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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

For Metaphysics keep your eye on Cambridge.

Now, the man who seems most representative of Cambridge metaphysics at the present time is Mr. John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, Doctor in Letters, Fellow and Lecturer of Trinity College. Mr. McTaggart has already published *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* and *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*. But now he has come nearer. He has brought his metaphysics into connexion with the things of the Spirit. He has touched our dearest interests. Through Mr. Edward Arnold he has published *Some Dogmas of Religion* (10s. 6d. net). None of us can any longer ignore Cambridge metaphysics.

The Dogmas of Religion have been somewhat discredited of late. A distinction has been drawn between dogma and doctrine. Doctrine has been applied to the things which we find in the Bible, dogma to the speculations of theologians upon these things. Doctrine has been called 'dogma in the making'; and the hint has been pretty broad, although it has sometimes come from theologians themselves, that it would have been better for us if it had never been made. When we see a book by Mr. McTaggart, or indeed by almost anybody nowadays, certainly by any metaphysician, on 'Some Dogmas of Religion,' we are quite sure that the dogmas of religion are about to have a bad time.

But we are mistaken. Mr. McTaggart believes in dogma. He believes that there can be no religion without dogma. He does not go so far as to say that dogma is religion. He says, 'Dogma is not religion, any more than the skeleton is the living body.' But he maintains that dogma is necessary to religion. He says that 'we can no more be religious without dogma than our bodies could live without our skeletons.'

Is Mr. McTaggart ready, then, to accept the dogmas of religion? Our religion is Christianity. Is he prepared to accept the dogmas of historical Christianity, and in the name of metaphysics to call them true? Or any of them? No, not one of them. The dogmas of Christianity which he discusses in his book are Immortality, the Freedom of the Will, and the Omnipotence and Goodness of God. Does he believe in them? He does not believe in one of them. Starting with the decision that we can have no religion without dogma, he ends with the declaration that we can have neither dogma nor religion.

This is surely very sad. Mr. McTaggart feels and admits it. But its sadness, he says, is no ground for denying its truth. It is no more sad than cancer, famine, or madness; and these are all real. But he hastens to add that it is not quite so sad as it may at first appear.

There is hope that we may yet be religious. *But we must first be metaphysicians.* For there can be no religion without dogma; and 'the only way of coming to any conclusions on matters of religious dogma is by means of metaphysical arguments. So the great majority of mankind are bowled out of religion. It is a long time since the Pharisees said, 'This people that knoweth not the law is cursed.' Mr. McTaggart in our day says the same. Not so contemptuously; not so wickedly. Very sadly, indeed, and compassionately. But still the same. He says, however sadly, that if there is any hope that a man should enjoy the knowledge and the love of God he must first be a metaphysician, and obey the laws of logic.

And even for the metaphysician the way is hard. Mr. McTaggart remembers an exclamation reported of Jesus (Mt 11^{25}, Lk 10^{21}) that 'the kingdom of heaven is hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.' He is not sure about that exclamation. He is not sure if Jesus uttered it. Observe the word 'reported.' If He did, then he would not be quite sure of Jesus. In any case, he much prefers another exclamation (Mt 13^{45}) which is reported of the same Teacher, that 'the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' For that means that there is no way of getting to the knowledge or the love of God but by metaphysical argument. And what if the man's argument does not reach it? In the words of the parable, what if, after selling all that he has, he cannot buy the pearl? What if all that he has is too little? It is not easy even for a metaphysician to have any religion. It is a great price that has to be paid for it, and 'the greater the price, the fewer can pay it.'

It is all such a pity. But how can you help it? says Mr. McTaggart. Religion is a great thing. The way to it, therefore, is hard, and few there be, even of the metaphysicians, that find it. Mr. McTaggart is not quite sure of all the reported sayings of Jesus, but, 'Sixteen centuries after the death of Jesus, the Jewish race produced another great religious teacher, in whom philosophic insight and religious devotion were blended as in no other man before or since.' And what did Spinoza say? He said, 'Omnia præclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt.' All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

For Metaphysics, we said, keep your eye on Cambridge. For what should we keep our eye on Manchester? For Religion, it appears. For religion with its new meaning and interest. Manchester is a new University. Unlike the ancient universities it looks more 'before' than 'after.' If we may judge by a handsome volume of Essays which has been issued from the University Press, the young University of Manchester is already to be identified with the study of religion, because religion is the study of the future.

It is a volume of *Inaugural Lectures delivered by Members of the Faculty of Theology, during its First Session*, 1904–5. It is not the first publication of the University of Manchester, but it is the first of the theological series. It is edited by Professor A. S. Peake, M.A., B.D., Dean of the Faculty of Theology. 'We shall not be satisfied,' says the author of the first lecture, 'until there is a long row of volumes of a theological series, side by side with the other publications of the University of Manchester.' Whether a long row will be a blessing to the University or to us depends on the value of the volumes. This volume is of the most exceptional value and interest.

