Abridged course of religious instruction, apologetic, dogmatic and moral, transl

by

François Xavier Schouppe

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ABRIDGED COURSE

OF

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION,

Apologetic, Dogmatic, and Moral:

FOR THE

USE OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS.

BY THE

REV. FATHER F. X. SCHOUPE,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH THIRD EDITION.

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Card. Archiep. Westmon.
THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The translation follows Father Schouppe's text exactly; nothing has been left out, nothing has been added to the original. Father Schouppe's work was framed on the diocesan Catechism of Malines, in Belgium; and, as might be expected, it contains some instructions which are applicable to Belgium only. The author himself points out what is peculiar to Belgium: e.g. Part III, chap. iii. First Commandment of the Church, i. Nos. 6, 7, p. 328; also Third Commandment of the Church, No. 9, p. 334.

The Malines Catechism differs from the Catechism used in England by enumerating only five Commandments of the Church. The Catechism in England adds a sixth, 'not to marry within certain degrees of kindred, nor to solemnise marriage at the forbidden times;' and inserts, as the fifth, 'to contribute to the support of our pastors.'

The teaching on the two parts of the sixth Commandment of the Church will be found in Part II, chap. xv. Matrimony, Art. I. Nos. 7, 8, pp. 227, 228; and Part III, chap. vii. Art. IV. Matrimony, Nos. 3, 4, pp. 377, 378.

Finally, those who read the Abridged Course in English will know that, in England, the contracting of marriage otherwise than before the priest and two witnesses, though illicit and sinful, is not necessarily invalid: for the Decree of the Council of Trent on clandestine marriages, not having been published in England, is therefore, by virtue of a provision in the Decree itself, not binding upon persons living in this country.
PREFACE.

It cannot be too often repeated that religious instruction is the vital part of education. However noble and precious human science may be, it can only succeed in forming, as it were, a body without life. The knowledge of religion is the vivifying soul. All the profane sciences combined could not prevent youth from straying in this world: the science of faith, which is the true light of human life, can alone guide their steps in the ways of honour and happiness.

This religious science must be solid; it must strike its roots deeply in young hearts, so that it may be able to grow and strengthen as life advances, and resist all the storms that may assail it.

In religious instruction there are two periods or degrees, which may be designated the period of memory and the period of intelligence. The first corresponds to primary teaching, the second to more advanced and higher teaching.

In the primary schools* the text of the diocesan

* Under this denomination must be understood, in a wide sense, all those classes composed of children not yet capable of understanding a developed course of religious instruction.
PREFACE.

catechism, which contains elements as precious as they are necessary, should be adhered to. These elements must be impressed on the memory of the children, and the meaning of them made clear by such explanations as they can readily understand. If, after having received this primary education, the children finally leave the schools, they will still take with them the elementary knowledge of Christian doctrine which may afterwards become sufficiently developed in them by hearing the Word of God and reading good books. If, on the other hand, they continue the course of their studies, they will possess the fundamental principles which will serve as a foundation for more complete knowledge. For those more favoured amongst the young who are brought up in the schools of more advanced and higher instruction, the text of the catechism does not suffice: to it must be added the demonstration of faith and a fuller explanation of its dogmas.

The demonstration of faith will acquaint the young with the philosophical and historical foundations of our belief, which will put them in possession of solid principles, against which all attacks and sophisms will be vain.

The full explanation of the dogmas of faith will give to the young a better knowledge of their true meaning, and will enable them to view them in their admirable harmony. A multitude of objections and prejudices, arising from ignorance of our mysteries, or a false idea of our dogmas, will thus be removed. This enlightened knowledge will, moreover, cause the Christian religion to be beloved and Jesus Christ and His Church to be cherished. The truths of faith are so beautiful
in their nature that they cannot fail to delight the mind when they are seen in their true significance.

To put both this demonstration of faith and a full explanation of its dogmas within the reach of the young is what we have endeavoured to realise in this Course of Religion.

The work is composed of three parts, entitled 'Apologetic,' 'Dogmatic,' and 'Moral.'

The first comprises the rational principles of religion, the demonstration of the Christian faith and the true Church of Jesus Christ, as well as the refutation of the principal modern errors.

The second part unfolds the whole series of the dogmas of faith, from the mysteries of God and the creation to the universal judgment, the final term of God's work in this world.

The third part presents an exposition of the Christian virtues and obligations. It treats of laws in general, of the Decalogue and the commandments of the Church, of sins and good works, of the Sacraments and of prayer, of the feasts and of religious ceremonies.

In order to combine clearness and solidity, we adopt a regular and simple method, which appears to us calculated, especially if aided by short explanation vivâ voce, to render the logic of the proofs, the true sense of the dogmas, as well as the harmony and the charming beauty of all the virtues of faith, easy to grasp, learn, and comprehend.
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ABRIDGED COURSE

of

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

1. The course of religious instruction is that part of teaching which has for its object religious science. It is of greater importance than any other study, because religion extends its influence not only over the present, but also over the future, life of man. It is the only science which contains a pledge of happiness in this world and in the world to come.

When religious teaching is confined to the first elements of Christian doctrine, and only goes so far as to impress an exact knowledge of them on the memory of children, it is called Catechism, the primary or first course of religious instruction. When it rises to the science, properly so called, or the expounded knowledge of religious truths, it is styled higher course of religious instruction.

2. This course, in its full extent, comprises three parts: the apologetic, the dogmatic, and the moral. The apologetic shows which is the true religion; the dogmatic teaches what the true religion proposes to our belief; the moral, what the true religion commands us to practise,
Part First.

APOLOGETIC.

3. The apologetic part defends the true religion against all adversaries, be they unbelievers or heretics.

4. It comprises two distinct arguments: namely, the truth of the Christian religion as opposed to unbelief, and the truth of the Catholic religion as opposed to the heresies of the various sects. Two preliminary articles will lead to these arguments.

I. Preliminary articles.
II. Chapter i. Truth of the Christian religion.
III. Chapter ii. Truth of the Catholic religion.

PRELIMINARY ARTICLES.

First Article: On the End of a Religious Argument.

5. The argument touching the true religion has for its end, (1) to confirm in the truth those who already possess it, and to arm them against error; (2) to confound the ungodly, and to defend the faith against their attacks; (3) to lead to the truth those who are ignorant of it, but seek it in good faith.

