Lectures on the History of Religions

Volume I

By Various as below
London Catholic Truth Society No.cts0012 (1910)

Contents

Introduction to the Series

In modern times great use has been made of what is called the Comparative Method. It is a process by which facts, more or less of the same sort, are collected, and then compared; after this, an attempt is made to judge whether groups, which at first appeared isolated, are really connected; and sometimes, whether one group is more valuable than another. Immense progress has been made by the use, in our medical schools, of Comparative Anatomy; much light has been thrown on the interrelation of races by Comparative Philology, or the study of their languages; all who are interested in politics, or sociology, or economics, and make any pretence to be considered scientific, apply the comparative method to the history of states, or society, or money.

The same method can be applied to any phenomenon, be it practice or idea. Religion includes both practices and ideas, and is itself the most interesting phenomenon on the face of the earth. Nowhere, accordingly, has so much eagerness been shown as in the study of Religion according to the Comparative Method. Here, of course, the triple process must carefully be observed, though we find that in practice its stages are often confused. The facts about the world's religions should first of all be accurately ascertained; they should then be compared and contrasted; and finally, general laws (should any such emerge) and general appreciations (should any such be possible) may be formulated.

Catholics believe their religion to be a unique revelation given to them by God through his Incarnate Son. They believe also that a gradual revelation of Himself was granted, in a special manner, to the Jews. All other forms of religion they accordingly believe to be not only inadequate, but deficient in an essential quality which their own possesses. These other religions are in the main natural, while theirs is supernatural, though we acknowledge that the working out of these notions,

in theory and in fact, is matter for most careful reflection and delicacy of expression. It might hence be thought that they would resent any comparison of their own religion with others. This is not so. They are indeed anxious that Christianity should be known — only so can it be appreciated; and, once appreciated, men will see its truth. But a thing becomes known, not only by being studied in itself, but by being compared with all that is around it, or preceded it, or challenges it. Often we first and best realize how magnificent is an artistic chef-d'oeuvre by seeing a bad copy. A caricature may reveal details which, in the harmonious perfection of the original, had escaped our notice.

Only, a Catholic will protest against two things, and protest, moreover, in the name of sound Science itself. Research must not begin with the conclusion, that is, with general principles held a priori as true. And similarities must not be taken to imply identities. Thus if we begin with the fixed principle that Totemism is true (cf. Lecture i. 6), we shall soon be forcing new evidence into a shape which will fit this theory. If we begin by assuming Solar Myth to be the master-key, everywhere shall we be seeing sun-gods, from Abraham to Napoleon. And more generally, if we decide at the outset that the supernatural neither can nor does exist, that miracles do not happen, that revelation is nonsense, we are committed, before examination, to the manipulation or rejection of such evidence as, e.g., the New Testament professes to offer.

Again, it is the coarsest of mistakes, showing that he who makes it is neither historian nor philosopher, and least of all fit to study religions, if we at once assert causal connection where we see external similarity, or identity of idea where there is coincidence of phenomenon. We cannot at once assert, and ought not even to assume, family connection from facial resemblance. And because Mithra-worshippers "dipped" their neophytes, and atheist Freemasons have taken to "baptizing" their children, it does not follow that they mean the same thing by it as we do, or that the latter borrowed the idea as well as the rite from Christians, or that Christians borrowed either from Mithraists.

The lectures aim primarily at satisfying the first requisite of the Comparative Method, i.e., the collection and exposition of facts. It has primarily been attempted to set before the reader certain details connected with religions ancient and modern. We say primarily, because comparison has been occasionally resorted to—e.g., the feasts of Greece have been compared with those of Rome (xiii. 5; xiv. 10, 14; and xi. 4, 5, 20, etc.), or the theology of Augustine with that of Paul, Luther, Trent, or Wesley. Also a fairly full index enables a reader to pursue and complete such comparisons for himself. Still less frequently has the final appreciation been suggested, or a general law formulated; partly because it is hoped that these will arise spontaneously from the observation of the facts, partly through fear of asserting what, in our narrow limits, we have been unable fully to prove.

