

Council for Missionary Education. It is about the easiest way we know of following the armies with understanding, and it is so well written that we should read it for the mere delight of the reading. Where will you find a picture of Arab life or an estimate of Arab character more vivid or comprehensible? And you had better understand the Arab. For 'his leaders begin to-day to dream of a Pan-Arabian programme that shall somehow unify the scattered tribes that lie under French and British protectorates in Africa and in Aden, in Mesopotamia, and under ineffective yet cramping Turkish control in Syria and Cilicia. That programme is necessarily vague, but it springs from a desire for a fuller life that will more completely realize the great possibilities that lie concealed within the Arab race.'

The fullest Notes on the Sunday School Lessons

are to be found in the *Methodist Sunday School Notes* (Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Department). That much can be said at once on a comparison between this volume and the similar volume issued by the Sunday School Union. Another thing can be said. The authors of the Notes are given in the Methodist book, and those who know their work already, the work of Mr. C. F. Hunter, B.A., for example, or the work of Mrs. E. E. Whimster, will understand the advantage of that. All the lessons are annotated and illustrated in this generous volume—the Morning Lesson of the Sunday School Union List, the Afternoon Lesson of the British International List, the Standard Graded Course, and the Missionary Lesson. As for illustrations, the most difficult field to cultivate is the Missionary literature: Mrs. Whimster has a genius for it—the genius, no doubt, that consists in taking pains.

Comparative Religion—and After.

BY STANLEY A. COOK, M.A., CAMBRIDGE.

It is hardly necessary at this time of day to enlarge upon the nature or the value of the comparative study of religions as it is now pursued. The interest in it, and the importance attached to it, are sufficiently indicated by the numerous works devoted to the accumulation of material, the investigation of special points, the solution of particular problems and so forth. Need one do more than recall the voluminous *Golden Bough*, or refer to so symptomatic a fact as an Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics? The study itself, and the spirit in which it is conducted, are in harmony with that aspect of 'democracy' which—to a certain extent at least—respects the existence of every religion, but also permits nothing to lie outside the scope of criticism. Both are significant also of the prevalent anxiety to find *some* satisfying answer to the perplexing and often somewhat novel questions which are raised by one's reading, by reflexion upon current events, or as a result of personal experience.

But when religions have been 'compared' and the resemblances and differences duly registered, much still remains to be done. The mere com-

parison of religious data, the impressions we gain, the conclusions we draw and the theories we formulate, do not bring us to the goal of our labours, if only for the reason that individuals find themselves in hopeless conflict touching their results. In fact, the study of religions soon leads to a new stage; the comparison of religions is found to involve that of religious attitudes and of attitudes to religion, and at a stroke the whole subject becomes more intimate and personal. Attitudes to religion or to religious 'data' (in the widest sense) are no less important than the data themselves. When religion is in any way involved—be it Australian Totemism, the Golden Bough, or the Angels of Mons, etc. etc.—what we feel or think, what we express by our conduct or remarks, become veritable data for a deeper study of what religion really betokens. Ancient or savage ritual and myth are not the only data on which to base a clearer conception of religion: modern conduct, attitudes and arguments—whether we consider the conscientious objector, Bolshevik atrocities, German 'hypocrisy,' or the occultism, magic and false mysticism in our midst—these, in a word, are of

the greatest significance for a view of religion which shall do justice to the facts and be helpful for the future.

Where religion is concerned, our beliefs and practices can be regarded as at least *implying* convictions, propositions, theories and the like, which concern our ideas of Reality. What *is* the Universe, if so-and-so be really true and all its implications developed? It is always easier to pass what is virtually a value-judgment from our own current point of view than to work out the implications of conduct or beliefs in a way that would fulfil the Golden Rule of Criticism, namely, of treating the ideas of others with the consideration we should desire for our own. Yet the trend of thought is such that sooner or later the more difficult and delicate problems raised by modern religious 'data' must be fought out. Just as past diplomacy tabooed certain international questions because they were too dangerous for a more than conventional discussion, so, in the realm of religion, there are problems which are speedily seen to be so personally vital that there is a natural desire to resort to compromise, and to refrain from disturbing them. Yet perchance there may be a spark—some Serajevo incident—which will bring to a head the problems the finality and overpowering importance of which are so widely recognized.

The very fact that there are questions which are felt to be so profoundly vital has this significance, that, typically religious ideas (*a*) are more *personally* real to us than those which are not religious, and (*b*) when they are not felt to be ultimate realities, they are at least felt to be nearer the actual Ultimate Realities themselves than all the surest and most 'real' data of our sciences. Of all ages and lands it is true that religion characteristically involves conceptions of the greatest and most vital realities, so far as they are apprehended in the light of current thought and experience. At the same time, comparison reveals transitions of thought such that one has to recognize—bearing in mind one's own past life-history—the possibility of a further development of conceptions of reality, even though one is entirely unable at present to imagine the advance or to conjecture the form ideas will take.

