

Gladstone's Via Media Theory of Development

Andrew Armond

The development then of an idea is not like an investigation worked out on paper, in which each successive advance is a pure evolution from a foregoing, but it is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders and guides; and it employs their minds as its instruments, and depends upon them, while it uses them.... It grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found, not in isolation, but in continuity and sovereignty. (J.H. Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*)

Oh for a Protestant Bossuet to write the “Variations” of Rome! (Christopher Wordsworth, *Letters to M. Gondon*)

I.

A ccording to the Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal John Henry Newman is now “Blessed,” following a controversial beatification by Benedict XVI in Birmingham last August. The beatification garnered an unusual amount of media attention, particularly in the UK, concluding a successful papal visit despite many predictions that Benedict would face an openly hostile reception.

The issue of Newman’s beatification, as well as the continuing influence Newman maintains not only in Roman Catholic but other ecclesiastical, theological, and academic circles, ensures that further explora-

tion of Newman's life and work, particularly his theological polemics, should maintain its relevance and importance into the twenty-first century. Indeed, it appears that Newman's canonization is likely, and it is possible that Newman will join only 33 other figures in the history of the Roman Catholic Church to receive the august title "Doctor of the Church." Both Nicholas Lash and Ian Ker have argued for Newman's worthiness to become a Doctor, positioning themselves among others who believe that Newman was a proto-architect of Vatican II theology. A key component of this argument centers on Newman's doctrine of development – that is, the means by which the Church can assert both its unwavering catholicity as well as its ability to accommodate – within orthodoxy – to changing social structures, intellectual movements, and political realities. In a recent interview, Ker, in particular, notes that Newman's theory of development "is no longer controversial but is part of mainstream theology and indeed is actually echoed in Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation" ("Cardinal Newman"). Ostensibly, Ker sees in this Vatican II document three threads of argumentation that may be seen as either derivative of or related to Newman's theory of development: 1) the authority of the apostolic succession; 2) the upholding of tradition; and 3) the possibility for accommodation within that tradition. As the Vatican II "Constitution" states:

For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her. ("Dogmatic Constitution")

Of particular note is the optimism in the Constitution's language, an optimism Newman put forth in the mid-nineteenth century regarding the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church, as Jesus Christ's Ideal Church, both embodied perfection (in its dominical authority) and moved toward it (in the continual unfolding of doctrinal developments such as Papal Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception).

Yet Newman's theory was controversial in the nineteenth century, both among its Anglican detractors and among some Roman Catholic thinkers who were slow to embrace both Newman and his theological work.¹ Newman's seminal statement on the theory of development came with the 1845 publication of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, a document Newman labored to produce as an Anglo-Catholic but concluded as a Roman Catholic.² At first glance, the *Essay* is a two-part work, the first of which argues for the theory of development itself, while the second contains the outworking of the theory through a laborious examination of historical theological minutiae: yet, as Ker rightly points out, for Newman the doctrine of development, "as far as his continuing membership in the Church of England was concerned, [was] literally a matter of life and death" (xviii). Put simply, if the Church of England claimed apostolic succession, thereby, for example, placing authority in the Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries that circumscribed Christian orthodoxy, then, as Newman came to believe through the writing of the *Essay*, they too must embrace the Church of the eleventh and twelfth centuries – that is, the "medieval" church so full of (in the Anglican view) "corruptions" such as purgatorial fire, plenary indulgences, the *cultus* of the saints, and others. Newman makes a startling admission – to the minds of some Anglicans, particularly – in taking for granted that there is "discrepancy between ancient Christianity and any variety, every variety, of modern Christianity" (141); yet the discrepancies are not the central issue in defending Christianity, or at the least, they only prove again that an infallible guide, a *locus* of absolute trust, is the only way to account for these discrepancies. In this way Newman's argument is an effort to grapple with historical criticism, but his presuppositions in doing so were found by self-consciously orthodox Anglicans to open the door for further unbelief.

The arrival of the *Essay* was greeted with a sort of nerve-racking, quiet fervor on the part of many prominent Anglo-Catholics, particularly since they knew they were grappling with two overwhelming challenges: first, the mere force of Newman's own intellect and rhetorical power; but second, and even more striking, the fact that Newman had, as it were, been the highest and brightest star of the Anglo-Catholic movement. Surely now he would be able to deconstruct his own previous arguments *against* Roman Catholicism, making his argument *for* it even more powerful in the end. Even a leading Anglo-Catholic light such as John Keble, as Erik Sidenvall points out, "later confessed that he dared not open Newman's [*Essay on Development*] for two years" (131). Henry Manning contended that "Newmans [*sic*] book seems to me to demand of us a higher Theology" – ostensibly precisely because of the novelty of its argument ("Manning and Gladstone" 53). Manning's term "demand" also suggests that Newman's work is a gauntlet thrown (consciously or no) at the Church of England, whose theology Newman was later to describe as "paper" – that is, as unreal.³ This "higher Theology" Manning identifies seems to circle back round to the same place it always has for Anglicanism – the *via media*. The protestant, certainly post-1800, claims an invisible church whose membership, known only to God, is based upon an internal, individual, spiritual feeling. The Roman Catholic claims a visible Church deriving its authority directly from Christ, his Apostles, and those Apostolic successors, whose membership is based upon external sacramental grace. But the Anglican claims neither *in toto*: thus, can a Church be a Church that claims neither the protestant principle of development and ecclesial identity nor the Roman Catholic one? Is moderation in such matters bound to degenerate into a muddled, inchoate mess?

Such questions obviously consumed William Gladstone's mind.⁴ Upon reception of Newman's volume on 28 November 1845, Gladstone recorded that he "Received & went to work on Newman's book: with some tho' not enough sense of the seriousness of the task" (499). Evidently, he had enough "seriousness" to "pray God to guide [his] mind" as

he worked through Newman's argument. Further, one can assume that in undertaking the task, Gladstone was struggling with this direct address of Newman to his readers at the conclusion of the volume, an "appeal," Gladstone writes at the end of this entry, that "did [him] this good" (499). The appeal:

And now, dear Reader, time is short, eternity is long. Put not from you what you have here found; regard it not as mere matter of present controversy; *set not out resolved to refute it, and looking about for the best way of doing so*; seduce not yourself with the imagination that it comes of disappointment, or disgust, or restlessness, or wounded feeling, or undue sensibility, or other weakness. Wrap not yourself round in the associations of years past; nor determine that to be truth which you wish to be so, nor make an idol of cherished anticipations.

Time is short, eternity is long. (445, emphasis added)

What "good" this appeal ultimately did Gladstone was to spur him on directly to contravene it, since he did decide to "refute" Newman's argument, or at the very least to attempt a refutation. Gladstone had first entreated Manning to offer a more nuanced and theologically potent response than he felt he could muster at the time, writing first in a November 1845 letter – before even the publication of the *Essay* – that "you may have to entertain the idea of answering Newman's book" (Erb). After its publication, the two men continued to correspond regarding the force of Newman's work as well as the potential for a robust response. Both seem less concerned with the work's central argument, believing that it is not likely to spur large numbers of Anglicans to convert to Roman Catholicism; but both men are concerned with the work as a whole, believing overtly that it may assail centuries-old arguments for Christianity's validity itself, while covertly assuming that the work will have a great cultural weight not yet measured. Gladstone admits at this point that the *Essay* "interests me deeply, shakes me not at all" while also affirming "I think he places Christianity on the edge of a precipice: from

whence a bold & strong hand would throw it over" (Erb). Manning responds in like fashion, stating that "in the end I feel where I was"; yet, like Gladstone, he too recognizes the power of the work itself: "The Book is to me wonderful" (Erb). Manning equivocates on the immediacy of his own response, writing that "Newmans [sic] book seems to me to demand of us a higher Theology" and that therefore "I cannot do things for the nonce, or patch an inconsistent theory" (Erb).

