–experiential reductionism, is once again the bearer of divine truth and, hence, in need of careful guardianship and maintenance. In such a case, Newman's classical theory of doctrinal development, the entire thrust of which is to maintain *continuity amidst historical change*, rather than seeking out a principle for future change – receives renewed relevance. History, context, and experience play their instrumental role – again, as instruments in the hands of the

⁷⁸ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Sacred Scripture: God's Word and the Church's Word*, in *Communio* 28 (2001) 26-41 (28).

⁷⁹ HAUKE, *Nachruf auf Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk*, 19.

Holy Spirit – in helping the Church to shape better, more accurate, more precise judgments about the divine mystery that is ultimately revealed by God.

6. Conclusion

In Scheffczyk's reflections on the development of dogma, one can see that the single biggest threat to authentic development of dogma is not so much a misapplication of Newman's seven notes, but a more or less subtle rejection of what Newman calls the «dogmatic principle». Without the dogmatic principle, in vain do we debate about the finer points of a particular doctrinal or disciplinary proposal that would constitute either continuity and reform within the tradition, or a rupture from the tradition. Nothing less than the rule of Vincent of Lerins is at stake, canonized in Vatican I's *Dei Filius*, according to which the Church is obliged to progress her teaching «*in derselben Lehre, in demselben Sinn und in derselben Bedeutung*».

Depending on whether one accepts the dogmatic principle, one's treatment of particular doctrines looks quite different. For example, whereas Schillebeeckx struggles to articulate beyond vague generalities what is perennially true in the teaching on *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* by the Council of Florence, Yves Congar, by contrast, was at pains to find the points of continuity between the patristic and contemporary understanding of the axiom. For him the discontinuity lies in a prudential judgment about the individual culpability of those who are outside the Church. The point of continuity, however, is that the Catholic Church – *and only the Catholic Church* – is commissioned and qualified to save all mankind⁸⁰. Whence the difference in treatment of this dogma? The answer is: Congar accepts the dogmatic principle.

Our scientific understanding of the faith, theology's ability to penetrate the *nexus mysteriorum*, a proper understanding and application of the «hierarchy of truths» that does not render certain doctrines disposable simply because they depend on more foundational mysteries – all these stand or fall with the dogmatic principle.

If one accepts the dogmatic principle, one is accepting the possibility (and by faith, the reality) that, according to God's plan, created and visible things are used to reveal Uncreated and invisible things.

«Wenn von evangelischer Seite eingewandt wurde, daß auch hier die Dogmengeschichte "Legitimationswissenschaft" des Dogmas bleibe, so hängt dies mit dem Proprium des katholischen Lehrprinzips zusammen, das in allem Wandel des Geschichtlichen das Übergeschichtliche der Offenbarung und ihres Niederschlags im geschichtlich verfaßten Dogma der Kirche wahren

⁸⁰ A. MESZAROS, *Yves Congar and the Salvation of the Non-Christian*, in *Louvain Studies* 37 (2013) 195-223.

muß... So ist Dogmengeschichtsschreibung letztlich eine Folgerung aus dem gott-menschlichen Prinzip des Christentums»⁸¹.

If one has intellectual trouble with historical contingencies propelling the Church's doctrinal tradition, one already has trouble – perhaps unwittingly – with the wisdom of the Incarnation.

But once one accepts a divine economy whereby God uses his own creation as a medium with which to communicate with his creatures – and that this creation was created precisely with a view towards being a fitting medium of communication – then the thoroughly historical nature of dogmatic propositions and the seemingly odd turns and zigzags in a dogma's journey through the doctrinal tradition no longer pose an unassailable problem for the Christian who must adhere to divine truth with a divine faith.

Being able to adhere securely to divine truth, the Christian enjoys a certitude about God and God's plan for the world that enables her to continue on her path towards beatitude. She enjoys the «assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen» (Heb 11,1). Can a Christian persevere in holiness without this assurance and conviction? No, which is why God provides the necessary means – divine instruction – for us to attain our end. And of this providential God, Newman is, through his experience of conscience, as certain as he is of his own existence⁸².

⁸¹ SCHEFFCZYK, *Katholische Dogmengeschichtsforschung*, 146-147.

⁸² NEWMAN, *Apo.*, 241: «Starting then with the being of a God, which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence...».

Abstract

This essay examines some of the theological intersections between Cardinals Leo Scheffczyk and John Henry Newman on the question of the development of dogma. The author briefly surveys Scheffczyk's reception of Newman's thought on development. Some of the major challenges to Newman's theory today are also summarized, focusing in particular on historicism and radical hermeneutics. The author then proceeds to demonstrate that both Newman and Scheffczyk uphold what Newman calls the «dogmatic principle», the maintenance of which is crucial for avoiding a neo-modernistic conception of dogma that reduces it either to a mere product of historical contingencies or to a mere contextual expression of religious faith. Finally, Newman's teaching on conscience is analysed with a view towards uncovering its insights for upholding the dogmatic principle and, with it, a sound theory of doctrinal development.

Riassunto

Questo saggio esamina alcune intersezioni teologiche tra il Cardinal Leo Scheffczyk e il Cardinal John Henry Newman sulla questione dello sviluppo del dogma. L'Autore esamina brevemente la recezione dell'idea newmaniana di sviluppo nell'opera di Scheffczyk. Sono anche compendiate, prestando particolare attenzione allo storicismo e alle ermeneutiche radicali, alcune delle principali accuse mosse alla teoria di Newman. L'Autore procede quindi a dimostrare che sia Newman sia Scheffczyk sostengono ciò che Newman chiama «principio dogmatico», la cui conservazione è cruciale per evitare una concezione neomodernista del dogma che lo ridurrebbe o a mero prodotto delle contingenze storiche o a semplice espressione contestuale della fede religiosa. Infine la dottrina della coscienza di Newman viene analizzata con l'intento di svelare le sue intuizioni in merito all'affermazione del principio dogmatico e, con esso, di una sana teoria dello sviluppo dottrinale.