

St John Henry Newman and the Liturgy: A re-examination

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Abstract

This article offers a critical discussion of Ian Ker's book *Newman on Vatican II* (2014).

Keywords

Ian Ker, Newman, Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Novus Ordo*, *Vatican II*

Ian Ker sees himself, entirely justifiably and deservedly, as not only 'a world expert' but 'the world expert' on Newman.¹ His 2014 *Newman on Vatican II* 'is a short book, but it takes the reader through a considerable part of the Newman corpus and of his fundamental ideas... short, passionate and addressing important questions of the moment'.² Ker proposes and defends a thesis that Newman 'was both a radical and conservative, a reformer but also a traditionalist'.³ He concludes that there 'can be no question but that Newman would have strongly supported the reformist party at Vatican II... would undoubtedly have aligned himself with the moderates... and all those who wished to interpret the Council in accordance with the hermeneutic of reform in continuity'.⁴ Furthermore, Ker argues that 'Newman's writings on those subjects that occupied the Council offer a balanced, corrective commentary on the conciliar documents'.⁵ The book is also a Newmanian apologia of the 'hermeneutic of reform in continuity' as promoted by Benedict XVI (the so called 'Roman School' of conciliar hermeneu-

¹ Ian Ker and Joanna Bogle, *John Henry Newman - A Saint for Our Times*, YouTube Video (EWTN, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvoQHALV5DI> 0:40. Ker himself emphasises 'the' in the interview.

² James Pereiro, 'Newman on Vatican II by Ian Ker', *The Catholic Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (2016): p. 629.

³ Ian Ker, *Newman on Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 3.

⁴ Ker, p. 159.

⁵ Ker, p. 160.

tics). Ker himself places his work in this context. Quoting Benedict XVI's speech to the Roman Curia, the text describes Newman as making 'exactly the same point' as the then-Pope in his book *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*.⁶

One of the areas *Newman on Vatican II* examines is the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. The text addresses this subject in two pages in the chapter *Some Unintended Consequences of Vatican II* arguing that it

would seem that Newman could have nothing to say about *Sacrosanctum Concilium* since this is the one document of the Council that he can scarcely be said to have anticipated in any way, as he never wrote about the liturgy and certainly was no forerunner of the liturgical movement of the twentieth century. However, there were and are unintended consequences of the promulgation of the Constitution [on the liturgy] on which he would certainly wish to comment.⁷

I argue that: (1) an important subject is conspicuously treated too briefly, (2) Newman did have both a direct and indirect influence on the Liturgical Movement, (3) Newman wrote about the liturgy and liturgical reform, (4) Newman would have criticisms of the concepts of development and liturgical reform found in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (5) Newman would not dismiss the post-Conciliar reforms as 'unintended consequences' and 'illegitimate developments'⁸ but would have seen them as a consequence of the Council, and (6) speculatively (and arguably anachronistically), Newman would have theological and pastoral concerns regarding the Council's liturgical reforms and the *Novus Ordo*, but would have obtained an indult to continue using the traditional liturgical forms rather than entering into schism as some did after Vatican II.⁹

It should be noted that this paper is not a criticism of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the post-Conciliar liturgical reforms, or the *Novus Ordo*. It is a critical engagement with certain narratives in Newman scholarship, and a tentative non-definitive alternative opinion on the authentic voice of Newman regarding the liturgical reform of Vatican II.¹⁰ The purpose

⁶ Ker, p. 40.

⁷ Ker, p. 125.

⁸ Ker, pp. 125–26.

⁹ I am indebted to Dr Peter Kwasniewski whose 2019 article, 'Saint John Henry Newman, the Traditionalist', gave me the impetus for this criticism and which has added to an emerging scholarship questioning the metanarrative of Newman as the *Father of Vatican II*. Peter Kwasniewski, 'Saint John Henry Newman, the Traditionalist', *New Liturgical Movement*, 14 October 2019, <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2019/10/st-john-henry-newman-traditionalist.html>.

¹⁰ It should also be noted that when discussing 'Conciliar Liturgical reforms' I am seeing the process beginning at the Council with *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and concluding with the *Novus Ordo* in 1969. I am aware that some scholars would argue for a separation of the two and for a broader historical scope for the process of reform. I, however, feel this is an

of this paper is not to offer an exhaustive study of Newman's thought on the liturgy or a comprehensive critique of the liturgical reform. I simply wish to open a debate on whether the argument presented in *Newman on Vatican II* is accurate and definitive.

