

APOLOGETICS

A Class Manual in the Philosophy of the Catholic Religion

By

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This little Book on the Sanity of the Catholic Religion is dedicated, with Love abounding, to the fadeless Memory of Two who loved that Religion through long and stainless Years, and were Its ardent Apologists in Word, in Deed, and in all their Lives,

MY FATHER AND MOTHER,
who are now, these many Years,
with God in Heaven

PREFACE

At the present moment there is great need for textbooks in Christian Apologetics or Evidences. Perhaps there is even greater need for texts in Christian Polemics. For it does seem that Catholics might at last refuse to deal seriously with the insanities charged against their religion. It does seem that Catholics, might now take the active and aggressive stand in the endless argument that goes on about their faith; that they might now, after so many, many weary refutations of absurdities, require proofs from their opponents instead of silly charges, and positive doctrine instead of the vague sentimentalism and tiresome negations that make up the jejune sectarianism of our day. Still, however delightful it would be to charge happily into the part of "the offensive" and turn out a textbook that would serve Catholic students by instructing them in methods of making the enemies of the true faith consider the cheapness and inadequacy of their own resources, it is well to resist the pleasant impulse to do it. For successful Polemics can come only from sound Apologetics. Let the Catholic student learn and love to be a thorough apologist for his religion; let him delight in the scientific knowledge of the reasonableness and necessity of his own true faith. Then, and then only, will he be equipped for positive warfare against falsehood.

Then, and then only, will he be able to show the unreason and the unmanliness of irreligion, and to dissipate the fog of sentimentality that passes for religion with many modems. Let us then have textbooks in Apologetics.

The class manual in Apologetics needed today has a somewhat peculiar shape. Two or three generations ago, a text in this subject had mainly to deal with the unique truth of the Catholic religion among many religions, all claiming to be Christian. Among people of our western civilization at least, it was then quite generally admitted that there is a God and that Christ is God-made-Man; Christ's Church was admitted to be the only true Church, and the question that concerned

the apologist was—which, among several claimants, is really Christ's Church? Today, outside the Catholic Church, the existence of God is specially ignored, and the divinity of Christ is generally denied, even by sectarian clergymen. The modern textbook in Apologetics must, therefore, deal more fully than the older texts with the fundamental truths of God's existence and the divinity of Christ. And the modern chapter on the claims of the Catholic Church, as distinct from other Christian bodies, may be made much more brief and direct, for the simple reason that the "other Christian bodies" have largely faded into a vaguely differentiated group with no very positive claims of any kind except the general claim to the right of taking "centre shots at Rome," as a bright little modern book has it.

This textbook was written in a sincere effort to supply what is felt as a distinct need. It tries to present a clear and logical statement of the philosophy, the *reason*, that is back of the Catholic religion. It endeavors to impress upon the student the necessity under which every educated Catholic lies, of being interested in the reasonableness of his religion and of realizing his duty to make non-Catholics interested in it. It tries to offer a course of training that will make Catholic students understand that they have a warfare to conduct, but not a "warring against flesh and blood"; that they are soldiers active for Christ, not to inflict the shame of a defeat, but to share the glory of a victory; that they are militant marchers in a hostile world, not bearing chains to bind, but bringing the inestimable treasure of the truth that makes men free.

May this book serve, then, however feebly, the glorious purpose for which it was composed.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Name 2. Definition 3. Importance 4. Division

1. NAME

The word *apologetics* is derived from the Greek word *apologeisthai*, which means "to defend oneself." The words *apology* and *apologia* derive from the same source. Thus, the basic meaning of *apology*, *apologia* and *apologetics*, is the same, viz., "self-defense" or "justification of one's position, conduct, or belief." The vulgar meaning of the word *apology*, which makes it synonymous with *excuse*, is excluded from our use of the term. To make an apology, or to present an apologetic is not, therefore, to admit being in the wrong; on the contrary, it is to explain that one is in the right. *Apologetics* means a justification, a vindication, a satisfactory explanation.

2. DEFINITION

Apologetics is the science which explains and justifies the Catholic religion as the true religion.