This equivocation would only grow, as Manning himself became less and less confident in his own Anglican position, and consequently in his confidence to offer an Anglican response to the *Essay*. As David Newsome points out, Manning "wrote in August 1846 to tell Gladstone that he was abandoning the project," something of which Gladstone "could not conceive" (321). In fact, Newsome argues that "Manning may not have been as open with Gladstone" as the latter thought (321); yet ostensibly Gladstone realized Manning's abandonment of the project was enough to begin his own work on a refutation in September of 1846. Gladstone abandoned the task in August of 1847, and the manuscript, currently housed in the Gladstone Papers at the British Library, remains unpublished.

This, Gladstone's unpublished response to Newman's *Essay*, has not been commented upon extensively, though Gladstone's attitude toward the theory of development, especially as related to matters ecclesiastical and theological, has received attention, most notably by David Nicholls in James Bastable's *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays*. Nicholls points us to several key features of Gladstone's emerging views regarding development, particularly in his *Church Principles* and in letters from the 1840s; however, the particular draft in which Gladstone responds to Newman directly and comments more thoroughly on development is not mentioned. What Nicholls does point out is valuable, however, for providing a clearer context in which we can examine the document. First, he notes that Gladstone believed in a "fundamental changelessness in Christian faith" while at the same time upholding the possibility – indeed the necessity – for modification. Here, Nicholls references the *Church Principles* in which Gladstone asserts that it is "no

reproach to religion that [the Church's] external aspect on earth, and even certain of the modifications of her internal character, should perpetually appear to be undergoing alteration" (6). Yet this assertion is tempered several pages later, as Gladstone presents the mixed character of such modifications and alterations. After all, "It may not be improbably the case that, so far as respects religion, we are actually progressing in some particulars while we retrograde in others" (11). Thus, Gladstone, Nicholls believes, had a "basically conservative" position as regards development, certainly not taking it for granted that merely because the Church brings a development forward, it is summarily to be taken as legitimate – a position Gladstone would later identify as Newman's in the *Essay*.

Rather, the Church derives its authority ultimately not from itself in these matters – that is, not in the addition of new doctrine, but always in "renovation" rather than "innovation" (25). Newman argued that the very nature and character of the Church *requires* at least the antecedent probability of its being an "infallible governing body," but Gladstone and other Anglicans were concerned that Rome had already overextended its "infallible" power to define doctrines not properly Christian (and, furthermore, that they were concomitantly brazen and defensive in so doing). Nevertheless, Nicholls goes on to conclude that Gladstone's view of the matter seems unfinished, quoting Gladstone's letter to Samuel Wilberforce of 10 December 1845 in which Gladstone states that "it becomes extremely difficult to draw out with precision against Newman the limits of this power [of defining doctrinal parameters]" (124), that is, given Newman's own presuppositions about the ontology of the Church. Yet Nicholls himself has not much more to say on the fact of Gladstone's resistance to Newman's argument, focusing instead on other Anglican reactions to the *Essay*, and, as previously noted, the rest of the article neglects to mention Gladstone's own lengthy unpublished manuscript on this very topic.

In *The English Cult of Literature*, William McKelvy devotes a few pages to this manuscript; he recounts the historical circumstances sur-

rounding the writing of the document while briefly summarizing Gladstone's position on development, concluding that "[Gladstone] did not answer the essential questions" regarding development, presumably the only questions that could have yielded a robust Anglican response to Newman's argument (203). McKelvy believes that the conclusion of the document rests on Gladstone's "odd distinction between 'to hide and to stifle' and 'deforms'" and thus he contends (but without preponderating evidence) that Gladstone "realized that this point was nothing to stand the light of day." Instead, as McKelvy notes later, Gladstone turned back to his Homeric criticism as a way of navigating the propitious nineteenth-century minefield of ecclesiastical and theological controversy: "If Gladstone could not theoretically distinguish the legitimate from the corrupt in one area, he found comfort in the related but safer exercise of describing legitimate revelations in corrupt forms" (210-11). David Bebbington likewise comments briefly on Gladstone's response, noting that Newman's *Essay* constituted an (albeit indirect) "repudiat[ion] ... of Gladstone's church principles," since Newman's *Essay*, according to Gladstone, "den[ied] that Christian truth was what had always been believed by those who enjoyed the apostolic succession" (113). This position, according to Gladstone, seemed (ironically enough) essentially to set up "private judgement" (a term Newman himself greatly derided as a key principle of protestantism) as the "arbiter of doctrine" (113). Bebbington later mentions the document, particularly Gladstone's contention that the process of development as relates to religious ideas is particularly apt to deterioration rather than progress. He closes his discussion of the document simply by stating that "Gladstone did not fulfill his intention of writing a refutation of the *Essay on Development* at that time" (174).

While quite helpful in the contexts of the larger arguments that both McKelvy and Bebbington make in their respective works, and while both authors point readers to the de-evolutionary or entropic principle upon which Gladstone's response rests – that the ways in which the Church changes over the centuries are much more likely to be corrupting changes rather than progressive ones⁵ – I think that more can, and should, be

done with Gladstone's unpublished manuscript. For one, the entire thrust of Gladstone's 70 folio pages does not *merely* seem to rest on the distinction, as McKelvy contends, between "to hide and to stifle" and "deforms"; that is, I believe the document opens a more robust and multifarious line of argument than has previously been noted. Second, though Bebbington rightly points out Gladstone's argument that, ironically, accused Newman of recourse to "private judgement," scholars would benefit by a fuller account of how Gladstone attempts to make such a claim tenable. Thus, my own purpose in the following essay is to provide a close reading of Gladstone's document, providing where necessary theological context, and to offer more general claims regarding the ways in which the document develops Gladstone's church principles as well as his method of interpreting Scripture, ecclesiology, and history. I also defer to more seasoned Gladstone scholars in the hope that they might make further use of this unpublished but nevertheless important piece of theological writing; neither do I provide a more robust historical context for Gladstone's polemic against Newman, as my purpose is primarily expository.

II.

It is not necessary here to trace the whole of Newman and Gladstone's relationship, even respecting their already established theological polemic of the 1830s and their later controversy of the 1880s. Yet two important and more immediate events may prove useful in providing context for Gladstone's theological frame of mind in the mid-1840s. First, Newman and Gladstone had already sparred to a certain extent over the publication of Newman's *Lives of the English Saints*. In late 1843, Gladstone was disappointed with the initial offering in this series of J.D. Dailgairns' "Life of St Stephen," writing to James Robert Hope that the biographical sketch seemed to contain at least implicit "approval of particular points and phrases of Roman doctrine more or less opposed by the Church of England" (Newman *Letters and Diaries* 43). Here, already in seeming anticipation of the later controversy over development, Glad-

stone criticizes the implication that Anglican devotion “require[s one] to strip off every habitude and attachment connected specifically with [the English Church]” and “fall back upon a different development” (44). That is, the biography’s celebration of “Roman” spiritual disciplines, with, as Gladstone terms them, the “poisoned peculiarities of the Roman system,” would inevitably “chec[k]” from the outset those very spiritual disciplines the biography was intended to foster in Anglican Christians.

Newman’s initial response was a sort of retreat; at least, as he says, a “hopelessness ... of escaping the disapprobation of a number of persons whom I very much respect” (*Letters and Diaries* 45). Indeed, due to Gladstone’s and Pusey’s “misgivings,” Newman decided to abandon the project as a series and to focus instead on the release of individual *Lives* (55). Newman, however, was careful to note (to James Robert Hope) that this ostensible retreat was not one dealing with principles, but with personalities: “I am making a great concession, not to [Gladstone’s views], but to my respectful feelings towards him” (60). His other considerations dealt with the practicalities of publishing the series as well as his concern with episcopal censure (*cf.* 61). At the very least, the exchange tells us of the mutual respect each man had for the other; however, Newman’s admission of a personal concession to Gladstone the man, not one regarding theological substance, forecasts the complicated ways in which the relationships of those inside and outside of the Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic controversies of the 1850s and following would be tested and, in many cases, would suffer irreparable damage. Finally, this brief incident points us to the ways in which *development*, both of doctrine and of practice, is always already tied up with larger questions of ecclesiology, theology, orthodoxy, and even personal loyalty.

