

*The Epistemological Underpinnings of Reception*

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Keywords: Epistemology, Assent, Imaginary

Abstract:

Within his Fifteen University Sermons John Henry Newman, taking a more apologetic tone, notes the manner in which, “the world overcomes us” not by comparing arguments but by “imposing on our imagination.” Following this same conviction Newman would later write that, “man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating and acting animal” for “many a man will live or die for a dogma. No man will be a martyr for a conclusion.” When considering the epistemological nature of our convictions, beliefs and actions, what Newman would call “assent”, we are given insight into the pluriform manner in which conversion and assent takes place. Similarly, in investigating the method in which thoughts, theologies and practices are received within the act of Receptive Ecumenism we might consider the ways in which Receptive Ecumenism uniquely effects the imaginary of one participating in this ecumenical experience and the epistemological and theological role this method has in bringing about unity that is not demanded in other forms of ecumenical encounter.

This paper will seek to highlight the epistemological assumptions that are implicit in Receptive Ecumenism by following Newman’s own insights into the act of assent and how Receptive Ecumenism may be applied in this act. More particularly this investigation will consider the act of reception theologically in identifying the gifts of another as expressions of the Church of Christ, as outlined in *Lumen Gentium* 8, and how the reception of these gifts is an act of assent, which effects the underlying imaginary of both the giver of the gift and those who receive it. Finally, this paper will note the unique contribution Receptive Ecumenism plays from an epistemological standpoint in the ecumenical project by aligning itself with the Catholic emphasis of ecumenism as being an act of conversion and a transformative resource.