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EVOLUTION
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BY

STEWART A. McDOWALL, M.A.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

CHAPLAIN AND ASSISTANT MASTER AT WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Author of Evolution and the Need of Atonement

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TO MY FATHER

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PREFACE

MANY laymen feel that the humanity of a doctor is generally, though by no means always, richer than the humanity of a clergyman. Not a few courageously proclaim the fact; greatly to the discomfort, and perhaps the benefit, of the clergy. And as we mentally run through the long roll of literary doctors, beginning with Luke the Beloved Physician, noting the names of Sir Thomas Browne, Dr John Brown, Dr Oliver Wendell Holmes, and many more, till we reach contemporary writers like Douglas White and the author of *The Corner of Harley Street*, we cannot but agree that the laymen have a good deal of justice on their side. And our personal experience teaches us the same.

The reason of this is not far to seek.

The humanity of the doctor is richer than the humanity of the parson because he knows so much more about the mechanism in which the soul lives. Very few doctors fall into the mistake of thinking they have to talk to, and counsel, a mechanism without a soul; while "quite a many" clergymen talk to a soul as if it had not got a mechanism tied on to it. Unfortunately, the doctor has not time to be a parson

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as well (though many are both in all but name and technical knowledge); and, still more unfortunately, a medical degree and a hospital appointment, followed by some years of general practice, are not within the sphere of practical politics in the training of the parson. But, at least, we parsons can learn to reverence the doctors' point of view, and the doctors ours.

Each will have to be honest and openminded, and unready to take offence. But the outcome will be pure gain for both. We parsons shall learn to admire the body a great deal more than we do; and to see what a very useful servant, what a very valuable ally, it has been, and still is, for the soul. We shall learn to be rather more charitable to some sinners, and rather less complacent to some respectable folk. We may learn to lighten our condemnation of sins of the body, and to put far more vigour into our denunciation of harshness and lovelessness and such-like sins of the soul. We shall get love into truer perspective, and bring our code more into line with our Master's. We may find saints in rather unexpected places—and sinners too, for the matter of that. And the doctors will learn something as well, but we may leave that matter to them.

The spread of knowledge has imposed a very serious duty upon all parsons, for it has taught men to ask "Why?" And if the clergy cannot give a reason for the faith that is in them, and further, a reason that

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takes full cognisance of, and welcomes, modern discoveries, men will turn to others for help. The phase of doubt and questioning is in itself thoroughly healthy; but it may become a real menace to the Church, unless her accredited teachers are prepared to teach, and to learn. It is no good to say to a man "This is what you ought to want to hear about." Our duty is to let him tell us what he wants to hear about himself, and then to try to answer his questions. For the common-sense man asks questions which are full of common sense. St Peter was not told to be content to roam with the flock, and to snatch a mouthful for himself where he could; nor, on the other hand, does the skilful shepherd feed his flock with roots all the year round.

The present book, and its precursor, represent an attempt to look at the human being as a soul closely connected to a mechanism. I have tried as far as possible to see eye to eye with the doctor and the common-sense man, while keeping steadily in view the conviction that the mechanism exists because of the soul, and not the soul because of the mechanism. Furthermore, stress is laid on the fact that neither soul nor mechanism is fixed: the one is growing through the activities of the other, and both are changing. Much is to be gained by the effort to view life as a whole, and without bias. Naturally, a rooted conviction that the soul is more important than the

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mechanism renders it impossible to write altogether without bias; one can only try to avoid prejudice, as far as is humanly possible.

Comparatively little detailed consideration is given in the present book to the conclusions of particular schools of philosophy, except where a reference to one system or another has seemed desirable for the purpose of illustrating a definite point. William James justly complains that “The abuse of technicality is seen in the infrequency with which, in philosophical literature, metaphysical questions are discussed directly on their own merits. Almost always they are handled, as if through a heavy woollen curtain, the veil of previous philosophers’ opinions. Alternatives are wrapped in proper names, as if it were indecent for a truth to go naked.” I have tried, rather, to work from point to point, handling everything with bare fingers, and only discovering by touch the shape of each lump of fact and its contacts with the next. And the shapes and contacts of some were unexpected.

But clothes are ornamental; and these ornaments we have come to consider essential to decency. Therefore, both for the sake of our ideas of what is suitable, and to escape arrest by the police who guard our thoughts, I have decked the body of my work with more or less of the usual habiliments¹.

¹ Those who have never studied Metaphysics, but who wish to gain some general idea of the scope and aim of Philosophy, cannot

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The debt I owe to many writers, and especially to M. Bergson, is manifest throughout. But, for the above reason, no copious bibliography is given, though reference is made to some of the works which proved specially helpful; and also, of set purpose, to various small manuals, which may be consulted with profit by those who have not leisure or opportunity to study larger books.

I would emphasise the fact that the outlook on the problems of life and religion is in a sense narrow. The standpoint of evolution has been adopted, and from that, and that alone, the whole has been viewed. Very much that is true and valuable, very much that is important, must necessarily lie outside our purview. And everything that does lie outside has been rigorously excluded. I cannot hope to have avoided serious omissions, any more than positive errors; but many aspects of the problems discussed are outside our range, and one may not justly be brought to task for failing to include matters which it was never intended to discuss.