A second crucial document in this regard is Gladstone’s 1844 review of W.G. Ward’s *The Ideal of a Christian Church*. While the review is well-known and has been widely commented upon in the past, I wish to stress a few of its key points in anticipation of Gladstone’s writing on Newman’s *Essay*, particularly those sections of the review that concern the doctrine of development. First, Gladstone takes pains in his review to up-

hold his particular version of the *via media*, a tendency we will examine further in the document critiquing Newman's *Essay*. For example, Gladstone is pleased to observe that both the ostensibly crypto- (or proto-, at the least) papist Ward, as well as the thoroughly protestant Isaac Taylor, could "unite in prizing very highly, and in prizing as a whole, that Liturgy which is no merely accidental appendage to [the English Church], but which constitutes to the great mass of her members the principal exhibition of her character and (under the Sacred Scriptures) nearly the whole of her authoritative teaching" (87). The *Book of Common Prayer* is upheld here as the uniting force of the English Church, a work presumably wide enough in its scope to accommodate multiple interpretive positions; yet Gladstone's careful parenthetical insertion "under the Sacred Scriptures" also hints at the *crucis* of his *via media* ecclesiology: the English Church is a wonderful uniting force encompassing a diversity of opinions, as long as those opinions comport with or exposit in some way the words of Scripture and the broad currents of tradition.

Another aspect of Gladstone's upholding of the *via media* in the Ward review is his defense of the English Reformation. Apart from Ward's overheated rhetoric, he does offer a substantive critique of the Reformation on precisely the notion that it, either directly or indirectly, led to the ostensible "infidelity" of the German "higher critics" and that therefore, as Newman was later to assert, the two real alternatives were either a supra-rational faith in the infallible Roman Catholic Church or a coldly rational atheism. This argument, too, rested to some extent on a theory of development, for it asserted that the protestant principle of "individual judgment" somehow allowed for an inappropriate level of personal liberty in the interpretation of Scripture while simultaneously leading to an overreliance on, and ultimate trust in, a growing narrative of scientific progress. Further, as the argument ran, both of these results were wholly incompatible with the main thrust of the ancient Church's doctrine and practice. Again, in response to such a claim (or at least to an implicit form of it in Ward's *Ideal*), Gladstone responds with recourse to the Elizabethan settlement – both in the 39 Articles and in the Book of

Common Prayer – as an outworking of the *via media* and an upholding of a truly catholic, broad ideal for the Church. The English Reformers, after all, were able to keep “in view such a liberty of opinion with respect to the Real Presence, as might serve to attain that great end of preventing a schism” (97-98), not to mention other potentially hyper-catholic or hyper-protestant doctrines. Indeed, Gladstone concludes this section defending the English Reformation against Ward’s argument by agreeing that the German Reformation has resulted in a “total loss ... of the idea of a fixed, changeless system of dogma, an objective truth revealed to men, and made available for their use in the Gospel” (105). Here, too, Gladstone refers to a principle of “decadence ... which seems to have marked the course of aboriginal Protestantism” (105). Both of these points also presage Gladstone’s arguments against Newman, particularly the former, since Gladstone will argue that Newman’s *Essay* essentially results in the same “loss” of fixity in the Christian faith, and that Newman’s Roman Catholicism also is a “decadent” faith subscribing to various corruptions of aboriginal Christianity. Such would indicate a further adherence on Gladstone’s part to the *via media*.

A further criticism on Gladstone’s part concerns the question of the proximity of the nineteenth century Church to the ancient Church, in particular the notion of whether or not – and how – the former may, should, or can closely adhere to the doctrine and practice of the latter. Both Gladstone’s Anglicanism and Ward’s and Newman’s Roman Catholicism were ultimately means of grappling with the historical problem facing Christianity in the nineteenth century. *Given* changes in our understanding of biblical history; *given* our understanding of historical sources; *given* the use of textual criticism for establishing or problematizing authorship; *given* developments in our understanding of the scientific principles at work in shaping the progress of geology and biology: what to do with a Christianity that seems at odds at least with some of these contemporary understandings? Gladstone did not wish to unquestioningly absorb all of these progressive understandings, as did some English theologians and critics; neither did he find, as he would accuse Ward and

Newman of finding, that supra- or extra-rational fideism was a satisfactory response to the question of how Christianity was to exist and be defended in such an age. He finds Ward affirming, as Newman does in the *Essay* to a later extent, that "the ancient system is one which cannot be reproduced or even realised by us" (121); and, for Ward, given a choice between German infidelity and a secure, infallible teaching body, the latter is infinitely preferable, with no "qualification or counterpoise" (124-25), as Gladstone would have it.

What Gladstone ultimately sees in Ward's argument is a profound recourse to "private judgment," an ostensible "safety net" for the perils facing the committed catholic Christian in the nineteenth century. Such a view, Gladstone suggests (e.g., 143), excuses the believer from the arduous but necessary process of sifting his own conscience in light of the historical and living Church alike in favor of a highly individualistic "absolutism" (143). True, Gladstone indicates, such a retreat is "impregnable" and thus completely and utterly safe, but such safety is personally presumptuous and bound to fail. After all, Gladstone writes, "what is to become of us in those moments of existence when the dark clouds of some mortal sin blot out the whole heaven from view, or when faintness and languor of spirits, and mental perplexity, open a door to the temptations of skepticism?" (144). Once more, Gladstone's answer to the problem posed by Ward's position is to affirm the *via media*. It is neither the purely protestant principle of "personal assurance" of faith that guarantees our security as Christians, nor is it the "analogous and equally fatal fault" of Ward's that would test belief by conscience (147). Thus Gladstone concludes the essay with an appeal to the middle way, noting the character of the English Church as one that, though imperfectly, has balanced the role of the individual's conscience with that of the authority of the Church (168-69).

III.

Gladstone's unpublished document refuting Newman's theory of development is divided into halves, and though its organizational *schema*

is somewhat rough and repetitive in places, Gladstone does seem to be moving toward an unfinished but coherent argument. Thus, in order to give readers a clear sense of how Gladstone's rhetorical positioning unfolds, I will offer an extended commentary and summary based on Gladstone's own organizational pattern; that is, I generally will treat the document as it is written rather than thematically. However, it will benefit readers to gain a broad overview of the argument before doing so. Gladstone's critique of Newman's theory revolves around several of Newman's core assumptions with which he strongly disagrees; in turn, Gladstone indicates that these assumptions are themselves informed by faulty presumptions.

The first of these core assumptions that Gladstone attacks is the idea that a significant breach has been opened up by Newman's claims in the *Essay*, that Newman no longer feels it necessary to build a coherent *catena* of tradition on which to base the whole of Catholic doctrine and practice. Gladstone believes, in contrast, that Newman builds his argument on the totalizing authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Such a presupposition rests upon two faulty presumptions, according to Gladstone: first, a faulty view of history that assumes the "natural" order of institutions – including the Church – is progressive toward truth and rightness rather than retrogressive toward error and fault, or at best, a mixture of the two; second (a corollary of the first), that one should expect an Ideal – that is, a perfect, flawless Church – rather than one consistently in need of correction, given humanity's fallenness. The second of Newman's faulty assumptions centers around the nature of developments within the Church. Gladstone continually assails Newman for defending the most extreme developments in Roman Catholicism with the argument from authority rather than that of Scripture and Tradition; yet, at its most basic, Gladstone's argument is that Newman has lost an appreciation for moderation. After all, as Gladstone will argue, not every development begs the most extreme or full measure of its core idea; such developments are not *necessary* in any sense of the term, nor are they rightly to be assumed merely because the Church has taken up the authority to sanction them.

