

## A STUDY IN HENO-CHRISTIANITY.

“The One in the many.” “The many in the One.”

How endless is the controversy which these phrases suggest, from the early days of Eleatic philosophers down to the right and left of the Hegelian schools! I do not propose to trace it in the history of metaphysic, nor do I suggest even that a little common sense might settle the age-long babble, if its representatives could have been persuaded to sit for a few hours at the same “round table.” It has an application to Theology and to Christology which does require attention. Comparative Theology has made the question a burning one, when it styles certain forms of what some describe as monotheism as nothing better than flat and flagrant Polytheism, while others endeavour to mend matters by calling the same mental and religious stage by the name of Henotheism. India and Egypt, Asia-Minor and even Palestine have grasped at a unity of force behind varying names and changeful manifestations of the Deity which has justified co-religionists in claiming for some one element of their Pantheon the supremacy which others have assigned to another.

Thus the “*Sivas*” of India, in their endless modifications, have claimed for *Siva*—the destructive and disintegrating element in the universe—the majesty of the One Supreme Deity. Nor has this prevented others, say *Vaishnavas*, from cherishing the same immense, transcending, overwhelming majesty for *Vishnu*, before whose glory and beneficence all other existences, human or Divine, shrinks

away like a mote in the sunbeam. Numerous illustrations of the same fact of experience come to us from the land of the Vedas. Very similar phenomena may be asserted of the gods many and lords many of the Assyrian and the Semite. The worshipper again of Ra, Amun, Tôth, Phtah, Kneph, Osiris, may have often been in mystery or nescience as to which of the divine elements filled his imagination or religious sense, when he blended several into some one function of reverence and dealt with *it* as supreme, not denying to other worshippers in the sacred land of Nile a similar privilege. To the stern monotheist, for whom there can be one and one only God and all beside are nihilities, to him the plurality cannot abide in the Unity, nor the many in the One, nor the One in the many. Jehovah, the "*I am that I am,*" cannot share His eternal throne in the estimate of His worshippers with any supreme Baal (master or Lord of Nature), any Molech (king, overlord of spirits or bodies), yet doubtless Baal and Molech had those who attributed supremacy and absolute Deity to themselves. Theism tends to plurality when its generalizations are hasty or insufficient and are coloured by local influences or tribal peculiarities, or when the emotion of worship is swayed merely by venerable tradition, special circumstance, or personal equation.

Henotheism is hardly possible until philosophy has bestowed or breathed over some hoary superstition a new and foreign catholicity, and taught a variety of worshippers something of the equal rights of men to think from the centre of their consciousness outwards. The more we ponder and exercise the sense of God which belongs to us, the more unique does it become. There cannot be in the nature of words, and in their relation to thought, more than one absolute. The same one and eternal substance may be robed in many attributes, but it is identical wherever it comes within the range of cognition. A strenuous

realization of the aloneness and fulness and sufficiency of the only God can alone satisfy the conditions of the problem of theism. A half-instructed thinker may say that Brahminism is the best form of religion among Hindu Aryans, Mohammedanism the simplest form of it for the Arab, and may imagine that Christian Theism is the truth for the West; but any deeper insight into the complex phenomena reveals the superficial character of such hasty generalization. There is but one God, or no God. Truth is one or it is inaccessible. Eternal Righteousness cannot break itself into fragments, or adapt itself to the various conceits or predilections of men. The solidarity of men is ever forging its way out of the delusion that degrees of longitude can divide eternal right from absolute wrong.

He who is master of all must be the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He is above all and within all. True it is that the myriad-coloured bow may refract the infinite fulness of the one undivided beam. The red and violet ray must equally proceed from the white one. They are conditions of each other, and they with all their congenital glories are equally conditioned by that of which they are only the partial manifestation. It is conceivable that one man might argue that "*red*" is the one radiance in which he can see, and is the only and supreme mystery of light. But another might use equivalent language about the "*violet*," and so on through all the gamut of colour; but they would be each one in melancholy illusion, and have need to learn the first principles upon which the entire mystery turns.

