

fearful, the most censorious, why should anybody want our help? If with that catalogue of sins we have the gall to sin against humility—to be overbearing, unwilling to listen or to understand—we are not merely failing to show Christ to the world and failing to see him in the sick and the frightened, we are actually preventing him from being made known to those who need him.

It is Mary who epitomises true humility. It is a quality present wherever she occurs in the scriptures—at the Annunciation, on the journey with the child Jesus to the Temple, at Cana in Galilee, at the foot of the cross, in the Upper Room. If we cannot share that humility we shall actively keep people who need him from her son.

Mary pray for us; All Saints pray for us.

George Tyrrell and the Development of Doctrine

Aidan Nichols OP

Early last summer, when he was in Peru, Cardinal Ratzinger disclosed that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was preparing a document on the ‘central issues of the Modernist crisis’. He enumerated these as the nature of doctrine, principles in the interpreting of the Bible, and the role of philosophy in theology.

If we want to get those thorny ‘central issues’ into historical perspective, how should we go about it? If one belongs to the English-speaking world, there is, arguably, no better way than to explore the thought of the Modernist George Tyrrell, who was born 125 years ago this year. However severe may be our final assessment of him, it is a fact that the questions Tyrrell raised were those of a theological genius, and we cannot ignore them or brush them away. To understand his thought we must trace its history—his ideas of what theology should be developed dramatically in the course of his life. And if we want to get to grips with what was really distinctive about his thought—where he was addressing himself to the ‘central issues’ which Cardinal Ratzinger has recently listed—then we must consider especially what he had to say about the notion of doctrinal development. His ideas of what theology should be formed, so to speak, a series of photographic lenses through which he peered at his favourite subject: the continuity and discontinuity of Christian tradition.

The history of Tyrrell's theology

He was born in 1861, the son of a Dublin journalist.¹ His family were Low Church Anglicans. In search of a type of Christianity with what he deemed greater intellectual coherence, he entered the Roman Catholic Church in London in 1879, and the following year became a novice in the English Province of the Society of Jesus. His 'first period', from 1880 to 1896, was characterised by militant Thomist orthodoxy, and is reflected in essays republished later as *The Faith of Millions*.² As philosophy professor in the Jesuit studentate at Stonyhurst from 1894 to 1896 he berated the 'Baroque' Scholasticism of the Society's favoured theologian, Francisco Suárez (1548—1617), advocating a return to the historical St Thomas. He saw no disadvantage in Pope Leo XIII's attempt to impose a single common master on the Catholic schools, describing the pro-Thomist encyclical *Aeterni Patris* as 'a blow against sectarian narrowness and in favour of a Catholic and liberal uniformity'.³ By this, he appears to have meant a uniformity of method and terminology which might

create a context of clear communication for the critical assessment of all other systems.⁴

However, he was accused of turning young Jesuits into Dominicans and removed from his post. In retrospect he commented on his choice of theological mentor:

The fact is that Aquinas represents a far less developed theology than that of the later Scholastics and by going back to him one escapes from many of the super-structures of his more narrow-minded successors, and thus gets a liberty to unravel and reconstruct on more sympathetic lines. ...under cover of Aquinas, much might have been quietly introduced and assimilated unconsciously that will be opposed if presented in an alien and hostile garb.⁵

The year of his relegation to the scriptorium of Farm Street, 1896, also saw the gestation of his first book, *Nova et Vetera*, a devotional work, like much of his output, and the fateful occasion of his first encounter with the Baron Friedrich von Hügel. Von Hügel gave Tyrrell his first taste of the new wine of the historical-critical study of Christian origins which was to burst the old wine-skin of Thomism—at least when considered as a sufficient basis for a contemporary theology.

Thus began Tyrrell's 'second period', which has been described as one of 'mediating' (i.e. mediatory and moderate) liberalism.⁶ The aim of 'mediating liberalism' was to present Catholic Christianity to the modern mind in broad and sympathetic terms as a harmonious body of truth rooted in an objective, supernatural revelation yet welcoming scholarship in its self-presentation. Such a 'change of tactics', as Tyrrell termed it, was directly indebted to J.H. Newman's biographer, Wilfrid

Ward, as Tyrrell freely acknowledged.⁷ It formed a judicious compromise between the apologetic assertion of public doctrine and its critical re-appropriation, and held to the Wardian axiom that if scholars exercise caution, ecclesiastical authorities will show moderation. During this second period, Tyrrell wrote a group of articles on the nature of doctrinal development, an inevitable theme for one who had placed himself in a succession consisting of Newman and Ward. Meanwhile, von Hügel had introduced Tyrrell not only to the advanced exegetical studies of the Abbé Alfred Loisy but also to the new 'vitalist' and 'action' philosophies of Henri Bergson and Maurice Blondel.⁸ Tyrrell ceased to be content with Ward's ecclesiastically eirenic but intellectually less than perspicuous position. In 'A Perverted Devotion', an article criticising pulpit recourse to the doctrine of Hell, he stigmatised the Scholastic interpretation of eschatological dogma as theological rationalism, pleading instead for a 'certain temperate agnosticism' on the ultimate fate of the damned.⁹ Though the English Jesuits were prepared to pass this essay, their Roman confrères demurred.¹⁰ They rejected Tyrrell's proposal that the human mind, because of its finitude, is incapable of grasping *hic et nunc* what may be the final state of man.¹¹ As a result, Tyrrell was moved a second time, to the bucolic retirement of a small Jesuit mission at Richmond-in-Swaledale, where he stayed from 1900 to 1905.