6. In order to understand how useful and necessary it is that the true religion should be shown forth, it will suffice to consider, in a general way, the state of the world as regards religious truth. There is in the world a fact,
which is apparent to all. It is the existence of the Catholic Church, proclaiming herself to be the pillar of truth, the organ of God, the ark of salvation, the portal which opens to eternal life. For more than eighteen centuries, speaking in the name of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, she says: I alone possess the only true religion. Whoever believes and professes my doctrine shall enter into eternal life; whoever rejects it shall be rejected of God, and hurled into everlasting damnation.

If this solemn affirmation be true, there can be no choice. The teaching of the Church must be received with docility, so as to escape hell and to inherit eternal beatitude. This question, therefore, is plainly of supreme importance. It is not only useful, but it is necessary, to know whether the word of the Church be the expression of the truth. Some persons know it, some are ignorant of it. We, who have received the faith and have been baptised, have the happiness to know it and to believe in it; we are in possession of the truth.

7. But there are some who have not been equally enlightened, and who are not convinced of the truth of Catholicity; they are ignorant of the holy proclamation of the Church, or else they doubt it or deny it, saying, 'The doctrine of the Church is not true.' To all such it is necessary to present the demonstration of the truth.

8. Let us remark, first of all, that the denial of the Catholic faith by unbelievers is not the expression of a certainty, but of a simple doubt, or of a blind persuasion founded on prejudice and corrupt desires.

They deny the doctrine of the Church because it is distasteful to them, or because, in order to indulge their passions, they wish it to be false. They moreover seek by vain reasoning to persuade themselves that it is false; and by the influence that the will can exert over the intelligence, they arrive at a state of doubt, or rather at a sort of persuasion by which they succeed in deceiving themselves. They can go no further with regard to that
which is so certain as the Catholic revelation; the mind of the man who rejects it may arrive at doubt, but not at any evidence and certainty of the opposite. He, for example, who would deny the reign and conquests of Alexander might adduce endless reasonings and sophisms, but could never affirm with certainty that Alexander and his conquests are a myth.

9. Instead, therefore, of denying the great affirmation of the Church, unbelievers should be content with demanding proofs, and should apply themselves to a serious examination of this question, *Is the doctrine of the Catholic Church the truth?*

This is in fact the great question, which contains in itself all the strife between Catholicism and its adversaries, the unbelievers of every age and of every variety, *Is the doctrine of the Catholic Church the truth?*

Enlightened by faith, we reply with promptitude, *'Yes, it is the truth; the pure unchangeable truth.'*

This answer gives our adversaries a right to demand our proofs. We must therefore show forth the truth of the doctrine which the Church proposes as the way of salvation.

Second Article: Three Kinds of Demonstration.

10. There are three kinds of demonstration, or three ways of proving the truth of the Christian faith, which are suited to different degrees of intelligence. The first is an *indirect* demonstration; the second a *direct*, but *summary*, demonstration; the third a *direct and complete* demonstration, which establishes the whole edifice of truth on the ruins of error.

I. Indirect Demonstration.

11. We understand by this indirect demonstration of the true religion a simple reference to the doctors of theology and their writings. In order to appreciate the force and usefulness of these, it is to be remarked that
scientific demonstrations are not the work of every person, but of special men. He who knows a thing to be a fact is not therefore necessarily capable of explaining it. Thus any one may know that an edifice is solidly built, but only the architect may be in a position to explain the causes of its solidity. One may know of the victories of Cyrus, but not be able to prove them, or to remove all the historical difficulties regarding them; such an explanation belongs only to the historical student. One may be perfectly sure of certain truths relating to rights, but at the same time be unable to prove them, not being learned in this particular subject; and if we have opponents who contest these different points, we refer them to particular persons specially qualified to furnish the required proofs and explanations.

It is the same in matters of religion. All the faithful are perfectly aware of the truth of their faith; but only those well versed in religious science, such as priests and theologians, can expound it and answer all objections. It is to such that the mass of the faithful can always refer their opponents. This reference renders all men indirectly capable of demonstrating the truth. Thus every individual among the faithful can answer his opponents in such words as these: 'The truth of the faith which the Church teaches is beyond doubt. I have the happiness of knowing this truth; but if I am not sufficiently learned to furnish all the proofs and explanations that you demand, I know that complete and rigorous demonstrations have been given by the most learned doctors, from the time of the Apostles to our own days. These demonstrations exist, in substance, in all books of theology. Study these books, or apply to the priests and doctors versed in these matters.'

II. Summary Demonstration.

12. This demonstration, which may also be called popular, because it is within reach of every one, is based
upon the great fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostles themselves gave but little proof of their mission other than this supreme and convincing sign of His divine authority given by Jesus Christ Himself. He said to the stubborn Jews, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale’s belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights’ (Matt. xii. 39).

The proof* drawn from the Resurrection is at once simple and convincing. It only requires, in order to understand it, an upright heart which seeks the truth in good faith, and a reasonable mind which recognises, in miracles and in prophecy, the stamp of divine authority.

It may be argued thus: If Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, His doctrine is divine;† and Jesus Christ is truly risen; therefore His doctrine is divine.

18. In the major of this syllogism we say: *If Christ is risen, His doctrine is divine*—that is, if He is risen, His doctrine is approved, authorised, and declared to be true by God Himself in working such a wonder in its favour. The justness of this conclusion is the more evident because Christ had predicted that He would rise again on the third day in proof of His divine mission.

If His doctrines were false, God must have worked the most astounding prodigy in favour of an impostor. He must have sanctioned falsehood and led mankind into error. This is an impossibility to Him who is the essence of goodness and truth.

* This demonstration may be seen more amply drawn out in Frayssinoux, *Conferences*, tom. ii. confé. 6. Also in Feller, *Catéchisme Philosophique*, tom. ii. n. 323. Above all, in the *Sermon sur la Résurrection*, by Card. Giraud, Archbishop of Cambrai.

