

Tradition and Normativity of History: Newman and Lonergan in Quest for Unity of Knowledge

Cyril Orji

Abstract: *This paper identifies Newman and Lonergan as two major contributors who shaped the current state of Catholic intellectual tradition. Their contribution lies in their creative use of tradition and history. Their relationship is also one of dependence—Lonergan drew upon Newman and did so creatively. The clarity Newman and Lonergan brought to the contentious matters of tradition and history offers a constructive way of clarifying the what and why of Catholic intellectual tradition.*

Key Words: John Henry Newman; Bernard Lonergan; Catholic Intellectual Tradition; History; Tradition.

In this paper I use the differentials of the human good, which are foundational to Lonergan's project of transformation of Christian education,¹ to clarify the meaning and scope of the important matter of Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT). Because these differentials are the outcome of the higher viewpoint which Lonergan sought in the history of ideas, particularly in the works of John Henry Cardinal Newman whom he greatly revered, I elucidate Lonergan's viewpoints with Newman's work on the development of Christian doctrine. Their quest to achieve wholeness or unity of knowledge serves as a paradigm of how to make Catholicism intelligible. Newman searched for truth in Christian tradition. Lonergan discovered Newman in his critical study of history through a process of self-appropriation. Newman's stronghold was tradition.² Lonergan relished history as pertaining to meaning and drama of life.³ As an Anglican, Newman's quest for nearest approximation of primitive truth in the *via media* was matched only by a relentless search for truth (as a Catholic) that was "unencumbered

¹ "Differentials" are things that make a difference to human good. They are very impactful and distinguish society from time to time. Lonergan usually speaks of three kinds of differentials: intellectual development, sin (evil), and redemption (grace). These three are intertwined and interconnected. Human intelligence develops with time and the development leads to progress in society. We cannot, however, speak of the development of intelligence and human good apart from evil. Evil, an aberration of the good, often results from wilful and deliberate attempt not to pursue knowledge; the result is decline in society. Redemption comes as a restoration of the order destroyed by sin. As human beings with an infinite desire for knowledge we are all involved in the drama of progress, decline, and redemption. See Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 10, eds., Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000), 26-30.

² John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (New York: Longmans, 1947), 95.

³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 179.

by Scholastic metaphysical assumptions.”⁴ As a Thomist, Lonergan embraced historical consciousness in his engagement with post-Kantian philosophical currents. No one understands the problem of tradition and history better than Newman and Lonergan.⁵ Tradition and history were, for them, a fact, and the continuity between the early age and latter ages was also, for them, equally something demonstrable.⁶ Together they demonstrate how the pull towards wholeness or integration of knowledge serves the good of Catholicism and how this search is a central unifying force of CIT.

The impact of Newman’s work on development of doctrine was felt at the Second Vatican Council.⁷ It has generated a debate on how to foster the identity and character of Catholic institutions of higher learning in the contemporary world. Fifty years after Vatican II, the issue of identity of Catholic colleges and universities is still a subject of vigorous debate among commentators and faculty of Catholic colleges and universities. In the United States the discussion is framed in the form of a question: what is the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT)? To this day, CIT remains a contentious term, not because those who find it objectionable deny the reality of what is designated by CIT, but because there is no consensus regarding exactly what is meant by the term.⁸ The existence of a CIT therefore, “is not a given, as arguments *contra* are in balance with arguments *pro*.”⁹

In practical terms, CIT tries to clarify the nature of the relationship between Catholicism’s intellectual tradition and the Church hierarchy.¹⁰ While the nature of the relationship remains complex, some fear that we might be witnessing the end of the era of cordial relationship between Catholic institutions of higher learning and Church authorities. This concern motivated members of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) at their Land O’Lakes Wisconsin meeting (1987) to demand that Catholic universities be free from all ecclesiastical interference. They demanded that Catholic universities be granted true autonomy and complete academic freedom. Negotiations for these demands were still going on when John Paul II issued his authoritative Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesia* (1990)—a document that declares that a Catholic university is born from the heart of the Church—and reignited questions whether this and other related claims have solid basis in Church history and tradition.¹¹

⁴ Neil Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity? Toward an Ontology of Meaning,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010), 609-36, at 614.

⁵ See James M. Wilson, “Doctrinal Development and the Demons of History: The Historiography of John Henry Newman,” *Religion and the Arts* 10 (2006): 497-523, at 497.

⁶ Drew P. Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects of John Henry Newman’s Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” *Horizons* 16 (1989): 223-42, at 226.

⁷ Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity,” 615.

⁸ See Wolfgang Grassl, “Is There Really a Catholic Intellectual Tradition?” A paper presented at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Montreal, QC, November 7-10, 2009. The assumption of this paper however, is that CIT exists and that what is meant by the term is to be understood “in terms of two aspects: the classic treasures to be cherished, studied, and handed on; and the way of doing things that is the outcome of centuries of experience, prayer, action, and critical reflection.” See Monika Hellwig, “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Catholic University,” in *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, eds., Anthony J. Cernera and Oliver J. Morgan (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2000), 1-18, at 3.

⁹ See Grassl, “Is There Really a Catholic Intellectual Tradition?”

¹⁰ See John Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going: The Horizon of the Knowing Subject* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 65.

¹¹ See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae_en.html; accessed November 12, 2011.

