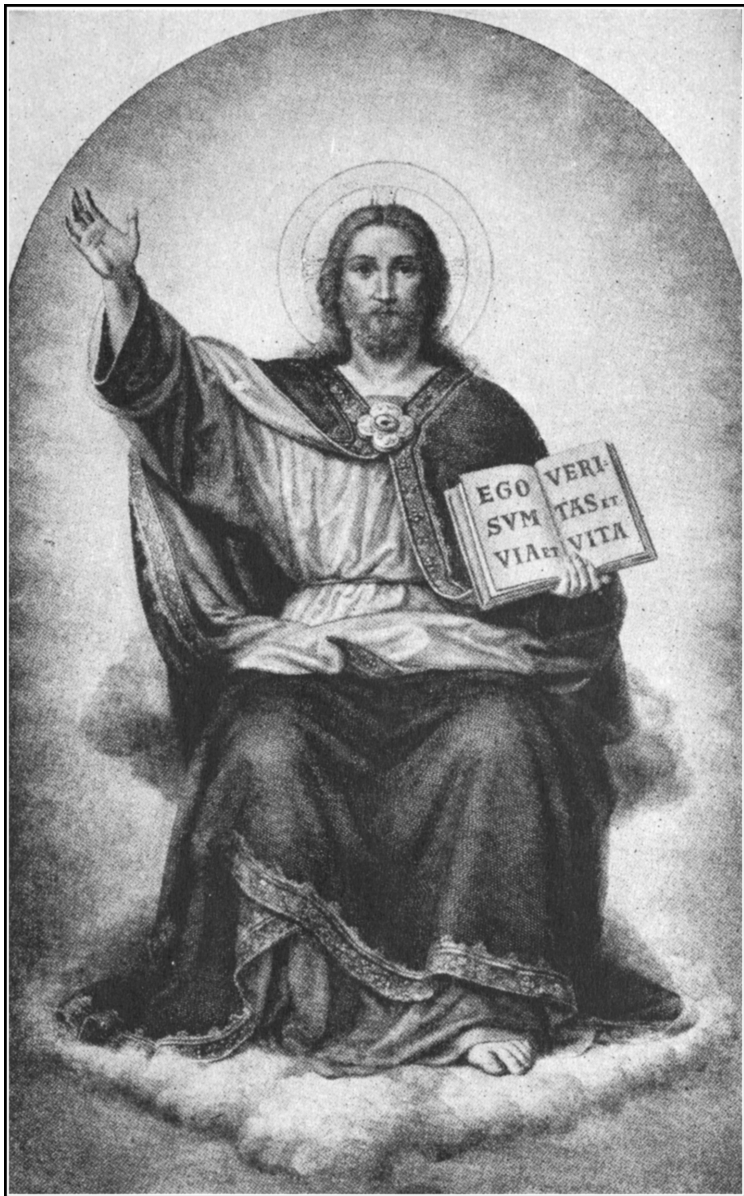


CHIEF TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

A Course in Religion Book I

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Fr. John Laux, M.A. was a high school religion teacher who distilled the fruit of his many years of research and teaching into these fine high school religion books. At first glance, it might appear foolish to reprint books that were first published in 1928. But a reading of Fr. Laux's books will lay that thought to rest. For he had a rare talent of capsulizing the intricacies of our Catholic Faith and its theology into succinct, precise, learned and yet lively prose that is at once truly interesting and that all can easily understand. He is profoundly intellectual, yet always clear and easy. His writing, while aimed at the high school student, remains challenging and informative to the college student and the adult Catholic as well. But further, Fr. Laux writes in a virtually undated and almost undateable style, a style that is, one might say, classic and timeless, a style that truly befits his subject matter—the timeless teachings of our Ancient Church. For these reasons, the four books in this high school series are all works of rare genius, as also are his *Introduction to the Bible* and *Church History*, for they all possess these same qualities that make Fr. Laux such a pleasure to read and such a joy to study from.



THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

CHIEF TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

CREATION, ORIGINAL SIN, CHRIST, FAITH,
GRACE, ETERNAL LIFE, ETC.

A Course in Religion
For Catholic High Schools and Academies

BOOK I

by

Fr. John Laux, M.A.