1

Newman on Vatican II discusses how Newman would have responded to the Council's reform of the liturgy in just over two pages of text. In comparison, the index lists fifteen pages which discuss the 'ecclesial movements and communities' which came into being after the Council. While not dismissing the importance of the new ecclesial movements in the life of the Church, a two-page treatment does not reflect the significance of the of the subject of the liturgy and the Conciliar reforms. As MacCulloch states in *A History of Christianity*, after the Council, apart

from the furore on contraception, nothing in the life of the Church was so universally disruptive as the changes made to public worship... Although the hurt extended a good way beyond theological conservatives, the defiant and semi-clandestine celebration of the old Mass and its music became a catalyst for a slow gathering of fury among traditionalist Catholics, which in some places led to schism.¹¹

MacCulloch is not a Catholic yet perceives the significance of the liturgical changes. *Newman on Vatican II* acknowledges this importance, saying that the document on the liturgy 'was obviously also the document that had most effect on the life of the Church and the lives of Catholics'.¹² If the purpose of *Newman on Vatican II* is to show a 'corrective commentary', then an issue which has caused great controversy and even schism would be a natural area to explore; yet the text has limited engagement with the subject.

The text may argue that Newman did not speak about the liturgy (an assertion this paper disputes), but this does not excuse its lack of engagement with that subject. Elsewhere in *Newman on Vatican II*, Newman's *Seven Notes* 'to discriminate healthy developments of an

appropriate historical scope as this paper's focus is upon Ker's Newman scholarship, not the liturgical reform itself.

¹¹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity - The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 973–74. For a theological study of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* see: Pamela E. J. Jackson, 'Theology of the Liturgy', in *Vatican II - Renewal within Tradition*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 101–28. For a historical study of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* see: John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 129–41. For a Traditionalist Catholic systematic criticism and rejection of the liturgical reform see: Rev. Anthony Cekada, *Work of Human Hands - A Theological Critique of the Mass of Paul VI* (West Chester, Ohio: Philothea Press, 2010).

¹² Ker, *Newman on Vatican II*, p. 125.

idea from its state of corruption and decay...’ are referenced to discern the authenticity of *Dignitatis Humanae*.¹³ The author has no problem, therefore, using Newman’s thought to analyse other Conciliar documents and controversies which Newman himself did not specifically use the *Notes* to address.

There is a sense of a ‘sleight of hand’ in *Newman on Vatican II*, passing over the subject of the liturgy very briefly and not drawing attention to the often divisive liturgical debate. In defence of its brevity on the subject, the text states that ‘Newman could have nothing to say about *Sacrosanctum Concilium* since this is the one document of the Council that he can scarcely be said to have anticipated in any way, as he never wrote about the liturgy and certainly was no forerunner of the liturgical movement of the twentieth century’.¹⁴ As sections two to five of this paper will show, however, there is a strong argument that this is not the case.

2

In stating that Newman ‘certainly was no forerunner of the liturgical movement of the twentieth century...’ *Newman on Vatican II* is establishing something of a strawman argument.¹⁵ The Liturgical Movement was contemporary to Newman – the ‘Father of the Liturgical Movement’, Prosper Guéranger, was only four years younger than Newman, was ordained in 1827, and re-established Solesmes (the home of the Liturgical Movement) as a Monastery in 1831–33. Newman would not become a Catholic until 1845. It would, therefore, be impossible for Newman to be a forerunner in the sense of ‘preparing the way’ for Guéranger and the Liturgical Movement.

Furthermore, Newman can be shown to have had indirect links to the Liturgical Movement and direct influence upon the Church’s understanding of the principles of liturgical development. On the one hand, it could be argued that Guéranger’s visit to Newman at the Oratory while the former was in Birmingham, in fact, demonstrates Newman’s lack of influence on the Liturgical Movement.¹⁶ At the meeting Newman demonstrated an ‘iciness’ towards his French guest. Although

¹³ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1878 Edition, fourteenth impression (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), p. 171, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/development/>.

¹⁴ Ker, *Newman on Vatican II*, p. 125.

¹⁵ Ker, p. 125. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes a ‘forerunner’ as someone ‘who runs before, esp. one sent to prepare the way and herald a great man’s approach, a harbinger; also, a guide... That which foreruns or foreshadows something else; a prognostic or sign of something to follow.’ ‘Forerunner, n.’, in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, September 2020), <https://www.oed-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/73142?redirectedFrom=forerunner&>.

