

# 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.

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

*SECOND EDITION REVISED*

NEW YORK  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMERICAN BRANCH: 35 WEST 32ND STREET  
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE, AND BOMBAY

1920

TO  
MY WIFE  
AND THE DEAR MEMQRY OF  
RONALD  
OUR YOUNGEST SON  
WHO GAVE HIS LIFE WILLINGLY  
AT GINCHY ON THE SOMME  
6TH SEPTEMBER 1916

## PREFACE

DISTRACTIONS and anxieties arising out of the war have interfered with the preparation of these Lectures for the press, but it is possible that, at certain points, the thought may have gained in maturity by the enforced delay.

Readers of this volume who listened to the Gifford Lectures in 1912 and 1913 will recognize that, in the main, the material and the treatment are the same. But I have not hesitated, on occasion, to transfer a lecture or part of a lecture from its original place in the series, when the sequence of thought seemed to gain thereby in clearness and logical coherence. One or two passages also, which appeared to have little or no bearing on the argument as it ultimately took shape, have been removed. A lecture, introductory to the Second Series, criticizing two recent essays on Religion, has been omitted. It served at the time as a convenient illustration of the thesis of the previous year's course, and it was printed shortly thereafter as an article in the *Hibbert Journal* for October 1913. But the discussion has not sufficient permanent importance to justify its retention here, and its inclusion would interrupt the course of what is intended to be a continuous argument. On the other hand, I have tried to develop the subject more fully at points where the original treatment had been somewhat hurried. This applies more particularly to the lecture on 'Time and

Eternity' and to the criticism of M. Bergson's doctrine of Time and its implications in the lecture which follows. Here what was originally a single lecture has grown into two. Complete success in such a region is unattainable, but I trust that what is now offered is, in some respects, a more adequate handling of a peculiarly difficult subject. In Lecture IV, while my view of the relation of biology to physics remains unchanged, I have added some detailed criticism of recent neo-vitalist statements from which I wish to dissociate myself; and the discussion of Pluralism in the later lectures has been extended by including a criticism of the views of Professor Howison, Dr. Rashdall, and Dr. McTaggart.

The choice of a title has caused me some difficulty. The title eventually chosen may easily be condemned as too ambitious; but it has at least the merit of comprehensiveness, and it is also the official subject of the Lectures founded by Lord Gifford. It has the disadvantage—if it be a disadvantage—that it does not indicate in advance the nature of the conclusion reached. But philosophical labels are for the most part misleading, and the conclusion will mean more to the reader if he discovers it for himself. I am especially anxious, however, that the reference to 'recent philosophy' should not lead anyone to suppose that the book is merely, or even primarily, an historical survey of opinion on the subject with which it deals. There are many names mentioned in the course of the lectures, and many theories criticized, but there is no pretence of an exhaustive survey, and not one of the names and theories actually cited is introduced on historical grounds. They are all employed as a means of illuminating, either by affinity or by force of contrast, the constructive position which is gradually built up in the course of the lectures. In short, although it consists largely of criticism, the interest of the book is neither critical

nor historical, but constructive throughout. This method of construction through criticism is the one which I have instinctively followed in everything I have written. I do not claim that it is the best method; I simply desire that its nature be recognized.

In the present case, when contemporary discussion on the fundamental questions of philosophy and religion is peculiarly active, the necessity is almost imposed upon a writer of defining his own position by reference to divergent views and other forms of statement. And I venture to think that the value of his work is thereby increased; for only by such mutual criticism, and the resulting definition of the points of difference, can we advance towards a common understanding. Readers of this volume will note the prominence given to Professor Bosanquet's impressive statement of the Idealistic position in the two volumes of his Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh. I found it especially instructive, from time to time, to make Professor Bosanquet's treatment my point of departure, because, along with the large amount of general agreement, there was at certain points a difference of emphasis, to say the least, in our ways of holding the Idealistic creed. The lecture on 'The Criterion of Value' and the two lectures on 'The Absolute and the Finite Individual' may be mentioned as examples of what I mean.

It is possible that some readers may think that I have drawn too frequently upon the poets. That is perhaps a question of temperament. But my procedure was, at any rate, quite deliberate, for I accept Wordsworth's description of poetry as 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge', and I am even ready to be persuaded by Mr. Yeats that 'whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent'.

In concluding this preface, I desire to thank the Senatus of the University of Aberdeen for the honour they did me in appointing me to the Lectureship. It has enabled me to bring together the reflections of many years, and I have striven, in return, to give them of my best.