These years initiated the 'third period' of Tyrrell's activity and witnessed the emergence of his most characteristic ideas. Before Tyrrell's dismissal from the Society in 1906 he had produced a small library of books, some in his own name and others pseudonymously. For a condensed statement of his approach to theology in this third period one cannot do better than consult his essay 'The Relation of Theology to Devotion', of which he wrote in 1907, the year of his excommunication: 'It is all here—all that follows—not in germ but in explicit statement'.¹¹ In this brief study, Tyrrell points out that 'theology' may refer in a Catholic context to one of two things. More narrowly, it is the Scholastic tradition currently in possession in institutes of academic and ministerial formation. More widely, it is the attempt to articulate revelation, an enterprise defined by Tyrrell in terms of the unification and elucidation of data provided by Christian experience in the concrete. The applying of philosophical concepts to revelation, as carried out in Scholastic theology, tends like all philosophising to 'excessive abstraction and vague unreality'. It needs to be constantly tested by facts: 'the facts here being the Christian religion as lived by its consistent professors'.¹²

Tyrrell draws examples of how Scholastic theology and the lived Christian experience can conflict from the realms of soteriology, Eucharistic doctrine and Christology. It is characteristic of the unpredictability of Tyrrell's radicalism that in dealing with the Eucharist

he draws on such 'experiential facts' to defend the view that the glorified Christ is locally present in the Eucharistic elements as the 'Prisoner in the tabernacle'. But it is in relation to Christology that he introduced what will become his key terms in theological method: *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. The test of doctrine is, he asserts, whatever spirituality either directly affirms or indirectly requires. Theology stands to Christian devotion as art criticism stands to art. Just as the art critic 'formulates and justifies the best work of the best artists', so the theologian must take as his measure the *lex orandi*, the 'devotion of the best Catholics'.¹³ Though Tyrrell retains the concept of an aboriginal apostolic 'deposit of faith', he sees that deposit as being a prayerful experience of the heart rather than a communication of beliefs to the mind. In this he announces his secession from the school of Newman and Ward.

Until some point in 1909, the year of his death, Tyrrell adhered consistently to the principles laid down in 'The Relation of Theology to Devotion'. The development of his personal theological life took the form of underpinning these *idées-clés* philosophically by appealing to the pragmatist and voluntarist notions of A.J. Balfour and William James. In *Lex Orandi*, for instance, Tyrrell asks how we know the Creed is true, in whatever sense it may be true. He replies that the Creed is true in that there is a 'certain analogy' between its formulae and 'the eternal realities of the spirit-world'. Here Tyrrell takes the crucial step of extending to credal confession the view of theological language he has hitherto reserved for philosophical theology. He argues that we know the Creed is true (in the sense just outlined) because of its proven value as

a practical guide to the eternal life of the soul—a proof which is based on the experience not of this man or that, however wise and holy, but of the whole Christian people and of the Church of the saints in all ages and nations, of the consensus of the ethical and religious *orbis terrarum*.¹⁴

And in an attempt to explain the genesis of orthodoxy he went on: It is ... Christian devotion, rather than Christian metaphysics, the need of the soul rather than the need of the intellect, that has selected the orthodox faith in preference to heterodox error.¹⁵

Such a restatement of the concepts of catholicity and orthodoxy commits Tyrrell to the view that a Christian belief can be known to be true by being fruitful in practice. But is 'being fruitful in practice' what Tyrrell means by 'being true'? Probably not. Tyrrell never embraced a thorough-going pragmatism but he married his tendency to pragmatism with something approximating on occasion to a double standard of truth:

Certain concrete historical facts enter into our creed as matters of faith. Precisely as historical facts they concern the

historian and must be criticised by his methods. But as matters of faith they must be determined by the criterion of faith, i.e. by their proved religious value.¹⁶

Three years after *Lex orandi*, in a sequel entitled *Lex Credendi*, Tyrrell defended himself against the charge of mere pragmatism, showing that he felt its force.