The first lecturer is Professor T. F. Tout, who seems astonished to find himself in a Faculty of Theology. He is described as 'Professor of Mediæval and Modern History, and Bishop Fraser Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History.' And he seems

to be for ever asking himself and us whether these subjects belong to Theology. Surely Ecclesiastical History does? No, he is not so sure. If Ecclesiastical History is not simply History it is nothing. The only reason that Professor Tout can find for separating off a part of history, and lecturing upon it by itself, is that no man can lecture upon history as a whole. It is the principle of the division of labour and the growth of specialization that makes him an ecclesiastical historian. And yet there is one thing of which Professor Tout is sure, as sure as though he had belonged to a Faculty of Theology all his life. It is that the study of the future is Religion.

For he holds that the study of Religion is of all things the best discipline that a University can offer. And so he says: 'One subject we have insisted upon all students taking within our walls, and that is the subject of Comparative Religion, for the teaching of which we have had the good fortune to obtain the services of a professor of acknowledged eminence. It has been thought that nothing is more likely to open the mind of the student than to be brought into living contact with the origins of religious beliefs, and with some of the great historical religions which divide with Christianity the allegiance of the world.'

The second lecturer is Professor Peake, whose subject is 'The Present Movement of Biblical Science.' In what direction is Biblical Science moving? Both in the Old Testament and in the New, the gains which Professor Peake expects to gather are looked for in the field of Anthropology and Comparative Religion. 'Again and again,' he says, 'the Old Testament student is forced back for the explanation of certain features in his documents on parallels in lower and especially in savage religions. The religion of Israel rose from the common ground of Semitic religion, and this in its turn arose out of a type essentially savage. The lower element survived into the more developed forms, and often these incongruous survivals can be understood only through comparison with religions of a more rudimentary character, in which they would have been quite at home.'

Professor Peake gives an example. 'The laws of uncleanness,' he says, 'have often been explained as if they symbolized some deep spiritual or ethical principle. But these attempts to read in loftier ideas have been characterized by extreme artificiality, and a persistent endeavour to force the material into a most uncongenial mould. All becomes clear once we are willing to learn from the anthropologist, and to see in these laws, which seem so inharmonious with the higher religion of Israel, survivals of the savage conception of taboo.'

He turns to the theology of the New Testament. His outlook is the same. He has no time even to mention all its problems. He mentions the one problem which seems to him of most vital importance. And he says: 'The most pressing question for us to-day in New Testament Theology is to reconstruct the environment in which Christianity grew up, and settle, so far as we can, the question, What were the historical influences that helped to shape it? In an age of Syncretism, when the Orontes flowed into the Tiber, we may well ask what waters mingled in the Lake of Galilee, or, to vary the metaphor, from what quarries came the stones with which the New Jerusalem was built?'

The last lecturer is Professor Rhys Davids. His outlook is the same. Professor Tout opened the book with an expression of pride that a Chair of Comparative Religion had been placed in the University of Manchester, and that for the work of that chair they had obtained the services of a professor of acknowledged eminence. Dr. Rhys Davids is that professor. We expect, therefore, that to him the study of Religion will be the study of supreme importance. And it is so. But it is more than that. Again, it is the coming study. And he watches with evident joy the wide increase of interest in it, and the efforts that are being made throughout the world to satisfy that interest. 'The

University of Paris,' he says, 'has founded a special school for the comparative study of the history of religious beliefs.' He then points to the University of Manchester and the founding of his own chair. 'And,' he ends, 'since that appointment the young and vigorous University of Tokyo has established a similar chair.'

For the study of religion—before we pass from it altogether, let us make this single observation—for the study of religion it seems to us better to begin with a special rather than a general book. With a book, we mean, which deals with some special religion, or some part of it, rather than with religion as a whole. We believe, indeed, that it is always better to gather facts before attempting principles. There are some excellent introductions in English to the study of comparative religion. Jevons and Menzies and Geden occur at once. But before they are opened a serious effort should be made to master a book like Hopkins' *Religions of India*, or, much better even than that, Deussen's *Upanishads*, now accessible in idiomatic English.

We little suspect how much we owe to the sublime teaching of the Upanishads. For until quite recently their influence upon Western thought has been indirect and even quite roundabout. In the lecture just referred to, Professor Rhys Davids reminds us that our civilization came directly from the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. But the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean owed much to the thought of Persia, and through Persia to the ideas of India, and especially to those ideas which were most easy of transfer, and most allied to its own thought, the ideas belonging to the scheme of life contained in the Upanishads. That ultimate source is now open to our direct investigation.

'Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them' (Lk 13^4). It is curious that the Jews did not understand their case. For it is the problem of Job. And they had Job in their hands. Through all the generations they had been reading Job and trying to understand him. It is curious that they did not apply it to the case of 'those eighteen' and understand it.

Perhaps they did not understand the problem of Job. We do not understand it yet. When a preacher, like Professor Gwatkin, gives out the title of his sermon and says, 'Job's Problem,' our ears are open to hear. For we know that the problem of Job is with us still.

The problem of the Book of Job, says Professor Gwatkin, is the strangely unequal distribution of this world's good and bad things. They never were more unequally distributed than they are to-day. And men were never so much astonished at the unequal distribution. The Book of Job, we say, was written to vindicate the ways of God to men, to explain the unequal distribution of this world's good and bad things. But it does not do it. And Christ does not do it. You read the Book of Job, but you do not understand the problem. You read what Christ says about 'those eighteen,' but you do not understand it yet. When you have read the Book of Job you no longer make those mistakes about the problem which Eliphaz the Temanite made, but you do not understand the problem. You read what Jesus said about 'those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell,' and you no longer shake your head and say, they must have been sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem, but you do not understand why the tower fell upon them.

Why do we not understand? Professor Gwatkin thinks it may be beyond our reason. He thinks it may be one of those things which it is well for us that we cannot understand. For there are some things which we cannot understand enough to satisfy the mind, and for the meaning of which we are therefore driven back upon the heart. There are some things which we get at the meaning of, so far as we ever get at their meaning, only

by living through them. Professor Gwatkin thinks that this is one of those things; and so it is good for us that the answer is beyond our reason, and we must learn it by living it, so far as we can ever learn it in this world.

Professor Gwatkin has published a volume of sermons, elsewhere noticed. He calls the volume *The Eye for Spiritual Things* (T. & T. Clark; 4s. 6d. net). The title is taken from the first sermon, but it applies to the whole book. For when we come, for example, to the sermon which we are now dealing with, on 'Job's Problem,' we find that what he says about the problem of Job has this as the essential thing in it, that no one can understand that problem who has not the eye to discern the things of the Spirit. We cannot understand it by a study of economics or sociology. We cannot get at it by logic or philosophy. Not even theology will give it to us, unless we are theologians of the heart.

Nor can the spiritual eye explain it to the mind. It can only accept it and push the problem back. It can accept the problem. 'If you ask me Job's question,' says Professor Gwatkin, 'why the wicked prospers in all his ways, while the righteous is crushed by misfortunes, I can only answer that such is God's will.' But it can also push the problem back a little. And that is as much as science or philosophy can do for any of the problems of life.

'I am as far as possible,' says Professor Gwatkin, 'from thinking that we can fully make out the problem which our Saviour left unsolved: but I think we can do the sort of thing which men of science do. They have never fully made out a single fact of nature—not even why we feel warm before the fire. Sooner or later, they are always checked by a vail of mystery. Sometimes they can push back the vail a little, by showing that one thing depends on another; but they never can tear it down. If they can explain one cause by another for a long way, sooner or later they always come to a cause they cannot explain. Why does a stone fall? Because the earth pulls it down? Why does the earth pull it down? They cannot explain that; and when they do explain it, they will only explain it by some further cause they cannot explain. Science never really does explain things: but it gives us a practical view of lesser mysteries by showing that they are parts of greater mysteries, as when we learn that our weather depends on the balancings of the clouds for thousands of miles around us.'

What is that greater mystery, then, into which this lesser mystery can be pushed? It is Predestination. 'Shall we look for light to what Gibbon might call the darkest corner of the whole theological abyss? Yes; just because Predestination is a great mystery, it throws a flood of light on the lesser mysteries around it. Job's problem is a case of predestination, for misfortunes are the refusing or the taking away of this world's good things; and this is predestination, so far as it is not the result of our sin.'

Thus the misfortunes of life come under the doctrine of predestination. And it is under the same doctrine that its blessings come. If it was not for their sins that the tower in Siloam fell upon those eighteen, neither was it for their righteousness that the rest of the men that dwelt in Jerusalem escaped. It was the will of God. Eighteen were chosen to perish so: the rest were chosen to escape. It is predestination. We have not explained predestination, but we have shown that it was not sin that brought about the death of the eighteen, nor righteousness that secured the escape of the rest. We have brought the event, and all the sorrowful events that have ever happened in the world like it, within the greater mystery of predestination.

And more than that, we have shown that it is not so great a misfortune. For predestination, as we find it in the Bible, refers, says Professor Gwatkin, to this world's good and evil things, not

to salvation and perdition. It is therefore limited in its application, mercifully and momentously limited. And now, when we ask why the wicked prospers in all his ways, we are able to answer, Because he deserves it. He is one of the children of this world. Now, the children of this world are wiser for their own generation than the children of light. If a man labours for the meat which perisheth, he is not likely to labour in vain. Verily, he has his reward.

