

P E T E R   L A N G

# Experience in the Early Thought of George Tyrrell

HUMAN, RELIGIOUS,  
CHRISTIAN, CATHOLIC

LAWRENCE J. DONOHOO

This study undertakes a comprehensive inquiry into the concept of experience in the thought of George Tyrrell from his earliest writings to 1900. No aspect of experience is passed over in its human, religious, Christian, and Catholic inflections. Tyrrell pursued a vast array of subjects and addressed them in often novel ways, even in his formative years, and at every stage of his thought he encountered the question of experience wherever he roamed. A study of experience in Tyrrell's early works thus effectively offers a sweeping survey of the full gamut of his early thought. In the beginning we see that he came to recognize only gradually the significance of this category for all his inquiries. While scholars have traced experience in Tyrrell's mature thought and researched its role in such targeted fields as ecclesiology and fundamental theology, the early writings by contrast have been largely passed over. This suggests a need for an unrestricted search at the origin of Tyrrell's thought that tracks his discovery, formation, and evolution of this concept. We discover that its flexible and enigmatic character shapes and unifies the various questions that Tyrrell addressed over the years, thus marking his mature theology with a distinct character that was passed on to others in the universe of experience.

**Lawrence J. Donohoo** has taught philosophy, fundamental theology, and systematic theology in several colleges and seminaries for nearly three decades. He is currently completing the next volume of his comprehensive study of George Tyrrell's thought.

Experience in the Early Thought of  
George Tyrrell

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Lawrence J. Donohoo

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Human, Religious, Christian, Catholic



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# Abbreviations and Citations

## Abbreviations

<i>FM</i>	George Tyrrell, <i>Faith of the Millions</i>
<i>HS</i>	George Tyrrell, <i>Hard Sayings</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NV</i>	George Tyrrell, <i>Nova et Vetera</i>
<i>ST</i>	St. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>

## Citations

Since *Faith of the Millions* is a published collection of Tyrrell's articles that first appeared in journals, the various articles cited from this work will not be preceded by *FM*. However, pagination is always that of this two-volume collection since it is more readily accessible.

*Nova et Vetera* (*NV*) is a collection of 273 meditations. The names of these meditations, which are never abbreviated, are given in the respective notes.



# Introduction: Theme, Method, Scope, and Life

With more than a century between us and his untimely death, now is a good time to return dispassionately to George Tyrrell, S.J. (1861–1909), the theologian who was arguably the greatest thinker and most prescient visionary of the group of scholars and friends known as the Modernists.<sup>1</sup> He aroused strong responses during his lifetime and long afterward among those who knew him or his thought, and among those who supported or opposed what they assumed he thought. The controversies that made him famous and the polemical works that reflect them are weighted toward the end of his life, and it is this period of his life that is most studied and amply referenced. Yet Tyrrell is greater than his polemics and his legacy is greater than simply his last works. Because he generously documented his intellectual development and wrote much in little time, his thought deserves an inquiry that begins at the beginning in order to see better where he was going and judge more clearly his lasting contributions.

Since Tyrrell wrote on an ample variety of topics in an extensive array of genres—books, essays, reviews, prefaces, correspondence, and even autobiography—what is needed is a work of exposition that encounters the totality of his thought and chronicles its evolution. But life is short, even in the world of ideas, so a theme of unification with contemporary relevance is called for—according to a standard dear to his heart. To that end, this study in the

form of an exposition is guided by a theme broad enough to embrace the various subjects Tyrrell engaged and of vital interest today: experience in its interrelated forms as human, religious, Christian, and Catholic. But here I can only hope to begin. This is the first installment of a planned multi-volume exploration of Tyrrell's complete thought through the lens of experience set at a very wide angle. Intimately bound up with his project of renewal and occupying him from start to finish, this theme is ideally suited for engaging an achievement that views and values the panoramic sweep of reality by way of the viewer and evaluator.

In contemporary philosophical and theological circles the concept of experience is as familiar as it is central—and more or less complex depending on the author. Like many ethical concepts, this idea is double-edged from the start since it points to both object and subject, and their relation, yet it is wider than ethics by emphasizing the mode of being acted upon as well as acting. And experience is elastic because it is ambiguous, bearing a variety of senses in different thinkers who treat it and even lurking in the thought of those who reject it. Formal reflection on experience is often associated with progressive thought, but in fact it is a trans-ideological category. Without visa it freely crosses boundaries dividing progressive from conservative thought in both religious and secular domains.<sup>2</sup> Everyone uses experience and many reflect on it to one degree or another, and even those who deny its validity as a formal category are often working from their experience, intellectual or otherwise. Despite widespread acceptance today as a major category for interpretation, this concept or tool or method or vision is at once vague, controversial, multifaceted, and ubiquitous. But no matter who discourses on experience, this obvious and elusive “reality” enjoys the status of corrective to the abstract, the extraneous, the ideological, the obsolete, and the inauthentic.

But it was not always so. Given the prominence of experience as this unavoidable yet opaque phenomenon at the core of our lives, theories, and cultural consciousness, it is urgent that we explore its historical roots. For the principle that the origin of a thing helps reveal its character is no less true for concepts than things. As an exercise in concrete, integral, reflective, relevant, and authentic thinking, the retrieval of the sources of experience can sharpen our present understanding and appreciation of it. This inquiry into the thought of George Tyrrell seeks to contribute to that retrieval by examining one thinker who happened upon experience in a variety of contexts at a time when this concept was gradually coming into its own.<sup>3</sup>

In mainstream Catholic theology of the late nineteenth century, experience was a largely undefined philosophical and theological concept mostly restricted

to epistemology and morality. Included along with sensation and memory as pre-conditions for art and science, experience is defined in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* simply as "knowledge of individuals" as opposed to universals.<sup>4</sup> When the inductive gathering of data successfully arrives at ethical conclusions, it is identified with good common sense or even as a rudimentary practical wisdom. In the world of *techne*, experience denotes a functional familiarity with the way things are and how they work; it does not include knowledge of causes and so cannot be taught. In both worlds of *praxis* and *techne*, it implies the private and incommunicable, and so was not traditionally welcome in the formal company of method, system, and theory.

In the nineteenth century, however, the situation began to change. Post-Kantian Continental philosophy, particularly in the realm of philosophy of religion, began a more intense inquiry into the subject, thus deepening a concern that stretched back to the late Middle Ages. In association with such related concepts as freedom, historicity, and individuality, it soon became a category in its own right. When certain Catholic thinkers of this period began to absorb new advances in science and history and acquaint themselves with complex approaches to consciousness and subjectivity that appeared in modern philosophical currents, experience was introduced to the religious and theological arenas. A concept that had been largely relegated to modest assignments was suddenly charged to serve as a tool for exploring new domains as well as old ones in new ways, including the work of reconciling traditional understandings with contemporary insights. Address mattered here, for diverse assessments of experience were advanced by thinkers in various countries working from different intellectual and cultural backgrounds.

