

"Can Doctrine Develop? Reflections on the German Contribution"

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Intro on Dogmatic Development

Two centuries ago, if one were to hear a lecture on doctrinal development, almost everyone in the audience, especially if it had been a Catholic audience, would have asked: can doctrine really *develop*? Today the primary question does not ask whether there can be development, but whether there can be such a thing as doctrine? Can people still say that there are undisputed religious truths that have been explained sufficiently, that we really know for sure? In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the problem was development. As we grow into the twenty-first century, the problem is doctrine itself.

First Section: Defining Doctrine

Given the current climate, it will be helpful to spend a few minutes articulating a notion of what doctrine is, before explaining whether and how it can develop. Let me back up a step and say that I will be speaking out of a Catholic context. But regardless whether Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodoxy, all Christians traditions assume the normativity of Scripture. This only means that Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection represent the apex of God's grace. Despite its historical, cultural and linguistic locatedness (or perhaps because of it), Scripture is normative for Christians. Although its language is relative (indeed, the plurality of the Gospels, the

ambiguity of important terminology like the titles of Jesus, the shifting emphases in the Pauline epistles, etc.), the truths are not.

Because she is guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has the task of "rearticulating" or "distilling" the message of Scripture into doctrines that are normative. One sees such a process in the formation of early Christian creeds. The English theologian Nicholas Lash reminds us that creeds distill the myth of scripture, and "what the Scriptures say at length, the creed says briefly."¹ Like the Scriptures, though, the creed, and the early Christian doctrines about the nature of Christ, the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the procession of the Trinity are all human expressions of divine truths. The truth is normative, but its expression remains limited by history, language and culture.

The word "doctrine," like "doctor," comes from the Latin word for teaching. The great German theologian of the past century, Joseph Rupert Geiselman, writes of doctrines: "They are human, but also authentic and authoritative expressions of the God's word."² It becomes easy to focus one-sidedly on the complex reality of a doctrine. One can fixate on the human element and claim that doctrines are human efforts that can only express a subjective reality in finite language. Or one can push the human element to the side and say that doctrines are so divine that they overwhelm human contingency. I want to stay between these two poles. My reason for doing so stems from the Catholic understanding of who God is and what the Church is and does.

The Bible does not seek to make God into an object knowable like any other object, but instead emphasizes the need to rest with the mystery. So when Moses asks God for a name

¹ Nicholas Lash, Believing Three Ways in One God. A Reading of the Apostles' Creed (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 7-8.

² Joseph Rupert Geiselman, Die Katholische Tübinger Schule. Ihre theologische Eigenart. (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 57.

(which in the ancient Hebrew world would have meant an identity capable of domestication), God responds with the cryptic "I am who I am," which serves as theological shorthand for "mind your own business." The Biblical God certainly tells us enough about who He is to merit covenant fidelity, but the revelation to Israel never infringes on "the secret things [that] belong to the Lord" (Deut 29:29). These reservations carry over to the New Testament when St. Paul reminds us that "now we see dimly in a mirror" and our knowledge is only "in part" (1 Cor 13:12), thus compelling us to walk "in faith and not in sight" (2 Cor 5:7).

Good theology always respects the shallow ice on which it skates. Certainly a belief in divine revelation means that we can say something about who God is, but as theologians like Pseudo-Dionysius and Thomas Aquinas remind us, our words about God can never be complete because God is both too close to and too far away from our own experience in order to put this relationship into words that say it all.³ The Fourth Lateran Council confirmed in 1215 that whatever similarity may be between humans and God (and this would include the way truth inheres in a divine mind and a human mind) there is a greater dissimilarity.⁴ From all this we can conclude the following: at least in the Christian tradition, we cannot know the truths about God completely.

The role of doctrine is shaped by the nature and the mission of the Church as well. As Paul Crowley has outlined in his book on dogma, the early Church never separated dogma from the life of the Church – its liturgies, prayers and confessions. Dogma in the early Church belongs to the Church's effort to define its nature and to accomplish its mission. Like its worship, the

³ Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I q. 12-13; Pseudo-Dionysius, On Divine Names, 1,i.

