

THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS CRISIS.

AS REVIEWED BY COUNT GOBLET D'ALVIELLA.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION is at present in a state of transition. The old views are rapidly changing and a new world-conception based upon a more correct and truer comprehension of nature is rapidly spreading. Science and the results of science have become the common property of the people, and begin gradually to affect the traditional interpretation of religion. In this country we do not notice the change so much as in the Old World because the constitution of our churches, which are supported by the people in absolute independence of the government, is different from that of European State churches. In Europe religion is to a great extent officially forced upon the people in schools as well as through State institutions which compel people to belong to any of the religions sanctioned by the State. Here religion is an affair which concerns the individual personally and privately, and our government has nothing to do with it except that in general it favors religion as such and would assist all those religious aspirations which are animated by the right moral spirit. In Europe the salaries of the clergymen are paid by the State, and the State taxes all its people alike, whether or not they belong to any church or synagogue. Infidels and Jews as well as Christians must contribute to the support of both Protestant and Catholic churches, and if non-conformists wish to keep up a religious service of their own they must pay for it from their own pockets.

It is a matter of course that under these conditions the clergy with very few exceptions have to preach a religion that the government deems best for the people, and the result is that dogmatism prevails. In this country congregations pay their own minister, and in consequence our clergymen are the exponents of the belief of their congregations. If a congregation becomes liberal, they will engage

liberal clergymen; if they are orthodox they will retain the old orthodox ministers. At any rate religion is not imposed upon the people, nor is any dogmatism prescribed except in conservative churches which do so on their own account; there is perfect freedom.

As a result of this state of things, conditions have greatly changed, and our churches are therefore very different from European ones. This is especially true of liberal congregations, for we count quite a number not only of non-sectarian churches but even of churches proclaiming a universal religion. Even the Catholic churches, though they preach the same dogmas as in Europe, are very different in their constitution, and although it is constantly denied in Europe and also here by orthodox representatives of the Roman Catholic church, that there is such a thing as Americanism, the truth is that the spirit of American Catholic churches is widely different from the one that prevails in Italy, France and Spain. There is not the same blind submission to authority, but for that very reason the congregations are stronger here and also more serious in their religion. Thus it happens that the earthquake that shakes up the churches of Europe is felt less in this country.

We are in receipt of an extract from the *Revue de Belgique* in which Count Goblet d'Alviella has collected from a French magazine, *Mercure de France*, a symposium of opinions on the religious situation. The *Mercure* requested a number of leading men of various convictions and persuasions to give their opinion concerning the present religious crisis, and the answers are very profuse and detailed. They cover a series of articles of many hundreds of pages, published in several consecutive numbers of the *Mercure*, but Count d'Alviella has boiled down these interesting documents, and reduced them to a reasonable shape which faithfully sums up the opinions now prevalent in Europe.

The circular sent out by the *Mercure de France* on the 20th of February, 1907, reads as follows:

"The religious idea, religion or religions, the influence of this or that religious form on the development of morals, have for several years formed the subject of an increasing number of works. On the other hand we see that everywhere conflicts are entered into against religious doctrines, against a religion or in the name of a religion: in France, the separation of the Church from the State; in England, debates on the subject of education; in Germany, the quarrel between the government and the Catholic center; in Italy and in Spain, the anti-clerical demonstrations; in Russia, the hostility of autoeratic orthodoxy against liberalism; throughout the Orient, race conflicts which usually become conflicts between religions; in the far East, the victory won by Japanese civilization over a Christian nation. In the face of this situation it seems to us that it will be of great interest to gather together and publish

in the *Mercur de France* the opinions of our most authoritative contemporaries upon the following question: *Are we now witnessing a dissolution or an evolution of the religious idea and religious sentiment?*"

Here we present Count d'Alviella's condensation of the answers as follows:

