

**THE TRUE CHURCH
OF CHRIST EXOTERIC
AND ESOTERIC**

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The True Church of Christ Exoteric and Esoteric by J. W. Brodie-Innes

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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 *γνώσις*. 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) to 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

* *Leibnizii 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