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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 3<sup>10</sup>, 'we see that they could not enter in through Unbelief' (ἀπιστία). We might, perhaps, with advantage restore the word in 4<sup>6</sup>, which is only a repetition of 3<sup>10</sup>. 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 3<sup>16</sup> we have the question, 'Who are those that heard and provoked?' When we come to 4<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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).

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## 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

the best thing to do with the Absolute Being was to trust Him, that the right thing to do with our fellow-man was to love him, and that the only sound way to treat the future was to believe in it? If that was not fundamental optimism, what was? But the incident suggested other thoughts. Had something not gone wrong somehow with our current conception of Christianity, when the Christian Church could convey so misleading an impression of its Lord?

It may possibly be objected that what may be true of the Churches of the Continent, Catholic and Evangelical, is not true of our Christianity on this side the Channel. I am not asserting that it is. But I cannot help feeling that a like contagion of depression in presence of its mighty task of winning the whole world for God affects all the Churches. I do not see the same vital optimism to-day in our religion that impels the progress of science, or drives on the progressive elements in our political life. Would any representative spiritual thinker to-day, for instance, put Hope between Faith and Love, as one of the great virtues of the Christian life, unless he were conscientiously following St. Paul, carried along as it were against his will by a stronger inspiration? Would he look on its absence as a sin? Yet surely we must do this if Hope be one of the great virtues.

I am persuaded that the root cause of the whole mischief is a certain weakening in the root virtue of all the virtues, of faith in God. The aim of this paper is chiefly to call to memory the essential Biblical teaching about Faith. So abundant is this teaching that only the barest outlines can be given. Indeed, the emphasis laid upon Faith goes right through the whole Bible from one end to the other. The self-revelation of God, the growing disclosure of His Nature and Will is, of course, the master idea. The Bible is mainly a book about God. But that self-revelation is not something that is forced upon men, so that whether they like it or no they must believe in it. It is a revelation to free human spirits. Viewed from the Divine side, therefore, it is self-revelation; but viewed from the human side it is discovery all the way, discovery of God. In other words, the revelation is always conditioned by Faith. All through the old covenant God trains men in Faith. He is always incomparably greater in Power, Wisdom, Love, and Grace than they are at first willing to believe, and all His ways with them in Providence are directed towards making them capable of thinking larger, juster, and more generous thoughts of Him. Explain it how we may, men naturally and instinctively always think God weaker, harder, and less trustworthy than He really is, and the whole story of Old Testament revelation

is the story of the gradual dispelling of that obsession by the Providence and Spirit of God. In other words, it is a training in Faith, and through this a growing self-revelation of the unity, the omnipotence, the omnipresence, the omniscience, the eternity, the justice, and the grace of God. All these glorious truths about God, every one of them a gospel, every one of them essential to full faith, dawned upon men after a long struggle of growing faith with unbelief, unbelief which incited men to believe that God was not One, but many; that He was weak, that He was absent from the world, or only visited it occasionally, that He did not know everything, and could be outwitted and flattered, that He was temporal and therefore changeable, that He was unfair and partial to His own clan, and that He was hard and relentless in His dealings with men. Thus all the Divine attributes were optimistic conceptions won after a hard battle with pessimism. So all the heroes of the Old Covenant were heroes of faith, men who launched themselves out on the great undiscovered ocean of God's nature and purpose, trusting the larger and more generous thought.

So by the inspiration of the Almighty, the Hebrew mind reached Monotheism, the most supremely optimistic of all faiths. But Hebrew faith was something more than Monotheism. It was faith in one supreme God, who had entered into covenant with Israel. It is this assurance that suffuses the whole religious life of Israel with colour and glow. For the covenant is not a bargain with man in which God says to him, 'If you do this, I will do that.' It was fundamentally a Divine assurance of grace. 'I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people.' It is a complete mistake to call this first covenant a covenant of works, as did the Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century. Like the second and greater covenant it, too, was a covenant of pure grace. But it, too, called for faith, faith in the grace manifested in the opening of the covenant with the fathers, visualized in ritual and sacrifice and king, and manifested in the Law and in the Prophets. The true Israelite by faith thus lived in an order of grace, although it maintained his living communion with the living God.