A belief which constantly and universally fosters spiritual life must so far be true to the realities of the spiritual world and must therefore possess a *representative* as well as a practical value.¹⁷

But the objections of Tyrrell's critics could be fully met only by relating such arguments from religious experience to some wider account of knowledge and reality. This Tyrrell was unable or unwilling to do.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Tyrrell's public tone was becoming ever more strident, especially in the wake of the (remarkably intransigent) joint pastoral letter of the English bishops, 'The Church and Liberal Catholicism' which had appeared in early 1901.¹⁹ Whereas Loisy was stressing the compatibility between traditional Catholic doctrine and the new biblical and historical sophistication, Tyrrell was underscoring their incompatibility—in order, it seems, to bring the crisis over doctrine to a head. In the pseudonymous *The Church and the Future*, he rejects Loisy's proposal that traditional dogma might be re-interpreted in a sense compatible with the results of criticism. Christ's teaching was not dogmatic but prophetic: a 'vividly realised intuition of the coming Kingdom of God, and of its sovereign earth-and-time dwarfing importance', differing from other prophetic utterances only in that its bearer saw himself as 'the King of that redeemed humanity, through whom their redemption was at last to be effected'. In regard to this vision, Christ sought only a '*practical* acknowledgement that he was the Way'. It is not a body of doctrine that has been committed to the Church's guardianship but only a 'way' or manner of life, and in an uncanny anticipation of the contemporary Anglican writer Don Cupitt, Tyrrell takes primitive Christianity to be comparable with Buddhism. The theologian's task is to distinguish the *form* of doctrine from its *matter*: its (infallible) truth to the 'spirit of Christ' from the (highly fallible) truth of its constituent philosophical and historical elements to the 'world of man's outer experience'.²⁰ In *A Much-Abused Letter*, which led to his expulsion from the Society, Tyrrell recognised that the Church authorities were unlikely to embrace his somewhat Pickwickian notion of doctrinal truth. He counselled an academic in intellectual difficulties with faith to abandon the 'officially formulated Catholicism' and adhere instead to the 'as yet unformulated Catholicism' or, rather 'the living multitudinous reality thus perversely formulated'.²¹ And Tyrrell ends by prophesying that the Catholic Church may have to die in order to perpetuate itself in giving its life for what is not itself: 'May not Catholicism like Judaism have to die in

order that it may live again in a greater and grander form?'²²

In 1907 Tyrrell's career as a 'Modernist' who was also a communicant Catholic was brought to an end by papal action, elicited by the bishop of Southwark but precipitated by Tyrrell's own hand. At the time of the promulgation of the decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* and the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907, Tyrrell's negotiations with various bishops for reincardination as a diocesan priest were on the point of a successful conclusion, thanks to the good offices of Mercier of Malines.²³ Yet if one may believe a letter to the Old Catholic bishop Vernon Herford antedating the Roman documents, he believed Pius X, whose anti-Modernist policies were already clearly signalled, to be in his intransigence both heretical and schismatic.²⁴ In two letters to *The Times* he repudiated the papal strictures on Modernism in the style of a Hebrew prophet, thus faithfully echoing the preferred mode of the pope himself²⁵. Though only forty-six years of age he had just two years of life left. Unknown to himself, he was in the grip of Bright's disease which brought him to his death in July 1909.²⁶

Though in a sacramental wilderness, Tyrrell produced a final trilogy. In *Through Scylla and Charybdis* he collected and expanded his mature writings on the nature of revelation, doctrine and theology. He argued that the intellectual crisis of Catholicism could be resolved only if people realised that while theology has a history, doctrine can have none, being simply the stake which marks the presence of revelation, itself a largely ineffable experience of the spiritual world.²⁷ In *Mediaevalism*, goaded by the pen of his erstwhile protector Cardinal Mercier, he excoriated Neo-Scholasticism, and, mindless of his early enthusiasm for the Neo-Thomist activities of Leo XIII, wrote it off as no more than an Ultramontane papacy's instrument of theological control.²⁸ In *Christianity at the Crossroads*, published posthumously, what Tyrrell himself described (in part, ironically) as his 'system' seems on the verge of internal collapse. Wholly convinced of the truth of Albert Schweitzer's account of Jesus as an apocalypticist, Tyrrell now declared his attachment to a 'futurist' eschatology, deeming Christianity to be essentially other-worldly and *toto caelo* at variance with any ideology of progress. Resurrecting Newman's language of a continuous Christian 'Idea', Tyrrell proposed that traditional Catholic teaching and piety on 'the Last Things' was simply the apocalyptic vision of Jesus in a new key²⁹. But this unexpected turn left intact, indeed strengthened, the paradox that a theologian so concerned to reconcile the Church with contemporary culture was so entirely convinced that history had contributed nothing to the fundamental religious appreciation of the primitive Gospel. How that could be, Tyrrell's changing attitudes to the theory of doctrinal development will show.

