

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.

INTRODUCTION.

The evidences of Christianity, that is the arguments employed in defence of it, are usually called Apologetics from the *A*:logies for the Christian religion addressed by some of the early fathers to the heathen emperors, when our faith was proscribed and its adherents persecuted. *Apology* now means an excuse for something wrong or improper, but then it meant a vindication of the beliefs and conduct of Christians against the slanders of their enemies.

It is not proposed in this study of the subject to present the arguments for the truths of natural religion, (*i. e.* the existence of God, &c.,) but only for those distinctive truths of Christianity which are common to all denominations of Christians.

A. DEFINITION OF CHRISTIANITY: The Christian religion is the system of belief and conduct originated by Jesus Christ, set forth in the Bible, always believed and generally practiced in the Christian church, and exemplified in the character of the Christian man. Thus there are four witnesses to be examined.

B. THE CAUSES OF OPPOSITION TO CHRISTIANITY:

- I. In Early Days:** (1) The State feared its political influence. (2) The rival religions, Judaism and Classic Heathenism) were jealous of it. (3) Every grade of ancient society had some ground for hating it.
- II. At the Present Time:** (1) *An evil heart.* To acknowledge that Christianity is true necessitates confession of sin, which is intensely humiliating to many. This wrong moral bias (*a*) clouds the full force of the evidence, and (*b*) sets the will in opposition to what is clearly seen. (2) *Discontent with the present constitution of society.* Many, who desire to better the condition of the poor by social changes, think Christianity stands in the way. Their opposition to it rests on the following misconceptions: (*a*) That true Christianity is responsible for the abuses of our social system. (*b*) That Christians must necessarily defend these abuses. (*c*) That the sole object of Christianity is to prepare a man for another world. (*d*) That an outward scheme of social reform will cure the ills which spring from sin. (*e*) That a condition of earthly good will finally satisfy a soul made in the image of God. (3) *Dissatisfaction with the errors and corruptions of Christian churches.* Unbelief is often a reaction from (*a*) Superstition, (*b*) Intolerance of other Christians. (*c*) Jealousy of the investigations of science or criticism, (*d*) Hard, mechanical dogmatism which is destitute of the spirit of Christ. In all these cases the abuses of Christianity are identified with its fundamentals. (4) *Attachment to certain theories of science or philosophy.* (*a*) A theory of God which declares that even if he does exist he can never be known. (*b*) A theory of the universe which is supposed to be fatal to Christianity. (*c*) A theory of the nature of man which makes moral obligation and religion both impossible. (*d*) A theory of the origin of the Bible which reduces it to the level of other books.

C. THE PURPOSES SERVED BY THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY: (1) They remove difficulties from the minds of honest enquirers. (2) They leave the determined unbeliever without excuse. (3) They justify the believer's faith at the bar of his reason. (4) They shew how Christian truth can meet every new system of error.

D. THE KIND OF EVIDENCE TO BE EXPECTED: This is determined by the nature of the subject and the limitations of the human mind.

- I. We have no right to expect:** (1) A logical demonstration. That is possible only in the case of such truths as have been assumed or implied in the principles with which a discussion begins. The opposite of any truth which has been demonstrated is not only false, but absurd and impossible. This is not true of anything which depends on probable evidence. (2) Evidence which will compel the assent of every man. A demonstration would scarcely accomplish this in the case of those whose hearts are in violent revolt against the truths. (3) Evidence which will meet every objection which can be raised. In such a vast, complex subject, incidental difficulties may be left unsolved, and yet the main line of truth may be reasonably well established.