† The divinity of the mission of Jesus Christ must not be confounded with the divinity of His Person, which will be considered elsewhere.
The minor of the syllogism adds: *Now Jesus Christ is truly risen*. This proposition affirms an historical fact that is proved in a most undeniable manner. The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ must indeed be admitted as beyond a doubt if it be attested by numerous obviously truthful witnesses—that is to say, by witnesses who could not have been deceived themselves, who could not have wished to deceive others, who could not have deceived even if they had wished to do so. Now the resurrection of Jesus Christ is attested by such witnesses as these.

(1) These witnesses are, first, the Apostles, who saw their risen Master during forty days, contemplating Him with their eyes, hearing Him with their ears, touching Him with their hands; who, though at first unbelieving, yet afterwards, converted by evidence, devoted their existence to publishing this great event, and, in fact, announced it to the whole world, sanctioning their testimony by miracles, and sealing it with their blood.

(2) Women and disciples of every kind, numbering in all more than 500 ocular witnesses (1 Cor. xiv. 6).

(3) Auricular witnesses not less trustworthy, such as innumerable Jews and pagans who, vanquished by the evidence of things, became converted, admitted the Resurrection, and believed in it with the deepest and firmest faith.

(4) The very enemies of Jesus Christ, the chiefs of the Jewish nation, hearing the Apostles declare the Resurrection, did not attempt to arraign them as impostors, and by this conduct themselves gave testimony to the truth. For if there had been imposture, these hostile men would not have failed to confound the impostors. On the one hand, it was their interest and their duty to do so; on the other, they had every means at command for doing so; for, having placed guards at the entrance to the sepulchre, they were likely to know what had become of the body of Christ, and had
but to produce it. If, then, they did not unveil, or seek to unveil, the imposture, it was because there was no imposture. Enemies so powerful and so vigilant, whose interests lay in not being taken unawares, were not likely to be imposed on.

(5) The most avowed enemies of the Christian name, such as Celsius, Porphyry, Hierocles, Julian the Apostate, and others; who, in speaking of the resurrection of Christ have sought to explain it, as well as His other miracles, by the artifice of magic, have never denied the fact itself.

(6) All these testimonies are confirmed by the living monument built upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, namely, the Church and the feast of Easter, the centre of her solemnities. To-day, as in her earliest days, the Church proclaims the resurrection of her Author, saying to all generations: 'I am founded, with my worship and my faith, on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If He had not risen, I should not exist, the world would not have believed, and would still have been lost in idolatry.'

The witnesses we have enumerated above are of obvious veracity. Taking, for example, merely the Apostles, every unprejudiced mind will allow (1) that they could not have been deceived—their number, their incredulity, the nature of the fact, its continuance during forty days, the multiplicity and variety of the apparitions that attested it, rendered error and hallucination impossible. (2) That they did not wish to deceive; their conscientiousness and their piety, their interest and the prospect of the most terrible consequences of deceit, must have excluded from their minds the very thought of such a crime and of such folly. (3) That they could not have deceived, even if they had wished to do so. In order to succeed in deceiving, they would have had to do two things: (a) to take away the body of their Master, who had deceived them; and (b) to persuade men that He had come to life again. Both were equally impracticable, on account of the satellites
who guarded the tomb, of the impossibility of maintaining secrecy, and of the disinclination of the Jews, and of the world at large, to believe such intelligence, unless imposed upon them by the force of evidence.

We may add, that if we compare this event with every other fact recorded in history, we shall not find another that is established on proofs so numerous and so certain; therefore, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ could be called in question, nothing could be certain in history, and the best authenticated facts would be doubtful, such as the assassination of Cæsar and the conquests of Alexander. The resurrection, then, of Christ is an absolutely incontestable truth. This resurrection is the seal imprinted by God on His religion; this religion is, then, true, and every man must accept it under pain of eternal damnation, according to those words of His, ‘Qui non crediderit condemnabitur,—Whosoever believes not, shall be condemned’ (Mark xvi. 16).

III. Complete Demonstration.

14. Complete demonstration is that which proves the true religion in a rigorous manner, and in all its parts. It is capable of developments more or less extensive. To keep within the limits of our plan, we shall confine ourselves to presenting the principal proofs, and to the solution of the most frequent objections. *

Complete demonstration embraces a twofold subject,

* The plan of this Abridged Course confines us to very narrow limits for the objections. But more lengthened refutations may be found in well-known works, such as Gouset’s Théologie Dogmatique; Boone’s Manuel de l’Apologiste and Motifs de mon Attachement à l’Eglise Catholique; M. de Séguir’s Réponses aux Objections les plus répandues contre la Religion; Abbé Berneau, La Foi et l’Incrédulité, L’Eglise et le Monde, La Mort et l’Immortalité; Franco’s Réponses Populaires aux Objections; Feller’s Catéchisme Philosophique; Bergler’s De la vraie Religion; Schuppe’s Elements Théologique Dogm. et Cursus Scriptura Sacra.
the Christian religion and the Catholic religion. These are, in reality, one and the same religion; but in order to arrive at the truth in an explicit and practical manner, we must make a distinction between them, and explain them separately. By the Christian religion in general we understand the doctrine that Jesus Christ preached eighteen centuries ago; and by the Catholic religion this same doctrine as it is preserved by the Catholic Church, and distinct from the Christianity of dissenting sects.

CHAPTER I.

TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION DEMONSTRATED AS OPPOSED TO UNBELIEF.

15. We take the word unbelievers in a broad sense, to designate generally all those who are not acquainted with Christian revelation, or who positively refuse to believe in it; such as pagans, Mahometans, Jews, apostate Christians, rationalists, free-thinkers, &c.

16. The demonstration of Christian truth to unbelievers, in order to be complete, must comprise three parts: the grounds of the demonstration, the means of demonstration, and the facts and proofs of which the demonstration consists.

First Article: Grounds of Demonstration.

17. The grounds or bases of Christian demonstration are certain fundamental truths, which are evident to reason, and which it is impossible to deny without shutting one's eyes to its light. They may be reduced to the seven following:

(1) Certainty, denied by sceptics.

(2) The objective existence of bodies, denied by idealists.

(3) The personal existence of God, denied by atheists and pantheists.
(4) The infinite perfection of God, His providence, and the free-will of man, denied by fatalists.

(5) The spirituality of the soul and its immortality, denied by materialists.

(6) The natural law and the force of its obligations, denied by autonomists.

