

## REVIEWS

*The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*: The Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Aberdeen in the years 1912 and 1913. By A. SETH PRINGLE-PATTISON, LL.D., D.C.L. (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1917.)

It is sad to think how much the quiet voice of this book may be drowned in the present turmoil, and what a very different welcome might have been accorded to it in the years when the lectures were delivered. Yet to the understanding mind its value is enhanced by the definite close in measureless destruction of the age of which it speaks, for it may be that no such account of its thought, written not as history but as experience, will ever again be written. The date to be borne in mind while reading is not the time of publication, 1917, but 1913, the year when the last lectures were delivered. Something of pathos and tenderness these lectures have gained in the revision during the sad years when the author himself had suffered grievous personal loss, but the subject remains what we may broadly call the religious philosophy of the nineteenth century, understanding by that term the period from the French Revolution to the present war. The first lecture is occupied with Hume, but that only serves to link the new age on to the thought of the eighteenth century. Kant also might be regarded as outside the period, but it is only in the merely chronological sense in which Rousseau is outside of it. Practically Kant's doctrine of what we should now call Ideal Values is the fruitful seed of the new time; and there is no more admirably lucid exposition of it in any language than the second lecture. The historian who looks back upon the age will, in all probability, measure by a different rule, and see things in a different perspective. The methods both of Naturalistic Agnosticism and of Transcendental Idealism will seem to him blind alleys, and he will dismiss them lightly, as Troeltsch already does, as dead issues; but this book is autobiography, not history, and therein lies its supreme interest. To one who was a pupil of Professor Pringle-Pattison in the days when he was beginning his career as a philosophical teacher, it all reads like the record of his own mind, which however much of it he may have outlived, he must never forget that he has lived through. And even for

a younger generation that has not lived through it, it must be a great gain to have this admirable record of one who has, a gain that never can be replaced even by the most balanced later estimate. Every new age is apt to be unfair to its predecessor—and even Dr Pringle-Pattison shews how much he belongs to the nineteenth century by his judgement of the eighteenth—and contempt and indifference is always a foolish failure to appreciate our true foundations. Already some superior twentieth century persons, like Mr Chesterton, dismiss the nineteenth century as an age in which nothing happened. Such superiority is never, in any case, a wise mental attitude, and, to those who wish to avoid it, no better account of the thought of the past age can be commended. Even those who have but a modest knowledge of the philosophical disciplines will find it pleasant reading. There is an admirable lucidity worthy of the countryman of Hume, with a literary ease and grace, rivalled among philosophical writers since Plato only by Berkeley. A fine mastery of that great instrument the common English speech saves the necessity of resorting to philosophical jargon, which is often a cover for poverty of thought as well as poverty of expression. Nor is the presence of much poetry an accident; nor is it, as is suggested in the Preface, merely characteristic of the author's personal interest. It belongs to the subject, which is really the Romantic Movement, and without it the inwardness of the feeling of the time could not be made plain. The predominance of Tennyson and the frequent quotations from what may be called the Rossetti school, with Wordsworth and Browning as greater but more distant luminaries, is exactly the proportion of that age, though it may no longer be of the present, and the picture would be defective in any other setting.

If one were disposed to enter upon criticism, it would be in respect of the newer movements. If there is any lack of understanding and sympathy, it is towards the Vitalists and Pluralists, and especially towards the latter. When Dr McTaggart is called the true Pluralist, there is surely some confusion between method and result. True Pluralism is a method of beginning and not a prophecy of the conclusion: and Dr McTaggart on that principle is not a Pluralist at all, but a Hegelian who puts the content of the cosmic reason into unbreakable vessels of individual souls. And, if there were any further criticism it would be that Prof. Pringle-Pattison has not adequately settled his own account with Hegelianism, and relies far more on mere 'organic unity' for solving problems like perception and the moral ideal, than his own view of the individual justifies. But the book is no less a true record of its period for these limitations.

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