

how much of a given teaching is from God and how much from man?" what, for instance, in Paul's ninth chapter of Romans is solid truth and what is but drapery of cloud, rising from the everywhere diffused Hebrew idea of God's sovereignty? it may impress us as a highly critical and hazardous way of theologizing; nevertheless, he insists, its validity cannot be denied, and the only safety is in following to the end the path it indicates. "We must," he says, "hold firmly to the dictum of the late Prof. George R. Bliss, that God's thought alone is the Bible." The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, especially, needs, he claims, "to be reviewed, possibly revised, and probably delimited by the unflinching and practically new processes of Biblical theology."

The results he achieves, while at points revolutionary, are everywhere worthy of study, especially on such subjects as the meaning of the word "spirit," the nature of inspiration, and the personality of the Holy Spirit, as viewed in the combined light of Scripture usage and teaching and modern psychology, as also in his dealing with the novel anti-mystical theory of Ritschl, and the late engaging attempt to explain Christianity "philosophically, yet evangelically," represented by the recent work of W. L. Walker, "The Spirit and the Incarnation."

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### **The Tree in the Midst; A Contribution to the Study of Freedom.**

By Greville Macdonald, M.D. Pp. xxviii., 411. New York, A. C. Armstrong; and London, Hodder & Stoughton.

A year ago Dr. Macdonald gave us *The Religious Sense in its Scientific Aspect* which was well received, in some quarters with great enthusiasm. That work bore decided marks of selfconsciousness and a studied style. These qualities have not wholly disappeared in this larger and far more important work, but they no longer objectionably obtrude themselves on the reader. Indeed the literary style of the present volume may be said to attain unto the best degree of that Scotch style which is at once the admiration and discouragement of so many. The clearness, vigor, and epigrammatic character of the sentences are a constant fascination. And the publishers

have done their part in full accord with the author's excellence.

But chiefly of the matter. The author's sub-title tells us that he aims to make "a contribution to the study of freedom." It is evident that he has succeeded. An explanation of human freedom we can not here claim to find. Nor are there any radically new data in this contribution. There are new statements and new relations suggested. Some of these will need to be rejected, some to be modified and some pursued to legitimate conclusions.

Several outstanding characteristics call for review.

1. The main purpose is to find a place for all the facts of freedom in the theory of the universal application and validity of the laws of biological evolution, taking biological evolution as only the highest sphere of general evolution. It must be said that in seeking this end the author has not minimized the facts of freedom but has sought to do them full justice. If place can be found in evolution for the whole spiritual nature of man with its aspirations, its strivings, its highest conceivable destiny then will that theory hold the field. The growing recognition of the Theistic principle in evolutionary theories and the gradual modification of these theories to comprehend the larger facts are doing much to abate the antagonism to the theories and to enhance their general plausibility.

So far there remain several epoch-making stages of evolution at which new forces manifest themselves. And in each case the new epoch differs from the old not quantitatively alone but qualitatively as well. It is not a question of how much the lowest form of living matter differs from the highest form of dead matter. The question rather is, how does it differ. And not yet has an answer been given that can negative the presence of an entirely new factor. So also of the stages at which appear consciousness, conscience, and spiritual life. Macdonald undertakes by repeated uses of the analogy of the oak and the acorn to show that all that comes out in the development of the life was present in the embryonic germ. Herein he is in accord with the present evolutionary trend. This view is now quite generally admitted to demand for its ultimate basis the Theistic principle. But

it must seem far from conclusive that God would have held in undeveloped embryo the seed of all spiritual life for countless ages, during which the lower forms of life were developing from the primordial germ. Surely there is no final reason why He might not just as well have introduced a new factor at the stage of evolution at which it is to begin its work. Macdonald yields no plausibility to that theory which holds to the natural evolution of man's physical being and consciousness but which contends that the spirit of man was a new inbreathing of God in accordance with the Genesis account.

There are so far two serious objections to the thoroughgoing application of the evolution theory for the production of man in all that he is and is to be.

In the first place, it involves the application of the same laws to physical and spiritual life. This is the recognized defect of Henry Drummond's great work. Macdonald seeks to anticipate this objection by a full discussion of analogy in its two uses of illustration and proof; but he seems to fail to make out his case.

In the second place, two fundamental Christian doctrines lie across the path of the Christian thinker when he heads toward this complete evolution, namely the fall of man and the deity of Jesus Christ. I am aware that I shall be charged with being traditional and unscientific in holding that these are fundamental Christian doctrines. None the less is the case so, as it appears to me. It seems not impossible that an adjustment might be had between the theory of the fall and the doctrine of evolution. But none appears in the other case.

A third objection, metaphysical in its character, might be mentioned; the high destiny of man—ultimate, full fellowship with his Maker—does not seem consonant with the view that his Father left him in the protoplasm of ages past and shall see him face to face only in the consummation of ages hence.

2. Macdonald's primal and primary prophet is Heraclitus and his message is "There is no Being but in Becoming." This he applies in a sense far wider and deeper than that of his teacher and in a sense which is essentially true. Heraclitus however hardly deserves all the credit of teaching the thought of the ages this great principle.