¹⁶ See: John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. Vol. 19: Consulting the Laity: January 1859 to June 1861*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain (Oxford:

when in the Oratory Library surrounded by books a more animated exchange took place between the two men, very little of any substance was discussed.¹⁷ On the other hand, despite its insubstantial nature, this meeting shows that Guéranger esteemed Newman. As the Abbot of a major French monastery, Guéranger, held Prelatic status in the Catholic Church. For him to visit Newman – an ordinary priest – was a sign of the high regard he held him. To argue that this episode shows that Newman had an *influence* on Guéranger would be to overstate the case and create my own strawman. But it does show that *Newman on Vatican II* is arguably too hasty in completely dismissing Newman's relationship to the early Liturgical Movement and its founder.

There is evidence of Newman having a more lateral, or indirect, influence. In his study *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Alcuin Reid discusses Newman's 1831 homily on *Ceremonies of the Church*. Reid states that while the homily is 'Anglican High Church apologetic, it is also an accurate articulation of the Catholic principle of respect for Liturgical Tradition, displaying the Catholic tendencies...' of Newman.¹⁸ Reid also references Newman's 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* as having 'consonance with the principle of the organic development of the Liturgy...'.¹⁹ This homily was before the foundation of Solesmes and the start of Guéranger's Liturgical Movement. While there is no evidence that Guéranger ever read this homily or that it in any way influenced the movement, it is important to note that even at this early stage and while still an Anglican, Newman was espousing opinions which were comparable to Catholic principles of development and tradition.

Reid's argument is supported in that as early as 1847 Newman was being cited by Giacomo Mazio, a Jesuit and professor of Theology and Canon Law at the *Collegio Romano*. He used Newman's *Essay* to defend the development of the Roman liturgy under Papal authority in

Oxford University Press - Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016), p. 403, <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199200511.book.1/actrade-9780199200511-book-1>.

¹⁷ Newman, p. 403n3. Newman's coldness should not be seen as a snub to Guéranger and his ideas. We can ascribe to Newman something of an Englishman of that generation's hostility to all things Gallic – Newman's youth coincided with the Napoleonic wars and their subsequent economic fallout which bankrupted his father. On the one hand Newman thought that 'France, [...] is truly *La belle France* in all externals. I am enchanted with it.' Yet when it came to the meaning behind symbols, Newman 'would not even look at the tricolour'. John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Ian Ker (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 49.

¹⁸ Alcuin Reid, OSB, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Second Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 68.

¹⁹ Reid, OSB, p. 69.

contrast to the development of the Anglican liturgy.²⁰ Shea summarises Mazio's use:

In the article, entitled 'Liturgia Anglicana', Mazio argued for the authenticity of the Roman liturgy and against the tendency of some Anglicans to measure the legitimacy of doctrine or practice on the basis of what history could reconstruct of the first centuries of Christianity. Mazio argued against the contention that Roman Catholic doctrine became corrupted after the fourth and fifth centuries by dint of the corruption of its governing principle of authority in the papacy. In doing so, Mazio advanced Newman in general and the *Essay on Development* in particular as champions of the Roman Catholic alternative.²¹

This shows that Newman's work as an Anglican in doctrinal development was directly used by Catholic theologians to justify developments in the Roman Liturgy. This was not what Newman had specifically written the text for. Nevertheless, the ease with which Mazio applied Newman's principles to this area of theology shows that the principles of doctrinal development which Newman espoused were indirectly prognostic of the principles of the development of the liturgy.

The links between Newman and the twentieth century liturgical reformers are subtle and tangential, but they can be discerned if one looks carefully.²² In the latter half of the twentieth century, Newman scholarship was becoming prominent in Germany in the same universities where figures such as Romano Guardini and Josef A. Jungmann were teaching and who would later have significant impact on the reform of the liturgy.²³ One of the principal architects of the liturgical reform, French Oratorian Louis Bouyer, wrote a detailed biography of Newman in 1952.²⁴

²⁰ See: Kenneth L. Parker and C. Michael Shea, 'The Roman Catholic Reception of the Essay on Development', in *Receptions of Newman*, by Frederick D. Aquino and Benjamin J. King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 37 & 41, <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199687589.001.0001/acprof-9780199687589-chapter-3?rskey=YxVIgD&result=4>.

