

and in this Epistle by St. John, would be exceptional in application to individuals, but most natural as a designation of Christian churches.

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ART. II.—LOISY'S SYNTHESIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

VI.

THE point I have been pressing in these papers is that the foundation-stone of Christianity, whether realized by the individual or asserting itself objectively by means of its peculiar institutions, is Jesus Christ as the actual manifestation of Deity on earth. For Loisy this is an ecclesiastical dogma, posthumous and adventitious. As I read history, it is the *raison d'être* of the religion. The most that the Church can do is to respond as adequately as is possible to the demand for an intellectual "setting" of a truth whose provinces are primarily the spirit and the heart.

I have dealt sufficiently with the evidence furnished by our canonical literature. It seems to me that even when we have eliminated the Fourth Gospel and palliated the arbitrary excisions in the Synoptic story desired by these high critics, the conduct and letters of the first teachers of Christianity offer an unassailable proof that Jesus had made the claims which lie at the foundation of our creeds. It is a natural sequence when the Acts presents, in connection with these claims, a story of the effusion of the Holy Spirit's power and His attestation to the labours of the first teachers. There is not a particle of evidence that this book, which stands or falls with the Third Gospel, is unhistorical. And I take it that the Christians, who in many cases incurred obloquy and risk by embracing the new creed, were at least as alive as we to the necessity of having a reasonably accurate account of their religion. The class of society which furnished the bulk of proselytes was not one addicted to mystic speculations, but rather one that asks for practical demonstration. It is incredible to me that under such conditions the Church should have launched out thus early in Haggada, and, supplementing a non-historical Jesus with a non-historical revelation of the Holy Spirit, evoked for its fictions the names of John the beloved disciple, and Luke the fellow-traveller of St. Paul. Loisy, however, I gather, accepts the historicity of the Acts, though disowning that of St. John's Gospel, and so far deviates from the critical lines of Harnack. For his early Church history, if not for his Christology, he accepts the

same documentary evidences as ourselves, and we are now in a field in which the argument can be pursued without deviating to meet repudiations of well-established literary evidences.

I endeavoured in my last paper to portray the ecclesiastical conditions presented in the Acts and in the Epistles. Certainly no reader who is unacquainted with later Church history would infer that this loosely-organized federation of Christian societies depicted in the New Testament had any idea that Peter was a permanent "prince des apôtres," still less that it was a part of the Christian faith that "a supreme head to the Church" was henceforth to be recognised in the Papal chair.

The Abbé gravely remarks: "No wonder this idea never perished in the Church." As a fact, there is not a sign of its existence. The sub-Apostolic times, however, contribute the solitary instance of Clement's intervention in the affairs of the troubled Corinthian Church. It is an episode which attests the predominance of Rome as the centre of Western Christendom. On the other hand, it is curiously adverse to the claims of the Roman Bishop as Peter's successor, for while the authority assumed in this Epistle is evidently personal (Clement having probably been a companion of the Apostles), it is, nevertheless, modestly veiled in the dignity of the whole Roman Christian community. The author writes in its name and nowhere asserts his own individuality. Rome itself is, in fact, here a witness, as Lightfoot shows, to the presbyteral organization of the first Churches. Loisy admits this, yet fails to see how this cuts at the root of the Petrine hegemony and its personal devolution to the Pope.<sup>1</sup>

The Acts and Epistles depict for us a scattered brotherhood, whose local Churches are connected by several bonds of common interest, but conspicuously by this startling doctrine—Christ the actual manifestation of God. It is unnecessary to confirm the Apostolic teaching on this point from the writings of the succeeding period. That in some way Christ had manifested the Divine attributes in His own human life was generally admitted, even by the teachers deemed heretical. The Arians as little denied this as the earlier Patripassians. The questions at issue throughout the various phases of controversy connected with this subject were: first, how to

<sup>1</sup> "L'Évang. et l'Égl.," pp. 142, 143. Loisy argues that *Rome's* supremacy is shown, and that it does not matter "que ce soit la communauté héritière de la tradition apostolique, non le successeur personnel de Pierre, qui semble avoir la parole." One is tempted to ask which was the "communauté héritière" in the years 1305-1376—the presbytery of Rome or the Papal Court at Avignon?

