

at least -- issued in a satisfactory denouement. The knot, though perhaps loosened, some of its threads more clearly revealed, has not been untied, the threads laid straight and true, in unrestricted extension. That remains to be done here and now. So, let us proceed without further delay.

#### MOHAMMED AND NICAEEA

The easiest and most direct way of untying the knot is to get inside it. This can be done with dispatch by the simple means of declaring that both the Islamic and the Christian statements regarding the Nature of Jesus are absolutely true and correct. By this one means that He is both an aspirant rising up to God and God descending as man. The Christians will disagree with the rising and the Mohammedans with the descending. So, obviously, we have as complete a difference of opinion and perception, as clear a knot, as it is possible to get.

But, I am saying that both opinions are correct and even self-sufficient. By this I mean that neither opinion or perception is in need of the other, or of any modification, in order that a complete and verifiable theological position be maintained and that each position so obtained will be equal in validity and vitality with the other. And, while the man of common sense and reason may by now wish to conduct me to a chair in the corner

for contemplating the cracks while crowned with a conical cap, I will first have opportunity to point out -- what is a fact, however unpalatable -- that, historically, each position has flourished quite nicely, with no apparent diminution of vitality, so that one inclined to emotional sobriety would have to own that God is obviously favorable to both positions in equal measure and shows no sign nor symptom of shifting His Allegiance so as to delectate the one while destroying the other.

So, we are left with a very touchy situation for a scholar. The rubrics of reason declare that there shall be no final dissonance within any intelligently held position and that if there is dissonance between positions of major weight, such as complete theological systems, then harmony must be restored by the ascendancy of one over the other or by the integration of both wholes, or parts thereof, into a new homeostasis, which combines what is harmonious and discards what is not.

The rubrics of emotion operate in the same manner. Dissonance cannot be tolerated indefinitely in the emotional realm. If the attempt is made to do so, disease, dire and definite, must follow inexorably. The pattern for resolving emotional dissonance, for restoring emotional harmony, is identical in outline, although not in technique, with that for resolving intellectual dissonance, as mentioned above.

On the Stage of History, God has clearly encouraged both the Islamic and the Christian views of Jesus of Nazareth. One could try a quick fix for this dissonance by saying that He does so in precisely the same way that He encourages both Job and the Devil, with each religious representative

taking himself in the place of Job and the other in the place of the Devil. But, no person of generous feelings and familiar with the history of each of these religions can do that and prosper intellectually.

If the Crusades were mounted by great Saints (among them Bernard, Francis, Dominic, Louis IX) with precisely this Job-Devil typology in mind, we have to say, without remarking the wisdom of the Saints, that the Crusades were a Colossal Failure and that God did hardly serve up to Job these desserts. There has to be something of the Opinion of the Holy Spirit in the fact that Islam was not wiped-out and Christianity was not defeated. In fact, it was a draw, with much high heroism and grandeur of spirit displayed on both sides during the conflict. This has to tell us something -- something deeply theological, something savoring of Truth. And that is that both sets of statements about the Nature of Jesus of Nazareth are fundamentally and absolutely true.

So, we have some parameters for the discussion. We know that we cannot falsify either set of statements. We must end up with a view of Jesus which remarks Him as both an aspirant, like any other man, and as God Incarnate in human flesh. We know, further, that both sets of statements must subsist together in perfect harmony. We must end up with emotional and intellectual clarity and peace of the highest order. Finally, we know that to introduce any reservations or demurs in the result will falsify the discussion and contradict the witness of history, which has to be taken, in this particular, as the unequivocal Voice of the Holy Spirit, that is, of God.

It may be observed in passing that this approach to the matter does in principle esteem the witness of Tradition, broadly taken, as on a level par with the witness of Scripture. This has been my consistent practice for many years, and, while I cannot assent to taking the authority of tradition in exactly the sense of ascent meant by a canon lawyer, I do very definitely take it in the sense that were there some other Presence or Pretext dangling this Drama of History than the One we call the Holy Spirit, we should be obliged to be worshipping or at least propitiating it, whatever it is, also. In other words, if there is some other agent at work <sup>here</sup>, I should be very happy to know what or who it is. And if we are unable to explain why there is not, I should be inclined to ascribe that deficiency to our own spectacles and not to His invisibility.

"Scripture" and "Tradition" are two names for the same thing. What gives Scripture its tinge of superiority in the hierarchy of authorities is not that it declares more or better or other than Tradition does but that it distills Tradition into a very compact specific. Tradition is the milk. Scripture is the cream. The lives of Saints and Sages are the butter, the quintessence, which is made by vigorous churning of the milk and the cream. The mind is the churning-rod, the body is the pot and the emotions, positive and negative, good and evil, plunge the rod up and down to produce the butter. Actually, the lives of Saints and Sages are tinged with more authority than even Scripture, for, they distill Scripture into the very Nectar of Immortality. The Word is living, it is Life. It is most certainly not type on a piece of paper or harangue in a preacher's microphone.

That aside, let us go on to remark that if we can still these religious quarrels and get ourselves to understand the congruence of our apparently dissonant articles of faith -- that is, if we can rise up to faith in God and leave off faith in our own pretense and foibles -- we can eliminate these religious wars and disputes, the worst blots on our record, in a trice.

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur remarked that the way to end war is to outlaw war, not to disarm. He meant that when it is unlawful to engage in warfare as an adjunct to the pursuit of public policy, the aggressor can appeal to the law for protection from attack, both internal and external. Such an appeal carries the weight and majesty of law so that the law-breaker can be treated as any common criminal. But, to disarm merely invites attack by dispelling the means of resisting it. Appeasing Mars is hair-brained flummery. Disarmament conferences are not else than overtures to demonic operas, score by Krupp, libretto by Pratt & Whitney.

In the same way, religious wars can be eliminated by declaring that, because there is not more than One God, theological systems must in principle be congruent, regardless of whether we perceive them as such or not. This then leaves the systems free to evolve and associate as their adherents choose, which will not be a bad thing for anyone with the faith of Gamaliel. By applying this principle in advance of the discussions, the faith of each party is guaranteed immunity from aggressive prejudice, and, if such occurs regardless, redress, sharp and decisive, may be appealed to and meted out under the full weight and majesty of the principle, namely, God Himself. You will get along in love and peace or both be thrown out.