I am not intending to press the matter into the regions of the philosophy of religion generally, but to call attention to an aspect of Christology or Christianity upon which the absolute One, in its multiplicity of partially appreciated forms, throws needed illumination. The various and variegated forms of Christianity are at times puzzling and

bewildering, both when we look down the ages of Christianity or cast our glances through the various provinces of Christendom. The fundamental conception of the one Christ seems hopelessly divided, and it may be lost to the view of those who profess and call themselves Christians. So far from being led by partial vision into unity of faith, or the bond of peace, or even from aiming at the same reality and ideal of righteousness, they differ as the scattered rays of the sunbeam do in the expanded spectrum of the laboratory. A question arises whether the several methods of appreciating the one Christ should be allowed to be for each the sufficient and adequate presentation of the sublime reality; or whether its advocates should be pressed to forsake their own essentially limited and one-sided grasp of the supreme glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In apostolic times some entertained so high an estimate of the *Heavenly* Christ, that they had the audacity, even in the Christian assembly, to say that *Jesus* was "accursed," and believe that they were doing God service. They encountered the fierce condemnation of the Apostle Paul, who grasped with supernatural energy the Unity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and burst out with the tremendous counterblast: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed (anathema)." Complacent Henotheism, which tried to be content with half-truths and treat them as the whole, never justified itself to the Apostle. "Is Christ Divided?" was his indignant repudiation of a spurious catholicity. If we are to comprehend the height, depth, length, and breadth of the Christ and His love, we have to do it *with all saints*. Doubtless there are some who are so impressed with the infinite uplifting of the glory of that "name above every name," which is transferred to the Incarnate God, that this aspect of the blessed One seems to be the whole that is knowable and the all of the Christ. One "saint" has been so deeply overawed by the *breadth* of the love of

Christ—His love to every creature, to every nationality, to every idiosyncrasy, to men of every antecedent, “to the uttermost,” to all that come—that he will have no other Christ. Contemplation of the “*height*” is supposed by him to suggest sentimentality and enthusiasm; contemplation of the “*depth*” to savour of useless theology or worrying metaphysic, while deep pondering of the “*length*” involves the measures of eternity—the yesterday and tomorrow and for ever from which some in these days recoil with weariness and disgust. To each of these four saints, Henotheists or Heno-Christists, Paul makes brave appeal, and he desires something for each of them. He would have them each comprehend with ALL saints the height, depth, length, as well as breadth of that which surpasses knowledge.

The idea of St. Paul needs further attention, and will suffer fresh illustration.

We must admit that every element of the glory of Christ is so absolute, so perfect in itself, so absorbing, so engrossing, so beneficent, that if it beams or glances on the soul, it conveys the impression—which may turn out to be no other than an illusion—that it is the *whole* revelation, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. This illusion may throw some light upon the intense divergencies of Christian experience, the strange contrarieties of Christian practice, the antagonisms of Christian conduct, and when regarded from a higher point of view may be itself interpreted as a part of an undivided whole, one element only of a Unity which threatened to monopolize and disparage every other. In illustration of this, let us ponder a few of these partial estimates of the one Christ, which in the first instance issued like a beam of heavenly light from the face of Jesus Christ, and has seemed to the worshipper as nothing less than the whole of His glory.