²¹ C. Michael Shea, *Newman's Early Roman Catholic Legacy, 1845-1854* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 144, <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/oso/9780198802563.001.0001/oso-9780198802563>.

²² I acknowledge that Newman's influence upon those who advocated, planned, and implemented liturgical reform in the 20th century is an area in which a lot more research could be done. This paper is simply seeking to engage with Ker's argument. A more thorough examination could – I think – fruitfully explore this further.

²³ Werner Becker, 'Newman's Influence in Germany', in *The Rediscovery of Newman - An Oxford Symposium* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp. 174–94.

²⁴ Louis Bouyer, *Newman - His Life and Spirituality - An Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of John Henry Newman* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011). This angle is, I acknowledge, highly tangential and in this form somewhat weak. I include it to show that there are potential links which open *Newman on Vatican II's* argument to further criticism. Once

There is a strong argument that *Newman on Vatican II* was incorrect to say that Newman was ‘certainly’ not a forerunner of the Liturgical movement. This is a strawman argument because Newman lived contemporaneously with the beginnings of the Liturgical Movement which started before his reception into the Catholic Church. Despite this, I have shown that there is an argument that Newman was both a direct and indirect forerunner in a ‘fellow traveller’ or prognostic sense. While it cannot be argued that he was a progenitor or ‘father’ of the Liturgical Movement, there is a sense that he could be considered an ‘uncle’.

3

Ker discusses Newman’s writings on the liturgy in several different sources. Other scholars have written, in some cases extensively, on Newman and the liturgy. I will argue, therefore, that *Newman on Vatican II* stating that he ‘never wrote about the Liturgy’ is simply not correct.

Ker specifically states that, as an Anglican, ‘Newman was hostile to any attempt to change the liturgy, especially the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian Creed...’.²⁵ The content of this quotation is not discussed in *Newman on Vatican II*, but the original letter from which this is taken provides an interesting commentary on Newman’s caution on liturgical reform as an Anglican. Newman asks:

Do not you think that the advantages gained by any alteration are not balanced by the hazard? — I am sometimes tempted to think associations connected with the Liturgy and affection for it is the great hold of the Church in the minds of the multitude — They feel little her abstract claims on their reverence; great as they are; — perhaps they have some notion of the superiority of her orders — still the influence she exerts in the hearts of her people is chiefly by a reverential attachment to those prayers which they have heard from childhood and have been their solace often in their most trying seasons, and have shed a grace on the high solemnities of marriages and births. — Should we not dread disturbing this feeling? if indeed the cause were urgent, then every thing must give way to necessity — else, the very talk about alteration will move irreverence towards the Service in an age peculiarly inclined to self confidence and irreverent presumption? — And again, in the question of the Athanasian Creed, if certain parts offend certain minds, is there not on the other hand an extreme danger of countenancing the false liberality of the age, which would fain have it believed that differences of opinion

COVID restrictions have subsided, access to the further resources necessary to develop this point should be possible.

²⁵ Ker, *Newman on Vatican II*, p. 7.

are of slight consequence? And is it not our duty to give warning to our brethren of fatal errors in charity to them?²⁶

Newman expressed pastoral concern for offending the sensibilities of the faithful by altering their liturgy. A liturgy which had been with them from their youth and through the difficult times of their lives. Furthermore, Newman is expressing concern over whether altering the liturgy so as not to offend certain people's sensibilities would allow liberalism and error.

The author of *Newman on Vatican II* has written about Newman and the liturgy in other sources, but there appears to be a conspicuous avoidance of acknowledging the liturgy's significance, for example, in Ker's *Biography* of Newman – currently the leading Newman biographical text. This book contains a single indexed reference to the liturgy which argues that Newman supported a 'Church's liturgy, which was always changing "according to the times"...'.²⁷ In the original source material, however, this understanding is not necessarily contextually correct. This is found in a section of the *Biography* detailing Newman's cordial disagreement with a friend over the Gothic architecture of A. W. Pugin. Newman – the *Biography* states – argued that Pugin

was 'notoriously engaged in a revival', for there was no 'continuous' Gothic tradition. But the Church's liturgy, which was always changing 'according to the times', required a 'living architecture', whereas Gothic was 'now like an old dress, which fitted a man well twenty years back but must be altered to fit him now'.²⁸

Newman complemented Pugin as 'a man of genius', but lamented that

he has the great fault of a man of genius... He is intolerant, and if I may use a stronger word, a bigot. He sees nothing good in any school of Christian art except of that which he is himself so great an ornament. The Canons of Gothic architecture are to him points of faith, and everyone is a heretic who would venture to question him.²⁹

²⁶ John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, Vol. 2: Tutor of Oriel: January 1827 to December 1831*, ed. Ian T. Ker and Thomas Gornall SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press - Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016), p. 191, <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199201082.book.1/actrade-9780199201082-book-1>.