As a result of these radically unorthodox notions, Gladstone believes, two undesirable results ensue: first, the aggregation of power in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, both to the pecuniary and spiritual deficit of many; second, the more disturbing possibility that many souls could be led astray from Christianity altogether, particularly when the ground of historical continuity is lost. In this way, Gladstone intimates, Newman's arguments are of the same piece as German higher criticism (liberal Protestantism) and the heightened individualism and personal Scriptural interpretation of low Protestants. In response, Gladstone maintains the *via media* of Anglicanism, not only in the sense of a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, but even within the Anglican Communion itself, as his arguments both support and contradict, at times, certain Anglo-Catholic doctrines. At the very least, Gladstone's response puts the *onus* of responsibility regarding all matters theological and ecclesiastical, doctrinal and practical, on the constantly reforming Church. This same Church in everything submits her views to Scripture, to a multiplicity of interpretive voices that call out the extremes for condemnation, when necessary, and uphold the most central path of Christian tradition and practice.

1. *A Shift in Tactics*

From the outset, Gladstone roundly asserts that Newman's argument itself is striking and potentially controversial due to the shift in *tactics* it represents. Gladstone's choice of the word "tactics" itself suggests his own understanding of the Roman Catholic Church as preeminently a Church Militant. It is indeed "an event of immense and profound importance" representing "the transition from the tactic of identity to the tactic of development" (264). Now a gaping *breach* – an "enormous gulf" (266) – has been introduced into the continuity of the historical church; as a result, Gladstone asserts, the Roman Church must "tolerate and welcome what she formerly repelled" (265). It is this discontinuity with historical Christianity – now openly avowed – that so disturbs Gladstone. First, the shift is *from* historical continuity *to* authority. After all, when the Church argues

from historical continuity, its argument rests, in Gladstone's view, on an external body of evidence – tradition, and tradition as it has conformed to Scripture. Yet the Newmanian doctrine would *internalize* the appeal to evidence, since the Church's claimed authority encapsulates both tradition and Scripture, and, in Gladstone's view, may openly contradict both. Thus does Gladstone suggest a shift in tactics from the Roman Church's self-defense as "witnesses" of an objective truth to "arbiters" of subjectivity. This language is striking in its suggestion that Newman's argumentation is weakly progressive, that the modern Roman Church forges a self-enclosed authority by which to interpret the world, sacred texts, tradition, and the like, while ostensibly orthodox Anglicans rely on an objective outside themselves to which they "witness."

For Gladstone, the importance of this shift in tactics cannot be overestimated. In asserting that the Church is not necessarily bound – cannot be bound, in fact – to strict historical continuity, and thus in claiming that the Church therefore must be an infallible arbiter of doctrine and practice, Newman has, in Gladstone's view, created a singular superstructure that can easily be waylaid by destroying the objectivity of the Christian faith and subjecting it to theory. In this way, it is true to say that Gladstone characterizes Newman's argument as radical, modern, and progressive; he believes it to be an argument *a posteriori*, and that weakly, since "Christian Theology is a science to be collected like other sciences from a body of experimental facts and like them to change according to the new lights which experience supplies" (269). Thus, if one so breaks with historical Christianity's continuity, in a sense imposing a particular narrative into which one fits the available data, then the possibility for radical unbelief not only exists, but may even be encouraged – grounds upon which Gladstone and Newman both reject pure Protestantism and the excesses of German Higher Criticism. Thus Newman's view is that the Church needs to claim absolute authority so as to shepherd the unbeliever and redirect him into the faith *through* the certainty *guaranteed* by the Church.

But such a view is anathema to Gladstone, who is never willing to subscribe either to this notion of ecclesiastical supremacy or that of his-

torically discontinuous Christianity. As he writes, "the acute and subtle mind which conceived these propositions [papal infallibility, the lack of historical continuity in the Christian faith] readily foresaw the objection that they destroy all certainty in religion, that they throw the Christian believer wholly at large, they displace every landmark and[,] destroying the assurance that connects us with the faith of the former ages[,] destroy the objective evidence of our union with the Redeemer" (269). Newman is therefore a dangerous radical: if the historical evidence for the continuity of the Christian faith is not presupposed, if it is open to a kind of scientific investigation, then Christianity is ultimately "a speculative scheme which one ingenious brain has created & which another equally or perhaps less ingenious will destroy" (270). As Gladstone later confirms, Newman's "concession ... to the unbeliever" is that "Xty is not one & immutable at all times – that we cannot authenticate our present religion by the direct testimony of former ages" (272). Later in the document, Gladstone follows this notion by stating that Newman's theory "either destroys or fatally impairs that great and overwhelming evidence of the Christian religion which is supplied by its permanence and unity throughout all ages" (326). According to Gladstone, then, Newman undercuts the central apologetic for Christianity, at least Christianity of the catholic variety – the fact that it is not *in substantia* different from what it was at the outset is always already a testimony of its uniqueness and its veracity.⁶

2. *Imbalanced Developments*

Another salient feature of Gladstone's text is his thesis regarding the asymmetrical nature of Newman's theory; though he does not explicitly or consciously use the term, Gladstone's appeal is to the *via media* of Anglican theology. He believes that "it is a gross fallacy to hold that because certain principles pointed in a certain direction every movement in that direction is a lawful development of them"; after all, if such were true, "in ethics particular virtues would be developed into vices" (272). Gladstone does not develop the point immediately, but the thread of the appeal to *via*

media runs throughout the document. Yet at even a deeper level than the Anglican *via media*, his understanding of the relationship between virtue and vice sounds wholly Catholic in the Augustinian and Dantean tradition: both men in their respective works stress the extent to which sin is disordered love. Thus is love the cornerstone and animating force of all of our ethical life, yet the restraint and proper ordering of those loves results in virtue rather than vice. Gladstone takes the same point and applies it to the theory of development of doctrine while demonstrating concern with the potential danger inherent in any emphasis on moderation – a lukewarm centrism akin to *acedia*, the failure actively to pursue the Good. As he writes, “the doctrine of a mean” has the potential to be “useful or dangerous” (273), since it is susceptible of “lukewarmness & indifferentism, and to every form of spiritual and carnal sloth” (273).

In order to demonstrate the outworking of a proper, spiritually vivified moderation regarding doctrine, Gladstone turns to the notion of the “Undivided Church” (i.e. the legitimate ancestor of the Anglican Church) as a “center of gravity” that rightly condemned excesses and strove for a mean between such excesses as Arianism and Sabellianism, Pelagianism and Lucidism (273). The Church’s role as a mediator between excesses is an “inference naturally aris[ing]” from available evidence such that this role appears to be “no accidental circumstance, but a normal characteristic of her position and function, as being the center of gravity to all the spiritual forces of the world, appointed to sway and marshal them, and therefore to correct and reclaim or else put away whatever might have gone astray in this direction or in that” (273). Now, according to Gladstone, the Roman Church, in stark contrast, legitimates the extremes. For example, if one were to grant the supremacy of the Roman See, Gladstone argues, why would not the Roman Church “with equal zeal, or with or without any zeal at all, rebuk[e] those who have lifted the Popedom into an object of idolatry?” Or grant the role of Mary as Θεοτόκος: “has [the Roman Church] on the other side been careful to guard against the awful danger of all idolatrous veneration?” (274). Such lack of correction makes the Roman Church into a “partisan who has some side of a system

to defend" and not a "sentinel of the faith, watching round & round against the adversary" (275).