Tyrrell and the idea of development

Tyrrell's earliest essay on the theme was prompted by an editorial in the London *Times* during the celebrations for Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.³⁰ Surveying what it called 'ecclesiastical development' during the reign, *The Times* praised the religious progress which, in all churches save that of Rome, had rendered theology broader and more enlightened. In defence of the role of *some* concept of progress in this context, Tyrrell appeals to Vincent of Lérins' *Primum Commonitorium* as well as to the Council of Florence, arguing that while after Christ and his apostles progress in *objective* revelation ceased (since they represented the 'fulness of time'), revelation can be said to make *subjective* progress by way of addition not to the deposit of faith but to the Church's understanding of it.³¹ To explain himself, Tyrrell draws on Newman's analogy between the growth of a child's mind and that of the corporate Church.³² He also echoes Newman in his concealed citation of the Lucan description of Mary's ruminations on the Finding in the Temple.³³

What happens to the individual, happens to the Church as a whole. She holds fast to the form of sound words; she keeps the deposit once and for all delivered to their saints. But more than this, she ponders these words and compares them in her heart; she sees more and more how much they involve; she, as it were, draws nearer and nearer, till details before unnoticed stand out distinctly, and consequences heretofore tangled in their premises are drawn out and separated.³⁴

Despite the 'cordial', affective counter-balance of Tyrrell's reference to the Infancy narratives, he sees the process involved as essentially *logical* in character. By skilful Socratic questioning, the entire Roman Catholic faith as believed today could have been elicited from a Christian of the primitive generation. From the words 'This is my Body', such a Christian could have 'inferred the detailed Eucharistic doctrine of the *Lauda Sion*'. Such progress is analysis, not development like that of acorn into oak.

Yet Tyrrell goes on to modify this restrictive statement by appeal to the commonplace Late Scholastic distinction between what is held *de fide divina*, as an intrinsic constituent of divine revelation, and what is believed simply *de fide ecclesiastica*, as part of those infallible teachings which the Church has put forth in the service of the revealed deposit, but by reference to post-apostolic 'science' or 'history'. Thus, we know which doctrines are revealed dogmas, and which councils of the Church are ecumenical, through 'ecclesiastical faith', but, once equipped with this knowledge, we affirm the content of such dogmas and the authority of such councils by 'divine faith', as a direct response to the self-revealing God. It is only where a revealed article of faith has entered into symbiosis with a philosophical truth or historical fact that

we have a true development, by the absorption of extraneous matter, of natural truths and facts, and the consequent increase in bulk of the body of our beliefs.³⁵

Failure to observe this elementary distinction between the merely analytical or Socratic progress of dogma, and the genuinely developmental increment of such ecclesiastical doctrine accounts, Tyrrell concludes, for the way Catholicism is simultaneously accused *both* of 'wall-eyed rigidity' *and* of 'unwarrantable additions to the faith of the Apostles'.

Yet such a nuanced concept of doctrinal progress is not, of course, that contained in the editorial mind of *The Times*. The latter can blandly advise the churches to 'keep pace with the intellectual advance of the day', since to it the development of Christianity is nothing more than an aspect of the development of culture itself. Whereas *Catholics*

most thankfully accept, with the limitations already explained, the charge of intolerance and adamantine immobility. It is perfectly evident to us that Christ came to teach the masses of mankind, and not to argue or plead with doctors of the law; and that for the masses dogmatic teaching is a necessity.³⁶

And Tyrrell goes on to say that it is no less evident that he commissioned the Church to a similar office. Without her authoritative guardianship, the deposit of faith 'must inevitably be lost'.

The publication of an English translation of Auguste Sabatier's *De la Vie intime des dogmes et de leur puissance d'évolution* enabled Tyrrell to return to the subject in the following year, 1898.³⁷ Tyrrell find the value of Sabatier's book to lie in the 'clearness of its opposition to Catholic conceptions'. For Sabatier, the Creed is a 'divinely inspired allegory'.

In the soul of Christ and the prophets and apostles, God causes some strong and unusual spiritual commotion which they of their own ingenuity, consciously or unconsciously, seek to utter and embody in allegories...³⁸

On this scheme, revelation is the arousing of an indistinct apprehension of the divine Object. This apprehension, registered as a sentiment, then seeks its own formulation in a theory or idea. Dogma is, then, the fruit of reflection on religious feeling. The theologian's task is to assist the evolution of such self-expression in the changing conditions of culture. In particular, he should serve as mid-wife to what Sabatier called 'intussesception', a neologism naughtily explained by Tyrrell as to keep to the 'form of sound words', while quietly slipping new meanings under them, and explaining them away as long as they will possibly admit of it, and when this gets too difficult (one) may noiselessly introduce new terminology and

suffer the old to retire into its well-earned rest.³⁹

Against all this, Catholic theology regards revelation as a 'supernatural instruction of the mind'. Either directly, or through some created agency, God uses those forms and images which constitute the mind's 'language' to express truths not known before, or at least not known in the same way.