## I.

## ANCIENT AND MODERN ASCETICISM.

Who can fail to be arrested by the words of Jesus which call upon His followers to bear His cross, to endure its shame, to take the cross daily, to hate and break every bond of personal affection, to refuse to physical desires the most elementary solace of food and water and clothing, to cast self away absolutely and finally, to bear cruel injury, and in lieu of self-assertion provide fresh provocation to insult, to ignore "to-morrow," to be absorbed with heavenly contemplations, to love enemies and bless persecutors, to ignore health and even to court absolute poverty, to sell all and give to the poor even "great possessions"; to anticipate torture, imprisonment, malignity, cruel and early martyrdom with imperturbable calm and radiant smile? Doubtless this kind of highest life secured the approval of Eastern asceticism, of Essenic self-annihilation and Stoical superiority to suffering, strong emotion or death. Philosophical speculations were ready to accept this ideal and to justify the dictates of the Prophet of Nazareth. There has been enough in the turbulent flesh of man, in the way of the world, in the imminence of death, in the fear of the future, in the immensity of the contrast between "the light affliction that is for a moment," and the terrors of eternity; between the world as it is, and the torments of hell, to develop this teaching into all the anxieties and combinations of Eastern monachism and pillar-sainthood, into the raptures and flagellations of the monks of the Thebaïd, into the self-abolition of the Benedictine and the rule of St. Augustine, into all the astounding feats of Cistercian and Franciscan, Carmelite and Jesuit. The intense earnestness with which "the religious life" has been pursued confounds the Epicureanism of contemporary Christianity and has

made in its long history numberless inroads and victories on the complacency and smug comforts, to say nothing of the extravagant luxuries of the Church. There is a side and aspect of Christ's own teaching which may apparently justify the extremity of self-humiliation, self-mutilation, and self-abolition. Doubtless the very ideal of the Carmelite may be a faint adumbration of the mystic self-abandoned Holiest One whose meat it was to do the heavenly will, who spent whole nights in prayer, who refused in extreme agony the narcotic wormwood and gall, who blessed His betrayers and murderers, who denied Himself absolutely for the saving and peace of the publican and sinner. The enormous place which this form of the divine and religious life has assumed in the aggregate of Christendom staggers the self-complacency and self-gratification of the major part of the living Church. Were they right who glorified the hectic flush on the emaciated cheek as the genuine image and only sufficient mirror of the blessed life? Is the Christ the Man of Sorrows? and is there nothing more to say concerning Him? and must the life of the Lord as lived among men and within man be an unswerving acceptance of such ideal? Is this the Christ, and is there no other? Is there no Saviour, no Healer, no Comrade or Brother of all, no Vanquisher of Hell, no Master or King of men, no Lamb in the midst of the throne? The Heno-Christian hypothesis claims the ascetic Christ as the supreme, the one, the only Christ for its school, the one Christ to preach, or to defend, the one power to subdue the world with, the veritable Christ who is alone worthy of the name. When one follows the history of what the ascetic, monastic, self-crucified Man has done for the world, what temples He has built of lonely abnegation and of gorgeous splendour, what tremendous tasks He has set Himself to do, what deeds of surpassing valour and heroic martyrdom He has achieved, we do not wonder that whole generations

of Christians have passed away with no further idea of the one Christ than that of the archetypal Monk.

But while this has been the case, yet almost *pari passu* with it we have observed the intense activity of those saints who have sought with absorbing eagerness to realize the depth and height of His real Being, who have endeavoured to sound intellectually the nature and fulness of the Deity that was manifested in the Incarnate Word, and we have been compelled to watch through fifteen hundred years and more the rapturous and daring struggle to reduce it to the form of human thought.

## II.

### THEOLOGICAL ORTHODOXY.

Not only great thinkers of East and West have laboured at this colossal task, influenced by the philosophical systems dominant in Asia Minor, Alexandria, and Rome, but vast populations have been sensibly moved—before and since the great rent between Latin and Greek thought, before and since the signal severance of hearts in the ecclesiastic revolutions of the sixteenth century—to have and to hold the truth about Him, who is the Head over all things and the King of Glory. The words spoken by the Lord and His apostles are, and have always been, the sources and stimuli of this imperious discipline of the human understanding. He said things of such tremendous import about Himself, about His relation to the Father, concerning His relation to men, His power to save, His authority to exercise judgment and to extend mercy, that the conviction took magic hold of Greek and Jew, Oriental and Roman, that whatever they meant by the terms GOD, ALMIGHTY, and ETERNAL, they felt to be recapitulated in Him, and yet that there could only be one God in the depth of His being. Consequently how to adjust this overwhelming thought with