(7) Religion and the obligations imposed by it, denied by the impious.

These preliminary truths, obvious to reason, are called *grounds of Christian demonstration*, because it supposes them to exist, and there can be no solid demonstration if they are denied or called in question. They may also be termed common-sense truths, because they are taught by the natural sense common to all reasonable men, and the denial of them would be contrary to this common sense. These *data* of reason are, moreover, amply proved in every course of sound philosophy.* We will confine ourselves to a brief exposition of them.

18. (1) Certainty.—Man possesses in his reasonable nature the faculty of recognising truth with a perfect certainty. Those who deny this proposition are called *sceptics*, unreasonable men who reject the light of reason itself, and affirm certainty at the same time that they deny it, for their denial amounts to this, *It is certain that nothing is certain.*

The Author of our reasoning nature has given us several means of arriving at true and certain knowledge. Philosophers call them *criteria*, and commonly admit six, namely, evidence, consciousness, exterior sense, authority, analogy, and common sense.

*Evidence* is the clear perception of the necessity of a judgment, or the affinity of two ideas. Immediate evidence, or the evidence of *intuition*, is distinguished from mediate evidence, or the evidence of *deduction*. Immediate evidence makes known to us truths which are shown by their own light—those primary truths which do not admit

* Such as those of Decker, Liberatore, Tongiorgi, &c.
of demonstration, but on which all other truths are based. Such are analytical judgments, in which the attribute is so inherent to the subject that it is an essential part of it, and only offers the same idea under another form. For example, two and two make four; the whole is equal to all the parts put together; the whole is greater than its separate parts. There is no effect without a cause.

Mediate evidence makes known truths which are not apparent of themselves, but which are deduced from the primary truths by means of reasoning or demonstration.

Consciousness gives us the certainty of our existence, and of other facts that take place within us, such as thought, desire, doubt.

Our exterior senses make known to us with certainty the exterior and immediate objects which act upon our various sensations; that is, the existence of the bodies that constitute the visible world.

Authority, or testimony, under the requisite conditions, gives us a certain knowledge of historical exterior and sensible facts. Of this class are events purely natural, as the death of a man; such also are those facts which are called miraculous, that is, facts which are due to a supernatural cause, but which equally affect the senses, such as the resurrection of a dead person.

Authority is the easy and clear means by which we come to the certain knowledge of the true religion.

Analogy is a criterion which allows a conclusion to be drawn respecting things not known from their similarity to things known. Thus, from the sight of a man and his actions I judge with certainty that he, like myself, is a being gifted with liberty and intelligence. So also, from observing the constant motion of the heavens, I know that the sun which sets to-day will reappear on the horizon to-morrow. Analogy is the basis of foresight and of what is called human experience, and physical science rests on it.

Common sense, which we take here as a criterion, is
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a manner of seeing; it is a uniform judgment common to all mankind; in other words it is that general and invincible sentiment of all mankind which is simply the expression of his reasonable nature. It helps us to know universally admitted truths, such as the individual existence of each one of us, that of the objects that surround us, that of the Divinity; also, the difference between good and evil, and the principal points of the natural law.

These several means of knowing the truth suppose an ultimate motive or reason which produces that certainty in the mind which rests in the possession of truth. It is called the foundation of certainty. It consists in objective evidence, that is to say, in the evidence of the object itself rendered manifest by the means of some criterion.

19. (2) Objective and real existence of bodies.— Those who deny the real and objective existence of bodies are called idealists; they say that there exist in the mind ideas which represent bodies, but that it is not certain that these ideal and subjective representations are linked to objective realities. These men are refuted by ordinary good sense, and are belied by their own conduct. If, for example, they become the victims of some accident, or of some disagreeable treatment, they do not doubt its reality. The most striking and sensible arguments should be used to convince them, and to make them speedily certain of the objective existence of bodies.

20. (2) The existence of God.—We call God the Supreme Being, the Primary Cause of the Universe, the Necessary Self-existent Being, infinitely perfect, and possessing within Himself the plentitude of being. Those who deny the existence of God are called atheists.*

* To the honour of the human race, it is doubtful whether such persons as veritable atheists really exist. This question can only be elucidated by rightly understanding the meaning of the words 'veritable atheist.'
Those who deny the existence of a personal God, and confound the divine nature with the mass of beings that constitute the universe, are called pantheists.

Both are refuted, (1) by the faith of the human race; (2) by the order and the beauty of the universe; (3) by the very existence of the human species; (4) or even by that of any of the living species, by which the earth is inhabited. These are four unanswerable proofs.

21. (1) The faith of the human race.—We mean by this the common accord with which all men believe in the existence of God, their worship of Him, and the homage of dependence which they pay Him. This bond of union is as ancient, as universal, and as lasting as the world itself. This belief of the whole world is a most convincing fact: 'Cast your eyes over the face of the earth,' said Plutarch; 'you may there find cities without ramparts, without education, without magistrature; people without fixed habitation, without property, without money; but you will nowhere find a city where the knowledge of God does not exist.'

Cicero and Seneca spoke in the same way, and modern discoveries have verified their words.*

an atheist by conviction, one convinced by the force of reason of the non-existence of God, it is clear that such atheists cannot exist, because the grounds for such conviction do not exist. 2. If by veritable atheist is understood an atheist by simple persuasion, who, from hearing it constantly repeated, deludes himself into the belief that there is no God, in this case also it would seem that the mind of man could not accept so senseless a persuasion. It is only the heart of the fool that would say there is no God. 'The fool has said in his heart,' and not in his intelligence, 'there is no God' (Ps. xiii.)

As to practical atheists, who live as if there were no God to fear and honour, the fact of their existence is, alas, but too well established. What we have said of atheists will apply also to pantheists.

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* Cic. Tuscul. lib. i. n. 18; Senec. Epist. 117.
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This unanimity, this feeling common to all, shows that it is in the nature of man to believe in God, just as it is in the nature of children to entertain feelings of love and gratitude for the authors of their existence. The belief in God therefore springs from nature and from reason; it is the expression of the truth.