George Tyrrell was one such thinker in this period whose prolific writings over a span of some twenty years reveal an increasing preoccupation with the category of experience. Despite or rather due to the variety of subjects he addressed, there is scarcely a text of his where this idea is not either explicitly or implicitly engaged. Over and above the sheer abundance of texts engaging this theme in manifold ways, experience is critical for grasping Tyrrell's thought as a whole because it forms a flexible web that connects a vast sweep of themes disparate in content and presented in diverse genres over an extended period of time. Moreover, his teachings on experience provide us with a philosophical and theological treasure trove because his expansive treatments of the subject underwent a rapid development in a relatively short space of time. This was largely due to an increasing awareness of the roles that experience plays in religion in general and Christianity in particular. Since this development mirrors the very nature

of experience itself as it meanders through time to the cadences of life, Tyrrell's unfolding thought on this subject rewards the student with a more realistic grasp of its time-bound nature. We should be neither surprised nor disappointed if this development will show fits and starts, produce many rough drafts, and be burdened with exaggerations and errors in a rising crescendo of writings that peaked toward the end of his career. But Tyrrell's pioneering work in hoisting experience to a central category of theology bequeaths a lasting contribution to securing its place in mature and thoughtful forms of life, religion, and the Christian faith.

This study undertakes a comprehensive inquiry into the concept of experience in the thought of George Tyrrell from his earliest writings to 1897. It is intended to be comprehensive in the sense that no aspect of experience is passed over in its human, religious, Christian, and Catholic inflections. My original intent was to examine experience in Tyrrell's entire corpus in a single work, but it soon became clear that the law of reasonable bounds demanded that either the notion of experience be limited to one or two perspectives or that the time period of his writings be shortened. I chose the second option because other students of Tyrrell have worked through the implications of experience for specific questions, particularly in the settings of ecclesiology and fundamental theology, and especially in his later works. By contrast, his early writings have been mostly passed over.

More importantly, a broad investigation of experience appeared the better subject for study since Tyrrell only gradually came to recognize the centrality of this category for his thought. For while his lifelong interests freely ranged across a vast array of subjects and pursued with often unconventional methods, it was especially in the formative stages of his thinking that he happened upon experience in various questions in different ways. Indeed, a study of experience in Tyrrell's early works effectively results in a survey of almost all of his maturing thought since it shows up nearly everywhere. Not only does this extensive search help uncover the very meaning of experience, it reveals how this idea roams freely among the various arenas of human endeavor and binds them together in new ways.

By concentrating on experience, this inquiry consciously avoids giving center stage to various topics in Tyrrell's writings through which other scholars have evaluated his thought, such as philosophy of religion, revelation, Church, authority, modernism, and doctrinal development. Experience implicates these themes, but it is both wider and different from all of them. In its multifaceted senses it runs against the grain of the more familiar categories, sometimes in bold relief, other times barely visibly. As a concept that can stand both with and against

other concepts, experience in Tyrrell binds some familiar categories in new ways and loosens others from their accustomed conceptual grids in his attempts to interpret matter and mystery in new and startling ways. Tracing experience in Tyrrell's thought, then, is not the presentation of simply one more concept among many, even if a novel one, but rather of a "meta-concept" which infuses all the various domains of his thought. Many of the identifiable themes in Tyrrell's writings will then be encountered here, or perhaps re-encountered, but from a distinct vantage point.

This situation creates a number of challenges. The first to be faced is how to investigate an apparently unwieldy idea in a wide-ranging thinker whose myriad interests led him to address many issues in vastly different fields of knowledge. If experience is everywhere, and if Tyrrell wrote on nearly every conceivable topic in theology, how can we avoid a study of nearly everything while perhaps still missing our quarry through the sheer density of material? The truism comes to mind that there must be some idea of the object to be sought at the start, for the appearances of experience are subtle in the earliest writings when Tyrrell appears to be mostly unaware of its presence. Here it would be tempting to succumb to the urge to read experience from later texts back into earlier ones, but this prejudices a recovery of origins by a hasty recourse to outcomes. So back to the past: it is better to bracket Tyrrell's future, even if it past to us, in order that later developments, dependent on earlier insights, can show more mature forms in due season of what earlier appeared in embryonic form. But no reason to bracket our ordinary engagement with the issues Tyrrell presents, for that is exactly what he expects. And more formal methods can supplement an ordinary reading, such as examining the contexts where "experience" appears, tracking questions that resurface where experience is present, and isolating themes that traditionally have attracted reflections on this concept.

Once underway, the challenge is less one of identifying the trail than of not straying too far from it in quest of more oblique expressions or fascinating subjects. For experience even in its purer senses is sufficiently diffuse and analogical so as to admit of many meanings and even more connotations. Consequently, it runs the risk, like "being" and "love," of connoting so much that it denotes very little. Much of our early labors, then, are devoted to the pursuit of its clearer forms. As we progress chronologically through Tyrrell's rather copious writings, the bounty of our wide search gathers up the various aspects of experience that may be increasingly distinguished from each other. At that point it appears reasonable to refine our approach by showing some flexibility with chronology in order to group writings implicating experience by subject matter.

A second challenge, already hinted at, concerns the very character of experience itself which, unlike most ideas, does not readily yield to conceptual formation. For the “being” of experience is more exactly the act of experiencing, more a verb than a noun, and more a never-ending process than a permanent outcome.<sup>5</sup> It is a continuum that cannot be isolated from its origin, trajectory, and relational character that binds the experienced and experienter. In this sense experience is different from most ideas whose abstractive character represents the familiar world of definable beings and even of concepts themselves. It belongs rather to a small group of ideas whose referents, like those of particularity, process, potentiality, and presence, are not easily arrested in the “still life” or “snapshot” of the concept.<sup>6</sup> In fact, these four ideas may be seen as components of experience. Like particularity, it is inseparable from the specific act of a particular person in a particular context; like process, it refers to an end result that is not isolated from the way that leads to it; like potentiality, it emerges from a source and points to an actualization greater than itself; like presence, it describes an interactive relational reality in the nexus of receiver and received, agent and acted upon.

A brief examination of particularity and process as aspects of experience allows us to see the difficulties more clearly. Like them, experience can only survive the ordeal of abstraction if its non-abstractable element is retained (paradoxically) as the referent.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise the idea of experience would be a mere abstraction (as opposed to the appropriate abstraction of a concrete being), which is the precise opposite of its intended sense. This hazard is most apparent in the final moment in the act of knowing when the knower returns to the particularity of a concrete being that is understood through the abstracted concept. In this act of “reparticularization,” the concept formed in the act of knowing is then applied to the being now grasped in its singularity and “standing thereness,” which were necessarily bracketed in the earlier moment of abstraction while the being’s assumed nature was universalized in a concept. This apparently complex procedure is performed by us all day long in the flash of an eye: “Is that a rock or a cow over there on the hill?” “Let’s get closer. . .it’s a rock.” The question and answer here truncate a more involved process: (1) encountering an unknown sense object; (2) pulling two likely candidates from the library of stock concepts for identifying the object; (3) interviewing both candidates for application to the object; and (4) applying candidate “rock” to the object after gaining some adequate evidence. But when one returns to reparticularize the concept of experience after an abstraction, the temptation is to be satisfied with a generalization of some kind that glosses over the particularity belonging to the experience as such. As a result, the act of abstracting experience from experiences can either lead to a

misleading reification since the idea has an elusive referent when it returns to be concretized, or the concept of experience simply becomes one more unapplied abstraction that fails to return to earth. These traps can be avoided, but they require some work.

Experience as process also defies adequate conceptualization because its sought-after finished form cannot be properly distinguished from the development that leads up to it. This is unlike most other concepts, which need not refer to their earlier forms or provide an account of their genesis. Experience, however, along with such similar concepts as motion and process, embraces the entire spectrum from origin through way to end point.<sup>8</sup> Like life itself, the concept of experience must include this entire gamut as experienced in order to embody successfully the content it sequentially encounters if it is to avoid collapse into the very abstractions from which it is designed to be distinguished.