But what would be the alternative to such partisanship? Gladstone's catholicity is one of unity through diversity: that is, he is at pains to (*contra* Newman) point out the *multiplicity* of, as he terms them, "voices" – theological/spiritual influences – in the history of the Church. The truly catholic Church hears not one voice, but "a thousand voices, accordant and dissonant in different degrees" (282); and through "*piecemeal* evidence," through "the combination of *imperfect* evidences," the doctrine of the Church can be proven (282, emphasis added). The irony of this passage in particular is that it neatly mirrors Newman's own theory of "antecedent probability" as demonstrated in Newman's opening section in the *Essay*. There, Newman offers an extended simile regarding the inchoateness of the disparate parts of an idea that nevertheless may be reconciled and joined into an integral whole:

...as views of a material object may be taken from points so remote or so distinct that they seem at first sight incompatible, and especially as their shadows will be disproportionate or even monstrous, and yet all these will be harmonized together by taking account of the point of vision or surface of projection, so also all the representations of an idea, *even all the misrepresentations*, are capable of a mutual reconciliation and adjustment, and of a resolution into the subject to which they belong, and their contrariety, when explained, is an argument for its substantiveness and integrity, and their variety for its originality and power. (32-33, emphasis added)

What do we make of such a seeming similarity at this point in Gladstone's view and Newman's? After all, Gladstone seems to agree with Newman's assertions regarding the extent to which the multiplicity of perspectives may be reconciled into a unity. Is this Gladstone at his most catholic or Newman retreating into more Anglican language (i.e., that of the *via media*)?

Gladstone himself acknowledges the similarity between his own view and that of Newman's concerning historical antecedent probability and the multiplicity of voices within the Church: it seems, though, that he implicitly assails the *method* of the resolution of disparate opinions within the Church. That is, however Newman and the Roman Church seem to approve of the coalescing of diverse voices toward unity, the imposition of a univocal (and infallible) interpreting authority effectively nullifies any potential weight that those discordant voices might have. Gladstone thus claims that "If we were to trust ourselves to that seductive but most insecure course of inquiry which deduces belief concerning the actual revelations of the Divine will from our views of antecedent expediency or necessity, we would find ourselves led to other conclusions by the side of those that the Church of Rome has favoured, and entitled to as much regard" (284). This is Gladstone's second difficulty with Newman's antecedent probability – that its results are often more damning to the Roman Church than Newman admits. That is, if Newman claims for the Roman Church the core principle of antecedent probability – that it is antecedently probable that Christ left His authority to a visible organ on earth, the Roman Catholic Church – then the Church has a right and a responsibility to define doctrines that previously were undefined. In Gladstone's view, the Roman Church has done so and has not only defined doctrines that depart from historical orthodoxy, but conversely has left other potentially crucial doctrines undefined.

Gladstone continues this line of argumentation by utilizing several examples. First, he points to the "unpardonable sin," claiming that, surely if there were any doctrine upon which the Church should "call into activity her defining power" it would be this one (284). Yet the Roman Church, according to Gladstone, has not demonstrated *ex cathedra* (my term, not Gladstone's) an *absolute* teaching regarding the unpardonable sin. Such is not a difficulty for Gladstone's Anglicanism, as he writes: "For us indeed who do not adopt the Roman view of the *necessity* of an infallible guide, this teaching of the Church may be perfectly *adequate*" (285, emphasis added). Again, here the argument is implicitly thrown

back upon antecedent probability. There is *enough* writing in the tradition to offer – but not to *ensure absolutely* – a “reasonable satisfaction” for the “mistrustful soul” (284-85). Yet, according to Gladstone, “The Roman teachers are ever dwelling on the necessity of absolute as opposed to probable evidence” (285). Leaving aside the the accuracy of Gladstone’s statement, his conclusion regarding antecedent probability is that “the Roman theory respecting the decision of controversies is to be viewed with very great suspicion,” presumably because it does not allow for a gentle and truly developmental resolution of doctrinal issues, but speaks univocally, effectually shutting out the complexities of a truly historical development. Such complexities seem to evince most deeply the messiness of the human experience, for Gladstone, since humans always must utilize both their own reasoning power as well as to place that reason alongside those with whom they exist in community. The complex messiness of the *via media*, once again, seems for Gladstone to be the most probable means by which God would speak in and through God’s Church.

3. Gladstone’s Historical Sense

It may be fair to assert that Gladstone’s *via media* theology in this document has at least an ancillary, if not a more close-knit relationship, to his reading of history, and sacred history in particular. After all, the Roman doctrine of development itself, filtered through Newman, was to Gladstone and others a quintessentially ahistorical one, since it leaped over the truly orthodox *catena* of historical theology in favor of an authoritative teaching body unburdened by the responsibility to tie its novel doctrines either to pre-Nicene tradition or to Scripture. Gladstone offers two equally plausible interpretations for the presence of the cult of the saints in order to make this larger point regarding his own understanding of the orthodox interpretation of history versus the Roman Catholic understanding of such. In the first case, he offers as an explanation for this phenomenon something akin to the Anglo-Catholic doctrine of “Reserve”: that God gradually unfolded revelation as the human capacity for

particular doctrines increased over time. Thus, the cult of the saints may have existed because it “sought to train the capacity of the soul for the apprehension of God, to expand the spiritual eye by carrying it along the ranks of the hierarchy of the blessed even as the natural eye is expanded by the gradually increased admission of light” (286). Here the direction of development is decidedly evolutionary, much as is the doctrine of Reserve. Development presupposes, as the analogy to the eye would suggest, a gradually *increasing* capacity of humanity along with a concomitant (and here, presumed) humility – or at least *caution* – regarding the extent to which any human pronouncement defining divine doctrine may be given free rein. As a second explanation for the *cultus* of the saints, however, Gladstone then gives the obverse possibility – that there is a gradually *decreasing* capacity of humanity for the apprehension of spiritual truth and that the *cultus* is but an example of such: “we may have come under the dominion of fear and bondage instead of love and may conceive of our Redeemer not as our medium of approach to [the] Godhead but as one whose grandeur we require to approach through some other medium” (286). Thus there are these two possibilities: “either a more lofty appreciation of sanctity, or a great decay of the principle of faith *may*, in the abstract, and in the general, have given rise to the movement of mind which has assigned to the saints too prominent a place in the Christian system” (286). Gladstone notes here in the margin that purgatory and the marriage of priests would also be doctrines susceptible of this dual interpretation.

Gladstone uses another example in order to demonstrate these two conflicting methods of historical interpretation – the purgatorial system. First he points out that the ante-Nicene language used to describe the dead in Christ was overwhelmingly joyful, expressing confidence in the state of blessed rest enjoyed by departed Christians. Again Gladstone contrasts the primitive with the contemporary Roman Church in this matter, arguing that “a very gloomy and somber colour has been communicated” regarding the state of the Christian departed. Yet, as Gladstone points out, there are those in the Roman system who enjoy perpet-

ual bliss, but they are the very few (as opposed to many or all Christians in the primitive Church who were presumed, upon death, to be in the presence of God directly). Thus the development of the doctrine of purgatory has been not in a progressive or positive direction, but a negative one that has furthermore issued in "a great relaxation of discipline within the Churches of which now we speak since this change in doctrine has taken place" (290). That is, for Gladstone, the history of humanity has been one in which "sin and ... holiness" have been "appreciat[ed]" *retrogressively*; it makes little sense, therefore, under the Roman theory of development that the doctrine of purgatory would stress its punitive aspects *progressively*. Indeed, Gladstone calls this contradiction "a great enigma" (291) while at the same time cynically noting that one of the results of such a punitive purgatorial doctrine has been to guarantee the Roman Church more wealth and power (291).

