



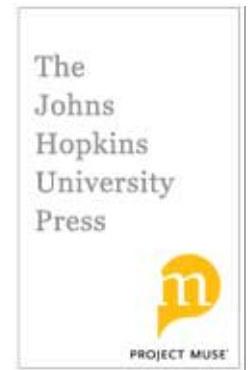
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John Henry Newman on the Nature of the Mind: Reason in Religion, Science and the Humanities by Jane Rupert (review)

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(Review)

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Finally, Jane Austen makes an appearance, and Barrs notes that in complement to Tolkien, she was chosen by the same BBC pollsters as the author whose work (specifically, her novel *Pride and Prejudice*) most influenced the lives of English women. Barrs again takes considerable space to mention film adaptations, and he supposes that Austen's use of humor has contributed significantly to her continuing popularity. After exploring moral vices and virtues that appear in *Pride and Prejudice*, he concludes with an extended quotation from Elizabeth Jenkins's biography of Austen, including the following words:

When Macaulay mentioned Shakespeare and Jane Austen in the same breath, he did not suppose it necessary to state the obvious difference in their art and scope; admirers of Jane Austen understood what he meant in making the comparison, and feel that however far apart they stand, the two share the quality . . . of creating character. (192)

A comparable book is Philip Ryken's *Art for God's Sake* (2006): it is not groundbreaking scholarship, but it is a helpful primer for the layperson and provides a good review and summary of what has been said on this topic, as well as an opportunity for further investigation. Barrs uses copious references to Scripture, and for more in-depth studies, readers might consider a book by another of Schaeffer's protégés: Nancy Pearcey's *Saving Leonardo* (2010). One criticism is that Barrs includes only works by Christian writers, and the kind of art he considers is almost exclusively fiction. My guess is that Barrs chose authors because of their popularity, and also because the Creation–Fall–Redemption theme resonates most clearly in their work.

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Jane Rupert. ***John Henry Newman on the Nature of the Mind: Reason in Religion, Science and the Humanities***. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. Pp. ix + 123. \$75. ISBN 978-0-7391-4047-5.

John Henry Newman on the Nature of the Mind, by Jane Rupert, is a valuable recent addition to scholarship on John Henry Newman's understanding of religious epistemology, and the role that the imagination, as well as the liberal arts, plays in this mode of knowledge. Given *Christianity & Literature's* recent reviews on books about Shakespeare, Milton, and Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens and Gerard Manley Hopkins, it seems fitting to review here a book on Newman, a Victorian who although primarily a church historian and theologian wrote two novels and religious poetry. Rupert, who obtained her doctoral degree in English at the University of Toronto, is author of *Uneasy Relations: Reason in Literature and*

Science from Aristotle to Darwin and Blake, which explores the rupture of the unity of reason through the long course of history from 4 BC to 1900 AD.

The present book consists of five chapters which discuss the use of reason in religion, science, and the humanities, as noted in the subtitle. The author contends that reason has been reduced to empirical knowledge, putting aside other modes of knowledge in religion and literature. In Newman's writings and in this book the term "imagination" refers to the faculty that enables a person "to picture" something real rather than "to fancy or desire" something possible.

Chapter 1, "The Closing of the Mind: Empirical Philosophy and Science," sets the stage and presents the recurring argument: human reason has been seriously impoverished by the contemporary scientific worldview. In it the author identifies the origins of empirical philosophy in the Epicurean materialistic worldview.

Chapter 2, "Expansion of the Mind: Reason in Religious Belief in Contrast to Science," explains religious imagination as a mode of reasoning defended by Newman at a time when scientific reasoning was crowding out other types of reasoning. The author looks at various texts from *The Idea of a University*, and *Atlantis*, the journal of the Catholic University of Dublin, founded by Newman. The imagination leads to knowledge of concrete things, unlike science, which abstracts from concrete things. The author describes Newman's idea of reasoning through the imagination and the impressions it makes. Through this mode of reasoning, together with converging ideas and personal judgments, we reach what Newman calls the illative sense, akin to Cicero's rhetoric. Cicero explained that an orator looks at issues from different angles, examining resemblances, differences, opposites, and contradictions in order to persuade his audience (40).

Chapter 3, "Mind in the Meditative and Contemplative Life: The Magisterial Imagination and the Affections," lays out Newman's insightful views about the role of the imagination in the knowledge of religious truths. Rupert shows how for Newman the use of the imagination is the result of the experience of the moral conscience, and the perception of words associated with concrete experiences in Sacred Scripture as well as in the creeds. She looks in particular at Newman's explanation of some terms of the Athanasian Creed. The images or impressions formed in the mind by association with concrete realities, such as a father or a son, enables people to have a real inward perception of God. The author writes, "On the material plane, sense, sensation, instinct, and intuition supply us with facts for the intellect to use; in the religious domain, revelation supplies us with the facts from which doctrines issue through the exercise of the intellect" (55).