COUNT D'ALVIELLA'S REPORT.*

Leaving aside those correspondents who refuse to declare their position either "because the life of a Christian is too short to answer such trivial questions," or because they do not believe in the possibility of foretelling the future, the answers as a whole may be subdivided into three groups: (1) Neither dissolution nor evolution, (2) dissolution, (3) evolution. But in this connection we ought to repeat once more how very necessary and difficult it is to come to an agreement on the meaning of words. He who predicts the dissolution of every religious idea aims only against dogma or creed. Another proclaims the perpetuity of religious sentiment but reduces it to scientific curiosity or to an altruistic instinct. Some who affirm the evolution of religion recognize that this evolution as they conceive it is really equivalent to a destruction. Others imagine that they are describing the progressive dissolution of religion while they really show the elements of an actual religious reconstruction. . . . Accordingly in a classification based on these terms we shall have to take into account ideas rather than words.

I. NEITHER DISSOLUTION NOR EVOLUTION.

A. Because Religion has reached Its Final Form.

Those who contend against the possibility of a religious evolution come from two opposite camps; on the one hand those who consider religion perfect and final in the form in which they profess it; and on the other hand those who consider it too imperfect in itself or too absurd to be capable of any progress whatever.

The first idea is found especially among Catholic writers. M. François Coppée writes, "*Credo in sanctum Ecclesiam catholicam.* I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. That single word *Credo*, if you please, will be my answer to the inquiry of the *Mercur de France.*"

The same simple faith—the faith of a poet—appears in the answers of M. Vincent d'Indy who proclaims in retaliation, "the dissolution of that vain science, philosophy"; of M. François Jamme who declares that "we are witnessing the dissolution of all that is

* Translated from the French by Lydia Gillingham Robinson.

not Catholicism"; of M. René Bazin, of Prof. G. Dumesnil, of M. J. Besse, of M. Maurice Denis, of the Abbot Lemire and of the Abbot Wetterlé, formerly an Alsacian deputy.

M. Charles Woeste, a former Belgian minister, formulates the thesis with a conciseness which leaves nothing to be desired:

"The religious idea implies the existence of a religious truth; now if there is a religious truth it is not susceptible of evolution; it either is or it is not. If it were variable it would cease to be the truth."

However, it is not only the Catholics but there are even some Protestants who occupy the same ground.

M. Kuiper, the Calvinist Woeste of the Netherlands, does not deny that the state of mind is not "for the moment unfavorable to the development of religious receptivity," but he adds as well:

"After this time of weakness there will follow a period of renewed religious receptivity which will surpass in intensity the religious receptivity of the past."

From Geneva, the venerable M. Ernest Neville protests against the abuse of the term "evolution." He admits that religious minds tend rather to busy themselves with actualizing even in this world the will of the Heavenly Father; but if social Christianity is desired it is "on condition that the adjective shall not devour the substantive!"

M. Wildeboer, professor of theology at the University of Groningen, declares that we do not need a religious evolution.

M. Siegfried Wagner, heir to a great name, limits himself to stating that "the truth of the Gospel is eternal." He apologizes for not speaking at greater length since he is "on the point of departing for the south."

B. Because Religion Rests on Habit or Ineradicable Illusions.

From quite another point of view M. Maurice Vernes, after having stated that "men of science work and teach to-day outside of the dogmatic System," adds:

"There can be no question at this time of the dissolution of the religious idea or sentiment, nor the slightest symptom of its evolution. The rationalism which triumphs in the substance of historical and scientific study is at bottom only a method of work destined to renew successively the various domains of research; to see in it the catapult which from one day to the next is about to overturn religion, is to be sorely deceived or to be satisfied with words."

A similar view is expressed by M. Felix de Dantec:

"A general decline of religious sentiment is certain, although it is less advanced in some cases; but it has not resulted in a complete disappearance of the organ even in the case of atheists....It would be illusory to wish to awaken religious sentiment on behalf of a religion in a decline. Only a new and living religion would profit by the restoration. To-day science holds the leading string; whither will it lead us?"