So Gladstone rests this particular case – that of historical interpretation – on these two principal contradictions: first, the purgatorial system has ostensibly "enlarged & pushed beyond the limits of human life" the time of spiritual probation "while the love of purity has diminished"; second, as regards the *cultus*, "the vision of the grave" has been "darkened for ordinary men" and "heightened for a few" (292). The result of such contradictions is the "enhancement of the hierarchy" and the "exaltation of the see of Rome" (292). What can be marshaled in defense of Gladstone's seemingly heightened cynicism here, however, is his more measured claim that the "tests or signs" that would validate or nullify the claims of the Roman Church are to employ "dispassionate reason." But in not resorting to the use of such reason, the Roman Church nullifies its own pretenses to authority. Their argument is essentially circular, "dependent for support upon results," and those results are themselves "the immense aggrandisement of that developing organ through the direction which it has itself given to the course of thought and instruction" (292). Gladstone's discussion of historical interpretation thus throws the issue back upon the question of Rome's pretenses to power and authority, and in particular the extent to which Newman's ostensibly "progressive"

theory of development is overly reliant on an optimistic – even naïve – presumption regarding the ability of humankind to hold together disparate historical, ecclesiastical, theological, and political developments under the aegis of one univocal governing body.

The following passages continue to illustrate the nature of the relationship Gladstone draws out between Roman self-aggrandizing power – that is, its pretense to be an ideal Church – and the one-sidedness of its historical developments. He returns to a particular notion of moderation or balance that he suggested earlier in his argument, focusing here on what is ostensibly a return to the *via media*, emphasizing that a legitimate historical development in any body proceeds by means of a “combination and counterpoise of forces which if left to operate singly would move in opposite direction and produce no common result” (293). The implication, again, is that the Roman doctrine of development leaves no room for such a counterpoise of forces, lacking an “equable evolution” (293). Here, Gladstone continues to tie the notion of Rome’s imbalance to the language of monarchical oppression in order to explain this lack of moderation: “The law which harmonises the Roman developments is that of a constant tendency to enlarge the power of those who bear rule in the Church, and to depress the relative privileges of those who are ruled” (293). This is the definitive exposition, in this document at least, of Gladstone’s earlier hints that the Roman method of the reconciliation of discordant elements is deficient, that its tendency is away from the moderate synthesis of dissent under the guidance of Scripture, Tradition, and the Holy Spirit, and toward an ever-increasing, self-aggrandizing, univocal power structure. In addition, Gladstone’s language at this point is particularly accusatory, casting Roman one-sidedness as a sort of monstrosity, a cancer, a disease.

The final emphasis in this half of the document concerns the Roman Catholic Church’s use of Scripture, for it is here, above all other *loci*, that Gladstone finds the greatest disjunct between the early Church and contemporary Roman Catholicism and therefore the greatest potential rhetorical weapon to marshal in his argument against Newman’s theory of de-

velopment.⁷ And again, we find Gladstone utilizing the *via media* in his defense of the Anglican position. But what is that position? After all, if Gladstone continually calls the Roman Church back to Scripture as the central *locus* of its authority, one might presume that he possesses the theological sophistication to specify more carefully the ways in which Scripture is to be interpreted. He addresses the question directly by first pointing out the two extreme positions: that of "plac[ing Scripture] in the hands of the congregation at large" or committing the task of Scriptural interpretation to "the hands of the dominant caste or priesthood" (294). But instead of taking a more strictly mediatory position here, as he does with other doctrines in the document, Gladstone appears most protestant, arguing that the Early Church encouraged, both in formalized doctrine and in liturgical practice, the wide use and reading of Scripture. He goes on to argue that such a position not only existed in the ancient undivided Church, but "is now in the Churches of the East" and "is now in our own land also" (294).

Gladstone then calls the Roman Catholic guardians of Scripture "ecclesiastical police" for this tendency to withhold Scripture from the masses. The Roman Church's defense of the practice revolved around the notion that, in restraining Scriptural access, they were likewise restraining the opportunity for unfounded and potentially heretical readings. Yet again Gladstone's argument returns to the observance of a "de-evolutionary" tendency in the history of the Church. He joins the prevalence of heresy with the prevalence of Scripture reading in the early Church, arguing therefore that it was precisely *because* of the laity's access to Scripture that heresies were recognized as such and gradually condemned by Councils. Such a shift in the practice of encouraging, and, to a lesser extent, even allowing, the wide reading of Scripture is further evidence of the disjunction between the early Church and the Roman Church, for Gladstone, and yet again, the argument's animating question is that of "the nature of the ruling power in the society of Christians upon earth" (296). The Early Church "laid open to the laity her primary service, and final warrant of her decisions" – to the point that it "invited

them to follow her with this document [Holy Scripture] in their hands” (296). Part and parcel of the Roman Church’s exercise of power is in its restraint of Holy Scripture, therefore. Again, it is important to note the extent to which Gladstone sounds most Protestant here, in his condemnation of the mode of Scriptural instruction in the Roman Catholic Church. He accuses the Roman Church of “distribut[ing] morsels from [Scripture], and these are received without verification, without contextual knowledge, without that familiarity which the ancient services of the Church would have engendered and maintained among the faithful” (296). The themes of the first half of the document – the novel method of historical interpretation as well as the one-sided nature of Roman developments – are brought together in Gladstone’s conclusion that the Roman restriction of Scripture to the laity is, essentially, evidence of a concomitant “attenuation ... [of the] system of Christian training” as well as a “mighty growth in the antagonistic or balancing doctrine of ecclesiastical authority” (297).

4. The Ideal (and Reality) of a Christian Church

Here the document takes a decided turn from a general exposition of principles regarding the notion of development to a more specific critique of Newman’s *Essay*.⁸ The rest of the document continues to delineate some of the themes and arguments mentioned above, but tends to rest even more carefully upon the notion that the living Church is always striving for an ideal and yet cannot presume to have already realized that ideal. Thus the Church is not, and cannot and must not, claim to be in any sense infallible.

Gladstone begins this section by agreeing in full with Newman’s assertion that Christianity “must now be regarded as a fact in the world’s history” (299) and that this fact is thus worthy of our attention and even our “legitimate inductions respecting its essential character and the law of its existence in the world” (299). Where Gladstone quickly parts ways with Newman, however, concerns Newman’s assertion (in defense of Christianity as a natural religion rather than a revealed one) that one must

"take it for granted that the Christianity of the second, fourth, seventh, twelfth, sixteenth, and intermediate centuries is in its substance the very religion which Christ and his Apostles taught in the first" (Newman 3). For Gladstone, such an assertion enters "the labyrinth of inaccurately drawn presumptions" (299).

Gladstone seems to be indicating here and in other sections of the document that the Roman theory of development articulated by Newman, which is itself a keystone to the entire Roman Catholic system,⁹ may be materially correct in many instances but is fundamentally flawed in its core presupposition that *continuity* – particularly of doctrine but also, presumably, of core ecclesiological and moral truths – is "antecedently probable," that is, to be expected. Rather, for Gladstone, it is *corruption* and *degeneration* that is to be expected – an entropic view – especially in, as he terms them, "moral systems" or systems in which "the appetites & passions have an interest" (299). Indeed, in moral systems, "whether they be living and practical as in institutions political or religious, there is the seed of almost certain corruption" (299). As in the first section of the document, the reader is often left to wonder upon what basis Gladstone then builds the authority of the Church. In potential response, then, to those who would take Gladstone at his word and wonder if there is therefore any hope for a system such as Christianity (given its propensity for inevitable corruption), Gladstone distinguishes between the "essence" or "prototype" of a system and its particulars. That is, "although the human faculties err (and though where passion & appetite intervene very serious error is the rule rather than the exception), yet upon the whole they execute their work though imperfectly: and the perception of truth & duty is rarely extinguished, and if anywhere it commonly survives in institutions" (300). Gladstone seems to be building here toward an argument that would have to account for, on the one hand, the relative corruptions of the Roman system, given Newman's own defense of that system, and, on the other, the reasons for defending an Anglican Church that itself was not ignorant of or unscathed by imperfection.

