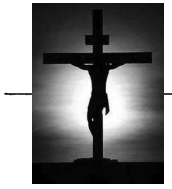
TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST,

EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC.

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE origin of the first appearance of these papers in the pages of *Lucifer* was to attempt to correct misconceptions. Writers of great ability and honesty were often found to postulate as Church doctrines things which had never been and never could be taught by the Church, though they might have been enunciated by persons ostensibly members of the Church, but over whom the Church could have no control; the false teaching and evil lives of professing Christians in all ages were ascribed to Christianity, which should be ascribed to professing Christians who were not really such.

The evidences of this position are mostly in voluminous and somewhat difficult works, not easy of access to the generality, and hardly likely to be familiar to the average man who is not a member of the Church, while of manuals there are many, and few trustworthy, since they mostly seek to support a particular view, and are characterized rather by bold assertion and rhetorical disquisition than by a statement of evidence and logical deduction therefrom.

To the bulk of non-Christians, or of Christians who are not members of the Church, it is hopeless to speak; but Theosophists by the mere fact of being such must hold that "There is no Religion higher than Truth." Therefore a statement of facts with the evidence for them, and the logical conclusions, is certain of careful

and unbiassed consideration from every true Theosophist, and, however small, a contribution to the pursuit of truth must be welcome to him.

These papers, then, are no expression of opinion. It may be that the evidence and the authorities cited do not support the facts, it may be that the facts are wrongly stated, or that the conclusions do not logically follow; but in any case, facts, authorities, and conclusions are set down without declamation or rhetoric, and any intelligent reader can judge them for himself.

The papers were originally intended for those specially familiar with Oriental philosophies and modes of thought, an attempt has therefore been made to translate the language of Western Christian teaching as to the origin and functions of the Church into Eastern phraseology. In republishing the papers with a view, it is hoped, to a wider circulation, it became necessary to explain somewhat of this phraseology. Therefore a paper by the same author on the *Seven Principles of Man* as understood by the Eastern schools (a conception which has been largely used as an analogy in these papers) has been added as an appendix, and a glossary of the Sanskrit and other Theosophical terms used in the work has been appended, which it is hoped will make the papers quite clear to the average Western mind.

THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST, EXOTERIC AND ESOTERIC.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

THE method of treating a subject of vast magnitude necessarily varies with the character, the knowledge and the mental attitude of those to whom the writer addresses himself. To treat fully from all points of view of the Esoteric Church of Christ would require many volumes, countless references to ancient and modern books, some well-nigh inaccessible to the ordinary student, and a profundity of scholarship far beyond anything that I possess, probably beyond that possessed by any human being now alive: yet the materials exist, their locality is known, and some day, perhaps, they may be compiled. Meantime, however, to show the modesty of my own aim, it may be useful that I should first indicate for whom these papers are intended, or rather for whom they are not meant.

First, then, I write not for those who have been *truly* trained in the faith and doctrines of the Church, for to them all the knowledge I can impart has come in a far more perfect as well as easier way than any I could suggest. I would emphasize the word *truly*, for I mean the esoteric members of the Church, whose faith is not a blind faith, but a deep and genuine spiritual *knowledge*. I write not for the indifferent, having no desire to proselytize, least of all to gain those who have no backbone,

but are washed about like jelly fish. I write not for the avowed enemies of the Church, believing as I do most fully that open hostility to any brother-man's beliefs is a bar which must be removed before any real spirituality can enter; intellectual logical argument is out of place in what regards the pure γνῶσις. Those for whom I write are the seekers after truth, pledged to no positive opinions which may prevent their accepting it, those whose inner eye is sufficiently open to understand that there are mysteries in heaven and earth which the bodily senses cannot grasp, and the logical brain cannot fathom, but of which the Divine intuitive faculty of the seer in moments of ecstasy may obtain fleeting glimpses. In a word, the true and thorough Theosophist, whether member of the Society or not, who is not also an esoteric Christian, is the reader to whom I address myself, but the little I bring, if met by an earnest wish on his part to find and to follow the truth, may bring forth much good fruit.

