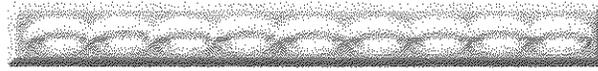


ETA SIGMA PHI

Thirty-eighth Annual Latin Prose Composition Contest (2005)

To be written as an examination, under supervision, within a maximum of three hours. The contestant is permitted to use an English-Latin lexicon (e.g., Cassell's) but no other helps. The only identification on the contest paper should be the contestant's pen name. The following selection comes from Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion by Jane Ellen Harrison. This pamphlet was published as a summary of her innovative work on Greek religion. At the end of this summary, the author turns to her own notions of religion and its role in the twentieth century. Some of the modern vocabulary employed will provide an opportunity for creative expression, and Prof. Harrison's direct style will allow for literal translation.



Religion means to us now, at least to me, not cosmology, not a story told to account for how things are, not ritual or theology, the various projections of our own unsatisfied desire; religion means a way of life possible because we are not only animals but human animals; it means the sense that you and I are good but that we can and mean to be better, and that in order to be better we will if need be—and need is—practice asceticism, suffer sharp pain and desolation in the death, the crucifixion of animal desires. All religion in all time is concerned with life, the religion of today with the betterment of life.

But, thank Heaven, asceticism is not all or chiefly that depressing thing, negation...In the old days most religiously-minded people were troubled by the thought that they were not "devoting themselves to others;" self-sacrifice was felt to be incumbent, the only road to peace. Hence the constant itch for philanthropy. Now religion says all things are possible and permissible, only remember there is a better as well as a good. The instincts are good and remain the prime motors to thought. The personal emotions are good, the best of which the spiritually undeveloped are capable, yet in the exercise of these you but strengthen your selfhood. But in science, that is the disinterested search after truth, in art, which is creative self-absorption, you lose yourself in something bigger and more permanent and these henceforth rank as of the highest religious value.

Asceticism is then not only resistance to the descending wave, it is also, it is chiefly, the rising on the upward wave, buoyant, triumphant.