

Presidential Address
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE
IN A WORLD CHURCH

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

The discussion of the development of doctrine up to this time has been played out largely in the context of Western history. The topic which this presentation tries to address is what happens when this discussion is taken out of this admittedly complex yet largely homogeneous sphere (homogeneous, that is, in relation to other cultural patterns elsewhere in the world). A variety of questions come to mind: Will terms of the argument have to change? Will some parts of the world church find certain moments in the past discussion of the development of doctrine more congenial than the current issues which engage Western theologians? What challenges might come from other parts of the world church to the West regarding an understanding of the development of doctrine? These and other questions—some of a methodological nature, others more regarding theological content—will be what this presentation will try to explore.

To begin this discussion, I would like to note, very cursorily, four of the salient features that have marked the discussion since the sixteenth century Reformation that may come into play in an extension of this discussion beyond a largely Western ambience into the wider church.

First of all, there is a kind of position that makes the point that the development of doctrine really is not a development—or at least change—at all. In the polemics between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth century over how beliefs and teachings in the church were or were not anchored in the Scriptures and the Apostolic Age, the debate about development of doctrine was more to show, from the Catholic side, that change was only apparent. What had changed or appeared to have been added to the Apostolic tradition was something that had really always been there. It was a matter of moving from the implicit to the explicit, or showing the logical conclusion that could be drawn from a doctrinal premise. The work in Salamanca of Molina, Soto, Cano, and others, in their efforts to delineate the definability of theological conclusions, was involved in this latter move, whereas Bossuet can be found to argue the former direction.¹ From the Protestant side, as seen in the work of

¹For a discussion of these, see Jan Hendrik Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972) 119-78.

Bossuet's opponent Jurieu, the argument was that the changes or novelties added later could not be found in Scripture and therefore must be rejected. Thus neither Catholics nor Protestants at this stage, it would seem, would accept development. In all of this, the emphasis is on stasis and Vincent of Lérins' definition of tradition as *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*. Change is only apparent, and recedes when examined more closely.

A second salient feature can be detected at the turn of the nineteenth century. Here one sees, under the influence of the Enlightenment, the results of a rationalism that rendered the patristic sense of dogma much narrower and sought a more closely defined doctrine than had been the case earlier. This is evident in the work of someone like Philipp Neri Christmann (1751–1810) in 1792, and culminates in the work of the Roman School in the middle of the nineteenth century with the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and later, the definition of papal infallibility.² Especially in the latter event one sees an attempt to explain doctrinal development either in terms of a logic that attempts to hold its own in the face of the Enlightenment, or in some hypothesis of a mysterious growth from a seed or kernel to be found in the deposit of faith. There is, therefore, on the one hand, an attempt to define doctrine almost juridically; on the other, to account for change by positing a hidden, now inaccessible origin.

During this same period, one also detects yet a third feature in attempts to account for the development of doctrine. Rather than focusing on how change can be accounted for through ratiocination, or positing a hidden source, an attempt is made to regain the more holistic approach. In the spirit of Romanticism rather than the Enlightenment, development is cast in terms of the growth of an organic unity rather than institutional perdurance. One notes this emphasis on organic growth in the work of Johann Adam Möhler on the unity of the church, and in the great *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* of John Henry Newman.³ Attempts are made by both authors to give both a theological and (especially by Newman) a more philosophically grounded account.

Both of these approaches find ways to account for genuine change that cannot be reduced to the move from the implicit to the explicit. Both admit, as it were, that there has been change.

A final feature of the history of the development of doctrine is found in the twentieth century's emphasis on the historical and the hermeneutical. Historicity, both in the historical criticism of the Scriptures and in the rereading of theological development in the *Ressourcement*, provided yet another framework to account for change in the course of the development of doctrine. The world is never static, and any form is always a situated, contingent, and mutable form

²On these developments see Hans-Joachim Schulz, *Bekanntnis statt Dogma: Kriterien der Verbindlichkeit christlicher Lehre* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996) 164-79; Walter Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1965).

³See the discussions in Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation*.

rather than given once and for all. Thus any articulation of doctrine is of necessity historical. The development of hermeneutics, based upon this grasp of historicity, on the one hand, and a greater appreciation of the processes of human understanding, on the other, has contributed yet another level of conceptualizing the development of doctrine. Here the blending of the philosophical and the theological dimensions of a comprehensive theory of the development of doctrine can be imagined, and is indeed presented in the work of such theologians as Jan Hendrik Walgrave and Karl Rahner.⁴ Here both the philosophy and the theology reach further than accounting for the anomaly of change. They are integrated in a larger picture of human understanding and history, and in a theology that situates the development of doctrine within a theology of revelation and the church.

If one looks at these salient features in order to assess where the development of doctrine has gone over the last four centuries, a number of points can be made which will be useful for the further discussion that will be undertaken. First of all, concern for *identity*, *continuity*, and *fidelity* are paramount in the discussion of Christian doctrine, whether one dismisses all the change as only apparent, or takes it as part of historical situatedness. Identity may be construed as static or dynamic; continuity, also, demonstrable or more mysteriously organic; and in every instance, fidelity to the teachings of Jesus Christ which have come down through the apostles. All three dimensions of identity, continuity, and fidelity have been, therefore, and can be conceived from both a classical and from a modern cultural point of view, to use Bernard Lonergan's distinction,⁵ depending upon the time and location of those theologians struggling with the issue of doctrinal change. Indeed, to speak of doctrinal *development* rather than simply doctrinal *change* already underscores this commitment.

Second, *how* development or change is negotiated in the midst of commitments to identity, continuity, and fidelity produces a series of strategic proposals. Some function in terms of the implicit being made explicit, or the logical conclusion being drawn from an explicit or implicit premise, as we have seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The nineteenth century sought internal laws of development or posited an unfolding. In the twentieth century, theologians are more like to posit a genuinely theological reasoning, centering upon how one construes God's revelation in Christ, and how the Holy Spirit continues to guide the church as it encounters new and different situations unknown to the Age of the Apostles. Indeed, one can say that discussions of the development of doctrine turn largely on two axes: an epistemological axis, which accounts for change in terms of human understanding, historicity, and hermeneutics; and a theological

⁴Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation*; Karl Rahner and Karl Lehmann, "Geschichtlichkeit der Vermittlung," in Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer, *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965) I, 722-90.

⁵Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1972) 2301-302.

axis, which dwells upon the nature of revelation and a theology of the church which can demonstrate the church's identity, continuity, and fidelity to its Lord.

Third, the *mode* itself in which to think of the development of doctrine has oscillated between the propositional and the relational. The press for greater clarity at the time of the Reformation and the rationalism of the Enlightenment brought a strong emphasis on precisely articulated propositions as the best form of preserving and presenting teaching. Under the influence of Romanticism, and existentialist and personalist philosophies in the twentieth century, discourses of revelation as event and encounter came to predominate, focusing on the personal and the comprehensive in the transmittal of faith rather than the propositions which distill the meaning of revelation. These two forms, proposition and event or encounter, represent an oscillation in the discussion of the development of doctrine which can be found even in our current situation. A third form, related most closely to the language of event and encounter, is more doxological or liturgical, and has been urged upon Catholics particularly from an ecumenical perspective.⁶

Karl Rahner, who contributed so much to our understanding of the development of doctrine, also suggested that we might now find ourselves at yet another stage for discerning the development of doctrine. In his now famous address of 1978, he proposed that the spread of Christianity throughout the world, and its taking root in places and cultures not strongly influenced by what he called Hellenistic Christianity, meant that a new phase of existence was upon us, namely, the prospect of a genuinely world church. He could only speculate about what changes the chorus of cultures in which the church now found itself would inaugurate for Christianity in the third millennium; suffice it to say, he averred, that it would be at least as profound as had been the shift from Jewish to Hellenistic Christianity.⁷

Put another way, the plurality of cultures in which the church is now located may add another layer to the epistemological and theological approaches to the development of doctrine. Both concepts here are significant. The church must come to terms now in its transmittal of teaching in a pluralistic medium the likes of which has never before been so in focus. That plurality is a plurality of cultures, which means that the differences to be negotiated are tied up with worldview and ways of being human, that is, the most profound difference of human subjects in an interpretive encounter. Secondly, what that portends for theological reformulation of our understanding of revelation and the church itself still remains to be explored.

The Christianity of the Hellenistic Mediterranean may never have been the only cultural form which Christianity has taken, but it certainly has been the

⁶This is the point proposed strongly by Schulz, *Bekennnis statt Dogma*.

⁷Karl Rahner, "Toward a Fundamental Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979): 716-27.

majority form up into the middle of the twentieth century. Even non-Hellenistic forms of Christianity formed part of their identity in reaction to the churches which clustered around the Mediterranean. And even today one can question whether there has really yet been a move from Hellenistic Christianity to a world church. To be sure, the church is now truly catholic for the first time in terms of its extension throughout the world. But genuine inculturation has stagnated or has been stymied in many places through lack of imagination, a lack of will, and a fear of a kind of centrifugal move that may only end in fragmentation.

The purpose of this presentation is to explore what the move from a largely Hellenistically rooted Christianity into a genuinely world church might mean for the development of doctrine. The suggestions of how different things might look have heretofore largely been proposed in very broad strokes. This has been the case since the language of inculturation was first formulated in the 1970s, since the future was still so much before us. To a great extent that future still remains unrealized; yet certain things have taken on clearer focus in the meantime that permit a limited discussion of the topic. And it is such a limited discussion which I propose here—limited in the following ways.

First of all, as has just been said, the real issues of development of doctrine may still be ahead of us. As I will suggest at the end of this presentation, these issues could well revolve around christology as they did in the fourth and fifth centuries. But even without the issues themselves fully on the horizon, we can look toward the conditions under which another phase in the development of doctrine will have to take place. It is not only possible, but necessary to do so, in order that we might be prepared as well and as responsibly as possible. And it is those conditions upon which I will concentrate in this presentation.

Second, it should be understood that this is not a discussion of development of doctrine only for the churches of what we used to call the Third World. The churches of the older Hellenistic Christianity are undergoing a good deal of turmoil on their own, a factor that cannot be ignored in these discussions. These churches struggle with a variety of challenges, such as future directions of secularization, what comes after modernity, and the process of globalization. The churches of the Third World do not stand so separate from the realities of the First World. They cannot be portrayed simply as “younger” churches, developing along an evolutionary path which the First World churches have already traversed. They, too, have been affected (often tragically so) by the forces of globalization. Hence it is not a matter of articulating a separate model of development of doctrine for the still-developing churches. What is at stake here, as has always been the case in these discussions, is the unity and continuity of the church as a whole. As I hope to show, elements which have been part of the discussion of the development of doctrine over the past half millennium can still find their voice in the world church today. To that end, they call into question any simplistic linear development to which contemporary theology might pretend.

What follows is in three parts. The first part will explore issues which might fall under the category of the epistemological as suggested above: how we as

humans understand and express what has been handed down to us. It will look at the issues raised by considerations of language and culture, on the one hand, and by the effects of globalization, on the other. This will lead to a second part, which will try to distill the epistemological and communicative conditions which will support a faithful development of doctrine. The third and final part will turn to the theological dimensions of articulating a theory of development of doctrine for the world church.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, AND GLOBALIZATION

Language and Culture

Issues of language and culture are best considered together in this discussion, since they are so closely intertwined, and because language is such a constitutive element of, and formative element for, culture. Yet some distinctions can be made for the sake of some progress of the presentation here.

The first issue regarding language is translatability. It has been known of course since the time of the christological controversies of the fifth century that terms that appear to have a formal equivalence in two languages may be far apart semantically. *Persona*, *physis*, *hypostasis*, and *prosopon* were difficult enough to understand across the divide of Latin and Greek within the Indo-European language family, but became even more deeply problematic when it was attempted to span from Indo-European languages into Semitic (Syriac, Amharic) and Afro-Asiatic (Coptic) languages. It is not accidental that the christological fault lines coincided largely with the boundaries of language families. The Hellenistic cultural overlay across those linguistic divides in the Eastern Mediterranean was ultimately not strong enough to sustain a united church. In retrospect, it may have been the withering of Jewish Christianity after the first century that may have prevented such a division earlier in Christian history.

The lessons of the fifth century are instructive for the late twentieth. Just as recent ecumenical discussions have shown that many of the christological divisions of the fifth century were indeed divisions over semantics, not divisions in faith, so too we must ponder what the world church holds out for us now. What does it mean, over time, to incorporate churches in cultures in the Sinitic language family, for example, who have a long history of literacy and a highly developed conceptuality, but develop concepts with a kind of concreteness rather than abstraction? While Western languages from Europe may prevail in the world church, they contribute also to the ongoing struggle of the churches in the regions of East and South Asia to overcome the stigma of being nothing more than Western transplants. What if the Synod for Asia had been held in Chinese or Vietnamese, rather than English? It is noteworthy that the Japanese bishops called attention to the anomalous use of English for an Asian Synod in their response to the *Lineamenta*. Does this portend to be a time bomb ticking under issues such as how the absolute is expressed in the cultures of India and the rest

of Asia, or how plurality and unity are to be understood, or how God has first been revealed to the peoples of those regions, or how the finality of Christ is to be expressed?

Alongside the potential for division through misunderstanding, one must also note the prospects for enrichment. Peter Neuner has suggested that, from a cultural point of view, the emergence of the doctrine of God as triune in the third and fourth century was helped along or made easier by a Neoplatonic tendency to see threeness in all things. What emerged as the doctrine of the Trinity was not simply a reproduction of this, but this Neoplatonic backdrop helped provide a subliminal horizon within which to speak of God, Christ, and the Spirit.⁸ As theologians work to articulate Christian faith within their cultural and religious worldviews, and these are in turn used as frameworks to critique Western theologies, we might expect some similar contributions. One thinks, for example, of an early work such as Vengal Chakkarai's *Jesus the Avatar*⁹ or, more recently, the comparative theological work of Francis Clooney looking at South India.¹⁰

Another dimension of translatability and semantic fields has to do both with what languages allow us to say, and with what the environments within which language functions permit us to imagine. As is commonly known, many languages of the world do not have an equivalent concept for what Western languages have called, since the seventeenth century, "religion." Nor do some languages have the copulative verbs that permit certain kind of precision in defining relationships. Nor do others have plural formations. Languages in oral cultures are notoriously short of the abstract nouns so common in languages in written cultures which are—need it be mentioned?—the stock-in-trade of theology. A number of years ago, a student of mine who comes from the Chin tribe in northern Burma tried to translate "contextualization" into Chin, without success. The closest he could come was "earth and water theology"—a translation that captures one dimension of the concept, but misses significant other parts.

I mention these points of translatability not only because of the greater danger along linguistic lines, but also because of implications for a propositional approach to communicating doctrine. A Western proposition may look like a Chinese slogan, but they are not the same. Reduction to proposition is seen in other contexts as an enervation of an idea rather than as a communicating of its essence.

To this must be added some general observations about culture. What has emerged in the cross-cultural study of peoples is that, while one may not be able to find cultural "universals" of any concrete significance (i.e., these universals

⁸Peter Neuner, "Die Hellenisierung des Christentums als Modell von Inkulturation," *Stimmen der Zeit* 213 (1995): 363-76.

⁹(Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1930).

¹⁰See, e.g., his *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1993); *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Shrivaisnavas of South India* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1996).

exist as such a level of generality that they are rendered unuseful for much intercultural communication), there are patterns that are of interest to us here. Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede made a study of more than forty cultures using a four-scale set of characteristics.¹¹ Of immediate significance to us here is that of what he calls a scale of individual-collective as a way of organizing societies. This is also often called egocentric (for societies organized around the concept of the individual as the basic unit of society) and sociocentric (organized around society as the basic unit) forms of society. This is of significance here because most of the societies of the so-called West (in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand) are markedly egocentric, whereas much of the emerging world church is in sociocentric societies. Let me focus on but a few differences here, relevant to a discussion of development of doctrine, to illustrate the point.

Egocentric societies tend to prize innovation and, perhaps because of their commitments to a capitalist economic mode, consider the past as something outmoded and superseded or a source of nostalgia at best. Because innovation is so prized, it is usually cast in the mode of progress, i.e., a linear move into the future. And in turn, because progress becomes such an important category, and innovation is the means to it, discontinuity comes to be prized over continuity.¹² Rhetorically, this results in thinking that whatever is new is always improved, and the endless discourse of paradigm shifts for every little change that comes along.

Inasmuch as every individual is expected to maximize his or her own potential, individual expressiveness and the importance of individual experience is given priority. To that end—and in line with what has just been said—difference becomes an important category. Difference in this instance may be more valued than evaluated: it becomes worthy for its own sake.

If this is contrasted with a largely sociocentric society, it is the cohesion and well-being of the group which has priority over the individual. To that end, innovation is always a two-edged reality. It may foster the well-being of the group, but it may betoken deviation which threatens the safety and cohesion of the group. For that reason, any innovation proposed must somehow be shown not only not to be harmful to the future of the group, but—if fundamentally very different—must also be shown not to be an innovation at all. Continuity is valued, discontinuity must always be accounted for. Rhetorically, phrases such

¹¹Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* (Beverly Hills CA: Sage, 1980). These were expanded to six scales by Michael Hecht, Peter Andersen, and Sidney Ribeau, "The Cultural Dimensions of Nonverbal Communication," in William Gudykunst and Molefi Kete Asante, eds., *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication* (Newbury Park CA: Sage, 1989).

¹²This may be behind one aspect of questioning whether "development" is the proper term to conceptualize change in doctrine. See for example Edward Schillebeeckx, "Breuken in christelijke dogma's," in Edward Schillebeeckx et al., eds., *Breuklijnen: Grenservaringen en zoektochten* (Baarn: H. Nelissen, 1994) 15-49.

as "we have always believed that..." or "the church has always taught that..." will preface what appears to be a discontinuous innovation, or show how it reflects basic principles deeply held.

The distinction between egocentric and sociocentric cultures is of course more complex and not so easily delineated as presented here. Nor does every individual in either society conform to the majority pattern. I introduce the concept to help see what are going to be some of the principal linguistic and cultural issues in looking at the development of doctrine in the future. Persons from largely egocentric societies are more likely to emphasize discontinuities, breaks, and the inadequacies of past formulations. Their sociocentric counterparts will seek out continuities, unfolding development, and ways of rediscovering present challenges in past debates. Much of debate in the post-Reformation period appears to have been in sociocentric terms. Both Catholic and Protestant sides are concerned with continuity. But a Catholic Bossuet will invoke the Vincentian Canon in a different way from the Protestant Jurieu: for the former, Vincent of Lérin's formula encompasses the entirety of Catholic history, but for the latter it disqualifies large parts of it as not being in continuity with Scripture. Efforts to see apparently anomalous or heterogeneous developments as but the implicit made explicit, or the logical conclusion of a half-hidden premise, are part of this same sociocentric strategy.

It is only more recently that the more individualist or egocentric approach emerges, possibly with the preoccupation with historicity. It has been the study of history that has both created a new challenge to development of doctrine, but has also freed it from the current formulation of any doctrine as being seen as its eternal and absolute form. The postmodern claim of the death of any grand narrative, and the resultant primacy of the discontinuous and the different, and the priority of the other, might be seen as the egocentric society in its extreme form.

I bring this all up not just to suggest that cultural forms shape the debate about the development of doctrine even within the relatively homogeneous cultural ambience of the West, but also to note the challenges that face the conversation on development of doctrine between a predominantly egocentric conversation partner and someone from a predominantly sociocentric background. The sociocentric cultures come in many variations, of course. To return to Hofstede and those who have expanded upon his work, this scale of individual-collective interacts with five other scales. But churches coming from predominantly sociocentric cultures will be confronted with multiple challenges at once. At one point, they see the disparities between Western formulations of doctrine and the only partial intelligibility of those doctrines within their own cultural and linguistic settings. At yet another point, they very much want to belong and consider themselves members of a church which is truly Catholic. And at still another point, they need to incorporate both difficult insights from the West and their own new insights into their understanding with sociocentric rhetorical strategies. It is important that Westerners understand the challenge of that conversation about

development in this setting. The discourse from the side of the sociocentric partner may appear not to grasp the point of the Westerner, when in fact there is a genuine struggle to understand going on. The language that a sociocentric partner has to use to appropriate this discourse may sound like a misfire to the egocentric counterpart. Anyone who has witnessed exchanges, say, between liberal Protestants and the Orthodox in ecumenical discussions will have experienced this in a Western setting.

As we enter a world church, these elements of communication—themselves not new—must be kept before us.

Globalization

The other epistemological feature which must be taken into consideration when considering what conversations about development of doctrine will mean in a world church is the phenomenon of globalization. I take globalization here in the sense in which it is increasingly used: as a way to describe the technological, economic, social, and cultural state of the world today.¹³ Developments in communications technology have simultaneously expanded and compressed time and space in the world. As a result, we can detect a wave of homogenization of the world by market capitalism and the cultural productions of the West, especially the United States; and a fragmentation of that same world, as local cultures and communities resist homogenization and the rapid pace of life that communications technology makes possible and market capitalism requires. These responses of resistance include reassertion of the local and of local identities, and various strategies of what are generically called fundamentalisms. I take fundamentalism to be an attempt to step out of the fast-flowing stream of globalization (at least in its cultural forms which seek to erase local identity) by creating a community based on identifiable identity markers from a tradition. These identity-marking elements are not what would be seen as essential to a tradition in calmer times. They are chosen precisely for their obtuseness in the face of cultural homogenization and their measurability as who is in and who is out.

Thus, within Islam, isolating women from the public sphere is part of fundamentalist forms of Islam, although it does not figure in what are usually considered the "Five Pillars of Islam" (belief in the oneness of God, daily prayer, alms for the poor, the observance of the month of fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca).

Globalization and the phenomena it is creating culturally are of importance in two ways for discussions of the development of doctrine. First of all, the compression of time and space means that the modern tripartite divisions of time into

¹³I have developed this in more detail in *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997), and in "Die neue Kontextualität—Globalisierung und Fragmentierung als Herausforderung an Theologie und Kirche," *Jahrbuch Mission* 51 (1999): 29-49.

the premodern, the modern, and the postmodern lose much of their meaning. The premodern, the modern, and the postmodern now find themselves side by side in much of the industrialized world, especially in Asia. What is happening is that modernization is not happening in the Western, uniform fashion that sociologists at the beginning of the century had predicted. Secularization is not the natural consequence of modernization. In places like Japan and Thailand we see a proliferation of new religions. Religion is, if anything, more robust now than it was several decades ago. To be sure, some of those religious forms may be disturbing in their turn to violence. But secularization may prove to be but one response to modernization, one predominantly true in Western countries.

What this means for theologians is that, when thinking of conversation partners in the development of doctrine, persons from egocentric societies should not consider sociocentric conversation partners as being on some evolutionary line at some distance behind themselves. Sociocentric societies are not turning into egocentric societies even as they adopt certain aspects of them. The temptation to hear a sociocentric conversation partner as "behind" in development from where we are or as "premodern" will miss the subtlety of the complex interaction now going on in those societies because of globalization. To attend to this compression of time is to avoid a potential short circuit in the conversation. A sociocentric partner may be able to appropriate elements out of the past history of the development of doctrine in new ways—such as the rhetoric of the unity of the church in nineteenth-century discussions. For them, it will be a congenial way to account for otherwise unaccountable change.

What this means for further discussion of the development of doctrine in the world church is that one cannot assume either (1) that the so-called newer churches will exhibit a tendency to need to repeat the trajectory of the discussion thus far, or (2) that elements thought superseded by Western theologians have no place in the discussion now, or (3) the future discussion of the development of doctrine will be a wholly new discourse, taking us beyond the point to which the likes of Rahner and Walgrave have brought us. The future discussion is likely to be a *mélange* of past and present, and to identify past elements as past will be a mistake in intercultural communication.

The second element which globalization brings to these discussions is the growing gap between rich and poor. The gap is one between inclusion and exclusion. Telecommunications is the lifeline of a globalized world. In the United States, there are in excess of seven hundred telephones for every 1,000 of the population. In Bangladesh, there are but 2 per 1,000, and in Chad but 1. Whole populations are excluded outright, even as they might be exploited for the natural resources of their territory.