Apologetics is a *science*, that is to say, it is a body of certainly known facts, set forth in a manner that is systematic, logical, and complete; and it presents the reasons which show these facts to be true and certain.

Apologetics is a *human* science, for it draws its facts from history and philosophy (i.e., *human* sources) and develops its proofs by unaided human reason. Apologetics does not call upon Divine Revelation (as the *divine* science of theology does) for its fundamental proofs; but it regards the records of Revelation as historical documents until they have been proved by reason to be the teachings of the infinite and infallible God.

Apologetics explains and justifies the Catholic religion as the true religion. That is to say, Apologetics shows that the Catholic religion in its essentials, and in such individual doctrines as may be investigated by the unaided mind of man, is reasonable, right, and true; and it shows that the arguments used against the claims of the Catholic religion are unwarranted, unreasonable, and fallacious.

3. IMPORTANCE

You may say: "I am a Catholic. I know perfectly well that my religion is the one true religion. I have no need of a scientific study to convince me of its unique truth. I possess the infused gift of faith, and I realize, moreover, that my religion is thoroughly reasonable. What care I for the attacks and slurs directed against it by ignorance and prejudice? I need no Apologetics to show me that such attacks and slurs are utterly unreasonable and unjust. Therefore, the study of Apologetics does not appear important to me."

Your objection misses the point. Apologetics is not meant to convince you of the truth of your religion, but to equip you for the task of convincing others. Apologetics is not meant to rationalize your faith; for faith is a divine gift far surpassing mere intellectual conviction. But faith and intellect are gifts of the one God, and between them there

is a perfect and beautiful harmony. To discover this harmony, and to indicate it in a scientific manner for the benefit of others, is the opportunity offered you in the study of Apologetics. This opportunity you must embrace. For, as an educated Catholic, you are required to do more than possess your faith in security, and to bear with patience the slights cast upon it by unreason and prejudice; you must be able to banish prejudice from minds that entertain it. Those who misunderstand your religion, and hate it, and speak all manner of evil things against it, are human beings with souls that God wants saved, and He expects you to do your part in saving them. Now, you may do very much for the saving of such souls by disposing them intellectually to receive the divine gift of faith. Apologetics seeks to fit you for this service, and it is, therefore, a very important study in fact, it is the most important study you could possibly undertake.

Again, although you rightly say that you need no argument or scientific proof to convince you of the truth of your religion, you may be placed in circumstances in which you will find a knowledge of Apologetics a strong bulwark against the weakening or even the loss of your faith. Many Catholic parents, in spite of the clearly defined wishes of the Church, send their sons and daughters to colleges and universities in which little is heard of God or the dignity and destiny of man, and much is made of the pseudo-science which rules all religion out of account. Suppose you are sent to such a school. Professors will smile tolerantly or scoff openly at your religion; your fellows will sneer at your piety; lax and lapsed Catholics on the campus will urge you by example, and probably also by word, to abate the ardent practice of your religion and to conform yourself to the pattern approved by the school. Day after day, week after week, month after month, you will live in an atmosphere of contemptuous opposition to all that you love and revere. You will breathe perforce the contagion of that atmosphere. And what then? Unless you are a thorough apologist for your faith, unless you have a ready and adequate answer for the cleverly worded arguments used against it, you may feel that perhaps, after all, your position is not altogether safe and certain. You may find yourself thinking, "Surely these learned professors cannot be altogether wrong; there must be some grain of truth in what all these others are saying." And thus you will stand in danger of a horrible degradation, namely, of withdrawing your faith from God and reposing it in man. Faith you will have in any case; man simply must have faith. But what an unspeakable thing it is to transfer one's faith from the All-Wise and the Infinitely True to a sneering professor, a picayune and priggish pedagogue. Now, a thorough knowledge of Apologetics is a strong defense against this sort of spiritual putrefaction. You perceive, then, that this study is important—for yourself as well as for others.