In Chapter 4, "The Cultivation of the Mind in Liberal Education: Greek Sources and Historical Practice," the author presents some of Aristotle's doctrine on knowledge in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and how these influenced Newman's understanding of the liberal arts. Newman would lament a "dystopian university that would allow only the inductive method of modern physical sciences with its consideration of material cause and effect" (74) inadequate for the perception of intelligent or spiritual agency. Speculative reasoning or *theoria* from first principles results in knowledge which is enjoyed for its own sake, contrasting with *techne*, the

kind of knowledge that is connected with production and so dominates our culture. Newman defended the central place for speculative thought in the university according to the Aristotelian tradition. At the same time he also defended the study of Letters or Literature as another pillar of liberal education. In English the Greek term *logos* represents both thought and word. *Logos* and *theoria*, or speculative science, differ: the latter seeks a clearness and hardness that strips words of their senses and associations, starving each term until it has become a ghost of itself (cf. *Grammar of Assent* 214–15).

The book closes with Chapter 5, “Mind and Soul: Intellect and Sanctity at the Catholic University of Ireland,” which offers the most novel contribution of the book. This chapter deals with holiness and Christian humanism. Rupert describes the dual ends of Christian humanism: cultivation of the mind through the liberal arts, and interior sanctity (88). Newman describes the goal of Christian humanism as the union of sanctity and intellect, using the image of the Church as a ship where the ballast represents holiness, and the sail represents the intellect and the university (89). Rupert points out that Newman’s university lectures at the Catholic University were paralleled by eight sermons preached at the University Church (90). She sums up each of the eight sermons which were dedicated to the subject of holiness and interior life. In his first sermon Newman spoke of the state of original innocence or integrity, and of the civil war that ensued between the faculties. He indicated the Church’s mission to rectify this disorder by “the balancing of intellect by sanctity” (91). The last part of the chapter is devoted to Newman’s explanation of the role of personal influence in the formation of youth, and to the presentation of the examples of the exercise of this formative influence by men such as Origen and Quintilian.

Jane Rupert deals with the subject matter from a literary perspective. She analyzes philosophical ideas but makes more distinctions based on spoken and written language, drawing from her knowledge of English and literature. She follows a literary methodology providing commentary of texts, attribution of sources, and etymology of terms. This methodology is on the whole more similar to the deductive method of theology that advances in knowledge from first principles. During the 20th century many authors have written on Newman’s theories about our apprehension of ideas and truths, especially commenting on two of his major works, *The Idea of a University* and *The Grammar of Assent*, and the *Oxford University Sermons*, a precursor to the latter (cf. Terrence Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman*, Peeters Press, 1991; John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition*, Clarendon Press, 1970). Rupert accurately portrays Newman’s arguments in these works. However, an analysis of certitude in religious knowledge would have completed the subject. Rupert’s book uses Newman’s writings very well, drawing from the most important texts on his teaching about the imagination, reason, and literature. For secondary sources a reference to education historian Paul Shrimpton would add support to her findings. Shrimpton has published two important books germane to chapter 5. One of these, *A Catholic Eaton? The*

Oratory School, was published in 2005. Recently his *The Making of Men: Idea and Reality of Newman's University in Oxford and Dublin* has appeared (2014). John T. Ford's recent article, "John Henry Newman: Conversion as Inference," *Newman Studies* (Spring 2013), also comes to mind.

The author's thesis about the reduction of reason to scientific reason is an accurate one that explains in part the impoverishment of 20th-century university education. At times the ideas presented sound repetitive, but the current state of affairs bears repeating the thesis, and the author does so from different perspectives. In addition to the clear explanation of the thesis and arguments in its favor, Rupert makes a very good contribution to the subject with her treatment in chapter 5 of Newman's harmony between intellect and prayer: reason and holiness. Both are necessary for the cultivation of the soul and for Christian humanism. *John Henry Newman on the Nature of the Mind* is a very good addition to the study of Newman's epistemology from a literary point of view. Written in elegant prose, it is both enjoyable and accessible to most readers and of special interest to professors of religious literature and Newman scholars. Through her exposition the author invites the reader to appreciate the role of imagination in religious thinking and to pursue knowledge through a reading of the classics. She concludes with an invitation to the reader to exert in Newman's footsteps a moral and spiritual personal influence on others.

Rev. Juan R. Vélez

Author of *Passion for Truth, the Life of John Henry Newman*

Mary McCartin Wearn (ed.). ***Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion: Lived Theologies and Literature***. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. x+190. \$104.95. ISBN 97847210429 (hbk).

This edited collection presents a rich and cohesive body of essays on the ways in which 19th-century North American religious thought impacted on, and was impacted by, female experience. The individual essays range across a variety of literary forms, genres, and authorial backgrounds, and are both accessible and scholarly, each carefully positioning the texts under focus within relevant social, literary, and theological contexts. Yet this is an unusually coherent collection which as a whole makes a distinctive contribution to general understandings of how religion functioned in women's lives and writings during this period. Some clear themes emerge: religion's empowering potential for women's subjectivity and public role, despite the generally patriarchal tenor of religious culture; and women's achievements in emphasizing religion's social and material implications.

Wearn's strong introduction sets out the book's overall "argument," which aims to correct the common view that 19th-century women's religion predominantly domesticated and sentimentalized the spiritual (e.g. Ann Douglas's seminal 1977