

OUTLINES OF SOCIAL THEOLOGY

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Outlines of social theology by William DeWitt Hyde

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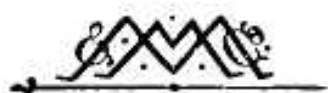
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WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE

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BY
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PREFACE

IDEALISM and theology, originally joined together in "the Gospel according to St. John," were put asunder through the estrangement of the Greek and Latin churches. The Greek church put a metaphysic in the place of religion, and paid the penalty in spiritual sterility. The Latin church put authority in the place of reason, and paid the penalty in intellectual barrenness. Protestantism has inherited the Greek formulas without the philosophy which gave them meaning, and the Latin distrust of reason without the authority which made dogmatism effective. The remedy lies in a reunion of vital religion with rational theology.

The time has not come for writing this new theology. The returns from psychology and sociology, on which it will depend, are not yet in. A man however may blaze a path, even though he lacks the materials and the capacity to build a road. This little book aims to point out the logical relations in which the doctrines of theology will stand to each other when the time shall come

again for seeing Christian truth in the light of reason and Christian life as the embodiment of love.

I have called it Social Theology, because the Christianity of Christ and his disciples was pre-eminently a social movement, and because we are looking at everything to-day from the social rather than the individualistic point of view. In ethics, in economics, in sociology, in politics, we no longer treat man as capable of isolation. *Unus homo, nullus homo.* Man is what he is by virtue of his relations to that which he is not. In these special sciences we try to solve the problem of the individual by putting him into right relations with the forces and persons about him. Christ came to place man in right relations with God, with nature, and with his fellow-men. The modern man translates the Greek $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ by life rather than soul. The preservation and enrichment of life, not the mere insuring and saving of the soul, is the function of religion which appeals to men to-day. And at this period of transition the adjective "social" serves to call attention to the shifting of emphasis from the abstract and formal relation of the isolated individual to an external Ruler, over to man's concrete and essential relations to the Divine Life manifested in nature, history, and human society.

A few paragraphs of this book, amounting to twenty or thirty pages, have appeared in published sermons and addresses, and in articles in the *Andover Review*, the *Outlook*, the *Century*, and the *Forum*. The greater part, the relation of parts to each other, and the interpretation of each part in the light of the whole, is entirely new.

For valuable suggestions and criticisms upon the proofs, my thanks are due to Professor Egbert C. Smyth, of Andover Seminary; Professor George H. Palmer, of Harvard University; and Professor D. Collin Wells, of Dartmouth College.

With the exception of the first and last chapters I have avoided the technical philosophical discussion which theology always invites. In dealing with the grounds of belief in God, in the first chapter, I have found it impossible to treat the subject at all without assuming some familiarity with the results of metaphysical inquiry. And yet the presentation there made is the merest summary of the idealistic position. In the last chapter also I have introduced a summary of the idealistic objections to asceticism, hedonism, socialism, and promiscuous charity. The general reader is advised to skip both these chapters. Yet it was impossible to omit them from the book

without leaving it logically very incomplete. For after all metaphysics must be the Alpha, and ethics the Omega, of any theology which is rooted in reason and fruitful in life.

WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE.

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