

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

tainly, remain beyond dispute—the lofty principle of universal charity and the fundamental maxim of ethics, the “golden rule,” that issues therefrom; both, however, existed in theory and in practice centuries before the time of Christ (cf. chap. xix.). For the rest, the Christians of the early centuries were generally pure Communists, sometimes “Social Democrats,” who, according to the prevailing theory in Germany to-day, ought to have been exterminated with fire and sword.

II.—PAPAL CHRISTIANITY

Latin Christianity, variously called Papistry, Romanism, Vaticanism, Ultramontanism, or the Roman Catholic Church, is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of civilized man; in spite of the storms that have swept over it, it still exerts a most powerful influence. Of the four hundred and ten million Christians who are scattered over the earth the majority—that is, two hundred and twenty-five millions—are Roman Catholics; there are seventy-five million Greek Catholics and one hundred and ten million Protestants. During a period of one thousand two hundred years, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, the papacy has almost absolutely controlled and tainted the spiritual life of Europe; on the other hand, it has won but little territory from the ancient religions of Asia and Africa. In Asia Buddhism still counts five hundred and three million followers, the Brahmanic religion one hundred and thirty-eight millions, and Islam one hundred and twenty millions.

It is the despotism of the papacy that lent its darkest character to the Middle Ages; it meant death to all freedom of mental life, decay to all science, corruption