22. (2) The spectacle of the universe, and the admirable order which prevails, manifest the hand of a Supreme Disposer, who is distinct from His work. The harmony of nature, all the wonders which incessantly strike our eyes, cannot be explained excepting by the action of an intelligent cause, which is God. It is thus that a timepiece proclaims the existence of its maker. To contemplate the universe, and yet deny the God who made it, is to admit effects without cause, the possibility of a palace without an architect. Must not those men be blind who say that the universe is the work of chance, or, what is the same thing, that the world made itself? What would persons so wilfully blind reply if they were told that a house had built itself, that a book or a poem had been written by chance?

23. (3) The existence of the human race.—The human race did not make itself. It must, then, have had an author, who existed of Himself, and by the necessity of His essence. It is therefore this Author, existing of Himself, that we call God. We will explain this reasoning. The human race did not make itself; all men in general, and each in particular, must have recognised this fact, and said, No, it is not I who gave myself existence. Humanity, therefore, comes from an author other than itself. Who is this author? I cannot answer that it is a being coming in his turn from another; for the same question is ever recurring. It must, therefore, be one who is self-existing, a necessary being who is the primary and supreme cause of all things—that is, it must be God.

24. (4) Any of the living species whatever by which
we are surrounded, if we reflect a little, will in the same manner lead us to the existence of God. Whence, for instance, comes the little bird that sings in the woods? From the egg. And whence the egg? From another bird. And this other bird? From another egg; and the same question may be repeated without possibility of solution or explanation, unless we suppose a primary cause of these living creatures—God, who created them.

25. There is a God, then, in spite of atheism. And this God is not the universe, as the pantheists say; for we have seen that the primary cause and author of the universe is as distinct from the universe as an architect is from the edifice which he has built. The impious system of the pantheists, who found their creed on their assertion that there exists only one substance, and that that substance is God, not only confounds the world with its author, the effect with the cause, but also matter with spirit, the finite with the infinite, and destroys the very idea of God, the Being who is essentially necessary, spiritual, infinitely perfect, and distinct from the visible universe of which He is the primary cause.*


God is infinitely perfect; that is to say, He possesses all perfection in an infinite degree. As proof of this truth, (1) all the perfections which I admire in creatures must be found eminently in God, since He is the primary cause: as also those which are possible—that is to say, those which might exist must be found also in their primary cause; for otherwise they would not be

* Pantheism is by its essence an atheistical system—the atheist and atheism become necessarily pantheist; since, if there be no true God, known and recognised, they are forced to declare that the substance of the world is the necessary being, existing of itself in consequence of being God. See Goezhebr, Diction. Encycl. de la Théologie Cathol. art. Panthéisme.
possible. The primary cause of all things, who is God, possesses, then, all perfections. He is infinitely perfect.

(2) In the second place, God, being by nature necessary and independent, cannot be limited in His perfection; nor could His own nature or a will not His own impose a limit to an absolute and necessary essence like His. He possesses, then, the plentitude of all perfection.

27. Providence.—It follows that there is in God the attribute of providence; for, taken as an attribute, providence is a part of wisdom, and must be counted amongst the multitude of God’s perfections. It exerts a constant and universal action over all that exists and happens. It is the name we give to the wise and protecting action by which God governs the world and directs all creatures towards an end worthy of Him.

28. The liberty of man.—God, in creating the stars, plants, and animals, made them subject to necessity, that is to say, to irresistible functions or instincts by which they of necessity obey the laws of their nature in a mechanical way. He did not act in the same manner towards man. He gave him liberty, that noble attribute which constitutes him master, sole arbiter of his will, that he might direct his actions according to order, obey the laws of his nature, and go forward freely and without constraint towards his end.

We speak here of the essential liberty of man, which is called free-will, and which is opposed to necessity. It may be defined as the faculty of acting by choice, and of choosing between good and evil. As the word liberty may be taken in different senses and may lead to confusion, it is important to make a distinction between (1) moral and physical liberty, (2) true and false liberty, (3) natural liberty, or the liberty proceeding from natural right, and civil liberty.

(1) Physical liberty is the natural faculty of willing and doing anything, whether good or evil. Man has full liberty to will; this is the free-will of which we
have been speaking. But as regards the liberty of acting, of executing that which the will determines, he only possesses it in a very limited degree. Moral liberty consists, not in the power of acting, but in the right of acting, of willing and of doing; it is the faculty of acting by choice in anything which is right and lawful. It will be seen that moral liberty is limited by law and the rules of order; it is restricted to the bounds of that which is lawful. When an action is contrary to order, we may will it and do it physically, but not lawfully or morally. All men are free to work evil and to violate justice, but none have the right to use this freedom.

(2) True liberty presupposes order and lawfulness; it is found only within the bounds of that which is right and good. The passions which impel the will towards evil are its enemies. The more a man is master of his passions, the more easily he acts uprightly, and the more he is free and master of himself. False liberty is the independence and license which consists in breaking the bounds imposed by order and by law—this is but a wild liberty, proceeding from evil and disorder.

(3) In the objective sense, civil liberty must be distinguished from natural liberty. The latter is the natural right to do good, to practise virtue, to live according to the maxims of the true religion, to enjoy all the benefits of the Church, to observe the holy laws which Jesus Christ, the Supreme Legislator, has established on earth. Civil liberty is that which is granted by the laws of the state, whether in favour of good or of evil.

29. Divine Providence and human liberty are denied by the fatalists, who would subject the Sovereign Ruler of the world, as well as man, to the unknown and blind necessity they call futality. Man, they say, is not free. Whether he work good or evil he acts by necessity, and could not do otherwise than he does. These errors are refuted by the laws of all nations, which recognise the
liberty of man; by our consciousness and our common sense, which loudly proclaim it.

30. (5) The spirituality and immortality of the soul.—The soul, taken in a broad and general sense, is the vital principle which animates all living creatures, animals as well as men. But this principle in man is distinguished by a particular faculty which elevates the human creature incomparably above all others that live on the earth. Man is gifted with intelligence, and is therefore spiritual and immortal; for our soul is not only that which feels in us, but that which thinks—that which makes us know the truth, and love that which is good. Our soul is therefore an intelligence—that is to say, a principle of spiritual operations, such as thoughts and judgments.