⁴ The Council writes, "quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda." Cited from Denzinger: Enchiridion symbolorum, ed. Peter Hünermann. 39th Edition (Freiburg am Breisgau: Herder, 2001), # 806.

declaration of dogma helped the early Church achieve unity. Following Cardinal Walter Kasper, Crowley suggests that we see dogma "not as a fortress of propositions to which the faithful must submit but rather as a sign of the gospel within the living faith of the Church."⁵ Crowley goes on to state that dogma should encompass more than Church teaching alone. He writes

I also intend another, less formal sense of dogma as the mediation of the confession of faith that has taken place through the great monuments of the tradition. Here the emphasis lies not so much on what dogma says as on how it functions within the life of faith. Dogma as a function of the confession of faith, as confessional theme, would therefore include liturgical traditions (e.g., infant baptism), universal disciplinary practices (e.g., priestly celibacy), and even theological traditions (e.g., Chalcedonian Christology) that have not only served the cause of authentic catholic unity in the church but have also become points of controversy in various times and places.⁶

The church is a community of people bound together by a common faith in Jesus. Dogma serves to unify the body of Christ toward a real spiritual unity. If Crowley is right, and the faith is indeed living, then it is in need constant rearticulation for a constantly changing audience. Not only must it constantly renarrate its witness and belief in the resurrection for those inside the Church, but for those outside the Church as well.⁷ In a chapter on doctrine, Avery Dulles makes an interesting point about the Barmen Declaration. He views the attempt by German Protestants to oppose Nazism as more than church-state conflict. Dulles posits that one can read the Barmen Declaration as dogma because it essentially anathematized Germanist Christians. I agree with

⁵ Paul G. Crowley, In Ten Thousand Places. Dogma in a Pluralistic Church (New York: Crossroad, 1997), xii; Crowley references a work by Walter Kasper titled Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1965).

⁶ Crowley, In Ten Thousand Places, xii.

⁷ Dulles, The Resilient Church. The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1977), 60.

Crowley's assertion that dogma and doctrine are not just propositional truths to which all Catholics must assent. There is a broader meaning to doctrine that takes seriously the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit among those Catholics not part of the magisterium. Doctrine is not just something forced on the laity; it is something that is lived in each local community tuned into the whisperings of the Spirit.

Second Section: Developing Doctrine

One's understanding of doctrine determines how one makes room for an idea of doctrinal development. Many have coupled doctrine so closely to truth that to signify any shift in doctrine would be to undermine the validity of one's religion. Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704), the 17th century French apologist, provides a perfect example. Bossuet spent most of his life arguing why Protestantism was a faulty form of Christianity. He was incredibly popular and well-respected theologian in the French-speaking world, and his works were reprinted and translated several times over. Of Church doctrine Bossuet writes,

The Church's doctrine is always the same [...] The Gospel is never different from what it was before. Hence, if at any time someone says that the faith includes something which yesterday was not said to be of the faith, it is always heterodoxy, which is any doctrine different from orthodoxy. There is no difficulty about recognizing false doctrine: there is no argument about it: it is recognized at once, wherever it appears, merely because it is new.⁸

This example shows how the prior question of doctrine determines the subsequent question of development. For Bossuet, religious truths correspond to propositional formulae. A religion

⁸ This citation comes from Owen Chadwick's From Bossuet to Newman. The Idea of Doctrinal Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 17. For Bossuet's litany of accusations directed at Protestantism, see his two volume History of the Variations of the Protestant Church (New York: Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, 1902). He states the Catholic aversion to innovation in his preface: "The Catholic truth proceeding from God has its perfection at once; heresy, the feeble offspring of the human mind, can be formed only by ill-fitting patches." (ibid, 5).

would be undermined if it advocated change or development, just as mathematical truths would be undermined if one wanted to "update" the Pythagorean theorem or the definition of a right triangle. Bossuet knew enough Church history to be aware that creeds had become longer and doctrines like the two natures of Christ were not declared until several centuries after the New Testament was written. But for Bossuet, the words may change, but the idea remains the same as it always has. The seventeenth century Catholic mind contains no understanding of the faith that the first century believer could not have articulated. To suggest otherwise would undermine the permanence of Christian truth.

Bossuet's understanding remained popular up until the nineteenth century. The Catholic theologian most often credited with providing an alternative to Bossuet is John Henry Newman. Newman's forays into the question of doctrinal development arose from his concerns about whether Catholicism could be discarded as easily as many of his fellow Anglicans had done. When he became convinced that the developments taught by the Catholic Church were authentic, he made the decision to leave the Church of England and turn to Rome. But I am not going to speak about Newman tonight.