Sabatier's description would fit the history of *natural* religion, where just such theoretical and narrative attempts to satisfy and explain religious feeling take place, with what resultant mixture of truth and error, and degeneration of symbolism into mythology, we know only too well. It was to avoid the drawbacks of such 'man-begotten' religions, that the Divinity:

devised for us the economy of the Incarnation, and in the life of the God-Man and of his precursors and followers, uttered Eternal Truth and Love as far as it can be uttered in the enacted language of human life ...⁴⁰

Insofar as divine revelation is thus embodied in the sacred history it is 'God's language', and, like the language of creation itself, is the same for all men in all ages, however they interpret or misinterpret it. The record of such revelatory events is apostolic tradition, as crystallised primarily in Scripture. The Church's relationship to the primitive tradition is described by Tyrrell in terms of what may be called reflective guardianship. Though the Church does not deny that, were the revelation given today, or had it been communicated in ancient China, the same divine truths 'would sound strangely unlike themselves', nevertheless, in obedience to the dispositions of Providence, she

treasures the original mind-forms and language in which Divine truth has been committed to her, as it were the perishable earthen vessel in which a priceless gift is contained.⁴¹

Moreover, the Church 'ponders' that form of words which alone is divinely guaranteed, and over the centuries, by a process as inevitable as men's inclination to 'put their thoughts in order', has embodied her ponderings in what Tyrrell presents as the simple and straightforward idiom of the Schools. The Church 'wisely adopted a philosophy little removed from the first spontaneous efforts of the mind towards unity'. Though not claiming that the Scholastic articulation of dogma is the only one possible, or even the best, she cautions her children that those who venture on other translations of revelation 'do so at their own peril'. The real Christ came to enlighten the mind by truth as well as to sanctify the will by charity, but the Christ of Sabatier is careless of how the mind might explain to itself the feelings he inspires. Stripped of its historical and dogmatic truth-claims, the essence of Christianity survives here only in the continuance of a religious sentiment. Though Sabatier insists that

Christ 'is not here: he is risen', having cast aside the 'cerements and grave-clothes of dogmatic statement', Tyrrell feels it would be more frank to say to the mourner at the tomb: 'His disciples have come and stolen him away': 'well-intentioned, no doubt, in their zeal for his reputation; but surely mistaken in their judgement and weak in their faith'.

The first indication of Tyrrell's dissatisfaction with his early, part-Scholastic, part-Newmanian, account of doctrinal development occurs in 'The Relation of Theology to Devotion'. There Tyrrell denies that the Church's guardianship of revelation is reflectively developmental as well as preservative, asserting that human thought and language are so inadequate to revelation that they are more its detritus than its representation.⁴² In the *Church and the Future* Tyrrell invokes the language of doctrinal development in a sense quite different from that he had earlier given it. He now speaks of Christ's 'spirit' (or religious attitude) working itself out in the Church, developing as humanity encounters fresh situations and problems. Such development of the spirit brings with it a parallel development in the doctrinal expression of that spirit. This body of doctrine offers us a construing of the eternal realities (the Kingdom) to which we must adjust our lives if we are to live with Christ's attitude or spirit. But such doctrine is unconnected with theological, i.e. intellectual, understanding, being purely of the spiritual order, i.e. the order of a life-transforming contact with transcendent reality.⁴³

However, the principal source for Tyrrell's mature view of doctrinal development is *Through Scylla and Charybdis*. He opens by setting forth his main conclusion, which will, he predicts, strike his readers as 'entirely reactionary'. It is the desirability of a return to the 'earlier and stricter view as to the unchanging, unprogressive character of the apostolic revelation'. His chief preoccupation is to be

a repudiation of all attempts to mitigate the supposed difficulties of this severer view by theories of development, dialectical or otherwise. It insists rigorously on the theological contention that the dogmatic decisions of the universal Church do not in any way add to or amplify the revelation which it is their purpose to safeguard and re-assert; that, whatever be true of the natural light of reason or of theological science, the supernatural Light of the World does not shine more brightly on us today than on the earliest Christian generations. Understanding by 'dogma' a religious truth imposed authoritatively by the Word of God, not as a conclusion of theological reflection, it rejects the very notion of this development, and still more of the multiplication of dogmas, and acquiesces cordially in the patristic identification of novelty and heresy.⁴⁴

Tyrrell's introduction states his chief reason for reverting to J.B. Bossuet's root-and-branch rejection of all notions of progress in doctrine.⁴⁵ Theories of development are, he maintains, hypotheses in a state of accelerating break-down, so we must 'return to our point of departure'. The 'hypotheses' he has in mind include both Scholastic and non-Scholastic theories of doctrinal development.