Late Instructor of Religion, Notre Dame High School, and Professor of
Psychology, Villa Madonna College, Covington, Ky.

*“For I give you to understand, brethren, that
the gospel which was preached by me is not
according to man. For neither did I receive it
of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revela-
tion of Jesus Christ.” —Galatians 1:11-12*

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Cover illustration: Christ appears to the Apostles in the Upper Room, and St. Thomas declares his faith by saying, "My Lord and my God!"

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A Word to the Teacher

The need of some systematic presentation of the truths of our Holy Religion to boys and girls of our American Catholic High Schools has been felt by Catholic educators for a long time. The manuals now in use have been found to be either too technical or too simple, and the problem has been to prepare a text that would suit the needs of the growing mind, and, while enlisting the interest of the pupils in acquiring a knowledge of religious truths, would at the same time encourage the practice of virtue and cultivate a love for the Church.

The present *Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* is an attempt to solve this problem. The general arrangement of the course is based, as far as possible, on the division and order of the larger Baltimore Catechism. The catechetical form of presentation has been abandoned, because, in the opinion of prominent educators, "it is conducive to memory work rather than to reasoning, encourages inefficient teaching, and makes almost no appeal to the interest of the pupil."

For practical purposes the work has been divided into Four Parts, each of which is bound and paged separately and provided with copious helps for study and review, a table of contents and an index.

The First Part embraces the mystery of the Trinity, the work of Creation, Redemption, Sanctification, and Consummation. It is introduced by a brief treatment of the nature, necessity, sources, and qualities of Faith. The Second Part treats of the Means of Grace: the Sacraments, the Sacrifice of the Mass, Indulgences and Sacramentals. Part Three is devoted to General and Special Christian Moral; Part Four to Apologetics.

The writer suggests that every pupil be provided with a copy of the New Testament, to be used throughout the course; a Student's edition of the Missal, to be used in connection with Part Two; and the *Imitation of Christ* as supplementary material for Part Three. It is presupposed that there is a well-stocked Religious Book Shelf in every High School Library.

The concluding words of Father Drinkwater's preface to his excellent little book of religious instruction *Twelve and After* are applicable to every textbook in Religion: "Let us remind ourselves that religion is not a book-and-writing matter. Such instruction as this book contains is very useful and in some ways necessary; but there are things even more necessary, such as plenty of singing, corporate prayer, both liturgical and unliturgical, and opportunities for personal service, not to speak of the more individual and interior practice of religion. If these more essential things are well managed, then the intellectual instruction will have all the more meaning and fruit. It should become the raw material of Catholic ideals. We can but build up our altar stone by stone and arrange our wood upon it as carefully as may be, and then pray for the fire of the Lord to fall in acceptance of the offering."

A word to the teacher of religion. The purpose of the teaching of religion must be the same in all our schools from the grades to the university—to form *religious characters*, to train men and women who will be ready to profess their Faith with firm conviction and to practice it in their daily lives in union with the Church.

This obvious purpose of all religious teaching imposes a twofold duty on the teacher of religion in the High School: to give his pupils a *fuller and more profound grasp of Christian Doctrine*, and to lead them on to the *intelligent use* of the helps that have been given us to lead Christian lives.

It is idle to dispute, as is sometimes done, whether the training of the intellect is more important than the training of the heart and the will; the imparting of religious knowledge, than the formation of religious habits. Both are of supreme importance. The will follows the intellect; but the intellect is also powerfully influenced by the will. Ignorance may sometimes be bliss, but never in religious matters. Well-instructed Catholics may become backsliders, but their number is small in comparison with those who are lost to the Church because their ignorance of Catholic teaching made them easy victims of the purveyors of false science, shallow philosophy, and neo-pagan morality. Religion requires that the *whole* man worship God with all his faculties and acts. The intellect must *believe* that which is true concerning God—

Faith; and the *will* must be directed to *do* those actions which are right and to avoid those which are wrong—*Morals*.

Cardinal Newman wished to see the enlightened Catholic youth pious, and the pious Catholic youth enlightened. This ideal may never be fully attained, but it is certainly worth striving after.

