

AN EXCUSE FOR WHY CATHOLICISM DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE EARLY CHURCH - THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

In Cardinal John Henry Newman's Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine he acknowledged that the Church of Rome different from the Early Church but held that Protestantism was not identical to the Early Church.

According to him the Early Church was the same religion as Roman Catholicism and that the Church learned more about the gospel through time and eventually it came to teach modern Roman Catholic doctrine. The primitive Catholic Church evolved into modern Roman Catholicism but both are the same Church.

Newman gave seven tests to show when a genuine development has taken place for it can happen that some developments are not developments at all but errors.

There must be a basic doctrine that implies other ones so that they can be developed from it and that another.

This basic doctrine must come from the apostles to be a real development. This is impossible for we have very little indication of what the apostles taught. We have plenty of hearsay but that is all. The Bible however says that the faith is complete in Ephesians 1. Jude says it was given once and for all. And Jesus personally promised the apostles - them more than their successors - that all truth would be given. Attempts today to argue that same sex marriage and divorce can be considered developments are just nonsense. So novelty is clearly not Christian and would not fit how Jesus wanted the Church to have intimate unity of fellowship and truth. Church unity is impossible if clarity is a problem.

The development must fit the other revealed doctrines. Who can prove that everlasting torment in Hell fits a God who loves sinners?

The development must be logically derived from the basic root doctrine.

The development be the only possible one for trouble would ensue if a doctrine implied two or three different things. The idea that Jesus needed a sinless mother doesn't prove the Catholic doctrine that she had to be conceived without sin. Why couldn't she have been cleansed of sin later in life?

The development must have taken the simplest road to be genuine. For example, the simplest implication of a doctrine should be the accepted one. This is ignored in practice. Is it simple to say that when Jesus said bread was his body that he meant it literally not symbolically?

The developing be done by or validated by the legitimate authorities in the Church. This proves that Newman doesn't believe in the other six reasons at all. If a doctrine implies something logically it implies it whether the Church recognises it at all. Here we have Newman virtually admitting that the only thing that makes a doctrine a development is the arbitrary decision of the Church.

The doctrine must have meant to have been developed as well. The Church argues that since God kept Mary from sin that he would not have let her body decay but would have taken her to Heaven. Hence in 1950 Pius XII proclaimed that Mary was taken bodily to Heaven. They think that the doctrine of the sinless conception implies the assumption. This is nonsense. Perhaps God doesn't want to reveal the fate of Mary's body or doesn't feel he needs to. And besides God could preserve the body without raising Mary to life if she died.

Despite the opposition when they first came out, Newman's ideas were locked into the Church's official stance at the Second Vatican Council (page 210, The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought).

It is a fact that few if any of the Catholic developments are in harmony with these rules. For example, if you say that the doctrine of original sin implies baptism is necessary for infants to get rid of it then the problem is proving that original sin meant to imply that. Perhaps God wipes the sin after it appears without baptism or perhaps it will not be pardoned until the child is able to renounce sin or perhaps if the child dies God will send it to Limbo from where it can go to Heaven if it chooses. For a doctrine to be really open to development it would have to explicitly say that it is just a root. The example we have given fits absolutely none of the rules and yet it was a "developed" doctrine that is one of the foundation stones of Roman Catholicism. It proves that Roman Catholicism is wrong.

The Church says it has to understand doctrines better all the time meaning that the way a doctrine was stated before could

be inaccurate so it has to be improved. When Hell used to be thought of as a fire with demons with horns in it under the earth that could have led to the development of misleading doctrines, say that Hell will one day break out on earth and that demons have bodies and that the sinners there deserve to burn as if their despair is not enough. The rules are useless except for exposing the sham of Roman Catholicism.

The Development of Doctrine is a meaningless hypothesis for it opens the way to invent new doctrines. For example, the early Church insisted that sin committed after baptism had to be paid for in penance. Newman argued that the Church when dealing with this idea came to discover that it implied that indulgences, merits, purgatory, prayers, and masses for the dead should be believed in. But it could be argued that death is the punishment that deals with the debt. The Bible says that is what death is for (Romans 6:23). And it could be that God will be strict and instead of sending you to purgatory he will miraculously and secretly amplify your last agony at the point of death to pay off the debt in full. And it could be that we can't help the souls in Purgatory for they help themselves or that the saints have already taken care of it. And when religion is full of mystery – it cannot explain evil what sense does it make to say that the debt of penance infers these things for what it infers may be beyond our grasp of logic and inconceivable to our human earthly logic?