Tyrrell proceeds to state his objections, first to the logical-Scholastic family of theories of development, then to their (largely) non-logical Newmanian rivals. For the *Scholastic* theorists, apostolic revelation is itself 'a divinely authorised though rudimentary theological system' which expands by two means. Firstly, additional doctrine is developed by a deductive process and confirmed by Church authority. Secondly, philosophical or historical claims presupposed by this original 'system' are identified, and these too are taken to be covered by the sanction of revelation. Thus for the Scholastic theory of doctrinal development, it must be heresy to deny a later deduction from the apostolic deposit, e.g. that Jesus Christ has two natures, human and divine. Similarly, it must also be heresy to deny certain historical facts bound up with the original rudimentary system, e.g. that Peter preached at Rome, and certain philosophical principles entailed by it, e.g. the immortality of the soul. In such ways, Scholasticism generates an entire intellectual structure from out of the apostolic deposit. Unfortunately, this structure can now be seen to conflict at certain points with both science and history. Tyrrell lodges the further objection that, whereas philosophers such as J.S. Mill deny the cognitive value of deduction, the School theologians insist that when we have succeeded in deducing fresh doctrine from the apostolic deposit we genuinely know more. Yet in this case, Catholic Christians today must enjoy a higher degree of enlightenment compared with their fellows in the early Church. But then:

Must we not regard the apostolic age, when all these deduced dogmas were confused and indiscernible, as one of relative darkness and chaos? Yet what would the Fathers, with their continual appeal to the tradition of the apostolic sees have thought of such a contention? What would St Paul, with his belief in a proximate advent, have thought of the view that his saving doctrine was but germinal and rudimentary, and that a fuller light was reserved for long ages to come?⁴⁶

Thus the claim that, as a result of logical or dialectical development, we know more of revelation than apostles and fathers did, cannot be true because it is in effect denied in advance by those apostles and fathers themselves.

Tyrrell now turns to consider the *non-logical* or *Newmanian* theories of development. Again, he has two fundamental objections. The first resembles his second objection to the Scholastic theory. The non-logical

theories maintain that we are not bound to the categories in which revelation and dogma were originally expressed, but only to belief in the realities and experience that underlie those categories and which can be re-expressed in new categories today. But then such writers do not regard the primitive creeds in the way in which the fathers did, namely, as the highest form of dogmatic truth. On the contrary, they must regard those creeds as the least perfect because the earliest attempt to formulate the mysteries of faith. Tyrrell's second objection is that these theologians:

assume what antiquity never dreamt of, that the realities and experiences which were the subject-matter of the apostolic revelation are still accessible to our investigation, and can serve as the criterion of our dogmatic re-statements, just as the abiding phenomena of Nature can be used to test our scientific re-statements.

And so Tyrrell rejects both major types of such theory found in the Church of his day:

If the conservative idea of merely dialectical development subjects the present to the past to the detriment of all scientific and historical liberty, this (the non-logical theory) subjects the past to the present, to the utter evacuation of the traditional appeal to Scripture and the apostolic age.⁴⁷

Tyrrell reserves his sharpest criticism for the attempt to marry features of both families. This produces the worst of both worlds. The concept of an apostolic deposit makes it impossible to integrate faith with modern scholarship. The application of the idea of development to the Gospel reduces Christianity to an aspect of human nature and removes its eschatological character. The combination of the two engenders a conceptual monstrosity.⁴⁸

But having seen off all such theories, at least to his own satisfaction, where is Tyrrell to turn? He wants to maintain two things. Firstly, the absolute, not merely relative, immutability of revelation. Secondly, a concept of dogma which will allow Catholic Christians total liberty as philosophers and historians. In his own words, he wants

to reconcile perfect fidelity to the ancient principles of Catholic tradition with an equal fidelity to the fullest exigencies of scientific truth and moral truthfulness.⁴⁹

How is this to be achieved? By re-thinking the very ideas of revelation and of dogma. Tyrrell's distinctive concept of *revelation*, comprises four elements. Firstly, revelation in itself contains neither propositions nor concepts but is a 'profound religious experience'. Secondly, the content of this experience is 'prophetic vision of the Kingdom of God directed to the orientation of the spiritual life'. Thirdly, the language in which revelation is expressed simply 'illustrates' this visionary experience. It provides us with cues or aids with which to grasp it, but is not itself even

partially constitutive of revelation. Fourthly, though the prophetic vision of God's Kingdom is non-theoretical, it constitutes a form of truth of which Tyrrell can say only that it is a 'mysterious truth independent of those other truths used for its illustration'.⁵⁰

But what, on such a view of revelation, could *dogma* be? Dogma simply protects and re-asserts: revelation as described above in no way adding to it or developing it. In effect, dogma for Tyrrell is a unique kind of language whose purpose is to preserve the integral memory of the original revelation-experience. In itself dogma makes no truth-claims in the conceptual order, any more than does revelation itself. Truth is involved, but it is an utterly dark truth of which we can only say that it orientates the spiritual life towards the Kingdom of God. As such it is unchanging, not only substantially identical in each generation of the Church's life but absolutely and unconditionally identical. It is because revelation and dogma, thus re-interpreted, make no truth-claims that could possibly conflict with those of either philosophy or history that the denial of doctrinal development 'liberates' theology. Le Roy and Loisy, Blondel and Batiffol may go about their business in peace, without fear of intervention by the guardians of orthodoxy. Only historians of doctrine will suffer as a group within the Church. But their demise will be amply compensated by the emergence of history of theology as a scientific discipline.