No one can be more sensible than the Editors, of the lacunae inevitable in a short series, and the diversity of treatment which to some extent detracts from its unity. These defects did not seem to warrant the abandonment or even prolonged postponement of the publication of these lectures. We trust, however, that the omissions (e.g., of the religions of Mexico, Scandinavia, Polynesia, etc.) are secondary, and may later be made good. At least, a consistent effort to achieve a scientific, yet popular, and never controversial treatment has been, we hope, successful.

The volumes have a certain unity within themselves. The first, after an introductory lecture, deals with very widespread or very ancient religions, other than those which more immediately affected the world when Christianity was born. Vol. II. treats precisely of these latter religions; Vol. III., of

certain great stages in the history of Catholicism, with its Jewish background; Vol. IV., of the fate of such religious movements as separated themselves from the main current; of the great post-Christian religion of Mohammed; of the modern destinies of the third great Semitic religion, Judaism.

It is hoped that in a fifth volume — frankly of the nature of an appendix— descriptions of other cults, barbaric, ancient, or modern and "after-Christian," may supply something of what can never, perhaps, be adequately treated.

C. C. M.

The Study of Religions

From the French of The Rev. L. de Grandmaison (Editor of the "Etudes")

"He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth ... that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." — Acts xvii. 26-27.

"It is hard work to find God." — Plato.

I. Religion: the Word and the Thing

The word Religion, which is common to all the languages of Western Europe, is a Romance form of the Latin word religio (relligio). The true etymology of this word connects it with re-legere (to re-collect, to recall before one's mind, to reflect; all with a shade of concentration and anxiety). The current etymology, which, since Lactantius at any rate, seeks to relate religion with re-ligare (to bind, join, unite), though philologically inexact, has at least the advantage of expressing far more vividly the actual and living meaning of the word.

In a recent book, Mr Morris Jastrow, after examining the different definitions of religion advanced by his predecessors, sums them up as follows:—

"Religion consists of three elements: (1) The natural recognition of a Power or Powers beyond our control; (2) the feeling of dependence upon this Power or Powers; (3) entering into relations with this Power or Powers.

"Uniting these elements into a single proposition, religion may be defined as the natural belief in a Power or Powers beyond our control, and upon whom we feel ourselves dependent; which belief and feeling of dependence prompt (1) to organization; (2) to specific acts; and (3) to the regulation of conduct, with a view to establishing favourable relations between ourselves and the Power or Powers in question."

This synthetic description, which is fairly accurate and complete, has none the less the serious defect of not bringing sufficiently into light the specific element, the transcendent quality, of all religion which is worthy of that name. It is not enough to say that the religious man recognizes "a power or powers which do not depend on himself." We must say that he at least in fact conceives this Power, this Force, or, more exactly, the Being which has possession of it, as first, sovereign, or ultimate. He may make mistakes about the subject of the divine power, i.e. he may attribute that power to many subjects or possessors, or else to a single subject whom an enlightened reason can show to be manifestly incapable of possessing it. But, for such a man, and in such of his actions as

properly may be styled religious, this Power is supreme and ultimate; beyond it he neither knows of nor can imagine any other.

There can in consequence be no religion, in the full and pregnant meaning of the word, save where we can discover, as implicit perhaps, yet none the less as in practice recognized, the transcendent character of the Being to which are addressed prayer, adoration, sacrifice. In other words, Religion is the sum-total of beliefs, sentiments, and practices, individual or social, which have for their object a power which man recognises as supreme, on which he depends, and with which he can enter (or has entered) into relation.

Below this level there will none the less exist actions, emotions, and beliefs analogous to the beliefs and emotions and actions of religion, and participating in some of their characteristics.

II. Leading Religious Notions

The first, which in importance surpasses all the rest, is the idea of God, or of the Divine. This idea will express itself by the word God, if the ultimate Power, on which man recognizes himself as dependent, is, by analogy with human personality, conceived as personal; by the word divine, if the idea remains obscure and vague, and refrains from defining the way in which that Power is what it is.

Theism and its Divisions

Theism is that conception of religious philosophy according to which the subject of the Divine Attributes (Self-dependence, Omnipotence, Universal Fatherhood, Omnipresence) is distinct from all other existences, and transcendent — that is to say, in a superior and incommensurable order, in their regard.

Pantheism is the erroneous notion whereby the subject of the Divine Attributes is identified with all that exists.