These papers will not be amusing, they will contain no stirring denunciations of anybody's wickedness, no Newgate Calendar of the various iniquities of other people. I shall endeavour plainly and distinctly, so far as in me lies, to set forth what is meant by the Church of Christ, hoping that those who like the picture may be moved to seek further, and those who do not may pass by on the other side, and at least abstain from false representation.

At the very outset I wish to clear the way by some definite understanding regarding words, "the counters of a fool, a wise man's money." Of course we cannot and we do not mentally advert to the whole nature and all the elements of a concept when we use the word which is the sign for it, and so when a word is associated with a complex cluster of ideas there is a tendency to let

some of them become for a time latent—what Leibnitz calls the *cogitatio caeca* or *symbolica*.*

Hence we often use words without realizing to ourselves all they mean; in conversation, in writing, in public speeches, we habitually go by the mere rhetorical form (λαλιά) not the substance of the thought (λόγος).† Thus it often chances that a writer or speaker intends but a fraction of the meaning of the word he uses, the reader or hearer sees but a fraction and that a wholly different one, and hence argument and misunderstanding and bitter hostility. I therefore beg all really Theosophical readers (I care nothing for polemical ones) tc endeavour to assist me in understanding, as I shall endeavour to make plain, the words I use.

Let us agree, to start with, that calling of names is of no consequence, save to the Karma of him who uses them, and let us not therefore be afraid of names. There are some who, finding that the ethical teaching of Christ embodied spiritual truths they could not relinquish, and that the mystical Christos was a verity they needs must acknowledge, have professed some kind of acceptance of Christianity, but have invented the word "Churchianity" to express what they dislike. Others speak of Ecclesiasticism, etc. All this simply depends on what is connoted by the word "Church." If this can be shown to be good, then all the sting is taken out of the word Churchianity, which becomes a somewhat foolish coinage, and ecclesiasticism is a word of praise rather than blame. Ἐκκλησία is the Church, therefore what belongs to the Church is

* *Leibnitii Opera*, tom ii. p. 14, Geneva, 1768. Conf. Mansel, *Proleg. Log.* p. 29. Arist. *Rhet.* I. cviii. 31.

† See these contrasted in *John* viii. 43, and see also J. S. Mill on the evil consequences of casting off any of the existing connotations of words, *Logic* Vol. ii., Bk. iv. Chap. iv. pp. 529, 268.

ecclesiastic, and the spirit thereof is ecclesiasticism; so all stand or fall together. Similarly, if I can show that a priest is necessarily an intrinsic part of the Church, a priest is *sacerdos* and the principle whereby priests of the Church exist is sacerdotalism. To say that this means the *abuse* of priestly power, or its excess, is tampering with the meaning of words, a more heinous sin in philosophy than tampering with the coin of the realm; for it distorts and confuses the λόγος, the substantial idea. So again if the Church be *ecclesia docens*, a teaching Church, the natural word to express such body of teaching is doctrine, and the summarized conclusion of doctrine enunciated authoritatively is dogma. If the Church have no authority so to enunciate, then the dogma falls to the ground and is worthless, but if the dogma be truly enunciated by a Church having authority, then it is right, and orthodox (*i.e.*, the right teaching). All therefore depends on first establishing the meaning of the words "Church of Christ," and secondly in showing that the concept denoted by those words is a veritable entity, whose influence on mankind is for good and worthy of recognition.

There are many among the opponents of the Church, Agnostics, Secularists, Theists (so-called), and others, whose favourite line is to assert broadly and definitely that the Church teaches so and so, which pretended teaching they proceed solemnly to refute; for combatants of this nature the ordinary methods of argument will not do; they have in fact written their adversary's brief before proceeding to answer it. As a rule those who really know better leave them severely alone, but it is questionable whether this is wise or right; for long we have listened to frothy speeches and read vituperative articles with a sort of amused wonder at what next