To my brother, Professor James Seth, who read the lectures in manuscript, and to Professor H. R. Mackintosh, of New College, Edinburgh, and Mr. H. F. Hallett, M.A., who read the whole in proof, my warm thanks are also due for their ready help and valuable suggestions.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,  
*December 20, 1916.*

The reception accorded to these Lectures encourages me to hope that the book may continue to be found of service for some time. The call for a new edition has come while publishers are still hampered by difficulties of production and by the accumulations of the war. In these circumstances it has been decided to print the present edition from the plates of the American edition issued in 1917. This has made it impossible to introduce into the text more than verbal corrections, but I have been able to add, by way of appendix, a few supplementary notes referring to the more important criticisms and discussions to which the volume has given rise. Any attempt at mediation in a difficult dispute is necessarily exposed to attack from both sides, and this has happened to my attempt, in the second series of Lectures, to balance the claims of the Absolute and the individual or of monism and pluralism. But I have met with nothing to shake my confidence in the fundamental positions and lines of argument to which I had committed myself.

# CONTENTS

## FIRST SERIES

### LECTURE I

#### HUME'S 'DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION'

	PAGE
Reasons for beginning with Hume . . . . .	I
The importance attached to the 'Dialogues' by Hume himself . . . . .	2
The question debated is not 'the Being but only the Nature of the Deity' . . . . .	6
Demea's attempt to base religious faith on philosophical scepticism . . . . .	7
The <i>a priori</i> argument dismissed . . . . .	8
Concentration of the discussion on the argument from design . . . . .	9
The criticisms of Philo and his anticipation of modern points of view . . . . .	11
Hume's tenacious adherence to the 'speculative tenet of theism' . . . . .	14
Contrast between the order of nature and the record of human history . . . . .	16
Hypothesis of a finite God suggested but set aside . . . . .	19
Surrender of the moral attributes . . . . .	20
Insignificant character of the conclusion . . . . .	21

### LECTURE II

#### KANT AND THE IDEA OF INTRINSIC VALUE

Hume's conclusion determined by the restricted nature of his premisses . . . . .	24
Kant's analysis of moral experience . . . . .	26
The idea of value or worth: the good will . . . . .	27
'A realm of ends': teleological view of the world of nature . . . . .	28
The 'postulates' of God and immortality . . . . .	31
Defects of Kant's statement . . . . .	34
The doctrine of the self-legislative will . . . . .	36
The idea of value in Kant's successors and throughout the nineteenth century . . . . .	38

	PAGE
The philosophical antithesis between Idealism and Naturalism	40
The objectivity of values . . . . .	42
The idealistic position not to be staked on any minor issue . . .	43

### LECTURE III

#### THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY DUEL BETWEEN IDEALISM AND NATURALISM

The protest of 'the heart' against the reason . . . . .	47
The Kantian separation between Knowledge and Belief . . .	48
Lange's <i>History of Materialism</i> and the 'flight to the ideal' .	52
Lotze's protest against materialistic dogmatism: 'the world of forms' and 'the world of values' . . . . .	54
Ritschl's repudiation of metaphysics . . . . .	56
Spencer's Unknowable as the reconciliation of religion and science . . . . .	58
Mr. Balfour's argument: its sceptical and constructive aspects	60
The disparagement of reason: danger of so presenting the principle of value . . . . .	62

### LECTURE IV.

#### THE LIBERATING INFLUENCE OF BIOLOGY

The relations of philosophy and the sciences . . . . .	66
Biology and physics . . . . .	68
The claim of biology to use its own categories . . . . .	71
The organism as a self-maintaining whole . . . . .	73
Criticism of Neo-vitalistic statements . . . . .	77
Re-interpretation of the doctrine of evolution . . . . .	81
Revival of general interest in philosophy . . . . .	86

### LECTURE V

#### THE LOWER AND THE HIGHER NATURALISM

Ambiguity of the term Naturalism . . . . .	88
A defence of order and continuity against an arbitrary Super- naturalism . . . . .	89
Illusory 'explanation' of the more developed by the less developed . . . . .	91
Transition in nature from one order of facts to another . . .	93
The question of the 'origin' of life . . . . .	98



# CONTENTS

xi

	PAGE
The passage from perception and association to the conceptual reason . . . . .	100
Continuity of process does not exclude the emergence of real differences . . . . .	103
The meaning of potentiality . . . . .	106
Philosophy as criticism of categories . . . . .	108