Monotheism and Polytheism are the two subdivisions into which Theism falls, according as these Attributes are considered as subsisting in a single Being, or as parcelled out among many.

This explicit conception of the Divinity, which presupposes a certain stage of philosophic development, is overlaid, to a great extent, in many nations, by a crust of religious notions far less distinct and elaborated, and far more concrete.

Animism

Animism is the name generally given to the conception which is at the root of these notions. Animism consists in attributing a will, passions, and powers modelled on the human type (anthropomorphic, that is) to mere material objects, or to non-human living creatures. These objects, now that they may thus be considered as animated, endowed with a principle of life and action (soul, spirit, breath, or mana), can in certain circumstances enter into direct relation with man in his individual or social capacities. Since the power attributed to them is regarded as extraordinary, superior, superhuman, it is but a short step to invoke them, to establish actions and ceremonies destined to do them pleasure, to propitiate them, to appease them. The last step is to consider them, and to treat them, actually as gods.

Nature-worship, and Totemism

Among many peoples, the fear mingled with respect which is the beginning of Adoration, fastened at first upon the great forces of Nature, celestial or atmospheric: the heavens, the sun, the moon; the stars and planets; storms and fire. This is the religion of Nature. But very frequently, and indeed, as a rule, the superior and "Divine" powers are considered to reside in some determinate class of material or artificial objects, or in them to manifest themselves in some special way. Hence comes the worship of stones and holy places (the High-places of which the Bible speaks), of trees and sacred woods, of sacred animals. Nature-worship has left its mark most deeply on the religion of ancient Greece and Rome, of Egypt, and of the Semites. Indeed, any nation which grows up in wide plains, as did the Babylonians and the Egyptians, are constantly invited by the mighty glory of the heavens, and the miracle — so overwhelmingly splendid and sudden in the south — of sunrise and of sunset, to see in the great orbs of Heaven their origin and the rulers of their destiny. And nations whose life is agricultural or pastoral rather than that of the huntsman, will, of necessity, evolve field-and-woods worship, and celebrate the mystic cycle of the dying and re-born year. Hence the sun-cults of Egypt and Assyria, etc.; hence the supreme Aryan Light-God. Zeus and Jupiter, chief among the Greeks and Romans respectively, alike derived their name from the root div, or bright. Hence, again, the long litanies of nature-titles, drawn from rain, or wind, or cloud, or lightning, given to those gods; hence the problematical Asiatic worships of the young Year-God, slain violently each winter, to rise once more in spring. Of course ingenuity has here run riot. The Corn-spirit is, by one authority, held to explain the most divergent rituals; the cult of the Heavenly Twins is for Dr. Rendel Harris a master-key of mysteries. Roscher's famous Lexicon explains every title of Athene from her supposed identification with the storm-cloud. Once we were called upon to explain all ancient history as solar myth: not only the pagan deities, but Abraham and Samson became sun-symbols; the twelve Apostles were the signs of the Zodiac. Archbishop Whately's clever proof that Napoleon himself was but a solar myth showed that people were already emancipating themselves from that now antiquated folly. But see infra, pp. 13 n., 21. In particular, Totemism—a name borrowed from a dialect of the Red Indians — consists in a religious alliance contracted between a tribe or clan and a vegetable or more often animal species (bear, beaver, crow etc.). Hence arise initiations, imitations, dramatic representations, tales and myths. The artificial objects put into relation with the gods, and participating in the respectful fear entertained for them, assume the character of fetish or idol, for no clean-cut distinction between these names can be laid down: an idol is but a worked fetish; it is less crude, better modelled.

We are aware that almost any of these definitions can be disputed; it has, for instance, been maintained that a totem is no more than a tribal or family or personal crest; and the name fetish is constantly misused. A few examples will at any rate show that, whatever its origin, totemism assumed sooner or later a definitely religious influence, or is not, at any rate, a mere arbitrary social symbol. Thus from the Clan-totem the whole clan believes itself descended; the progenitor of the Iroquois turtle-clan was a turtle so fat that his shell wearied him when he tried to walk; he threw it off, stood upright, and evolved himself into a man. Called by the totem's name, the clansmen believe that the totem is incarnate in every member of its species [this differentiates it from the mere individual object called Fetish] and most intimately united with themselves. Thus, if by accident they kill their totem-animal, they often are in despair, they will apologize to it, throw the blame on, e.g., their hunting-spear. Among the East Africa Wanika, the mourning for a dead hyaena, their ancestor, is far more passionate and prolonged than that for a dead chief. It is buried in pomp, and was, during life, protected by threatening tales of penalties incurred by violating it. Among the

