

Interreligious Reading after Vatican II with John Henry Newman's Two Habits of Mind

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Introduction

This paper applies certain elements from John Henry Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* to some issues presented by the recent volume *Interreligious Reading After Vatican II*, responding particularly to Michael Barnes' essay "Opening Up a Dialogue: Dei Verbum and the Religions."¹ My motivation for this arises primarily from being a Catholic who participates in Scriptural Reasoning, and who has therefore been led to reflect on the particular tensions that bear on the practice of SR from within the Catholic tradition. My main concern is, firstly, the fact that magisterial pronouncements are often bound to a correspondence view of truth, connected to the deductive reasoning frequently associated with the neo-Scholastic textbooks. Insofar as this seems to entail a "mono-visional"² understanding of truth, it obviously threatens the plurality of voices which are part and parcel of the practice of SR in the Abrahamic tent of meeting. Secondly, I am also concerned in this paper with the fact that magisterial documents of recent decades affirm consistently that interreligious dialogue should not preclude proclamation, with the ultimate end of seeking conversion. Again, this threatens to unsettle the kind of respectful engagement required for SR, where the centre of gravity lies not in seeking converts to one's own tradition, but in engaging in constructive encounter with other traditions to heal the brokenness of our global context, or engaging in *tikkun olam*.³ With both these areas of concern, there is a genuine tension for the Catholic SR practitioner, so in this paper I want to show how John Henry Newman's thinking might offer some resources to orientate Catholics navigating their way through this difficult territory.

What is proposed in this paper is intended to show Catholics how they might be orientated between the two poles described by Paul D. Murray in the *Interreligious Reading* volume, in terms of avoiding both "a closed, conflicted tribalism" and "a universalising common core theory of religious traditions."⁴ On the one hand, I will argue that adopting what Newman calls a "religious habit of mind" can contribute to avoiding the "universalising common core" while enabling the Catholic practitioner to adhere to the uncompromising tenor of many magisterial pronouncements made in the deductive mode, through locating analogous points of certainty in the epistemics of belief, where the imperative incumbent on Catholics to evangelise those of other faiths can also be located in the certainty of faith. On the other hand, we will also see here what Newman outlines as a "theological habit of mind," the adoption of which can contribute to avoiding "a closed, conflicted tribalism" while

¹ In *Interreligious Reading after Vatican II: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism* (London: Wiley, 2013).

² I take this term from Paul D. Janz's *The Command of Grace* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), although he doesn't use it with a neo-Scholastic connection himself. Cf. Chapter 2.

³ Cf. Dault, "Catholic Reasoning and Reading Across Traditions," in *Interreligious Reading* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013), 48 for an excellent discussion of *tikkun olam*.

⁴ "Families of Receptive Theological Learning: Scriptural Reasoning, Comparative Theology, and Receptive Ecumenism," in *Interreligious Reading*, 79.

enabling the possibility of being addressed by the plurality of voices of the Abrahamic tent of meeting and tacitly suspending the business of evangelisation for the sake of *tikkun olam*. Newman's two "habits of mind" are thus presented here as potentially encouraging a two-sided disposition which should encourage fruitful participation in SR, and for navigating the two sets of tensions bearing particularly on Catholic SR participation itself.⁵

Before getting into the detail of this, it might well be asked why one would want to draw on *Newman* specifically for the task at hand, for he is hardly one of the leading Catholic theological authorities in the much debated area of interreligious dialogue. The answer to this question should be relatively self-evident as the paper progresses, but by way of a preliminary justification I will make three points. Firstly, Newman's role in Vatican II is widely acknowledged, to the degree that it has been argued that he is the "Father" of the Council.⁶ Although Newman is not directly referenced in the conciliar documents,⁷ it is clear that he provides them with certain fundamental points of orientation. Some of these points are related to the concerns of the *Interreligious Reading* volume which I'm discussing. Ian Ker, for example, points out that *Gaudium et Spes* encourages "exactly that creative and positive engagement [with the] world that Newman desiderated in his own time."⁸ For this reason, a full account of the relationship between Vatican II and SR should benefit from being approached through the lens of Newman's thinking.