## LECTURE VI

### MAN AS ORGANIC TO THE WORLD

Manufactured difficulties as to the subjectivity or relativity of knowledge . . . . .	110
Cognition conceived as the 'barren rehearsal' of a finished reality . . . . .	113
Relatedness <i>versus</i> Relativity . . . . .	115
The epistemological problem in Locke, Berkeley, and Kant . . . .	116
The objectivity of the secondary qualities . . . . .	120
Professor Laurie's statement of philosophical Realism . . . . .	122
The evolution of the sense-organs as part of nature's purpose of self-revelation . . . . .	126
The same principle applies to the aesthetic qualities . . . . .	127

## LECTURE VII

### ETHICAL MAN: THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

The ethical <i>versus</i> the cosmic process . . . . .	132
The Religion of Humanity, as a merely 'subjective synthesis', follows from this dualism . . . . .	133
Comte's phenomenalism depends on a false idea of metaphysics	135
Vital truths of Comte's religious doctrine: (a) the central function assigned to religion in human history; (b) the insistence on the moral qualities as the only fit objects of love and worship; (c) the organic life of Humanity . . . .	137
Humanity taken as a species of finite Absolute . . . . .	145
Impossibility of thus isolating Humanity illustrated from Comte himself . . . . .	146
His subordination of the intellect to 'the heart' makes him eventually false to the scientific spirit . . . . .	150

## LECTURE VIII

## POSITIVISM AND AGNOSTICISM

	PAGE
The time-process as the progressive revelation of an eternal Reality . . . . .	153
The human and the divine: Positivism and Christianity . . .	157
Agnosticism depends on a false ideal of knowledge . . . .	158
Substance and qualities, essence and appearance . . . . .	159
Confusion between the unknowable and the unfathomable . .	165
The Religion of Humanity and the worship of the Unknowable as complementary half-truths . . . . .	170

## LECTURE IX

## IDEALISM AND PAN-PSYCHISM

Further reflections on the Agnostic fallacy . . . . .	172
General conclusion reached in these lectures . . . . .	175
The idealistic doctrine maintained does not involve Monadism or Pan-psychism . . . . .	178
The motives underlying monadistic theories . . . . .	179
The desire to save spontaneity and freedom . . . . .	183
Illusory attempt to evolve the very conditions of evolution . .	185
Such freedom becomes indistinguishable from pure contingency	186
A realm of physical law required as the <i>milieu</i> of the spiritual life . . . . .	188

## LECTURE X

## IDEALISM AND MENTALISM

Our conclusion does not involve Subjective Idealism or Mentalism . . . . .	190
The circular nature of Berkeley's argument . . . . .	191
Ferrier's demonstration of an 'infinite and everlasting Mind' proceeds on the same lines . . . . .	193
Green's Eternal Consciousness . . . . .	195
The mentalistic argument yields us at best only the empty form of the Ego . . . . .	198
To regard the material world as self-subsistent, or as a <i>res completa</i> , is a moral as much as a speculative impossibility .	200
The larger idealistic truth admits of a frankly realistic attitude towards external nature . . . . .	201

*SECOND SERIES*

## LECTURE XI

THE LOWER PANTHEISM AND THE DOCTRINE OF  
DEGREES OF TRUTH

	PAGE
The argument of the First Series reviewed . . . . .	207
The reality of appearances . . . . .	216
But is not this merely the pell-mell of empirical occurrence over again? . . . . .	219
The idea of a system and a scale of values is essential . . . .	220
Spinoza on degrees of 'perfection' . . . . .	221
Mr. Bradley's use of the principle . . . . .	222
Illustration from the world of Shakespeare's tragedies . . . .	223

## LECTURE XII

THE CRITERION OF VALUE: ITS NATURE  
AND JUSTIFICATION

Mr. Bradley's criterion of inclusiveness and harmony . . .	226
Accepted by Professor Bosanquet in his formula of individuality and non-contradiction . . . . .	227
Formal and abstract character of such a principle . . . . .	230
We must argue from the specific modes of our finite consciousness of value . . . . .	231
Mr. Bradley's transformation of the purely logical criterion . .	233
His unconvincing defence of this transformation . . . . .	234
The real defence is the view taken of man as an organ of reality	235
The inevitable assumption involved . . . . .	236
The real meaning of the ontological argument . . . . .	240

## LECTURE XIII

## THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL

Ideals operative in experience are themselves part of experience	243
Common neglect of this, e. g. in Hume's argument . . . .	244
Descartes's argument from the idea of a Perfect Being . . .	246
The cosmological argument also rises from the imperfect to the perfect . . . . .	249
The Ideal the most real thing in the world . . . . .	251
Solution of the problem of immanence and transcendence . . .	253