Thus far, and it is a long way surely, goes the old covenant. But the new covenant goes beyond it. Judaism in certain respects is a kind of cold fit of doubt and fear after the great optimism of the greater prophets. But it never lets go its monotheistic faith, and never quite loses hope and faith in the covenant faithfulness of God. Into it comes Jesus Christ with His announcement of the kingdom of God and the new covenant. The new covenant

is the old covenant freed from all externals and widened to all mankind. The Kingdom is obviously a manifestation on earth of the life of heaven, possibly the reason why St. Matthew always calls it the kingdom of heaven. Its ideal is life as God meant it ultimately to be, free from sin and free from all that element of tragedy and darkness which haunts human life as we know it in the world of time. Jesus says that He has brought it, that it is even now in the world. 'If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.'

The essential point is that the kingdom of God which Jesus announces is a pure gift of the grace of God. We shall miss the point entirely if we turn it into an ethical aim, as if Jesus said: 'I have come to show you the true ideal, let us work together for it.' The coming of the Kingdom in Him is the actual arrival of God in His grace initiating a new covenant with all mankind, containing implicit in itself the promises of the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and power over the tragic elements in human life, and all that we see unfolded later in the apostolic experience. It is true, as Ritschl has said, that the gift of the Kingdom is also a task. But it is the gift that makes the task possible. The task is the working out of the gift. We may compare the gift to the grants of prairie given by the States in new countries to the emigrant. It is on the basis and security of the grant that the settler works out its latent wealth of pasturage, of golden harvests and more precious silver and gold.

The understanding of what Jesus really meant by the kingdom of God is of absolutely vital importance for the understanding of the whole apostolic experience, and it explains, too, the extraordinary emphasis which Jesus puts upon the necessity of faith. God's gift is unlimited and amazing, but man's power to receive it is as yet pitifully small. The supreme way of realizing the Kingdom, then, is the increase of faith.

For this it makes all the difference in the world whether Jesus Christ is simply and only a brother man giving me new thoughts about God, or whether He is God manifest in the flesh seeking me. How vital this is to the Christian life an illustration may show. I know a great and famous man, let us say, and I earnestly desire his personal friendship. Now it is nearly always possible in our day and land to get an interview with anybody. But an interview is not a friendship, and so long as I am the seeker, and so bear the burden of the interview, there is not much hope of it becoming one. But it is altogether a different story when the greater takes the initiative

and keeps it, and is not offended or put off by all my weakness or insult, but bears it all and comes through it all, and holds out his hands to me still.

That is the great Christian story of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The coming of the Kingdom is the pressing home of the initiative of grace, and the new depth of God's nature revealed demands an unlimited extension of man's faith.

So everywhere in the Gospels we find Jesus calling for faith, and ever for more faith. He seems insatiable in His demand for faith. He welcomes it wherever He finds it in publican, Syrophenician, and Roman. He tells His disciples in effect that if they have enough of it there is nothing that they cannot be in the way of goodness, nothing that they cannot achieve in the way of blessing. Where He finds no faith He can do nothing, where He finds great faith there He works great deeds. He even says: 'According to your faith be it unto you.' Clearly all this teaching is simply a great extension and development of what we have already found in the old covenant. He has 'not come to destroy but to fulfil.' He is fighting with the same old persistent obsession of unbelief. The only conceivable background of His whole teaching about faith, the only thing that makes it reasonable and coherent, is the truth that He continually lived in the open presence of a Father, whom He knew to be incomparably greater, freer, more loving and more ready to help men than any one of them ever believed. If He could get men to awaken to that supreme reality, then the Kingdom would be actualized. In part He succeeded, and in part He failed. In so far as He succeeded Christianity is a living power in the world to-day. He failed to carry His own generation by storm, but He saw that something more was needed than He had been able to achieve by His teaching and deeds, and so of His own freedom He chose to die for His idea of God, and for pure love of His brethren lay down His life for their sins. So, predicting final victory, He 'sealed the covenant with his blood.' He died and rose again on the third day.