There is also a deeper reason why bringing SR into dialogue with Newman promises to be a fruitful task. Newman's thinking has been said to "mark a watershed in the development of modern theology," not least through elements of his *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* which prefigure important movements in twentieth-century philosophy. Nicholas Lash, for example, suggests Newman is a precursor to "the fundamental shifts" which have taken place in "the assessment of the range and variety of modes of human rationality," such as those associated with the Frankfurt School's "critical theory" and Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics.⁹ Fred Laurence picks up on the Gadamer link and suggests that Newman anticipates some aspects of Martin Heidegger, too.¹⁰ James Cameron goes in a similar direction, claiming that, as regards the "view of language as a set of tools the function of which are determined by needs arising out of the way of life" of those who use it, we find a view "close to that elaborated by [Ludwig] Wittgenstein in his later work."¹¹ The approximate links between the philosophical mindset favoured by theorists and practitioners of SR is relatively obvious here, a philosophical background discussed in the *Interreligious*

⁵ There is also a further practical pressure bearing on Catholic participation in SR, which is not discussed in this paper, but is worth mentioning. This involves the use of the Greek New Testament by Christian participants, when the 'internal library' of Catholic participants is more likely to be 'fired up' by the Latin Vulgate translation.

⁶ Ian Ker refers to Newman as the 'Father of Vatican II' in *Newman and the Fullness of Christianity*, (London: T & T Clark, 1993), 1.

⁷ Hence his other title of the "invisible peritus" (John Coulson and A. M. Allchin, *The Rediscovery of Newman: An Oxford Symposium* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1967], xx).

⁸ Ker, 126.

⁹ Nicholas Lash, introduction to *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, by John Henry Newman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 20-1.

¹⁰ Quoted in David B. Burrell, "Newman in Retrospect," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 263.

¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

Reading volume by Paul D. Murray who describes truth in terms of “not [being] simply about seeking to engage and articulate the reality of things, but also about discerning and living in accordance with the fruitful possibilities that the open-textured reality of things presents.”¹² In terms of philosophical or epistemological resonances, then, bringing Newman into conversation with SR could be beneficial in articulating Catholic engagement with the practice itself.

A final reason why Newman promises to be an insightful and fruitful interlocutor for this discussion can be seen by drawing on the biographical details of Newman's own life. One of my concerns in this paper is to discuss how the imperative to proclaim and convert might be navigated by Catholic SR practitioners, and Newman seems uniquely promising in this regard because he is himself a *convert* to Catholicism, albeit from within the Christian religion. Newman's life has famously been described as a “striking instance of the journey and the drama of a lived faith”¹³ from the straightforward biblicism of his childhood to an “Evangelical-style conversion” in his adolescence,¹⁴ then founding the High-Church movement of Tractarianism before his conversion to Rome in 1845. Because his life and thought developed and changed as he underwent the “the drama of a lived-faith,”¹⁵ his mature thought, particularly, is highly promising for its understanding of the complex, multi-faceted dynamics of human decision-making in faith, and it promises therefore to offer space to accommodate the manifold textures of lived faith, including moments of conversion, which can sometimes threaten to destabilise interreligious encounters.

On the basis of these observations, I will outline two fault lines indicative of particularly Catholic tensions, taken from Barnes' essay, before giving two examples of how Newman's two habits of mind might allow the Catholic SR practitioner to navigate these tensions. I will then orientate this argument as demonstrative of the practice of reserve in communicating the Christian faith, which Newman encourages, and I will close by discussing a unexpected corollary of this which presents an observation regarding the *Interreligious Reading After Vatican II* volume as a whole: namely, that this Newman-informed framework for Catholic SR participation deepens the university-orientated nature of the practice, which could inhibit the breadth of its application as the primary mode of interreligious encounter to correspond to documents such as *Nostra Aestate* in a global Church.

¹² Murray, 80. Cf. also Adams' essay "Long-Term Disagreement: Philosophical Models in Scriptural Reasoning and Receptive Ecumenism" in the same volume.

¹³ Norris, 73.