this genuine humanity, became a problem which must be propounded, if not solved. To a large extent the effort to state this synthesis arose out of the one-sided and hasty philosophical solutions which were set forth eagerly by acute and often well-meaning men. The Church and conscience of Christendom often, with equal passion, haste, and condemnation, repudiated the successive solutions that had been offered. The phrases used were intended to safeguard and to state a few fundamental facts concerning the nature and fulness of God, and the participation in that very nature and fulness of Him who was the Christ of God, and at the same time to put into verbal form coincident belief in the perfect and complete humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Supposed accuracy of *idea* assumed a towering importance. If any trifled with a solitary word which had received the sanction of the Christian CHURCH or Christian consciousness, it was mortal sin. The moral and disciplinary side of Christ's teaching was treated as of less essential value than a knowledge of what He was in Himself. The Nestorian and Monophysite solutions of the problem offer a striking illustration of the peril of intruding mere metaphysical hypotheses into the realm of definitely accepted facts, the uselessness of so-called explanations of the Incarnation or the Person of the Living Lord. Those who held to the fundamental pre-credal facts out of which the age-long speculations emerged felt convinced that Nestorians had divided Christ into two, a human and Divine Being, and that the vinculum between the two was so elastic as to lose all hold upon thought and to fail in the great extremity, evaporating, as it often does still, into a superficial Unitarianism which loses all hold upon the Incarnation. While on the other hand, the Monophysite hypothesis led virtually to an admission of a polytheistic *tertium quid*, neither God nor man, not Divine enough to save, nor human enough either to sympathise with man, or to understand the

extremity of human need, sorrow, or peril. "Orthodoxy,"—whether Nestorian or Monophysite,—still more Catholic Orthodoxy as the conclusive deliverance of a majority, which rejected both hypotheses, was on all sides alike treated as the highest and best and the most essential feature of Christianity itself. Neither asceticism was supposed to wipe out the stain of blasphemous division of the Christ, nor would good works nor saintly life atone for a Pantheistic hypothesis or the polytheistic creation of a new Divinity, who was after all neither Son of God in His fulness, nor Son of Man in His claim to heal, to guide, or to save.

Similar intensity of conviction as to the indispensable value of ideas, which were put openly, furtively, and sometimes unconsciously, into the place of absolutely accredited facts of Divine manifestation, prevailed throughout the scholastic period, throughout the struggles of the Reformation, of the Catholic Reaction, of the Puritan, Anglican, and Evangelical Revivals of later centuries. All sections of the Church have been bewildered by the sacro-sanctity of partially apprehended words, and have yielded the most abject deference to verbal terms as though they were things indubitable, essential, and indispensable to the reality of Christianity. We are far from underestimating the importance of these intellectual struggles. We are so made that we cannot avoid thinking out problems that arise in these regions of meditation, pushing them to their consummation, sometimes to their bitter end. The religious element of our common nature continually supplies pabulum to our reason, and thesis can only exist in the presence of anti-thesis. The passion of penitence, the inward yearning after the unseen and the eternal, and the desire for communion and reconciliation with the Highest, falls back with pathetic constancy on the attempt to define the undefinable. The definition becomes the veil of the most holy

*adytum* and *sacra* of the faith. In the face of this absorbing conviction, this reverence for the function of reason, it is impossible not to trace a forecast of an ultimate triumph of the Catholic understanding of the human race on these and other departments of its faith in the unseen and eternal. Nevertheless, the whole history of dogma, *per se*, is a species of Heno-Christism, substituting a beam from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ for the full-orbed majesty of the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. Its eager advocates, whether Catholic or Puritan, are supposed to be at a sorry discount, while to their self-consciousness they are heirs of the greatest inheritance, seers of the beatific vision. It may be a victory of Christ when the dogmatist finds that there is much which he needs to learn.