Among other things, what this implies for our study is that experience, insofar as it involves particularity, process, potentiality, and presence, requires a more inductive method since this concept cannot be grasped adequately any other way. Unlike most works that set out with a thesis to be proved and then proceed to analyze the various aspects of the subject matter systematically through a logical chain of conclusions, this study at best can only end that way. To be sure, the student of Tyrrell, having already learned his teaching on experience *a posteriori*, could serve as systematician and elucidate this teaching in synthetic form. But the reader would then receive a truncated subject matter, a once-colorful landscape now in a black-and-white reproduction, a methodical articulation that would hide its developmental, revisable, and irreducible features. An inductive approach is particularly warranted in the case of our author who only gradually came to see the centrality of experience through his own intellectual experiences. In a word, the way of discovery is essential here for arriving at the way of being. When experience refers to the sum total of the moments that lead up to its more mature form, along with the process that accounts for this, then a method of inquiry is recommended that images its own subject matter by prioritizing the concrete, tracing the way, observing the overlooked, and studying the context.

We have observed that experience may be said in many ways, a conclusion confirmed by common experience and acknowledged in our title's predication of its human, religious, Christian, and Catholic significations. Following Tyrrell's investigation under these four aspects in terms of likenesses, differences, and interrelations constitutes a third challenge for this study. It is in tracking down these various nuances that our inquiry often finds itself facing complex questions in abstruse territory. It helps that these four distinctions are understood

somewhat loosely since they are not clearly delineated at the outset of Tyrrell's career and he increasingly blurred the lines separating them intentionally. In its unofficial role as an antithesis of system, then, experience should be given a certain conceptual freedom that allows it to cross over established epistemological boundaries in its work of presenting reality in unfamiliar ways. And reality here is not only intended in a formal sense: experience is also conversant in its ordinary and everyday expressions from which it first emerged and to which it often returns. Patience is thus recommended, especially at the start, when certain issues require abstruse reasoning and others appear to belabor the obvious. Whether the form in question is an engaging story or a formal argument, we will meet experience at work in familiar and unfamiliar territory, meeting the unexpected and expected in both unexpected and expected ways.

One example of Tyrrell's interest in classifying experience is found in his "religious faculty," which raises a question at the heart of this study.<sup>9</sup> A difficulty arises here from a Christian perspective when the religious power is presented as merely one among many human powers—or, in other words, when religion is seen as one of many factors of life.<sup>10</sup> For then something else must serve as the integrating and organizing factor of life. But if such a universal principle governing human knowing, feeling, and acting is a whole of which religion is simply a part, then is not the Christian faith, which claims to be the overarching principle of life, surpassed by something beyond it? Yes, unless life itself is also religious, at least potentially. Then the task for the individual becomes one of integrating all the factors of life, including religious activities in the strict sense, into a unified whole that is religious in the broadest sense. Activities directly associated with God, such as prayer, or with one's neighbor from a divine perspective, such as acts of charity, then take their place alongside such activities as work, learning, and leisure to form elements of this larger whole. And when all these activities are integrated with the specifically religious factor into a life that is religious in both senses, then life takes on a specific human and religious character in all of its dimensions—and for some, a Christian and/or Catholic one as well. This simple observation, encountered by every reflective believer, repeatedly emerges as a theme accompanying Tyrrell's approach to experience. Resisting sharp demarcations between the human and religious spheres, religious experience as he presents it penetrates, configures, interprets, and contextualizes Christian life, and Christian life returns the favor.

Among other tasks, then, this study of Tyrrell's theology of experience attempts to clarify how the so-called secular aspects of life are waiting to be sacralized. An ongoing task for the theologian is to surmount a multipolar understanding which

is not content with simply parceling out life into various domains, but integrating the factor of religion into a life that is religious in the larger sense. One may well interpret the Christian faith as proposing a vision that clarifies the purpose of human life and then offers teachings that presume a clean delineation between the sacred and the secular spheres. But another approach sees religion as life that embraces the widest field because the tradition is received by individual persons who must integrate the religious factor with the other factors of life. One might propose that Tyrrell is attempting for Catholicism what Hegel undertook for philosophy by establishing the relation of universal systematic thought to the particularity of the individual.<sup>11</sup> From the “factor” perspective, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; from the “life” perspective, Christianity is analogical, for each individual Christian life and the experiences that comprise it have similarities to and differences from all other Christian lives with corresponding experiences. The Christian life then is irreducibly a one and a many, and the principle of unity that follows from this is *e pluribus unum*. Yet even the one faith is a plurality: just as religion is expressed in the particularity of religions and Christianity exists in the form of many denominations, so particularity also embraces a variety of religious communities. Although his critical assessment of Protestantism gradually mellowed with time, Tyrrell remained committed to the end to the specifically Catholic form of Christianity, even as he was conscious of its defects.

A fourth challenge this study must face is that of arriving at definitive teachings on the concept of experience in Tyrrell’s writings. In his time and in his thought this category, which enjoyed the status of the novel and nascent, underwent the same broad development which accompanied his thought in general. No one was more conscious of this development than Tyrrell himself, even as his awareness of it developed.<sup>12</sup> Much of his writing is thus characterized by a marked tentativeness that becomes increasingly resolved as he accelerated his rejection of earlier versions of his thought that he came to judge as dogmatic. Yet his frequent retractions of even cherished positions were not a form of epistemological relativism. While holding that every formulation might be improved upon, Tyrrell always judged the human mind to be capable of arriving at positions that could be judged as superior to their alternatives. In this vein he even entertained the possibility that his entire theological corpus might be surpassed by a synthesis which eluded him to the end—a startling openness which always threatened to relegate his self-perception to that of permanent pathfinder.<sup>13</sup>

To respond, then, to the developmental character of Tyrrell’s thought in general and experience in particular calls for an interpretive fairness that distinguishes trial runs from lasting results. This is only possible if we occasionally walk

a little ways down rejected paths in order to provide a vivid contrast to and so shed light on the paths that are taken. And in the continual task of distilling the permanent from the passing, we must always be on the watch for the occasional rough stretch where the value or direction of a particular insight is not immediately accessible.

For the sake of accurately assessing Tyrrell's thought as well as that of his circle, we should recognize that he was not the first to have traversed the ground of experience. As with most thinkers, the more we study him, the more we find how much he depended on the thought of others. "Well thought" and even better read, his mind worked best when it was confronted with powerful ideas, whether acceptable or rejectable. This introduces a fifth challenge of determining to what extent he alighted upon new insights and how far he simply synthesized those of others. Tyrrell's confederates are placed both horizontally and vertically, that is, contemporaneously and serially in a long tradition of Catholic liberalism.<sup>14</sup> Horizontally: since he found himself in a close-knit circle of friends and supporters, Tyrrell's theological development became increasingly communitarian and intimately associated with their theological development. Among other interests, this circle supported ecclesial renewal, expressed opposition to modern scholasticism and ecclesial retrenchment, and insisted upon deference to new historical and scientific discoveries.<sup>15</sup> Vertically: as remarked above, although Tyrrell stood with others of his generation at a new moment in the history of theology that was distinguished by a more conscious assimilation of experience, such ideas nonetheless had deep roots that may be traced back to earlier generations of modern thinkers.<sup>16</sup>

The power of these new ideas was fueled in large part by the architectonic concept of evolution which, giving the impression of theoretical invincibility, eventually persuaded Tyrrell to switch from critic to proselytizer.<sup>17</sup> Before long he was encouraging theology, like all other disciplines, to adopt the new perspective and "study things in the light of their origin and growth."<sup>18</sup> If we are to follow this counsel with respect to his own thought, it is necessary to recognize both its remote and proximate sources since his teaching on experience presupposes its appearance in a tradition which he assimilated. By identifying Tyrrell's sources on this textual-chronological journey, we may relive with him his own discovery of experience along with its roots.