In accordance with what has been said above, Macdonald also insists, with frequent reiteration, on two other principles; no direct creation, and no paradox. These two principles are really at bottom one, and are one with the author's understanding of the dictum of Heraclitus. This he recognizes. There is no occasion to quarrel with these principles. There is room for much difference as to their application.

3. The Introduction and Chapter II. contain the best vindication that has come to my observation of the place of the spiritual in any true system of philosophy or religion. The poet and the philosopher reach and proclaim ever the deeper truth and meaning of existence. The scientist is concerned with facts. The truth lies back of these. It ever remains that the things which are seen are temporary, while the unseen things, open to those who fear not the wonderful, are eternal. "The mere man of science looks upon the unknown as opportunity for conflict. He attacks it with might and main and kills the wonder of it that he may assign it a proper place in his graveyard of information." "We know well what the men of science have done for us but the true service of the prophet and poet is less readily realized." The trinity of worship in our day are historical study, scientific analysis, and progress; and they are all interpreted chiefly in the realm of the physical. History and science show us only what has been and what is: man needs evermore that which shall be, and here religion, life, art, and philosophy find place. It is a great advance in the last few years that so many prophets are arising to contend for the ideal. Newman Smyth in his *Through Science to Faith*, Veda Scudder in her *Life of The Spirit in Modern English Poets*, Wilkin in his *Control in Evolution*, James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* are, in their way, some of the successors of Henry Drummond. And Macdonald must now take rank with this rapidly growing school that is doing so much to vindicate the spirit as a source of knowledge as over against the exclusive reign of the intellect in the modern scientific age. Our author's classification of experiences under the heads egoism, altruism, transcendentalism may be open to some objection, but it sets forth the essential facts and

puts the emphasis of value correctly. For this great service the volume is eminently worth while.

4. We have now arrived at the heart of the discussion and the explanation of the title. The account of the Garden of Eden our author takes for a legend. *The Tree in the Midst* bearing the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil constitutes the condition of Adam's entrance upon a moral life with ethical distinctions. The Creator intended that Adam should violate the command not to eat of this tree. In this act of insubordination he became conscious of the power of self-determination. It was the rising above complacent, nonprogressive acceptance of an easy environment and the entrance upon a conscious struggle with the thorns and thistles of sorrow and suffering. In this struggle man constantly enlarges the scope of his freedom and its reality. The name of the forbidden tree gives color to this theory as does the reason assigned for banishing man from the Garden. For how could man lead a moral life without the consciousness of moral distinction? Our author however is very far from making a virtue of disobedience. He draws a sharp distinction which he applies with great skill and thoroughness between insubordination to hereditary environment and disobedience to the laws of one's being. When he says that in time the prohibition to eat of The Tree in the Midst would have been withdrawn, there is no valid reason for questioning the view. But is it not just in this fact that we find man's violation of the command to be disobedience rather than insubordination? Nor can it be successfully maintained that moral development is possible only in revolt from one's environment. Had Adam developed his self-consciousness and self-determination in the discharge of the ethically indifferent duties enjoined in Genesis 1: 28, he might speedily have arrived at the point where he could receive from the Creator the gift of moral freedom. And in this case the gift would still be such as our author contends it must, namely that of acquiring ethical and spiritual character. It is not necessary that man have an entirely new environment in order to come into a *modus crescendi*. It is not an antithesis between making "the best of our restrictions" and building "wider limits for our roaming."

This reference to Holmes' Pearly Nautilus does not serve the argument, for the tortoise may grow his larger shell only if he accepts in their place the limitations of the smaller.

5. Let no one conclude that the eschewing of paradox and the magnifying of insubordination by our author carry with them the denial of sin and the minimizing of evil. He is very far from this even though he does make man the author of evil and the creator of the Devil. And yet it does look a little insufficient when he says, "But we may for the present dismiss the point by affirming that *whatever is, is right until something better becomes possible*, when the 'whatever is' immediately becomes wrong. And this is the whole essence of that mystery of Evil which has been the sorrow of the thoughtful since all time." Fuller light is thrown on this theory of evil in his discussion of the law of Perfection, Compromise and Competition, Inheritance and Wage. The last three chapters, bearing these titles, make the practical application of the whole discussion.

The conclusion is hardly commensurate with the splendid place assigned to the transcendental in the opening chapters. We come upon the outstanding questions of freedom, Whence? and Whither? A more definite answer would seem to be justified than the following: "If our freedom has not answered its Whence it is surely weaving its Whither. Man has not yet justified his inheritance by his wages; but the possibility of better work remains. And for our peace and hope, it is given us still to ask the questions which the revelations of the evolving universe are forever answering—Whence is our inheritance? Whence is the seed?" Dr. Macdonald has not fully solved the question of freedom. He has made a contribution toward its solution. Yet, its ultimate solution is not likely to lie in the direction of his interpretation of Adam's violation of the divine command.

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