We cannot pursue in detail the story of how His apostles carried out their Lord's supreme thoughts. I would only say that St. Paul's teaching about faith seems to me simply the development of his Lord's. He takes the total manifestation of the grace of God—which Jesus had expressed in the term the kingdom of God—as it was given in the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, and completed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in effect he teaches that this great salvation has once for all been freely given to men. But, like Jesus, he

taught that they must have faith to receive it. At every point faith is the essential thing. Men are justified by faith, they are sanctified by faith, and they must live by faith in the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. To prove this in detail would be to cite a large part of the Pauline Epistles. A learned and invaluable modern commentary has discovered that there are seven different kinds of faith in the Pauline Epistles. As I read St. Paul there is only one kind of faith, and it is always in God. But God manifests His grace in different ways. Sometimes it is in His Providence, sometimes it is in His hearing and answering prayer, and sometimes it is in the Cross and Passion, and sometimes it is in the Resurrection of His Son and the gift of His Spirit. But faith is always the same thing in essence: it is the going out of the heart to the living God, in confidence and self-dedication, in all His manifestations. And to that faith God always reveals new depths of His goodness in Nature, in History, and in Redemption. The progress of the new life is always, according to St. Paul, 'from faith to faith.' But God is always before us with His grace inviting us on to more and deeper intimacy. 'All our communion with God depends on God's communion with us.'

One would have thought that this great discovery of God which we have in the New Testament would have gone on developing, as science goes on from discovery to discovery, from faith to faith, till the crowning victory predicted by Jesus in the prophecy of His second advent was realized. Such seems to have been the general New Testament expectation.

But such was not the event. The progress of the new faith in the heathen world was like the passage of a red-hot shot through an immense snowdrift, the ball cooling and slowing as it went.

Kipling has a story about how fear came to a little village in northern India built in the great jungle on the southern slopes of the Himalayas. From sheer dread of the wild creatures of the jungle, the dwellers in the village forsook their fields and cowered in their huts and at last forsook their homes themselves. He tells how then the rank weeds and creepers began at once to grow through the green crops and over the houses, and how all the wild alchemy of tropic sun and rain and storm got to work upon the village and crumbled it away in ruin, and how in a month the jungle was back in roaring flood again, where once there had been the homes of men.

Such a return of the jungle, as we know, befell Christianity as the dark and middle ages developed. Pagan rites and philosophy came back in Christian forms, and the energies of the primitive faith

became muffled and depressed under the heavy overgrowth of the ancient jungle.

Christianity did not altogether fail or die; it achieved heroic things, but it came very near succumbing.

When the deliverance actually came with the Reformation, it came through a man who put all the stress on faith, who went right back to the primitive revelation and the elemental human response of faith.

To Luther, says Harnack, 'the Christian religion is living assurance of the living God, who has revealed Himself and opened His heart in Christ—nothing else. Objectively, it is Jesus Christ, His Life and Work; subjectively, it is faith. Faith is our life; its object, however, is the God of grace, and therefore the forgiveness of sins, which includes adoption and blessedness. Let us hear some of the great sayings about faith by which Martin Luther recalled Christendom to the centre of things again: 'Oh, it is a living, active, powerful thing, faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do us good continually.' 'Faith is a living deliberate confidence in the grace of God, so certain that for it it could die a thousand deaths. And such confidence and knowledge in Divine grace makes us joyous, intrepid, and cheerful towards God and all creation. "It is impossible for one who trusts in God not to rejoice." Even if the world falls to wreck, he will be overwhelmed undismayed amid the ruins.' 'Such faith, which throws itself upon God whether in life or death, alone makes a Christian man.'

Out of that re-birth of faith, the modern world was born. But the jungle of Protestant scholasticism and formalism came back again in the seventeenth century, and again the springs of life ran low. Again, there came a return in the eighteenth century in the great Evangelical Revival which, as Lecky says, saved England from paganism, and which in its essence was a return to primitive Pauline faith. Without it the Oxford Movement and later revivals of religion would have been impossible. In our own time, it appears to me, the return of the figure of the Jesus of History has been the most potent element in the renewal of faith in all the Churches alike. It is surely true of Him to-day, as it has always been, that above all others in human history He stands for faith. When all has been said of these others, their faith is as a grain of mustard seed compared with the faith of Jesus. He is, as the Puritan Goodwin said: 'the first and greatest believer who ever lived,' or as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has once for all put it: 'He is the author and the perfecter of faith.'