Even if the future does not hold out to you the prospect (and the menace) of secular university life, you have still a

real need for the study of Apologetics. In the office, in the club, in social contacts with friends and acquaintances, you are sure to find much hatred of your religion, hatred that comes largely of misinformation. There are too many Catholics, even educated Catholics, who meet that hatred with an excuse instead of a true apologetic. Do not swell the ranks of these shrinking and unworthy soldiers of Christ. Realize the importance of Apologetics, and give this science your most earnest study.

Where you fail to encounter hatred against your religion, you will find indifference towards it. You will find people interested in the things they eat, in the garments they wear, in the amusements with which they are diverted, in the matters of business to which they attend, in the journeys they plan to make, in the fortunes they hope to build up, in the careers they aspire to achieve, and in all manner of things that have no value passing this life. Here again is an atmosphere hostile to your religion, an atmosphere that spiritual writers call "the world." Now a true apologist can do much to purify the worldly atmosphere; he can win the attention of worldly minds and make them less worldly; he can gain a respectful hearing when such minds are made to realize that he has sound reasons to offer in defense of his faith, and not mere emotional or sentimental argument. Once more you perceive that Apologetics is a science of supreme importance.

Finally, what science could be more important than that which brings man's noblest faculties to bear upon the most excellent object of study, viz., God and the things of God? What culture is there to compare with the culture of soul which comes of the recognition and appreciation of infinite truth? Is there any true culture possible in minds that regard religion as futile or as a mere agglomeration of tender sentiments? Certainly, there is no cultured Catholic who is not an able and ardent apologist for his faith. Therefore, you dare not call the study of Apologetics unimportant; on the contrary, you must acknowledge it as incomparably the greatest and most important study in your entire program.

4. DIVISION

The truths that Apologetics establishes are these: That God exists, one, infinite, all-perfect; the creator and conserver of the universe; the ruler of all things. That man is bound to recognize his utter dependence upon God by acknowledging Him and serving Him in the practice of the true religion. That the true religion is that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is true God and true Man. That the true religion of Christ is that of the Catholic Church.

These truths indicate the four departments of Apologetics, which may be named as follows: God, Religion, Christ, The Church.

Under these four heads we shall develop our study of Apologetics. The present treatise is accordingly divided into four Books, with Chapters as follows:

FIRST BOOK God

- Chap. I. The Existence of God
- Chap. II. The Nature and Attributes of God
- Chap. III. The Action of God upon the World

SECOND BOOK Religion

- Chap. I. The Nature of Religion
- Chap. II. Supernatural Revelation in Religion

THIRD BOOK Christ

- Chap. I. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer
- Chap. II. Jesus Christ, True God
- Chap. III. Jesus Christ, True Man

FOURTH BOOK The Church

- Chap. I. The Church of Jesus Christ
- Chap. II. The Marks and Attributes of the Church of Jesus Christ
- Chap. III. The Identification of the Church of Jesus Christ.

FIRST BOOK

GOD

This Book offers rational proofs for the existence of God, and reasons out the truth about His nature and attributes. It then studies the action of God on the world, and shows that God is the creator, conserver, and ruler of the universe. The Book is accordingly divided into three Chapters, as follows:

Chapter I. The Existence of God

Chapter II. The Nature and Attributes of God

Chapter III. The Action of God upon the World

CHAPTER I

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

This Chapter offers rational proofs for the existence of God. That God exists we already know by the divine gift of faith, by revelation, by grace, by training, and by our own direct thought upon the realities and requirements of life. We know that God exists, not because something proves it, but because everything proves it; not because a certain syllogism demonstrates it, but because our rational nature absolutely requires it.