¹⁴ Ker, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

1. The Unifying Power of Newman's "Two Habits of Mind"

1.1 Two Fault Lines

In this first section, I want to show how a group of distinctions Newman makes in his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* offer resources for unifying two fault-lines of intra-Catholic debate, which are perceptible in Michael Barnes' essay "Opening Up a Dialogue: Dei Verbum and the Religions." I am grouping these distinctions together using Newman's own turn of phrase, speaking of two different "habits of mind" which I will explain in more detail shortly. Beforehand, the two fault lines in question need to be brought clearly into view. The first of these surrounds two sides to one of the most widely known and long-standing questions involving the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council. This is, namely, the issue of how far the conciliar promulgations constitute a 'rupture' or a 'reform' with the tradition which immediately preceded it. The literature on this question is vast, and Barnes' footnotes provide a suitable indication of where to look to investigate it further. Barnes sidesteps this debate himself, and he explicitly leaves the question open, stating, "The extent to which [Vatican II] represents a continuity or discontinuity...continues to divide opinion." Later, he still does not come down on either side of the issue when he leaves open the outcome of the process by which "the 'rupture/reform' debate works itself out."¹⁶

Barnes is commendably even-handed here regarding this rather vexatious fault line of Catholic theology. But, the fact remains that, as regards modes of theological reasoning or epistemology, he seems to side with something closer to the proponents of a rupture at Vatican II: a break with the modes of theological reasoning which were extant in the pre-conciliar period. This can be seen in statements such as those claiming that "the documents of Vatican II are primarily inspirational in tone" unlike "Trent and so many of its predecessors where the prevailing literary genre was legal."¹⁷ He uses the development of *Dei Verbum* to show how there was "a shift from the propositional terms of manual-based theology to the personalism of God's own self-communication to human beings," which involves "substituting biblical categories from scholastic concepts" after "centuries of manual-based theology" had "obscured [the] mystery of God's self-revelation."¹⁸ Examples such as these make clear that, as regards the relatively discrete area of theological reasoning, Barnes considers Vatican II to have involved a marked break with the immediately pre-conciliar era. He connects this with the general inclinations of the school known as "*nouvelle théologie*" as paradigmatic of the move away from a period of manual-based deductive theological reasoning, or "a deductive method which aimed to extract timeless and unchanging propositions from the flux of Christian narrative," shifting to "a largely inductive form of reasoning formed [by] a contemplative attention to scripture and liturgy."¹⁹

I want to respond to a certain problem this view of a rupture in modes of theological reasoning leaves for the Catholic SR practitioner. That is, this apparent breach in modes of theological thinking presents something of a challenge which, if adhered to entirely, would involve considering the Council disconnected from much 19th and early 20th century Catholic

¹⁶ Barnes, 11; 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11; 17; 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

thought—something highly problematic for many. It is precisely in responding to this challenge, I suggest, that Newman's two "habits of mind" promise to offer a unifying point of orientation. Although Newman himself was of course critical of the dry and narrowly-conceived deductive absolutism of 19th century neo-Scholastic textbooks, his *Grammar* allows for moments of unconditional certainty *analogous* to those of deductive inference, but without the necessary commitment to a correspondence view of truth and therefore more readily enabling an incorporation of these moments with the tentative and reserved conditional considerations that are likely to undergird constructive encounters with others of different worldviews, such as are required for the practice of SR.

The second fault-line I want to discuss involves another question Barnes leaves open in his essay when he cites some of those magisterial documents (especially *Verbum Domini* and *Divino Afflante Spiritu*), which strikingly and unequivocally affirm the need for a "commitment to dialogue" between the Church and followers of other religions.²⁰ These affirmations make clear that, notwithstanding the undeniable place of evangelisation and proclamation in Catholic tradition, there is also a place—established and grounded with full magisterial authority—for entering into constructive dialogue with followers of other religions for the sake of the common good. Of course, these two might threaten to seem mutually exclusive, insofar as seeking to evangelise and proclaim the truth of Christ would seem to preclude constructive encounter for the sake of the world. Barnes states that "[n]othing is said in any of these documents about how the demands of the traditional form of mission as proclamation and the more recent commitment to dialogue are to be held together."²¹ We thus have here another juncture or fault line on which Barnes reserves judgement.

However, notwithstanding this reserve, there still seems to be an implication that "proclamation" is a remnant of an older way of doing things, described as "the traditional form" of mission over against the "more recent commitment to dialogue."²² But the magisterial documents do not easily cohere with this chronology, and the imperative to evangelise is arguably a consistent theme of magisterial documents in the post-Conciliar period. To give just two brief examples, Pope John Paul II states in his 2000 encyclical *Novo Millennio Inuente* that the Church "wishes to serve *one single end*; that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life."²³ This imperative continues into Pope Francis' 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he opens by saying he wishes "to encourage the Christian faithful to embark on a new chapter of evangelisation."²⁴ Again, I suggest, Newman's two habits of mind offer us a way to navigate this fault line between "mission as proclamation" and "commitment to dialogue," so I will now look at these two habits of mind and explain why this is the case.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Redemptor Hominis*, 13; cf. *Veritatis Splendour*, 7 (my italics).

²⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 1.

1.2 Newman's Two "Habits of Mind"

I will now outline Newman's two "habits of mind" in his *Grammar*, which I will subsequently use to unify the difficult fault lines outlined in the previous subsection. On the one hand, I will suggest that Newman shows how an unconditional certainty (analogous to that associated with deductive reasoning) can cohere 'in' consciousness along with different modes of reasoning involving a more measured, conditional, and pragmatic stance. This distinction will thus show how a Catholic participant in SR can be seen as adopting different "habits of mind" in different contexts, and one of these "habits," particularly, for SR. The adopting of different "habits of mind" can thus enable the Catholic SR practitioner to avoid being faced with a "rupture" in the epistemological development of their tradition, and the place of "mission as proclamation" therein. In what follows, I will give two examples of different activities which pertain to Newman's two habits of mind respectively: two which can accommodate the deductive reasoning of the neo-Scholastic textbooks and the imperative to evangelise, seen as being within the "religious habit of mind," and two which can accommodate the "inductive" reasoning²⁵ Barnes associates with *Dei Verbum* and the commitment to dialogue, seen as being within "the theological habit of mind." The latter, I suggest, is an appropriate disposition for the practice of SR.

The first example is Newman's well known distinction between "notional apprehension" and "real apprehension." Notional apprehension is described as apprehending "propositions in which one or both of the terms are common nouns" and so stand "for what is abstract, general, and non-existing." Newman gives the example of the proposition "Man is an animal." Real apprehension involves apprehending propositions "which are composed of singular nouns, of which the terms stand for things external to us, unit and individual."²⁶ The use of the term "singular" is a little confusing here,²⁷ but what Newman means is nouns which refer to genuine 'things' which we have directly encountered by sensory perception, imagination, or memory. Of course, we will have encountered many examples of things to which common nouns might apply, but the formulation of the general term is an abstraction *from* those encounters. For example, the noun "humanity" would apply to a person we happen to be talking to at a given point in time, but it does not by definition apply *singularly* to him or her, like the term "this human" does. So Newman's singular nouns point to specific entities. He says of real apprehension that it involves "experience or information about the concrete" regarding things which are "presented to us [by] bodily senses [or] mental sensations."²⁸ In order to avoid undue simplification here, it is important to point out that Newman understands these two modes of apprehension as intermingled in everyday life. It is when one gives critical attention to the apprehension of propositions that these two modes can be discerned separately.

²⁵ Barnes, 15.

²⁶ *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 25-31.

²⁷ This is confusing because "singular" in the sense of grammatical number is not at issue. If it were, the opposite would be "plural," but plurals would qualify as Newman's singular. (E.g., "My brothers James and John.")

²⁸ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 25-31.

The important point is that notional apprehension is fundamentally conceptual; his common nouns do not refer to things *per se*, but they are abstracted *from* things and refer to abstract notions or general concepts. In contrast, the singular nouns of real propositions refer to concretely existing things, and it is precisely this characteristic of singular nouns which demarcates the difference between Newman's two modes of apprehension. He states, "The terms of a proposition do or do not stand for things."²⁹ So the defining feature of real apprehension is that there is something apprehended which is inherently external, whereas with notional apprehension there is no distinction between that to which a common noun points (the general concept) and the noun itself.

This basic epistemological framework, I suggest, offers some valuable orientation for navigating the two fault lines outlined in the previous subsection. In moving from the realm of real apprehension to notional apprehension, I suggest, we can make the kind of dispositional shift in response to specific contexts that is required of a Catholic SR participant. That is, one moves from inhabiting a space where the emphasis is on "this is *my* faith" in real apprehension, in which the articles of faith fully correspond unquestioningly to reality (like Barnes' description of "timeless" and "eternal" deductive truths), to a place where one is focused more in terms of notional apprehension, thinking in terms of "this is an article of faith for *Catholicism*" and focussing more on something as a notion that one entertains or is sympathetic to. Put differently, real apprehension of the Pope, for a Catholic, would involve acknowledging him as the successor of St. Peter, mandated by Christ, to whom one owes faithful obedience. In notional apprehension, however, one focuses on the *notion* of the Petrine office, respectfully focusing less on one's own commitment to it in acknowledgement that this commitment is not shared by those with whom one is meeting. The same general pattern applies to the imperative to evangelise in that, for the sake of the healing of the world, the Catholic SR practitioner inhabits the theological habit of mind whereby the facts of one's faith are focused-on in a more 'third person' mode as notions rather than being directly binding on those with whom one meets as 'real' facts pertaining to their existence. In this sense, the imperative to evangelise can be suspended in the theological habit of mind, becoming a notional commitment rather than an imperative, but without being dismissed or denied for the broad sweep of Catholic life *in toto*.