Now, in the world as known by Science, wrong conceptions of the True and Real sooner or later lead to failure. There are limits: in spite of my ignorance of Science there are *certain* things I

seem to achieve successfully; in spite of the laws of health, I can go to *certain* lengths in offending against them. And in general, as regards all that is effective, in the widest sense, certain things are indispensable for their success, certain things inevitably preclude success. It is frequently patent, on the one hand, that evil succeeds because the necessary effective steps have been taken, and in accordance with effective laws; whereas, on the other hand, good will fail because of something which 'in the nature of the case' must invalidate it. If we 'happen' to do or to refrain from doing what 'happens' to ensure or to preclude the effect, we must obviously expect the logical consequences. Progress essentially consists in making the 'happen' less indefinite; and in the history of thought the stress lies now on the religious and now on the non-religious side. The disputed efficacy of prayer is an illustration.

But this dichotomy is not absolute. Human consciousness, in the phase of it which we call 'religious,' testifies to a Power which is felt to be *personally* all-sufficing and all-powerful, even though men suffer what otherwise seems calculated to overthrow their convictions. The 'religious' and the 'non-religious' phases are so far at least interconnected. Moreover, when we speak of a 'religious' belief or practice, or of 'Religion' being or doing so-and-so, it is very important to realize that in the last analysis we refer to experiences, and so forth, which are a natural and integral part of the whole individual experience, and which are put in a special category in order to mark and maintain their distinctiveness or uniqueness. It can be shown inductively by the ordinary comparison of 'religious' and 'non-religious' data—what is also to be expected *a priori* on psychological grounds—that the 'religious' consciousness or the 'religious' experience which leads to the specific convictions and formulations of the Ultimate Realities cannot be regarded as finally distinct from the 'non-religious.'

While in the world of Science we all agree in recognizing the necessity of conforming to the True and the Real, on the other hand, where religion is involved, we seem to have what are different conceptions or 'theories' of Reality. And these not only tend to conflict with one another, but any of them, if felt or shown to be really true, would have the profoundest significance for our entire life and thought. There is the

'theory' that God stands aloof from mundane or secular affairs, that an Emperor or State can represent the Ultimate Power for all human purposes, that the 'religious' sphere is something quite apart from ordinary practical life. Or religion may be tolerated as a merely private affair, so long as it does not interfere with the Government (*e.g.* in Bolshevism). Again we may contrast the indefinite part religious conceptions hold in the ideal of a League of Nations with the ages and lands where religious, international, and political convictions are organically interconnected.

The fight against evil, and the faith that Might is not Right, involve or imply conceptions of the real nature of the Universe which are immensely more profound than the 'non-religious' and crude rationalistic ideas that prevail on all sides. 'Scientific' thought does not give us the Ultimate Realities in a way that answers the inmost aspirations—perhaps of the scientist himself. In fact, human behaviour always implies a 'theory' of the Ultimate Realities far more sweeping than any we can properly formulate, and there is something remarkable, in this age of crisis, in the implications logically inherent in the great activities or ideas, which we detest or accept, as the case may be, and the sporadic, incomplete and imperfect formulations of what Ultimate Reality is.

Thus, the idea of God's blessing or His help really involves a gigantic 'theory' of the Universe which should logically leave its traces throughout all religious and non-religious thought. And even if we assume that there is nothing in the Universe to justify this idea, we must still ask, What is man, what is human nature, that the idea should even prevail and be maintained? What is the Universe if the highest type of organic life claims such conceptions of the environment? What theory *then* can we find? The problem is to find a theory of the Universe and of Reality, such that we can understand both the religious and the non-religious convictions that prevail, and the best theory will be that which deals most fairly with its rivals and opponents. It can hardly be that the Ultimate Realities are inconsequential and contradictory; the essential differences must lie in the experience and life-history of the individuals who give us their 'religious' and 'non-religious' convictions which Comparative Religion can classify and co-ordinate.

The comparative study of religions leads to a comparative study of religious and non-religious

thought, in order to form a conception of religion *within* the total world of thought, even as the 'religious' modes, phases and moments of the individual, *which are the source of our data for conceptions of religion*, are only a part of his total life and experience. The immediate practicable problem, and one that can be handled along scientific lines, is not the discovery of the Ultimate Realities; it is rather the treatment of them as implied or formulated by men, it is the study of the development of minds which fashion, accept, or dispute formulations of the nature of effective Reality on the basis of the tone of their experience.