In spite of its overall positive reception, there were some passages in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* that made some theology faculty uneasy, such as the stipulation that all who teach in Catholic institutions of higher learning must be faithful to Catholic doctrine and morals in their teaching and research and “Catholic theologians, aware that they fulfil a mandate received from the Church, are to be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church as the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture and Tradition” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Article 4, no, 3). These, together with the processes by which the document was implemented in the U.S., added to the existing tension between faculty in Catholic institutions of higher learning and the hierarchy.¹² This tension, in my view, suggests all the more the need to clarify the two essential but troublesome concepts in the intellectual appeal of Catholicism: tradition and history. Benedict XVI more recently spoke out against a hermeneutic (of discontinuity) that derides history and tradition.¹³ Apart from undermining the rich theologies of the past,¹⁴ a hermeneutic of discontinuity “draws a sharp line between pre-Vatican II Catholicism and the new and different spiritual and intellectual atmosphere supposedly mandated by the Council.”¹⁵ The risk a hermeneutic of discontinuity poses for Catholicism is not just a split between pre-conciliar and post-conciliar Church, but a dis-integration of knowledge. According to Neil Ormerod’s careful study of the issue, there are at least two sides of the debate. “On one side the Bologna approach to church history that, while not denying deep continuity, emphasizes the ‘rupture’ of the council, the ways in which the council was discontinuous with what went before.... On the other side is a more official interpretation that can so emphasize continuity as to rule any possibility of discontinuity.”¹⁶ The problem of continuity and discontinuity requires a theological analysis or heuristic that can help determine whether what is changing over time is doing so continuously or discontinuously,¹⁷ as I purport to do in this essay.

THE PULL TOWARDS WHOLENESS

Lonergan greatly admired Newman whose work on the act of organizing intelligence (method) he embraced wholeheartedly. His first encounter with Newman was in his formative years as a Jesuit when he read *The Idea of a University* (1873), a work that captures the essence of Newman’s involvement in Catholic education. Lonergan accepted Newman’s idea that a university education exists primarily to train the mind and foster liberal education. He also accepted the epistemological grounding of Newman’s other related work, *Grammar of Assent* (1870). This work, in which Newman probed the nature

¹² Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 90.

¹³ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html; accessed October 22, 2011.

¹⁴ It is important to note Ormerod’s observation that the category of “discontinuity,” like “continuity,” is more descriptive than explanatory and “that the underlying issue is not one of continuity/discontinuity but of authenticity/unauthenticity of the development in relation to God’s saving act.” See Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?” 613.

¹⁵ Reinhard Hutter, “The Ruins of Discontinuity: Reinhard Hutter Looks for Answers to the Fragmentation of Catholic Theology in America and finds Some,” *First Things* 209 (2011): 37-41, at 39.

¹⁶ Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?,” 609-10. The first approach, according to Ormerod, is associated with the multivolume edited works of Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

¹⁷ Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?,” 611.

of the human mind and what it means to know, would later become a basis or framework for Lonergan's signature work on method. His appropriation of Newman would lead to a whole new set of ideas, moving the Catholic intellectual project closer and closer to all-encompassing wholeness.

Lonergan described Newman as his intellectual mentor and appropriated him accordingly.¹⁸ What the two men articulated in their respective works can be conceived as different aspects of the Catholic good. The good, when articulated by minds, makes a whole.¹⁹ Newman's dedication to tradition and Lonergan's attention to history together enrich Catholicism's intellectual heritage. Catholicity in itself is, after all, a heuristic that pushes for a further whole.²⁰ What is lacking today is a central integrating thought that will unify various aspects of our life that seem fragmented: economy, ecology, technology, society, matter, mind, etc.²¹ As evidenced by the way he appropriated Newman, Lonergan provides a way to reach toward that central integrating thought and a way toward wholeness that is implicit in the notion of Catholicity.²²

THE CONTEXT OF NEWMAN'S WRITINGS

The context of Newman's writings is important for understanding his thought.²³ As an Anglican, Newman loved the Fathers and sought, through the study of ancient wisdom a *via media*, i.e., a middle way between the excesses of Protestantism and what was pejoratively described as "popery." Until the middle of the nineteenth century, identification of the Roman Catholic pope with the Antichrist was a characteristic feature of the British public life.²⁴ "Even the learned were so accustomed to thinking of the Roman church as the Antichrist that their eyes were blinded to Newman's novel distinctions between Catholicism and Popery."²⁵

In the preface (1836 and 1847 editions) of the *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church*, Newman described the *via media* as a search for "a possible road between a mountain and a morass [needing an] appeal to the imagination."²⁶ He outlined the errors of Protestantism and the Roman Church, locating the Church of England's *via media* as a third system that cuts between them.²⁷ Before long however, he came to the realization

¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, "Reality, Myth, Symbol," in *Myth, Symbol, and Reality*, ed., Alan Olson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 32.

¹⁹ See John Haughey, S.J., ed., *In Search of the Whole: Twelve Essays on Faith and Academic Life* (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2011), ix.

²⁰ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 120.

²¹ See Robert J. Deal, "Professional Education as Transformation," in *In the Search of the Whole*, 37-50, at 49.

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

²³ John Connolly, "Newman on Human Faith and Divine Faith: Clarifying Some Ambiguities," *Horizons* 23 (1996), 261-80, at 263.

²⁴ Paul Misner, "Newman and the Tradition Concerning the Papal Antichrist," *Church History* 42 (1973): 377-95, at 377.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 379; quoting Robert H. Greenfield, *The Attitude of the Tractarians to the Roman Catholic Church 1883-1860* (Ph. D. dissertation, in typescript at the Bodleian, Oxford, 1956), 215.