Any discussion of influences must face the sixth challenge of addressing the problem of the relation of Tyrrell's life to his thought, especially when the subject matter is experience. For his own personal engagement with the idea of experience likely arose not only or even primarily from his conceptual thinking,

but from a life marked by hardship, sadness, and suffering that was consciously intersubjective, consistently controversial, and intensely passionate. The ecclesial controversies during the first decade of the past century that may have occasionally served as helpful stimuli more often produced painful conflicts, which lent tragedy and bitterness to the period in general and to Tyrrell's life and thought in particular. His naturally apologetic and argumentative character may have served him well in earlier days when theological and personal disputes were mostly within the bounds of possible resolution. But later clashes with raised stakes brought out his acerbic genius which won him as many powerful enemies as arguments and eventually led to his status as ailing alien. This "live" context, which distinguishes Tyrrell's biography from that of most authors, offers a deeper attraction and realism to his writings, but it also invites a psychological and ideological hermeneutic. When the stakes and temperatures are high, the student may be tempted to extremes: to support the traditionalists or the revolutionaries, to identify the valorous and the villains, to interpret the age one-sidedly, to find ready confirmation for one's own preferences. A certain detachment is then called for to meet this challenge that recognizes that truth is rarely the sole possession of any party. Since opposing sides may be both victims and perpetrators, truth is best served when unnecessary judgments are avoided, especially those concerning the antagonists.

Our contemporary predilection for interpreting a thinker's ideas by recourse to non-intellectual factors, including his or her subjective dispositions, invites the critic to approach any system of thought through the office of psychologist or sociologist. In view of his personal biography, the temptation to study Tyrrell in this fashion is especially strong, and when the topic is experience, all the more compelling since he bequeathed to us both "idea" texts (books, articles, book reviews) and "life" texts (letters and autobiography). Obvious truth be told, research on this period and this thinker have not always avoided theological partisanship, but this is to be expected for a controversial personality and a contentious period that struggled with problems that are still with us, if in altered form. The diverse appraisals and judgments of this intriguing yet tragic episode in modern Church history thus provide all the more reason to offer a contribution that attempts to recover in slower, calmer motion the authentic thought of George Tyrrell in its historical placement at the center of a storm.

The question of the relation of life to thought must be faced at a yet deeper level because of the biographical writings of the author and the subject matter. Quite simply, Tyrrell complicated the question of the relevance of his life for his teaching on experience by writing a brief autobiography. To be sure, he wrote it

principally for himself,<sup>19</sup> but he knew that anyone who was already well published could expect such a work falling into public hands. Covering the first 23 years of his life, *The Autobiography of George Tyrrell* is written somewhat in the spirit of Augustine's *Confessions*. It is both a factual statement of his life and a critical reflection on it, both a summary of personal events and a trove of universal spiritual insights. Written seven years after the last events it records, this work was fashioned at a time when its author was hardening his resistance to the Jesuits and rapidly releasing his thinking from prior intellectual commitments.<sup>20</sup> The events it records may then be painted with even darker shades than their original coloring, and in this case it would be not only a summary of what is almost exactly the first half of his life, but a personal statement on himself for himself at a particularly critical time.

Now when the subject matter is experience, the issues raised by Tyrrell's life and autobiography only highlight the question of the relevance of this life—or any personal life—to a philosophy or theology of experience. For if any conceptual presentation of experience is partly configured by the personal experience of its conceiver, then delving into the personal biography of George Tyrrell appears necessary. But if experience by definition is ineluctably personal, then a philosophy or theology of experience faces the objection that its conclusions are irrelevant for public discourse, not only because the common and objective elements are presumably inseparable from the personal and subjective ones, but the communicator of experience in this case is also the interpreter. We are then faced with the cul-de-sac of a philosophy or theology of experience, taking the principle of individuality to an extreme, being shackled to the subjective individuality of its framers. Any line separating this discipline from biography disappears and one arrives at a trite solipsism that instructs each to go his or her own inimitable and unscientific way. A nearly opposite danger, equally unacceptable, arises when a particular biography sets out, even if unconsciously, to determine theology.<sup>21</sup> We can acquit Tyrrell of these shortcomings since even a superficial reading of his autobiography and his other writings manifests a largeness of spirit and capacity for self-critique that is incompatible with narcissism.<sup>22</sup>

Without denying the thesis that personal experiences doubtless influenced his theology of experience, as would be true of anyone, Tyrrell's thought is too complex to fall prey to charges of radical subjectivism or undiluted solipsism. Rather, it stakes out a middle ground where each can forge a personal path that synthesizes personal convictions and insights with a larger common teaching that belongs in the public domain and applies to all. This middle ground comprised of the personal and the common is itself a common, objective achievement—and

a personal one. On this view, personal experience can contribute to the concept of experience either “before” or “after”: before, insofar as anyone reflecting on experience can apply one’s personal experience to the common category as long as it is applicable to others; and after, insofar as one takes advantage of the space left open for personal appropriation in a well-rounded theology of experience. What we shall discover is the young Tyrrell already reaching toward a meta-concept of experience that accounts for the difference between the common and the personal while finding a place for them both, all the while offering a more complex understanding of experience that may serve as an entry into religion and theology.

To preserve Tyrrell’s approach, I shall attempt to hold to the principle that any of his “life” texts are of use solely for the purpose of gleaning common and objective insights into his teaching on experience. This means avoiding the seduction of reading his publications in the light of his private thoughts, that is, of interpreting what he presented to the public primarily in the light of what he did not present to the public. On the presumption that the non-intellectual causes of an idea cannot determine its truth or worth, this study disavows any attempt to uncover a psychology of deeper teachings nestled in Tyrrell’s private life and correspondence that allegedly holds the interpretive key to his public writings. The hermeneutical decision has been taken to honor the distinction between psychology and theology, and to respect Tyrrell’s decision to withhold from the public what he chose to reveal only privately to a privileged few.<sup>23</sup> In the rare cases where unpublished writings contribute to his philosophy and theology of experience, I shall use common sense to determine how far they should be included in this study in order to maintain a sensible demarcation between biography and theology.<sup>24</sup>

Distinguishing personal from topical writings brings us to the seventh challenge of respecting the different kinds of writing encountered in Tyrrell’s corpus. For here is a body of literature at once permanent and passing, serious and lighthearted, scholarly and popular, theological and philosophical, reflective and impulsive. Discriminating among its various intentions, audiences, and literary modes is a prerequisite for adequately grasping Tyrrell’s thought, particularly when the subject is experience. Form and matter come together here: the presentation of experience as flexible, manifold, and analogical is reflected in a body of literature with identical characteristics. Manifesting an exceptional diversity in the form of books, articles, reviews, or letters to the editor, these compositions display the pen of a thinker who could think and write systematically, occasionally, rhetorically, and argumentatively. Such flexibility on the part of an artist

who was at home with these various styles demands a diligence on the part of the student to follow the clues that literary form offers for effective interpretation.