Omahas, the Red Maize clan never eat red maize; if they did, running sores would break out all round their mouths. Boils and white spots would be the penalty for touching, even, the male elk, among the Elk-clan of the same Omahas. Totems will protect, or at least not injure, their clients. The Senegambian Scorpion-clan say that scorpions will run all over their bodies without biting them. All sorts of external marks — special plaits of hair, tattooing, branding, knocking out of teeth — manifest one's connection with a particular totem. At birth, adolescence, marriage, death, special commemorations are made. When a South Slavonian child is born, an old woman cries out, "A she-wolf has littered a he-wolf"; the child is drawn through a wolf-skin; a piece of a wolf's eye and heart is sown into its dress; sometimes it is named Wolf. The dying members of the Buffalo (Black Shoulder) clan of the Omahas are dressed in buffalo-skin, have their faces painted with the buffalo symbol, and are told: "You are going to the animals; you are going to the ancestors; be strong." It would be quite out of place to describe at length the social complications based upon this idea. Though in Australia and (especially North) America, totemism is very prevalent, yet a very strong reaction is taking place against reading it into Semitic or the classical religions. M. Toutain, in an important paper read at the Oxford Congress, 1908, asserted that it was a key which would open but few doors. M. Salomon Reinach beat an astonishing retreat in his presidential address. Orphism, no less than totemism, declared this erstwhile champion of that theory, had become a hobby, and an overridden hobby too!

As for the fetish, it is even less necessary to offer many illustrations. Anything will serve the purpose; there is no limit to the possible instances. Thus the negro of Guinea will take the first remarkable object that he notices on going out — a feather, a twig, a claw; if he succeeds in his enterprise, whatever it be, he forthwith worships it; else, he throws it away, stamps on it, spits on it, abuses it violently. Our cult of horse-shoes, of crooked sixpences, of odds and ends kept "for luck," is not so very far, after all, from having some connection with this old superstition.

Cult of the Dead: Ancestor-worship, Ghosts, etc.

The religious sentiment may, again, attach itself to a certain class of men: the ancestors of the family or clan, the illustrious dead belonging to the tribe, to chiefs or kings. They are considered, either in their images or in their persons, as depositaries of some formidable and superhuman power, and are treated with proportionate respect. A subsidiary category of intermediate vague beings may further be evolved — genii, spirits, disembodied souls, imps and fairies, whose behaviour, malevolent or useful, is regarded as highly efficacious, and gives rise to all sorts of superstitious and, so to say, infra-religious actions. Whatever be the object of the Religious Sense, around that object a whole network of defences, precautions, and prohibitions (taboos) forms itself; and it is through these that the fear and respect finds its expression.

Ancestor worship, though of comparatively little religious importance, was yet, in ancient Greece, for instance, of the very highest social moment. The clan-worship of the ancestral hero from which the clan took its name, was the strongest possible bond of unity among its members; often a hostile unit would find itself thus set up within the State. The great reformer Kleisthenes was obliged violently to abolish the traditional worship and establish new and arbitrary cults in its place. We are assured that the semi-divine worship paid to dead ancestors in China is directly responsible for a very remarkable perfection of family-life in the country parts of that great Empire. The Roman process of adoption was so solemn and complicated an affair, chiefly because the adopted man had to abandon his family cult and undertake a new one.

Magic

Finally, on the lowest plane of conceptions, related indeed to Religion, yet not deserving of the name of religions, are to be detected some very widespread beliefs which constitute magic. Starting from the notion that certain formidable and considerable forces, which are, none the less, susceptible of compulsion, reside in certain objects or certain specified persons. Magic undertakes the task of capturing these forces, of exorcising them, of coercing them by incantations, adjurations, operations, which — if they are but performed according to the rules — infallibly produce the desired result. The object of this magical cult is therefore treated without respect and without any love. It is feared as the receptacle of a powerful Force, no doubt, but in no way considered as good, supreme, or divine. The sentiments entertained towards it are therefore different in essence and in principle from the true religious sentiment, whatever be the truth of the case for those amalgams which are produced by the perversions of the root-ideas.

