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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

literary grace, and lit up with delightful touches of humour.

To trace the history of the Jewish writings in Christian times which constitute the Kabbalah; to expound their contents with sympathy; to estimate what is of value in them, setting aside all fantastic, occult, and superstitious elements, and

exhibiting their religious philosophy,—this is the task proposed and well done in *The Holy Kabbalah*, by Mr. A. E. Waite (Williams & Norgate; 30s. net). Probably few are interested in the Kabbalah, nor after perusing this handsome volume are we deeply convinced of its value or even its interest save for the very élite of mystics, but at least we have here the standard work on the subject.

An Orphic Reaction in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, LIT.D., LL.D., D.D., BIRMINGHAM.

THE Christian religion can never be properly understood apart from its environment, for even if we were to assume that we were adequately equipped with a knowledge of its foundations, and however magically we may regard the mystic fabric as having sprung into being, we have still to recognize that it grew up as one religion among many, and not all of its contemporaries were either dead or dying. If we imagine its language to be a Divine product, and call it by the name of the 'language of the Holy Ghost,' we shall find (and indeed we may say that we have at last found) that we have not enriched the speech of the Spirit by giving to the first messengers of the Kingdom an unnatural vocabulary, or an impossible syntax. What is true of the language is true also of the institutional side of the New Religion, though we are much slower to believe in a ritual *κοινή* than we have been to acknowledge a popular Greek speech. How much we have lost from making Christianity an insular product, a peninsular Judaism, out of touch with other faiths and with all the philosophies! On the other hand, how much we gain, when we find that Christian teachers had antennæ which felt after God in other directions than Moses and the prophets, and could discuss the division between Stoic and Epicurean with as much readiness as they could debate across the dividing line between Sadducees and Pharisees! What applies to philosophy, with Paul as a representative Stoic, is true of literature, with Paul as our book-taster. It has been one of my private pleasures to point out to Christian readers of the Pauline Epistles that the one to the Colossians implies an acquaintance with the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, such as would entitle us to assume that the Apostle had once seen that play performed, or had read it as accurately as if he had seen it.

Yet we can hardly put Aristophanes into the penumbra of Christianity, and must be content to say that Christian literature is not to be detached from its environment. This somewhat lengthy prologue leads me on to say, repeating what was suggested above, that not all the religions which co-existed with Christianity and competed with it, were either dead or dying. Certainly not Stoicism, which is religion as well as philosophy, and strong under both heads. Quite recently I was led to a closer study of the doctrines and the ritual of the Orphic or Pythagorean sects by the discovery, lately made in Rome, of a splendid underground basilica or temple of the Neo-Pythagoreans, enriched on every side with reliefs taken from Greek literature and antiquity. No one ever imagined that such a visible resurrection was coming to Orphic history in Rome, nor that we should be able to realize that Christianity was being anticipated in the Imperial City by an aggressive sect, apparently so young that one would never have imagined it was one of the oldest of ethical and spiritual movements. Yet there it was, as early as A.D. 40, or thereabouts, and there it is, at least in architecture and in art, before our own eyes to-day. One of the past competitors of our Faith is on the screen again for us to study, and I hope to show that it had common elements with the Christian religion, and had some reaction upon it.

Let us, however, try to realize the position of the new propagandists of the ancient faith and cult: let us put ourselves in their place, as if potentially priests in this lovely new temple. Our first difficulty will be one of adaptation of ancient forms and formulæ to a modern audience. We shall have to apologize for some things said and some things done by them of old time. We shall have to hide