M. Urbain Gohier answers this last question ironically:

"The religious idea and religious sentiment will not disappear. Their evolution, like our political evolutions, will consist in a change of terms. Already red curés are replaced by black curés; there are pontiffs, gospels, catechisms, councils and excommunications among freemasons and socialists; there are lay baptisms, humanitarian communions, civic Easters and Christmases, banquets on Good Friday, processions of Saint Etienne Dolet in place of the novena of Saint Etienne du Mont, a cult of Saint Zola in place of the Cult of Saint Labre."

The same note is sounded by MM. Paul Adam, Georges Brandès, and Maurice Barrès, this last considering that "the best religion is still the one which we have"; likewise in somewhat more measured phrases by MM. Jules Soury, Jules Sageret, Arno Holz of Berlin; G. Sergi, professor of anthropology at the University of Rome, and Cesare Lombroso. The last named admits that all religions adapt themselves little by little to the culture of the people who profess them, but he adds disconsolately:

"If it is possible for an institution founded on error to evolve, it always ends by falling into another error."

Finally let us cite one of the executors of Auguste Comte, M. Antoine Baumann, who, faithful to the teaching of his master, thinks that Catholicism, the heir of preceding religions, may still be called to play an important part "under new forms otherwise impossible to specify."

II. DISSOLUTION.

Among those who affirm a more or less early dissolution of religious sentiment or the religious idea, the greater part understand religion exclusively in the sense of anthropomorphism (M. Emile Verhaeren); of revelation (M. Domela Nieuwenhuis); of dogma, rite, and preaching (M. Yves Guyot); of belief in spiritual beings (M. Plekhanoff); of a hackneyed clericalism (M. Théophile Braga of Lisbon); of the worship of a God apart from the universe (M. André Niemojewski of Warsaw); or of piety understood in its traditional acceptation (Mr. Edmund Gosse of London).

M. Leopoldo Lugones, inspector general of the University of the Argentine Republic, formulates this aphorism:

"Since the days of Greece our society has been established under the concept of obedience to the principle of authority, the two supports of which are religion for the soul and government for the body....To-day disobedience reigns."

M. E. Humperdinek, a composer of Berlin, modestly contents himself with treating the question from a musical point of view:

"We may conclude from the well-known dissolution of the religious spirit in the music of to-day that the religious idea of our own time has become totally barren, and that it is vain to attempt an artificial rebirth as long as new transcendental ideas are not prolific."

Viewing the problem in a more complete fashion, an Italian sociologist, M. Francesco Cosentini, maintains that of the two fundamentals of religion, dogma is destroyed by science and ethics tends to detach itself entirely from every vestige of religious garb.

I include here, but not without some hesitation, the group of those who while insisting on the permanence of the evolution of religious sentiment conceive religion as a purely humanitarian bond exclusive of any notion, collective or individual, of relations with a transcendent power. As Mr. Israel Zangwill of London regards it in his statement, there comes a point where "the transformation is so great that it might equally well be called a destruction."

M. Eugène de Roberty:

"On the whole (with apologies to the materialists of history) the religious question seems destined to remain for a long time the social question *par excellence*. For under the problem of divinity which I consider a temporary one, is hidden the problem of humanity which I deem eternal."

M. Maxime Gorki:

"The dissolution of the idea of a personal God seems to me inevitable among intellectual circles as well as with the masses....I believe that we are witnessing the formation of a new psychological type. In order that this formation may take place, a broad and free intercourse is necessary between men of equal positions, and the problem is solved by socialism. Religious sentiment as I conceive it, accordingly, must exist, develop and bring about the perfection of man."

M. Lucien Descaves believes in the future of a mystical socialism. A French painter, M. E. Grasset, is convinced that Christianity continues and will continue for a long time to come in its principle and in its new form, socialism."

M. Is. Querido, a Dutch man of letters, predicts the creation of first a socialistic society followed by an anarchistic:

"But in order to attain moral perfection we must have the psychical support of a faith: this will be the confluence of the best affections of the spirit and in both strength and depth will replace for future humanity that which is now the faith in God of the devout."

Analogous opinions have reached us from two other political writers from the same country, MM. Albert Verwey and Nico van Suchtelen. From the first, "there is but one cult, and that is to live." In the opinion of the second all religion and all fetishism are actually vanquished in favor of "faith in the power of intelligence."

Mr. P. Schiel, a literary man of London, thinks that ethics is destined to replace religion. Michel Revon is not far from sharing the same opinion, at least so far as Japan is concerned where he has particularly studied the religious situation.

The Russian sociologist M. Novicow writes:

"From the viewpoint of dogmas it seems to me that religions are undergoing an incontestable dissolution. This is not true of worship. Worship is necessarily allied to dogma, but only slightly. Doubtless a day will come when religious dogma will cast off all pagan stain, all belief in any divinity whatever. Then man will practice the true religion without God. This religion will be able to develop forever without ever dying, if in its cult it finds more and more perfect methods of giving to men the sentiment of the infinite and of elevating them into regions of purity and of idealism."

Does M. Novicow reject the idea of God and still permit that of divinity to remain? If so his thesis would deserve rather to have a place in the third category by the side of M. Hébert's reply and several others.

III. EVOLUTION.

A. Within the Limits of Catholicism.

Belief in the perpetuity of the Church belongs to the very essence of Catholicism. But there has been growing for some time among the laity,—and as for that among a fraction of the clergy,—the belief in the possibility and even in the necessity of a Catholic evolution in the intellectual and social domains. M. Marcel Rifaux recently addressed to a certain number of his coreligionists a questionnaire containing the following inquiries relating to the present crisis in the Church: "Is this intellectual crisis simply a crisis of laborious adaptation or is it indeed a crisis of exhaustion? In the first hypothesis, what are the means to be employed in order to clear up this crisis and to hasten a return to Catholicism? In the second hypothesis, what is it which keeps us from Catholicism and by what equivalent shall we be able to replace it?" The replies published by M. Rifaux in a large volume entitled "Conditions of a Return to Catholicism," have excited cries of indignation from those organs which devote themselves to contending against novelty in the bosom of the Church. At the same time this opposition has

not prevented M. Rifaux from affirming his convictions anew in the symposium of the *Mercur*:

"Some Catholic authorities are thoroughly convinced that they are remaining faithful to the spirit of the Church while engaged in disburdening the divine tree of all the parasitic vegetation which hinders its growth. A gross, scholastic, archaic, and antiquated anthropomorphism, legends sometimes ridiculous, puerile devotions, unauthentic texts, fraudulent relics, a shameless commercialism in certain sanctuaries, hero worship, a fetish respect paid to decorations and episcopal dignity, abuse of titles and distinctions, a spirit not of authority but of autocracy,—such, in short, are the points on which the progressive Catholics make their claim."

It is noteworthy that a French bishop, Mgr. Lacroix, does not hesitate to write in the *Mercur*, "I share almost all the conclusions of Dr. Rifaux."

The same feeling is courageously expressed in the response of a group of distinguished writers, both laity and ecclesiastics, nearly all of whom are contributors to the "Annals of Christian Philosophy" of Abbot L. Laberthonnière: Says M. Georges Fonsegrive, "What appears hostile to religion restores it"; Abbot Klein, "It is important to notice that peace is no longer sought in unity but in the demarcation of domains"; M. Albert Leclère, professor at the University of Bern, "The religious future of the world seems in the face of a science and a philosophy equally independent, to be a Catholicism more and more in accord with the age"; M. Maurice Blondel, professor in the University of Aix, "The present crisis is a purification of the religious sense and an integration of the Catholic faith"; the Abbot Brémont, who admits the suggestive fact that a renewal of religious sentiment has taken place but that this does not apply to the masses, says: "The latter, far from returning to a religious sentiment, seem to me to be withdrawing from it more and more every day"; M. Antonio Fogazzaro does not hesitate to draw the conclusion that would naturally be expected from the author of *Il Santo*:

"We are advancing toward a religious conception in which dogma will hold a very great place, but in which the relations between human intelligence and dogma will be the relations of a living faith exceeding formulas, plunging into mystery and thence drawing love, strength, and life to be interpreted into action."

