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God and the War

The Final Armageddon That is Enthroning Faith.

BY HORATIO BOTTOMLEY, (EDITOR OF JOHN BULL.)

In this remarkable and truly inspired article, Mr. Bottomley, whose marvellous hold on the public mind grows with every day of the present world-tragedy, delivers the greatest message ever penned since the war began. It is destined to become a classic, and will, beyond doubt, deeply stir the heart and soul of the nation.

THE death, the other day, of my old friend G. W. Foote, leader of the English Freethinkers, has set me freely thinking. Years ago we lived together. He was then the "rising hope" of his Party—oh, those "Parties"—and was rapidly qualifying to take the place of Bradlaugh, who was gradually gravitating to the world of Politics. He would rehearse his speeches with me, would point out the historical and scientific errors in the Bible—and its contradictions and inconsistencies. What a wonderful man I thought him—and how I pined from the sublime eminence of our superior intelligence and wisdom (I was seventeen and he was nearly thirty) and poor Christians and other victims of "religious superstition!" Dear, simple, deluded creatures—they "believed in God!" I knew better—I "believed" only that which could be "demonstrated" to my "reason." What a clever chap I was!

And now to-day, in my fifty-fifth year, and after about as strenuous a life as any man of that age has ever lived—I believe in God! And in the immortality of the soul of man. I am not sure that if poor Foote had died a few years ago I might not have been a candidate for his successorship. But now it is too late. This great world-war has done it. In War there is a mighty alchemy, transmuting the base metal of human experience into the pure currency of Faith. If War does not engender faith it must of necessity breed Despair. In these soul-searching days, no man can be content with a mere negative philosophy. The doubter must go to the wall. Pure "rationalism"—however "scientific"—has no word of inspiration for the warrior, no word of comfort for weary watchers, or of solace for broken hearts.

And as with the physical world, so with the spiritual. I have long understood all about the "indestructibility of matter," and the "conservation of energy." I have been taught that no speck of dust is ever wasted—no flicker of force is ever finally extinguished. And now I have come to believe that every noble aspiration, every worthy act and thought—every high resolve—is conserved immortally. I believe that God has a divine purpose for not only the blood of heroes, but equally for the tears of women, the quivering anguish of the humbled heart and the sacrificing effort of unselfish aim. I believe

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one type shall be destroyed
Or cast as rubbish to the void—
When God has made the pile complete.

And today, with that confession of Faith let me ask myself what is God's part in this war. "Why is the red blood flowing; why do the women weep—Why have our dear lost brothers gone to their long last sleep?" It is a big question, and one which is not to be answered in the language of conventional creed. A very New Theology is required to grapple with it. That, I suppose, is why the professional preachers have left it so severely alone; they have trembled to either justify or explain their God. I will remind them that all creation is "red in tooth and claw," and that once there was war in Heaven; that the whole history of Israel is crimson with war, and that even the central figure of their Faith did not escape the operation of this universal law. From His bitter Gethsemane to the agony of Calvary, He endured its torments. And that, they have been telling us for ages, was the price of the old world's salvation. Cannot they preach that the sacrifice and endurance of our land to-day is but a repetition of the tragedy of A.D. 33? Cannot they tell the people to listen to the Voice, asking "What is righteousness—what is salvation—worth to you—What will you give for it? Your labour? Your money? Your life? Your son, your brother, your father?"

Come, ye Priests and Parsons—cannot you see what it all means? Cannot you get together what I have called the spiritual skeins of this world tragedy, and weave them into a pure, white garment for the soul of man? Your calling, too, is on its trial. Your Articles, your Rubrics, your Dogmas, your Ritual, are all out

some will be chosen and others will be left. It is for the Anglo-Saxon race to see that it is chosen.

