

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### A NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA.

It has not been long since in Holy Russia, under the pressure of the materialistic movement, every one who raised any religious question was looked upon as being far behind in the march of civilization. And thus for the two last decades a large number of educated Russians held as an undisputed truth that "there is nothing in the world but matter, and materialistic scientists are its prophets." But everything fashionable, even scientific theories included, passes away, and people naturally fall back on what by trial centuries long has been proved solid, sound, and reliable. And so it is with religious views.

Many Russians, after a careful analysis, have come to a conclusion that, if there were no God and no religion, they ought to be invented. And indeed there are now some Russian scientists who are trying to find a basis to justify their belief in God. In the *Moscow Orthodox Review* for January, for instance, we find an interesting paper, in which Professor Solovieff, lecturing on Philosophy in the St. Petersburg University, expounds his views on the "Religious Basis of life." The Professor takes the following position: "There are," he says, "two desires akin to each other, and innate in the human soul, which elevate man above the rest of Nature. These are that of immortality and that of truth or moral perfection. But man, by himself, cannot save his life, and cannot reach moral perfection. In other words, he is doomed both to bodily and spiritual death."

Further on, taking up the elements of his cardinal position, the Professor logically comes to the conclusion that man is living, as it were, in the reign of death. He kills animals in order to preserve his own life, which, as he is aware, is ephemeral. He commits a kind of suicide in order to sustain his own species, which, however, is doomed to extinction. Men die and nations disappear. In some future age life will be extinct upon our globe, and our solitary system, like thousands of others, will dissolve into lifeless cosmic dust. "Striving for life," says Mr. Solovieff, "we die, and trying to comprehend life, we discover death everywhere. Our mind indorses death as a universal law." But the human heart revolts against such a fate, and man's conscience dictates to him another course of life which is not to be found in Nature. There is a supreme good, self-existing and independent of Nature and the human mind, and there is a mysterious relation between that good and the human soul.

"Without his own volition," says Mr. Solovieff, "man cannot believe in God. If we don't wish to believe, we will not believe. God is not an external thing, the existence of which we could not dispute. He is an internal truth, which we are bound morally to recognize. To believe in God is our moral duty. Man may not fulfil his moral duty; but then he loses his human dignity."

"To believe in God means to admit that the Good of which our conscience testifies, and which we find neither in Nature nor in our mind, exists by itself. Without that belief we ought to admit that the Good for which man longs above all things is but a dream, an illusion of human mind; that is, that it does not exist at all. But morally we cannot admit that; for to us, as moral beings, life itself has value only on account of our belief in real good, or good as a truth. We have to believe that that Good exists by itself, and that it is a perfect truth; that is, that we must believe in God."

After having recognized God as the first and the last reason of the moral world, the Professor clearly sets forth the moral precepts as to the relation of man to man, and of man to God, which are to determine a true religion.

Count Leo Tolstoi, the foremost of Russian novel writers of to-day, had lately created a great sensation by teaching and practising religion. To his explanatory remarks on the New Testament he explained fully his religious convictions. Unhappily the religious censor had destroyed his paper before it was published. It is known, however, that the Count holds that there can be no hope for man, nations and the world if religion is relinquished. What precisely are the Count's religious views is not generally known; but as far as private information shows, he seems to favour Protestantism. Instead of associating with the clergymen

of the Established Church of Russia, he is on friendly terms with the Raskolniks, who bow to the authority of the Bible rather than to that of the Holy Synod. Though a rich man, he leads a plain peasant's life. Being the best informed man of the so-called high life, he prefers the company of the unpolished, but earnest and sincere Raskolniks, who are wont to put in practice what they believe.

Under the influence of Leo Tolstoi and Vladimir Solovieff, not only students but even greyheaded men and women find it necessary to revise their convictions. Thus religious topics are now predominant, even in private circles. Russian clergymen, however, do not contribute much, if any to the new movement. In fact, the men and women moved by the example of the Count and of the Professor try to work out religious views for themselves, pondering over the Book. As to the official religious teachers, these, even at this favourable moment, serve rather to confuse minds than to clear them. Here is one striking example. Propagation of Spiritualism in Russia is rather of recent date. Among the Russian converts to Spiritualism there are some prominent professors, doctors, lawyers, writers, and so on, not counting hosts of the aristocratic ladies. In view of that fact many priests deemed it their duty to deliver some sermons on spiritualism. Naturally they dwell on the summoning of the soul of Samuel by the woman of Endor. Now, by what power did that woman bring up Samuel? One priest answered that, as the Divine Spirit could not be at the command of a witch, therefore she used the help of the Evil Spirit. Another priest said that Samuel's appearance was a miracle, performed by God's will. Still another preacher argued that Samuel was not brought up at all, and Saul's hallucinations were responsible for the story. In view of these diverse explanations the orthodox people are at loss what to think of the Spiritualists. Do they invoke spirits of the departed persons by God's will or by the Devil's, or do they deal merely with illusions and hallucinations? And yet that question ought to be answered: for the Spiritualists claim to be the strongest friends of the Christian, furnishing, as it were, tangible proofs of a future life and of the resurrection of the soul.

