

## CURRENT ISSUES.

IN his most recent book, on *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, Dr. Gore notices an assumption in the New Testament. "Both St. John and St. Paul," he observes, "appear to have a robust confidence that the good man—the spiritual man—will come to a right conclusion. They do not seem to be vexed with our problem, that so many good and spiritual men, as we must judge them to be, come to what we must also judge to be the wrong conclusion. They seem to assume that genuine goodness and acceptance of the truth even in this world will be found together." By "the truth" Dr. Gore means the Christian faith. And it is quite obvious that this robust confidence is not shared by thoughtful observers to-day, whether they are in the apostolic succession or outside it. Who can assume that the creed will be accepted by anyone, provided only that he is honest and open-minded?

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This is the question asked and discussed by Canon Quick, of Carlisle, in an American journal called *The Anglican Theological Review*. Canon Quick's article opens the October number, and is entitled "The Christian Tradition and the Modern Spirit." What is the change which has come over us since mediævalism passed? This, that instead of "the truth" we prefer to speak about "truth." In the mediæval scholasticism "the truth" became a codified system resting on metaphysical principles, and men had to accept this. Nowadays men seek to be loyal to truth, or, in other words, devoted to reality, but they do not profess, and they do not desire, to bind themselves to a truth, or "the truth," in some previously arranged shape.

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This spirit of enquiry and independent research is vital. "Our teachers," as Canon Quick remarks, encourage it, because they "are accustomed to conceive of reality as of a world wherein

new discoveries may indefinitely alter and supersede all that is known." And it has the wholesome quality of optimism. To love truth means at any rate that one believes it is possible to know what is true. Also, it precludes neutrality; it presupposes that the ultimate nature of things is somehow good. Such is the first point made by Canon Quick. He analyses this zeal for truth in order to show that, often unconsciously, it contains much that is common to itself and to Christian orthodoxy.

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Then he turns to the Church, and blames it for failing to present the true intellectual meaning of the Cross. The reason why Christian doctrine has got out of touch with the modern mind is that there has not been a proper interpretation of the Cross. Here the Canon will win agreement from many clergymen and ministers who find themselves unable to present their message with force and passion largely because they feel a "stop in the mind" when they come to speak of the atoning love of God. What the true interpretation is to be, the Canon does not say. But he insists that our Lord's religious message implied a "deeply realistic and scientific study of the world and of human nature," and that He "never purchases a cheap edification by saying things which are not really true to life." A true interpretation of the Gospel, he urges, demands an unflinching spirit of honesty, which leads each of us to be willing to go to school in and with the world, without imposing upon it his preconceived ideas of what it ought to be."

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There is one sure note of this love of truth, and that is the willingness to have one's own faults pointed out kindly and firmly. To resent reproof is a mark of childishness. Anyone who professes to seek reality will welcome even the unpleasant experience of having defects in his character or creed exposed. "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" So Paul asked the Galatians, who had taken offence at his plain-speaking. "O foolish Galatians," he might well exclaim. For this temper is an infallible mark of folly. The truth is not what we like to hear or to believe about ourselves or the world; it is generally something much more uncomfortable.

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But such a Galatian temper is not yet exorcised. An instance

of it occurs in Dr. Nicol MacNicol's new book on *The Making of Modern India*. Dr. MacNicol is one of the most thoughtful and sympathetic missionaries of the Scottish Church in India, and his book is an invaluable guide to right thinking upon Indian affairs. A review of it will appear in our pages before long. Meantime we may notice what he says about Indian sensitiveness. He notes how "the greater part of the actual Hinduism of to-day sprawls across the land, naked and gross like the red-painted stones that represent its gods." It is small wonder that Western visitors are disgusted and repelled. Even some finer minds in Hinduism itself admit the indecencies and moral emptiness of the national religion. But how do the Hindus take the words of truth spoken by those who would free them from this moral handicap? As Dr. MacNicol admits, they regard such critics as enemies. "When Lord Curzon hinted that veracity was not a universal virtue in Bengal this gibe outweighed a hundred political benefactions, and will never be forgotten. So when a distinguished Christian scholar on a visit to India spoke of the tutelary deity of Mysore as a she-devil—which in her origin she undoubtedly is, and she has not yet by any means entirely sloughed the horns and the hoofs—he was guilty of an unforgivable indiscretion"!

