

"CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH."

ST. JUDE 3.

"Beloved, when I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common Salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints."

When one looks out upon the world's religious life, and marks the divergent, and, unhappily, diverging views of truth, that are everywhere apparent, this saying of the Apostle comes to us with almost the insistent force of a personal appeal. For if in the first century there was need of such an exhortation as this of the Apostle Jude, then how much more must there be need to-day! If within thirty-five years of our Lord's Ascension, the objective body of Christian truth was in danger of mutilation and denial, then how much more real and pressing must that danger be to-day! No doubt it is true that, in the great body of believers, there is being evidenced a deepened desire for corporate re-union; but it is quite open to question whether, in many directions, that desire means much more than a spirit of impatience with the present policy of economic waste. However that may be, it seems to me quite clear that, more than ever urgently, there is coming to the Church this old-time challenge to "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints." And when I say so, I am not at all thinking of the effect upon the Church of the so-called Higher Criticism. No doubt there has been a real danger in that movement, but, upon its destructive side, it would seem to have largely spent its force; and, generally speaking, its outcome has been to strengthen rather than to weaken the foundations of the faith. I think that so much, at least, may safely be said. To assume,—as some have seemed to assume,—that Holy Scripture will not stand the test of scientific scrutiny is to dishonour the confessed convictions of the Church. Always must it be remembered that the lamp of truth is the handmaid of religion. Always must it be admitted that every great scholar, whatever the particular field of his investigation, is God's conscious or unconscious servant; so that there is absolutely no triumph of truth ascertained in any one of its various departments that does not make for the ultimate triumph of the whole. In the strength of that conviction, we can await with quiet confidence every critical examination of the Bible. But when I say that the Church must hear and accept this challenge to "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints," I am not thinking of the critical attacks that have been made in recent years upon the Bible. Not that at all. I am thinking rather of the way in which many men are coming to belittle the truth as the great constructive factor in the development of human life and human