When we analyze a few of the proofs that wise men have formulated for the tremendous truth of God's existence, we undertake a task of some delicacy and even danger. We may find ourselves thinking, as the reasoning process of proof is tediously developed, and as argument is marshaled after argument, that there may be room for questioning what requires such an elaborate process of evidence. On the other hand—so variable is the human viewpoint—we may come to think that the arguments here presented are very few, and make but a sorry basis for the intellectual conviction of so grand a truth as that of God's existence. Let us keep our common sense. Let us remember that this elaborate process of evidence is not requisite, but possible, and that our whole purpose is to show that it is possible. We do not need proofs to convince ourselves of the existence of God; we develop them so that reason may attain its highest function, and so that those who demand rational proof of God's existence may be forced to admit that such proof is available. And if the thought strikes us that these arguments are few, let us recognize the obvious fact that our task is like that of men who dig down to find and study some few of the roots of a giant tree. We do not think that these few roots are all that hold the tree in its place, erect in storm and wind; we know that there are a hundred other roots, each with a hundred sturdy radicals, all firmly grounded and secure, which are not the object of our present study. In a word, while the arguments offered are conclusive and incontrovertible, we do not seek to rationalize faith, but merely to record some of the compelling reasons which show that faith is justified by the natural power of the human mind. Meanwhile we hold fast to the divinely given belief which needs no

argument, and to the natural conviction of mind which is the result in us of the converging evidence of all the experiences of rational and practical life. This Chapter presents five proofs for the existence of God. Each proof is studied in a special Article. The Chapter is accordingly divided into five Articles, as follows:

Article 1. The Argument from Cause

Article 2. The Argument from Motion

Article 3. The Argument from Design

Article 4. The Argument from the Moral Order

Article 5. The Argument from History

ARTICLE I. THE ARGUMENT FROM CAUSE

a) Doctrine of Causality b) The Argument

c) Discussion of the Argument

a) DOCTRINE OF CAUSALITY

A *cause* is that which contributes in any manner whatever to the production of a thing. The thing produced is called an *effect*. The relation of a cause towards its effect is called *causality*.

The world around us is a tissue of the cause and effect relation, i.e., of causality. The movement of the earth and the heavenly bodies is the cause of recurrent night and day and of the change of seasons. The laws of Nature are but formulas which express the existence and relations of causes and effects. Plants, brutes, and men live and grow by the causal activity of an inner life-principle and by the supplementary causes of light, heat, air, moisture, food, which enable this life-principle to function. Everywhere we see causes at work producing effects, and we see effects, in their turn, becoming causes of further effects. The sun, for example, is the cause of sunlight; sunlight is the cause of sunburn; sunburn is the cause of pain; pain is the cause of sleeplessness, etc.—the example may be extended indefinitely. We need no further example, however, to convince us of these facts: (1) Causality exists in the world. (2) The effect of one cause may become the cause

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of further effects. (3) The chains of cause and effect may be crossed and interwoven at innumerable points, so that many causes may converge to produce one effect, and the influence of one cause may be found in various effects.

So obvious is the existence of causality in the world that it appears unthinkable that anyone should deny it. Yet men have denied it. There have been, and still are, those who assert that we can know nothing of the relation of objects and events except an *association* and *succession* which we have no right to call the relation of cause and effect. This means, for example, that when a piece of dry wood is thrown into a roaring fire, the fire is not to be called the cause, and the decomposition of the wood the effect, of the burning. Now, a treatise on Apologetics has neither the space nor the right to discuss this curious doctrine in detail. Only a general criticism of it can be offered to show that it is contradictory in theory and pernicious in its practical results.

First of all, it must be said that the existence of the cause-and-effect relation in the world is as evident as the existence of the world itself. Causality is understood by a direct and irresistible intuition of the mind, even as the bodily world is perceived by a direct grasp of the senses and of consciousness. All activity, all thought, goes forward upon the solid roadway of the recognition of the obvious fact of causality. The scientist in the laboratory, the surgeon in the operating room, the physician at his work of diagnosis, the teacher in the classroom, the salesman dealing with a prospective buyer, the mechanic at work upon an automobile, the business man, the economist, the sociologist, the lawyer, the director of souls—all are seeking to know causes, or to produce effects, or to prevent undesirable effects. Everywhere and in everything we find causality showing itself inevitably in the activities of practical and intellectual life.