²⁶ Gerard Magill, "Moral Imagination in Theological Method and Church Tradition: John Henry Newman," *Theological Studies* 53 (1992): 451-75, at 451; quoting *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, xxi.

²⁷ Jeremy N. Morris, "Newman and Maurice on the *Via Media* of the Anglican Church: Contrasts and Affinities," *Anglican Theological Review* 85 (2003): 623-640, at 628.

that the *via media* was “unreal” and only a paper religion that Catholic arguments had absolutely pulverized.²⁸ At one point he caused a furor in the ranks of the Oxford movement when he openly claimed he no longer identified the anti-Christ with the Church of Rome and that, even if charges of the sort were to be made, the Church of England was equally open to the charge.²⁹ The subsequent back and forth and competing claims of Anglican and Roman Catholicism became, for Newman, a reason to examine the nature, meaning, and extent of “Faith and the Church.”³⁰ He did this by engaging in a lengthy study of the history of the fourth century Arians.³¹

Newman then began to question whether the truth lay in the *via media*. At first the study led him to equate the pure Arians with Protestants, semi-Arians with Anglicans, and Rome with what it has always been (“popery”).³² But in 1839 Newman came to the conclusion that the search for *via media* was implausible and began to develop moderate (Anglican) views. His new insight would “strike a balance between apparent extremes by a nuanced mode of reasonable discernment.”³³ Thus, the demise of the *via media*, as Newman understood it, was a signal that the Anglican Church was no longer to be understood as a legitimate part of the one true Church, but as a schismatic Church.³⁴

Newman abandoned the *via media* after long years of struggle “to bring the Anglican Church to a recognition of its catholic spirit,”³⁵ i.e., after reaching “an abstract theological judgment that the true catholic church was the Roman, not the Anglican” Church³⁶ Two years after the abandonment of the *via media* (in 1843), he came “to the existential realization, in a concrete judgment of conscience, that he must join the Roman Catholic Church, that his salvation depended on converting to it.”³⁷ Intellectually, Newman portrayed his conversion to Catholicism as a search for solution to a controversy,³⁸ but hardly ever abandoned his test of apostolicity or the search for true doctrine that he located in the formulary of Vincent of Lerins (d. 434), a formula we shall return to later. It suffices to say that Newman’s goal, whether as an Anglican or Catholic, was always “to recover the treasures of tradition by examining the doctrines of the early Church.”³⁹ For

²⁸ Lynn A. Feider, “John Henry Newman: His *via Media*,” *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 44 (1990): 177-190, at 177.

²⁹ Misner, “Newman and the Tradition Concerning the Papal Antichrist,” 379

³⁰ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (New York Image, 1956), 215. According to Donald Capps, Newman’s “understanding of the ideal church is intimately related to his conversion to the Catholic Church. The Church of England was the natural mother who abandoned her son shortly after birth, who failed to express the “favouritism” an elder son expects and who rejected his plea to be allowed to help when she was in distress ... In contrast, the Church of Rome was the spiritual mother, representing stability and security.” (See “John Henry Newman: A Study of Vocational Identity,” *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion* 9 (1970): 33-51, at 47.

³¹ See <http://newmanreader.org/works/arians/index.html>.

³² Martin J. Svaglic, “John Henry Newman: The Three Conversions,” *Mid-Stream* 8 (1969): 66-79, at 76.

³³ Magill, “Moral Imagination in Theological Method and Church Tradition: John Henry Newman,” 451. See also J. H. Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (1836), ed., H.D. Weidner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

³⁴ Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects of John Henry Newman’s Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” 224.

³⁵ Walter E. Conn, “From Oxford to Rome: Newman’s Ecclesial Conversion,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 595-617, at 616.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 612.

³⁹ Magill, “Moral Imagination in Theological Method and Church Tradition,” 451.

this forward looking scholar, “the future of the Church is best served by a submission to her past modes of reflection—modes that educate us to meet future challenges with a faithful intelligence.”⁴⁰

Before he joined the Roman Church, Newman was a prominent member of the Oxford movement. The origin of the Movement goes back to John Keble, the Oxford don whose sermon of 1833 became a significant turning point in Anglo-Catholic relations.⁴¹ When Keble preached the sermon that became the origin of the Movement, Newman was at the time returning “from a visit to Sicily, in which he had come close to dying from typhoid, and believed himself providentially preserved by God to come to the defence of the church.”⁴² When he arrived in England to learn that Keble had preached a sermon on “National Apostasy” and had attacked the Church Temporalities Act,⁴³ Newman saw the movement as the beginning of “the restoration of ‘ancient religion’ to England after Roman and, subsequently, Anglican failures.”⁴⁴ This was the catalyst that informed Newman’s “conviction that history itself demonstrated that the Roman Catholic Church was the single, transcendent and yet visible entity that could embody, interpret, and judge all the facts of history.”⁴⁵ It was not surprising that the Oxford Movement became, for Newman, not a digging of defences of the old order, but a “revolution by tradition,”⁴⁶ a reason for which he centred his concern mainly on authority in the Church and the process of transmission of the Christian faith.⁴⁷ “*Ecclesia semper reformando*, is always, in one way or another, an appeal to roots, to measuring the church by its origins and by how the church embodies and hands on God’s self-revelation in Christ.”⁴⁸

Ever before he became a Catholic, Newman advocated apostolic preservation of the faith and revival of orthodox (Catholic) practices. For him, the Bible and the Apostolic tradition cannot be properly understood outside of their actual patristic contexts.⁴⁹ “It is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Fathers that ensures authoritatively, normatively and critically, the historic continuity of the apostolic community and her apostolic faith and praxis.”⁵⁰ As Newman got steeped in tradition, in the eyes of his opponent, his Oxford Movement was edging “closer to popery, the dreaded bugbear of the

⁴⁰ Hutter, “The Ruins of Discontinuity,” 39.

