

PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES

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ROBERT MOREHEAD

**PHILOSOPHICAL
DIALOGUES**

PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT MOREHEAD, D.D.,

FORMERLY RECTOR OF EASINGTON, YORKSHIRE, PREVIOUSLY SECOND MINISTER OF
ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, AND ONE OF THE CHAPLAINS
OF HER LATE ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE, AND
HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS.

"Le cose tutte quante
Hanno ordine tra loro; e questo è forma
Che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.
Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma
De l'eterno valor, il qual è fine
Al qual è fatta la toccata norma."

DANTE, PARADISO, *Canto Primo.*



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PREFACE.

THE friends who, in compliance with the expressed wishes of its late learned and amiable Author, now give to the public this last production of his pen, have but a few words of preface or explanation to offer.

Few people, they suppose, will be inclined to look far into a book, bearing the title of *Philosophical Dialogues*, who are not in some degree acquainted with Mr. Hume's posthumous Dialogues on Natural Religion—a work reprehensible certainly in its design, and mischievous in its tendency, but calculated, by the singular elegance and spirit of its composition, and the air of candour and good-humour it everywhere assumes, to win favour with careless readers; and to disguise from them, in a good degree, the dangers involved in its doctrines. The Speakers in these famous Dialogues—whom the reader will meet again (to his surprise probably, if not thus forewarned,) in the following pages—are, Philo, a fearless, versatile, and most ingenious Sceptic—Cleanthes, a philosophical Deist, or devout philosopher—and the young Pamphilus, who plays the part mostly of Chorus in this dialectical drama—mediates between the principal combatants—and by alternately propounding his modest difficulties to each, draws from them a larger and more popular exposition of their several systems than the course of the controversy might otherwise have suggested.

Nothing certainly can exceed the good-temper and good-breeding

with which, in these Dialogues of Mr. Hume, the discussion is conducted on all hands; nor can the finest of the Platonic, Ciceronian, or Berkeleyan models, claim any sure superiority, in respect either of the clearness and profundity of the speculations, or of the terse and elegant brevity with which they are illustrated and maintained. The advantage, however, remains—as it was plainly intended to remain—with Philo, who (like Socrates in the Platonic Dialogues) is seen at once to represent the person and opinions of the author: And the result is, an apparent triumph to the most reckless and wide-wasting scepticism; and a thorough discrediting, not only of all systems, but of all principles of belief, either in a Deity or a Revelation.

Dr. Morehead, who from early life had cultivated a taste for such abstract speculations, and had long lamented that they should have been so often pursued to conclusions inimical to religion and morality, conceived, a good many years ago, the ingenious notion of providing an antidote to the poison of these insidious Dialogues of Mr. Hume, in the form of a mere continuation of them; in which the original interlocutors might be again brought together, after a considerable period of separation, and made to resume and follow out their former discussions, with juster and happier views of the ends to which they were truly fitted to conduct them. In the year 1830, he accordingly gave to the world his "Dialogues on Natural and Revealed Religion,"—in which Philo, Cleanthes, and Pamphilus again meet—with the advantages of more matured reflection, and larger intercourse with the world—and are naturally led, not only to remind each other of their youthful disputations, but to explain the processes of thought or observation by which they had been severally led to retract or modify any of their former impressions. Cleanthes, who is the least changed of the party, still retains his distrust of all direct or authoritative revelation, and has even come to lean a little more than formerly to the large and loose speculations of his original opponent; while Philo himself, who of course continues to be the hero of the piece, and the favourite of the author, is represented as entirely converted, not only to the devout Theism of Cleanthes, but to the whole grand truths of the Christian Revelation; and the main scope and object of the work,

accordingly, is to show how he had attained to these happy convictions, not by renouncing, in any degree, the free exercise of his understanding, or, indeed, any considerable part of the principles for which he had formerly contended—but rather by following them out still more boldly and steadily, and with a deeper sense both of the misery of the doubts in which they had left him, and of the quarter in which alone the solution of these doubts was to be found.