### III.

#### THE ETHICAL AND HUMAN ASPECTS OF THE CHRIST.

At many epochs in the history of Christianity, in the literature of Europe, and in the practical religious life of the Church, the teaching of a most vigorous section of society has treated the service of MAN as positive antithesis to the worship of God. The Brotherhood of man (apart even from the Fatherhood of God), the equality of man in the eye of the law, the interchange of charity, the substitution of activity (irrespective of motive) for faith or inward righteousness, is made identical with Christianity; while self-sacrifice for the good of the whole, "the enthusiasm of humanity," is openly declared, even now, to be the religion of Jesus. The effect of the new and higher standard of life is said to be the end of all religious experience. Let him be Mohammedan or Romanist, Quaker or Seventh-day Baptist, Jesuit or Socinian, if he succours the wretched and tends the dying body—and apparently ignores his faith, if he will only keep silence about the supra-phenomenal realities, not obtrude his metaphysics nor suggest

that there is any underlying and universal mystery behind the activity or example of "the Carpenter of Nazareth," or any significance in His death beyond the debt of nature, he is for many Neo-Christians the true and only possible Christian. The waves of the vibrations, made by the introduction of this great altruistic propaganda, derived, as we admit from the mighty word and work of the Divine Lord, have lapped round the bulwarks of all our organizations, and the issue is for the present far more conspicuous than many who have come under the fashion or the spell of it readily admit. We see it in our literature, our fiction, our social compacts, our new ritual of flowers and music, of magic lanterns and concerts in lieu of Holy Communion and importunate prayer. We discern the signs of it in the perpetual iteration of the purely *human* aspects of the gospel, in ominous silence about sin or forgiveness or judgment or mercy, great insistence upon the material, the hygienic, the philanthropic tones of the message of the Master, and a dead hush about the world to come, or the day for which all other days were made. This is only Heno-Christianity, a one-sided acceptance of a part for the whole, a prophesying but in part, a foretaste or a forecast, it may be, of that universal victory of the new man over the old man, when the true dogmatic shall establish itself in the highest regions of intellect, and universal love will emerge from the unclouded light. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away!

#### IV.

#### RELIGIOSITY,

#### *As Evinced in the Crusading Heno-Christism.*

Could there have been any solitary ray of the Divine spectrum in that astounding movement which precipitated a considerable proportion of the populations of the West of

Europe upon the Eastern Empire, and the sacred places of the patriarchal and Christian faith? When we trace some of the forces which produced it, we are astounded at the terrible mixture of motive, the blending of its abnormal religiosity with almost unmentionable depravity, its frenzied excitement of religious and quasi-Christian emotion with selfish greed, murderous passion, and fiendish slaughter. We almost hesitate to admit any, even the most attenuated and perverted element or thread of Christianity in the movement as a whole.

Still, when we remember the passion for pilgrimage, the yearnings of millions of so-called Christians to kneel and pray where the body of the Lord lay in the tomb, when we recall the lofty faith and fervent devotion of such saints as Urban, such mighty potentates as Innocent III., of such teachers and prophetic spirits as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, such martyr-like consecration as that of St. Louis, King of France; when we recall the hold which the absorbing idea had upon the free spirit and daring heroism and independence of Frederick II., we recognise the fact that it represented for nearly two hundred years the most thrilling conviction of Western Christendom in the fact of the historic reality of a veritable incarnation of the Eternal God, in what was therefore thought of as holy land and holy place; we recognise the fact that hundreds of thousands submitted to untold privation and bitter death with the bare hope of pressing with their own feet the places hallowed by the bleeding feet of the God-man, even though the very same men who came to this awful, weird function, came, as Godfrey, the hero of the first crusade, through incredible slaughter and inexplicable cruelty towards his conquered foes, to indulge in this tremendous luxury of religious emotion. Though every conceivable act of folly and greed, treachery and cruelty had stained the course of their progress, there is no explanation of the tremendous force which goaded the remnant forward to their

goal, but a supra-natural conviction in the most stupendous event that had, as they believed, occurred in the history of the world. The indiscipline of even cultivated intelligence so perverted the one truth that it was able to obliterate and supersede all moral distinctions, and, by its omnipotent energy, expiate and absolve all sin. The annals of Buddhism and of Islam are replete with wonderful stories of heroism in pilgrimage to the sacred places of their faith, and reveal the grip which these brethren of ours have submitted to when the powers of the Unseen fell upon them. Both Buddhist pilgrimage and Persian passion-plays have displayed many of the like emotions, to say nothing of the Hindu festivals of multitudes hungry for the solution of the mystery of life, or Japanese yearning after what Amitabha-Buddha could do for them; yet there is an explicitness, intensity, and violence of contrast between the aims and plans of the crusading armies which transcends any other analogous process in the history of religion.

The corruption of the best and noblest form of transcendental conviction may, if you will, reveal the worst aspects of human delusion; but it is another proof that let human nature grasp one truth, or deeply feel one beam from the supernal light, it is all but irresistibly impelled to believe, as crusading Europe did, that this one idea and method of religious observance was the whole of the Christian revelation, the supreme and final claim made at the time by the Divine will upon human obedience. This is only one of a group of corresponding phenomena which I have ventured to call Heno-Christism. Consider—

## V.

### THE CRUSHING SENSE OF UNPARDONED SIN.

Here I must put into relation with one another many thrilling moments in the history of mankind. Some of

these phenomena may be seen in Oriental religions, in Greek mysteries, in Egyptian purifications, and certain fearful lookings for of eternal judgment and retribution, and they show the resistless force and even excruciating anguish with which men in every age have waked up to the sense of estrangement from, and irreconcilable enmity to, God, to the absolute Lord of all. We must admit that there have been periods of reaction and of indifference and of materialistic pause in the great agony, but we can never be sure that any day will pass when the emotion of unforgiven sin may not sweep the world, as when the flagellants howled their piteous cry for mercy to the impassive and unbending laws of nature, and to the irresistible Power of life and death. The overwhelming sense of collision with God throws light upon the self-immolation of the *fakir*, and the austerities of the mediæval monk ; but we see the signs of it in the efforts of Luther to free himself from the burden of his sin, and in the entire career of Bunyan's Puritan Christian under the beetling brow of Sinai, and in the valley of the shadow of death. At the present hour there are countless sufferers from the intolerable load of unavailing grief, who, though they see some glimmering of hope, regard their experience as the most essential and indispensable form of the Divine life at its commencement, and preach a resemblance to their bitter trouble as the one way to the peace or hope of the gospel. They have seen the lightning gleam glancing from the cloud of the Divine wrath against sin. They have apprehended the terrible significance of the words of Jesus, and of the cross where He, the Incarnate God, gave Himself up as the Ransom, the Sacrifice for sin, and the Lamb of God ; and this one thought dominates every other, and this, as in many celebrated revivals, is regarded not only as truth, but practically as the whole truth, as not only the Christ, but the only Christ for sinful men, and all that is to be known of the

height and depth, the length and breadth of the love and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Like the ethical or the ascetic, the philanthropic or dogmatic Christian, these troubled ones in unappeased fear of the Almighty know but in part and prophesy but in part.