⁴¹ According to Nancy Benvenga, at the time of Newman “the ancient university of Oxford was an exclusively male domain: only men were as yet admitted as students, and the dons were prohibited from marrying; only professors and heads of colleges were allowed to marry. Thus the colleges were, in effect, monastic communities. Moreover, the Tractarians held a high view of celibacy as an important part of what they called their ethos, and many of them, including John Henry Newman, never married” (see “An Oxymoron? Women in the Life of John Henry Newman,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 51 (1997): 117-131, at 117.

⁴² Geoffrey Rowell, “For What We Have received,” *Modern Believing* 51 (2010): 7-15, at 7.

⁴³ Thomas Ferguson, “The Enthralling Power: History and Heresy in John Henry Newman,” *Anglican Theological Review* 85 (2003): 641-662, at 654.

⁴⁴ Wilson, “Doctrinal Development and the Demons of History,” 502.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 498. From the age of fifteen Newman had three major conversion experiences or “great change of thought,” as he calls it in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. See Martin J. Svaglic, “John Henry Newman: The Three Conversions,” *Mid-Stream* 8 (1969): 66-79.

⁴⁶ Rowell, “For What We Have Received,” 7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁹ George D. Dragas, “John Henry Newman: A Starting-point for Rediscovering the Catholicity of the Fathers Today,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25 (1980): 273-95, at 276.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Anglican Church since the Reformation,"⁵¹ As if to prove his opponents right, soon after Newman published his famous Tract 90 of the *Tracts for the Times* that ended his involvement in Anglicanism,⁵² he began to equate Anglicanism with liberalism. Newman wrote in 1852 concerning his rejection of liberalism that liberals "give no better guarantee for the philosophical truth of their principles than their popularity at the moment, and their happy conformity in ethical character to the age which admires them."⁵³ This comes at the heels of his 1832 condemnation of England's "fallacious notion of its superiority to other countries and other times."⁵⁴

Newman's new found term, 'catholic,' became central to his life and quest.⁵⁵ Whether in the Anglican Church in Oxford, or in the Roman Church in the Oratory in Birmingham, he was searching after the same thing, catholicity.⁵⁶ "Catholicity [was] like a magnet, which [sustained] him in his work and life-search, or is like a compass, which [showed] him the true orientation in his life."⁵⁷ The breadth and depth of the word 'catholic' so permeated Newman's life that it would be a mistake to think that he became a Roman Catholic in October 1845, for Newman would not have embraced Roman Catholicism had he not first discover catholicity in his Anglican days.⁵⁸

NEWMAN'S DEVOTION TO TRADITION

Newman embraced Catholicism, in part, because of his conviction that Scripture has to be interpreted through the lens of the Church's tradition and that tradition has an apologetic purpose for the Church.⁵⁹ He thought that by deriding tradition Protestantism had dispensed with historical continuity and has relinquished all claims to historical Christianity.⁶⁰ Catholic tradition, for him, "has taken certain definite shapes, and has thrown itself into the form of a science, with a method and phraseology of its own, under the intellectual handling of great minds, such as St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas."⁶¹

Newman's love for tradition, Catholic tradition in particular, made him begin *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) with a detailed explanation of his conversion from the Anglican Communion to Roman Catholicism. He also gave a detailed account of how his conversion impacts the problem of continuity and change. "It is difficult at this distance," comments Neil Ormerod, "to remember just what a remarkable contribution Newman made in his *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. At a time when the official Roman theology was conceptualist and ahistorical, focusing on the absolute givenness of divine revelation from which conclusions could be deduced in

⁵¹ Ferguson, "The Enthralling Power," 654.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ See Michael D. Aeschliman, "The Prudence of John Henry Newman," *First Things* 45 (1994): 36-39, at 37.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dragas, "John Henry Newman," 275.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ferguson, "The Enthralling Power," 641.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Hutter, "The Ruins of Discontinuity," 41.

positivist fashion, Newman was proposing a complex process of historical development for Christian doctrine.”⁶² Newman saw continuity as something that comes with change. Whereas for some traditional Catholics at the time, “the unchanging stability of the Catholic Church [was] a sign that it was the one true Church, Newman argued that the developments evident in the Catholic Church were markers that it was the one true church. Only the one true church would demonstrate the process of genuine doctrinal development.”⁶³