Our assignment, then, is recognizing and evaluating both the various kinds of writings as well as styles of composition: manuscripts to which utmost care in composition was shown, occasional essays and letters that reveal much passion as well as thinking,<sup>25</sup> and various shades of writing somewhere in between. The letters Tyrrell sent to his friends and associates often included previews of his latest ideas in order that he might benefit from their criticism.<sup>26</sup> If we add to Tyrrell's apologetic energy and passionate response a rare capacity for effective irony and satire, we are not surprised at his penchant for being misunderstood, sometimes even by his friends.<sup>27</sup> When it came to issues of truth, Tyrrell's writings can be ironic and ambiguous at times, but they are largely free of compromise. On the rare occasions when he did attempt to meet his censors part way, the genre of writing this produced likely does less than full justice to his thought.<sup>28</sup>

Here it is apropos, both by reason of the subject matter and the diverse literary forms he employed, to comment on Tyrrell's splendid prose. It was judged by some to belong to the most gifted British writer that the Church had produced since Newman. Aware of his flair for expression, Tyrrell responded generously to the inner coercion driving him to produce. By current standards, his mostly informal style is eminently readable and surprisingly contemporary, even in its use of many colloquialisms that are still in vogue today. All the more reason for us not to overlook the occasional "period piece" word that carries a different sense or meaning, which I signal to the reader when confusion would otherwise result. While it is safe to say that Tyrrell's quality of prose is almost uniformly outstanding, the quality of his argument is occasionally less satisfactory. His penchant for writing hastily and publishing his thoughts at every turn even before they had always reached maturity likely served his thinking better than his argument. Because he is eminently quotable and his prose is often so polished that a paraphrase only serves to conceal it, I shall not be reticent in giving Tyrrell ample opportunities to speak for himself.

In the face of the abundance, variety, and complexity of Tyrrell's writings from the perspective of experience, it is clear that a comprehensive study of this category in all his writings would far exceed the limits of what this study can reasonably undertake. Where to begin is not difficult to decide: at the beginning with Tyrrell's first composition. But where to end—our eighth challenge—poses a problem indeed since a complete study of experience in his thought would require several more volumes. To be sure, our inquiry could find a fitting

conclusion at a particular point in a given branch of theology where experience is clearly profiled. But such a point may be inappropriate from other perspectives on experience in other theological domains since this multifaceted concept moves forward on various thematic fronts with differing intensities and uneven advances. One arena may yield a coherent and definitive teaching on experience at the very moment when another arena may be in a more amorphous state and can offer nothing more than tentative positions and provisional teachings. Would the difficulty vanish if we were to give primacy to the most fundamental domain, namely religious experience as it is explored in Tyrrell's religious and theological writings? But this is itself a variegated concept that cannot be simply contained within one theological domain and so might reflect various stages of development in, say, spirituality, fundamental theology, and ecclesiology at any given moment.

A solution, however, is at hand if we look elsewhere. Instead of seeking the completion of a specific stage of Tyrrell's articulation of experience, we can return to the question of influences and consult which intellectual figure had the greatest impact on his thought. Assuming the common view of scholars that various stages in his writings can be marked out to reveal major turns in his thinking, one might well argue that the most basic distinction is that between an earlier period when St. Thomas Aquinas was Tyrrell's principal influence and a later period when a number of modern thinkers and theological influences competed for that role. The genesis of Tyrrell's thinking is that of a young Jesuit scholastic who was trained to think within the parameters of scholasticism and whose subsequent encounter with other thinkers was instinctively filtered through a Thomistic lens.<sup>29</sup> It is this first period—the "Thomistic phase"—that the present study investigates, from the earliest compositions with their unabashedly scholastic accent, through a middle period when Thomas was placed in dialogue with other thinkers, to the beginning of the end of this influence and just before it began its steep decline. During these years it is Thomas who was the thinker to whom Tyrrell was most indebted for the categories and content of his thought. It was Thomas who provided him with the basic metaphysical and epistemological worldview underlying his far-flung inquiries in so many fields addressing so many issues that were not and could not possibly have been addressed by Thomas himself. What will mark the following few years is the Thomistic influence still present but in attenuated form, when the foundations of Tyrrell's earlier convictions will be shaken and occasionally crumble as he joins a community of thinkers who will introduce him to modern forms of thought. This period and its writings will be treated in our next volume.

To speak of a Thomistic phase admittedly does not give us a hard and fast rule for unambiguously defining an “after” phase since the waning influence of Thomas would be felt in certain areas of theology before others. As with most thinkers, we do not discover in Tyrrell a sudden break from one period to the next, any more than the colors on the prism yield discrete entities. Yet the distinction remains useful, for when this first period came fully to a close toward the start of the new century, the medieval giant not only lost his status as Tyrrell’s primary inspiration, but many of the principles, concepts, and methods regarding mysticism and modernity that he increasingly promoted, constituted a rejection of Thomism in general. If taken flexibly, then, the category of a Thomistic phase offers a unifying principle for interpreting all of Tyrrell’s writings from 1886 to 1897 and for distinguishing them from all the writings that follow. These years coincidentally correspond to roughly the first half of his writing career but only a fraction of his literary output.

This first major period of Thomistic influence requires a further division of Tyrrell’s writing career into three phases. An early phase, spanning the years from about 1885 to about 1896, is marked by the predominance of Thomas that provides Tyrrell with the basic concepts and vocabulary for engaging a broad representation of thinkers on a great variety of issues. A second phase, as important as it is brief, finds its chronological middle point in 1897. It is marked by sustained attention to questions in aesthetics, spirituality, and morality, and sees the publication of two autographs, *Nova et Vetera* and *Notes on the Catholic Doctrine of Purity*, as well as the preparation of a third, *Hard Sayings*. Although the first work is comprised of a series of short meditations and the second is really a long essay on a somewhat narrow theme, both together represent a critical moment in Tyrrell’s career since he now publicly appears as a thinker in his own right and not simply as a brilliant if eclectic Thomist responding creatively to the insights of others. The third phase, to be treated in the next volume and lasting from 1897 to early 1900, shows the Thomistic influence rapidly waning and contemporary thinking increasingly adopted in positions outside of—and often at odds with—the scholastic agenda. This later phase, which chronologically doubles as a middle period from the perspective of Tyrrell’s entire career, may be considered as either his late Thomistic phase or his early middle period. It is a particularly fascinating time span when scholastic and modern conceptions are both harmoniously and dissonantly juxtaposed to create works of profound arguments and brilliant insights. But that phase can only be adequately understood and appreciated after the first two phases treated in this study. They are respectively entitled “George

Tyrrell of St. Thomas” and “Recasting Traditions: Aesthetics, Spirituality and Morality.”

Having clarified the theme, method, and scope of our inquiry, we arrive at the ninth and last challenge of justifying yet another work on Tyrrell. The topical theological questions he addressed, including religious experience, have been thoroughly combed by students, along with issues of biography, background, sources, circle, influences, and legacy. But experience simply considered has not been a topic for discussion, nor the relation of this theme to its specifically religious expression. Further, Tyrrell’s earlier works that this study targets have been largely overlooked, for understandable reasons, with attention focused on his mature and controversial writings. This work seeks to fill this gap by working within the chronological parameters that yield the origins of his thought with the help of an open-ended concept—experience—particularly suited to lay bare his panoramic thinking. Both the timeframe and the subject matter recommend a textual approach proceeding chronologically along the way of Tyrrell’s own experience with the theme of experience. Chronologically documenting the gradual development of this concept in his earliest writings is further recommended in view of the prolificacy of his writings and the rapid development of his thought. Because he chose to publish his ideas at their various stages of maturity, it is safe to assume that his conclusions are best appreciated by recourse to the process that led to them. This means placing ourselves under his tutelage and allowing him to be our pathfinder in his search for the meaning and importance of experience in its various accents.

