

What is True Christianity?

by Franz Hartmann, M.D.

From The Path
reprinted from "Theosophical Siftings" Volume 1

The Theosophical Publishing Society, England

Christianity is a religion. The word "religion" has evidently three distinct meanings.

1. In the first place, it signifies the practice of a certain kind of spiritual training by which the higher principles in the constitution of man are developed and re-united (bound back) to the divine source to which they belong. In this sense it is the same as Yogism (from Yog, to bind).
2. In the second aspect it implies the knowledge of the true relation existing between microcosmic man as a part of the All and the macrocosm of the spiritual and material Universe. In this sense it is a science.
3. In the third and common acceptance of the term, "religion" means a certain system of forms, ceremonies, and usages, by which some supposed external, deity is worshipped or propitiated, and his favour obtained, so that the sinner may escape the deserved punishment, and evade the law. In this sense it is a superstition.

To become a "Christian" of the third order it is merely necessary to submit to a certain ceremony called Baptism, whose mode of administration varies in the different sects; but it seems that to become a real Christian some [Page 13] other baptism is necessary, namely, the Baptism of the Water of Truth, the Baptism of Blood, and the Baptism of the Living Fire of the spirit.

The first baptism, with the Water of Truth, means the attainment of spiritual knowledge, and corresponds to the first of the four noble truths taught by Buddha, "Right Doctrine".

The second, or the Baptism of Blood, is commonly supposed to mean a shedding of blood by martyrdom in the defence of a belief in a historical Christ. But such a process would be a loss of blood, and not the inception of it, and could not properly be called a "baptism." The best way to obtain information in regard to this "Baptism of Blood" will be to ask those who have received it, or who are receiving it at present.

There is a certain class of practical Occultists, whose inner senses are opened to a great extent, and who have been taught by no one but the spirit within themselves and their own experience. They say that the Baptism of Blood means a penetration of the growing spiritual germ in man through the flesh, and blood, and bones of the physical body, by which even the gross elements of the physical form are

attenuated and purified, [Compare the "*Elixir of Life*" in the *Theosophist*.] and that this process produces pains and sufferings typically represented by the suffering, crucifixion, and death of the man Jesus of Nazareth. They say that no one can be a true follower of Christ, or a real Christian, who has not undergone this Baptism of Blood, and experienced the pains of crucifixion, ["That which was from the beginning", etc — John, Epistle I, i] but that man, having passed through that occult process, becomes an adept, when only the highest baptism, or the last initiation — the Baptism of Fire — will be necessary to enter the highest attainable state (spiritual power), and to become a Son of Light.

But, it is asked, what has Jesus of Nazareth to do with that process ? How does the latter come to be typified by his suffering, and what is the *rationale* of it ?

It is claimed that at the beginning of certain historical periods — when old religious truths are about to be forgotten, and the idolatry of form assumes the place of true religion — some great spirit (planetary) appears upon the earth, incarnated into a human form, and by his word and example impresses the old truths forcibly upon a number of receptive minds, to communicate to others, and thus lay the foundation of a new religious system, embodying old truths in a new form.

It is believed that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the mortal form in which such a spirit was embodied; the latter being no less than what I believe every planetary spirit to be — an emanation from the Universal Logos or Word. [This has nothing to do with so-called "stigmatisation", the latter being merely the result of a strong imagination upon a weak body]

But what is the Logos ? or, to express it better, how can we form a [Page 14] conception of it ? We can conceive of no other God, or supreme Good, but the one which lives within ourselves, and which is said to be the image of the Universal God reflected in the purified human soul, where it (He) may attain self-consciousness and the knowledge of self. The Universal God may be described as the incomprehensible centre from which proceed the elements of Love, Life, and Light in the various modes of manifestation on this different planes. The whole of Nature is a product of the Spirit of God, being poured out throughout the All by the power of the Word, which is the life or thought rendered active by will.