Catholic Action is today becoming a vital force throughout the world. The layman cannot effectively engage in Catholic Action unless he is well versed in the teachings of his faith and able at all times to explain and defend it. The type of layman, therefore, that is needed today is the type which Cardinal Newman asked for years ago when he said: "I want laymen, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not; who know their Creed so well that they can give an account of it; who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well instructed laity. I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth; to learn to view things as they are; to understand how faith and reason stand to each other; what are the bases and principles of Catholicism. Ignorance is the root of bitterness."

The great Cardinal's ideal of the Catholic layman may never be fully attained, but it is certainly worth striving after. It is only through such pious and enlightened laymen and laywomen, working with their bishops and pastors, that Catholic Action can be truly successful. It is the chief duty of our Catholic Educational system to place on the battlefield an army of laymen, equipped to "fight the battles of the Lord."

THE AUTHOR.

The author and the publishers make grateful acknowledgment to the B. Herder Book Co. for permission to include material from "Stock Charges Against the Bible," by T. Paffrath, adapted by C. Kean.

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“MY GOD AND MY ALL”

St. Francis of Assisi in the Embrace of the Crucified Lord

INTRODUCTION

Our Life's Purpose

"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee."—ST. AUGUSTINE.

1. The Desire for Happiness.—All men have at least one aspiration in common—they all wish to be perfectly happy. This desire is so deeply rooted in our hearts that it can never be destroyed. It is a part of our very nature, and must, therefore, have been planted therein by God Himself, the Author of our nature. Now, if the all-wise God created us with such an ardent longing for perfect happiness, He also wishes us to attain it.

2. Earthly Goods and Happiness.—Many seek happiness in the possession of earthly goods, such as riches, honors, pleasures. But these things cannot make us perfectly happy. They are all vain and perishable, often embitter our life, and invariably forsake us in death. Solomon, one of the most fortunate of kings, was bound to confess: "I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces . . . ; and whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure. . . . *And I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun*" (Eccles. 2,8-11).

3. "God Alone Sufficeth."—Only a good that is perfect in every way, that never changes, and never ends, can satisfy our desire for perfect happiness. There is only one such Supreme Good—*God*. Hence, we cannot find perfect happiness except in the possession of God. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee," says St. Augustine. And the Venerable Thomas à Kempis begins his *Imitation of Christ* with the golden words: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, besides loving God and serving Him alone."

4. How We Can Possess God.—We cannot possess God as we possess a house or a farm or a sum of money. These are material things, and God is a spirit. We can possess Him only

as we possess something true, good, and beautiful, with our intellect and our will, by knowledge and love. Our eternal happiness will consist in contemplating and loving God, the Supreme Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Hence, our happiness in this life, and the only means of attaining eternal happiness in the next, consists in knowing and loving God with all the powers of our intellect and our will. "This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17,3). And the first and greatest commandment is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (Matt. 22,37).

5. Love and Service.—If we know and love God, we will also serve Him. Love and service go hand in hand. We serve a person if we do his will. God has made His will known to us in the commandments which He has given us. Hence, we serve God if we keep His commandments. Our Lord said to the rich young man: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19,17). And the Beloved Disciple says: "This is the charity [love] of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5,3).

Our life's purpose, therefore, is to know, love, and serve God here on earth, in order that our desire for perfect happiness may be satisfied by the possession of God in Heaven.

6. Grace and Our Life's Purpose.—Of ourselves, by our own natural strength, we could never know God properly, love Him truly, and keep His commandments faithfully. For this we need a special help from God. "Without Me," says Our Lord, "you can do nothing" (John 15,5). We call this special help *grace*, because it is a favor, or *free gift* of God. By it He enlightens our mind and strengthens our will to know Him and to love Him. By it He performs the greatest marvel of His love: He makes us holy and pleasing in His sight, adopts us as His children, gives us the right to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. These wonderful gifts can be obtained by all through the *means of grace*, the most important of which are Prayer and the Sacraments.

