

THE EVIDENTIAL FORCE OF THE
LIFE OF CHRIST.

BY THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

“IT is plain that the antagonism between Science and Religion arises much more from a difference of spirit and temper in the student of each than from any inherent opposition between the two. The man of science is inclined to shut out from consideration a whole body of evidence, the moral and spiritual; the believer is inclined to shut out the physical. And each, from long looking at that evidence alone which properly belongs to his own subject, is inclined to hold the other cheap, and to charge on those who adduce it either blindness of understanding or wilful refusal to accept the truth. And when such a conflict arises it is the higher and not the lower, it is Faith and not Science that is likely to suffer. For the physical evidence is tangible, and the perception of it not much affected by the character of the man who studies it; the spiritual evidence stands unshaken in itself, but it is hid from eyes that have no spiritual perception, and that perception necessarily varies with the man. By what means then can a man keep his spiritual perception in full activity? And is there any test by which a man may know whether his spiritual faculty is in contact with the source of all spiritual life, and is deriving from that source the full flow of spiritual power? Revelation, if it tells us anything, ought to tell us this. The answer which Revelation makes is expressed in the words of St. Paul, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” This doctrine runs through the New Testament, and it implies that one main purpose of our Lord’s appearance among men was to give them in His life, His character, His example, His teaching, at once a touchstone by which they could always try their own spirits, and judge of the real condition of their own spiritual faculty, and also a vivid presentation of the supreme spiritual law by which they could for ever more and more elevate and purify and strengthen their own spiritual power and knowledge. Let a man study the Jesus of the Gospels. Let him put before his conscience the teaching that Jesus gives; the picture drawn of our Father in Heaven whose holiness cannot allow a stain upon a single soul, and whose tenderness cannot endure that a single soul should perish; Who ruleth all the universe, and yet without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground; the picture drawn of the ideal human life, the humility, the hunger and thirst after righteousness, the utter self-sacrifice, the purity; the picture drawn of human need, the helplessness, the hopelessness of man without God. Let him ponder on all this and on the many touching expressions, the truth, the depth, the force, the superhuman sweetness and gentleness with which all is presented. And if his conscience bows before it, and can say without reserve and in unalloyed sincerity, “This is my Lord; He shall be my teacher; here I recognise the fulness of the eternal law; at His feet will I drink of the well-springs of

eternal truth; His voice will I trust to the very utmost; then may that man be sure that his conscience is in contact with the Father of spirits, and that his study will guide him into fuller and clearer knowledge, and more certain conviction that he is grasping the truth of God. Let a man put before his heart our Lord’s own character. Let him think of the life of privation without complaint, of service to His kind without a thought of self; of His unfailing sympathy with the unhappy; of His tenderness to the penitent; of His royal simplicity and humility; of His unwearied perseverance in the face of angry opposition; of His deep affection for the friends of His choice, even when they deserted Him in His hour of darkness; of His death on the Cross, and the unearthly love that breathed in every word He uttered and everything He did. Let Him read all this many times, and if his heart goes out to the Man whom he is thus beholding, if he can say with all his soul, “This is my Lord, here is the supreme object of my affection; Him will I love with all my strength; from Him I will never, if I can help it, let my heart swerve; no other do I know more worthy to be loved; no other will I keep more steadily before my eyes; no other will I more earnestly desire to imitate; no other shall be my example, my trust, my strength, my Saviour;” if a man can say this, it is certain that his heart is touched by God, and the heavenly fire is kindled in his soul. Let a man put before his will the Lord’s commands; the aims, the self-restraints, the aspirations that the Lord required in His disciples. Let him ponder on the call to heavenly courage in spite of all that earth can inflict or can take away; the call to take up the Cross and follow Him that was crucified; the warning and the promises, the precepts and the prohibitions; let him think of the Leader who never flinched, of the Lawgiver who outdid His own law; let him think on the nobleness of the aims to which He pointed; of the promise of inward peace made to those who sacrificed themselves made by our Lord and re-echoed from the very depths of our spiritual being; let him think of the sure help promised in return for absolute trust, tried by millions of saints and never yet known to fail. Let a man put this before his will, and if he can say with all his soul, “this is my Lord, here I recognize Him who has a right to my absolute obedience; here is the master that I mean to serve and follow; and in spite of my own weakness and blindness, in spite of my sins, in spite of stumbling and weariness of resolution, in spite of temptations, and in spite of falls, I will not let my eyes swerve, nor my purpose quit my will; through death itself I will obey my Lord and trust to Him to carry me through whatever comes;”—that man most certainly is moving in the strength of God, and the power of the Eternal Spirit lives within him. Our Lord is the crown, nay, the very substance of all Revelation. If He cannot convince the soul, no other can.

The believer stakes all faith on His truth, all hope on His power. If the man of Science

would learn what it is that makes believers so sure of what they hold, he must study with an open heart the Jesus of the Gospels; if the believer seeks to keep his faith steady in the presence of so many, and sometimes so violent storms of disputation, he will read of, ponder on, pray to, the Lord Jesus Christ.—*Brampton Lectures, 1884.*

MISSION TO THE JEWS.

LAST week we printed a letter sent to us by the Rector of St. George’s, Toronto, from Canon Sutton, one of the Honorary Secretaries of the Parochial Missions to the Jews Fund, which has its headquarters in London, England. It is a rule in this Diocese, and a growing custom everywhere, to take up a collection for Jewish Evangelization on Good Friday. The near approach of that solemn day, supplies an occasion for saying a few words as to our duty to the Jews.

First of all, have we any duty to the Jews—what do we owe them? “Much every way,” we might answer. Rather, what do we not owe them, that we count precious in the Faith? From the Jews we receive the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation; every line of the New Testament also was penned by the Jews; “of the Jews, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever.” Nay, by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, and by their unbelief, we have obtained mercy. What language could be too strong, what terms too extravagant by which to measure the extent of our indebtedness to the Jewish race?

But this is by no means the whole of the matter. The Divine economy clearly contemplates the re-conversion of the Jews. For the moment, the severe side of God’s providence is turned towards them, as, towards us, He has turned the gracious side. But they are still His beloved people, for their forefather’s sake. The covenant was made originally with the Jew; he is the natural heir to the promises, and when the ingathering of the Gentiles is complete, the temporary rejection of Israel will come to an end. “And so,” as St. Paul reasons, “all Israel shall be saved.”

Meanwhile it is the Christian’s duty to labour for the conversion of the Jews, not only for love’s sake, but also because God has some marvellous blessing in store for his Church through their restoration. We need not wish ourselves accursed from Christ for their sakes, but every Christian should say, “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved.” On Good Friday, the Church throughout the world does offer that prayer, that all Jews may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and that our Lord’s design may be fulfilled, that there shall be “one Flock, one Shepherd.” We cannot say that there has been any large answer to such prayers. But have we any reason to suppose that prayers will receive a favorable hearing unless they are winged by alms and effort. What have we done, what have we given? The Church of England in her corporate capacity