some of them away (every great religion has a skeleton or two in its cupboard), and some of them we shall have to explain away, the convenient phrase for referring to such being the formula, 'which things are an allegory.' Otherwise we shall be the death's head at our own feast! So far as we have worked on Greek models, with Homer for our Bible, we shall have to reform them into decency and sometimes into intelligibility. On the other hand there will be some things which never can be out of date, either in doctrine or in practice. We can always tell people to 'follow God' (St. Paul does the same), and if we can illustrate our faith by our works, we have the essential elements of successful propaganda. When it comes to particular practice, without which no new sect arisen or old sect revived can get very far, we can proclaim the 'bloodless sacrifice,' and the associated 'vegetarian diet.' These can never be out of date, though they may be out of fashion. To the end of time the altar where breathes the living sacrifice will attract the spiritual worshipper more than the altar that smokes; and equally, to the end of our dispensation, there will be an increasing company of those who practise an untainted diet. 'But what of those legends that you have brought to Rome?' one will say. 'They seem more suitable for a Pompeian Villa than for a new sanctuary. Why are you telling us over and over the incidents of the *Wanderings of Ulysses*, and how do they come into either the history or the literature of the new religion?' Then we should have to explain that the Soul of Man is the true Ulysses, the Pilgrim from time to eternity, the Seeker after those *Islands of the Blest*, where in Elysian Fields those found worthy are at peace. There is a subject to announce in large print on the doors of our new Synagogue: 'The Islands of the Blest: where are they, and how may we find them?'

Suppose, on the other hand, that some one, less disposed for belief than to cavil, should interrupt in the good Greek manner, and ask why we have pictured on our walls the story of the daughters of Danaos, occupied eternally with the task of pouring water into a huge cask with a huge hole in the bottom, what shall we say in reply that will savour of edification and advance conviction? Would it not be something like this? 'Our young friend has touched upon a question of surpassing interest. It will seem to be a new problem that he has proposed. It is really as old, or almost as old, as the Church itself. For when the divine Plato was reporting the conversation of his Master, we find

him discussing this very same mystery of the Danaids, or the daughters of the Egyptian Danaos. He, Socrates, learned from Philolaos, one of our first teachers after Pythagoras, that there were two principal ways of regarding the Soul of Man: the one to describe it as in a tomb or *Sēma*, rather than a body or *Soma*; the other to regard it as a cask or *pitnos*, similar to that which the Danaids were trying to fill; and in this latter case we learn (to which our friend who asked the question will readily assent) that the cask has a hole in the bottom, and that man is the victim of credulity or incredulity (*ἀπιστία*), and is subject to irregular impulses in consequence of which he forgets as fast as he learns, and retains at last nothing of what he has received.'

In the Greek language, to which we are so much indebted, the Soul of the one thus described is called *pitnanos*, or *credulous*, being of the nature of a *pitnos*, or *cask*. In the same way Philolaos explained that the sad and weary female forms which are represented on the pillars yonder, are themselves souls that have missed their way, and engaged themselves in tasks that have no completion; they are the *uninitiated*, who never get farther than the front door of the temple, while always imagining that they have reached the shrine, or that it cannot be far off. Such was the doctrine of Philolaos with regard to the True Blessedness and the way of attaining thereto; and, if I have satisfied our inquirer with a reason for our having on our walls the Danaids and their pitchers, and the great vat or vase which stands for the Soul of Man, I may go on to answer another question which I am sure is in the minds of my readers, the question how the hole in the cask is to be stopped, and the uninitiated turned into the spiritual expert. It will be remembered that I said that the Soul was, through its irregular emotions and impulses, the victim of *Credulity* or *Incredulity* (they are closely related): now the cure for Credulity or Incredulity is Faith, and Credulity itself may be defined as Non-Faith or Un-Faith; and those who are the victims of Un-Faith never enter into true Blessedness. Moreover, since Faith is only an apprehension of Truth, it becomes necessary to observe, what again the Greek language, so full of noble thought and teaching, can explain to us, that Truth, or, as they call it, *Alétheia*, is, on one side, a negative apprehension; it means exactly 'Not Forgetting,' and he who does not forget, either his own Divine Origin or his equally Divine Destiny, will be sure to become a true Initiate, and to share the company at last of those who 'rest

their weary limbs on beds of Asphodel': but without the true Faith, one will fall into unbelief and never enter into bliss at all, but will remain to the last a cask with a hole in the bottom, or a cracked cistern which can hold no water.