²⁷ Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011), p. 339, <https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199569106.001.0001/acprof-9780199569106>.

²⁸ Ker, p. 339.

²⁹ John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. Vol. 12, Rome to Birmingham, January 1847 to December 1848*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain (Oxford: Oxford University Press - Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016), p. 220, <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199683369.book.1/actrade-9780199683369-book-1>.

Newman's letter is a critique of the ideas and principles behind Pugin's neo-Gothic architectural style, not the Church's liturgy. Some broader context might be helpful to qualify Newman's hostility to Pugin's style. After his conversion to Catholicism, Newman joined the Oratorians, a Congregation of priests and brothers founded in Rome during the Counter-Reformation. Their Oratorian heritage tends to strongly favour Italianate architecture. This can be seen in the design of the Brompton (London) Oratory completed in 1884 during Newman's lifetime and the Birmingham Oratory Church completed after his death. Newman's letter is not a text promoting liturgical change *per se* as it is simply criticising Pugin's style. This is a distinction which the *Biography* does not make clear. This lack of distinction is important as it points towards an underlying narrative by the author of both the *Biography* and *Newman on Vatican II*.

Despite there being a single indexed reference, there are four further mentions of the liturgy in the *Biography*, two of which are especially significant. The *Biography* discusses Newman's responses to those who questioned why he was dismissive of Anglican liturgy as a Catholic when he had written so favourably of it as an Anglican.³⁰ It also discusses how 'Newman was cautious about any attempt to change the liturgy...' during his time at Oxford.³¹ The text quotes from Newman's own caution about changing learned prayers, in enabling liberalism in the liturgy by removing passages from the Athanasian Creed which offended people, and how Newman started a Saints-day service in the University Church.³² The author – Ker – it can therefore be argued, contradicts himself within *Newman on Vatican II* and within his own wider academic output when he says that Newman 'never wrote about the liturgy...' as he himself has written on this specific topic.

Other writers have acknowledged that Newman wrote on the liturgy. Writing in *Adoremus* in 2019, London Oratorian Michael Lang states that the 'sacred liturgy does not feature prominently in Newman's vast literary corpus'.³³ Yet Ker's predecessor as *the* Newman scholar, C.S. Dessain, states that 'Newman had much to say, not only on the sacraments, but on common worship and Liturgy'.³⁴ These interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Lang is correct in that in the context of the vast corpus of Newman's literary output, the liturgy is not a prominent

³⁰ Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography*, pp. 510–11.

³¹ Ker, p. 36.

³² Ker, p. 36.

³³ Uwe Michael Lang, 'The Most Joyful and Blessed Ordinance of the Gospel: Saint John Henry Newman on the Liturgy', *Adoremus – Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy*, 8 November 2019, <https://adoremus.org/2019/11/08/the-most-joyful-and-blessed-ordinance-of-the-gospel-saint-john-henry-newman-on-the-liturgy/>.

³⁴ Charles Stephen Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, Third Edition (1st Edition, 1966) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 26.

subject either as an Anglican or a Roman Catholic. Dessain is, however, also correct in that within the vast corpus, there are many texts which discuss the liturgy both in theological and practical/pastoral terms and there is ample material for something of a ‘theology of the liturgy’ to be discerned. Peter Kwasniewski has edited a five-hundred-page plus collection of Newman’s writings *On Worship, Reverence, & Ritual*.³⁵ This book is significant because, while it does not show a ‘systematic’ theology of the liturgy, it collects Newman’s thought on the liturgy in one volume which allows for common themes to be discerned and the progression of Newman’s thought to be seen.³⁶ Kwasniewski states that ‘allusions to liturgical rites are ubiquitous in Newman’s writings...’³⁷

There is a strong argument that there is an error in *Newman on Vatican II* when it states that Newman ‘never wrote about the liturgy’. He clearly did write about the liturgy and liturgical reform from both a theological/doctrinal and a practical/pastoral perspective. We have also seen that it is not historically correct to dismiss Newman as not being a forerunner of the Liturgical Movement; there are tangible links both direct and indirect. It is legitimate to state, therefore, that *Newman on Vatican II’s* justification for not pursuing an in-depth discussion of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the post-Conciliar liturgical reforms in is flawed.