Now a principle of spiritual operations can be no other than a spiritual substance which is incorruptible and independent, in its existence, of the body to which it is united; so that it does not die with the body, but is immortal, unless its Creator, by a positive act of His will, were to destroy it. This, however, would be contrary to the nature of things, for two reasons: (1) the Author of our nature, having placed in our souls an unconquerable desire of perpetual happiness, has also provided an object, that is to say, a happiness fully commensurate with this desire. Again, this happiness supposes a future and endless life wherein it will be found, since it is not to be found in this transitory life. (2) The great Author of nature, as will be seen later, has engrafted in our hearts a law which exacts a sanction of recompense and of chastisement; this sanction also supposes a future life, since it is but rarely bestowed in the present life. This teaching of reason is confirmed by the consent of all nations and the universal belief in the doctrine of a future life.

31. The noble properties of the human soul are denied by the materialists, who say that man is only
matter, and does not essentially differ from the brutes or vegetables. They are to be answered thus: first, the essential intelligence of man places a gulf between him and animals devoid of reason. If they are too blind to see this gulf, they may be asked why animals do not speak, and how it is they do not pray. And if they persist in upholding their own relationship with brute beasts, there is nothing left but, with a feeling of compassion, to abandon to their depravity men who renounce the dignity of human nature.

The error of those who deny the noble origin of man, as our faith teaches it, may also be traced to materialism. According to the materialists, man is not created to the image and likeness of God; but he springs from a spontaneous vegetable growth, which little by little became an animal, and by degrees increased in perfection till it developed into man. It will suffice to reply to this mean and revolting hypothesis, that it has been refuted and proved to be impossible by learned men of the first rank, such as Quatrefages.*

* See 'Le Darwinisme et l'Origine de l'Homme,' in the Revue Catholique, August 1871. As to the opinion regarding heterogeneity, or spontaneous generation, it is now generally rejected by science. In order to defend it, the ancients founded their theory on the multitude of little animals which appear on substances in a state of putrefaction, and they thought that these creatures were formed at the expense of the elements of such substances. They laid down this principle in consequence: Corruptio unius, generatio alterius.—Every creature in dissolution produces another. But the more profound researches of modern times have shown that the production of animals, which is manifested under these circumstances, is due solely to one of the generating processes known to science, and that these animals issue perpetually from germs deposited by creatures of the same kind. Modern science thus opposes this other axiom to the false principle of the ancients: Omne vivum ex uno.—Everything that lives comes from a germ.

The doctrine of spontaneous generation still, however, has its adherents. Unluckily for them, all the experiments they have tried, in order to support this superannuated hypothesis,
TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

32. (6) The natural law.—Man has in the depth of his nature a law engraven there by the hand of God. It is that law which says to every one, 'Do good, avoid evil.' Honour God. Do not unto others that which you would not have them do unto you. 'Honour thy father and thy mother.' That is natural law, which have declared against them. The only specious argument which they can urge in its favour is the appearance of living creatures, sui generis, in the parenchyma of the organs of divers animals. But it is more than probable that the germs of these creatures have been brought there by means of circulation, as the fine membranes of the capillary vessels would not constitute an insurmountable obstacle to these germs whilst they are of microscopic diminutiveness. The absence of a direct proof of this mode of introduction, due only to our want of the necessary means of observation, cannot be a valid argument in favour of a theory which is in opposition to a universal physiological law. This reason has been accepted by the most distinguished scientific men of our period; but judging, at the same time, that direct proofs are to be found, they have sought them by means of ingenious observations, which have produced results that may be called decisive.

A partisan of the ancient ideas—M. Pouchet, Director of the Museum at Rouen—took certain alterable liquids, such as milk, &c., and placed them in carefully-closed receivers, in which he had either created a vacuum or introduced pure oxygen; or else he had submitted the contents to a temperature of 100 degrees, in order to destroy all living germs which might exist therein. After some days he found the liquids full of germs, which, to his mind, was a proof of spontaneous generation (Hétérogénie, Paris, 1869). Another savant—M. Pasteur—opposed M. Pouchet, and declared that his experiments had been made under defective conditions, and he himself tried the same experiments, taking however stricter precautions (Essai sur l'origine des Corps vivants spontanés, 1861; Mémoire sur les Corps vivants organiques, 1862); and the alterable substances remained indefinitely without producing any organisedatoms; an evident proof that life proceeds only from a living germ. The experiments of M. Pasteur appeared so conclusive that, when brought before a commission appointed by the Academy of Sciences, they obtained full sanction from that learned body, who pronounced against the hypothesis of heterogeneity.
may be defined as the knowledge imprinted in human nature of the moral order, which God ordains shall be followed, and forbids us to disturb. Those who deny the natural law are called autonomists. They say that their will is their law, that there is no essential difference between good and evil, between almsgiving and thieving—that it is a question of custom or of taste, and that everything is indifferent at root, everything is permitted. They may be answered that at least it is not permitted to outrage common sense; and man’s common sense does proclaim the existence of a natural law. All men have attached to certain actions an obligatory force, coming from the very nature of their objects. The existence of society, domestic, civil, and political, proves this. All society supposes a tie, an obligation between the head and the members; a natural obligation anterior to any positive law, since law emanates from society, comes after it, and presupposes the obligation of obedience.

Again, is it not the natural law which makes all mankind agree that benevolence is a virtue and murder a crime? What legislator would dare to say that murder and perjury, treason, blasphemy, and ingratitude are lawful things, and may become virtues? Then, again, remorse, which wakes up in a guilty conscience, makes all men feel that there are obligations which none may violate, even could they do so secretly and screened from all human observation.

33. (?) Religion and the obligations it imposes.—Religion is the homage which reasonable creatures owe to God. It is defined as the whole duty of man towards God. Taken subjectively, religion is a virtue obligatory on all; objectively, it is a body of theoretical or practical truths concerning the relations of man towards God.

The act or exercise of religion is called worship. It is divided into interior and exterior worship.
34. There are two kinds of objective religion: *natural,* and *supernatural or revealed religion.* The first is that which is learnt by means of the natural light of reason; it consists in certain truths which the Author of nature has imprinted more or less clearly in the heart of man. The second is that which is only learnt by means of a supernatural light, superior to that of reason, namely, the light of revelation. This light is morally necessary to mankind, in order to supply the deficiencies of natural light.

35. Revelation is God’s teaching to man, by means of ordinary words, or by other clear and evident signs. Thus, all that God spoke to the patriarchs Himself or by His angels, to the people of Israel by the prophets, to the whole world by His Son Jesus Christ, in order to teach us His law and His mysteries, is revelation.

By the word *revelation* is commonly understood *revealed religion,* and it more particularly designates the Mosical-Christian religion, which is the only religion divinely revealed.

36. Religion, or the worship of God, is an indispensable duty imposed on man, to neglect which constitutes impiety. This duty, founded on the natural and essential relations between God and man, comprises interior and exterior worship.

To recognise the obligation of interior worship, we have only to consult either the first ideas which man forms of God, the universal persuasion of all races, or the dearest and most sacred interests of humanity. (1) God, man’s Creator, is Master, Legislator, Father, and Supreme Benefactor. Man is His creature, overwhelmed with His benefits, and essentially subject to His laws. Who does not feel that religious duties spring from these ideas, and that man owes homage to such a Benefactor, to such a Father? (2) History testifies that everywhere and always religion has been considered by men as a duty and a virtue, and impiety as a detestable vice.
Moreover, religion has been regarded in all times and by every people as intimately bound up with the dearest interests of man, with civilisation, the preservation, and the well-being of societies. All legislators have believed in a divine Providence presiding over the government of the universe; and it is on this belief, as on an eternal foundation, that they have raised their institutions and constructed the edifice of society.

The obligation of exterior worship is shown (1) by the experience and practice of all nations; (2) by reason, which commands that man should pay homage to God with his whole being, with his body and soul; (3) by natural feeling, which must show itself exteriorly, to proclaim aloud the greatness and the benefits of the Supreme Master of the universe.

37. It follows, then, that man is bound to know religion. Since he must perform religious duties, he cannot be permitted to be ignorant of them; he is, then, obliged to acquire the knowledge of them; and if he do not know which is the true religion, he must carefully inquire and search after it. Revealed religion cannot be excluded from this research, for the sole reason that it is revealed. For, on the one hand, revelation is possible; to deny its possibility would be to deny the omnipotence and the goodness of God, and to contradict universal belief; and on the other hand, if it has pleased God to reveal a religion—for example, the Christian religion—and to inculcate it on all men, every one is bound to learn it and to practise it with docility.

It has pleased God, as will be proved, to reveal to man a religious law, which is no other than the one above mentioned, namely, the Christian religion. This revelation is an historical fact; it is called the divine fact, because it has for object God speaking to humanity, the greatest event in the whole history of the human race.

38. The Christian religion or revelation, of which we are speaking, takes its name from Jesus of Nazareth,
called Christ, who, at the commencement of the modern era, established it in Judea as an obligatory religion for all the nations of the earth. But it does not, strictly speaking, date from Jesus Christ, since it began with the human race. Having been given, in substance, to the first man, it was faithfully kept and practised by the patriarchs, developed later on by Moses and the other prophets, and finally established by Jesus Christ, who gave it to its later form and its perfection.

Thus the Christian religion presents three distinct phases, called (1) the patriarchal religion, from the time of Adam to that of Moses; (2) the Jewish religion, from the time of Moses to Jesus Christ; (3) the Christian religion from the time of Jesus Christ; this will remain unchanged even to the end of the world.

These three form but one and the same revelation, which has become developed like a mysterious plant; they are all the same divine light; but it has risen over the world slowly and majestically, like the day passing through the gloaming of the aurora before arriving at its perfect brightness.

39. Here occurs the great question which we have to solve. Does the Christian religion proceed really from God? Is it divine—divinely revealed? We affirm that it is divine, and we proceed to expound this proposition. We say that the Christian religion, founded by Jesus Christ, is divine, and not that the person of this admirable Founder is divine, because in this place we abstract from the great dogma of the personal divinity of Jesus Christ, of which we shall treat later on. For the present we regard Christ as a simple Messenger from above, who was authorised by miracles, and who preached a religion in the name of Almighty God. The divinity of His religion is allied to the divinity of His mission, and what proves the one proves the other also.

We will show, in the first place, that the means of demonstration that we shall use are legitimate.
Second Article: Means of Demonstration.

40. The means of demonstration, the certain proofs by which the Christian religion is shown to be divinely revealed, are miracles and prophecies.

41. In order to prove that miracles and prophecies are legitimate means of demonstration, we shall submit the following questions: (1) What is the true idea of miracles? (2) What is the true idea of prophecies, and how are one and the other certain marks and infallible proofs of true revelation? (3) What authority is there for the Bible, wherein the miracles and prophecies which we give as proofs are related?

I. Miracles.

42. A miracle is a sensible event which takes place contrary to the ordinary laws of nature, by the special intervention of God. A corpse, four days buried and already a prey to corruption, comes out living from his tomb; a violent tempest becomes suddenly appeased; a river returns to its source. These are events which are manifest deviations from the universal and acknowledged laws of the physical world; they are miracles.

Miracles of the first order are so called when they surpass the power of any creatures, even that of angels. Miracles of the second order are those which surpass the power of man, but not that of angels.

43. To refuse to believe that God can work miracles, would be (1) to refuse Him His omnipotence; (2) to contradict the universal belief of all nations; (3) to deny the best authenticated facts of history.

God works miracles, either by Himself or by His angels. He can work real miracles by Himself, because by His full power He can deviate from the ordinary natural laws of which He is the Author; or He may allow His angels to do so within the sphere of their power.
44. A real miracle differs from a marvel or a prodigy of the devil. A marvel is an illusion produced by cleverness or trickery. A diabolical prodigy is an astounding event which, when God permits, can be produced by the natural strength of the devil. The devil cannot do anything in the visible world without the special permission of God.

45. It is not always easy to discern real from false miracles; but in many cases the divine operation is so manifest, and the hand of God so visible, that it is impossible to mistake it. Such, for instance, is the resurrection of Lazarus, as reported by St. John (chap. xi.).

46. A miracle worked in favour of a doctrine is a divine seal imprinted on that doctrine. It is the mark of God, as the royal seal is the mark of a king to warrant the authenticity of his decrees. A doctrine which is sanctioned by miracles is infallibly true; for if it were false, God would be authorising error, and He who is supreme truth would make Himself a guarantee for falsehood and the accomplice of an imposture. If, then, the Christian revelation is authorised by miracles, it must come from God—it must be divine and true.

