

Teacher Training.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

TEXT-BOOK: REDFORD'S "PRIMER OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES."

ANALYSIS, NOTES AND ADDITIONS, by Rev. Professor Ross, B. D., Presbyterian College, Montreal, Quebec.

THE EVIDENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is essential to Christianity to prove that he really existed, that he was superior to all other men and sustained a unique relation to God.

- I. He lived in Judea in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius: (1) He is mentioned by writers outside Christianity. (a) Epistle of Mara to Serapion. (b) Tacitus: *Annals* 25: 44. (c) Suetonius: *Life of Claudius*, chap. 25. (d) Pliny's *Letters* 10: 96, 97. (2) The facts and ideas of Christian history may be traced back to their origin in Him. (3) No man could have imagined the life and character of Christ.
- II. He came into a place and ministry which were prepared for Him: (1) He appeared when there was a wide-spread expectation among Jews and Gentiles of a deliverer from sin and social abuses. (2) He claimed to be the Messiah of the Jews. (3) He fulfilled the Messianic ideal of the Old Testament.
- III. His character, portrayed in the gospels, is a moral miracle: 1. *The leading features of it.* (1) He is superior to all the faults of His time. His goodness differed from the Jewish model in (a) Breadth, it was perfectly free from all religious scrupulosity. (b) Humanity, He pitied the mass of the people and lived and died for their sakes. (c) Modesty, He shrank from titles and from all conventional honor. (2) He combined and harmonized in himself the most opposite qualities, such as, innocence and force, earnestness and cheerfulness, humility and the most majestic claims. (3) He was absolutely stainless and holy. (a) All stages of His life were spotlessly pure—His childhood, Luke 2: 40, 52. His maturity, John 8: 46, and His time of greatest trial. (b) His disciples, themselves examples of heroic self-sacrifice and holiness, regarded Him especially holy, John 6: 69. R. V. (c) His religious character proceeds from the consciousness of sinlessness. In every other man it proceeds from the acknowledgment of sin. (4) His character has commanded the admiration of many opponents of Christianity. 2. *Three possible explanations of it.* (1) It is an invention of the authors of the gospels. This would require them to have been possessed of superhuman power. For what day-laborer among us could write a new play of Shakespeare? And yet this is an easy supposition in comparison with the hypothesis that illiterate Jews of the first century drew the portrait and composed the discourses of Christ. (2) It is an idealized portrait, *i. e.*, one in which the facts about Jesus have been worked over into harmony with an idea of the writers. But (a) how could they have formed an ideal so different from those of Jew, Asiatic, Greek and Roman. (b) The portrait of the gospels is a unity, which would have been impossible if an idealized picture had been produced by four independent authors. (c) One slight mistake would have marred the whole. (d) The details of the apocryphal gospels show what kind of a Christ His contemporaries would have invented. (3) It is a true representation of the real Christ. (a) Then Jesus cannot be classified with men. No other sinless character has ever lived. We must account for this case by supposing an extraordinary relation to God. (b) His sinlessness gives credibility to His testimony concerning Himself, and He claimed to be the Son of God.
- IV. The teachings of Jesus are a moral miracle: 1. *Their distinctive characteristics.* (1) Originality: They are higher in spiritual import than the old Testament, and they draw nothing from other sources. (2) Simplicity: Ethics is not easy to understand, but even children can see through Christ's. (3) Balance: The ripest human judgments are continually falling into extremes, Christ never. Yet He never tries to balance arguments but states the truth as if instinctively. (4) Adaptation to the spiritual nature of every man in every age. Every other teacher is moulded and limited by his surroundings and the spirit of his time. (5) Earnest tenderness: Christ is not a philosopher speculating about abstract truth, but a loving friend pleading for our highest good. (6) Comprehensiveness: They include provision for all man's relations in this world and in the life to come. (7) Their new motive: He appeals to man's love to God revealed as a reconciled and loving Father. 2. *The disadvantages against which Jesus as a teacher had to contend.* (1) His want of a special education. (2) The shortness of his life. (3) His poverty and lack of social position. (4) The narrow spirit of Judaism in which He was reared.