But is even this too much? Since nearly all of Tyrrell’s writings in the time period that this study has marked out for consideration invoke experience in one way or another, it is clear that the sheer volume of writings even in this restricted time frame on a concept so wide in scope suggests a formidable task. The strategy adopted to avoid this pitfall is to undertake different labors in our treatment of the various writings. In Part One, the search is begun for any clues whatsoever for experience by tracking its appearance in very different contexts. This is followed by a detailed study of an influential work and how Tyrrell understood and developed its teachings from the perspective of experience. Part One concludes by investigating another miscellany of writings that offers various perspectives on experience in different fields, thus providing a rich harvest of ideas for his future writings. Part Two begins with an elucidation of Tyrrell’s aesthetics and a detailed look at his sources. This enables us to appreciate the creative synthesis he arrives at that cannot be reduced to any prior aesthetics. His first two books

are then examined in order to draw from them the elements of a spirituality and moral theology of experience, respectively. On the basis of the work done up to this point, we shall later be able to undertake a more systematic inquiry into experience by distinguishing its various appearances in different theological arenas. Conceptual strands that are present but not necessarily interwoven in Tyrrell's thought can then be synthesized, and more opportunities are afforded to evaluate his claims and logic by cross-referencing his writings and even appealing to experience itself.

Our assignment, then, is an elucidation of human, religious, Christian, and Catholic experience in the Thomistic writings of Tyrrell in its unquestioning and questioning phases. To accomplish this task, especially in view of the abundance of texts where Tyrrell engages this concept, I address three major issues at once: the explicit teachings on experience, the general philosophical and theological teachings insofar as they bear on experience, and the development of the idea of experience in itself and in relation to these teachings. I begin at the beginning, where his thought already shows an incipient appreciation of experience as a reality deserving occasional treatment, and then continue through his increasing recognition of its importance as a category in its own right, and eventually arrive at his bold insistence on the indispensability of this meta-concept for philosophical and theological discourse. Yet any experience must be an experience of something, and so it can only be found in the various domains that Tyrrell explored: pedagogy, apologetics, philosophy of religion, ecclesiology, spirituality, sociology and social criticism, biography, aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, sociology, and fundamental theology. Consequently, this study's broadly chronological-textual method of discovery is complemented with the parallel investigations of these conceptual ports where experience is usually moored. Before I begin, however, a brief summary of Tyrrell's life is offered that provides a chronological scaffolding to support what follows.<sup>30</sup>

George Tyrrell was born on Feb. 2, 1861, five weeks after his father's death, in Dublin, Ireland into a poor Anglican family as the youngest of three children. His earliest formative ecclesial experience was the high Anglican liturgy of the Grangegorman Church in Dublin. First exposures to Roman Catholicism were by courtesy of a maid at one of the family's many temporary lodgings, and of a Miss Lynch, who embodied a Catholicism that was particularly attractive to him. In 1876 Tyrrell's older brother Willie died, leaving him with only his mother and younger sister. Tyrrell's path to Catholicism was smoothed by the Anglican pastor and social reformer, Fr. Robert Dolling, whom he met the following year. Shortly afterward he began attending the Jesuit church in Dublin

and even went to confession, and consequently ran afoul of the Grangegorman Church. Fr. Dolling invited him to accompany him to London, which he did in early 1879, but with the intention of investigating the possibility of conversion to Catholicism and a priestly vocation.

When he was not yet two weeks in London, Tyrrell tracked down the Jesuits at Farm Street in order to receive instructions in the faith. On May 18, 1879, he was received into the Roman Church, and on the very same day the Jesuit priest who received him inquired about his vocational plans, thus meeting Tyrrell on his own hidden ground. In November 1879, the Jesuit provincial deferred his entrance into the Jesuits, and arranged him to teach at a Jesuit school in Cyprus. Only three months after Tyrrell's arrival the school closed, so he was sent to the English College in Malta, which proved a disappointing experiment in Jesuit life. In September 1880 Tyrrell began his novitiate in Manresa outside London at roughly the same time that his mother moved to London with his sister Louy to stay with an uncle. Shortly thereafter, Tyrrell's mother converted to Catholicism and then followed her daughter to Bonn. Afflicted with breast cancer, she began the journey back to Dublin but got only as far as London, where she died before Tyrrell could visit her. His mother's death in May 1884 was a significantly difficult experience for the young Jesuit.

In September 1882 Tyrrell began philosophy studies at the Jesuit scholasticate at Stonyhurst outside London, where he followed the example of Fr. Thomas Rigby in rejecting Suárez's interpretation of Thomas. In the spirit of Pope Leo XII's *Aeterni Patris*, he presented the master's teaching directly from the text. After two years at Stonyhurst Tyrrell returned to Malta to teach for three years, which was succeeded by his theology studies at St. Bueno's College in North Wales from 1888 to 1891. On October 9, 1891, he was ordained to the priesthood. Tyrrell's tertianship (the "second" Jesuit novitiate) was undertaken in Manresa, where he engaged in a deeper study of *Spiritual Exercises*. After a brief unhappy period at the Jesuit mission house in Oxford, he was transferred to St. Helen's in Lancashire near Manchester for pastoral work in a blue-collar parish. This was perhaps his happiest assignment in the Society. Called back to teach philosophy at Stonyhurst in August 1894, Tyrrell came into sharp conflict with Suárezian-minded colleagues, which led him to solicit the intervention of Cardinal Mazzella, S.J. in Rome. This higher appeal did not endear him to the faculty or administration, and in August 1896 Tyrrell was removed from teaching and assigned to the editorial staff of the Jesuit periodical *Month* at the Jesuit headquarters on Farm Street in London. Disaffected, he wrote to the General in December 1896, expressly stating his desire never to teach again.

On Farm Street Tyrrell began his prodigious literary career. Beginning with essays and reviews, he was able to publish a collection of meditations, *Nova et Vetera*, after just a few months there in May 1897. This book made him both famous and sought after as a spiritual director. Baron Friedrich von Hügel, who had read this book, wrote his first letter to Tyrrell on October 9, 1897. This began a long friendship and fateful association that eventually brought the young Jesuit into the circle of friends and intellectuals who in time became known as the modernists. In September 1897 Tyrrell visited von Hügel for the first time, who supplied him with recommended readings that considerably broadened his intellectual horizon and introduced him to the burning questions of the day. Tyrrell's circle of friends and correspondents widened in 1898 to include Henri Bremond, Maude Petre, and Wilfrid Ward. In the same year he began to write prefaces for the Duckworth series, *Lives of the Saints*, and he published *Hard Sayings*, a collection of 18 in-depth spiritual essays. Ward's invitation to Tyrrell to join the Synthetic Society in 1899 widened his access to significant individuals, and in early 1899 he published his first apologetic work, *External Religion*.

Tyrrell's writings at this time increasingly represented a departure from Thomistic thought, particularly his celebrated article, "The Relation of Theology to Devotion" (1899), which gained wide European circulation through von Hügel's dissemination. His publication of "A Perverted Devotion" a month later, which was placed on the Index, led to increasing difficulties with Jesuit superiors and disaffection with the Society as a whole. Tyrrell was forbidden to write for any publication other than the *Month*, and in late 1900 he was assigned to Richmond in Yorkshire in northern England, where he spent his remaining days as a Jesuit until he was dismissed from the Society on February 19, 1906. We only mention in passing the tragic chronicle of Tyrrell's last years that were marked by a rapid decline in health due to kidney failure (Bright's disease) and mounting conflicts with the Church, especially following his public critique of Pope Pius X's encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. This culminated with Tyrrell's minor excommunication (deprivation of sacraments) on orders from the pope on October 22, 1907. He died on July 15, 1909, less than two years later.

