

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Moreover, in the most widely distributed form of Christianity the "virgin" mother of Christ plays an important part as a fourth deity; in many Catholic countries she is practically taken to be much more powerful and influential than the three male persons of the celestial administration. The cult of the madonna has been developed to such an extent in these countries that we may oppose it to the usual masculine form of monotheism as one of a feminine type. The "Queen of Heaven" becomes so prominent, as is seen in so many pictures and legends of the madonna, that the three male persons practically disappear.

In addition, the imagination of the pious Christian soon came to increase this celestial administration by a numerous company of "saints" of all kinds, and bands of musical angels, who should see that "eternal life" should not prove too dull. The popes—the greatest charla'ans that any religion ever produced—have constantly studied to increase this band of celestial satellites by repeated canonizations. This curious company received its most interesting acquisition in 1870, when the Vatican Council pronounced the popes, as the vicars of Christ, to be infallible, and thus raised them to a divine dignity. When we add the "personal Devil" that they acknowledge, and the "bad angels" who form his court, we have in modern Catholicism, still the most extensive branch of Christianity, a rich and variegated polytheism that dwarfs the Olympic family of the Greeks.

Islam, or the Mohammedan monotheism, is the youngest and purest form of monotheism. When the young Mohammed (born 570) learned to despise the polytheistic idolatry of his Arabian compatriots, and became acquainted with Nestorian Christianity, he