

# Teacher Training.

## CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

TEXT-BOOK: REDFORD'S "PRIMER OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES."

ANALYSIS, NOTES AND ADDITIONS, by Rev. Professor Ross, B. D., Presbyterian College, Montreal, Quebec.

### THE EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

#### I. THE CHURCH IS THE CHIEF WITNESS TO THE CHRISTIC AND APOSTOLIC ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH:

1. *The church has remained, from the death of Christ, essentially the same.* (1) In her doctrines. The centre of them all is that Jesus Christ is an incarnation of God and trust in him is the condition of salvation. (2) In her rites. Public worship on Sabbath and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper have always and everywhere been observed. (3) In her morals. Really devout and sincere Christians have always been distinguished for self-denial, benevolence and hopefulness. 2. *This substantial sameness of the church is proved by the writings of the church fathers.* (1) Of different countries: Asia Minor, Italy, France and Syria. (2) Of different periods back to the latter part of the first century. 3. *Any radical change in Christian belief before this was not possible.* Between the death of Christ and the end of the first century it would have been impossible to have imposed upon the church a mass of legendary matter wholly different from the facts on which the society was at first founded. (1) Most of the Apostles lived from thirty to forty years after the crucifixion, and John survived until almost the end of the century. (2) A great multitude of men, personally taught by the Apostles, many of them of wide influence in the church, survived to the end of the first century, and some of them to the middle of the second. (3) Throughout that period all sections of the church were united in their belief of the resurrection of Christ. (4) While perhaps some of the legendary matter which was afterwards incorporated in apocryphal gospels was already floating about in this period, none of it found a place in the books of the New Testament, nor was it regarded as of any importance by the early church writers.

#### II. THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES POINTS TO A DIVINE ORIGIN:

1. *The facts of this growth.* (1) Fifty years after the death of Christ there were churches in all the principal cities of the Roman empire. (2) Seventy-five years after, the Christians had pervaded the villages and country places. [Pliny]. (3) In the middle of the second century they had filled the castles, towns, council-houses, camps, and even the senate and forum. [Tertullian]. (4) The extent of the church's influence is seen in the complete extinction of the religions of the Roman empire. Their idols have not had a single worshipper for centuries. 2. *The obstacles to the progress of the church.* (1) The selfish, national ambition of the Jews which Christianity opposed. (2) The scepticism of cultured Pagans. (3) The prejudice and hatred of the common people. (4) The persecutions set on foot by the government. These were wide-spread, long-continued, and several millions of Christians must have perished in them. 3. *The means by which some religions have been rapidly spread.* (1) The sword (Mohammedanism). (2) Indulgence granted to immoral practices (Mohammedanism). (3) Deliverance from the burdens of the previously prevailing religion (Buddhism). (4) Readiness to amalgamate with existing faiths (Buddhism). Christianity was diametrically opposed to all these. 4. *The natural insufficiency of the means employed to spread Christianity.* (1) Its first preachers and missionaries were unlearned men belonging to a despised nation. (2) Its central doctrine was salvation through faith in a crucified Jew. (3) Its gospel opposed all human tendencies. It humbled pride, destroyed favorite sin, and demanded a life of toil and self-sacrifice. (4) Its claims were most exclusive and aggressive and so were well fitted to rouse the jealousy of all other religions. In view of all the facts only the divine truth of Christianity is sufficient to account for the early progress of the church.