As the reader progresses chronologically through this study of Tyrrell's early writings, the work of uncovering a philosophy and theology of experience becomes harder and easier: harder, because experience shows up in ever wider domains and becomes implicated in nearly every aspect of reality; easier, because the concept becomes increasingly familiar in its various aspects and ramifications. But it is hoped that in neither case will this reading become laborious, for it is truer to say of experience than of almost any other reality that "there is nothing so practical

as theory.”<sup>31</sup> This the reader should uncover even in Tyrrell’s exaggerations and mistakes, which we have not glossed over.

There are at least three basic ways to read this work. One is to enjoy the small morsels, usually found in the engagement of Tyrrell with this or that author. In these conversations we receive a double portion: a fair assessment of the thinker he encounters, even if in disagreement, and his own response. Taken this way, this study offers a series of diverse vignettes, each of which can be enjoyed in its own right without requiring the labor of synthesis and reconciliation. A second approach is to read the work historically or critically, or both, in order to better understand a recent period in Church history and to distinguish in Tyrrell’s teachings what is of passing interest from what is of permanent value. Finally, one may take the further step of integrating the various offerings through the lens of experience in order to enjoy a full-scale banquet. It is to assist with this effort that my syntheses are offered at strategic intervals, usually in the form of Conclusions. No matter how the work is read, I am confident that the reader will benefit from receiving George Tyrrell’s engagement with the concept of experience and thereby find his or her own experience enriched in new ways.

The words that Tyrrell’s close friend Henri Bremond wrote of Newman may be applied to our author as well: “We must take [him] just as he is, with his sceptical intelligence and profoundly believing soul, on pain of misunderstanding the originality, and of sacrificing the opportunities, of his ‘message.’”<sup>32</sup> And to paraphrase a famous contemporary of his, Friedrich Nietzsche, the insights of large minds are of greater value than the petty truths of the small. Finally, we can add Tyrrell’s own counsel that was taken directly from the school of experience: “there is a deep self that never sleeps and never dies; and that he who sees that watchful heart and not merely the slumbering eyes, will judge us (as we should judge one another) by what we say and do when we are *at our best*.”<sup>33</sup> In the following there is plenty of Tyrrell’s best to be found.

## Notes

- 1 One notable exception to the recent neglect of Modernism in general and George Tyrrell in particular is Anthony Maher, *The Forgotten Jesuit of Catholic Modernism: George Tyrrell’s Prophetic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018). The author examines in turn Tyrrell’s life, theology, and legacy.
- 2 It is fitting that the title of Tyrrell’s first book, *Nova et Vetera* (1897), announces what reflects his lifelong struggle to preserve the tradition by expanding and correcting it, and by retrieving from its storehouse truths both old and new. This abiding concern

is also reflected in the title of one of his last works, *Through Scylla and Charybdis*. The Odyssean image applies to the tension between tradition and authority, on the one hand, and progress and liberty, on the other (Letter to C. J. Longman, in *Petre, Life*, 318).

- 3 In the nineteenth century the concept of experience received philosophical attention before it became a theological category. An early example is Emerson's "Experience," likely written on the occasion of his young son's death (*The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 3, *Essays*, Second Series [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1876], 43–86).
- 4 "And from memory experience is produced in men; for many memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience. Experience seems to be very similar to science and art, but really science and art come to men through experience; for 'experience made art,' as Polus says, 'but inexperience luck.' And art arises, when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about similar objects is produced" (*Metaphysics* I,1 (980b27–981a7), in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross [New York: Modern Library, 2001], 689). Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle in assigning a secondary role to experience in his moral theology as well. See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I–II, q. 40, a. 5 (hereafter *ST* I–II, 40, 5), where experience is said to be a cause of hope. Thomas's philosophical thought is experiential in the sense that he follows Aristotle in holding that philosophy is ultimately based on human experience. And his theology is similarly saturated with experience insofar as his theology is philosophically shaped.
- 5 Toward the end of his life, Tyrrell explicitly applied this approach: "The Modernist therefore denies the scholastic's right to challenge him for definitions and conclusions that are ever in the making and never made." "For man, truth is an unending process of adequation, not a finished result. His understanding and analysis can never do more than outline the growing masses of his experience" (*Medievalism: A Reply to Cardinal Mercier* [London: Longmans, Green, 1908], 155, 157).
- 6 Seeking to define particularity is attempting to universalize a concept that is the opposite of universality. See Thomas Aquinas's teaching on the possibility of universalizing individuality in an indeterminate sense (*ST* I, 30, 4). Aristotle's definition of motion or change, similar to the notion of process, is "the fulfilment of what is potential when it is already fulfilled and operates not as itself but as movable" (McKeon, *Physics*, III, 1 [201a28–29], trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, 254. Potentiality is defined with respect to what it is not as not yet.
- 7 Abstraction is intended here in the Aristotelian sense, whereby the act of knowing involves the formation of a concept that arises when the intelligible form or species of the knowable object is abstracted from its particular and accidental features. See *On the Soul* III, 7 and *ST* I, 84, 7.
- 8 A comparison with certain works of art can illumine the distinction. For most art works—musical compositions, buildings, books—the end result is the completion

of the process leading up to the achievement that appears in the public world. But occasionally the work images the process of its coming to be. St. Augustine's *De Trinitate* intentionally includes earlier drafts of analogies that are later refined. Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* offers several drafts of "Selige Morgentraumdeut-Weise" as we witness Hans Sachs help Walther transform this song into the winning prize. The fantasy impromptu musical form erases the distinction between the act of producing and the object produced as much as possible and meticulously creates the illusion that it has no idea where it is going. Similarly, the concept of experience must aspire to be the "living form" of the experiencing that it images. As we shall see, the contemporary fascination with the philosophical applications of evolution encouraged this approach. And Hegel offered a metaphysical justification for this sensitivity to origin and development insofar as past historical achievements are dialectically included in what supersedes them. While interest in Hegel's thought waned in Germany shortly after his death, it enjoyed a renaissance in late nineteenth-century Britain. See Anthony Quinton, "Political Philosophy," in *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Anthony Kenny (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 364–65. During and after Tyrrell's lifetime Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method helped refine this sensitivity to origin and development by epistemologically probing its status as buried in the mature state of a being's idea. See Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 213–19; Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Robin Small, ed. *A Hundred Years of Phenomenology: Perspectives on a Philosophical Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), xv–xviii.