Newman seemed to understand the tension between continuity and change far more than his colleagues. He developed a four-part hypothesis for understanding the tension.⁶⁴ The first hypothesis was from the rule of Vincent of Lerins. In his *Commonitorium pro catholicae fidei, antiquitate et universitate* (AD 434), Vincent formulated the principle that to establish what is Catholic doctrine, i.e., the dogma of the whole Church, it is necessary to keep to what is believed everywhere, at all times, by everyone.⁶⁵ From it Newman deduced that although the rule of Vincent was applicable in Vincent’s own time and perhaps still remains true in Newman’s own time, at least in the abstract, “it was not effective in finding a satisfactory resolution to the difficulties of the nineteenth century. The solution the formula offered, contended Newman, was as difficult as the original problem.”⁶⁶ Newman’s second hypothesis was that Christianity has, from the very beginning, gone through changes and has always adapted to different times and changing circumstances. According to Newman, it was in these meetings of cultures that Christianity was corrupted by extraneous circumstances it encountered along the way, such as Platonism for example.⁶⁷ The third hypothesis appeals to the claim of Roman theologians regarding *disciplina Arcani* in the early Church. According to the *disciplina Arcani* claims, some doctrines were present in the early Church but to prevent them from being profaned by non-Christians these doctrines were never taught.⁶⁸ Newman agreed that the *disciplina Arcani* was a reality in primitive Christianity, but denied that it could be used to explain the differences in Christian doctrine.⁶⁹ Finally, Newman’s fourth hypothesis was a theory of development. The goal of this theory was to show that the so-called corruptions of the Roman Church could be viewed, not as “corruption,” but as true and legitimate developments of the idea of Christianity.⁷⁰

Using this four-part hypothesis, Newman claimed that Christianity was an idea—a living idea that is subject to development and corruption. To counter the inconsistencies he saw in the way the Anglican tradition accepted some developments in the Church and rejected others, Newman developed criteria for distinguishing true developments from

⁶² Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?,” 614.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects of John Henry Newman’s Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” 226.

⁶⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.1., trans, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 11.

⁶⁶ Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects of John Henry Newman’s Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” 226.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 227.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

corrupt ones,⁷¹ remarking (in terms Ormerod rightly observes would today would not be considered ecumenical) that “to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.”⁷² To show that the unity of type is the most obvious characteristic of faithful development, Newman used the analogy of physical growth: that just as young birds remain essentially birds when they come to maturity, children remain humans when they become adults.⁷³ But since “the subtleties of development necessitate further tests to prove their validity, Newman offered seven: preservation of type, continuity of principles, power of assimilation, logical sequence, anticipation of results, tendency to preserve the old, and chronic vigor.”⁷⁴

LONERGAN’S APPROPRIATION OF NEWMAN

Lonergan’s idea of history is indebted to Newman’s prior intellectual conversion. While accepting Newman’s discovery like “the first instance of an X, what is to be known when one understands,” Newman’s discovery, for Lonergan, was like any other X that possesses some properties and aspects in need of fuller determination.⁷⁵ In *The Idea of a University* Newman had probed the nature of the human mind, speaking of the university as an entity with a unique function—the mind of the world. A university fulfils this function properly, according to Newman, only if it has a department of theology. Lonergan accepted Newman’s idea that theology requires other disciplines because theology integrates faith and reason.

Newman was concerned not only with the epistemological problem (how the mind comes to know), but also with the issue of method, a key feature of *Grammar of Assent* that is structured around four polarities: argument and apprehension, inference and assent, the notional and the real, and simple and complex assent. Newman was more concerned with real and notional assent (personal act of judgment), locating the basis of assent in what he called the illative sense, i.e., the intellectual capacity to come to a conclusion about complex or disparate evidence, something Lonergan would accept and term judgment.⁷⁶

When Lonergan embraced them, Newman’s ideas were not generally accepted in the Catholic circles. They were in fact pejoratively dismissed as nominalist. “It was suspected, unjustly, of being the parent of Modernism, the heresy of Loisy and Tyrell condemned by Pius X. It was suspected, more justly, of being non-Thomist at a time when neo-Thomism was riding high. In the English College at Rome, it was said, the argument *secundum sanctum Thomam* carried greater weight than the argument *secundum veritatem*.”⁷⁷ To Lonergan’s credit, he was able to demonstrate that the ideas of Newman are not in

⁷¹ Ibid., 229.

⁷² Ormerod, “Vatican II—Continuity or Discontinuity?”, 614, citing John Henry Newman, *Conscience, Consensus, and the Development of Doctrine*, ed. James Gaffney (New York: Image Books, 1992), 50.

⁷³ Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects of John Henry Newman’s Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,” 229.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol.3 eds., F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 263.

⁷⁶ S.A.M. Adshead, *Philosophy of Religion in Nineteenth-Century England and Beyond* (London: MacMillan, 2000), 31.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 210.

opposition to those of Aquinas'. "Aquinas was a man of theory, system in particular, while Newman was a man of interiority, investigation in particular. It was Lonergan's later achievement to combine their horizons into a higher viewpoint."⁷⁸

LONERGAN'S DISCOVERY OF HISTORY

Going by the evidence provided by Frederick Crowe, we can conveniently point to three separate remarks Lonergan made concerning history. The first was what Crowe described as a 1977 remark that Lonergan made, attributing the problem of modern theology to a lack of historical scholarship. The second was an equally compelling statement in 1980 regarding his life work, which he summed up as that of introducing history into Catholic theology. The third was Lonergan's often quoted remark that the "meaning of Vatican II was an acknowledgement of history."⁷⁹ That Lonergan took upon himself the task of introducing history into Catholic theology is not disputed. What needs to be elucidated rather is how he made history intelligible to a Catholic thought that was already strong on tradition.⁸⁰

It was Lonergan's love for history that led him to Newman—his "fundamental mentor and guide."⁸¹ The importance he placed on history was nearly simultaneous with his philosophic turn to the subject,⁸² seeing history as intelligible to human inquiry and open to any eventualities.⁸³ His idea of history is best summed up in Herbert Butterfield's metaphor: "history is not like a train, the sole purpose of which is to get to its destination ... each moment of it is its own self justification."⁸⁴ There are, for Lonergan, two types of history: the history that happens and the history that is written about what happened. The former, i.e., the history that happens, very much occupied Lonergan very early in his career—as far back as the 1930s owing largely to the influence Hegel and Marx had on him, particularly their liberal doctrine of progress and dialectical materialism, respectively.⁸⁵ Lonergan rejected their idea of automatic progress and spoke of history as a triadic movement of progress, decline, and redemption.