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This is ominous. The presence of the immoral in Hinduism is bad, and so is the disposition to regard any criticism of it as a personal insult. Sensitiveness of such a kind is not a note of growth but of decadence. It is a form of suspicion, and of suspicion in its lowest shape, mixed up with complacency and a narrow national pride, a disquieting symptom.

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In the November number (p. 324) we noted Professor Burkitt's explanation of the spirit which led our Lord to cleanse the temple. Mr. A. D. Martin offers another impression of the scene in his thoughtful study of our Lord's life, which is called *Aspects of the Way*. He takes the episode as another phase of the earlier temptation to bow down to Satan and win dominion by means of force. Jesus displayed vigour and indignation here. But why did He stop when He did? Because, says Mr. Martin, "His indignation had swept Him up to the very frontiers that delimit the rival kingdoms of God and the world." That is,

Jesus checked Himself at the right moment. "It is not too much to say that those ten minutes of the Cleansing of the Temple were more critical for the character and destiny of Jesus than all the forty days in the wilderness."

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The basis of this interpretation lies in two considerations. One is, that the very desire of doing good may lead us to take a wrong step, or to adopt false methods. As Shakespeare put it :

"Most dangerous  
Is that temptation that doth goad us on  
To sin in loving virtue."

The other is, that Jesus possessed a "masterful strength" of nature. No man of feeble goodness would have been assailed by such a temptation. It struck at one who was "rich in blood, iron in physique, with continuous mental surge and energy, and instinct of command." Our Lord, as Mr. Martin aptly adds, "did not need that exhortation of the Psalmists which our quietists would be the better for heeding, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil!'"

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The article in this number, by Dr. Barnes, upon the Bible and Islam, will open up a new subject for some readers. It is a subject which is touched, from another side, by Mr. Alfred Guillaume, in his recent monograph upon *The Traditions of Islam*. For, while the Kor'an is the bible of the world of Islam, it must not be forgotten that just as the Jews require their Talmud, to apply the Old Testament to more developed life, so the people of Islam appeal to traditions, i.e. to a "vast literature" whose aim is "to provide an authoritative standard of belief and conduct based upon the word and deed of Muhammad which shall be binding upon the whole of the Muhammadan world." Mr. Guillaume describes the rise and scope and content of this extraordinary literature, which professes to enshrine early oral traditions of or about the prophet.

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One tendency, he notices, is to approximate Muhammad to Jesus Christ in some respects, especially as a worker of miracles. What the prophet really was, Mr. Guillaume does not profess to say. "No biographer, either ancient or modern, has succeeded

in giving his readers an entirely satisfactory appreciation of the baffling personality of the great prophet of Arabia. His loyalty and treachery, abstinence and debauchery, wisdom and ignorance, mediocrity and inspiration, demand the pen of a Boswell." Yet it is clear that he was no worker of miracles. He himself declared that he was not sent by God to work miracles. So later traditions set to work to furnish him with some, lest he should seem inferior to the Christians' Jesus. And they borrowed from the New Testament, for example, from the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Also words of Jesus were transferred to Muhammad. In the traditions, as Mr. Guillaume observes, "the fallible human figure of Muhammad has faded into oblivion," and colours of a semi-divine character have been infused into the picture, drawn largely from the New Testament account of Jesus.

#### *THE TEN BEST BOOKS ON THE APOSTOLIC AGE.*

IN responding to the Editor's request for a list of the Ten Best Books on the Apostolic Age, it is desirable to define the class of readers for which such a list is most suitable. It is obviously not designed for Professors of Theology, who will seek to acquaint themselves with all, or at least most, of the literature relevant to the subjects on which they lecture; nor can it have in view persons who, though not Professors, yet are deeply interested in theology and at the same time possess such means and leisure as allow them to pursue the study of it without restriction of any kind. The readers whose needs it is hoped to serve are those whose library must for various reasons be circumscribed in extent, and who wish for guidance in selecting just those books which are likely to be most helpful. And, since time as well as money may be a consideration of importance, it will be expedient to limit the proposed list almost exclusively