4

In this fourth section, I will argue against *Newman on Vatican II’s* statement that Newman ‘could have nothing to say about *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’. I will show that he can provide a critical commentary to some of the principles of development and liturgy reform promoted in the *Council’s document on the liturgy*.

Liturgical language provides a good example. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states that

since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be

³⁵ John Henry Newman, *On Worship, Reverence, & Ritual - A Selection of Texts*, ed. Peter Kwasniewski (Os Justi Press, 2019).

³⁶ It could benefit – and I would be interested in a potential collaboration – from a commentary of the texts giving historical and theological context in the life of Newman and textual analysis of the texts themselves, something more akin to John Henry Newman, *John Henry Newman - A Portrait in Letters*, ed. Roderick Strange (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁷ Kwasniewski, *Editor’s Note* to: Newman, *On Worship, Reverence, & Ritual - A Selection of Texts*, vii.

extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants...³⁸

Newman wrote about the use of liturgical language and, arguably, would have been troubled by the introduction and expansion of the use of the vernacular. As an Anglican, he had begun to understand the role language has in the transcendence of liturgy and worship. Newman states that to

be present at extempore prayer, is to hear prayers. Nay, it might happen, or rather often would happen, that we did not understand what was said; and then the person praying is scarcely praying 'in a tongue understood of the people' (as our Article expresses it); he is rather interceding for the people, than praying with them, and leading their worship.³⁹

This Anglican attitude can be seen, in a developed form, after Newman had become a Catholic. When discussing his view of heaven, Newman stated that heaven 'is not like this world; I will say that it is much more like, - a church. For in a place of worship no language of this world is heard...'.⁴⁰ This was not a mere aesthetic point but was part of Newman's theology of the transcendence of the liturgy. In *The Idea of a University* Newman explains this transcendence:

Clad in his sacerdotal vestments, he [the priest] sinks what is individual in himself altogether, and is but the representative of Him from whom he derives his commission. His words, his tones, his actions, his presence, lose their personality; one bishop, one priest, is like another; they all chant the same notes, and observe the same genuflexions, as they give one peace and one blessing, as they offer one and the same sacrifice. The Mass must not be said without a Missal under the priest's eye; nor in any language but that in which it has come down to us from the early hierarchs of the Western Church. But, when it is over, and the celebrant has resigned the vestments proper to it, then he resumes himself, and comes to us in the gifts and associations which attach to his person.⁴¹

The use of Latin was not a mere *accident* or aesthetical but was integral to how Newman understood the liturgy and the role of sacred worship to transcend the world. This is one example, but it shows how Newman did write on the liturgy, wrote on the liturgy as a Catholic, had a theology of liturgy which also has relevance to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

³⁸ 'Sacrosanctum Concilium', 4 December 1963, sec. 36, http://www.vatican.va/arch/ive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

³⁹ John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), pp. 259–60, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume1/index.html#titlepage>.

⁴⁰ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1907, 1: p. 5.

⁴¹ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1925), p. 425–26.

Sacrosanctum Concilium states that the liturgical ‘rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation’.⁴² This emphasis on ‘short’ is something Newman would also be arguably troubled by. As an Anglican he argued that if

any one alleges the length of the Church prayers as a reason for his not keeping his mind fixed upon them, I would beg him to ask his conscience whether he sincerely believes this to be at bottom the real cause of his inattention? Does he think he should attend better if the prayers were shorter? ... it is quite clear that it is not the length of the service which is the real cause of his inattention, but his being deficient in the habit of being attentive.⁴³

It can be seen from this that Newman objected to having a shortening of services as a primary principle of liturgical reform.