Tyrrell and our own time

In his rejection of the multiple theories of doctrinal development which had proliferated since the mid-nineteenth century, Tyrrell returned, in one sense, to the view of revelation typified by Jacques Bénigne Bossuet's affirmation that all innovation in matters of Christian faith is necessarily error. Yet, in another sense, this was a *jeu d'esprit*; or, rather, Tyrrell had pared down the objective content of revelation to such a bare point that the assertion of its absolute unchangeability presented no problems in the historical order. The original vision, wherein event and interpretation were inextricably mingled, prompts a variety of interpretations, both as to what actually happened in the career of Jesus (history) and its meaning (philosophy). The role of doctrine is to represent the original vision as a call to *metanoia*, while theology is the science that moderates the mutual relations of all these parties.

Tyrrell's denial of genuine doctrinal development belongs with his affirmation that theology (on the one hand) and revelation and doctrine (on the other) are heterogeneous. Both denial and affirmation support his insistence that Christian revelation is directed not to the mind, but only to the heart or will. At least until his last months, Tyrrell had a quite pellucid grasp of his aims and the means whereby they should be realised. The affective power of Catholic symbolism in texts and ritual must be

placed at the service of the only deity likely to be recognised in the cultural space of late Victorian and Edwardian England: Matthew Arnold's 'Power that makes for Righteousness'.⁵¹ Catholicism thus redefined in the interests of a missionary and pastoral purpose will lose its intellectual scandal while retaining its emotional and thus moral potency. Tyrrell recognised the price that had to be paid: the surrender of the traditional homogeneity of revelation, theology and doctrine.

Yet Tyrrell did not think it especially likely that the Church authorities would accept his new-style defence of Catholicism. He compares the pope and his advisers to 'delirious patients (who) try to strangle those who would serve them'. One does not have to regard every jot and tittle of *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* as well-chosen to wonder how beneficial such 'service' would prove. For Tyrrell had unravelled the characteristic pattern of Catholic belief. It is because insights gained on the basis of the Church's faith-experience may well be insights into the original revelation itself, can then be articulated theologically, and so find final sanction through the doctrinal authority of the Church's pastors, that the exact opposite of Tyrrell's contention is true. Revelation, theology and doctrine share the same content, though they refract that content in different media.⁵²

What has this extraordinary story got to tell us?

While Tyrrell's fundamental theology is far from making him, as is sometimes alleged, a prophet of the Second Vatican Council, his account of a Gospel 'au risque de l'interprétation' is certainly reminiscent of the difficulties faced by 'hermeneutical theology' in the post-conciliar epoch.⁵³ Though Tyrrell is a poor guide in these realms, the questions he raised still confront us. An ecclesiastical condemnation provides theology with time in which to pay an intellectual debt, yet cannot of itself redeem it.

- 1 For Tyrrell's life, see M.D. Petre, *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell* (London 1912; two volumes). Cited hereafter as ALGT.
- 2 *The Faith of Millions. A Selection of Past Essays* (London 1901: 'First Series', 'Second Series'). Here cited as FMI and FMII.
- 3 J. Crehan, 'Tyrrell in his Workshop', *The Month* 2, 3 (N.S., 1971), p. 111.
- 4 D.J. Schultenover S.J., *George Tyrrell. In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown 1981), p. 32.
- 5 Letter of 6.12.1907 to von Hügel, cited in ALGT II. p. 45. A less manipulative view of St Thomas is found in Tyrrell's early essay 'Aquinas Resuscitatus', *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 16 (1891), pp. 673—690.
- 6 ALGT I. p. 99: c.f. D.G. Schultenover, *George Tyrrell* op. cit. pp. 44—45.
- 7 G. Tyrrell, 'A Change of Tactics', *The Month* 86 (February 1896), pp. 215—227, reprinted in FMI, pp. 1—21. Tyrrell's adoption of Ward's programme is found in his review of the latter's *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman* (London 1897), and entitled 'Wiseman: his Aims and Methods', *The Month* 91 (February 1898), pp. 142—150. Reprinted in FMI, pp. 22—39.