It follows, however, that anyone who makes a careful study of the ways of managing these forces acquires an enormous reputation in his tribe, as one all-powerful for good or evil, according as he checks, or refuses to hinder, or actually stimulates, the malignant forces. In one Australian tribe it is thought that the sorcerer can enter the body of whom he will: another magician can, however, draw him out in the shape of a stone spear-head or splinter of quartz. The North American medicine man mingles literal and salutary doctoring with spells and incantations; he can scare devils away with rattles, and suck them out of wounds or blow them in with a blow-pipe. The Central and West African mganga is the rain-maker; this sort of magic is often sympathetic, i.e. an action is performed which is in some way connected in appearance with what is desired to happen; e.g., you ritually eat a cake baked of that sort of grain which you wish to be particularly plentiful: to obtain rain you make a splashing in water. The imagination of savages is often hopelessly and completely a prey to the blind terrors which these cruel beliefs foster; there is scarcely any limit to their disastrous effects.

All the religious forms and all the conceptions which we have just described and summarily classified are to be found, in various degrees, in all known peoples. Humanity, taken as a whole, is religious. "All men need the gods," said Homer, nearly three millenniums ago.

"That there never was a time in the history of man when he was without religion .... is a proposition the falsity of which some writers have endeavoured to demonstrate by producing savage peoples alleged to have no religious ideas whatever. This point we have no intention of discussing, because, as every anthropologist knows, it has now gone to the limbo of dead controversies. Writers approaching the subject from such different points of view as Professor Tylor, Max Müller, Ratzel, de Quatrefages, Waitz, Gerland, Peschel, all agree that there are no races, however rude, which are destitute of all ideas of religion. That our modern society contains a certain number of men who live without hope and without God, is doubtless due to that 'positive' education which supplies them with the immediate explanation, the secondary causes of facts, and thus checks for a time the natural and imperative effort of their souls towards the Ultimate End and First Cause. And their substitution of the Unknowable, the Infinite, the All, Science, Humanity, for God and their not infrequent lapse into superstition (e.g. neo-Buddhism, Christian Science) proves that the idea of God is rather falsified than lacking in them.

III. Natural and Revealed Religion

The relations of man, as an individual and in social life, with the Divinity, belong to Natural or Revealed religion according as they are conceived as necessarily issuing from the nature of things, or as the result of an initiative, an immediate intervention of the Divinity. In fact, as Newman already noticed, the second element is far predominant in the religions as they exist in fact.

However, we must notice that all religions present, in juxtaposition and indissolubly united, elements which must be connected on the one hand with natural religion, and on the other, with a Divine revelation (real, that is, or at least held to be such).

Thus, in the Moral order, we discover, in all peoples alike, alongside of the precepts of natural morality, and of certain primal duties put under the sanction, and inviting, if violated, the retaliation of the Divinity, other precepts, other duties, superadded by the expressed will of God (or of the gods). Certain actions are held to be forbidden, because bad in themselves (e.g. adultery, murder, theft); and others are held evil because positively forbidden (e.g. the touching of sacred objects, the burning of beeswax, the eating of beans, etc.).

In the order of Worship and of recognized dependence, the same holds good: prayer of praise and adoration, of petition and of thanksgiving; sacrifice; offerings, more or less complete and costly, of various objects the consecration or destruction of which is destined to recognize the sovereign dominion of God, or to put the worshipper into close relation with Him, are conceived sometimes as due to and issuing from the necessary order of things, but more usually as directly instituted, imposed, demanded by God (or the gods).

In the Order of Beliefs one might group under natural religion all credence which attributes to the Divinity the origin and government of the universe, and Providence in all its dealings with Humanity. To revealed religion would belong the beliefs which have regard to the more intimate nature, the number, the genealogy, the interventions of the Divine (covenants, theophanies, initiation, sacred books, prophetism), and those which touch on certain systems, or conditions of salvation (redemption, expiation).