Sacrosanctum Concilium states as its guiding principle: ‘to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change... [the] Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy’.⁴⁴ Newman would have been deeply suspicious of reforming the liturgy to make the Church more suitable to the times and the world. He stated that:

those men especially consider this, who say that we are but dreaming of centuries gone by, missing our mark and born out of time, when we insist on such duties and practices as are now merely out of fashion; those who point to the tumult and fever which agitates the whole nation, and say we must be busy and troubled too, in order to respond to it; who say that the tide of events has set in one way, and that we must give in to it, if we would be practical men; that it is idleness to attempt to stem a current, which it will be a great thing even to direct: that since the present age loves conversing and hearing about religion, and does not like silent thought, patient waiting, recurring prayers, severe exercises, that therefore we must obey it, and, dismissing rites and sacraments, convert the Gospel into a rational faith, so called, and a religion of the heart; let these men seriously consider St. Paul’s exhortation, that we are to persevere in prayer—and that in every place—and the more, the more troubled and perplexed the affairs of this world become; not indeed omitting active exertions, but not, on that account, omitting prayer.⁴⁵

⁴² ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’, sec. 34.

⁴³ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1907, 1:1p. 43–44.

⁴⁴ ‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’, sec. 1.

⁴⁵ John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 3 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 303–4, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume3/index.html>. There are questions of whether or not *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was playing into a sense of liturgy become rationalist when it uses the word ‘suitable’. I do not want to delve into this here because it is a question for a study of Vatican II’s liturgy reform rather than of Newman.

In another homily, Newman stated that

If prayers were right three centuries since, they are right now. If a Christian minister might suitably offer up common prayer by himself then, surely he may do so now. If he was then the spokesman of the saints far and near, gathering together their holy and concordant suffrages, and presenting them by virtue of his priesthood, he is so now. The revival of this usage is merely a matter of place and time; and though neither our Lord nor His Church would have us make sudden alterations, even though for the better, yet certainly we ought never to forget what is abstractedly our duty, what is in itself best, what it is we have to aim at and labour towards.⁴⁶

Newman was, therefore, clearly critical of a reform of the liturgy simply to accommodate ‘modern man’. It is not that he would object to the liturgy adapting to modern man as a secondary aspect of reform, rather, he would object to the liturgy being adapted to modern man as the primary cause.⁴⁷ To use a colloquialism, it is arguable that Newman saw this to be a case of the ‘tail wagging the dog’.

There is a clear argument, therefore, that *Newman on Vatican II* is incorrect when it states that Newman ‘could have nothing to say about *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’. Just from the brief snapshot I have given, Newman’s writings are relevant to some of the principles of liturgical reform given in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

5

We must now turn to *Newman on Vatican II*’s argument that ‘there were and are unintended consequences of the promulgation of the Constitution on which Newman would certainly wish to comment’. The text attempts to extricate Newman from the bitter debates over the post-Conciliar liturgical reform by labelling excesses from the reforms as ‘unintended consequences’ and ‘illegitimate developments’.⁴⁸ Yet the text offers no substantial theological justification for understanding the developments as ‘illegitimate’, nor historical context for regarding them as ‘unintended’. Both points are a matter of debate.⁴⁹ This lack of

Asking ourselves what would be Newman’s position on this could be the subject of a paper in itself, which I acknowledge. I am simply seeking to show here that Newman *does* have relevance for this question and Ker has not addressed this in his study.

⁴⁶ Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1907, 3: p. 313.

⁴⁷ I am assuming this as the meaning of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. I concede that some might oppose me on this, but I do not wish for this study of Newman to get bogged down into the debates over the Council’s liturgical reforms.

⁴⁸ Ker, *Newman on Vatican II*, p. 125–26.

⁴⁹ For example, see: Cekada, *Work of Human Hands - A Theological Critique of the Mass of Paul VI*. The Society of Saint Pius X, *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform - A Theological and Liturgical Study* (Kansas City, Missouri: Angelus Press, 2001). Alfredo Cardinal

justification and context, or even an acknowledgment that these might be needed, undermines the book's argument. The text is basing its analysis of Newman upon premises when they are arguably unsound. A more convincing and relevant argument would have been made had the text used Newman's theory of development to evaluate the 'illegitimate developments' which affected the liturgy. So swiftly passing over the whole issue substantially weakens the relevance of *Newman on Vatican II's* analysis.