Lonergan was also preoccupied with the history that is written about, a history he regarded as a real problem because of what he saw as the influence of historical positivism.⁸⁶ It is in the nature of Lonergan to think in terms of change, development, and history, as some phrases in his writings suggest: 'on the move,' 'ongoing,' 'transition,' 'emergence,' 'from...to,' 'systems on the move,' 'ongoing discovery of mind,' the 'long transition from primitive fruit-gatherers, hunters, and fishers to the large-scale agriculture

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Frederick Crowe, "All my Work has been Introducing History into Catholic Theology," in Frederick Crowe, *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical Theoretical, and Existential Themes*, ed., Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 78-104, at 78.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁸¹ Lonergan, "Reality, Myth, Symbol," 32.

⁸² Jim Kanaris, "Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1904-84): A Theologian of Change and Judgment," *Theology Today* 62 (2005): 330-41, at 332.

⁸³ Tad Dunne, "Trinity and History," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 139-52, at 144.

⁸⁴ Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London: Collins Books, 1957), 91. Cited in Crowe, *Christ and History*, 13.

⁸⁵ Crowe, "All my Work has been Introducing History into Catholic Theology," 83.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

of the temple states,' and 'how is there effected the transition from one level or stage in human culture to another later level or stage.'⁸⁷ Lonergan was able to integrate history with doctrine primarily because of his two fold analysis: "his analysis of the human mind and heart when it is thinking, understanding, judging, deciding, and his analysis of the human mind and heart when it is changing, developing, growing, responding to challenge."⁸⁸

In *Insight* where he refutes the liberal theory of automatic progress and introduces the concept of *cosmopolis*, Lonergan's main contention is that one of the functions of *cosmopolis* is to prevent practicality from being "short-sightedly practical and so destroying itself."⁸⁹ His attention to history, as contributing to *cosmopolis*, is an attempt to help Catholicism's intellectual tradition think in terms of a long range vision, and not be short sighted. For him, a critique of history is needed to protect Catholic tradition "against the rationalization of abuses and the creation of myths."⁹⁰

GROUNDS FOR SPEAKING OF CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

In Newman and Lonergan we have classic examples of two leading contributors of the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT). They remind us that CIT is not in one place or in one mind. "It cannot be found all wrapped up neatly in a tome, or even in the ecclesial instrumentality called the Magisterium. Rather, this tradition consists in the totality of all those instances in which a higher viewpoint has been sought and achieved either by those who identify themselves with the Sacred Tradition or by those who don't, but whose higher viewpoint has been appropriated by the Church."⁹¹ Newman's work on tradition and the development of doctrine and Lonergan's integration of history into Catholic thought are two instances of such higher viewpoints. Their prime examples show how the higher viewpoints that are sought by individual Catholics do enable the well-being of Catholicism.

The well-being of Catholicism is also a human good. And as a human good it has certain differentials. A differential, as we noted earlier, is what makes a difference to human good. It is Lonergan's way of showing that the good of Catholicism is enabled by the sincere and genuine efforts of those whose attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsible inquiry leads to a higher viewpoint. It is not only the insights of individual Christians or Catholics, but the genuine and sincere efforts of community of persons, Catholics and non-Catholics and religious persons, and people of no faiths alike that enhance the good of Catholicism. The case of Thomas Aquinas, the scholastic thinker whose "mind" Lonergan "spent years reaching up to,"⁹² provides a good example on many layers. Sometime in the thirteenth century, before the Latin West was fully introduced to the works of Aristotle, the writings of Thomas Aquinas were dismissed by the Catholic hierarchy and pejoratively branded "Averroist" simply because Thomas ventured to bring

⁸⁷ Crowe, *Christ and History*, 169.

⁸⁸ Crowe, "All my Work has been Introducing History into Catholic Theology," 104.

⁸⁹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 264.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 265. In *Insight* Lonergan uses the term "myth" pejoratively. His later works take a more sympathetic view.

⁹¹ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 75.

⁹² Lonergan, *Insight*, 769.

Aristotelianism into a Catholic thought that was laden with Platonism of the Fathers. Theological students in Paris were especially forbidden to read the work of Thomas. The archbishop of Paris threatened anyone who read the “forbidden” works with excommunication. The same Thomas whose work was outlawed was declared a saint by the Catholic hierarchy in 1323—precisely forty nine years after his death. The Archbishop of Paris officially removed the ban against his work in 1525. The genius of St. Thomas and Aristotelian philosophy and science enriched Catholicism. There are also countless many others, like John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan, whose diligent inquiry and responsible judgment have made a significant difference to Catholicism’s intellectual heritage. What they add to the good of Catholicism (here referred to as differentials), can be used, not only to elucidate the meaning of the contentious term CIT, but also to specify the scope of CIT because they derive from history and tradition and are inherent in the very notion of catholicity—a heuristic that seeks wholeness.

The following nine points represent CIT guidelines that I have derived from Newman and Lonergan’s linking of history and tradition with the differentials of the human good.