The Rev. Father Tyrrel, whose dispute with the ecclesiastical authorities of the English Church may be recalled, believes that "notwithstanding the dissolution of many religious institutions caused precisely by the growth of a more religious and more pro-

found sentiment," we are advancing towards an awakening of the religious idea.

M. Marc Sanguier, the manager of the *Sillon*, writes:

"The new generation of Catholics, and especially the young clergy, are trending towards democracy."

Abbot Romolo Minri thinks that the gravity, the universality and even the violence of the "enormous want of equilibrium between the religious thought of the different Christian communities and modern scientific culture," show that there is here "a period of anxious investigation for a new balance between religion and life."

The Rev. Father Allo says:

"No movement, however 'magnificent,' is able to extinguish any of the lights of consciousness. They can only be freed from their shadows by a clear illumination of free thought."

We can only regret not being able to include here the appreciations of the Abbots Loisy and Houtin.

Will all this movement towards emancipation be stopped by the recent syllabus of Pius X? I dare not say. If so it will be so much the worse for the Church; but if not, what will become of the Papal authority which is presented more and more as the cornerstone of Catholicism? Is a third result possible?

B. Within the Limits of Christianity.

M. Frank Puaux, formerly director of the *Revue chrétienne*, states that, far from weakening, the Christian churches are on the high road to evolution and progress:

"Scientific evolution prepared by the gigantic work of religious criticism which, studying the problem of the origin of religion, has maintained its principle; and social evolution tending to definitely separate religion from politics and concentrating its action on moral and religious development by the struggle against all social iniquities in the name of Christ."

On the other hand, a Dutch political writer, M. Vanden Bergh van Eysinga, while declaring that "just as Beethoven established a limit in a certain class of music which could not be passed, so Christianity is the perfect religion," adds that its evolution will no doubt be accompanied by a dissolution of the Church.

M. Baldassaré Labanca, professor of religious history at the University of Rome, formulates his opinion as follows:

"On one side the dogmatic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical past may to a great extent be seen to dissolve in religion, because science and criticism, philosophy and historical and political research, contend against the theology, dogma, and ritual of the Church. . . . But on the side of the parties who are

dissolving there exists in religion, especially the Christian religion, a current of moral and social idealism which constitutes its admirable, intrinsic foundation and evolution."

Similar conclusions have been formulated by the Count of Romanonès, formerly a member of the Liberal Cabinet of Spain; Baron Hans von Wolzogen, manager of the *Bayreuter Blätter*; the composer Bourgault-Ducoudray; MM. Robert Saleilles, professor of the faculty of law at Paris; Bonet-Maury, professor in the faculty of Protestant theology at Paris; Paul Seippel, professor at the Polytechnic at Zurich; and finally M. Charles Gide, who writes:

"We can positively prove an evolution in the religious idea and religious sentiment, or rather the idea tends to develop into sentiment. The religious idea tends to evade the dogmatic formulas in which it formerly sought to fortify itself. . . . But at the same time there is a tendency to replace the individualistic desire for salvation and heaven by a desire for the salvation of all. An entire school of ardent young pastors repeats the prayer 'Thy kingdom come,' declaring that this phrase must be understood in the sense 'Thy kingdom on earth,' and does not admit that Christianity can be anything else than a social Christianity."

C. Outside of All Denominational Limits.

Among the correspondents who view the question from an exclusively objective point of view whether or not they belong to any confession or definite school, a great number positively affirm their belief in the progressive evolution of religious sentiment but without pretending to decide what the religion of the future shall be.

M. H. Bergson:

"Only compound things can be dissolved. Now in its very essence the religious sentiment is a simple thing, *sui generis*, which does not resemble any other emotion of the soul. . . . Further investigation of the idea accordingly may throw light on the sentiment more and more but not modify it in any essential point, still less cause it to disappear."