It would seem to be this relative imperfection that Gladstone appeals to in the next section, where he critiques the notion that any ultimately true

system of faith can claim a “broad and simple theory” as its foundation (301). He first points to “naked or extreme Protestantism” as an example: in taking as its authority only Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in its interpretation, and in neglecting the Creeds and the notion of a catholic Church, “the individual has no external fact to rely on” and cannot “depen[d] on any external judgment” (301). Thus, on the one hand, extreme Protestantism eschews any external judgment, any objective *fact* of a Church, in favor of an individualistic subjectivism. On the other hand, Gladstone finds that the Roman Church is overweening in its confidence regarding its claims of authority, that neither catholicity nor sanctity provide Rome with an adequate foundation on which to base her claims. The former he dismisses quickly, arguing that “Rome can scarcely claim one half of Christendom, while Christendom most undoubtedly cannot claim (and at no time could have claimed) one half of the world” (302). The latter, however, provides Gladstone with occasion to discourse more thoroughly on the character of the relationship between a religious system and its moral influence. He finds that the Roman Catholic Church in particular, but Christianity generally, does not necessarily derive its greatest attractiveness from an overwhelming moral influence – that “the grapes of Christian virtue are gathered indifferently from thorn and from vine, the figs from fig tree and from thistle” (302). Ultimately, sanctity is not a valid “note” for Gladstone anyway – and, of course, *could* not be given his own entropic view of the development of moral virtue. Indeed, sanctity as a *fact* of the Christian Church is “withdrawn from the eyes of men, and therefore totally unavailable for the office of verifying the notes of the Church, which are intended to be public plain and palpable to all men” (302). There can thus be no pretense to the demonstration of a Christian Ideal through the visible manifestation of sanctity in the Church.

If then sanctity is not a valid “note” upon which the Church’s authority rests, then again, readers are left wondering about the extent to which Gladstone exhibits any optimism regarding the Church as a visible manifestation of Christ in the world. After all, Newman claims that the Roman system is the only truly “positive” system, and Gladstone’s

comments above regarding sanctity seem to affirm Newman's claim. Yet Gladstone does assail Newman's claim for the Roman Catholic Church as the only true positive system, all other systems – particularly Anglicanism – subject to collapse, with the ultimate aim of a unified catholic Christian body that is always reforming in light of Scripture and Tradition. For Gladstone, while the core doctrines of Christianity are susceptible of Roman corruptions – while the "worship of the Blessed Virgin ... invades the sentiments due exclusively to Almighty God," or while "Transubstantiation ... impairs ... the Sacrament by denying the reality of the signs employed in it" (303), there are likewise objections to Rome which are negative, Gladstone adds, such as the denial that "tradition apart from Scripture teaches any doctrine necessary for salvation" or that "the Pope is infallible in matter of doctrine" (303). Are these negative objections valid? They are, according to Gladstone, insofar as their use is "carefully limited and guarded" within valid "limits" (303). Again, Gladstone's recourse here is to the *via media*: negative objections should never serve to assail the entire Roman system, since the Church of England, Gladstone notes, "holds the same foundation of faith with the Church of Rome" (304). The image Gladstone uses is one of careful pruning; there must be "retrenchment in those particulars where there is excess" and "restoration in those particular where some truths have been stunted" in order to "make way for the undue and unnatural development of others" (304). Reformation should never destroy, but only renovate.

Gladstone's point regarding the careful pruning is a key one for understanding his project in this text: for it is only in the reasoned and measured employing of criticisms that the middle way holds. Gladstone does not necessarily eschew the notion of development entirely, but, throughout the text, consistently returns to the idea that developments must remain properly related to the embryonic concepts from which they are developed. As he states, the "conclusion which universal experience impresses upon the human faculties" is that "truth ... is not to be found among the most advanced, but commonly among the more qualified developments of ideas: ... not among the extremes but among the interme-

diate shades of party” (305). Often, Gladstone asserts, the more correct view among two parties – even those who may be on the same side, broadly conceived, of an issue – is the view “nearer to the mean” (306). Such an assertion forms the basis for what may be the most crucial observation – and most central – to Gladstone’s argument: that “It is therefore no apology[,] much less a recommendation[,] of this or that tenet to say it is developed out of this or that anterior notion which you admit” (306). Gladstone carries his notion of moderation further in the next section, implying that it is not so much a queasy or “paper” theology that he recommends, but rather a certain humility on the part of any catholic body regarding the nature of its claims to authority. Again, we see Gladstone turning Newman’s own arguments back against him as he asserts the individualistic and subjective character of the Roman theory of development which, “while it supplies the individual mind ... a royal road to [certainty], ... unfixes the anchors by which the body of faith is held and its permanency and continuous identity guaranteed” (307). Gladstone then reiterates the call *ad fontes* as well as his own particular belief regarding the (de)evolution of doctrine – that all religions and philosophies are “purest at & near their source” and that, ultimately, the weight of human frailty and sinfulness “strives to turn every instrument of teaching as well as of acting into an instrument of pride & uncleanness” (308). True, time is “*necessary* for the perception of great ideas,” yet, *contra* Newman, the *direction* is not necessarily toward perfection but “retrograde toward obscurity.” Ironically enough, then, Gladstone’s call continues to be for a more realistic view of the Church and its role in human affairs; it is only in understanding the Church’s *weaknesses*, its lack of pretense, that we can simultaneously be assured of the *certainty* of the Church’s past legacy and current mission.

5. *Conclusions: Rome’s Extremity*

By way of summarizing and concluding his argument, Gladstone turns his attention both to Newman himself – his own potential motivations for conversion and the production of the *Essay* – as well as to reit-

erating the Sisyphean task of anyone laboring to counter Newman's argument. Thus, Gladstone notices overtly the *novelty*, and covertly the *oddity*, of Newman's argument. Of the former, he accuses Newman of using primarily circumstantial evidence in crafting his argument; of the latter, the tone Gladstone adopts would seem to suggest that, at some level, he recognizes the genius of Newman while at the same time marveling at the *Essay's* foundational simplicity – and indeed, perhaps, wondering whether that simplicity belies a trickier subtext to which he is not privy. In any event, in understanding and processing the ways in which Newman has shifted the grounds of argument, Gladstone recognizes that Newman has pushed the upper boundary of the Roman Church's argument to its limit ("he that takes all, has no more to ask"). That is, at its most basic level, the dispute between the Anglican and Roman communion centers around what doctrines and practices were present "in the primitive system" (311) and how those doctrines and practices are subsequently to be interpreted, given human predilections and the changing contexts of human societies.

Gladstone avers that, since it is highly unlikely if not impossible to find these practices in the early Church, defenders of Rome were forced to "claim an exemption from the fetters of primitive & patristic interpretation" and, ultimately, to arrive at Newman's own utterly astounding claims in the *Essay*. These astounding claims are characterized by Gladstone: Newman argues that Roman innovations "proceed from a certain living teacher, acknowledging no limit, no law extrinsic to herself," and that there is nothing "to restrain her power of evolution or addition" (312) – again, the criticism would suggest a certain subjectivity and circularity on the part of the Roman Catholic defense of development. The developing power regulates and legitimates developments, in other words, only in order ultimately to demonstrate and then exercise its own power to regulate and legitimate developments. Gladstone's frustration with his sometime correspondent and acquaintance, given this perception of a large mental block keeping Newman from seeing the simplicity of his folly, causes Gladstone to call this lack of recourse to anything "ex-

trinsic” Newman’s “unhappy delusion” (312). So Gladstone seems to see the task before himself – as well as for anyone purporting to assail Newman’s argument – as one of simultaneous simplicity and complexity. On the one hand, as Gladstone notes, “If the work in which Mr. Newman draws his presumptions, and if the presumptions themselves, can be successfully impeached, his whole argument falls to the ground” (313). Certainly the above passage would seem to indicate that Gladstone himself is frustrated with the task, since Newman’s argument seems to him to be built on clearly faulty presuppositions. Indeed, Gladstone notes that, given Newman’s presuppositions, there is no basis from which to offer any legitimate critique of Roman Catholic doctrine or practice. There is no appeal to Scripture, for the Roman Church is the sole guardian of its interpretation; there is no concomitant appeal to Tradition, since (and here the novelty arises again) “she has a power to teach what has not formerly been taught, to condemn what has formerly been allowed, to allow what has formerly been condemned” (314). Indeed, for Gladstone there is no longer even any appeal to Rome *qua* Rome, since, “claiming the right to repudiate every other authority, she also claims, under this theory, the right to repudiate her own” (314). There is no ground left on which to stand, Gladstone claims, for the self-aggrandizing power Rome reserves to herself ensures her unimpeachable nature.