1. CIT IS AN “IDEA.”

CIT is not a static concept, but a “living idea.” Ideas are inexhaustible. “There is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea, no one term or proposition which will serve to define it.”⁹³ Living ideas bear fruit because they have “assimilative power,”⁹⁴ i.e., in the “power to enter into various cultures and to assimilate the best elements of those cultures into its own self expression.”⁹⁵ In Newman’s metaphor, “an idea not only modifies, but is modified, or at least influenced, by the state of things in which it is carried out, and is dependent in various ways on the circumstances which surround it.”⁹⁶

As an idea, CIT may have moments of progress or degeneration. Newman writes that the development of an “idea” may proceed quickly or slowly and the “idea” itself may be “interrupted, retarded, mutilated, distorted, by external violence; it maybe enfeebled by the effort of ridding itself of domestic foes; it may be impeded and swayed or even absorbed by counter energetic ideas; it may be coloured by the received tone of thought into which it comes, or depraved by the intrusion of foreign principles, or at length shattered by the development of some original fault within it.”⁹⁷

2. CIT IS NOT ENCASED IN A FORMULA

Newman shows how a system of thought or an intellectual tradition can not be reduced to formularies. A system of thought, even of heresies like Montanism or Pelagianism, or intellectual tradition like Platonism or Aristotelianism, defies formula. Formulas contain

⁹³ John Henry Newman, *An essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, <http://newmanreader.org/works/development/chapter1.html>; accessed October 19, 2012. See Chapter 1, “The Development of Ideas.”

⁹⁴ Ibid., See Chapter 8, “Assimilative Power.”

⁹⁵ Richard M. Liddy, “Catholicity and Faculty Seminars,” in *In Search of the Whole*, 73-84, at 74.

⁹⁶ Newman, *An essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, see chapter 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

only an approximation of truth or “leading idea” of the school of thought or the intellectual tradition that is represented. Often times a “leading” or “central idea” of a school of thought or intellectual tradition is identified mainly “for convenience, in order to group others around it.”⁹⁸ To use Newman’s own example, if one is asked to identify a central idea of Christianity one might choose to call the incarnation the central aspect of Christianity. But Christianity is more than the incarnation. Newman cautions that “one aspect of Revelation must not be allowed to exclude or to obscure another; [for] Christianity is dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once; it is esoteric and exoteric; it is indulgent and strict; it is light and dark; it is love, and it is fear.”⁹⁹

3. CIT IS NOT AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT

CIT is a human good that is generated by human actions. The good is something that is universal and totally concrete.¹⁰⁰ Human intelligence is a principle of universalization, requiring a synthesis in a concrete place and time. CIT is embodied in the concrete works of individuals with higher viewpoints. Intellectual traditions, in general, usually emerge “from a unique matrix of ideas that capture and ground the tradition; they have someone or something original at their headwaters. Plato and, in a different way of course, Plotinus were the originals who generated the intellectual tradition of Neoplatonism, for example. Following its initial spark, an intellectual tradition develops devotees and usually produces works that become classics in their tradition.”¹⁰¹ While the teachings (particularly the death and resurrection) of Jesus Christ remain the initial spark that produced CIT, today CIT exists concretely in the works of numerous individuals who have effected true authenticity in their lives and in the Christian tradition.

4. CIT IS REALIZED IN THE SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE

The scholastics spoke of the good as that which the will seeks. But this old Aristotelian definition seems to suggest that only what is sought after or desired is good. The definition does not exhaust the notion of the good because there are far too many good things that are not desired. He helps us realize that the capacity to desire and the desiring itself can also be good. “What everyone seeks is certainly good, but there is a whole set of other elements that are related to it, and they are good too.”¹⁰² Analogously, CIT is realized in the desires and good intentions of men and women who invest in higher viewpoint for the good of Catholicism.

5. CIT IS NOT A NEGATIVE CONCEPT

Just as the good is not negative in the sense that it is not a prescription of things to be avoided: “it is not a matter of ‘don’t do this’ and ‘don’t do that,’”¹⁰³ CIT is not a negative

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 28.

¹⁰¹ John Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 61.

¹⁰² Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 28.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 29.

concept or idea. The tension between the Church's teaching authority (Magisterium) and the academic community has made some reject CIT as a concept, because CIT at times can seem like a negative notion. In his work on the development of doctrine, Newman shows how Christianity grew out of the fact that the original Christian message that was preached by the disciples had to undergo development "and that development had to ferret out which of the plural meanings that were beginning to attach to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ were right and which were wrong."¹⁰⁴ Granted, the Magisterium refers to itself as the guardian of Church's intellectual tradition, the relationship between the hierarchy and the intellectual tradition itself is not one that is based on decrees or rules of what the academician cannot do. As guardians of the Church's doctrinal tradition, the Magisterium "is continuously fed by those who seek to connect the dots between their understandings and the faith of the Church."¹⁰⁵

6. CIT IS NOT A MERE IDEAL

The good is not a mere ideal or utopia that is beyond attainment. Rather, "the good is in things; it is something existing."¹⁰⁶ The original Christian message preached by the disciples, i.e., life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, was not proclaimed as a utopia, but as a concrete message that needs to be developed and improved upon. When Newman, for example, abandoned the *via media* after reaching an abstract theological judgment that the true Catholic church was the Roman Catholic church (not the Anglican) and had an existential realization that he must join the Roman Church, he still maintained the idea that the Catholicism is best served by submission to her past modes of reflection with faithful intelligence, in so far as these modes help us meet contemporary challenges. In the same way, CIT works in partnership with the Magisterium—a collaborative endeavour that makes "it more likely that there will be a 'genuine, authentic, long accumulation of insights, adjustments, [and] reinterpretations that repeats the original message afresh for each age."¹⁰⁷