Several of these peculiar phases of Heno-Christianity are intensified by the strange and overboding sense of man's life after death, which has continued to overcast his life that now is. Scientific discovery has not given one atom of relief to his foreboding. It has decupled our physical comforts, our locomotion, our embargo upon nature, our facilities of action, but has left us with a sense of pitiful unrest, and we are plunging in a deeper and more fathomless abyss of unsatisfied speculation. The niceties of mediæval notions of the incidence of retribution for every species of moral defect or undisciplined habit, and the specified anguish befalling the casual lapse or the momentary assault of irresistible temptation, are terribly portrayed by the pen of Dante. In the *Divine Comedy* there is the crystallization in burning gems of the emotions of mediæval theologians. But the realistic imagination of Bunyan, the theological outlook of the New England divines, the scientific dreams of Swedenborg, the current vivid realization of the Roman purgatory and hell, are as ready for an outburst to-day as during "the Black Death." No philosophy, nor science, nor *laissez faire*, can extinguish the smouldering fire of this most imposing supply and occasion of religious excitement and Christian experience. In innumerable minds and hearts and groups of sensitive spirits such a realization of the unseen and eternal is thought of as the cardinal and central idea of Christianity. Nor is the peculiarity lessened by the endeavour of the more robust to lessen the unrest and pain by the assurance that we commence the eternal life in the conscious knowledge of the only true God, and that there is no deeper hell than the



alienation of the heart from God, and than in absorption in its own self-satisfaction. For who can forget that the grim precipice of death, on the ledges of which we are clinging from the fear of what may follow is not reduced by a hair-breadth? A stupendous change haunts us still to be grappled with, let the rose-water moralists say what they list. This pungent atmosphere of the soul survives every attempt to disperse it, and it contains within itself all the *Summa Theologiæ* of Aquinas, all the *Commedia* of Dante, all the revival fires of the Puritanic conscience of Milton, or the ordered imagination of either Böhme or Wesley or Hervey or Whitfield. Entertainments and picnics, and days of sea air or mountain glory, and all the abundant charity of the modern Zeit-Geist, cannot quench the sense of the infinite which surges in every bosom. To call it a Heno-Christianity does not palliate nor explain its overweening potency. Nevertheless, even the sense of unforgiven sin and absolute guilt, and the certainty of an eternity for its development, is not the whole of the Christian idea, and they lead us to—

## VI.

## THE METHODS AND SEAL OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

There are two chief divisions of this solution of a problem of measureless significance. To use the now time-honoured terms, there is the objective and subjective—the *objective* the largely material, humanly administered, sacramentally manipulated solace to the bruised and throbbing heart, some objective definite thing which requires to be done, touched, eaten, drunk, under the spell of words uttered on rightly constituted authority by men of a certain guild. This holds the field from the mountains of Armenia to the Pacific seaboard of America, from the Kremlin to the Western Indies, from the intoxicating atmosphere of the Vatican to the London drawing-room or

the numerous shadows of the English village. Perhaps no amount of Biblical exegesis, or hard-faced theology or strong-fisted logic, no heraldic proclamation of the sovereignty of common sense, will for the present break the spell which tradition and speculation, fashion and intense human need have woven. The veil of the covering is more or less cast over all nations; and splendid deeds of self-sacrifice and martyrdom have been wrought by those who have persuaded themselves that their hands are necessary or relatively indispensable to the communication of the Divine assurance of pardon and eternal life. The mystery of this human self-sufficiency casts a perilous glamour over the other elements of the faith or obedience of Christ, and often betrays its unreal origin by confounding this one element of the gospel with the essence if not with the whole of it. This commanding importance given to an accident renders the entire representation of the sacramental and sacerdotal theory as purely *Heno-Christian*. Moreover it is not truly Catholic, it is one part only of a reality which needs its antithesis and its true complement to have any rational meaning. And there is the other—the *subjective*—method of receiving the heavenly solace, which after all is the only satisfactory explanation of the sacramental hypothesis, and is in fact superior to and independent of the human channel, or of any material charm by which Divine grace is mediated to the soul. The subjective method turns on the thought of the indwelling, the immanence, the inworking of the Divine in all the forces of nature, in all laws of mind and heart, and that all the broken heart needs is that attitude towards God which we call “faith!” This subjective condition is all-sufficient for “the power which worketh in us” to bring us into full submission to the awful righteousness, the infinite love, the absolute goodness of the Living Father as revealed in the sacrifice of the incarnate Word. This subjective method