M. Gabriel Monod:

"For two centuries both traditional Catholicism and traditional Protestantism have been in sight of dissolution; but it is only an evolution in religion. As long as men are ignorant of whence they come and whither they are going, the wherefore of life and of the universe; as long as they throw glances of curiosity, of hope and fear towards the infinite which surrounds and engulfs them; that is to say, as long as they are men, religion will be renewed in their hearts from age to age under ceaselessly changing forms."

M. Emile Vandervelde, the head of parliamentary socialism in Belgium:

"In socialist society, as in society in general, the problems of death and life, the mystery of our destinies and our beginnings continue to produce

metaphysical hypotheses or, if you prefer, religious beliefs. But they will never be more than hypotheses. People will no longer dream of imposing them as absolute truths in the name of a pretended revelation. In all probability there will still be religious associations, but there will not be autocratic, intolerant, despotic churches, except as archaic survivals."

These ideas appear in various degrees in the answers formulated by MM. Camille Flammarion, who says: "Religions and religion are two different things. The first will perish, but the latter will remain"; E. Menegoz, "The indestructible foundation of religion is the sentiment of moral responsibility"; Charles Morice, "When Spirit will have profoundly taken possession of Nature, the gods will be born again"; Sir Charles Dilke, "The religious idea is independent of churches"; Saloman Reinach, "The magical element tends to disappear. The opinion that religions approach their end has had its time. Religion which in its primitive forms is identical with human society can and must be constantly transformed"; Edmond Picard, "As long as men are not able to penetrate the mystery of death, of future life, of the immortality of the soul, of the force which presides over universal morphology, there will be religions to solve these unquieting problems either childishly or suitably"; Camille Lemonnier, "The religious idea may be displaced and modified but never extinguished"; G. Wells, "The religious idea and religious sentiment form an integral part of the intellectual and moral processes of humanity"; Napoleone Colajanni, "Religion does not die; religions become transformed"; Paul Sabatier, "Far from entering upon a religious dissolution we are approaching a glorious restoration"; Havelock Ellis, "Churches have but a temporary existence; the religious instinct is an element of human nature almost as much as the sexual instinct"; MM. A Mézière, Frédéric Mistral, Richard Dehmel; Miguel de Unamuno, rector of the University of Salamanca; A. D. Xénopol, rector of the University of Jassy; Louis Gumplowicz, professor at the University of Gratz; Béla Földès, professor at the University of Budapest; R. Mocsary, and the Marquis Pietro Misciattelli, express a similar opinion.

Finally there are those who exert themselves to specify more or less exactly in what the evolution will consist. M. Alfred Fouillée:

"Dissolution (extremely slow and interrupted) of positive religions. Evolution (how slow and with how winding a course!) in the sense of philosophy and ethics....What is certain is that positive science will never suffice for a humanity which has other vital needs besides material ones."

Nevertheless the majority of replies advance a little farther in their attempts to lift the veil of the religion of the future. M. Charles Wagner, pastor of the Evangelical Liberal Church writes:

"The more I consider these times of disturbance, the more also do I see appearing from the shadows a religion which is the religion of to-morrow; it is human piety in its powerful simplicity, it is the sacred regard of life, of grief, of labor, of all which constitutes humanity."

M. Sully-Prudhomme :

"The religious idea submitted by the progress of Protestant science to a criticism more and more enlightened, tends to exclude anthropomorphism of the divine essence and consequently to be transformed; but since religious sentiment is as inextinguishable as moral needs, this transformation will never result in the annihilation of the idea of divinity."

M. Marcel Hébert, who refers to the thesis which he has recently upheld in his work on *Le Divin* :

"Once past the period of contention the religious problem will reappear with the moral problem in which it is inherent."

Dr. J. Grasset, professor at the University of Montpellier :

"The religious idea proceeds, first, from the need of knowing about that which science cannot teach us, and, secondly, from the need of full and complete justice which our present life does not realize. . . . The present phase of religious evolution is characterized by the emancipation respectively of religion and science."

M. Giuseppe Rensi, editor in chief of the *Canobium* :

"The religious spirit will once more destroy religion, and perhaps will establish another; but the conflict will be renewed and will continue until all religious construction will be transformed into metaphysical consciousness without leaving any residuum."