reconcile Christ's possession of a human nature with this incorporation of Divinity; secondly, how to maintain this doctrine of a Divinity personified in Jesus Christ without violation to that of the unity of the Godhead. The logical process by which these problems were solved is traced by Loisy, lucidly and incisively enough, in the fourth letter of "Autour d'un petit livre." But we search in vain for any answer to the questions "why?" and "by whom?" We are not told that the argument on the orthodox side was based on appeal to Scripture, there being a recognition of the fact that the Church could not "evolve" any definition that was not already latent in the primitive doctrinal teaching. Nor would a reader unacquainted with the subject suspect that in this process of "evolution" the Roman Bishops, so far from taking the lead, played a very subordinate part, and that the period proves plainly that the idea of submitting such problems to Rome as the Church's central authority was quite unknown. That they were decided by the common-sense of Christendom interpreting the authoritative teachings of the Apostolic age is of vital importance for my argument. A right understanding on this point is essential to anyone who wishes to pursue the tale of the imaginary "supreme head of the Church" continuously from Peter's death at Rome. It will be well, therefore, to present some historical illustrations of the actual relations of Roman Bishops to this Christological controversy.

"L'historien," Loisy well says, "doit résister à la tentation de moderniser l'idée du royaume."<sup>1</sup> But the Abbé's own synthesis reads into the Christianity of the first four centuries a theory of ecclesiasticism which we shall find to be an adventitious accretion, really owing its final success to such political accidents as the break-up of the Byzantine Empire and the rise of the new Empire of the West. It is strange enough that we do not find any indication of Peter's hegemony at Rome in the writings of the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times, nor any connection of the "idée du royaume" with a successor to the "prince des apôtres." But we should at least expect that by the time the conversion of the Empire is effected all Christendom must have realized this primitive principle. It is notorious, on the contrary, that Rome's predominance is as yet nothing more than what might be expected of the centre of empire and civilization, and the scene of two great Apostles' martyrdoms. In pre-Nicene times, with Emperors reigning at Rome, the Pope is the *doyen* of the Western Episcopate, and the centre of Imperial unity is naturally associated by Western

<sup>1</sup> "L'Évang. et l'Égl.," p. 56.

Bishops with their ideal of the unity of Christendom. When, however, the Roman Bishop makes this position a ground for any extension of authority, the most High-Church Bishops of the West themselves withstand his pretensions. Thus Irenæus severely rebukes the arrogance of Victor in excommunicating the Churches of Asia Minor and North Africa for their peculiar observance of Easter, although agreeing with him on the point disputed. On two occasions Cyprian himself, whose theory of ecclesiastical unity did so much to prepare the way for the future Papal autocracy, and who styles the Roman Church "*Petri cathedra, ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est,*" sturdily maintains the independence of his own Church against Pope Stephen's misguided interference.<sup>1</sup> "No one should make himself a Bishop of Bishops" is the maxim of this great ecclesiastic, who has so often been quoted on the Romanist side. Such were the limitations on Roman hegemony even in the West, while the Petrine legend was gaining ground, and Rome could assert her claim to be the central seat of empire.

But it is in the more vital issues of the Christological controversy that we best see how little the lines of orthodox Christianity have been determined by the guidance of Roman Bishops, or by any recognition of a supreme Pontiff "*tenant la place de l'apôtre Pierre.*"

It is incontestable that, so far from Rome authoritatively solving the problems which so long distracted Christendom, her episcopal representative seldom plays a very prominent part, and is on more than one occasion on the heterodox side. There is first Hippolytus' distinct reprobation of two occupants of Peter's chair (Zephyrinus and Callistus, A.D. 202-223) as fautors of the Patri passian heresy.<sup>2</sup> Whether the charge was well founded or not, it is instructive that Hippolytus is at least absolutely unconscious of the subordination of Christian orthodoxy to Roman guidance as an essential principle of the "*royaume des cieux.*" For him it is conceivable that two Popes are on the side of heresy. Then, we have the Arian question and the subordinate ramifications of the Christological problem. It is the period of evolution of dogmas which to this day may be regarded as the common bond of union between orthodox Christian communities. Why is not the course of this evolution directed by Rome? Why does not Christendom realize in this critical time what M. Loisy thinks the two Apostles themselves realized before their martyrdoms—that at Rome they had bequeathed "a master to Cæsar" and

<sup>1</sup> See Neander, "Church History," vol. i., p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> See Milman, "History of Latin Christianity," Bk. i., ch. i., p. 51 *et seq.*