In this remarkable work the candour and clearness of the original Dialogues, as well as the graceful ease and simplicity of the composition, are very happily preserved: while the more arduous attempt to sustain the discursive spirit, and inexhaustible fertility of Philo's disquisitions—in due keeping, too, with the calm consistency of Cleanthes,—if not quite so successful, must yet be allowed to be managed with great taste and ability—and, in fact, to have succeeded, almost as well as the altered position of the party, and the graver character of the themes he had now to maintain, would admit of.

The Dialogues now offered to the public, though not properly a sequel or continuation of the former, are not only represented as passing between the same parties, but deal with the same topics and principles, and are composed avowedly in furtherance of the same design. They form, however, a complete and independent series as they stand; and though they would probably be read to most advantage in connection with those which went before, yet contain in themselves all that is any way necessary to the full understanding of the doctrines they maintain. Though directed almost exclusively to the establishment of the great and sublime truth, that all the laws of our intellectual, as well as of our moral nature, imply a tacit (though too often, unconscious) recognition of the power and the will of the Deity—and derive their whole actual force and authority from our indestructible reliance on His truth, wisdom, and goodness, they are yet less strictly Theological than the former series; and are properly entitled "Philosophical," as being chiefly occupied with a very refined, and sometimes very subtle analysis of most of our mental functions and capacities; with a view to shew that our most elementary faculties, of perception, memory, and imagination,

as well as our belief in the reality of external existences, in our own identity, and in the permanency of what are termed the laws of nature, are all derived from the same lofty source; and are essentially dependant on our inward feeling of the perpetual presence of a creating and sustaining God.

For the purpose of these disquisitions, the three friends are again represented as meeting, after another long separation; and when, the two elder of them at least, have had warnings, in the gradual progress of decay, that the period cannot be far distant when there must be an end, for this world, both of action and speculation—and when men of all habits and shades of opinion must, if not utterly reckless, “wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore.” Both, however, retain their philosophical serenity, and even the distinctive traits of their several philosophies—Cleanthes still proposing difficulties, and requiring precise proofs, though in an humbler tone and with less marked confidence in the grounds of his dissent; and Philo still luxuriating in his fine and imaginative speculations, with less reliance perhaps on the logical completeness of his arguments, but deeper conviction of the truth and importance of the conclusions to which they tend. There is but little in this tract on the doctrines or evidences of Revelation; though illustrations are constantly borrowed from its source; and the staple of the discussion may be said to be metaphysical;—with a perpetual reference for the solution of all difficulties, or rather the explanation of all phenomena—to our secret and deep working consciousness—though often but indirectly and obscurely recognised—of the will and agency of the Deity.

Of the merits of the work generally, it is not for the Editors to judge. Metaphysics, they fear, even when enlisted in the cause of religion, are not likely to find favour with the present generation of Englishmen—though, when they perceive that it has recently called for a *Fourteenth* Edition of Dr. Brown’s admirable Lectures on Mental Philosophy, they cannot but hope that this distaste for what was once a favourite study of the nation, is at last about to disappear. They are sensible too, that the style is occasionally cumbrous; and that there are more frequent and more elaborate *resumptions* of the argument, than an impatient

reader may like to be stopped by. But they are greatly deceived, if any one, at all conversant with the subject, can rise from the perusal of the whole work, without a strong sense of the singular ingenuity of most of the speculations on which it is employed; not merely as expounding the true test and character of our perceptions and recollection of external objects, and the ultimate foundation of all our laws of thought; but more especially, as tracing to the source the nature of our General conceptions—the limited function of Instinctive impulses in man—the relation of Cause and effect, and the proper notion and agency of volition—the true source of Sublimity and beauty—and the origin and criterion of all Moral distinctions—as explained and illustrated in the concluding dialogues of this collection.

Even on these points, however, they may be misled, by their partialities for the subjects—or for the writer. But they feel as if they could not be so misled, when they venture to predict, that,—however this little book may be thought to testify for the Genius or Judgment of its Author,—it will be at once received, by all who care to become acquainted with it, as a faithful memorial of the earnest Piety and sweet Philanthropy of his nature.