The notion of the sacred — places, times, things, and persons — can disregard the distinction set forth above. Besides, though that distinction was based upon facts and is useful for systematizing our religious conceptions, yet it is familiar (and even this familiarity requires much qualification) only to peoples which have grown accustomed to philosophical reflection. In almost all other groups the elements of natural and of revealed religion are inextricably intertwined, though with the elements of Revelation (real or fancied) predominant.

With all these elements, with all these religious phenomena — and here religious is taken in its widest possible sense— the relatively recent science of the History, or Comparative History, of Religions, is concerned.

IV. The Comparative History of Religions

During long centuries, indeed, the study of religions other than Christianity (or than the religion of the people of Israel) was considered either as mere food for curiosity, which the letters and reports of missionaries and explorers might to some degree supply, or else as a dependant of literary sciences, and thus mythology might be studied for the better understanding of the ancient authors of Greece or Rome. When any portion of Christendom entered into a prolonged or intimate relation

with peoples who professed these alien religions, a corresponding stirring of curiosity in their regard made itself felt, stimulated by apologetic or missionary considerations. Thus, for instance, did the Christians of Spain and of the East come to study the religion of Mohammed. But all this activity, which was at times very considerable, was sporadic, and subordinated to aims other than the study of non-Christian religions in and for themselves.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the French polygrapher Dupuis compiled an enormous collection in which he instituted a comparison of all the religions then known, in order to assign their common origin to the cult of the heavenly bodies. In the nineteenth century, the revival of classical studies on the one hand, and on the other the adoption of a far more severe critical method (verification and comparison of facts; publication of texts and of ancient records) prepared material for a new and independent science, which was assisted by the prevalent phenomenalist philosophy with its notion of Becoming (later to be called Evolution). A great number of thinkers came, in fact, to consider all religions to be but the progressive manifestations of a single religious sentiment, incarnate, from age to age, in these various manifestations, according to the need and stage of culture of the several peoples among whom they appeared.

On their side, Catholic Traditionalists, from very different motives, eagerly sought, in every nation and in every age, for traces of a primitive tradition.

This intellectual movement, assisted by the gigantic progress achieved in our knowledge of ancient or distant peoples — expressing itself in collections, museums, search for and publication of texts, deciphering of languages, scientific expeditions, etc. — brought about the constitution of the new science which put before itself as its single aim the comparative study of religions.

Two men especially contributed to the formation of the new school. In Holland, the Remonstrant (Arminian) pastor, Cornelis P. Tiele, after having published some important studies on the Mazdaean religion (1864) and the comparative religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia (1869), finally produced (1876) under the title of A History of Religion to the Coming of the Universalist Religions, what was, in fact, the first manual of the Comparative History of Religion. This short handbook was translated into the leading languages. And when the law of 1st October 1877, instigated by the doctrinal anarchy of Dutch Protestantism, transformed the chairs of Dogmatic Theology in the four Dutch Universities into chairs of History of Religions, Tiele was the first to be named occupant of that of Leyden.

In England the field was better prepared for the rapid growth of the infant science; the vastness of the British Empire, the treasures contained in the collections accumulated in the metropolis, above all, the possession of India, could not but provoke, sooner or later, a movement in this direction. Yet the initiation of the movement and its direction for forty years are to be assigned to a German scholar, Friedrich Max Müller, born at Dessau in 1823. A pupil of Bopp at Berlin, and of Eugene Burnouf at Paris, Max Müller was called to England, and much important Indian research was assigned to his care. His edition of the Rig-Veda (1846-1850) established his reputation as an Indian scholar, and he became Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. With a real erudition, Max Müller combined eminent qualities of style, of organization, and of initiative. His brilliant and ingenious Essays, united in four series under the name of Chips from a German Workshop, took the leading opinions by storm, not only in England, but on the Continent. The greatest service, however, which Max Müller rendered to the Science of Religions was the Collection of which he assumed the

direction, and which published, in fifty volumes, the English translation, enriched by lengthy and erudite introductions, of the Sacred Books of the East (Oxford, 1878-1905).