It may be expected that the new religious movement in Russia, being of an origin independent from the Church, will come in collision with the official clerical authorities; but laymen, longing for a true religion, will not give up the Bible even for the authority of the "Most Holy Governing Synod of Russia."

There are now in Russia two religious Protestant currents; the one below is of great force, counting fifteen million souls, and the other, above, is mighty in its independent religio-philosophic thought. The day is not distant when these two currents will unite in their course.—*Independent.*

### LIVING EPISTLES.

Do we remember as we should that we are in the world, as the representatives of our Master who has gone above, out of our sight, though present to our minds and keeping us, through all changes, ever in view. It is through us that a sinful world is to be brought to Him. The Gospel offer goes always to the individual soul, and is accepted or rejected by each person for himself.

Individuals, saved by grace, are privileged to carry it. We lean on our blessed Lord. In our sorrow, when the eyes are dim with tears, when the beloved of our lives is taken hence, we trust Him, and He comforts us. In our losses and troubles, when ease and wealth and social position are perhaps suddenly swept away, we trust Him, and He is more to us than all earthly possessions or pleasures. In our rose-tinted hours of joy and delight, when we arise to great heights, and our satisfied longings fill us with exultation, we trust Him, and He consecrates the joy. What is any experience worth to the Christian, if Christ do not make it?

There may be those who stand without, never having known the blessedness of being not their own, but wholly their Lord's, who marvel when Christians speak thus. Little do they dream of the divine strength which underlies all our weakness, of the unutterable peace which brims the cup of life, even when its drops are bitterest, of the beauty which hallows and irradiates life's lowliest days to those who keep close to the Lord.

Would that we could bring them in! Would that,

when they speak to us of this poor staff, and that poor rod, of earthly science, of culture, of amusement, or of worldly advantage, we could show them how much better it is to know the Lord, to talk with Immanuel, to be raised far above earthly vicissitudes, into the calm and the glory which proceed ever from the throne. If we were in love with our Master and in sympathy with Him, fully, constantly, would prayer-meetings be, as often they undeniably are, so dull that only a sense of duty drives reluctant feet to them? So dull and, alas! to many so profitless, that good men stay, practically, away from them, and, so far as numbers are concerned, they are mainly kept up by good women. A prayer-meeting should be as interesting as a primary. It should have as much attraction for a prayer-loving church as a concert or a popular entertainment. Yet it is vain to say that it has, in the face of the fact that ministers are always being obliged to urge church members to go to it, deprecating a very usual neglect, and that it is only in times of revival that a daily prayer-meeting can be sustained, in a single church.

Warmth, faith, genuine earnestness, and happy, triumphant love must first prevail in the individual heart, must then go from one heart to another, until the many are converted. Our dear Lord trusts us to show Himself to an unbelieving world. He speaks by us and through us, and thus are we living epistles, known and read of all men.—*Mrs. M. E. Sangster, in Christian Intelligencer.*

### "WHY DON'T THE PASTOR COME?"

The more faithful a pastor is, and the more fit by his very sensitiveness to be a good pastor, the more he is pained by the unnecessary complaints of his people. One form of his annoyance is the complaint of sick people that the pastor does not visit them. The invalid who is a member of a church ought to know that he has no friend in the world more ready to come to see him than the pastor. He ought to be the parishioner of a pastor of such a character as to be the most desirable man for the sick man to see; and yet through all the large churches people sicken, and sometimes recover, and then go sulking through the church six months, until at last it is discovered that the ground of their grumbling is that the pastor had not visited them when they were sick. It is this senseless demand of omniscience which is so intolerable.

This naturally brings up the question, whether the pastor ought to go to see sick people until he is sent for. What right has a whole congregation to suppose that the pastor knows of sickness when no human being ever presumed upon the physician's having that knowledge? It would be less unreasonable to make this latter supposition. A physician passing amongst the families in which he has patients might begin to suspect from some bodily appearance that sickness would shortly ensue, and might therefore be expected to go around in due time to see if the suspected person was really sick. Instead of that, it is the pastor, a man engaged in quite different studies, who is supposed to be able, from looking over his congregation on Sunday, to believe that Mr. A— will be sick on Monday, Mrs. B— will be ill on Tuesday, Mr. C— will sprain his ankle on Wednesday, Mrs. D's— child will have the measles on Thursday, and so on through the week. The physician whose business it is especially to look after sick folks, never goes till he is sent for, even if he knows there is sickness; but the minister is expected to come without being sent for, and to be able to tell that there is sickness without any information.

Perhaps each church needs three bishops; a pastor bishop, an evangelist bishop, and a teacher bishop—one to take care of those who are already enrolled in the church, to keep them toned up and drilled; another to go out, leading forth as many of the church as he can, to bring in those who are outside, heating up recruits and training them for the service; and a third to preach to those inside and outside the church, giving his whole time to that one work. As it is now, these three functions are expected to be discharged by one man. Whoever that man is, and however large his capabilities of discharging duties in these three departments, it is quite certain that he will excel in none. A man who devotes himself to personal care of hundreds of members of a church will have little time to go out among men of the world and endeavour to bring them into the Church of God. He who devotes his whole week to this latter employment can have little time to prepare for the pulpit; and he who does,