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# OUTSPOKEN ESSAYS

(SECOND SERIES)

BY

WILLIAM RALPH INGE, C.V.O., D.D., F.B.A.

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S

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## PREFACE

It is always difficult to choose a title for a book of essays, and it seemed most convenient to repeat the name of the little volume which was published three years ago. Those essays were in part a challenge to certain idols of the market-place and theatre, and I thought it legitimate to mark the purpose or tendency of the book on the title-page. But I have no wish to pose as a prophet crying in the wilderness. The events of the last few years have, it is to be hoped, taught something both to my critics and to myself; they have perhaps even brought us nearer together. In any case, the present volume contains nothing very daring or unconventional, and if it had stood alone I should have chosen a less provocative title.

The greater part of the book consists of hitherto unpublished matter. *Confessio Fidei* is an attempt to put in order what I actually believe, and to explain why I believe it. I shall be classified, I suppose, as belonging to the right wing of theological liberalism. But I prefer to call myself a Christian Platonist, and to claim a humble place in the long chain of Christian thinkers whose philosophy is based on the Platonic tradition. That chain has been unbroken from the first century to our own day, and in English theology it has had a very honourable record. It should, I think, be recognised as a third school of thought in the Church, not less legitimate, nor less productive of good fruits, than the Catholic and Protestant parties, which in ecclesiastical politics are so much more active and prominent.

The *Hibbert Lectures* were delivered at Oxford in 1920; the subject was suggested to me by my friend Dr. Jacks.

The five lectures are a sketch of the interaction of political and religious ideas in history, with special reference to present problems. The subject is interesting and important; but the treatment is necessarily cursory and superficial, mainly from lack of space, but also, as regards the medieval period, from insufficient knowledge. I hope, however, that as a summary of the attempts that have been made in various ages to place human institutions under the sanction of absolute authority, the lectures may not be without interest.

The Romanes and Rede Lectures were given in 1920 and 1922 respectively. These two annual lectureships have been held by such a series of distinguished men that it is a great honour to be asked to deliver them, and I valued the compliment from my two universities very highly. Both lectures have been published and widely read; but some who already know them may be glad to have them in book form.

The next two essays, which I am allowed to reprint by the courtesy of the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh Review* respectively, deal with closely connected subjects. The unending rivalry between Europe and Asia—a rivalry not only of peoples but of ideas and types of civilisation—has not been definitely settled in favour of the West. Under new forms, Asiatic competition may be a very serious matter for industrialised Europe, and it no longer seems likely that the whole world will pass under the political tutelage of the white peoples. The other essay, *The Dilemma of Civilisation*, raises the great question whether the over-mechanisation of life has not impaired the intrinsic qualities of the human race, so that what we usually call progress may have to be paid for by racial retrogression.

It is possible that here and there these two essays may bear marks of the very anxious years in which they were written. It then seemed uncertain whether civilisation would survive the terrible strain which the Great War had put upon it. Our social order has many enemies, who have not yet abandoned the hope of wrecking it. But it seems to me to have more strength than either

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its friends or its enemies gave it credit for ; and Western Europe at least shows signs of convalescence. The competition of the Far East is perhaps a question for the next generation more than for our own, though we must be prepared to deal with it ; and *The Dilemma of Civilisation* is a problem for the Earth-Spirit, whom George Meredith, in rather cryptic lines, represents as contemplating ' her great venture, Man.'

Meanwhile on him, her chief  
Expression, her great word of life, looks she ;  
Twi-minded of him, as the waxing tree  
Or dated leaf.

' Earth,' the poet thinks, is not yet certain that her great venture has been a success. But humanity is still young.

The last essay, on *Eugenics*, urges the necessity of counteracting, by rational selection, the racial deterioration which must overtake any nation in which natural selection is no longer operative. It has appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1922.

W. R. INGE.

St. Paul's,  
August 1922.



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