The same process which took place in the eternal Macrocosm of the Universe takes place in the inner world belonging to the Microcosm of man. "No one can come to the father but through the Son". That is to say, no God will take his seat in the interior temple of man, except through the power of the Word; in other words, by the concentration of thought and goodwill upon the divine germ which rests in the innermost centre of every human being. If we concentrate our love upon that centre of good, the divine germ will begin its active life, and the interior world gradually become illuminated by the Light of the Spirit. As this principle grows it will penetrate the soul and, through the soul, all the lower principles, even the physical body, throwing off the impurities of soul and body; and the more impurities there are present the greater will be the suffering, typically represented by Jesus, until finally the Baptism of Blood is completed, the soul purified, the animal ego dead, and the man has become "a Christ", or an adept: that is to say, one in whom the [6th] Christ principle has taken form.

It will readily be seen that this process is more difficult to accomplish than merely to go to church, to pay the dues to the priest, attend to prayer-meetings, and perform the prescribed ceremonies. To accomplish

this process requires a constant meditation of the highest kind, and a continual employment of will-power to keep away the disturbing elements of evil, which, in a person who strives for light, are still more boisterous than in one who is indifferent; for, as soon as the spiritual light kindled in the centre begins to radiate its life-giving rays throughout our interior world, the "dwellers of the threshold" — the evil Egos, created by evil thoughts and selfish desires floating at the periphery of the soul-sphere like clouds sailing through the atmosphere of our earth, begin to feel the destroying influence of the central sun, and battle for their existence. Still this atmosphere of evil must be penetrated before we can reach the luminous centre and the tranquil heaven within, and this is done by clinging to the principle of good and virtue, whose rays radiate from the centre. This principle will at first be felt only intuitively, but as we feed it with good thoughts it grows, and the interior spiritual senses become opened, so that we may see and hear its voice distinctly, and without any fear of misunderstanding its meaning.

The "below" is always in exact correspondence to, and related to [Page 15] the "above". We are immersed in an all-surrounding but invisible ocean, of life, whose waves pervade our psychic organisation, in the same sense as the volumes of air enter our lungs, and as the latter stimulates the life of the body, likewise the former stimulates the growth of the elements of the spirit, which draw their substance from the lower animal principles. In the same way the caloric rays of the sun enter the body of plants and stimulate the assimilation of the elements which are drawn from earth, water, and air.

Those who have gone through that occult process will require no proof of the truth of these assertions, because they know it is true by experiment, but the "exoteric Christian" and sceptic, having no such experience to assist his faith, may arrive at a certain degree of conviction by using his reasoning powers and logic in conjunction with the teachings of the Bible. Christ is reported to have said — "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53), and again — "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever" (John vi. 51). Now, this seems plain enough to every student of occultism, and if translated into scientific language of modern occultists, it would mean — "Unless you absorb and assimilate within your psychic organisation the sixth principle (the Christ), which is the only permanent and immortal principle in the constitution of man, you will have no sixth principle developed in you, and consequently possess no immortal life, at least as far as your personality is concerned (for the divine and now unconscious germ within you cannot die, but will re-incarnate again). But if you absorb the principle or spiritual life and develop the spirit within you, so that it grows through your flesh and blood, then you will have drunk from the Elixir of Life and received the Baptism of Blood and become a Christian, an Adept; for 'Christ' will have taken form in your body, and being Himself immortal, you will be immortal through Him".

These views are corroborated by the great Christian mystic, Jacob Boehme, by Jane Leade, Paracelsus, the Rosicrucians, and I can find nothing in these which would in any way conflict with the esoteric doctrine as taught by the Eastern Adepts. If any difference in opinion could arise it could only be in regard to the person of Jesus of Nazareth or Jehoshua, and whether he lived exactly at the time claimed by the modern Christians. This question I must leave to someone wiser than myself; but it seems of no great importance to me; for the existence of the Christ principle is disputed by none, and the man Jesus having died, can only be a Saviour to us at present, if we study His character and imitate His example.