The question of the significance of religion is not merely 'pietistic.' A new stage in the conditions amid which the Great War arose is at hand, and the nearer the end of the war the more do we realize that the 'psychical unrest' (if this general term may be used), which was so marked before August 1914, has not been allayed. Indeed, it is said that in Russia, at all events, there has been a worse hell under Bolshevism than even under Tzarism, while as for the ideal of a League of Nations, it can hardly be said that any present scheme touches the psychological roots of the problems in a way that would remove the infelt sense of insecurity, dissatisfaction and unrest. On the one hand, all effective life *implies* some sort of a theory of Reality; on the other hand, 'psychical unrest,' however it may manifest itself, must persist until an equilibrium has been found which shall enable one to face the future and all conceivable risks with courage and hope. Individuals may find a solution, in their faith or in their philosophy, but a harmoniously adjusted environment, whether of individuals or of nations, requires an adjustment of the various religious and non-religious conceptions of Reality which now unite and now divide.

The comparative study of religion thus leads to a further inquiry into the forceful ideas which make or mar men and peoples. We are 'up against' Reality at every moment of our lives; but who can say how much of our successful work, in peace or in war, is due to causes which belong distinctively to the realm of what we call 'religion'? Are we handicapped by any indifference on our part to the religious consciousness of what the Universe is? Are the Ultimate Realities indifferent to our conception of what they are? Or is there

truth in that conviction, which recurs in varying forms, that man can co-operate with these Realities, and the better his conception of them, the more effective and permanent the result of his activities? If the Great War may be regarded as the conflict between truer and falser conceptions of the nature of the Universe, we shall only be deceiving ourselves if we think that there are not other false conceptions. All our efforts to spread our

'culture,' to reform peoples, or in any way to further the progress of humanity, imply at bottom particular theories of the Universe and the Ultimate Realities; hence it would seem only self-evident that a consciously held view on these vital questions must be the precondition of our success.¹

¹ For an attempt to work out the data of religion on the lines indicated above, the writer may be permitted to refer to his article 'Religion' in the new volume of the *E.R.E.*

In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

For the Sundays in Advent, consider the purpose of Christ in coming into the world.

- I. To fulfil the Law and the Prophets—Mt 5¹⁷.
- II. To give His life a Ransom—Mt 20²⁸.
- III. To offer abundant Life—Jn 10¹⁰.
- IV. To witness for the Truth—Jn 18³⁷.

Advent Sunday.

'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.'—Mt 5¹⁷.

LITERATURE.—Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, 1886; L. Campbell, *Some Aspects of the Christian Ideal*, 1877; J. Stuart Holden, *The Confidence of Faith*, 1916; J. Cynddylan Jones, *Studies in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1888; F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, 1st Ser., 1896; W. Scott Palmer, *The Ladder of Reality*, 1915; E. F. Russell, *Father Stanton's Last Sermons in S. Alban's, Holborn*, 1915; D. Swing, *Truths for To-day*, i., 1874; W. Temple, *Church and Nation*, 1915; J. M. Wilson, *God's Progressive Revelations of Himself to Men*, 1916.

It has been well said that the who would speak to the times must speak from Eternity. The only satisfying interpretation of life is that which we get when we stand upon the hills of God, where by the side of Christ we are able to see things in their true proportion and perspective. Unaided and unelevated vision is bound to be mistaken. It is only in His light that we see light. And nothing is more needed to-day than that we should look out upon life, not as an insoluble mystery, and upon its happenings, not as a hopeless tangle, but as the expression of the everlasting nature of God. That Christ once came, declaring fully and finally the principles and the purpose of the Divine Government, makes it possible so to regard life,

even in its most troublous days, without fear or panic. To attempt, however, to understand its changing experiences apart from Him is sheer folly and hopeless darkness. Christ has not only the keys of death and hell, but of Life also. He openeth, and no man can shut. He shutteth, and no man can open.

1. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. A great many people still think that Jesus came to destroy. The religious life appears to them a life of giving up things. Renunciation seems the Christian motto. The religious person forsakes his passions, denies his tastes, mortifies his body, and then is holy. But Jesus always answers that He comes not to destroy, but to fill full; not to preach the renunciation of capacity, but the consecration of capacity.

(1) Here is your body, with all its vigorous life. It is a part of your religion to fill out your body. It is the temple of God, to be kept clean for His indwelling. Not the ascetic man, but the athletic man is the physical representative of the Christian life. Here is your mind, with all the intellectual pursuits which engross you. Many people suppose that the scholar's life is in antagonism to the interests of religion. But religion comes not to destroy the intellectual life. It wants not an empty mind but a full one. The perils of this age come not from scholars, but from smatterers; not from those who know much, but from those who think they 'know it all.'

(2) Under modern unbelief the life of man daily becomes narrower. The belief in a God and the attendant worship of Him, with all its trust, and hope, and virtue, has occupied a vast space in human life; and when to this we add the kindred ideas of heaven and endless existence, we have a vast world of thought and sentiment, which, when taken away from the heart, must leave life narrow indeed. But thus exactly does the criticism of to-day narrow life and transform it from a stream that widens into an ocean into a little thread which runs between some chemical action and a grave. Modern criticism seems a pursuit of the infinitely little, a