preposterous falsehood would develop itself. This was acting in ignorance of human nature, for no story is too absurd to be believed. Sheridan once replied to a noble Lord who proposed to take the "sense of the country": "Do so, my Lord, and welcome; we will take the nonsense of it, and depend on it we shall leave your Lordship in a very small minority." Thus it is that all the motley crew of opponents gain considerable followings. But not for these do I write. In heaven's name let them go on frothing, and let those to whom their froth is grateful follow docilely at their tails. But if among all that following there be some sincere seekers after truth, who have not the time or the learning, or the ability, it may be, to investigate for themselves all the statements they hear, and so believe them for lack of knowing better, and accept the arguments founded (and, to do them justice, for the most part logically founded) thereon, to these I have a word to say, and it is this—ask for authority. If you are told that the Church teaches so and so, demand to know where? when? on what occasion? who said it? and how did he who said it get authority to speak in the name of the Church? In very many cases you will be told that the Rev. Somebody Something said it in his sermon, or perchance at a garden party. More often still you will be told with airy certainty: "Oh, go into any church you like any Sunday, you're sure to hear that, or something like it." Sometimes, though this is more rare, a theological book, well-known or unknown, as the case may be, is brought forward. If you ask who gave authority to any of these to speak in the name of the Church, the reply is but the reiterated assertion, "Of course it must be so." And it never seems to occur to the speaker that it would be just as reasonable to assume that the village orator at a

political tap-room meeting is commissioned to speak in the name of the Government or the Opposition. If then there be true Theosophists among the congregations of these opponents of the Church, I write for them, and I promise to indicate to them how they may test the reckless assertions of their leaders, and how they may know where to find the real teaching of the Church.

It would of course be hopeless even to attempt to sketch out the briefest summary of what are the doctrines of the Church; suffice it if I show that a definite body of doctrines does really exist and that it can absolutely, conclusively, be stated as to any given point whether the Church has definitely pronounced upon it, and if so, what the Church teaching is, or whether on the other hand it is left still an open question, whereupon Christians may lawfully differ.

Further, it is no part of my scheme to enter into the exceedingly complex and intricate speculations as to the nature of Christ, the precise relation of the mystic Christos to the historic Jesus of Nazareth, or as to the emanation of the Trinity from the Unity, the exact relation of the emanation of the Logos (or Logoi if there be more than one) to the first emanation. All these are profoundly interesting, but foreign to my subject. Whether the correspondences between the Gnostic, the Hindoo, the Eranian, and other cosmogonies are susceptible of being accurately worked out I know not; in any case I am very certain that only very advanced students of the esoteric mysteries could profit by them, and the theory and essentials of the Church should be clear to any mind of average perceptions. Neither can I enter upon any historic questions concerning the iniquities perpetrated in any age by any members of the Church, in the name of the Church it may be. To clear

the ground here I am willing for the sake of the present question, to admit them all, reserving, of course, the right at any future time to put the enemies of the Church to a very strict proof of their allegations.

A simple illustration will show my meaning here. The doings of the Stanley expedition in Central Africa have been severely criticized and ugly tales told. As yet all we can say is, they may be true or false. But if a foreign critic should speak of the story of this expedition as the act of the English Government, or the English nation, we are justified in saying: "It may be all true, all the brutality, all the treachery, you speak of; it may have been done by Englishmen; if it could be proved we might be heartily ashamed; but it is not, and it never could be, the act of England."

If my understanding, and the idea of the Christian Church, which I shall endeavour to set forth in these articles, be, as I believe it to be, true and supported by the most abundant authority, then the corruptions and abuses which came into the Church, the debasing of the pure ideal left by Christ, and partially, but not in its purest completeness, developed by his immediate followers, was not only inevitable but actually essential, a vital part of the scheme. These abuses are *in* the Church, but not *of* the Church, and if it were possible to conceive a Church into which no such imperfections could possibly enter, it might be a glorified assemblage of Adepts, but it would most certainly not be the Church of Christ on earth. The elementary propositions are easy enough to state and probably will not be disputed: *viz.*, that some nineteen centuries ago a teacher, called (either contemporaneously or subsequently) Jesus of Nazareth, taught in Syria a certain system of ethics and some principles of cosmogony or theogony or what-