The man who denies causality denies all things; he must lapse into the endless silence of universal skepticism. Such a man has no right to take medicine for the relief of an ailment, nor to eat food to appease his hunger; to do these things would be to admit that the medicine could *cause* relief, and that the food could *cause* satisfaction of appetite. Nor has such a man even the right to defend his theory that there is no causality; for were he to offer argument, he would show that he believed argument capable of *causing* others to agree with him, and certainly such argument would reveal the reasons which *cause* him to hold his theory. Thus, the denial of causality is shown to be contradictory in theory. If the man who denies causality objects to this, if he says, "Between food and satisfied appetite, between medicine and the relief of sickness, between argument and mental conviction, there is only a relation of succession, albeit necessary succession," we answer, "Very well. You choose to call it a necessary relation; we call it cause; there is a difference in our terms, but not in the thing we mean." As a fact, those that deny causality dislike the word; they call it by another name; but they do not destroy the reality.

If there be no causality in the world, then the murderer is not the cause of his victim's death; the lazy student is not responsible for his failure in examinations; the good man deserves no praise for his virtues; the weakling is not to be encouraged, for he can in no wise amend his efforts. Thus the denial of causality is the denial of all practical morality. Hence, on grounds both speculative and practical, we reject the denial of causality as a contradictory and pernicious thing.

Causality, then, exists. There are really causes which contribute to the production of effects. Indeed, every object, every event in this finite world must have its cause or causes, and these must be *adequate*, i.e., sufficient to account fully for all the positive being or perfection of the effect. To limit our study to bodily objects—for our argument is to deal with this bodily or material world—we find that four causes regularly converge to produce a material or bodily thing. These causes are called, respectively, the *material*, the *formal*, the *efficient*, and the *final* cause. We shall study these as they are exhibited in a pertinent illustration:

1. I have on my desk a small marble statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This statue is neither infinite nor eternal, and hence it must have its causes; it is not a thing which *must* exist, but it has received existence from its causes. When I ask what these causes are, the first answer is obviously: the material, the stuff, out of which the statue is made. This is its *material* cause. It is a true cause, for without it the statue could not exist. The material cause of this statue is marble.

2. Now the statue might be made of wood, of plaster, of metal, or of other substance; but, as a matter of fact, it is made of none of these things, but of marble. There is something that makes this substance the precise thing that it is; there is something that makes marble marble. This is a cause of the statue, for without it the statue would not be the precise kind of substantial thing that it is. This is the *substantial formal* cause of the statue. Further, the statue has its outward shape, figure, or form. This is also a cause of the statue, for without it the statue would not be just what it is. This is the *accidental formal* cause of the statue. We use the term *accidental* to signify that which happens to be present as an extrinsic determination of the effect, although the effect would be essentially the same were this determination different. Thus, the statue would be a statue and a marble statue, even if it were of a different figure, or were made to represent some other personage than the Blessed Virgin Mary.

3. The statue has had a maker. The artist who produced it is its true cause. He is the *efficient* cause of the statue, for by his own activity he effectively produced it as this statue, using the material substance called marble to work upon. The tools used by the artist in making the statue are also causes of the statue, for without them it could not have been made. These are *instrumental* causes of the statue. Instrumental causes are not major, but minor causes, for they subserve the action of the efficient cause.

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Further, the artist made the statue according to some plan or model (person, picture, sketch, image in his imagination, other statue, or the like), and this is also a cause of the statue, for without it the work of the efficient cause would not have been guided to produce just this statue. This is called the *exemplary* cause. Like the instrumental cause, the exemplary cause is a minor cause and subserves the action of the efficient cause.

4. The artist must have had some purpose, some end in view, in making the statue. Perhaps he made it to sell for money, perhaps he made it to express his devotion to the Blessed Mother, perhaps he merely wished to exhibit his skill, perhaps he only wanted to do something to pass away the time, perhaps he found pleasure in the work, perhaps several or all of these motives, or others, had a place in the work. In any case, the artist was moved to make the statue by some end in view which was recognized as desirable to achieve. Now, this end in view, or simply *end*, is a cause of the statue, for without it the efficient cause would not be stirred to make the statue. It is called the *final* cause of the statue (from the Latin *finis*, "end").