To sum up, then. This is the conviction I have formed, and which has sunk deep down in my inmost heart of hearts, of God's purpose in the blood red tragedy of to-day. I believe that in this twentieth century mankind is destined to have revealed to it the first glimpse into that unexplored Land of Mystery which lies beyond the borders of our finite vision—that, at last, we shall begin to know. That is the meaning of all the wonderful discoveries of recent years. The sea, the air, the skies, the bowels of the earth are all giving up their secrets; but, till now, two remain unpenetrated and unsolved. They are the old, old mysteries of Life and Death. *Quo vadis* is still the problem of the universe—Whence and Whither are still the searching questions of the restless human soul. At last, the answer cometh. God is about to speak—but ere we catch the Message we must attune our ears to new chords and vibrations; ere we see the beckoning hand we must clear our eyes of the scales of animalism and savagery; and the nation which first succeeds in attaining to that spiritual exaltation will be the first to hear and see.

There you have it. God is taking stock of the world. Of this world. For aught we know, the same thing is happening in myriads of other worlds to-day. But our concern is with this old one in which we live. We are being tried in the fires of anguish and tribulation—we are having our baptism of blood. It is by flame and sword that we are being tested. Strange indeed it is that such methods should be decreed. But yet strange only on first reflection. For what is the test? Aye, there's the question! It is this—which of the peoples of the earth is fitted for the revelation—for assuredly it is not yet for all. Here, then, we have it. Shall it be the Land of the Rising Sun—with its dawning splendour; the great Slav nations of the Near East—throwing off their savage instincts of days gone by; the Teuton, with his gospel of Blood and Iron, of Might and Brute Strength; or shall it be the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon races—who for long generations now have led in the van of the world's progress and spiritualised and elevated our common lives?

And this, my friends, is my answer: this is the divine purpose—this is the mystic meaning of it all; this why men bleed and women weep—why little children are torn from their mothers' breasts—why wives are dashed from their husbands' arms—why the earth runs red with rivers of blood. It is that we are witnessing Armageddon—the last grim battle of the world; the last upheaval of the primitive barbarism from which we sprang when the stars first sang together. It had to come. It is the cosmic plan. The fitness of any species—of any race—can be determined only by a process of elimination. That is the history of the evolution of the world. And God does not interfere with it. He set it in operation before Time, as we understand the word, began; He planted the seed—the seed of human exaltation—and left it to ripen, or to rot. I believe that, in a large degree, the fruit is ready to be plucked, or, at any rate, nearly ready. The blood and tears now being shed are its final fertilisers, warmed by the sun of sacrifice.

And I believe that it has been given to the great branch of the world's family to which we belong—blessed and glorious thought!—if only we acquit ourselves worthily in this hour of trial, to be the first to pass the last milestone on the road of human Destiny, and to see, before our wondering eyes, the open portals of the Land Beyond—with the music of the Heavens wafting on our ears, and the Prince of Peace with one hand beckoning us advance, and with the other pointing to the Star of Bethlehem that will lead us on to God.

**WILSON GREETINGS
EMPEROR YOSHIHITO**
WASHINGTON, Nov. 9.—President Wilson cabled to the Emperor of Japan his cordial felicitations on the accession to the throne. The message follows:
"To His Imperial Majesty, Yoshihito, The Emperor of Japan, Tokio:
"On this auspicious occasion of Your Majesty's formal accession to the throne, I take pleasure in extending cordial felicitations, and in expressing the confidence that the influence of your high ideals, of right and justice which will continue to guide you in your exalted office will insure to the advancement of your country. I assure your majesty of my best wishes for your personal welfare, and that of your majesty's family, and for the continuance of the friendly relations existing between Japan and the United States."
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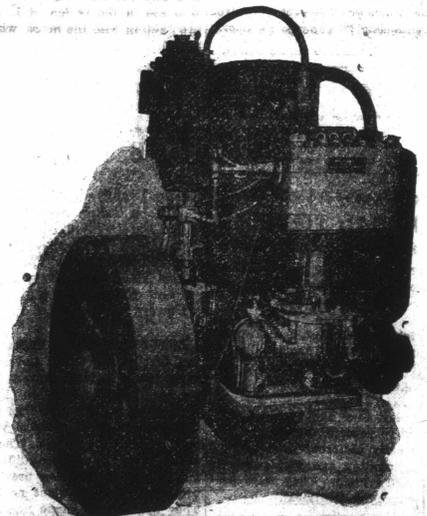
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