

CURRENT ISSUES.

MORE than forty years ago Matthew Arnold made a prediction. He was analysing popular Christianity in its use of the New Testament. He noted how it was fond of dwelling upon certain texts and passages, seizing upon them and building up a theology out of them. But meanwhile other texts remained "in shadow." And he looked for the day when "these deeper texts will gradually come more and more into notice and prominence and use." Well, texts have their vogue. Some are more popular than others, naturally; some deserve to be. But certain deep words are apt to be ignored, or, as Arnold said, to lie "in shadow."

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I remember Sir William Robertson Nicoll once telling me that he had been listening to sermons in all sorts of churches for I forget how many years, and had never once heard a sermon on the words of St. Paul about being "accepted in the Beloved." This was not the kind of text that Arnold meant, however. He cited, as specimens of texts at present in shadow, "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," and "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Well, his prediction has been fulfilled. Anyone who has followed the course of religious life during the last forty years will admit that these texts have come into their own.

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Professor J. M. Shaw of Halifax has found another text which he thinks has fallen out of use in our day. It is the saying, "Ye must be born anew." Professor Shaw has published a book of lectures on *The Christian Gospel of the Fatherhood of God*, one of those fresh, thoughtful books upon an old subject which reward the reader. He concludes the lectures with a sermon upon these words from the Fourth Gospel, in order to bring out the relation between the Divine Fatherhood and

regeneration. But why "regeneration"? Because, says Professor Shaw, this is essential to any salvation, individual or social.

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Sonship, he argues, is not a natural endowment, like childship, towards God. Only once in history has divine childship developed naturally into divine sonship, and that was in our Lord Jesus Christ. The rest of us break away from the Father, and so from one another. We regain our sonship by believing in Christ and owning His control of our lives. And this puts us once more into the true attitude of brotherhood towards our fellow-men. This and nothing else. What the world requires for social health and peace is a new spirit, a new heart in men. He quotes an American publicist who declares that peace and prosperity will return to the business world "when wage-worker and employer change their point of view towards life and become born again, becoming possessed by new and better motives in life, and realising that we are here to serve rather than to be served."

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What are the main qualities that make for success in the pastoral work of the Christian ministry? It is obvious that any success here depends upon personal character. One must be able to win people's confidence, and that means a victory over temptations to self-conceit and indolence and patronising. But are there any special qualities which tell? We may mention two.

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The first of them is hopefulness. To do good in pastoral work the clergyman or minister must bring with him something like a breath of fresh air, some uplift of spirit. Many of those with whom he has to deal are depressed or languid or anxious; some even may be almost desperate. It is an enormous help to such natures to come into contact with one who is sympathetic and hopeful.

"And you who doubt the sky
And fear the sun—
You, Christian with the pack,
You shall not wander back,
For I am hopeful, I
Will cheer you on."

This is an essential function of the Christian minister. He must in his own way be fulfilling the rôle which Matthew Arnold, in his lines on Rugby Chapel, declared that Dr. Arnold fulfilled.

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The second quality is love. Not an amiable sentiment, but the devotion to those for whom God has made one responsible, a devotion which makes one loyal, thoughtful, and patient. I wrote lately about Dr. Powicke's life of Richard Baxter. Well, the Bishop of Durham has published in the *Contemporary Review* for January his memorial address on Baxter, and he singles out this quality in the great Puritan divine. Baxter, he says, "might be provoking and unreasonable, he often was, but then he was so plainly sincere, so unselfish, so brave, so full of love, that men fell under the spell of a personal influence which they could neither question nor resist. The secret of his pastoral triumphs was his great capacity for love." Which is quite intelligible. People quickly know whether a clergyman or a minister is genuinely interested in them as individuals. They can feel, though they cannot explain, when the man helps them because their welfare means more to him than anything else. They are unmoved by gush, and as unmoved by any professional zeal. But the spirit of unselfish affection reaches them and rallies them. And so the relationship becomes truly Christian.

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The series of "The Ten Best Books" has to be interrupted this month in order to make room for the first of Dr. Adolf Keller's articles upon the remarkable new movement in Continental Theology. How far that movement is reactionary will be seen as Dr. Keller proceeds to analyse its contribution. Meantime it is significant that such an emphasis should be laid upon the objective element in Christianity. There are signs abroad that the preoccupation with the subjective side of religion, which characterises psychological research, is provoking a more or less wise protest. The movement described by Dr. Keller is one of these signs, and it is well for us in this country to mark it, as none of the writings produced by this group of scholars has yet been translated into English.