Newman was lying.

Newman knew that if the early Church taught salvation through the blood of Jesus and that anybody who is a sincere Christian and accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour is in his Church which is an invisible communion that that was enough to identify it with Protestantism for that is Protestantism reduced to its bare essentials. Though they deny it, even Catholics have an invisible true Church like that the Protestants believe in so it is nonsense to point to an organisation and call it the true Church for it could be run by secret apostates. Yet Newman needs an infallible visible true Church organisation to make his system of development work.

He needs to prove that the system directs one to faith in the Catholic Church. It doesn't. It makes the Romish faith totally unconvincing.

Jesus said that the Church would never be destroyed. Catholics believe he meant that the true Church on earth would never pass away. The Vatican could apostatise meaning that those who are true to the Church as it used to be would be the true Church though they no longer have an infallible head. The Church says that infallibility belongs to the Church as a whole though it is only exercised through Episcopal councils of the Church so a break-off of laypeople could then function as infallible if they are the true faith. So pointing to an organisation like Newman did as the holder of the true developments does not work for he is begging the question: he assumes the Catholic hierarchy are the guardians of the faith which need not be right. The Catholic Church has been frequently accused of apostasy by its own. Even by Newman's standards, the Church must have left the faith and the true Church in the middle of the nineteenth century when it made the Immaculate Conception a dogma for it is neither in early tradition or implied by it.

The Development of Dogma idea suggests that a new dogma can occur to a school in the Church and if the Church won't exalt that dogma to dogma-hood then the school can leave the Church and do it itself and become the true Church. Church means a teaching body and community. The idea of a true Church is impossible to accept for a part of the Church will have greater closeness to the truth than will the official heads for there are many things not definitively settled. The section will be a truer Church or body of teaching than the mainstream Church.

The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought gives a good refutation of Newman's views. I repeat them here with my own observations.

The first problem is that Newman never justified the developments adequately and ignored the fact that the early Church could have been mistaken say in the matter of penance following forgiveness doctrine which denied that God is generous with his forgiveness. It could be said the doctrine was heretical though the Church accepted it and should have known better for it was not an offshoot or anything of its doctrine that God was love and mercy and generosity themselves but contrary to it.

Second, Newman does not think about the Eastern Orthodox claim to be the true infallible Catholic Church even though its system is older than the Catholic one. Catholics will say that perhaps it did not develop enough so the oldness proves nothing. But it is itself-sufficient and that is the refutation of the Catholic reply. If the Church has a sufficient system for getting revelation from God and being a Church of God why should it need to develop into a papal system?

To make the Church the one that has the divine guidance to say what scripture means could and will lead to the Church stopping the Bible from being able to speak for itself. The Church becomes the real authority and the Bible is its subject. It is just like the New Testament doctrine that the Old Testament must be read the Christian way. Without the New Testament our interpretation and understanding of the Old will be radically different. If the Catholic Church officially decides that John 6 is all about the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus and uses its infallibility to see that

then we are not allowed to wonder if the doctrine is really taught by the scripture at all. Newman even said that just as the Old Testament has no authority except as interpreted by the New Testament which is the supreme authority giving the Old only a relative authority so the New Testament has only a relative authority because the Church and the pope have the power to decree what it means by the power of the Holy Spirit in them. This is blasphemous. It is a mistake for a Catholic to go to the Bible to prove the papacy when the book is no good without the pope for that is seeing the Bible not as it is or might be but as the pope says it should be seen.

Apparently, the only trace of a development of doctrine in the early Church was its recognition of the view that that ordinations administered by heretics were valid (page 57, Roman Catholic Claims).

The Catholic Church was not revealed lock, stock and barrel by Jesus and the apostles which everybody admits therefore all its new doctrines are not developments but corruptions and should be discarded.