II. Prophecies.

47. A prophecy is a certain prediction of a future event, which is merely contingent, the knowledge of which cannot be acquired.

Such, for instance, would be the prophecy of the exact time of a man's birth, the ruin of a flourishing empire, or the establishment of another, foretold several centuries before the occurrence.

Prophecy differs essentially from conjecture. A conjectural prediction is neither certain to come to pass, nor is it independent of the natural causes on which it is founded.

48. God alone can prophesy, because He alone knows all things, the future, as well as the present and
the past. The knowledge of the future supposes an
infinite intelligence.

49. Prophecy, as it emanates essentially from God,
is, like a miracle, a mark of the divine authority, and
when made in favour of a doctrine, it imprints on it a
divine seal which gives it the inalienable character of
truth.

50. Hence, as miracles and prophecies are certain
proofs of a divine revelation, we may form an argument
as follows: If Christianity is authorised by miracles and
prophecies, it is truly revealed by God; we know that
Christianity is authorised by this double sanction,
therefore Christianity is truly revealed by God, and is the
inevitable truth.

51. The minor of this syllogism affirms historical
facts, of which we must demonstrate the certainty; and
this obliges us in the first place to prove the authority
of the Bible.

For if we are asked how we know about miracles
worked in favour of the Christian religion, and how we
know the ancient prophecies, and whence we derive the
assurance of their authenticity, we reply that these are
historical facts contained in the Bible. We must, then,
prove the historical authority of the Sacred Scriptures,
whose authority is unquestionable, and superior to that
of any other history.

III. Authority of the Bible.*

52. The Bible is divided into books of the Old and the
New Testament. They have a twofold authority: (1) a
divine authority; (2) a human and simply historical
authority. We shall not treat of the divine authority
which they possess, as having been inspired by God, but

* See Schoppe, Corpus SCRIPTURAE SACRAE, tom. i. part i.
cap. i. art. 2, De Librorum Bibliorum Auctoritate, and art. 3,
De Libris Bibliarum in se spectatis.
shall now regard them from a purely human point of view, as ordinary books of history.

The histories of both the Old and New Testaments have an authority superior to any others; an authority so certain and so amply proved that it is impossible to question it without at the same time rejecting or doubting every record of history, and all historical authority. We would ask our adversaries whether they admit the authority of the books which we possess bearing the names of Tacitus, Plutarch, Thucydides, and others. If they do so, we may add that they cannot challenge the authority of the Bible, which is, as we shall show, far superior to that of profane authors.

We will begin with the New Testament. If this is recognised to be true, its veracity will serve to prove the truth of the Old Testament.

I. Historical Authority of the New Testament.

53. The historical books of the New Testament are the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The perfect authority of these books depends on three conditions—authenticity, integrity, and veracity.

(1) Authenticity.—A book is called authentic when it is really the work of the author whose name it bears, or to whom it is attributed. Are the books of the New Testament authentic? Were the four Gospels written by the Evangelists, whose names they bear? Does the book of the Acts of the Apostles come from the pen of St. Luke, as is affirmed by Catholics? Our adversaries deny it; they pretend that these books were composed by writers of a later date. We say, on the contrary, that their authenticity cannot admit of a doubt. It is proved by four arguments—prescription or legitimate possession, impossibility of the contrary, marks of authenticity, and testimony.

(a) The Universal Church has been in possession of these books ever since their origin, and has always held
them to be authentic; and though her cleverest and most furious enemies have tried to prove the contrary, they have never, during the course of so many centuries, been able to do so. Hence this possession of the Church must be considered legitimate and founded on truth.

(b) To say that these books have been invented by impostors, and falsely attributed to the Evangelists, is not only gratuitous, but an impossible hypothesis. The invention of them could not have been produced during the lifetime of the Apostles, because these would have protested against them; nor yet after their death—that is to say, after the first century of our era—because these books then already existed, and were spread throughout Christendom like the Christians themselves.

(c) The Gospels bear the marks of their authors' hands. The language in which they were composed; the style; the constant allusions to the Scriptures, to the manners and geographical circumstances of the Jews; the facts and words which are reported with a precision of detail which can only be given by an eye-witness—all these things show that their authors were Israelites who were contemporaries and disciples of Jesus.

(d) The Gospels and Evangelists are quoted by the earliest fathers, such as St. Justin, St. Irenæus, St. Polycarp, St. Ignatius, St. Clement of Rome, who was a disciple of St. Peter. Moreover, the heretics of the first ages, the pagan philosophers who were hostile to the Church, such as Lucian, Celsus, and Julian the Apostate, admit the authenticity of the Gospels. ‘Paul has nowhere dared to give to Jesus the name of God,’ says Julian; ‘neither have Matthew, Luke, nor Mark; John only has done it in his simplicity.’*

(2) **Integrity.**—The books of the New Testament have not undergone any substantial interpolation or alteration, \(a\) because such corruption has always been impossible, and \(b\) it is positively evident that it never has taken place.

\(a\) **Impossibility.**—All corruption would have been impossible during the lifetime of the Apostles, and under their eyes. They would have protested against it, and not have suffered it. It was also impossible after their death, as it would be now, because of the dissemination of copies and the vigilance of the Bishops.

\(b\) It is proved that the New Testament has in fact remained intact; proofs of this are furnished by the writings and commentaries of the Fathers, who quote nearly all the New Testament; by the ancient versions, which are in perfect harmony with the actual text; by the old manuscripts of the New Testament which have come down to us, some of which date from the fourth century, and which present the same text with some unimportant variations.

(3) **Veracity.**—The historians of the New Testament are truthful, veracious, and worthy of belief in the highest degree. We have proof of this in the person of the authors, in the nature of the facts which they report, in the form of their recital, in the confidence which they have inspired from the beginning.

\(a\) The authors are men who were neither deceived nor deceivers, and who moreover could not, if they would, have deceived. In fact, they were contemporary with, and witnesses of, the events which they relate. Calm of mind and slow of belief, they were men without excitement or enthusiasm; full of religion and probity, they had a horror of imposture, and shed their blood to witness the truth of what they have written.

\(b\) The history which they write is composed of a series of public and important events, which could easily have been proved to be false, and which contemporaries