Instead I am going to discuss my theological heroes: a group of theologians from a southern German university town that produced, among others, the astronomer Johannes Kepler, the brilliant poet Friedrich Hölderlin, and the epic philosopher Hegel. Tübingen was a vibrant and largely Protestant town nestled in the rolling hills of Swabia. In 1817, the small Catholic theological faculty of Ellwangen was uprooted and moved to Tübingen in an effort to expand the resources available for young seminarians. The Protestant king also wanted the theology faculty

transferred from the outskirts to the center of intellectual activity so that a greater spirit of cooperation would emerge.

Part Three: Romantic Interlude

The beginning of the nineteenth century was a time of great transition in the German academic world. Embodied in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the German Enlightenment represented an enormous intellectual achievement, culminating in the towering three critiques Kant produced in the 1780s. But Kant's Enlightenment project and his grandiose efforts to map the human mind were quickly challenged by the German Romantics.

The importance of German Romanticism for our concerns can be located in the romantic notion of religion. For the German Romantics, the core of religion lay not in a knowing or a doing (as much of Enlightenment religiosity had posited), but instead in a feeling or an intuition. When the Romantics talked about feeling, they did not mean a weepy emotionalism, but instead a mystical awareness beyond the realm of discursive thought that let one notice the magnificence of the divine presence. The second of Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion* – somewhat of a Magna Charta for romantic religion – lends an example of this kind of intuition. He writes:

The contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal. Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling. Religion in itself is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in the finite, and the finite being seen in God.⁹

⁹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, trans. John Oman (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 36.

German Romanticism was fascinated with what bound things together; it sought to explain not only how the infinite and the finite belonged together, but how poetry and philosophy coalesced, how brute instincts and rational speculation could cohere in one human person, and how the different faculties of the university belonged to a greater whole.

Fourth Part: Toward a New Theology of Development

Most Romantics were Protestants who became enamored with the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, a Jew from Amsterdam excommunicated from his own community. A few of these Romantics became Catholics, and a few Catholics recognized that their notion of sacramentality and what Ignatius of Loyola had called "finding God in all things" was present in the German Romantics.

One such Catholic was Johann Sebastian Drey, the "founder" of the Catholic theology faculty in Tübingen. A contemporary of Hegel, Beethoven and Goethe, Drey breathed the air of German Romanticism. For Drey, the romantic thought of people like Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schelling served as an able complement to a Catholic vision. Indeed, he learned from Schelling that the Incarnation was the central event in all of history. Christianity was neither an esoteric teaching hidden beneath the facts of history, nor the effort to strip away historical corruptions accumulated through time. Our relationship to the central salvific events of Christian history is always a real, sacramental relationship. God is present to believers through such symbols as water, wine, bread and oil. Through sensible experiences like liturgy, common prayer, and the experience of being loved, Catholics gravitate toward the supersensible truths.¹⁰

¹⁰ Johann Sebastian Drey, "Vom Geist und Wesen des Katholizismus," (Theologische Quartalschrift 1819); reprinted in Geist des Christentums und des Katholizismus, ed. Joseph Rupert Geiselman (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1940), 214.

As real, embodied spirits truths must always be mediated. The authentic theologian participates in the very reality he describes. Christianity is not something that happened two thousand years ago from which we are now separated. Because the Holy Spirit abides in the Church, Drey proclaims that the Church embodies "the truly objective, uninterrupted, pure and logical continuation of original Christianity."¹¹

As a Catholic, Drey rejected the Lutheran doctrine of *scriptura sola*, but also the strands of Catholic theology that view tradition solely in terms of textual authority embodied in such thinkers as Peter Lombard and the later, decadent scholasticism. Explains Drey,

If scripture alone is accepted as the means of the tradition of the ideas of religious belief, then construction proceeds by way of scriptural interpretation; then the whole of theology is exegesis. But if there exists a living objective reality which is generally recognized as the continuance of the originating event and therefore its most authentic tradition, then the historical witness is found in and through it.¹²

For Drey, Christ is no longer present in the same manner as the disciples experienced, but the Christ event is the culmination of the human spirit's longing for God and the apex of the divine initiative to fulfill such a longing. Further, the community of believers living in fidelity to the Christ experience is emboldened by the life-giving Spirit. Yet Drey does not opt for a spiritualist or enthusiastic theology of immediacy to combat the Lutheran emphasis on Scripture. Instead he embraces the Church as a living, *historical* community:

[T]he primitive [biblical] history and the further course of Christianity are in fact only *one history*, just as Christianity is itself only one reality in the ordinary sense. Consequently, for knowledge of Christianity its further course

¹¹ Drey, "Vom Geist und Wesen," 196.