- 8 See their correspondence as excerpted in M.D. Petre (ed.), *Von Hügel and Tyrrell, The Story of a Friendship* (London 1937).
- 9 Originally published in *The Weekly Register* 100 (16 December 1899), pp. 461—473. Reprinted in M.D. Petre (ed.), *Essays on Faith and Immortality* (London 1914), pp. 158—171.
- 10 For Tyrrell's relations with the Jesuit Generalate, see D.G. Schultenover, 'George Tyrrell: Caught in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus', *Proceedings of the Roman Catholic Modernism Working Group of the American Academy of Religion* (1981), pp. 85—114.
- 11 *Through Scylla and Charybdis* (London 1907), p. 86. 'The Relation of Theology to Devotion' was originally printed in *The Month* 94 (November 1899), pp. 461—473. Reprinted in FMI pp. 228—252, and *Through Scylla and Charybdis* (op. cit., cited henceforth as TSC), pp. 85—105.
- 12 TSC p. 104.
- 13 Ibid. p. 105.
- 14 *Lex Orandi* (London 1903), pp. 57ff. There is an echo here of Wiseman's appeal to the *orbis terrarum* in his 1839 *Dublin Review* article on Donatists and Puseyites. But whereas Wiseman appealed to the doctrinal judgement of the universal episcopate, Tyrrell appealed to the mystical sense of the *plebs sancta Dei*.
- 15 Ibid. p. 153. That popular devotion plays a major part in the historical ascertaining of orthodoxy need not be doubted. See e.g. H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* (N.S. 2, 2; 1951), pp. 145—164.
- 16 *Lex Orandi* (op. cit.), p. 164.
- 17 *Lex Credendi* (London 1906), p. 252.
- 18 Ibid. p. 68.
- 19 'The Church and Liberal Catholicism', *The Tablet*, 5.1.1901.
- 20 'H. Bourdon', *The Church and the Future* (London 1903), pp. 47—49; 73; 89—90.
- 21 *A Much-Abused Letter* (London 1906), p. 60.
- 22 Ibid. p. 89.
- 23 ALGT II. pp. 299—300.
- 24 Cited in E. Leonard, *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition* (London 1982), p. 120.
- 25 'The Pope and Modernism', *The Times* 30.9.1907, p. 4; *ibid.* 1.10.1907, p. 5.
- 26 ALGT II. pp. 420—446.
- 27 TSC *passim*.
- 28 *Mediaevalism. A Reply to Cardinal Mercier* (London 1908), pp. 143—158.
- 29 *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London 1909; 1963), pp. 50—53, p. 74.
- 30 'Ecclesiastical development in the reign of the Queen', *The Times* 2.1.1897.
- 31 'Ecclesiastical development', *The Month* 90 (1897), pp. 380—390. cited below as ED.
- 32 J.H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London 1833; 1871), pp. 143—144.
- 33 J.H. Newman, 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine', *University Sermons* (London 1871³; 1970), NO XV, pp. 312—313; Lk 2, 19.
- 34 ED p. 382.
- 35 Ibid. p. 383.
- 36 Ibid. p. 388.
- 37 A. Sabatier, *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their Power of Evolution: A Study in Religious Philosophy* (London 1898).
- 38 'Sabatier on the vitality of dogmas', *The Month* 91 (June 1898), pp. 592—602.
- 39 Ibid. p. 596.
- 40 Ibid. p. 598.
- 41 Ibid. p. 601.
- 42 TSC p. 95.

- 43 *The Church and the Future* (London 1903), p. 157.
44 TSC pp. 4–5.
45 As found, for example, in Bossuet's *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes*, Preface, ii. See O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman. The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge 1957), pp. 5–13.
46 *Ibid.* pp. 8–9.
47 *Ibid.* pp. 9–10.
48 *Ibid.* pp. 139–154.
49 *Ibid.* p. 10.
50 *Ibid.* p. 11
51 See N. Sagovsky, *Between Two Worlds. George Tyrrell's Relationship to the Thought of Matthew Arnold* (Cambridge 1983).
52 Cf. A Gardeil, *Le donné révélé et la théologie* (Paris 1909; 1932), p. 358.
53 C. Geffré, *Le Christianisme au risque de l'interprétation* (Paris 1983).

Transubstantiation for Beginners

Gareth Moore OP

It is a Catholic teaching that when bread is consecrated in the eucharist it becomes the body of Christ, and that when wine is consecrated it becomes the blood of Christ. People have always had difficulty with this. The difficulty is basically a very simple one: what we call and share as the body of Christ bears no resemblance to what we should ordinarily call a body, and what we drink as the blood of Christ has at best a very superficial resemblance to blood.

This difficulty, of matching our words with what lies plainly before our eyes, has led some Christians, before, during, and after the Reformation, to deny that the consecrated bread is the body of Christ and the consecrated wine his blood. Rather, they are to be seen as symbols of his body and blood: they are not the body and blood of Christ, but signify them. This mainstream Christianity has always rejected. Though much of our activity in the eucharist is symbolic, and though the consecrated bread and wine are clearly signs and symbols in some sense, they are not to be understood as *mere* symbols, symbolically the body and blood of Christ *as opposed* to the reality. To quote Theodore of Mopsuestia as representative of early tradition: