Chapter XI

CHRISTIANITY

"The Religion of the Love of God and Love of Man as Revealed in Jesus Christ".

Christianity appears to-day in a great variety of forms, but underneath the variety there is a surprising core of agreed upon beliefs and practices, whether Catholic or Protestant, liberal or conservative. The chief are these:

1) The oneness of God, though trinitarian.

2) God is the guarantor of the moral order of the universe, that is, God is moral in character, and concerned about good and evil. Indeed, good is conceived of largely as that which is in accord with the will of God.

3) Sin is an infraction of God's law, or disobedience to his will, and requires forgiveness. Forgiveness is possible under certain conditions.

4) God has revealed himself to man. Both Old and New Testaments witness to this.

5) God revealed Himself most clearly and completely in Jesus Christ, who was, if only a prophet, as Unitarians believe, nevertheless the greatest revealer of them all.

6) Man's salvation is bound in some way with Jesus.

There is great difference of opinion as to just how
Jesus is to be conceived of as Saviour, whether by his life, his teachings, his example, or by his death and resurrection, or by all together. But to all Christians, Jesus Christ stands at the center of their faith.

7) The Bible is basic to the Christian faith. Protestants believe that it is the ultimate authority. Catholics believe that the authority lies in the Bible as interpreted by the Church. Some consider it inspired verbally in its every word and phrase; others think that while it contains the record of God's revelation to men, there is in it a very human element, including error in some of its details.

8) God continues to reveal Himself to man, and man must continually strive to know God's will. Some trust to individual personal communion with God for guidance; others believe that God's continuing revelation is channeled through the Church.

9) All believe in a Church of some kind, whether as a divine institution, the living body of Christ, or merely a community of those who seek to know and do God's will.

10) Almost all believe in some sort of sacramental observances which go back to Jesus, through which the life of the individual and the group is enriched and sustained. This varies all the way from the High Mass of Roman Catholicism, which thinks that there are six
other sacraments, to the Quaker whose only sacrament is that of silence. Most Christians observe baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two which are directly traceable to Jesus' own institution.

11) All believe in some kind of a future life which is morally conditioned.

12) All believe in the coming one day of the Kingdom of God which Jesus came preaching. Some think that it will be established here, some place it beyond history. For some it is a great social ideal to be achieved through human effort with God's help, in the here and now; to some it is a Kingdom that will be ushered in by the direct and even catastrophic irruption of God into human history and the ending of the age.