We see that of the four major causes two belong to the very being of the effect; they are *intrinsic* to the effect as such: these are the material and the formal cause. The other two causes, viz., the efficient and the final cause, are not part and parcel of the effect, but are *extrinsic* to it. Thus we divide the four causes as follows:

Intrinsic	{	Material (exists only for bodily effects)
		Formal (substantial and accidental)
Extrinsic	{	Efficient (subserved sometimes by instrumental and exemplary causes)
		Final

In the argument which we are to offer presently we shall be concerned, first and foremost, with the necessity of admitting the existence of an efficient cause of the world. But first we have to consider another matter, one closely related to the question of efficient causality—indeed, it is a part of that question.

Everything that exists must have a sufficient explanation of its existence. Nothing can exist without a *sufficient reason* for its existence. Now, obviously this reason must be found either in the existing thing itself, or in that which gave it existence. To put the matter in another way: if a thing exists, then either (1) it is so perfect that it must exist and cannot be non-existent, or (2) it has received existence by the action of some efficient cause.

Now, if a thing be so perfect that it must exist and cannot be non-existent, it is *self-existent*. Such a thing contains in itself the sufficient reason for its existence. And since it must exist by reason of its own essential perfection, it has had no cause; it is eternal; it is *necessary* being (i.e., it necessarily exists), and not *contingent* upon the action of any producing cause.

If a being has received existence by the action of some efficient cause, it is not a *necessary*, but a *contingent* being, for it depends upon, is contingent upon, the action

of its producing efficient cause.

Thus there are only two kinds of being possible: (1) eternal, uncaused, *necessary* being, and (2) *contingent* being, which is efficiently caused.

Further: contingent things, things efficiently caused, must be traced back to a first efficient cause, which is itself *necessary* and *uncaused* being. For consider: a contingent thing is a caused thing, its cause produced it. If its cause is also produced, something produced that cause, and so on. If A comes from B, and B from C, and C from D, and D from E, and E from F, and so on, then somewhere and sometime we must come to a *first* cause which is itself uncaused, which is *necessary* being. One cannot trace back the chain of causation indefinitely nor to infinity; one must really reach the beginning, one must really attain the knowledge of a necessary first cause. To say that the series is indefinitely long and to leave the matter there, is to make an intellectual surrender of the whole question, an unworthy surrender, which leaves the mind in precisely the same state as if no cause at all had been traced. Such a surrender is simply a refusal to face facts. On the other hand, to say that the series of causes is infinitely long (i.e., has no beginning) is to assert an absurdity. For an infinite number of finite causes is impossible; finite added to finite can never equal infinite. Reason forces us to the conclusion that contingent things involve of necessity the existence of an uncaused and necessary first cause.

Now, can there be *many* uncaused and necessary first causes? Can various chains of causation be traced back to various first causes? Or is the first cause necessarily *one* cause? We assert that the first cause is one and only one. For a being that is so perfect that it must exist must have the fullness of perfection, it must have perfection in a wholly unlimited manner. Why? Because such a being is *self-existent* and wholly independent of causes. Now causes do two things: they make an effect what it is, and they *limit* the effect so as to mark off its perfections from those of other things. Hence a being that is independent of causes, as a *necessary* being is, is independent of the *limitation* which causes impose. Thus the first cause is free from limitation; in other words, it is *infinite*. Now, an infinite being is unique; there simply cannot be more than one such being. For, if there were more than one, there would be a distinction of being between or among them; this distinction would be itself a limitation, and none would be infinite. Suppose, for example, that there are two infinite beings, A and B. A has its own perfections in an unlimited degree; B has its own perfections, similarly unlimited. Now, if A and B are not identical (and thus *one*) there is a defect and a limitation in A, inasmuch as it has not the perfections that are properly B's. In like manner there is a defect and a limitation in B, inasmuch as B has not the perfections that are properly A's. Thus, unless A and B are identical and one, neither is infinite. We conclude that there can be only one *necessary* being, because a necessary being is infinite. Hence, the necessary first cause must be *one* and *infinite*.