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THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY**

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by L. R. Farnell

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**L. R. FARNELL**

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FARNELL'S THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

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## Preface

A SMALL book on a great and difficult subject must explain and apologise for itself, especially if it cannot claim a *raison d'être* as a handbook for beginners. Having accepted the stimulating invitation to give in the spring of this year a short series of lectures for the Hibbert Trust on some subject belonging to the department of comparative religion, I felt that it was desirable to avoid those topics that had been appropriated by former lecturers; and also that the Trustees, as well as the audience, deserved that what the lecturer put forth should embody the results of some personal and original study. I finally selected for special discussion the ritual of purification, and

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the influence of the ideas associated with it upon law, morality, and religion ; and secondly, the development of prayer from lower to higher forms. These subjects do not appear to have been as yet exhaustively treated by modern anthropology or scientific and comparative theology, and I had already worked upon them to some extent as "parerga" of the treatise that I am completing for the Clarendon Press on the history of Greek cults. I am aware that these special questions would well repay longer and more minute research, and could each furnish material for a large volume. But having been advised to publish the lectures more or less as they were delivered, I put them forth as tentative and incomplete work. I specially regret to have been unable to have gone further at present into the Egyptian evidence, with the kindly proffered assistance of Mr Griffiths, the Reader in Egyptology at Oxford.

The first two lectures, dealing with the methods and the value of the study of com-



parative religion and its relations to anthropology, are of a more general character. If they seem to occupy somewhat too large a part of a work of this small compass, the urgency of the questions they raise may serve as an apology. It was suggested to me that some such pronouncement might be timely at the point we have reached. For the subject is winning greater consideration, and even receiving endowment, in the organisation of the newer Universities. From the scientific point of view it is one of the most fascinating of studies; and its practical importance for our colonial administrators and our missionaries is obvious to those who reflect. It is also a legitimate hope that its wider and more intelligent recognition in England may tend to cool and temper the heated atmosphere of dogmatic controversy, by presenting religious facts in their true proportion and proper setting.

I must take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to many friends for valuable

assistance, and especially to my friend and colleague, Mr R. Marett, to whose comprehensive knowledge of the religious thought and ritual of savage races I owe many important clues.

L. R. FARNELL.

*August, 1905.*

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