The second example of the distinction between two habits of mind promising to unify the tensions of Catholic participation in SR is between the two modes of assent Newman outlines: one for the religious and theological habits of mind respectively. Interestingly, he argues that both forms of assent can be given to the same proposition simultaneously. For the religious habit, he speaks of assent as "simple assent," as a "reality" given in "devotion" with the example statement "there is One Personal and Present God." For the theological habit of mind, he claims, the same statement is apprehended for the purposes of "analysis and... [similar] intellectual exercises." These include "comparison, calculation, cataloguing, arranging, [and] classifying." To assent to a proposition in the religious way of knowing is called by Newman "simple assent." It parallels directly the basic mode of human cognition we associate with sense experience. As he states, "[T]here are many truths in concrete matter, which no one can demonstrate, yet everyone unconditionally accepts;" it is an "act of the intellect" described as "direct, absolute, complete in itself" and "unconditional."³⁰ The

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 135; 157.

parallels with deductive reasoning here are self-evident, but these are characteristics articulated purely within the purview of a phenomenology of consciousness. To reason by deduction is “direct, absolute, and complete in itself” because, as Paul D. Janz states, “it is effectively tautological, or a matter of analytical definition”³¹ and is thus final, ultimate and immediate. Moreover, deductive reasoning is “unconditional,” for the straightforward reason that changes in context has no bearing on the truth value of the statements which necessarily follow from the premises in question. What Newman achieves in his "simple assent" is to show that everyday sense experience, and many basic tenets of religious belief, are similarly “direct, absolute, complete in [themselves]” and “unconditional” purely in their emergence within the phenomenology of consciousness.

In contrast, to assent in the theological mode is a “complex assent,” seen as assent made “consciously and deliberately” and also connected with inferences, which are described as “both the antecedents of [complex] assent before assenting, and its usual concomitants after assenting.”³² Now strictly speaking, transparent deductive reasoning would come under the jurisdiction of complex assent, for both deduction and induction are inferential modes of reasoning. Newman himself wants to challenge the privileging of deductive reasoning in the Catholic theology of his day, and real apprehension and simple assent thus offer points in his thinking which can be seen as *analogous to* deductive reasoning insofar as they involve unconditional assent, notwithstanding the fact that deductive reasoning proper would belong to complex assent insofar as it involves explicit, transparent inference.

Newman also distinguishes what he terms “formal” and “informal inference.” Formal inference involves classical logic, geometry and algebra, and here we would locate deductive reasoning proper. In short, it is the forming of inferences using elements that can be expressed “in terms of words or symbols.”³³ Newman defines it as “all inferential processes whatever, as expressed in language,”³⁴ and his key point is that all inference, he says, “falls short of concrete fact.”³⁵ That is, to impose the rigid findings of deductive inference onto concrete reality is unwarranted,³⁶ and yet the findings of abduction and induction are always subject to a margin of uncertainty. Newman is clear that inference is essentially *linguistic*, and its limits are those of language. He says, “[A]ll verbal argumentation is ultimately syllogistic,” and “in consequence [it] falls short of concrete fact.”³⁷ But Newman should not be considered a sceptic, as he posits informal Inference as a way in which human reasoning is not bound by the limits of “verbal argumentation.” This has advantage over logical formal inference on the grounds that there are, he says, “countless [other] varieties and subtleties of human thought.” The ability to apprehend reality in the unitary givenness of lived experience involves what he calls “an *organon* more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal

³¹ Janz, 70.

³² Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 157.