“a supreme head to the Church”? At Nicæa “Cæsar” himself presides, and is hailed by admiring ecclesiastics as inspired and even on a level with the Apostles. The Bishop of Rome is summoned like any other Bishop. Being old and infirm, he sends two Presbyters to represent him, who receive no more respect than the other members of the Council. Constantine is succeeded by the Arian Emperor Constantius. Loisy’s “supreme head” is now found succumbing to the change of circumstances. The Bishop of Rome signs a semi-Arian creed and apologizes for having defended Athanasius. If we search for the recognised mouthpiece of Christian orthodox evolution, we are met with the strange spectacle of St. Hilary denouncing the heterodoxy of the Roman Bishop. “This is Arian faithlessness”; “Anathema I say to thee, Liberius, and to thy associates,” “Anathema to the prevaricator Liberius.”<sup>1</sup> In due course the second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, A.D. 381) carries on the work of orthodox evolution, and meets the heresy of Macedonius with the very important clauses in the Creed relating to the Holy Spirit. Rome is not even represented on this memorable occasion. This Council also shows how far we are as yet from Loisy’s ideal by its canons (afterwards confirmed at Chalcedon) prohibiting the heads of the great ecclesiastical centres from meddling outside their own provinces. The third Council (Ephesus, A.D. 431), which condemned the Nestorian Christology, was dominated entirely by Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria. At the fourth (Chalcedon, A.D. 451), Pope Leo’s “Tome,” explaining the two natures of Christ, is accepted; but this is not because he is Bishop of Rome, but because for once Rome has made a really valuable contribution to the solution of these intricate questions.

If we carried our gaze further afield we should find that in the Pelagian controversy, as in the Arian, Rome was actually on the heterodox side. Pope Zosimus (A.D. 417), so far from giving Christendom a lead in the right direction, strongly asserts the orthodoxy of the Pelagian Celestius, and is only brought to a right mind by an Imperial Edict expressing the views of Augustine and of the Carthaginian Bishops.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the real story of the period so hastily passed over by the Abbé Loisy. It is no answer to these facts to say, “Les papes du IV<sup>e</sup> et du V<sup>e</sup> siècle veulent être les juges en dernier ressort de toute la chrétienté.”<sup>3</sup> Individual Popes perhaps already cherished this aim. It certainly little

<sup>1</sup> See Salmon, “Infallibility of the Church,” p. 426 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See Milman, *op. cit.*, p. 158 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> “L’Év. et l’Égl.,” p. 148.

affected the actual course of doctrinal "evolution." There is no trace of any recognition of Rome's directive powers in the formation of orthodox theology. The Roman Patriarch erred as often as other Patriarchs. And if it is alleged that, nevertheless, Rome was throughout this period looked upon even in the East as the first of the Patriarchates, little investigation is needed to show that these *πρεσβεία τῆς τιμῆς* were purely honorary. They were as unsubstantial as those of the *doyen* of a corps of ambassadors to-day; or as those of a "premier Duke" or "Earl"; or as those of a "Father of the House of Commons." It was, indeed, the association with the ancient seat of empire,<sup>1</sup> quite as much as that with the memories of Peter and Paul, that lay behind the recognition of this dignity. With the transference of empire to Constantinople and the removal of the secular Western government to Ravenna, the Roman Bishops sometimes appear in a curious position of insignificance. The actual conditions are illustrated by the protest of that really great Pope, Gregory I., against the assumption by the Byzantine Patriarch of the title "Universal Bishop." There was indeed every likelihood that the centre of gravity of Christendom would finally lie at Constantinople. Who could have anticipated the rise of Mohammedanism, the overthrow of the great Churches of the South and East, the gradual decay of the Byzantine Empire, the revival of the Western Empire under Charlemagne, the subsequent gradual development of the great monarchies of Europe?

It was, as Milman says, the Koran and the iconoclasm of the Eastern Emperors that were "to deliver the Bishop of Rome from a distant and arbitrary master, and to relieve him from that harassing rivalry with which the Patriarch of Constantinople constantly renewed his pretensions to equality or to superiority." It is Charles Martel, not Constantine (still less Peter), who is the real founder of the recognised Papal autocracy. How little the idea of "giving a master to Cæsar" had been realized, even in the eighth century, is seen when we find Gregory III. (the Pope who secured the protection of Charles Martel from the Arian Lombards) not venturing to assume the pontificate after his election until it has been confirmed by the Imperial Exarch at Ravenna.