A great pastoral challenge facing us is how do we avoid becoming two churches,¹⁴ a church of those who benefit from globalization, and those who are

¹⁴The phrase was coined by Michael Budde, *The Two Churches: Catholicism and*

excluded and penalized by it. Theologically, will the experience of the poor really be taken into account in the understanding of how doctrine develops? In the last decades, the option for the poor, the defense of human rights, and the language of solidarity have moved from regional theological discourses to global ones. Feminist discourses cut across rich and poor, ego- and sociocentric societies. All of these are working their way into what might be considered a third millennial *regula fidei*.

SOME INTERCULTURAL PROPOSALS FOR THE DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN A WORLD CHURCH

What can be proposed concretely out of these general considerations on language, culture, and globalization for future discussion of development of doctrine in a world church? I would suggest four things.

First of all, the importance of the process of *reception* in the development of doctrine. The importance of reception in theology has long been acknowledged. One only needs to recall Newman's famous little essay, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*¹⁵ to recall how long this has been part of the theological discussion. Likewise, it is seen to be key in intercultural communication: the speaker cannot be sure how a message has been received unless the reception of it has been explored. The capacity of the receiver to reiterate the message literally is no guarantee. Any intercultural communication therefore, must depend on analysis of the reception, i.e., how and where the message gets lodged in the receiver's mental and cultural universe.¹⁶

Australian theologian Ormond Rush has sketched out a plausible model for a reception hermeneutics in discussions of the development of doctrine.¹⁷ It is based on the theory of literary critic and philologist Hans Robert Jauss. Jauss makes a distinction between reception as the effect of the (in this case, artistic) work upon the receiver, and reception as the concretization of meaning, which is the reader's synthesis between the text and the reader's mental and cultural universe. In encountering the text, the receiver operates within a horizon of expectation. The alterity of the text produces, in the concretization of meaning, a differentiation of horizons rather than a Gadamerian fusion of horizons. Thus the experience of the encounter does not end the independent existence of either the receiver or the message (text), but leads to a greater differentiation within the horizon of the receiver.

This would account for the fact that, when Western Christianity has been appropriated by non-Western peoples, the Western Christianity received does not

Capitalism in the World System (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

¹⁵(New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

¹⁶Schreier, *The New Catholicity*, 34-39.

¹⁷Ormond Rush, "Reception Hermeneutics and the 'Development' of Doctrine: An Alternative Model," *Pacifica* 6 (1993): 125-40.

become the new horizon of a people. Rather, select elements enter the horizon of the non-Western people either as alien element, new information, or revision of already held beliefs and symbols. Reception, that is, close investigation of how the meaning is concretized by the conversation partner and not merely the seeking of a formal assent, will be essential to effective discussion in the development of doctrine in a world church.

The second proposal is that greater importance should be accorded to the relational over the propositional in discussions of aspects of the development of doctrine. The more relational theories of revelation found in the twentieth century and in the treatment of revelation in the documents of the Second Vatican Council lay the groundwork for this. As was argued above, what the propositional approach to revelation and to doctrine gains in precision it may lose in translatability. To be sure, the propositional will continue to have its place, but it seems to me that, in the intercultural situation of the world church, it must be subordinant to an approach that focuses upon the experience of the encounter with Christ in faith.¹⁸ In sociocentric cultures, relationship is key to communication and to knowledge. The more goal-directed communication which propositional forms of address take will not convey faith in the way that a richer relational form may be able to do.

Third, Hans-Joachim Schulz, among others, has suggested that propositional understandings of dogma need to be enlarged and enriched by earlier patristic understandings of the term, especially in its liturgical and doxological context.¹⁹ Schulz makes this claim in the interest of finding greater common ground with the Orthodox and other churches of the East. But the reasoning applies as well to the world church. Discussions of the development of doctrine cannot turn completely on a propositional theology of revelation, nor upon a theology of the church which focuses too exclusively upon the magisterium as guarantor of faith.

Fourth and finally, models for conversation about the development of doctrine in the world church must be dialogical ones, based on exchange and communication. The first two of the proposals above focus upon that in terms of intercultural communication; the third upon the deepening of a genuine communion among the local churches around the world.

THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF A THEORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN A WORLD CHURCH

I turn then to the final part of this presentation, a revisiting of the theological dimensions of a theory of the development of doctrine in a world church. Let me do that in three points. The first two have to do with what were noted above as key theological moments in a discussion of the development of doctrine, namely,

¹⁸Brazilian theologian Alberto Antoniazzi makes the same point in "Dogma e Culturas," *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 49 (1989): 855-68, esp. 866-67.

