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978-1-107-60521-3 - Evolution and the Need of Atonement
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EVOLUTION
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BY
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Cambridge :
at the University Press
1914

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-60521-3 - Evolution and the Need of Atonement
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107605213

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First Edition 1912
Second Edition 1914
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-60521-3 Paperback

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP RYLE,
Dean of Westminster.

My friend, Mr McDowall, has allowed me the privilege of seeing this remarkable little book in MS. I have read it through carefully, and, I may add, with the greatest interest.

I cannot help thinking that his treatment of Evolutionary Science will be to many readers strikingly original and suggestive; while the theory, which he advances in connection with his general scheme of thought, upon the Origin and Nature of Sin, and upon the subject of the Atonement, is, I am sure, entitled to the thoughtful consideration of the theologian, as well as of the scientist.

The fact that he has arrived independently at some of the conclusions which have become better known through the philosophical writings of M. Bergson, only adds to the interest attaching to Mr McDowall's study.

I am glad to call attention to a work, which it seems to me is of real value on religious philosophy, by a promising writer.

HERBERT E. RYLE,
Bishop.

THE DEANERY, WESTMINSTER,
June 8th, 1912.

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PREFACE

IN writing this book I have only considered one aspect of the Atonement. Even so, I am conscious how incomplete, how rough and ill-composed, it will appear. It was thought out and written in the odd hours of a busy life, often with long intervals, and I fear it bears marked traces of this genesis. But it will be justified if in any way the thought outlined is of use to a few who, trusting in Jesus Christ, with a faith born of experience, yet feel deeply the difficulty of aligning the central tenet of the Christian Faith with their rational conviction that the evolution of animal life has always been from the imperfect towards the perfect, and not *vice versa*; who find it hard to face the question:—If sin is but inherited imperfection, how can we believe that man was ever wholly alienated from God because of sin?

The Atonement must always be beyond the understanding of finite minds. Any standpoint from which it is regarded may be, for the time and people, right and true; but we must never forget that the standpoint changes.

The consideration of the Atonement from the standpoint of an Absolute Ethic, and above all from that of Personality, has given, one might almost say, a new revelation. And so too, I believe, will a thorough examination from the standpoint of Evolution. If

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what I have written can serve in any degree as the Prolegomena to such studies I shall have achieved the utmost I have dared to hope.

It will be observed that much use has been made of the great and suggestive work of M. Bergson in the region of the Philosophy of Evolution. Yet much that appears to be plagiarism is really parallelism. The substance of Chapter I was written in the summer of 1908, and published in *The Interpreter* for July 1910 under the title, "The Biological Argument for Theism." Much of the argument of this chapter, and especially the conclusions that a "divine unrest" must underlie the evolutionary process, and that the creature is always striving to attain greater freedom, while itself creating fresh conditions for itself and others, is almost identical with that developed in *L'Évolution Créatrice*. These conclusions were, however, arrived at quite independently: I knew nothing of M. Bergson's work till some time after this article was published, and the outline of the rest of the book roughly jotted down. But those who know M. Bergson's writings will realise what an enormous stimulus they gave to my rather inchoate thought, and how great a debt I owe to him in their final shaping. Mine was the rough, almost grotesque sketch of the untrained hand: his the strong, sure work of the master. It seemed worth while to refer to this, simply because two people, faced with the same problem at about the same time, reached the same

Preface

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conclusions in several matters. Certainly, to find that another had travelled the same road, gave to myself great encouragement to go forward in my further journeyings.

Acknowledgement is due to the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, editor of *The Interpreter*, for his kindness in allowing me to make use of my article on "The Biological Argument for Theism." As I have already stated, this article forms the basis of Chapter I.

Finally, I would say that whatever of good may be found in this book has root in the influence of three people.

To my cousin, Margaret Benson, who taught me to think, and to care to think, my debt is lifelong.

To the teaching and guidance of my friend, Canon V. F. Storr, I am indebted for much of such knowledge of philosophy and theology as I possess: to his companionship and encouragement I owe even more.

To the advice and critical judgment of my wife, with whom every chapter has been read and re-read, the elimination of many obscurities is due. Without her constant help the errors of omission and commission would have been far more numerous than they now are.

To these three I dedicate this book.

S. A. McD.

WINTON,
August 1912.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE favourable judgment which has been passed upon the first edition of this book emboldens me to believe that it has been, and may still be, useful to some who are oppressed more with the difficulties of their faith than with doubts as to its basis in reality. To such it is addressed; not as an apologetic, but as a restatement of certain fundamental doctrines of Christianity from that point of view which the spirit of the age forces upon us; not as a full and methodical treatise, but as a chain of reasoning which may be used to bind together further thoughts which are hinted at and suggested rather than elaborated. For each man must face his own problems himself; and the problems of no two men are quite alike.

