

Wine (S.P.C.K.; 6d. net). What is its judgment? Against—against decidedly. But that judgment will not stay the movement.

There is still ignorance, and plenty of it, regarding *Comparative Religion*—what it is, and what it seeks to do. And ignorance is the poverty-stricken parent of fear. So Dr. A. S. Geden has done well to write a short and simple book under that title (S.P.C.K.; 2s. net). He is just the man to write it well, for he is a trained scholar who has given many hours and years to the study. This is his aim—

'The following work,' he says, 'is and can only be a brief introduction to a serious and most important subject. For those whose interest is enchained, and who desire to pursue it further, it is hoped that the bibliography at the end of the book will afford aid and guidance for more unrestricted study. Only a selection from a great and growing literature has been possible. In this respect, as in many others, the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by Dr. Hastings, is a treasury of all good things. There are many ways, however, of approaching the study of Comparative Religion. The best, in the judgment of the writer, is that of attempting to gain an insight into the teaching of some of the more influential

religions of the world, collating then the results obtained, and estimating the significance of truths held in common and of the cleavages and differences which profoundly separate them. It is from this point of view that the following introduction has been written. If it may conduce in some measure to a deepened interest in a subject that yields to none in urgency and promise, the purpose and hope of the writer will have been fulfilled.'

Bishop McDowell, in his Yale Lectures for 1917, tells us that in America there are ministers who fear that they may be spoken of as children's preachers. In this country no minister covets a more honourable attribute. The only trouble with us is that so few are worthy of it. Dr. A. E. Garvie, Principal of New College, London, is much concerned about the neglect of the children both in public worship and elsewhere. He has written a book on *The Minister and the Young Life of the Church* (S.S. Union; 2s. net) to urge the duty and pleasure of work among the little ones, and the obligation that lies on every student for the ministry to train himself directly for it. He writes with ample experience; and so simply and sincerely that no one can miss either his meaning or the pressure of it.

The Coptic Cabala.¹

By D. S. MARGOLIOUTH, M.A., D.LITT., F.B.A., LAUDIAN PROFESSOR OF ARABIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

THAT ancient authors, both sacred and profane, at times employed cryptic modes of expression is known partly from their own statements, and partly from traditions recorded by others, while occasionally it is to be inferred from certain phenomena. In languages whose letters have numerical values it is natural to utilize this fact for puzzles of the sort; and, indeed, in the great encyclopædia of old Islamic diplomacy which the Sultan Library in Cairo is now publishing, a recognized form of cypher consists in substituting for the

letters of names their values as numbers; thus, the series *forty, eight, forty, four* might represent *MHMD* (Mohammed), though this method was often thought too simple, and the process was complicated in some way. The Rabbinic name for this process is *Gematria*, usually identified with the Greek word *γεωμετρία*, 'geometry,' but more probably a corruption of the word *γραμματεία* in the sense 'cryptic alphabet' (as *notae* is used in Latin), since the word is applied to puzzles on a different principle, e.g. that which consists in substituting η for κ , ψ for α , etc. The Rabbis made some wonderful discoveries in the Old Testament by the use of the numerical *gematria*; thus they

¹ *A Preliminary Investigation of the Cabala contained in the Coptic Gnostic Books*, by F. H. Blond and T. Simcox Lea. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1917. 3s. 6d. net.)

identified Abraham's 318 trained servants (Gn 14¹⁴) with his house-steward Eliezer, the letters of whose name make up precisely that number. In the New Testament the Number of the Beast is offered as a puzzle, and no one has hitherto succeeded in solving it; for the essence of these cryptograms is that the solution must be *exactly* right, and liable to no objection, as is the case with the Rabbinic 318. It is also fairly clear that the number 153 in Jn 21¹¹ is cryptic, but of this too the import is quite uncertain.

The authors of the pamphlet before us, one of them an architect and the other a Doctor of Divinity, are attempting by the aid of this process to recover some of the *γνώσις* to whose existence they find allusions in the New Testament, and of which they suppose relics to be preserved in the Gnostic literature of the Copts. The numerical value of certain names and technicalities in the New Testament is not accidental (according to them), but reveals a system of mathematical symbolism, at times implying considerable proficiency in this science.

Now it is not possible to employ letters simultaneously for two purposes without detriment to one or other of those purposes; the existence of a puzzle is therefore apt to be revealed by something that is unnatural in the words that contain it: as in the first line of the *Iliad*, which ancient critics declared unlucky, inappropriate, irreverent, obscure, and unmetrical. Is there anything about the words with which this pamphlet deals calculated to excite suspicion? In the first case with which they are occupied the answer should be in the affirmative. It is that of the name ΚΗΦΑΣ, translated Πέτρος, but which would naturally be rendered λίθος, which in Greek, like ܢܝܢܘܢ in Syriac, is the ordinary word for 'stone.' This word *petros* seems to be preferred owing to its similarity to *petra*, 'rock,' found in the *Greek* of Mt 16¹⁸ ('Thou art stone, and on this rock I will build my church'), but not in the underlying Syriac, which has ܢܝܢܘܢ, *stone*, in both places, shown by a number of reasons to be right. Now if Πέτρος were numerically equivalent to Κηφᾶς, this would afford an easy explanation of the employment of this equivalent. The explanation offered by the authors of this pamphlet (who do not, indeed, notice the difficulty) is the following. The value of the name Cephas is 729, which is the cube of 9,—it must be admitted, a number highly likely to be employed mystically.