Since our whole Religion, our whole duty as creatures, consists in knowing, loving, and serving God with the help of divine grace, the *study of Religion* is the most important of all our studies. This study falls naturally into three parts:



ST. PETER CANISIUS

Doctor of the Church. Author of the first complete series
of Catholic Catechisms

1. Knowledge of God—the *Truths of our holy Faith*.
2. Love and Service of God—our *Duties to God, to Ourselves, and to our Neighbor*.
3. Grace and the Means of Grace—the *Sacraments, the Holy Mass*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REVIEW

1. Prepare a short paper on the following theme: *Our Life's Purpose, and How We Can Attain It*. The following questions will serve as a plan for your composition. Answer them without writing them out.
 - a) What do all men desire?
 - b) Why cannot the things of earth make us perfectly happy? See the Epistle of St. James 4,15, and the Gospel of St. Luke 12,16.
 - c) Why can God alone satisfy our desire for perfect happiness? See the *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, ch. 1, no. 4. Write out this passage.
 - d) If God alone can satisfy our desire for perfect happiness, what must be the purpose of our life?
 - e) Did God tell us how we can attain this purpose? Did He give us the means to attain it? See John 17,3; Matt. 22,34; 19,17.
 - f) Why are our Religion lessons the most important of all our lessons?
2. This paper may either be read to the class or delivered from memory without slavish adherence to the manuscript, but with careful following out of the plan. Try to find appropriate examples from the Bible and Church history to illustrate the theme. You know the story of St. Philip Neri and the Young Lawyer. How was St. Francis Xavier converted? What great Saints taught catechism and wrote catechisms? (St. Peter Canisius and St. Robert Bellarmine.)

Familiar is the story of Napoleon teaching the Catechism. For more than two years during his imprisonment on the Island of St. Helena, Napoleon Bonaparte taught the Catechism every day to the daughter of General Bertrand, his faithful companion in captivity. When the girl was old enough to make her first Communion, he procured a priest from France to continue the instructions and to prepare her for that great event.

CHIEF TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

A Course in Religion
Book I

SECTION I

FAITH AND THE SOURCES OF FAITH

CHAPTER I

Our Knowledge of God

"The fool said in his heart: There is no God."—Ps. 52,1.

1. How We Know God.—Our first duty is to know God. In Heaven we shall know Him face to face, but in this life He is hidden from our direct knowledge. We can, however, know something about Him by carefully noticing the things He has made, and still more by firmly believing what He has told us about Himself. In other words, we know God both by the *natural light of reason* and by the *supernatural light of faith*.

2. What Our Reason Tells Us About God.—Our reason tells us that there is one true God, the beginning and end of all things, our Creator and Lord; and that we must worship Him and do His will as it is written by Him in our hearts.

That there is an almighty God must be clear to every thinking person, for the fact is clearly proved by the whole visible world with its wise arrangement as well as by the voice of conscience.

a) No one can reasonably think that the world made itself; nor that the heavenly bodies could begin to move through space by their own power.

b) The wonderful arrangement and perfect order of the world lead us to infer that it was planned and carried out by a Being of supreme intelligence and skill.

c) All men who are in a normal state of mind know that they are bound in conscience to do certain acts and to avoid other acts, and feel that they are responsible for their conduct to a Supreme Judge who is the avenger of evil and the rewarder of good.

d) All the nations and races of men have always had an inner conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being. If there are any barbarous tribes that practice no religion, they can be such only as are degraded by vice below the normal condition of human beings.

The Scripture says: "The fool said in his heart: There is no God" (Ps. 52,1). Those who deny the existence of God are called *Atheists* (Greek *a-*,

not, and *theos*, God). Such people usually have reasoned themselves, or have been led by others, into a state of *doubt* in regard to the existence of God. Their state of mind arises either from pride, or from corruption of heart, or from a misguided education, or from all three. "He who denies the existence of God," says St. Augustine, "has some reason for wishing that God did not exist."

3. God Reveals Himself.—But God wished us to know much more about Himself—and about ourselves too—than our reason alone can tell us. From time to time, in His wisdom and goodness, He drew aside the veil that hides Him from us. He revealed Himself and His eternal decrees to us. He told us things about Himself which we could not otherwise know at all or not with certainty.

Revelation (Latin *re-*, back, and *velum*, a veil) means both the manifestation by God of His will and truths to man, and the body of truths thus manifested. It is called *supernatural* or *divine revelation*, as opposed to the natural revelation of Himself that God makes through the visible world.