and seal of redemption and of deliverance affects all that the most exalted and dignified Priest essays to accomplish. The light breaks, the peace that passes all understanding fills the heart and mind. The mystery of God is finished, the secret of the Lord is whispered, the hope of eternal life turns the guilty fear into radiant anticipation. All the perfections, all the fulness of God herein are forth-shadowed. The *Imitatio Christi* becomes a possibility, sorrow is gilded, death is vanquished, all the force of natural emotion is enlisted under the dominion of the sanctified, quickened and tender conscience. So heart-filling is this rapture that though more comprehensive than any one of the partial aspects of Christianity to which I have referred, yet if it presumes to lay down an exclusive definition of the whole of the faith of Christ, it risks the grand element of the solidarity of men, the mutual interdependence of man with man, the value of the personal effort of one for the saving of another, the part which the family and the community do as a matter of fact effectuate in the spiritual life of man, and in the realization of the Christian idea.

Even the spiritual, or hyper-spiritual, atmosphere in many a school of mystics has stifled the practical life of men lost in spiritual contemplation and in the full realization of the Divine glory, so that we must, even here, warn against the weakness of Heno-Christian emotions, and the peril of substituting the part for the whole. Even the Quietist *must* learn to cease from the flesh, must use his reason and his understanding to grasp the truths that excite faith and the symbolism which feeds it, and be nourished by the love which never faileth.

## VII.

The last illustration to which we refer is the exceptional importance given to the

## ORGANIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

The majority of Christian believers, alas! say of those who do not share *their* estimate of the Divine Society, "We forbid them, seeing that they follow not with us."

Non-participation in one community is abandonment of untold millions at the best to uncovenanted mercies. Rome regards indifference to or repudiation of the Holy See as an almost incredible and unbridled audacity. To be separated from this unity of organization is to be separated from Christ. Here, extreme ascetic *régime*, orthodox faith, conformity with all the great creeds, enthusiastic consecration to the well-being of mankind, the deepest sense of sin, the uttermost repentance, the most extreme religiosity, the holiest life, are all of no effect, if the subject of all these characteristics does not humble itself before the Papal infallibility. Therefore, to an untold number, the community is more than the Deity, more than the Christ, more than the Holy Ghost that worketh in us. In this respect the perversion of the grand reality of personal surrender to God in Christ is an extreme form of the Heno-Christianity which has confounded a small part of the Christ with the height and depth, the length and breadth of that which passeth knowledge. Nor must it be forgotten that in many quarters the Anglican community is as exclusive and purblind in its outlook as Rome itself. Nay more than that, there are sections of the Greek Church as utterly exclusive as the Holy Orthodox and Catholic Church itself; and many cliques and corners of Christendom, which lay such emphasis on the mode of administering an ordinance, on the rigidity of discipline, on the supposed just interpretation of unfulfilled prophecies, on the nature and principle of Church music and the like, that they ought not on this ground to cast a stone at the Vatican. Such prejudice

never reached a higher point of infallibility than when the Scotch pair who had persuaded each other that they constituted between them the entire Church of the living God were not "sure" of each other!

When will the sign of the Son of Man be seen, when will the unity of the Church, the triumph of "the power that worketh in us," be completed? When will He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? Must it not be when no satisfaction will be felt in these one-sided and partial views of that which passeth knowledge, when the scattered beams of the glory of the Christ are recombined into that one holy, uncompounded and absolutely blended ray of unsullied lustre, of which God said, "Let there be light, and there was light"?

This meditation may assist some in the various sections of the spiritual Church to ask themselves whether the one colour of the million-hued bow of promise in which they find so much is the whole of the one living Christ, and whether they have not to learn much of truth, of discipline, of reverence and activity, of life and love, from those who are analogously led to believe that they too have, alas! the entire glory of God beaming through another chink of the curtain which conceals the Holiest of all.

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