Such criticisms as have been levelled at the book point rather to sins of omission than of commission; but in many instances the omissions were intentional, fuller treatment being foreign to the scheme I had in mind. Several of the suggestions that have been made to me, both by Reviewers, and by private correspondents, often personally unknown to me, have proved helpful and stimulating. To those who tendered them I offer my sincere thanks. I am particularly grateful

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to those Reviewers through whom I have been led to study Dr Denney's books. Though Chapter v was never meant to be more than a bare outline, the omission of any mention of Dr Denney's work was a grave mistake, which I have partly remedied in the present edition.

Criticism has been made of the absence of any analysis of the New Testament doctrine in regard to the Atonement. But this analysis has already been made by many far abler and more competent for the task than the present writer, and it would be sheer presumption on his part to attempt to add to what has been said by them. The task I set before myself was a far lighter one; namely, to analyse very briefly the conclusions of scholars, and to use their results, themselves based on the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, to supply a clue to the relation between Sin and Atonement.

It may perhaps be well to mention that the statement, objected to as "unpardonably incorrect" by one Reviewer, that in the systems of certain of the Reformers "man's acceptance of Christ is based on terror," occurs in a passage which is quoted, though not verbatim, from Oxenham's *Catholic Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 232 (3rd edition). The view is therefore not my own, though I believe it to be substantially true, as indeed McLeod Campbell affirms.

I trust that I have profited by certain criticisms of

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minor points. In several cases I have tried to remove the obscurities and overstatements against which they were directed.

With one exception, no considerable changes have been made in this edition ; but a small amount of fresh matter has been added where it seemed that the text was open to misconception or required amplification ; and a considerable section has been added to the discussion of original sin. As formulated in the first edition, the conclusion reached in regard to this matter was open to serious objection, though the fact, and the reason for it, has escaped the notice of critics. I trust, however, that the fuller consideration of the matter given on pp. 144–151 will meet a difficulty which must appeal with special force to the mind of a biologist.

The problem of pain has also received somewhat fuller treatment.

No attempt has been made to supplement the book by a more detailed discussion of the bearing of the theory on personality and on the spiritual life. It seemed better to reserve this in the hope of offering some suggestions on these matters at a future date.

The one considerable change alluded to above is in regard to the treatment of the Atonement itself. The subject-matter of the book was originally intended to be covered by the title “ Evolution and the need of Atonement.” But reflection and criticism have shown

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that a somewhat fuller consideration of the theory of the Atonement was needed, in order to give greater completeness and continuity. The link between the earlier and later parts of the book was too slender. Therefore, with much hesitation and unwillingness, I have inserted in the last chapter a brief outline of the thought which seems to me to strengthen that link. I trust, however, that it will be clearly understood that no attempt has been made to give a theory of the Atonement that is complete in itself, even so far as completeness is possible to our limited understanding. Only that aspect which is brought into prominence by the theory of sin elaborated in the earlier chapters has been treated, and that in the briefest manner possible.

S. A. McD.

WINTON,
November 1913.

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INTRODUCTION

As the title indicates, the main object of this book is not to offer a new theory of the Atonement. Rather it is intended to show that when the origin and history of man are studied from the scientific, and especially the biological side, the spiritual life, its partial failure, and the need for Atonement, far from receding into vagueness and unreality, are thrown into strong relief.

Thus, the biological argument for the existence of God; the underlying essential principle of the evolutionary process; the aim of the whole process—increasing freedom; the beginnings and biological nature of sin; the individual, self-conscious person; the theological nature of sin; the need of atonement, from the standpoints of theology and of biology; are developed as a coherent, logical sequence. I believe that such a method of treatment is not merely permissible; it has great reality and cogency, and, fully developed, would prove a valuable contribution to thought. In the last chapter certain points in regard to the Atonement are examined in the light of what has gone

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before, and various suggestions are put forward in regard to their meaning and importance. Thus the book falls into two parts.

The first, and by far the longer, forms, I venture to believe, a logical chain of reasoning, leading to a definite conclusion—that when man's story is viewed in its biological aspect, the necessity of the Atonement emerges very clearly.

The second is far more tentative and suggestive. In it certain aspects of the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ are considered briefly in relation to the argument developed in the previous chapters.

Two other points demand mention.

No attempt has been made to deal with the philosophical problem of Freewill. The existence of freedom in man has been assumed; indeed the increase of freedom is argued to be the *raison d'être* of physical evolution. The nature of Personality also has not received any adequate consideration. Many works are devoted to the consideration of these matters; the discussion of them would have been impossible within our limits, besides being hardly pertinent.