

**THE DISCIPLINES OF
LIBERTY; THE FAITH
AND CONDUCT OF THE
CHRISTIAN FREEMAN**

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The disciplines of liberty; the faith and conduct of the Christian freeman by Willard L. Sperry

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WILLARD L. SPERRY

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THE FAITH AND CONDUCT OF
THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN

BY

WILLARD L. SPERRY

MINISTER OF CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BOSTON
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY,
ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
CAMBRIDGE



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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER
WILLARD GARDNER SPERRY
HENRIETTA LEAROYD SPERRY

Preface.

THE idea of Liberty, in one form or another, dominates the religious life of the present day. No matter how troubled the waters, the Freeman's spirit points true to this magnetic pole. Given this initial loyalty a man may box the compass of all other religious interests with an approximate fidelity to contemporary fact. These chapters suggest some of the outstanding points of the religious compass at the present time, but the thought of freedom is both their point of departure and their goal. The reader will make due allowance for the deviation due to personal factors and will correct these deviations by his own experience.

I am conscious of the fact that these pages may suggest the cheap and easy device of "scissors and paste." I have yielded, in some measure, to the inevitable seduction of the other man's effective statement of the case half from choice and half from necessity: from deliberate choice, because as a reader of religious literature I find that much of the value of any contemporary book is drawn from the constant intimation of other significant and rewarding books lying to one side or the other of the immediate highway; from necessity, because no man who is thinking and writing to-day can deny the whole premise of his effort—the noble communism of the modern religious mind.

In particular I wish to acknowledge my debt to those who have directly contributed to the making of this book. I fully realize that any freshness and conviction in these pages is very largely due to the two parishes to which I have ministered. The preacher of to-day is made or unmade, spiritually, by his people. They either force him into innocuous conventionality or urge him on to the exercise of his Christian freedom. The lines have fallen to me in more than happy places in these last years, in that I have found myself ministering to men and women who wished the man who preached to them to speak his own mind, irrespective of ortho-

PREFACE

doxies and heresies. Preaching, therefore, has become less and less an exercise of pulpit rhetoric and more and more a certain experimental thinking out loud. What the practice of preaching may have lost as a formal art, under these conditions, it has gained as the personal adventure both of preacher and hearer. If we have indulged in few flights of perfervid oratory in praise of our Christian Liberty, we have sought to think candidly and concretely about various aspects of that Liberty in faith and practice. I must, therefore, acknowledge my indebtedness to a constant sympathetic hearing in my present pastorate in the Central Congregational Church of Boston, and during a previous pastorate in the First Church of Fall River.

I am further indebted to my friend of other days in Oxford, and now my kinsman, Professor Charles A. Bennett of Yale University, for many valuable suggestions as to the matter and style of this particular volume, as for countless hours of comradeship in the common task of turning up the fallow ground of the mind; to Mr. Wilson Follett of New Haven for final appraisal of certain of these chapters; to Miss C. E. Howard, minister's assistant at Central Church, for patient and accurate help in the preparation of the manuscript; to Miss Ruth M. Gordon of the Old South Parsonage, Boston, for aid in reading the proofs; and to Mr. Ellery Sedgwick for leave to reprint as Chapter VIII of this volume a paper which appeared under another caption in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1921.

WILLARD L. SPERRY.

Boston,

February 4, 1921.

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