¹⁹Schulz, *Bekennnis statt Dogma*.

a theology of revelation and a theology of the church. The third has to do with what is likely to become the flashpoint for development of doctrine in the next century, namely, christology.

It has been noted already a number of times in this presentation that the existentialist and personalist perspective on revelation—seeing revelation in terms of event and encounter—has been congenial to shaping a more appropriate and accepted theory of the development of doctrine in the twentieth century. This basis, already sanctioned by the Second Vatican Council and widely accepted in the West, makes an excellent beginning for conversation in the world church. To be sure, concepts of the person in relation to the group vary from those developed in existentialist and personalist thought, but there is ground for dialogue. Moreover, much Western theological work (with the exception of feminist, black, and Hispanic theologies) has not taken suffering adequately into account. Theological work, taking into account these differences in the understanding of the person, will go far to providing a common base for further conversation about the development of doctrine.

Second, the theology of the church that accompanies a theory of the development of doctrine may need to focus more on the *catholicity* of the church than upon unity. The two are, of course, not in opposition to each other. But focusing upon unity solely may not give sufficient attention to the legitimate plurality within the church. Premature talk of unity, intercultural communication theory makes clear, may be a way of suppressing difference rather than actually dealing with it.²⁰

In a way, one can return to a kind of intercultural reading of the Vincentian Canon here for an understanding of the catholicity sought in the development of doctrine. To get a clearer determination of the *quod semper* requires closer attention to the *quod ubique* and to the *quod ab omnibus*. Indeed, the *quod ubique* comes first in Vincent's formula, although theologians have tended to imagine it mentally in the second place. The *ab omnibus* underscores the importance of reception discussed earlier. Catholicity may be the mark of the church that will need greatest attention in our time, much as apostolicity was paramount at the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, or holiness in the time of the Donatist controversy. The catholicity of the Roman Catholic Church especially is what I have in mind here.

Third and finally, a word about christology in the development of doctrine. The christological issues in the fourth and fifth centuries have often been our starting point for reflection on the development of doctrine. Christology stands before us now in a twofold way. On the one hand, some have felt that

²⁰On this matter, see the instructive essay of Milton Bennett, "Toward Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," in Michael Paige, ed., *Education for the Intercultural Experience* (Yarmouth ME: Intercultural Press, 1993) 10-51. It should be noted here that ethnorelativism does not mean a relativist (i.e., nonevaluative) approach to cultural difference. "Ethnopluralist" may have been a more useful term.

christology was placed so much at the center of the regional synods leading up to the Jubilee year that the presence and action of the Holy Spirit was being muffled. Christology, in this reading, is being used to hold the line on inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and development of doctrine. On the other hand, it is precisely the question of how we are to understand the meaning of God's revelation in Jesus Christ in a world church which, after a century of intense evangelization, still only constitutes one-third of the world's population, that is perhaps the most challenging doctrinal question of the age. It is a question that Western theology cannot answer on its own or wholly out of its own resources. It needs the experience and reflection of Christian theologians who live as members of a minority religion among other great religious traditions of the world. It would seem, then, that just as development of doctrine had its greatest earliest challenge at Nicaea and Chalcedon, it may face its newest and most dramatic one in the world church that is aborning.

To conclude, it is my hope that this presentation has helped us see that the issues of the development of doctrine in the world church show a continuity with issues addressed in the past (although not in the same temporal order nor with exactly the same meaning), and pose new areas for consideration, especially in better intercultural communication. The theological concerns may undergo some shift as well: a deepening of a theology of revelation that has already begun, and a greater focus on the catholicity of the church in order to encompass the voices which need to be heard and engaged. A great christological challenge looms before us. Peter Neuner, cited earlier, notes that the future will no doubt be no more tidy than the past as we look to the development of doctrine in a world church.²¹ But a reflection on dogma, done doxologically as well as cognitively, gives us confidence that the Holy Spirit will be with the church as it moves into this situation.

ROBERT J. SCHREITER
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois

²¹Neuner, "Die Hellenisierung des Christentums als Modell von Inkulturation," 374-76.