³³ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 209-229.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁶ This basically parallels Immanuel Kant’s famous critique of what he calls *Dogmatismus*. Cf. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁷ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 187.

argumentation.”³⁸ In short, this means that in human life we assent to all manner of things in the complex reality of embodied existence, and that the reasoning behind these assents cannot be captured and analytically broken down into logical inferences. Formal inference he calls “the logic of language” and informal inference “the logic of thought”, meaning the “logic” at work in embodied life on the interface of consciousness and reality itself.

I suggest that adopting the ‘theological habit of mind’ can allow Catholic participants in SR to be committed to the manifold plurality of voices in the Abrahamic tent of meeting, as a place where the reasonings behind textual interpretations are brought to the fore and discussed. This would be an inductive space, aligned with Barnes’ statements which suggest that Catholic theology in the inductive mode is the most appropriate way to approach SR, not least through an openness to the activity of the Spirit in the world outside the Church. This would of course be difficult for the unconditional certainty of the “religious habit of mind,” and so we again see how thinking in terms of adopting Newman’s different habits of mind can help orientate the Catholic participant in SR.

2. The “Principle of Reserve” and Activities of the “Learned”

2.1 On Reserve

My argument thus far has intended to show that the particular tensions bearing on the Catholic SR practitioner require the adopting of a certain two-sidedness, which is markedly resonant with the two-sidedness in Newman’s *Grammar*. This, I suggest, can offer important orientation for the Catholic SR practitioner, perhaps enabling a strategic adoption of different “habits of mind” in different contexts, with the “theological habit of mind” proving particularly appropriate for gathering in the Abrahamic tent of meeting to engage in *tikkun olam* for the healing of the world, but not precluding other moments in the “religious habit of mind” where the straightforward certainty of magisterial textbooks and the imperative to evangelise those of other faiths can come to the fore.

In this paper I have thus far used Newman’s analysis in ways which he clearly did not have in mind when writing *Grammar*, so in this section I want to show how this two-sidedness coheres with other elements of Newman’s writing and provides further conceptual orientation for understanding what it might involve. This should also answer to those who detect a danger of insincerity or inauthenticity here, for there is an enduring theme throughout Newman’s writing of practicing *reserve* or *discretion* in discussing the rudiments of faith with those of other worldviews, which is clearly connected with the two-sidedness at issue here. That is, I would extend my suggestion to understanding the adoption of different habits of mind to help orientate Catholic participation in SR, to say that the move from the religious to the theological habit of mind for the purpose of *tikkun olam* can be understood as practicing *reserve*: not focussing on the uncompromising deductive-correspondence type magisterial pronouncements, nor the imperative to evangelise, but rather concentrating on constructive encounter for the sake of the world.

³⁸ Ibid.,176.

The principle of reserve is a key theme of Newman's writing, particularly during his Anglican-Tractarian phase and his early work *Arians of the Fourth Century*, from 1833.³⁹ Here, he discusses the attitude of the ancient Alexandrian Church to those outside the flock, that is, pagans and catechumens. He says the Alexandrians "would write...with the tenderness or the reserve with which we...address those...whom we fear to mislead or prejudice against the truth."⁴⁰ We read that to speak "indirectly" is a deliberate technique of, for example, St. Clement, intended to avoid causing injury to those who might not understand.⁴¹ A key word of Newman's here is "duty." He says it was the "great duty of the Christian teacher...to unfold the sacred truths in due order," and that it is matter of duty for the teacher "to present [the truth] with caution or reserve."⁴²

Rowan Williams claims of Newman's book on the Arians that it orientates us to the "pious intensity of the pre-Nicene Church" from whom, it is said, we "learn where the pulse of true theology beats,"⁴³ which perhaps corresponds to the heart of belief as "simple assent" delineated in the *Grammar*. The concern for reserve can arguably be detected there, albeit implicitly. In a discussion of Trinitarian doctrine, he states that if we focus on the "elaborate, subtle, [and] impregnable" formulation of a dogma, how can it "come to the afflicted," or for that matter "the unlearned, the young, the busy"? How can it be, he asks, "a fact which is to arrest them, penetrate them, and to support and animate them in their passage through life?"⁴⁴ It is again a matter of duty for Newman that we present Christian faith from the point where the "pulse of true theology beats," the point which invokes "loving obedience"—a point from which "security" can be imparted, but only as "the fruit of costly personal engagement, rather than its [cognitively sealed] precondition."⁴⁵ The element of reserve in Newman's thought has been described as related to his "intense feeling [that] what is holiest should be hidden"⁴⁶ and that we should therefore remain "mute before mysteries."⁴⁷

