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978-1-107-43286-4 - The Faith of a Subaltern: Essays on Religion and Life

Alec De Candole

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THE FAITH OF A
SUBALTERN

ESSAYS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

BY

ALEC DE CANDOLE

LIEUTENANT IN THE WILTSHIRE REGIMENT

KILLED IN ACTION, SEPTEMBER 1918

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF BRISTOL



CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1919

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE writer of these Essays was born at Cheltenham on January 26th, 1897. His first school-days were spent at St Faith's, Cambridge, with Mr R. S. Goodchild. In 1908 he went to St Andrew's, Southborough (Rev. Reginald Bull). Two years later he was elected to a Foundation scholarship at Marlborough adding to it a Senior scholarship in 1912. At his schools he showed great promise and gained many prizes. In December, 1915, he was elected to an open Classical Exhibition at Trinity College, Cambridge. In the following April he left school for the Army and after training at a Cadet School in Oxford he was appointed to a Commission in the 4th Wilts. Regiment and proceeded to France in April, 1917.

After short leave in the following September he returned to France, and was wounded on October 28th, coming back to England in November. After some months on Salisbury Plain, where in the early part of 1918 he wrote these Essays, he was attached to the Machine Gun Corps and went to Grantham in April. In July he left again for France where he was killed on the night of September 3rd, 1918.

H. L. C. DE C.

January, 1919

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PREFACE

As Alec de Candole's Headmaster and friend, I have been given the privilege of writing a short preface to this little volume of Theological Essays. I strongly recommend to the attention of clergy and laity alike this young officer's vigorous profession of the faith that was in him. It is a valuable contribution to religious thought.

The boy's personality was remarkable and could not fail to impress itself on those with whom he came in contact, whether they were young or old. Of the depth in him there was no doubt from his early boyhood: the breadth of his outlook on life it was interesting to watch develop: to the height of his spiritual nature his book of poems *Avalon*¹ testifies, as well as this present volume, which he left behind him at his early death in Flanders.

When in the Sixth Form at Marlborough he was a good Classical scholar: but he was much more. He was avid of ideas and loved to wrestle with them and to argue over them. His mind was remarkably keen to detect error, and stern in rejecting it. Even more than most clever boys he was a remorseless critic, but his criticisms were

¹ This was printed privately, but is to be published in a fuller form later.

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governed by a strictly logical sense and fairness. His one great object of attainment was truth, truth at all costs. It is this craving for truth that is the chief feature of the present work. The reader must remember that it is the product of only twenty-one years of life, thought and experience. But yet there is maturity in his grasp of problems and in handling them, and evidence of a deeply religious life. The author commands attention by his obvious sincerity, as well as by his ability.

Like Charles Sorley, his rather older contemporary at school, whom he greatly loved, and whom he here quotes, he was a splendid rebel: a rebel against the institutional, the conventional and the traditionally accepted, when and where, if tried by canons of truth and principle, he found them wanting. Much that Alec de Candole here writes will challenge criticism, especially in schools of thought to which he was clearly and strongly opposed. Personally I do not accept all that the boy says, but after reading his Essays I feel that he was one who had the power of envisaging truth, and truth whole. There is fresh air, and sunshine all through, and a degree of common-sense that is stimulating and refreshing. He has conviction and a trenchant power of expression. In dealing with narrowness and exclusiveness he displays a just ruthlessness, and in the face of much ex-

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aggerated institutionalism declares boldly for Christ's fundamental principles, setting Christianity before Churchmanship. Boy though he is, he expresses the views of a large number of thinking Churchmen whose opinions and convictions, I think and hope, will now gain fuller presentment after the War.

This youth would surely, had he lived, have matured into a great force. For he had the root of the matter in him. His hope for the future was ordination in the Church of England, to which he was devotedly attached, in spite of his strong dislike and vigorous criticism of certain phases and tendencies in its modern development. "The seed and full flower of all human goodness is the life and death and love of Jesus." A finer dying message no boy ever left behind him.

May this volume, with its strong and nobly expressed faith, bring comfort to that new home beneath the towers of Westminster, a home he never knew but would have passionately loved!

ST J. B. WYNNE WILLSON

THE DEANERY,
BRISTOL,*November 1918*

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