¹² Drey, Brief Introduction to the Study of Theology, trans. Michael J. Himes (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994) #47, page 20.

[i.e., its continuing development] is a subject just as important and necessary as its primitive history.¹³

The priority of the scriptural account is temporal but not real. The first century Church for Drey is no more important than the nineteenth century Church in the sense that Christianity would no longer find practice if either had ceased to exist. As witness and chronicler, the Church continues to tell and *live* the story of salvation history, the most authentic account of what it means to be human, and the truest explanation of how God creates, sustains and saves God's creatures. In the aphorism following the citation above, Drey explains how the "force of life" governs all developments and that "one living force" infiltrates all subsequent periods of history.

Drey wrote perhaps the most important apologetic work in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ But he found himself at the opposite end of the spectrum from Bossuet (and one should note, several years before Newman articulated his theory). For Drey, the authenticity of Catholicism lay in the very reality of its development. Further, this development was not simply the logical expression of ideas already implicit in the mind of believers. Nor was it an inevitable organic outgrowth, like the budding of a flower. Drey's emphasis on life coalesced with his belief in human freedom.

Let us back up for a minute. Drey viewed the essence of Christianity to be part of its history, and its history to be part of its essence. Like any historian of Christianity, he saw developments in liturgy, Church practice and doctrine. But he also saw the history of conflict and in-fighting. Church history was not simply a happy progression and agreement on how our Christian understanding of the story of our salvation became richer, but a road littered with

¹³ Drey, Brief Introduction #174, 81.

¹⁴ See the three volume Die Apologetik als wissenschaftliche Nachweisung der Göttlichkeit des Christentums in seiner Erscheinung, (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967 –reprint of the 1837-47 edition). Abraham Peter Kustermann calls Drey "the father of fundamental theology" (the branch concerned with apologetics). See Kustermann, "Johann Sebastian Drey," in Dictionary of Fundamental Theology. English Language Edition, ed Rene Latourelle (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 247.

heresies.¹⁵ He declares the task of polemics to sort out these differences and get to their root. Inspired by Paul's statement in 1 Cor 11:19 – "there must be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine," – Drey calls the doctrinal disputes "necessary phenomenon."¹⁶ Drey indicates that disputes arise because of laziness or inattentiveness in matters of faith and intellect that go hand in hand with capacity to freely reject or accept the Gospel. Out of these disputes those charged with protecting the faith develop a more refined understanding.

At this juncture we leave Drey and turn to one of his earliest and brightest students. Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838) is the most famous member of the Tübingen School. Like Drey, he drank from the wells of German Romanticism. He was something of a theological prodigy. He finished his studies at the age of twenty-seven and took a position as a professor at his alma mater shortly thereafter. Two years later, while still in his twenties, he published perhaps the most important work on the Church since St. Augustine's *City of God*. Möhler's 1825 *Unity in the Church*¹⁷ combined his love of the Church Fathers with his interest in the Romantics as a response to the problems of Enlightenment Catholicism. Although the development of doctrine is not the central theme of the text, Möhler is clearly concerned with how doctrine develops.

Möhler learned a great deal from his mentor, and wanted to integrate human freedom with an organic view of the Church. But as the Hegel's philosophy of dialectic gained steam in the 1820s, Möhler became wary of a model of development wherein thoughts just bounced off one another. This concern became more acute when F.C. Baur, the Hegelian theology professor in

¹⁵ See Drey, Brief Introduction, #237-247, 109-13.

¹⁶ Drey, Brief Introduction, #247, 113. My awareness of this connection comes from Geiselman's Die Katholische Tübinger Schule. Ihre theologische Eigenart, (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 59.

¹⁷ Möhler, Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism, trans. Peter C. Erb (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

the Protestant faculty in Tübingen, explained how doctrines develop exclusively in terms of disagreements between factions.

One can easily get the impression, especially if one were to look at articles written in the theological journals, that theology is for the overly cerebral, and only erudite theologians have bothered with questions of doctrine. Möhler dispels these notions, writing that "the attempt to discover [what is] Christianity by mere thought" is, in general, "heresy."¹⁸ Echoing Drey, Möhler insists that an understanding of Christianity can only be attained by those who participate in its life. For the dialectician (and here Möhler had Baur in his sights), one begins with a thesis and an antithesis. The truth only emerges in the synthesis of the two. (Take for theory of governmental representation in a legislative body; thesis: representation should be proportionate to the population; antithesis: each state should have an equal number of representatives; synthesis: a lower house of representatives and a Senate together shall form a legislative body.) For the dialectician, the truth always emerges at the end. To the contrary, Möhler thinks Christianity *starts* with the truth, or at least a belief in it. He writes, "The basic foundation of the Church is the *living* Christ, the God who became human, not the search as to who he might be."¹⁹ This assertion affects how Möhler views the role of heresy.