ever may be the proper word, such teaching being either original or traditional, or collated, but in any case forming a distinct system; that he founded a school or association for the purpose of promulgating these teachings, giving the broad lines of such association its rules, government, and ceremonies to his immediate and most advanced followers; that these subsequently elaborated the scheme, which as time went on developed into a numerous and powerful organization, which organization is in fact represented by the whole body of Christians of all denominations to-day; that the organization and scheme of government as planned by the founder and his immediate followers was called the Church, and that this Church continued for some time a united body; that the separation between the Eastern and Western Churches left each an integral branch of the Church though in their administration sundered; that the subsequent separation of the Anglican Church from the Western had the same effect, producing now three branches forming together one Catholic Church.

The fact, which is indisputable, that each of these branches has called the others heretical and that the Church of Rome refuses to this day to acknowledge the Anglican as a branch of the Church Catholic at all, I shall deal with hereafter, merely saying by way of anticipation here that if my view be right it is one of those things which must needs be. Beyond these again are various Protestant sects thrown off from time to time like swarming bees, many of these undoubtedly, and some of them possibly, Christians, but whether members of the Christian Church or not depends on the interpretation of the word Church and to a certain extent on historic evidence; the tests and rules as to this I shall endeavour to show, but I could not possibly

in the space of these articles apply those rules to individual cases, or attempt to show what sects were and what were not beyond the pale of the Church.

So much is tolerably simple and gives us a purely human and historical association, not differing much perhaps from a big mutual-improvement club, or the like. But when we add to this the conception that the Founder was a Master, that the society had an esoteric as well as an exoteric aspect, and that in this esoteric aspect the Master has always occultly directed its progress and does so still, then a perfect whirl of questions assails one. How can it be proved? Did the first Christians think so? How comes it that the mythology, the ritual, the names and dates of the feasts, the very name and life story of the Founder, are borrowed from every imaginable source, Buddhist, Gnostic, Neo-Platonic, Eranian, Egyptian, a very ragbag of odds and ends of every religion on earth? If the pure and holy Jesus of Nazareth occultly guides his Church, whence all these corruptions and abuses? How could it be possible that two or even three rival occupants of the throne of St. Peter should denounce each other as heretical? How could the monstrous abuses of the Mediæval Papacy or the cruelties of Spanish Catholicism be possible? and so on, and so on; there is no end to such questionings.

It is no part of my purpose to answer such questions categorically; it would be utterly useless to attempt it, for a new flight would emerge at once; but rather to indicate what is the true conception of the Church in such a manner as shall show that all such questionings are irrelevant, and proceed from ignorance of the fundamental idea involved in the concept of the Christian Church.

I will close with a few words to indicate, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the lines I propose to take, and so end these introductory remarks, and devote the subsequent papers to clear definite statements, ranged in logical order with as much of proof and authority, or at all events references which will enable the diligent student to find such, as the space will admit of.

The keynote is the Hermetic axiom, "As above, so below."

Whether we take the Gnostic view, or the pure Buddhistic, or the lines laid down in the *Secret Doctrine*, or any other great Cosmogony, it is clear that an inner force or spirit, operating through or manifesting itself by means of the matter which is perceptible by the senses, is the true construction and meaning of the Universe. We may take the imperceptible force or spirit to be anything we please for the time being, either the final supreme *causa causans*, operating directly or by means of intermediate Æons, Dhyan Chohans, Elohim, Angels, Creative Spirits, or what you will. Let us but admit that in some way or other there is a substantial real τὸ ὄν which is the cause of the apparent τὸ φαινόμενον. As in the macrocosm so in the microcosm; the Divine spark, call it Spirit, call it if you like Atma-Buddhi-Manas, or by any name you please, is manifest in, imprisoned in, or dwells in, a material body, phenomenal and illusory if you will. The body, however, whether of the Kosmos or of the individual, is perceptible to the bodily senses of other individuals; it has its limitations, its hereditary qualities, its Karma, which do not affect the Spirit or Higher Principles, or Higher Self, save in so far as the latter is bound to its prison house.

And because the same law by the Hermetic axiom must pervade all things, every association must have