'The Schema, or visible figure of Cephas, shews $9 \times 9 \times 9$ or 243 facets out of a total of 486 on the whole surface. The 486 is *petra* ($80 + 5 + 300 + 100 + 1$), so that PETRA the rock is the surface of the cube whose solidity is CEPHAS. And ΠΕΤΡΑ, *σμγ*, or the Rock of 243 stones = $729 = \text{ΚΗΦΑΣ}$.'

This explanation accounts for two facts—the Græcizing of the Syriac name by the addition of a termination, and the introduction of the *rock*, which the original Syriac has not got.

A further difficulty in the passage is the use of the term ἐκκλησία (Church), which does not seem to belong (at any rate in the sense of something capable of being built) to quite the beginnings of Christianity. The Lewisian Syriac fails us here, and the Curetonian is not likely to represent the original in the case of its equivalent for this word. The mathematical explanation offered is the following:

It will be observed that the 243 facets visible belong to 217 separate cubes. . . . On the further side of the cube, invisible, are 169 more of the lesser cubes, and this is the number of the name of Christ 'O 'AMHN. These 217 + 169 cubes completely surround and enclose the cube of $7 \times 7 \times 7$ stones, whose surface has facets $7 \times 7 \times 6 = 294 = \text{ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ}$ —the Church.

It may be asked to what extent this system is to be found in the Coptic remains of Gnosticism, the *Pistis Sophia* and the Book of *Ieou*. The reply is that the system is not directly discernible in them, but is suggested as a solution for some difficult passages. That the Gnostics to some extent worked on this principle is attested by Irenæus, who makes the very pertinent observation that the numerical value of the name *Jesus* should be taken not from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. And the same would apply with even greater force to the name *The Amen*. The task of supplementing the statements of Irenæus would seem to be different from that of discovering intentional examples of the method in the New Testament itself; for the writers admit that there was a false as well as a true *gnosis*. And if the number 666 in the Apocalypse be a conscious imitation of 888, the number of the Greek *Jesus*—and this, which is an old suggestion, seems to be plausible—the authors of this pamphlet are justified in introducing

into criticism an element which has been hitherto ordinarily neglected. * The history of a text is only understood by those who know of what both the authors and the copyists are thinking. But to

appreciate fully the system suggested in this pamphlet requires more knowledge of mathematics and of the history of mathematics than most students of Christian theology are likely to possess.

The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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I.

DURING the past ten years, ever since Wrede published his pamphlet in 1906, it is the literary aspect of this writing which has commanded most attention, the problem of its structure and shape, the question whether it is a treatise or a homily. But the problem of its theology or Christology remains paramount. If this religious aspect has drawn less eager interest than was formerly the case, the reason has been an impatience with the habit of turning metaphors into dogmas, which has been specially rife in the dogmatic use of Hebrews, partly owing to the mistranslations of the Vulgate, partly owing to ignorance of Semitic sacrifice. I propose in this paper to discuss the genesis rather than the exodus of the Christology of Hebrews. But I do not mean to imply that the interests of the one are not at bottom the interests of the other. The doctrinal applications of Hebrews have been sometimes arid and sometimes mischievous, and often both. Still, they have been prompted by a religious interest fundamentally, and this was the interest which led to the original formation of the author's Christology. The more historical criticism has altered our attitude to the biblical proofs of Hebrews, to its bookish arguments and occasionally fantastic Alexandrian exegesis, all the more ought we to realize that the instincts of the writer were larger than any arguments which he adduces in their favour. The tabernacle may be legendary, and the interpretations of the Old Testament no longer tenable, but it was not from these that the composer of this beautiful and strong homily derived his convictions and confession of Jesus.

The clue to the Christology of Hebrews as of any other N.T. writing or group of writings lies in the particular aspect or estimate of the Christian experience which characterizes the writer. By

'Christology' we mean the expression given to thoughts upon the value and significance of Jesus Christ in the world-order, viewed from any standpoint of thought and discipline. The anonymous author of Hebrews is forced to think out this religious value, not by any speculative necessity (although he is more speculative in some respects than Paul) but by the demands of his own original faith in contact with the needs of his readers. Just because his speculations are so daring, we require to start carefully from the axiom that they are speculations in the interests of a religious experience, on which he reflects and for which, by the help of Alexandrian Judaism, he finds a metaphysical and theoretical basis of the Christian position towards God and the world.

To this writer religion is above all the sense and assurance of fellowship with God on the basis of forgiveness. Christianity is the religion which is religion as it mediates access to the divine presence and secures the consciousness of God's nearness. Now and then he seems to admit the simpler view of Jesus that such access requires no more than faith: 'he who draws near to God must believe that he exists and that he does reward those who seek him.' But the characteristic idea of his argument is that man's approach to God must be mediated by sacrifice offered on his behalf. He takes a sombre view of life; the stern sense of the moral decisiveness of existence in this world and of the liability to lose heart and ground thrills paragraph after paragraph of his homily. He thoroughly sympathizes with the instinct which underlay the practice of sacrifice in ancient religion, that fellowship with God is not a matter of course, that God is accessible and yet difficult of access, that human nature cannot find its way unaided into his presence, that the pressure