The movement thus set going by Max Müller gradually made headway in the United Kingdom. In 1876 the trustees of the Hibbert Fund, destined to maintain poor scholars during their theological studies, decided to secularize the moneys thus placed at their disposal. Part of the proceeds were employed in the giving of Lectures on the History of Religions. They were inaugurated by Max Müller in 1878. About the same time a Scotchman, Mr Gifford, founded, by will, four Chairs of History of Religions in the Universities of Scotland.

In France the progress of the new science was slower: the admirable works of Burnouf on the religions of India, of Remusat and St. Julien on those of China, had no doubt prepared the way for it; but the thoughts of few only turned towards a Comparative history of religions. In 1876, however, M. E. Guimet, a rich merchant of Lyons, accumulated, during his travels in the Far East, a magnificent collection of documents and objects which bore upon religion. This collection, which was immediately enriched by private gifts, was placed in a special museum, subsidized by the State. Conferences, publication of texts, an important Review (which has maintained its prime importance in our subject) were elements in a remarkable whole. Finally, in 1879, the secularization of the Faculties of Catholic Theology was voted on the motion of Paul Bert; and in their place, and animated by a frankly anti-catholic spirit, a Section of "Religious Sciences" was established in the School of Hautes-Etudes at the Sorbonne. At the present moment this section comprises no less than fifteen chairs, without counting those recently founded in the Universities of Paris and Lyons, for the comparative study of religions.

In Germany the foundation of special chairs was long in coming, as was the publication of special books. The best known German manual, by Chantepie de la Saussaye, included, in its first edition, only two Germans in a list of ten collaborators. But the Science of Religions, in all its parts and at all its stages, owes much to scholars such as Th. Nöldeke and I. Goldziher; F. von Richthofen and J. H. Plath; H. Brugsch and G. Ebers; H. Oldenberg and G. Bühler — I quote but a few illustrious names.

In the other European countries, chairs of History of Religions have been founded from 1884 onwards; at Brussels, e.g., held by Goblet d'Alviella; and at Rome, in 1886, by B. Labanca, etc.

Special Congresses have brought together the principal scholars who are interested in this subject. At first the religious aspect predominated; the believers in each several creed put forth expositions of an apologetic character in its favour, with the result that the advocates of non-Christian faiths usually took Christianity as an ideal type to which they claimed to show that their own system approximated. The first and best known congress of this sort was that of Chicago in 1893. Its directors published a detailed account of it under the rather ambitious title, The World's Parliament of Religions. Since then, Congresses of a purely scientific character — or such, at least, it was their aim to be— have followed one another every four years: the first was held in 1900 at Paris; the second at Bale in 1904; the third was held at Oxford in September 1908. The development of the Science of Religions can be measured by the fact that it was necessary to create no less than nine different sections to find place for all the works presented to the Congress at Oxford.

At this Congress it was, moreover, possible to take stock of the real and actual condition of the science of religions. It might be compared to the groups of separate buildings which are often found in semi-civilized countries, girt by a common cincture-wall which assures to the collection a sort of

purely artificial and wholly material unity. Some of the buildings are, as it were, autonomous; the main architectural features of their designs are fixed; the walls rise on firm foundations, but at their side you can see building-plots encumbered with unworked or half-worked material, with which chance-come architects run up at haphazard grotesque edifices that last but for a day, that crumble and collapse before they are even finished. Above all, no general plan: nothing save a certain outlook common to all their constructions, and a certain remote similarity in the building materials — nothing, I say, to reduce to unity this immense agglomeration. Thus, of the nine sections which divided the labour at the Oxford Congress, a few (those of the "Religions of India," of "Classical Antiquity") had to do with numerous, classified, and well-interpreted documents, and with scholars well equipped and already unanimous on many points; but the rest (that, e.g., of the Religions of non-civilized peoples, and especially that of general methodology) found themselves face to face with fragile hypotheses, improvised systems, disputable documents, divergent definitions; and that to such a point that it was impossible to agree on the very name that should be given to the new science. Are we to speak of Hierology, or of Hierography? Are we to construct the History, or the Comparative History, of Religions?

V. Causes of the Uncertainties and Divergences in the Study of Religion

Now these differences of opinion afford no cause for astonishment. In all that touches upon documents, verification of the existence or relation of the facts which are to serve as basis for the science of religions, we cannot but observe that no other subject-matter offers such opportunities for vague and arbitrary hypothesis.
