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978-0-521-38599-2 - Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine

E. R. Dodds

Frontmatter

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**PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN
IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY**

**THE WILES LECTURES
GIVEN AT THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
BELFAST, 1963**

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FROM MARCUS AURELIUS TO
CONSTANTINE

BY
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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1965
First paperback edition 1990
Reprinted 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000 (twice)

Library of Congress Catalogue card number 65 – 15309

ISBN 0 521 38599 7

Transferred to digital printing 2001

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E. R. Dodds

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY HENRY CHADWICK	<i>page</i> ix
PREFACE	xi
KEY TO REFERENCES	xiii
I MAN AND THE MATERIAL WORLD	I
II MAN AND THE DAEMONIC WORLD	37
III MAN AND THE DIVINE WORLD	69
IV THE DIALOGUE OF PAGANISM WITH CHRISTIANITY	102
INDEX	139

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FOREWORD

ERIC Robertson Dodds (1893–1979) was an Ulsterman from County Down and a man of many parts. A Fenian, a poet (friend of Yeats and Eliot, intimate with Auden and MacNeice), a lifelong rebel against authority who nevertheless ended by becoming an authority himself, holding the Regius Professorship of Greek at Oxford, 1936–60. From that august chair he taught and wrote for a fascinated audience and readership on Euripides' *Bacchae* and Plato's *Gorgias*. Lectures in California made his best known work, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951). All these studies were marked by the very modern questions that he put to the ancient texts, influenced by anthropological investigations of shame and guilt. One of his earliest interests remained a lifelong passion – the study of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists, with whom some of the best early Christian thinkers found themselves in deep sympathy.

The present book, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, is not only a learned and important study of the things that pagans and Christians of the time shared in common, but also almost a self-portrait of Dodds himself, ironic, austere, humane, illuminating, and of his puzzled reaction to his own age of anxiety. The reader often feels that the unity of the book

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[More information](#)

comes more from the author's mind than from the evidence presented. Another account of the same period might produce far more inconsistencies. Yet the range and generous sympathy of Dodds' interpretation and the sheer concentration of the writing combine to place it among the most notable of his distinguished studies.

Henry Chadwick

Cambridge

1990

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

THIS little book is based on a course of four lectures which I had the honour of delivering in May 1963 in the Queen's University, Belfast, on the invitation of the Wiles Foundation. The lectures are printed substantially as they were spoken, save for a few additions and corrections. They were addressed to a general audience, and I hope that in their printed form they will be of interest to the general reader who has no specialised knowledge of ancient thought or of Christian theology. I have, however, supplemented them with footnotes which specify the evidence on which my statements are based, and develop some additional arguments and speculations.

My thanks are due in the first place to the Wiles Foundation and to all those who took personal trouble to make my visit to Belfast an agreeable experience: in particular to Dr Michael Grant, Vice-Chancellor of the Queen's University, and to Mrs Grant; to Mrs Austen Boyd; and to Professor Michael Roberts. I am most grateful also to those scholars who attended my lectures as guests of the Foundation and discussed them with me at the colloquia which followed, namely A. H. Armstrong, H. Butterfield, Henry Chadwick, R. Duncan-Jones, Pierre Hadot, A. H. M. Jones, A. D. Momigliano, H. W. Parke, Audrey Rich, S. Weinstock and G. Zuntz. Here and there in this book they will, I hope, recognise

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

echoes of their individual contributions. But the main value of these colloquia lay in the informal interchange of ideas between representatives of several disciplines which even today are still too often pursued in timid isolation.

In preparing my manuscript for publication I have received generous help from two friends who are experts in fields of which my own knowledge is very incomplete: Henry Chadwick in patristics and George Devereux in psychology. They have saved me from a number of errors; for those which remain my native obstinacy is alone responsible.

E. R. D.

Oxford
October 1963

Since the above was written a version of these lectures has been delivered as the Eitrem Lectures for 1964 in the University of Oslo. I must take this opportunity to thank Professor Leiv Amundsen, Professor Eiliv Skard, Dr Egil Wyller and others for generous hospitality and helpful criticism.

E. R. D.

September 1964

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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In references of the form i, ii, 3.45, the last figure refers to the lines of Henry and Schwyzer's edition, except in the case of *Ennead* vi where the lineation is Bréhier's, the Henry-Schwyzer edition not being yet available.

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[More information](#)

*I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.*

ROBERT FROST