4. We Know God's Revelations by Faith.—God did not reveal Himself directly to all men, or even to very many, but only to a few. These men were told by Him to make His revelations known to their fellow-men. Since God does not speak directly to each one of us, we have to take the word of those to whom He did speak for what He told them. In other words, we take God's revelations on *faith*. To take something on faith means to believe or hold as true what another tells us.

If we believe what a fellow-man tells us on his own authority or on the authority of another fellow-man, we have *human faith*. If we hold firmly and without doubting what someone tells us on God's authority, we have *divine faith*, for in that case we really believe God Himself.

5. God's Spokesmen and Their Credentials.—But how do we know when a human being tells us something on God's authority? We ask him to present his *credentials*, that is, we ask him to prove to us that he is really a messenger of God, and speaks in God's name; just as we ask anyone who claims to be the ambassador or representative of an earthly potentate to show us his credentials before we believe him.

Miracles and *Prophecies* are the only infallible credentials which God gives His spokesmen. If God puts His miraculous power at the disposal of a human being or permits him to look into the

secrets of the future, we can say without hesitation or fear of error that such a person has been sent by God.

Miracles are extraordinary works which cannot be done by the powers of nature, but only through the omnipotence of God; for example, to raise a person from the dead.

Prophecy is a clear and definite foretelling of an event that can be known to God alone, because it depends either on the free will of God or on the free will of man. To foretell an eclipse of the sun or of the moon, is not a prophecy; but it is a prophecy to foretell the exact manner of one's own death at the hands of others.

6. Who Were God's Spokesmen?—The things which God wished us to know for our salvation He made known to us by the *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, and above all by His Son *Jesus Christ* and the *Apostles*.

Jesus Christ claimed to be not only a messenger of God, but the true Son of God Himself. He proved His claim by the supreme holiness of His life, by numerous miracles and prophecies during His life on earth, and by the crowning miracle of His Resurrection. He guarantees for us the revelations made to the Patriarchs and Prophets, as well as those made by His own Apostles.

7. Revealed Mysteries.—Since, then, God Himself has spoken to us, all that He has told us about Himself and about our own origin and destiny must be absolutely true, for God can neither deceive nor be deceived; if He could, He would not be God. Hence, even when He tells us things which we cannot understand—*mysteries*—we none the less firmly believe them, because He has revealed them.

Mysteries are revealed truths that are above and beyond our reason though not contrary to it. There are many natural mysteries, such as the growth of trees and plants and the marvelous instinct of birds and animals, which we do not understand; is there any wonder that mysteries should be found among the revealed truths? The Trinity is a mystery, because we cannot understand how one God can subsist in three Persons; but it is in no way contrary to our reason: we do not believe that three gods are one God, nor that three persons are one person, which would be a contradiction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REVIEW

1. What do we know about God by the light of reason?
2. What is the difference between human and divine faith?
3. What does the word "reveal" mean? Explain its origin.
4. Give five examples from the Old Testament illustrating the manner in which God revealed things to men.

5. How did Moses prove to the Pharaoh that he was sent by God?
6. How did Our Lord prove that He is the Son of God?
7. Is the following statement true or false: "A mystery is a revealed truth that is contrary to our reason"?
8. Copy the following texts: Heb. 1,1-2; Rom. 1,20; Acts 14,16; John 1,18. Use these texts to illustrate various points touched upon in this chapter; for example, Rom. 1,20 shows that we can know God by the light of reason.
9. *Reading*: Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question Box*, pp. 41-45, on Miracles.

THE ARAB'S PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

An Arab in the desert was once asked how he knew there is a God. "In the same way," he said, "as I know by the footprints on the sand that a man or an animal has passed this way."

ST. ANTHONY'S BOOK

The thousands of men who visited St. Antony in the desert were astonished at his wisdom and good sense. Asked where he had acquired such solid wisdom, he replied, pointing with one hand to the heavens and with the other to the earth: "There is my book; I have no other: all should study it: in considering the works of God, they will be filled with admiration and love of Him who created all things."

LORD BYRON ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

"How, raising our eyes to heaven, or directing them to the earth, can we doubt of the existence of God?—or how, turning them to what is within us, can we doubt that there is something more noble and durable than the clay of which we are formed?"