- 9 Tyrrell's first explicit reference to this problem is found in "Liberal' Catholicism," *Month* 91 (May 1898): 449–57; reprinted in *The Faith of the Millions: A Selection of Past Essays*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1901, 1904), v. 1, 68–84; see esp. 76–77 (hereafter *FM*).
- 10 This problem is clearly reflected in the title of Tyrrell's pseudonymous *Religion as a Factor of Life* (Exeter: William Pollard, 1902), privately printed under the pseudonym "Dr. Ernest Engels."
- 11 Tyrrell's temptation to think in terms of Hegelian absolutism is captured in a letter in which he confidently predicted that he was producing a "synthesis of everything. . . after which humanity will have nothing more to discover" (Marc-André Raffalovich Papers, Blackfriars Library, Oxford, quoted in David G. Schultenover, *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* [Shepherdstown: The Patmos Press, 1981], 208). This work will be extensively cited in our study since it is one of the few scholarly works on Tyrrell that includes a thorough treatment of his early career—and is arguably the best. Oskar Schroeder, noting that Tyrrell read Newman's *A Grammar of Assent* in 1885 before beginning his theology studies, finds a leitmotiv in this work for his life's project: "Religion has to do with the real, and the real is the particular; theology

- has to do with what is notional, and the notional is the general and systematic” (*An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* [London: Longmans, Green, 1875], quoted in Oskar Schroeder, *Aufbruch und Mißverständnis: Zur Geschichte der Reformkatholischen Bewegung* [Graz: Styria, 1969], 140).
- 12 “I have rarely or never written anything which after-thought would not have mended in some respects” (Letter to Bishop Amigo, in *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, Vol. 2, *Life of George Tyrrell from 1884 to 1909*, by M. D. Petre [London: Edward Arnold, 1912], 341–42) (hereafter *Life*).
- 13 “My own work—which I regard as done—has been to raise a question which I have failed to answer. I am not so conceited as to conclude that it is therefore unanswerable” (Tyrrell to Boutwood, 13 January 1909, Letter in Maude D. Petre, ed., *George Tyrrell’s Letters* [London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920], 119).
- 14 This is the major thesis of Thomas Michael Loome, *Liberal Catholicism, Reform Catholicism, Modernism: A Contribution to a New Orientation in Modernist Research*, Tübinger theologische Studien, vol. 14 (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1979), 23–33, 83–108.
- 15 Modern scholasticism, the official theology of the Church in the modern period, subsisted in various schools of interpretations that were associated with the manuals. Each of these possessed a common language, strict adherence to ecclesial and dogmatic pronouncements, and a stringent set of rules and outcomes governing open questions. This scholasticism to be distinguished from the spirit, content, and methods of medieval scholasticism. Tyrrell at first subscribed to a *ressourcement*-styled scholasticism of the late nineteenth-century that attempted a retrieval of an authentic Thomism that was faithful to the original texts and distinguished itself from the various schools of interpretation. But he gradually abandoned this at the turn of the century in favor of contemporary philosophical approaches.
- 16 “More precisely than any other religious writer of his time Schleiermacher mapped out the place of religion in the structure of human consciousness and its role in the cultivation of human capacities” (Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Steven Katz and Patrick Sherry, eds., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in The West* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], vol. 1, 9). His critical insight was the postulation of a third realm of reality beyond Kant’s metaphysical and moral realms that is the subject of genuine religion and is accessed through the act of *Anschauung* (religious experience in a specific sense). See Richard Crouter, introduction to *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, by Friedrich Schleiermacher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1–39. There is no evidence that Tyrrell read Schleiermacher, although he was influenced by thinkers who had studied him, especially Friedrich von Hügel and Maurice Blondel. See Schultenover, 73, 374, 377. For a rather comprehensive list of thinkers who more or less influenced Tyrrell, see *ibid.*, esp. 73–91, 188–207.

- 17 “Natural selection, a materialist explanation for adaptation and the diversity of life, was Darwin’s main contribution. Coupled with a candid and persuasive argument, it was enough to convince most scientists of the truth of evolution, and to capture the imagination of most late nineteenth-century thinkers” (Colin Patterson, “Evolution: Neo-Darwinian Theory,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L. Gregory [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987], 234).
- 18 Tyrrell’s melding of progressive scholasticism with nineteenth-century scientific methodology appears in the following remark: “It is characteristic of the mind of our day to study things in the light of their origin and growth; and indeed, if science be a knowledge of things by their causes, it is evident that to know the genesis of an effect is really essential to an intelligent understanding of its nature and its end” (Introduction to *The Testament of Ignatius Loyola*, by Ignatius of Loyola, trans. E. M. Rix [London: Sands, 1900], 1).
- 19 *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell*, vol. 1, *Autobiography of George Tyrrell, 1861–1884*, arranged, with supplements, by M. D. Petre (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), v (hereafter *Autobiography*).
- 20 Schultenover, 169.
- 21 Works in spirituality are likelier to be saddled with the temptation to make one’s personal experience the universal measure since spirituality is typically concerned with the personal element and the disciple is encouraged to imitate the life of the master.
- 22 Tyrrell’s judgment of his novice master, despite its generosity, provides a good description of this limitation: “Like most of us he was ‘automorphic,’ and supposed that others would be as he was” (*Autobiography*, 199).
- 23 Michele Ranchetti provides an example of the alternative approach that takes Tyrrell’s autobiography as the point of departure (*The Catholic Modernists: A Study of the Religious Reform Movement 1864–1907*, trans. Isabel Quigly [London: Oxford University Press, 1969], 7–8).
- 24 To be sure, there are defensible approaches that lie in between. Schultenover’s study interweaves biographical, historical, and theological elements into a larger whole. His assertion that “public writings reveal his thought, his private writings his feelings” recognizes Tyrrell’s capacity to distinguish the publicly objective and the privately subjective in his writings and life (113).
- 25 “We are quite at one with Cardinal Newman as to the importance of letters as a basis of biography. They are facts. But they are not the only facts. A man’s correspondence is not his diary. It will often represent the exceptional crises of his life, while all record of his normal self is wanting. Perhaps the most unpleasing episodes of his history will be the most prominent in his surviving correspondence” (“The Ethics of Suppression in Biography,” review of *Life of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster*, by Edmund S. Purcell, *Month* 88 [November 1896]: 365).
- 26 Unfortunately, most of the letters he received he destroyed.

- 27 A good example is the irony of “Tracts for the Million” that was missed by most (*Month* 96 [November 1900]: 449–60; reprinted in *FM*, vol. 2: 136–57). See Nicholas Sagovsky, “*On God’s Side*”: *A Life of George Tyrrell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 118–19.
- 28 For an example of Tyrrell’s capacity for compromise, see his last essay, “‘Revelation as Experience’: An Unpublished Lecture of George Tyrrell” (1909), ed. Thomas Michael Loome, *Heythrop Journal* 12 (April 1971): 148. This kind of writing is mostly absent in the earlier period that this study treats.
- 29 At the same time, the influence of Thomas is to be carefully distinguished from a more general scholasticism from which Tyrrell even in his earliest writings was careful to distinguish from his own thinking as well as from that of Thomas himself.
- 30 The secondary literature on Tyrrell and his life is voluminous. To single out a few: the *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell* is the place to begin, although one will be warned time and again by the commentators to protect oneself from Tyrrell’s self-interpretations as well as those of Maude Petre. The best biography on Tyrrell is that of Sagovsky, in large part because it limits itself strictly to recounting his life. For the relation of Tyrrell’s thought to his life, Schultenover’s *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* is incomparable. A sympathetic treatment that weaves Tyrrell’s life in the larger context of the modernist controversy is found in Marvin R O’Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994). Maher provides the most recent extended treatment of Tyrrell’s life in Part I of his work (3–74). Finally, some interesting observations may be found in Bernard Reardon, ed., *Roman Catholic Modernism*, *A Library of Modern Religious Thought*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Adam & Charles Black 1970), 36–52.
- 31 “The Clergy and the Social Problem,” *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 22 (January 1897): 15.
- 32 Henri Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*, with an Introduction by George Tyrrell, trans. H. C. Corrance (London: Williams and Norgate, 1907), viii.
- 33 Petre, *Life*, 25.

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