In contrast, Gladstone moves toward the close of his argument by way of a return to the *via media*. He does not hope to supply extreme Protestants with fodder for their arguments; while he acknowledges that they may do so, he also notes their responsibility “to show that their own system affords adequate guarantees for the permanent & uniform recognition of the Christian verity” (316). The difference, and of course the key at this point to Gladstone’s own continuing faith in Anglicanism, is that, unlike either Protestantism or Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism affords the benefit of a “written law” – Scripture – but with a guide to its interpretation that is neither unrestrained (as in Roman Catholicism) nor purely individualistic and subjective (Protestantism). Gladstone uses an analogy to “human affairs” in order to hone the point even finer, drawing out the

contrast between a despotic government and a constitutional one. The former "steadily resist[s] every ... effort" at criticism with a view to altering its theories and usages while "maintaining intrinsically an appearance of wonderful agreement" (317). The problem with the Roman Church, as a despotic communion, in Gladstone's view, is that it is equally likely, and perhaps more likely, to foster unbelief rather than belief precisely because of its quelling of any potential dissent. A constitutional system, analogous to Anglicanism, is indeed messy, "exposed to many difficulties" (317); but the Roman Church dams the waters of dissent. When those waters "break away," they are bound to carry with them "not only her [the Roman Catholic Church's] fables but her truths" as well.

Gladstone has returned here to one of the central themes with which he began, the accusation that the nineteenth-century Roman Catholic Church, using a novel form of argumentation for its own authority now legitimated by one of its newest and leading intellectuals, has subjected Christianity to a grand theory that only hastens its destruction. Gladstone concludes the document with the same central concern with which he began – the distinction between, on the one hand, the "addition" of novelty that in many respects signals a departure from ancient doctrine and practice, and on the other, the "explanation" or interpretation of the ancient tradition. That is, Gladstone does not – at least on the surface – eschew the notion of development altogether or suggest that the body of Christian doctrine is permanently fixed, and has been since the ante-Nicene Fathers. However, he does strongly suggest that the *core* of the body of Christian doctrine was permanently fixed and that the role of the Church continues to be one of interpretation within "*the limit* of essential truth" (323, emphasis added), and that truth comporting with Scripture and the earliest interpreters of it.

Gladstone's final word in the document points us back to the thorny issue of his relative optimism or pessimism regarding the status and role of the Church – both in its largest catholic sense and in the more precise sense of the Church of England. Given his emphasis on the entropic principle in the unfolding of doctrine and practice, one might assume that

he takes a particularly negative or pessimistic tack. Yet, if anything, the entropic nature of development points back to the Gospel message itself – to the fragility of humans as individuals and as communities in embodying and representing an ideal moral, ethical, or religious system. Thus is Gladstone's document hopeful in its prophetic tone, in its call for renewal and restoration of the sound mediating principles of English catholicism. As Gladstone concludes:

A certain work is appointed to be done in the world, and a Church is appointed to perform it. The performance of it is to be a struggle throughout: no victory, no repose: on the other hand no extinction, no abandonment of the task: but a perpetual effort for the manifestation of the glory of God through the body of the Redeemer in the world, a glory flickering through the darkness, varying in its brightness, within these limits, that shall ever be visible but never absolutely triumphant. There this conflict sways to and fro according to the balance of forces on one side and on the other. Is it not then manifestly to be presumed that when the force of the Church is collected and combined she will be more successful in her work whether of declaring the truth as of applying it, than when those forces are disjointed by violent separation, nay to no small extent wasted in reciprocal opposition? (333)

Oklahoma Baptist University

Notes

¹ Cf. Owen Chadwick's *From Bossuet to Newman* (Cambridge UP, 1957), particularly Chapter VIII, "Newman and Rome."

² Cf. Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 211, and the "Advertisement to the First Edition" of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame UP, 1989), xi.

³ From Newman's *Apologia*: "Protestantism and Popery are real religions ... but the *Via Media*, viewed as an integral system, has scarcely had existence except on paper" (77).

⁴ The narrative of Gladstone's reception of, and reaction to, Newman's *Essay* is also recounted in McKelvy 200-203.

⁵ Cf. Bebbington, 174, and McKelvy, 202.

⁶ This particular reading of Newman's argument had apparently been in Gladstone's mind for at least a few months by this time. Gladstone, in a letter to William Palmer on 12 June 1846, notes that "the argument itself is ... full of danger, less perhaps to the Church of England than outright to belief in a definite objective revelation" (Gladstone/Palmer).

⁷ It is also on this point that Gladstone most evidently, in this document at least, departs from the teaching of the Anglo-Catholics. Isaac Williams, in *Tracts for the Times* Numbers 80 and 87, had formulated a doctrine that encouraged the restriction of Scripture's use by the laity.

⁸ The document also shifts here in prose style; the style of the latter half is less polished and is more clearly a draft for a longer work, in my opinion, since it contains various threads of argumentation that are not necessarily teased out and followed to their conclusions.

⁹ For these men, at least. It seems as though discussions concerning development are a key component of the apologetic project – that is, the defense of a particular understanding of the Christian faith – in both Roman Catholic and Anglican circles. This fact seems furthermore to account for the exalted tone – the "high stakes" – involved in these disputes as well as the consternation on both sides that those in error are not only leading Christians astray (to either the Anglican or Roman communions, respectively) but are indeed giving further cause for apostasy for those already tipping in that direction.

Works Cited

- Bebbington, David. *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics*. Oxford UP, 2004.
- "Cardinal Newman: Doctor of the Church?" *Zenit*. Innovative Media, Inc., 22 October 2008. Web. 15 August 2010.
- "*Dei Verbum*: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation." *Vatican*

Online, n.d. Web. 3 January 2011.

Erb, Peter. Gladstone to Manning, 25 December 1845. *Correspondence of Henry Edward Manning and William Ewart Gladstone*. 4 vols. Oxford UP, forthcoming.

Gladstone, W.E. "Development." 1846-47. Add. MSS. 44736. British Library, London. 264-333.

———. "Gladstone to Rev. W. Palmer." 12 June 1846. Add MSS. 44364. British Library, London. 197.

———. *The Gladstone Diaries Vol. 2, 1833-1839*. Ed. M.R.D. Foot. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.

———. "Ward's Ideal of a Christian Church." *Gleanings of Past Years, 1843-78*. London: John Murray, 1879. 81-172.

Ker, Ian. "Forward." *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Notre Dame UP, 1989. xvii-xxvii.

"Manning and Gladstone: The 'Destroyed' Letters." *Dublin Review* 138:276 (January 1906), 41-59.

McKelvy, William R. *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers, 1774-1880*. U of Virginia P, 2007.

Newman, John Henry. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. London: James Toovey, 1846.

———. *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. Volume XI: Littermore to Rome, October 1845 to December 1846*. London: Thomas Nelson, 1961.

Nicholls, David. "Gladstone and the Anglican Critics of Newman." *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays*. Ed. J.D. Bastable. Dublin: Veritas, 1978. 121-24.

Sidenvall, Erik. *After Anti-Catholicism? John Henry Newman and Protestant Britain, 1845-c.1890*. New York: T&T Clark, 2005.

