

**STUDIES OF POLITICAL
THOUGHT FROM GERSON
TO GROTIUS 1414-1625**

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Studies of political thought from Gerson to Grotius 1414-1625 by John Neville Figgis

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FROM GERSON TO GROTIUS
1414—1625

by

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PREFACE.

IT is now nearly seven years since these lectures were delivered. At the time I delayed publication in order to secure completeness. Since then, many causes have increased the delay, and made perfection farther off than ever. Still, I have read a good deal more in the six literatures, all so vast, with which the lectures deal, and the conclusions are based on a wider induction than when first set forth. The volume, however, is but a course of lectures, intended merely to convey suggestions, and not a comprehensive treatise. Some day, perhaps, Mr Carlyle will give us that.

So far as the notes go I have made them as little numerous as possible. Those familiar with the literature will be aware that adequately to illustrate by quotation topics in the text would swell this little volume into a Cyclopaedia. I have reduced the errors, both in text and notes, so far as was practicable for one with many other occupations, to whom the use of a great library has been the fleeting boon of an occasional holiday. In so vast a range of topics I cannot hope to have avoided mistakes. They will not, it is hoped, militate against such interest as the book may possess.

Increasing reading in this subject has had one main result. It has confirmed the writer in his opinion of the unity of the subject, of the absolute solidarity of the controversies of our own day with those forgotten conflicts which form the argument of these lectures. The debt of the modern world to the medieval grows greater as one contemplates it, and the wisdom of the later ages less conspicuous. Some phrases, especially in the first lecture, would be different if they were to be written again. A glance at Lord Acton's essays on "The Protestant Theory of Persecution," or "Political Thoughts on the Church," or his lectures on Liberty will show what I mean. The mention of his name leads me to say that the obligations of this book to great Cambridge teachers are too obvious to need more elaborate expression. I feel, however, bound to set down here my gratitude to the Rev. T. A. Lacey for a suggestion respecting the Church as a *societas perfecta*, which more than anything else has helped to illuminate the subject, and is the main ground of any improvement there may be in the present form of the lectures on that in which they were delivered. The introductory lecture then, as now, is the least satisfactory; and would have been omitted were not some such preface a necessity. Besides, it has for the writer a personal interest. The late Professor Maitland, whose kindness was even greater than his genius, was good enough to come and listen to it. Since then, while the book was being rewritten, nearly three years back, I asked his permission to dedicate the lectures to one who had taught me so much. At the very time when he accepted this suggestion with his accustomed graciousness, I felt that the end might come before my task was accomplished.

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It has come. And now I can only say how unworthy of his memory is this bungling treatment of a subject some aspects of which he had himself illuminated. Maitland, as a student and a writer and a friend, touched nothing that he did not adorn; and his grave needs fairer wreaths than most of us can offer. Yet the humblest of his pupils may be allowed to say that he wishes his work had been more worthy of his teacher.

J. N. F.

May, 1907.