And still more. We can see that it is not predestination that really either makes or mars us. Predestination gives us our start in life, but we have our own race to run. The gifts we are born with, says Professor Gwatkin, are entirely matter of predestination, for we have no voice in the matter. The opportunities also which we meet in life are largely matter of predestination, for they are largely beyond our control. Is there injustice in that? There is not. God never promised to let all men share His gifts alike, and He does not judge us by His gifts, but by the use we make of them. Our gifts and opportunities are, so to say, but the zero line from which we start; and the question for us in the last day is how far we have got beyond it? The zero for one man is ten talents, for another five, for another one. But to whom much is given, of him much shall be required.

And there is one thing more. Our Lord did not solve the problem for us, but He went one step beyond the Book of Job, and it is a momentous step. For He showed that if the wicked have their reward in this life, the righteous have it in the life which is to come. 'Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.'

'For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is' (1 Co 3^{11-13}).

This is the Christian worker's text. It is not personal character the apostle speaks of, but work, and especially the work of teaching. He speaks of character afterwards. He says, 'If a man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved.' The text is sometimes taken as if it spoke of character—as if a man might be of an exceedingly shady character, and yet get into heaven; as if a man might be saved, yet so as through fire, his character and life being left behind him a heap of blackened ashes. The text does not deal with character. It deals with work. 'Each man's work shall be made manifest.' And the special work is the work of teaching. It is the teacher's text. It deals with what we teach, not what we are.

The teacher's work is spoken of as the building of a house, *with the certainty that there will be a fire.* The builder of a house usually builds in the hope that there will not be a fire. Sometimes he takes precautions against a fire. It is not often that he builds the house so that it may pass through the fire. But the building which the Christian teacher builds *will* pass through the fire. He knows it will. And he must build accordingly.

So there are three things in the text—the Foundation, the Building, and the Fire.

First, the Foundation. The Christian teacher has not to lay the foundation. It is laid already. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.' The Foundation is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ? What does that mean? His example? No. It is true that He went about doing good; that He denied Himself even unto death. And we must do good also. We must take up our cross and follow Him. We must

enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and be made conformable unto His death. But the example of Jesus Christ is not Jesus Christ, and it is not the Foundation.

His teaching then? No, not His teaching. Our teaching may be His teaching so far as we understand it and can make it applicable; but that is the building, not the foundation. The Foundation is Jesus Christ Himself, an historical person, a person who was born, lived, died, rose again, and ever lives. It is not doctrines about Christ. No theory of the Atonement is needed for the foundation. But neither is it Jesus Christ shorn of all doctrine, of all that makes Him Jesus Christ. It is not a human Jesus who was no Christ. It is not a Christ of the devout imagination who never was Jesus. It is Jesus Christ who was born, lived, died, rose again, and is alive. These five make up Jesus Christ, and you may not cut one of them away. Are they five miracles? We cannot help that. We have not Jesus Christ without them. We have not Jesus Christ unless we have them all.

The teacher does not lay the foundation. It is laid already. It is there, an historical fact, laid once for all in the past; a spiritual fact, ready for a spiritual building, in every moment of the present. The teacher builds upon it.

Next, the Building. There are many kinds of buildings. Some are slim and some are substantial, some are useful and some are ornamental. The peculiarity of this building is that it has to go through the fire. Its materials, therefore, must be fireproof—gold, silver, costly stones; not wood, hay, or stubble.

The materials must be fireproof. Now the materials are the things which we teach about Christ. Christ is there before we teach anything about Him. The foundation is laid before we begin the building. What are the things about Christ which will stand the fire? That Christ is a Saviour, not merely a Helper; that He is the only Saviour, not Church, or Conduct, or Creed; that He saves all to the uttermost, not merely from punishment, therefore, but from sin.

These are the materials. But out of these materials we must form a building. We must lay our stones well together. We must explain the things about Christ. We must explain them in their proper place and in their right proportion. We must not let holiness be lost in love, or love be killed by holiness. We must not hide the providence of God, or ignore the freedom of man. The building must be shapely. There may be much work at the laying of a foundation which the eye cannot look upon. Was there ever more unsightly work than at the laying of this Foundation? But the foundation is laid. We are building the building now. We tell the story of the Cross, but as an historical fact. We add to it the story of the Resurrection. We are not called upon to be for ever enacting a Passion Play, and repeating the ugly work that was done when the foundation was laid. We are building the building now, and not only should the materials be fireproof, but they should form a building that is fair to see. They should fall into a system in harmony with the character of God and the mind of Christ.

And then the Fire. But we have nothing to do with the fire. 'The day will declare it.' 'It shall be revealed in fire.' 'The fire will try every man's work, of what sort it is.' That is all we know. That is all we need to know.