7. CIT IS NOT PERFECT

The good does not exist in this life apart from evil. God wills the good and the good alone. "Yet the good that God wills and freely chooses with infinite wisdom and infinite goodness is this world. It is a good, then, that is not apart from evil. It is a good that comes out of evil, that triumphs over evil."¹⁰⁸ CIT is not without limitations or imperfection. Do we need to be reminded of Catholicism's anti-intellectual moments, a long stretch of time when either the truth was ignored or those committed to the cause of truth were run out of town, so to speak, or put to death?¹⁰⁹ The case of Galileo quickly comes to mind. Or who can forget that it was because the Catholic Church prided itself in its permanent possession of eternal truth that it remained aloof from some of the historical transformations at the dawn of modernity (revolutions in modern science, for example) and struggled to respond to some

¹⁰⁴ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 62.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰⁶ Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 29.

¹⁰⁷ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 30.

¹⁰⁹ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 77.

key defining events of modernity?¹¹⁰ Another indicator that CIT is not perfect is the fact that many of those who contributed to Catholicism's intellectual tradition have historically shared some of the biases of their day and have also been limited by their historical and cultural contexts. Aquinas's unflattering view on women, for example, stemmed from some of the biases of his day.¹¹¹ Recognizing human limitations, CIT abhors any form of intellectual arrogance.

8. CIT IS NOT STATIC

The good is not static, but always changing. "It is not the fulfilment of some blueprint."¹¹² Newman writes in *An Essay on the Development of the Christian Doctrine* that in its various forms Christianity has differed in every age. But the changes which have taken place "have not been such as to destroy that type,—that is, that they are not corruptions, because they are consistent with that type. Here then, in the *preservation of type*, we have a first Note of the fidelity of the existing developments of Christianity."¹¹³ The developments of Christianity have not, in the least, amounted to corruption nor have they altered the religion because the developments have all along been built on definite and continuous principles.¹¹⁴

Like the Christian faith itself, CIT is not static. It is not a blue print to be applied to all times and all places. Rather, it is always developing, always emerging in light of new questions. "St. Thomas's proof that beatitude cannot be had in this life is that beatitude is rooted in intellectual perfection, and so no one in this life knows so much that later generations cannot discover something more; consequently, the only people who could have beatitude, if beatitude lay in this life, would be the last generation."¹¹⁵

9. CIT IS NOT BEYOND CRITICISM

Our knowledge of the good, like our knowledge of being and God, is always analogous. Because God alone is good, finite beings are good only by participation. "One cannot choose between God and anything else, but one can always choose between finite things because they are finite in their being and in their goodness. They are not good from every possible viewpoint. Criticism is possible."¹¹⁶ Because CIT is always open to development, it is not beyond criticism. Newman discovered in his study of the Fathers that whether it was Tertullian, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, or Augustine, the Fathers "were intently fixing their minds on what they taught, grasping it more and more closely, viewing it on various sides, trying its consistency, weighing their own separate expressions. And thus if in some cases they were even left in ignorance, the next generation of teachers completed their work, for the same unwearied anxious process of thought went on."¹¹⁷ In a nutshell, CIT is

¹¹⁰ Michael McCarthy, "Toward a Catholic Christianity: A Personal Narrative," in *In Search of the Whole*, 147-163, at 148 and 155.

¹¹¹ Haughey, *Where is Knowing Going?*, 77.

¹¹² Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 30.

¹¹³ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of the Christian Doctrine*, see chapter 7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 30.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁷ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, see chapter 8.

a human good that is realized through human apprehensions and choices. Without apprehensions and choices there would be no CIT.¹¹⁸ “Human apprehension develops, so that one age understands things better and knows more than the preceding age.”¹¹⁹

CONCLUSION

The Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) is a process that reaches complete increment in judgment.¹²⁰ This intellectual tradition that is rooted in history and tradition is in every moment of its gestation, parturition, and maturation a reaching towards wholeness. Whole-making is what intelligence anticipates and is the object of the unrestricted inquiry of minds like Newman and Lonergan who desired to know everything about everything.

Newman was a man of tradition. Lonergan was a man of history. The foundation of Lonergan’s discovery of history is Newman’s prior intellectual achievement. He accepted Newman’s idea that history is essential for understanding the authority of tradition. Together Lonergan and Newman shed light on the problematic of continuity and change as these bear on the development of CIT. For these two whose works intersect, history is theologically significant because it is “the arena of human encounter with God, an encounter to be read in terms of the mutations of ecclesial organization from its primitive form.”¹²¹ For both men, “every insight, every conceptualization, every judgment is a leap in the “being of meaning,” whether in the individual or in the schemes of recurrence of meaning constitutive of tradition.”¹²²

Author: Cyril Orji is an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Dayton. His work is on Bernard Lonergan, Catholic intellectual thought, and Inter-religious dialogue. He is the author of *The Catholic University and the Search for Truth* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2013).

Email: corji1@udayton.edu

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¹¹⁸ Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 32.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, 396.

¹²¹ Jeremy N. Morris, “Newman and Maurice on the *Via Media* of the Anglican Church: Contrasts and Affinities,” *Anglican Theological Review* 85 (2003): 623-640, at 627.

¹²² Ibid.