Thus in playful fashion, but not ridiculously, I have tried to give an idea of the watchwords of the Neo-Pythagoreans when they moved on the capital of the Empire and built themselves a superb Synagogue, which must have attracted the attention of many of the more thoughtful in the metropolis. They would be saying to one another that something better than the Syrian Orontes has this time flowed into the Tiber.

We have picked up some of their watchwords: we know that their catechism is called *Akousma*, or *Listening-in*, and the Catechumens were known as *Akousmatics*, or *Listeners-in*; that the chief end of man was to become a Pilgrim to the Elysian Fields, and that if he failed it was δι' ἀπιστίαν or διὰ λήθην, through Unbelief or Forgetfulness.

And now let us turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and see what we find in its earlier chapters. Following an allusion to the words of the Psalm, which speaks of those of ancient days who could not enter into the Rest of the Promised Land, the Epistle explains that there is such a Rest, but that in the old time they did not enter in *through unbelief*, δι' ἀπιστίαν. This is the Pythagorean language. Read the third and fourth chapters and see how the argument eddies round the word ἀπιστία. In chapter 3 verse 12, where there is a reference to

'an evil heart of *unbelief* in departing from the living God,' I was disposed, with my usual fondness for emendation, to read ἀποστασία, Apostasy, but no! the Pythagorean term must stand: it occurs again in 3¹⁰, 'we see that they could not enter in through Unbelief' (ἀπιστία). We might, perhaps, with advantage restore the word in 4⁶, which is only a repetition of 3¹⁰. Here, then, we have the regular watchword of the Pythagoreans. We can go a step farther, and if we listen carefully we shall hear the Akousma (ἄκουσμα) and the Acousmatics; for the Epistle plays on this note. The Christian teaching is a λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς, whose first motive may perhaps be traced to the Psalm, 'To-day, if ye will hear his voice,' for in 3¹⁶ we have the question, 'Who are those that heard and provoked?' When we come to 4² we find a perplexing state of the text; something has gone wrong. Are we to read, 'they were not mingled by faith with the hearers,' or 'with the things that they heard'? The misunderstanding, perhaps, arose from a word ἀκούσασιν, meaning the catechetical teaching, in Pythagorean language. It would easily be changed into ἀκούσασιν of the modern editors, and so to ἀκουσθεῖσιν. Is that pushing the art of emendation too far? Perhaps; but I confess to an Orphic feeling, when I read these great chapters. For we also know our chief enemies to be ἀπιστία and λήθη.¹

¹ The student is referred, for further information on the subject to Carcopino, *La Basilique Pythagoricienne de la Porte Majeure* (Paris: L'Artisan du livre, 3 Rue de Fleurus, 1927).

The Gospel: Faith.

BY THE REVEREND PRINCIPAL D. S. CAIRNS, M.A., D.D., ABERDEEN.

IN his well-known book on the Evolution of Religion, Edward Caird commits himself to the statement that Jesus Christ was the greatest optimist who ever lived. I doubt if that is the conception of Christ and His religion which is most widely prevalent among us to-day.

I remember in the opening years of the war being at Swanwick with a company of refugee Continental students who had fled from the Belgian universities before the advance of the German armies—spindrift of the great storm which had drifted across the Channel to London. They were of many nationalities and faiths, or unfaiths. Most of them, indeed,

were Materialists and Atheists, and so half a dozen speakers were deputed to meet them in separate conference within the larger student conference. I had made the statement that Christianity was fundamentally an optimism, and I was at once conscious, when I was speaking, of a movement of surprise and dissent in the audience. When I had finished, this at once became explicit. How could I say such a thing? Christianity was surely an essentially pessimistic view of life. The answer was obvious. If Christianity were not the religion of faith, hope, and love, what was it? What did that translated into modern language imply but this, that