Heresy cannot be an antithesis for Möhler because it does not participate in the truth and derives from a different foundation from Christian reflection. In its very nature, heresy is always isolated from the body of the Church. Möhler considers "egoism" a synonym for heresy and contrasts it with love, the virtue fostered most readily in the Church. He bemoans: "I do not see how the Church could form a higher unity with those heresies that separated themselves [...]"

¹⁸ Unity, #18, 123.

¹⁹ Unity, #19, 130.

Love and egoism are not antithesis."²⁰ Instead they are contradictions for Möhler. Error can always arise in members of the Church, but as long as they belong to the same body and abide in the same Spirit, the errors can be worked out. Heresy by definition is already separate from the Church.

Speculation has its place in Möhler, but he insists that it must be secondary. The real, revelatory events are always primary. He writes,

Development by means of contradictions never transcends the kind of knowledge possible in this way, i.e., it is impossible for pure knowledge ever to pass over into positive divine faith because the latter has an entirely different origin and an entirely different nature.²¹

Michael Himes, the great scholar of the Tübingen School, has summed up Möhler's theology of development as follows:

Möhler took as his explanatory framework and his historical method not an idea but a living organism and so took as his metaphor for development not the movement of antitheses toward synthesis but rather organic process. Truth was given in the life, death and destiny of Jesus; the history of the church and its doctrine is the development of the understanding of that truth.²²

Möhler's recovery of the organic metaphor must be qualified. It did not mean that the doctrinal understanding developed in the course of history was inevitable; rather, it meant that doctrine developed within the Church as the manifestation of peaceful difference that allows for dissonance but no final discord. Möhler was fond of symphonic imagery to describe this reality. Or to update the imagery to the time and places, the freedom of the theologian is analogous to

²⁰ Unity, #46, 197.

²¹ Möhler, Neue Untersuchungen der Lehrgegensätze zwischen den Katholiken und Protestanten. Eine Vertheidigung meiner Symbolik gegen die Kritik des Herrn Professors Dr. Baur in Tübingen (Mainz: 1834), 480.

²² This quotation comes from the written copy of a presentation at the nineteenth century group of the 2003 meeting of the American Academy of Religion. It is called "Möhler as Church Historian." Himes has written a longer work on Möhler: Ongoing Incarnation, (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997).

the freedom of the jazz soloist. The solo is the spontaneous, free expression but can only be free if the soloist is in concert with the tune.

Möhler wants to make room for human freedom, but it is a freedom that is always secondary to God's initial movement. In this sense his understanding of the human role for the development of doctrine followed Augustine's explanation of the human role in salvation. "God cannot save us without us" Augustine was wont to say. One could formulate a similar slogan for Möhler's understanding of development: doctrinal truths cannot develop without human minds. In a later text Möhler explains his point:

In this process of the development of the divine word, [...] we may exalt as high, and extend as wide as we please the divine guidance [...] yet without human co-operation, without the peculiar activity of man, it did not advance of itself. As in the good work of the Christian, free will and grace pervade each other, and one and the same undivided deed is at once divine and human.²³

For Möhler, the fact or the reality of God's saving action always logically precedes any human articulation of this act. Because Möhler's career was cut short, another member of the Tübingen faculty took up the mantle to explain in greater detail how truth developed. Johannes Kuhn was only ten years younger than Möhler, and likewise rose with meteoric speed to achieve a reputation as the latest brilliant theologian from Tübingen. Fortunately for the state of theology and his colleagues, he stayed in Tübingen as a professor for over forty years. Despite all of the concern for dogma among his predecessors Drey and Möhler, Kuhn was the only one actually to

²³ Möhler, Symbolics: Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences Between Catholics and Protestants as Evidenced by Their Symbolical Writings, trans. James Burton Robertson (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), #40, 289-90.

write a dogmatic theology. He seemed bent on making up for the bashfulness, as the unfinished version of his *Catholic Dogmatics* extended nearly two thousand pages.²⁴