## LECTURE XIV

## THE ABSOLUTE AND THE FINITE INDIVIDUAL

	PAGE
Professor Bosanquet's view of the 'formal distinctness' of selves as due to 'impotence' . . . . .	256
The mere individual as a self-contained unit is certainly a fiction	257
Again, the true life of the finite self is a finding of itself in social and universal interests . . . . .	262
But this in no way supports the idea of a 'confluence' or blending of selves . . . . .	264
The individual as a unique expression or focalization of the universe . . . . .	266
Selves not 'elements' of Reality, but 'members' or incarnations of the Absolute . . . . .	270
The 'adjectival' theory of the finite . . . . .	272

## LECTURE XV

THE ABSOLUTE AND THE FINITE INDIVIDUAL (*Continued*)

Mr. Bradley's view of the plurality of souls as 'appearance and error' . . . . .	276
Resulting view of the destiny of the finite self . . . . .	280
But the individual is not simply a very complex group of universals . . . . .	282
The origin of such finite centres the only fact fitly describable as creation . . . . .	285
Real difference and a measure of independence involved . . . . .	287
The testimony of our greatest experiences . . . . .	289
Personality as a formed will . . . . .	291
A world of persons the appropriate End of the Absolute as a self-communicating Life . . . . .	294
NOTE on Professor Bosanquet's use of the social analogy. . . . .	296

## LECTURE XVI

## THE IDEA OF CREATION

Ordinary idea of creation as an event in the past . . . . .	299
A phenomenal regress cannot lead to a First Cause . . . . .	301
Cause as applied to God must be understood as Ground or Reason . . . . .	302
The relation of the universe to God is organic, not accidental . . . . .	304

# CONTENTS

XV

	PAGE
Creation as an 'eternal' act . . . . .	305
Creation 'out of nothing' is the denial of an independently exist- ing matter . . . . .	306
Creation as manifestation in and to conscious spirits . . . .	308
No existence of God prior to and apart from such manifestation	310
A comparison with Professor Howison's Pluralism . . . .	315
God must be more than <i>primus inter pares</i> . . . . .	320

## LECTURE XVII

### TELEOLOGY AS COSMIC PRINCIPLE

Finite purpose implies desire for the non-existent and the adapta- tion of means to ends . . . . .	323
Do these features of the idea disqualify it as a principle of cosmic interpretation? . . . . .	324
The traditional argument from design . . . . .	325
Teleology as affected by the modern theory of organic develop- ment . . . . .	327
The idea of purpose becomes the idea of a systematic and intel- ligible whole . . . . .	328
The idea thus tends to pass into that of value or satisfaction .	332
Illustrated by Spinoza's treatment of the subject . . . .	333
Can value be separated from activity or effort? . . . .	335
The 'eternal purpose' of God . . . . .	340

## LECTURE XVIII

### TIME AND ETERNITY

Three senses of the term 'eternal' distinguishable . . . .	343
The timelessness of truth: the Platonic world of Ideas . . .	345
'Eternal' in ordinary usage is rooted in our temporal experience	348
The perception of succession implies a consciousness of duration	350
Eternity as a <i>totum simul</i> . . . . .	354
The stages must be seen not merely simultaneously, but as elements in a completed purpose . . . . .	358
The analogy of an artistic whole . . . . .	361
The time-process must be retained, and yet transcended, in the Absolute . . . . .	363

## LECTURE XIX

## BERGSONIAN TIME AND A GROWING UNIVERSE

	PAGE
The spatialized idea of time and the illusion of determinism . . . . .	367
But the same illusion persists in M. Bergson's stress on the contingency of the future . . . . .	370
Past, present, and future organic to one another . . . . .	376
As a mere beginning, the <i>élan vital</i> is purely indeterminate . . . .	378
M. Bergson's suggestion of a theistic background . . . . .	379
Progress predicable only of the parts, not of the Eternal Nature on which they draw . . . . .	381
NOTE ON M. Bergson's doctrine of Time . . . . .	383

## LECTURE XX

## PLURALISM—EVIL AND SUFFERING

Dr. Rashdall's theory of a limited God . . . . .	388
Dr. McTaggart's Absolute as a society of self-existent persons . . . .	391
William James's Pluralistic Universe . . . . .	393
His mistaken conception of the Absolute as merely a spectator of the world-drama . . . . .	397
The problem of evil and suffering . . . . .	400
The arguments of Hume and Mill . . . . .	401
The conception of omnipotence . . . . .	403
The purely hedonistic ideal of both thinkers . . . . .	406
Failure of traditional theism to assimilate the most characteristic articles of Christian belief . . . . .	409
The eternal redemption of the world . . . . .	412
The element of casualty and 'the arduousness of reality' . . . .	415
The omnipotence of atoning love . . . . .	417