What these examples make clear is that employing Newman's principle of reserve to the adopting of the theological habit of mind in SR actually reverses the order of priority he envisaged, whereby someone communicating matters of Christian faith would avoid the complex matters of theology and stay focused on simple propositions. What this implies, in turn, is that SR—approached through the lens of Newman's thinking—is something which is the preserve particularly of the *learned*, those who can adopt the flexibility of mind to entertain notions for the purposes of classification, comparison, and argument while not precluding the straightforward simple assent to the basic tenets of the faith. Indeed, this would seem to resonate with SR as a practice which has taken root in universities and which

³⁹ Cf. Rowan Williams, introduction to *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, by John Henry Newman (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001).

⁴⁰ Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 42.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 48; 72.

⁴³ Williams, xlv-xll.

⁴⁴ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 112-3.

⁴⁵ Lash, 19.

⁴⁶ James Cameron, introduction to *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, by John Henry Newman (New York: Pelican Classics, 1973), 19; 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

is closely associated with specialised theological study in the academy within different religious traditions.

2.2 SR as an Activity of the "Learned"

I now want to bring this discussion to a close by pausing briefly on this point about reversing the priority of the religious and theological habits of mind when practising reserve in SR. I would suggest this touches on a further complexity about Catholic SR participation, which is not addressed in the *Interreligious Reading After Vatican II* volume. Before looking at this, I need to reiterate that the religious habit of mind is, for Newman, a more *primary* mode of epistemological experience than the theological. He states, "Real Apprehension has the precedence [as] the scope and end of the test of the Notional." This means that notional apprehension is of value only in proportion to the degree that its findings can be seen to apply to the concrete, empirical reality of human life. Moreover, Newman maintains that real apprehension is "the stronger" and "the more vivid and forcible."⁴⁸ This is almost self-evident, for having an abstract notion of lakes, for example, is a very different thing than paddling on the shore of Lake Garda on a sunny day.

Newman goes to great lengths to safeguard the epistemological priority of the religious habit of mind, with its concomitant real apprehension and simple assent. One reason for this, I suggest, is his concern for the poor and those without access to education, such as the Victorian industrial working classes with whom he worked pastorally throughout his mature period in Birmingham. The basic concern here is understandable, and it is a common one for Christian theologians. Given the intellectual sophistication of, say Trinitarian doctrine, are Christians not in danger of seeing those with a good education as somehow closer to God through their ability to understand these dogmas? Through prioritising the religious habit of mind, Newman ensures that those he calls the "unlearned" have all the intensity of faith of the "learned," and this moreover serves as a stark reminder to the learned to be centrally orientated by real apprehension and simple assent, not losing sight of the reality of God through complex, theological, notional cogitations. He states of the proposition "I believe what the Church proposes to be believed" that, as a real assent, this "is possible for the unlearned as well as the learned," *but* it "is imperative on learned as well as unlearned."⁴⁹ That is, our complex, inferential deliberations are seen as having to *follow from* simple assent to what he considers religious truth.

Insofar as Catholic SR participation can be approached beneficially through adopting Newman's theological habit of mind, which I think it can, we are then left with this unforeseen consequence: namely, that SR is a secondary activity, as the preserve particularly of the learned, and not easily accessible to those who have not been equipped with certain rudiments of intellectual activity. I suspect many Catholic SR participants would disagree with this consequence and would argue that their own practice of SR has been of primary, foundational importance for their own faith. Nonetheless, I would like to close by holding open the question of whether the distinct advantages that some academic education has for fruitfully practicing SR does serve as a problem for the sort of wide-ranging Catholic engagement with the practice—as a concrete response to the calls of the conciliar documents

⁴⁸ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 25-31.

⁴⁹ Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 131.

—which is called for in the *Interreligious Reading* volume. In short, Catholicism is the largest religious denomination on earth, with roughly 1 in 5 people identifying as Catholic, and many of the countries most readily associated with it are third world nations with severe poverty and correspondingly low rates of literacy and schooling. I do think this is an issue that might require some further discussion, in that an activity borne in the universities of the privileged West simply might not have the broadness of reach required to be seen as *the* primary response to some of the calls of the conciliar documents to engage constructively with the followers of different religions. Nonetheless, I would welcome further discussion on this point, and I hope it does not undermine the efficacy of approaching SR and the legacy of Vatican II though the lens of Newman's thinking.