The first part of the book deals with certain basal problems which lie at the root of religion, and an attempt is made to show that the chief contradictions

do better than read F. B. Jevons' *Philosophy. What is it?* (Camb. Univ. Press, 1/6 net) and the Hon. Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* (Williams and Norgate, 1/- net), both of which are admirable summaries.

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of our experience are due to the limitation of freedom, and the bearing of this limitation on the mechanism of thought. Necessarily, the discussion of many aspects of the subject-matter is somewhat technical; and I fear that I may not altogether have avoided obscurity, though I have tried to do so. The conclusions are simple, and so is their application, but one has first to dig deep, in order to discover this, and make it clear. In the second part the great realities of the personal religious life of a Christian are examined from the same standpoint—that of limited, but growing, freedom.

Of necessity frequent reference is made to my earlier book, *Evolution and the Need of Atonement*, to which the present volume is a sequel, and in some sense a corollary; though complete in itself.

In that book an attempt was made to show that sin, though it is the result of evolution, is yet not an *inevitable* result. It is failure to progress; but it is more than mere failure. It is the conscious *choice* of the lower course by beings who are capable of higher things. By sin man sets up a very real barrier between himself and God, since he has of his own will chosen a course of action that commits him to an evolution which can never end in perfectness. Imperfection is ingrained in his being. God must remove that imperfection by some means which leaves man's freedom untouched, if there is ever to be union between Himself and man; for there can be no true union between

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a Being Who is perfect, and beings eternally doomed to imperfection by their own free act. And so the evolutionary conception of sin in no degree does away with the need of Atonement, but, rather, lays stress on the necessity of an Atonement that could only be wrought by God Himself. It in no degree removes the need for a God, but rather gives clear indication of His existence and His plan for the world; for spiritual evolution is a real fact, and implies a spiritual environment.

Now philosophers have long been divided into two hostile camps: those who consider everything in terms of mind, and those who consider everything in terms of matter. The first includes the Sensationalists and Idealists; the second, the Materialists. But people are beginning to realise that the camps lie on opposite sides of a line; and that each group says the line has only one side. The common-sense man, who may be also a philosopher—for the prevailing view that the two are mutually incompatible is unsound—is objecting that every line has two sides, and *must* have two sides, even though it is without breadth. And so a species of philosophy, not very different from a kind of practical dualism, has grown up, which admits that Mind and Matter alike really exist in some sort of way, and that they are very closely related. As to what exactly constitutes this relation, views differ widely; but Mind is generally

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given a more prominent place in the system than Matter. In the course of the present work the reader will find a good many arguments adduced which seem to point towards the conception that *Matter is intimately connected with the limitation of freedom*. And freedom is necessarily to be regarded as an attribute of a Personal Being, and only of a Personal Being. It is further suggested that what we call Matter may be *simply the expression or manifestation of this limitation of freedom*.

In the beginning this must have been a limitation of the freedom of God, since freedom is an attribute of personality. Hence arise the kenosis-aspect of Creation and the doctrine of Immanence. As soon as other personalities develop, the limitation affects them also as part of their experience, and matter becomes a limitation of man's freedom as well as God's.

Moreover, the problem becomes explicable when, and only when, we seek and find an *end* or *aim* in limitation. Our whole examination will lead us to conclusions that involve a very definite teleology. We shall see matter as an instrument; for the end is something that can only be brought about by the limitation of the freedom of God. And this must necessarily be willed by God, for there is no one else to will it; and it must be, so, a self-limitation.

With the elucidation of this thought the first six chapters are concerned. Of necessity they are in a

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great degree metaphysical. The remaining chapters are more practical, for they deal with the everyday, wonderful certainties of religious life.

If anything is herein written that gives offence to one or another, I can but ask pardon. If anything appears too dogmatic in form, it is due simply to a desire for clearness and brevity. The whole matter is far too high for adequate presentation. One can but outline, to the best of one's ability, such aspects of the truth as seem to be revealed.

The pen is a poor instrument at best; and the awe and reverence of the heart, however deep, cannot be forced into the narrow compass of words and syntax. The ineptitude of the Prologue in *Pyramus and Thisbe* resulted from his inability to "stand upon points."

I can only say that I have tried to search out the truth honestly, and plead for lenient judgment.

For all of us there is one great belief, that "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, to the end that all who believe on Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life." This is the great, universal Truth; and we can only strive, each in his own way, to understand those aspects of it for which our training makes us able.

I must again express my gratitude to Canon V. F. Storr. He has read the manuscript, and offered many valuable suggestions. While he can in no way

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be held responsible for the general argument, or for the mistakes and omissions that may still remain, he is responsible for the absence of some, and for suggestions towards the reshaping of certain passages which were obscure or doubtful.

I am also indebted to my wife for many hints and criticisms, and for constant and ungrudging help in preparing this book for the press.

Acknowledgment is due to the Editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* for his kind permission to make use of my article on "The Problem of Continuity," which appeared in July 1914, and which forms the basis of Chapter II. A few omissions, verbal alterations, and additions have been made, but it remains substantially unaltered.

S. A. McD.

WINTON,
February 1915.

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