Gregory III. (A.D. 715) is the last Pope of the Byzantine obedience. From this point the story of the increase of Papal assumption may be pursued in Bryce's "Holy Roman

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<sup>1</sup> Canon XVIII. of Chalcedon gives this only as the ground of the *πρεσβεία*, and assigns to Constantinople co-equal authority. But this canon was "refused all validity in the West."—Milman, II., iv., p. 271.

Empire," or critically scanned by the aid of the Roman Catholic Janus. That the medieval autocracy served many useful purposes and often did much to rivet the hold of Christian principles on the barbarous nationalities of the West we all admit, but its growing inadequacy to advance the cause it ostensibly headed was realized long before the revival of letters showed it to be no part of the primitive Christian scheme. Its development of the characteristic vices of absolutism was inevitable. So, too, its appeal to false credentials—the donation of Constantine and the forged decretals—which such a keen critic as Loisy doubtless disowns. The Abbé, however, passes lightly over the period of "croissante corruption," merely telling us that the Churches were demoralized by wealth, etc., and the Papacy was too much absorbed in its peculiar imperial interests to reform matters.<sup>1</sup> The student who knows what Christianity was at Rome itself, and who has realized how, from the thirteenth century onward, a catena of wise and saintly men of undoubted orthodoxy denounced the Papacy as the centre of the recognised corruptions, and found in Papal Rome the Apocalyptic whore of Babylon, will scarcely accept this explanation of the dark ages. Loisy's "fait chrétien" itself decides for us this question. The "croissante corruption" was stayed, and such Popes as the notorieties of the eleventh or the fifteenth centuries are to-day impossible. Why? Not primarily on account of any action from the long-denounced Papal system, but because of the evolution of Protestantism, the world's renewed realization of individual responsibility to the Divine Christ, and the pressure on Rome of rival communions of higher moral ideals. The Jesuit counter-reformation, described by Ranke, was ethically a mere treading in the steps of Reformers who had disowned Rome. To this day, it may be added, the highest Christian civilization is to be found in non-Roman countries. In many instances still the "fait chrétien" really presents the lands of ecclesiastical obedience slowly accommodating themselves to ideals of justice, truthfulness, humanity, which have been long made the conditions of public life and Christian civilization elsewhere.

Such is the real object-lesson of this Christian "evolution." Our own neo-Anglicans have attempted the task of finding the acmé of ecclesiastical development in the Dark Ages, and from the fourteenth century onward profess to see a protracted period of confusion or retrogression. Loisy, at least, does not read history backwards in this way. But it is scarcely less absurd to conceive with him of the modern

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<sup>1</sup> "L'Év. et l'Égl.," p. 153.

Papacy—in its curialism, its ignorance of letters, its hostility to science, its failure to lead the way in any cause ethically or intellectually beneficial to Christendom—as the crown and flower of Christian “evolution.” We all recognise the saintly lives of individual Romanists. We doubtless acknowledge the utility of many adjuncts of the Roman ecclesiasticism, for purposes of organization and corporate life. None the less, Loisy has invoked a principle which is simply incompatible with the theory of the Papacy. So far as evolution is recognised by a Christian apologist and applied to the illustration of the “fait chrétien,” he can only proceed by making ecclesiasticism a secondary matter, and keeping the peculiarities of Roman Christianity mostly out of sight.

These articles are intended for members of the Church of England. Ours is a Christianity which can trace its continuous life to a time when Papal supremacy was unknown. Our Church has its roots in that ancient British Church which was important enough to send three episcopal representatives to the Council of Arles in A.D. 314. At the Reformation we resumed an independence, which had been sacrificed with doubtful permanent advantage at the Council of Whitby in A.D. 664. The final merging of the Christianity of Aidan and Colman in that which was connected with Gregory’s mission to the heathen Anglo-Saxons must never blind us to the pre-existence of a continuous corporate Christian life of which our national Church is still the representative. To what extent those religious bodies whose history is not, as ours, one of growth and adaptation, but rather one of rupture and abrupt dis severance from the past, can enjoy the full advantages of the Christian federate life presented in the New Testament, I need not stay to inquire. But for ourselves, and for all Churches that can claim this continuity, the ecclesiastical ideal in its true proportions may be as inspiring as in the Roman communion itself. Its relations to the central Gospel principle and its necessary limitations have been sufficiently dealt with. Loisy’s synthesis may do us good in enabling us to realize the capacity which the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, with this glorious pedigree, still has for real development by adaptation to enlarging science and new conditions of civilization. We may contrast with such advance the many unnatural and unedifying accretions of doctrine which the Abbé presents as results of Christian “evolution.” These espalier growths of a medieval ecclesiasticism, pruned and pent in under Papal guidance, are portrayed and vindicated in Loisy’s chapters on “*Le dogme chrétien*” and “*Le culte chrétien*.” As feats of dialectical skill these chapters are admirable, and not unfrequently they