The text does not address the links Newman makes between practical reform of the liturgy and doctrinal changes. As an Anglican, Newman warned that 'Rites which the Church has appointed, and with reason,—for the Church's authority is from Christ,—being long used, cannot be disused without harm to our souls'.⁵⁰ This shows Newman's pastoral concerns for liturgy reforms. Newman had concerns regarding the doctrinal impact of liturgical reforms. When discussing those who Newman labelled as *worldly* in their desire to make the liturgy more acceptable to them, he cautions that

they dislike the *doctrine* of the Liturgy. These men of the world do not like the anathemas of the Athanasian Creed, and other such peculiarities of our Services...I need not go on to speak against doctrinal alterations, because most thinking men are sufficiently averse to them. But, I earnestly beg you to consider whether we must not come to them if we once begin. For by altering immaterials, we merely raise without gratifying the desire of correcting; we excite the craving, but withhold the food. And it should be observed, that the changes called immaterial often contain in themselves the germ of some principle, of which they are thus the introduction...⁵¹

Newman was convinced that in altering the externals of the liturgy, to make it more acceptable to 'the world', doctrinal change is incited. *Newman on Vatican II* does not address how Newman linked the reform of externals/immaterial in the liturgy with doctrinal change. Nor does it acknowledge the historical context of the introduction of liturgical reforms. Both factors undermine the overall argument.

Ottaviani, Antonio Cardinal Bacci, and A Group of Roman Theologians, *The Ottaviani Intervention - Short Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, trans. Rev. Anthony Cekada (West Chester, Ohio: Philothea Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), pp. 77–78, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume2/index.html>.

⁵¹ John Henry Newman, 'Tract 3 - Thoughts Respectfully Addressed to the Clergy on Alterations in the Liturgy', in *Tracts for the Times* (J.G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840), pp. 3–4, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/times/tract3.html>.

A final flaw in *Newman on Vatican II*'s discussion of the liturgy is that it does not follow its analysis to a logical and substantive conclusion. It is merely stated that Newman would 'wish to comment' on certain issues. Several secondary aspects of the reforms are listed which would have been most difficult for Newman to accept. I do not dispute this reading. The issue I have is that *Newman on Vatican II* stops short of even making a supposition as to how Newman would react to the changes had he been a priest in 1969 when the *Novus Ordo* was introduced. If the task of the book is to present a corrective commentary on the Council documents and their interpretation, then surely this would be a natural step in the analysis.

I believe that, based on the liturgical principles outlined in this paper, Newman would have followed a path similar to that of another Saint, Josemaría Escrivà (1902-1975). Escrivà, the founder of Opus Dei, attempted to say the *Novus Ordo* in obedience to the Church but found he could not physically read the new Missals and was also attached to the structure, form and gestures of the Tridentine Mass. To accommodate Escrivà and many priests who were attached to the traditional form, Paul VI granted indulgences for private celebrations.⁵² Despite the serious reservations he may have had, Newman would have accepted the decisions of the Council and the reform to the liturgy. I cannot see any argument that Newman would have followed/supported those who rejected the Council and the *Novus Ordo* and moved into schism. I am not presenting this – admittedly anachronistic – reading of how Newman would have reacted to Vatican II's liturgical reforms as definitive. This is purely speculative on my part. I do, however, believe that this is plausible given Newman's views as outlined in this paper – especially the effects of revising traditional liturgy.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that: (1) *Newman on Vatican II* conspicuously discusses Newman and the liturgy too briefly relative to this issue's importance for Catholics; (2) while not a 'forerunner', which is a strawman argument, Newman can be seen as having some tangible links to and influence on the Liturgical Movement; (3) Newman wrote extensively on the liturgy and liturgical reform as an Anglican and a Catholic; (4) Newman's thought can provide criticisms of the concepts of development and liturgical reform in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*; (5)

⁵² See: Jeff Ostrowski, 'Why St. Josemaría Escrivá Only Celebrated The Extraordinary Form', Corpus Christi Watershed, 4 August 2015, <https://www.ccwatershed.org/2015/08/04/josemaria-escriva-celebrated-14962-missal/>.

Newman would not dismiss the post-Conciliar reforms as ‘unintended consequences’ and ‘illegitimate developments’ but would have seen them as a consequence of the Council, and; (6) somewhat anachronistically, but plausibly, I speculate that Newman would have had concerns over the effect of the revision of traditional liturgy but would most likely have followed a path which would have allowed him to retain both the older liturgical forms and full communion with the Church.

I wish the reader to take two principal understandings from this paper. Firstly, that St. John Henry Newman’s writings contain important thought on liturgical theology and the authentic development of the liturgy – meaning he has a great deal to offer any study of the reforms of Vatican II. Secondly, historians and theologians can, and it is important that they do, make an effective challenge to Ian Ker’s (self-proclaimed) dominance in the field of Newman studies.

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