M. Björnstjerne Björnson :

"Some Dogmas which are henceforth insufferable are falling and at the same stroke are diminishing the distance which separates religions from reality. This transformation acts slowly but it will not cease until all religions and all religious sects renouncing to some extent almost all that distinguishes them from each other will unite in one common adoration of an eternal and benevolent power."

Rabbi Louis Germain Levy :

"A religious idea is being worked out which will eliminate the irrational, miracles, external revelation, the petty devotion of fear and calculation."

M. Vilfredo Pareto, professor at the University of Lausanne :

"In an environment imbued with autocratic principles a religion of free inquiry may be useful; in an environment with a tendency to anarchy a religion of authority is indispensable in order to prevent the dissolution of society. . . . The trusts might provide us with a new religious form which despite its anarchistic appearance is at bottom, thanks to its worship of force, a religion of authority. . . . A reflex movement may arise on behalf of the ancient religions. . . . On the other hand it is far from demonstrated, for instance, that the rôle of Catholicism in the world is ended."

In the opinion of M. Istrati, formerly a minister of Roumania, the religion of the future, based like science on observation and experiment, will be spiritism. Thus "science and faith will be forever remitted."

To M. Minsky, a Russian political writer, this religion will be "Meonism,"* in which God is conceived as "the absolute Unity which from love for the multiple world dies voluntarily, is sacrificed continually for the universe, and lives again in the aspiration of the universe toward absolute unity." However, the author recognizes that hitherto this conception has formed "the patrimony of but few people."

Another Russian political writer, M. Dmitry Merejkowski, prophesies the religion of the Spirit which will be the religion of God in humanity. A third political writer of the same race, M. Nicolas Berdaieff, thinks that:

"History will end in a mysterious route towards a universal Church containing the entire truth not only of divine and celestial matters but equally of that which is human and terrestrial; towards a Church arising out of orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism—a free theocracy."

In the eyes of M. Auguste Strindberg, a literary man of Stockholm, the religious evolution advances towards its end which is "a monistic confession without dogmas or theology."

M. Gian Pietro Lucini, an Italian author, says that the movement of to-day is an anti-clerical demonstration not for the dissolution of a religious idea but for the integration of a scientific religious dogma."

M. Scipio Sighele, an Italian sociologist, believes that the only religion of the future will be nothing else than a philosophy; that is, a branch of science which while confessing its powerlessness to explain the mystery which surrounds us, will permit what Spencer calls the Unknowable to be called by the name of God."

More reserved in his conjectures, M. Emile Durckheim, professor of sociology at the University of Paris, concludes in these terms:

"All that can be presumed is that the religious forms of the future will be still more permeated with rationalism than even the most rational religions of to-day, and that the social sense which has always been the soul of religions will be declared more directly and more distinctly than in the past without veiling itself in myths and symbols."

Finally, if I may be allowed to quote myself, I expressed in the *Mercure* the idea that the crisis will come to an end when the

* From $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\upsilon\varsigma$, non-existent; illusion?

new conceptions of the universe and of man will be sufficiently impressed upon religious sentiment, and especially when a genial thinker will have found the means of conciliating the two contradictory principles of actual philosophy: on the one hand the notion of continuity and consequently of fatality which dominates the law of evolution in the scientific domain; on the other hand the liberty and spontaneity of conscience without which there could neither be any sentiment of moral responsibility nor an open field for religious activity.

* * *

The conviction that religions are not artificial and arbitrary becomes more and more widespread; that they have their source in the depths of human nature; that they possess characteristics in common; that they are susceptible of progress; that their essential element and their practical side is the diffusion of altruism combined with their conception of the divine; and finally that there remains to them under these circumstances an important rôle to play in social evolution. This current of opinion would appear with even more accuracy if this inquiry had not left out a noteworthy proportion of the territory where Protestantism is predominant, notably the United States, where it has been shown at what point and with what rapidity the churches can be transformed into instruments of humanitarian reform, leaving theological differences in the background.