remind us of Newman's "Apologia." Our sceptical critic of the Gospels, who has so little confidence in the first age of Christianity, here gravely defends the theological vagaries of a benighted period that knew only Latin literature, and accepted the false decretals as speaking the mind of primitive Christianity. By distinguishing the "interprétation authentique" from the "représentation historique" Loisy also squares his own position with the decrees of Trent, tacitly claiming a liberty of criticism which the Tridentine Fathers expressly anathematized. One turns from this clever tour de force with the consciousness that the Abbé is at heart as weary as his admiring critics *Voces Catholicæ* of "the mouldy biscuit of medieval speculation," but has not that independence of position which can frankly admit the hopelessness of the case. Rome itself, however, has recognised that this abnormal line of defence will scarcely serve her interests. The Abbé has, since I began these papers, made due submission to her authority. Nor, on the whole, can I regard him as a martyr of science, realizing in his own person how the system of personal autocracy can lead "*à de graves inconvénients—oppression des individus, obstacle au mouvement scientifique,*" etc.<sup>1</sup> But on this point my readers may be left to their own conclusions.

The impression left on my own mind by a close study of this literature is one of gratitude that the Christianity of our own more favoured communion has shaken off the incubus of ecclesiastical infallibility, and that the mistakes of former ages demand not of us such disingenuous methods of defence. This qualified scholar and skilful dialectician has confronted a dilemma that really faces every educated Roman Catholic, only to be disowned at Rome. Nor is there the remotest chance of the Papacy—whether by joining hands with the destructive critics in disparagement of the New Testament books or by other methods—finding a means of reconciling the results of modern scholarship with a dogma which was recognised as unsubstantial three and a half centuries ago. We may turn thankfully from the Loisy episode to the free atmosphere of our own communion. We may again realize our obligation to those reforming divines who, so far from claiming infallibility for the Church, have insisted on the Anglican clergyman's admission that "General Councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God."<sup>2</sup> The Divinity of Christ is accepted by us, not on the authority of Councils (valuable as they are as historical witnesses), but because of its consistency with primitive

<sup>1</sup> "L'Év. et l'Égl.," p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Articles of Religion, xxi.

inspired teachings, and because of the common consent of Christendom that it is the most adequate explanation of the power of the Gospel on the human heart. On the same grounds we accept the elaborate definitions included in the Nicene Creed and the Quicunque Vult. Not a word in these formularies has not gone through a fiery trial of searching criticism in respect to primitive credentials. Nor is it probable, despite all that God is teaching us to-day by the agency of science, that on this central subject we shall ever attain a fuller knowledge. But, outside this sacred province, in our definitions of miracle and inspiration, in our conception of the relations of the human soul to God, and (yet more obviously) in the adjustment of the Christian organization to the real needs of modern society—the principle travestied by Loisy is continually operative. The “evolution” of which we have heard so much is indeed discernible in the larger apprehension by man of truths themselves unchanging. But its governing factor is not the ukase of any ecclesiastical authority, however centralized. Rather is it our individual realization of a Divine Providence which directs the progress of all human intellectual acquisitions, and our own accommodation of these to the teachings of a spiritual faculty assured of the Saviour’s continual presence. May our own Church continue to produce men endowed with sufficient wisdom to distinguish its limitations and to harmonize “things new and old.”

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### ART. III.—THE SECOND ADVENT AND THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY.

THE circumstances of our Lord’s first coming serve as a signal warning to the Christian Church of to-day. Jerusalem knew not “the time of its visitation.” It was unprepared for the suddenness of Christ’s appearing, and for the manner in which He came. But it is clear from the New Testament narrative that there was a remnant of believers who were ready for Him, and had reason to anticipate His manifestation. St. Luke’s expression, “all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem,” indicates the existence of such a body. Simeon and Anna are mentioned as examples, and the parents of the Baptist shared the same simple-hearted faith. The Baptist’s mission, in preparing the way of the Lord, affords further evidence. Its importance, to which such