For Kuhn, matters of doctrine were not simply an intellectual game. Instead, doctrine concerned the human expression of truths that were salvific. The truth given by God cannot "develop" any further because God gave God's self in the form of Jesus. All Christian doctrines concern how God saves us. Kuhn expresses this point when he says that doctrines develop formally, not materially.²⁵ By this distinction he means that the material element of doctrine is always the living experience of Christ that Drey and Möhler emphasized so strongly. The formal aspect of doctrine is the form that doctrine takes, i.e., the human words that express this truth. For Kuhn, these words are contingent and meant for a specific audience. Since the Church is commissioned to spread the Gospel, it must always be mindful about preaching to its audience. But here one could ask, are not all doctrines then up for grabs and always available for review?

Perhaps because he insists on the merely formal character of doctrine, Kuhn places more emphasis on the role of the hierarchy than his teachers did. He agrees with him that the source of our truth is a living source,²⁶ but the life is not just life *per se*. The life of the Church is only living to the extent that it participates in the saving missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. Kuhn asserts the same real connection between his Church and the first century Church that Drey made. But this life abides in the collective body of the Church more wholly than in individuals. As the teaching office of the Church, the bishops and the magisterium represent and in a real sense speak for the faithful.²⁷ Perhaps Kuhn is old-fashioned here, and indeed he was a strong

²⁴ Kuhn, *Katholische Dogmatik*, (Tübingen: 1859-62; reprint Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968).

²⁵ for this point see Kuhn, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 152-56.

²⁶ *Katholische Dogmatik*, 134.

²⁷ *Katholische Dogmatik*, 155.

supporter of the monarchy in his brief stint in the Württemberg assembly, but he insists that unless there is an identifiable body that speaks for the faithful, there is no way for a Church to expound doctrine. He does not disallow the role of the theologian, and even admits that doctrine develops through dialogue with people who reject the faith.²⁸ Still, the formal expression is never separated from the matter it wishes to express. It must always be embodied in the Church and expressed through identifiable organs.

Conclusion

Although none produced a work on development as thorough as Newman's, all three reached conclusions about development similar to Newman's, namely that doctrines did develop, and this development did not undermine the legitimacy of Catholic doctrinal claims; on the contrary, it reinforced these claims. All argued that only something dead would not develop, and the very mark of a living entity was its growth, expansion, and inevitably, its development.

Let me conclude by suggesting that the Tübingen School has much to teach us – not only about the history of the theology of development, but how we the Church might proceed in the twenty-first century. Despite all of the struggles it faces, the twenty-first century Church will have the opportunity to make its contributions to Church doctrine. Certainly there is a warranted fear that Catholics "hold on tight" to the doctrines already out there, and this coincides with the renewed emphasis on catechesis. To these concerns I would only add that we can also learn the content of the faith by living the faith. Before Christians were called Christians, their movement was known as "the Way" (Acts 9:2). Indeed, those attentive to the indwelling of the Trinity in their souls are no farther from the authentic Church than a Christian from any other century.

²⁸ Katholische Dogmatik, 168.

The Tübingen School can teach us that the Church sings the same tune that has been sung uninterrupted for twenty centuries; sometimes poorly sung or sung by few, sometimes sung well and sung by many. We are not farther away from Christ at this point in time. Drey reminds us that "the self-consciousness of the original Christianity subsists within Catholics through each century in an unchanging substrate of an uninterrupted objective foundation."²⁹

They can also teach us that we need not fear a hostile culture. Today this may seem counter-intuitive. Just think of the biotechnological developments with cloning, the market for human organs, and the implications of such ideas for anthropology. Or one can turn to the state of our environment that undergoes an exponential destruction at the hands of materialists and millennialists. Never mind the threat of global terror, the culture wars about the sanctity of human life and the meaning of marriage. Although many things threaten the Catholic comfort zone (and perhaps many more things should), Catholics are called to critically engage the culture and the competing philosophies, anthropologies, and theologies. Despite what appears to be a woeful ignorance of the faith among the laity, the Church is for the first time in history both practically ecumenical and practically global. Indeed I am hopeful to be part of the first generation where European assumptions about the nature of the Church will not go unchallenged by Catholics in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The next century of dogmatic reflection by the Church promises to rearticulate in a new light the truths that redeem are fallen, fragile and broken world that still manages, somehow, to reflect the beauty of its creator for those willing and courageous enough to take a careful look.

²⁹ Drey, "Vom Geist und Wesen," 198.