## LECTURE I

### HUME'S 'DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION'

It is just two hundred years since the birth of the greatest Scotsman who ever applied himself to these subjects. In Academies and learned journals, even in the daily and weekly newspapers, during the past year<sup>1</sup> we have been celebrating the bicentenary of David Hume, and recalling to mind the achievements which gave him so conspicuous a place in the history of thought. It has seemed to me therefore not inappropriate to begin these lectures by some reference to Hume's pronouncement on those ultimate questions which Lord Gifford had in view in the foundation of this lectureship. The more so as we are not left in this matter to deductions, more or less probable, from Hume's general theory of knowledge; he has dealt with the theistic problem explicitly and at length in his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, a work to which his biography shows that he attached unusual importance as the deliberate and carefully weighed expression of his conclusions on the greatest of all themes. Although Hume's mode of stating the question, his handling of the argument, as well as the nature of his conclusions, are in many ways strikingly different from those which naturally suggest themselves to a thinker of to-day, I have thought that these very differences of formulation and of emphasis render a statement of his position valuable as a background to our further discussion. And although I do not intend these lectures to be primarily historical in character, a certain amount of historical orientation is

<sup>1</sup> The first course of lectures was delivered during the University session, 1911-12.

indispensable, if only to enable us to understand how the question takes for us to-day the form it does.

The history of Hume's *Dialogues* is indeed curious, and the fortunes of the work have been, perhaps, hardly commensurate with the care taken by its author to ensure its survival. It was written in the maturity of Hume's powers, when he was completing his revision of his youthful conclusions in metaphysics and ethics and bidding a final farewell to philosophical speculation; and in his correspondence with Gilbert Elliot of Minto there is interesting evidence of the pains he bestowed on the balance of the argument. The terms in which he speaks of it are more appropriate to a personal document than to a purely literary performance. ' 'Tis not long ago', he writes, ' I burned an old manuscript book, wrote before I was twenty, which contained page after page the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head. It began with an anxious search after arguments to confirm the common opinion; doubts stole in, dissipated, returned; were again dissipated, returned again; and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason.'

To Philo is assigned in the *Dialogues* the part of the sceptical objector—what Hume here describes as the struggle of a restless imagination—and because Philo's sceptical arguments are so entirely consonant with the general tenor of Hume's philosophy, it has been too common to take his utterances as representing by themselves Hume's own attitude to the question under discussion. But this is to ignore both the carefully constructed balance of the *Dialogues* and their avowed and deliberate conclusion. Hume admits, in the letter already quoted, that the part of Philo is one which admirably suited his temperament. 'I must confess, Philo,' says Cleanthes in the *Dialogues*, ' that of all men living, the task you have undertaken of raising doubts and objections suits you best.' And when Cleanthes further



rallies his 'ingenious friend' on the 'too luxuriant fertility' of his invention, which 'suppresses his natural good sense by a profusion of unnecessary scruples and objections', and on the 'strange lengths' to which his 'spirit of controversy, joined to his abhorrence of vulgar superstition' has carried him in the course of the argument, we seem to hear the echoes of one of Gilbert Elliot's letters at the time of the composition of the work. Hume replied to his correspondent that he wished his friend lived near enough to sustain in actual discussion the rôle of Cleanthes, the philosophical theist. Cleanthes, he explicitly says, is the hero of the piece, and he is anxious to see his position strengthened, if that be possible, against his own sceptical doubts in the mouth of Philo. He admits 'the strong propensity of the mind' towards the theistic conclusion, but he fears that 'unless that propensity were as strong and universal as that to believe in our senses and experience, it will be esteemed a suspicious foundation'. 'Tis here', he proceeds, 'I wish for your assistance; we must endeavour to prove that this propensity is somewhat different from our inclination to find our own figures in the clouds, our faces in the moon, our passions and sentiments even in inanimate matter.' There is good evidence, therefore, that Hume's purpose in the *Dialogues* was entirely serious, and the work as a whole is perhaps the most intimately personal expression of his views which we possess. It appears to be the outcome of something like a personal need to probe the question to the bottom, and to set down as carefully and dispassionately as possible both the positive and the negative results.

This is the view which is naturally suggested by the history of the manuscript and the deliberate publication of the volume as the philosopher's last bequest to the world he was leaving. For twenty-seven years Hume kept the manuscript by him. Rumours of the existence of such a work by 'the terrible David' had got abroad. Its negative