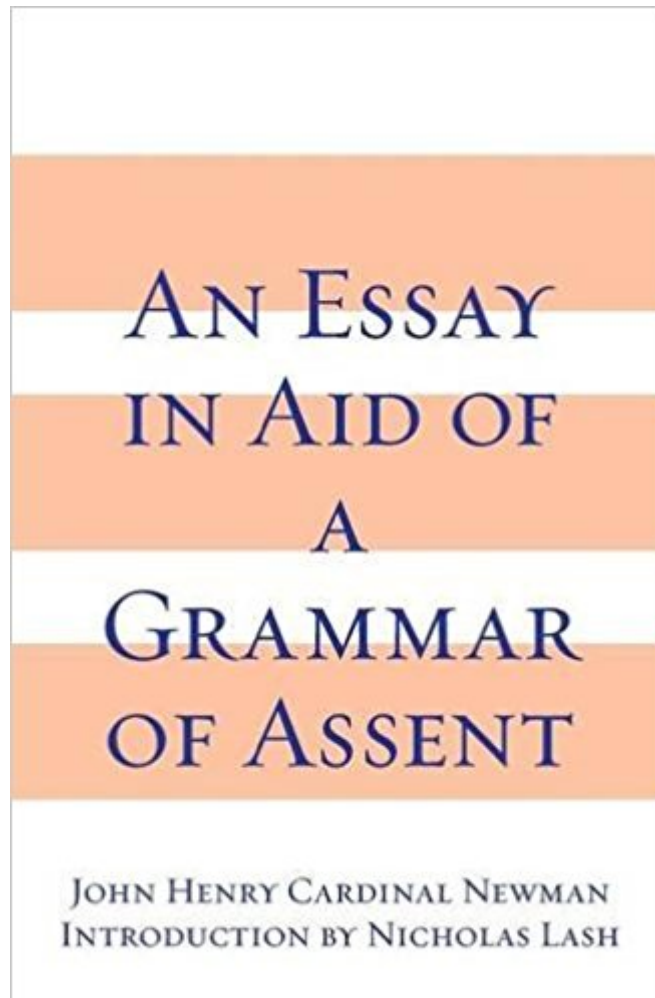




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# An Essay In Aid Of A Grammar Of Assent



## Synopsis

This classic of Christian apologetics seeks to persuade the skeptic that there are good reasons to believe in God even though it is impossible to understand the Deity fully. First written over a century ago, the *Grammar of Assent* speaks as powerfully to us today as it did to its first readers. Because of the informal, non-technical character of Newman's work, it still retains its immediacy as an invaluable guide to the nature of religious belief. An introduction by Nicholas Lash reviews the background of the *Grammar*, highlights its principal themes, and evaluates its philosophical originality.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Lash's introduction to this recent reissue of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* makes that work accessible to contemporary students of philosophy and theology alike. If one wishes a fresh perspective on the shape of the *Grammar's* critical questions facing philosophical theology, as well as an object lesson in the norms implicit in ordinary discourse properly employed, that person would be well advised to take up this century-old volume. (Theological Studies) "The combination of Newman's original genius, complemented by Nicholas Lash's ability to focus his concerns onto ours, makes this edition a useful tool for teachers. (America) "Here is presented one of the most famous 19th century statements of Christian apologetics, including a most influential analysis of the faith-reason controversy. (Reprint Bulletin Book Reviews)

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was a theologian and former Anglican clergyman who became a leading thinker in the Oxford Movement, which sought to return Anglicanism to its Catholic roots. This volume, first published in 1870, is Newman's seminal examination of the logical processes underlying religious belief. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This product is a photocopy of some volume checked out from a UC-system library. As such it bears library markings throughout its pages, and even some notes from previous readers. The cover itself is well-designed, but is clearly made by a company that re-publishes post-copyrighted works. It is a good read of a particular earlier edition of Newman's Essay, but for the sake of serious academic reflection I do not recommend this particular volume. Let it be known that this is an edition composed after his conversion to Catholicism, so it is not the volume during his Oxford movement Anglican days. Having taken a class on Newman it was embarrassing to have the one volume that was totally off in page numbers. The content is relatively the same, but readers must understand that this volume has gone through several editions. To find out what edition you need, confirm with your professor because I even copied in the ISBN number in to find the volume he wanted and it still led me to this. You won't be at a complete loss if you have this work, but just know that there are as many as 70 pages of distance between quotes in this edition and other editions, depending on where you are in the book.

Widely recognized as an extraordinary piece of 19th century literature and scholarly insight. And the work contributed and inspired diverse intellectual areas, especially 20th century Catholic theology, which culminated in Vatican II. Newman's almost conversational style and approach to essential philosophical matters, demonstrates and exemplifies the bridge that grammar assumes between the internal and external grasp of knowledge.

This edition, which cost me only \$23.31, without warning turned out to be digitally printed. The too dark, thick print is applied to cheap, non-acid-free paper. This makes the reading the book not only unpleasant but physically difficult. Had I opened this volume in a book store and saw the shabbiness inside, I would not have purchased it.

Order arrived promptly and as described.

Of great interest for anyone interested in the way in which the debate between rationalism and faith squared up in the early years of the 19th century

Thanks

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was an English Anglican cleric and a leader of the Oxford Movement; he converted to Catholicism in 1845 and eventually became a Cardinal. He wrote many influential books, such as *An Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (An Image classic), *The Idea Of A University: Defined And Illustrated*, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, etc. This book was first published in 1870. He states that "These so-called first principles, I say, are really conclusions or abstractions from particular experiences; and an assent to their existence is not an assent to things or their images, but to notions, real assent being confined to the propositions directly embodying these experiences." (Pg. 69) Later, he adds, "A dogma is a proposition; it stands for a notion or for a thing; and to believe it is to give the assent of the mind to it... It is discerned, rested in, and appropriated as a reality, by the religious imagination; it is held as a truth, by the theological intellect." (Pg. 93) He asserts that "Theology may stand as a substantive science, though it be without the life of religion; but religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology." (Pg. 109) He argues that "by believing the word of the Church... every Catholic, according to his intellectual capacity, supplements the shortcomings of his knowledge without blunting his real assent to what is elementary, and takes upon himself from the first the whole truth of revelation, progressing from one apprehension of it to another according to his opportunities of doing so." (Pg. 131) Later, he adds, "Therefore we may be certain of the infallibility of the Church, while we admit that in many things we are not, and cannot be, certain at all." (Pg. 184) He notes that "It is the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions. This power of judging and concluding, when in its perfection, I call the *illative sense*..." (Pg. 276) He adds later, "Our great internal teacher of religion is... our Conscience" (pg. 304), and observes, "retributive justice is the very attribute under which God is primarily brought before us in the teachings of our natural conscience." (Pg. 326) This book is a fascinating production of a still-highly influential Catholic voice, and an invaluable resource for studying Catholic philosophy.

This "essay" is a tour d'force of the force of the power of inferential versus deductive reasoning. This is an unique *aposteriori* argument for the existence of God, but unfolds an argument in a manner wholly different from the past, such as Aquinas, for example. Newman is a very persuasive author,

who uses his evidence judiciously and validly. People of faith will find this exposition worth the perspective. But, this book can stand on its own as a superlative example of brilliant exposition, using Newman's usually elegant style, and enjoying a journey that seems unlikely from its impetus. The first chapter is particularly difficult, but after that, the reading is engaging and remarkable.

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