

**FREEDOM OF
THOUGHT IN
RELIGIOUS TEACHING**

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Freedom of Thought in Religious Teaching by R. J. Cooke

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Freedom of Thought in Religious Teaching

By
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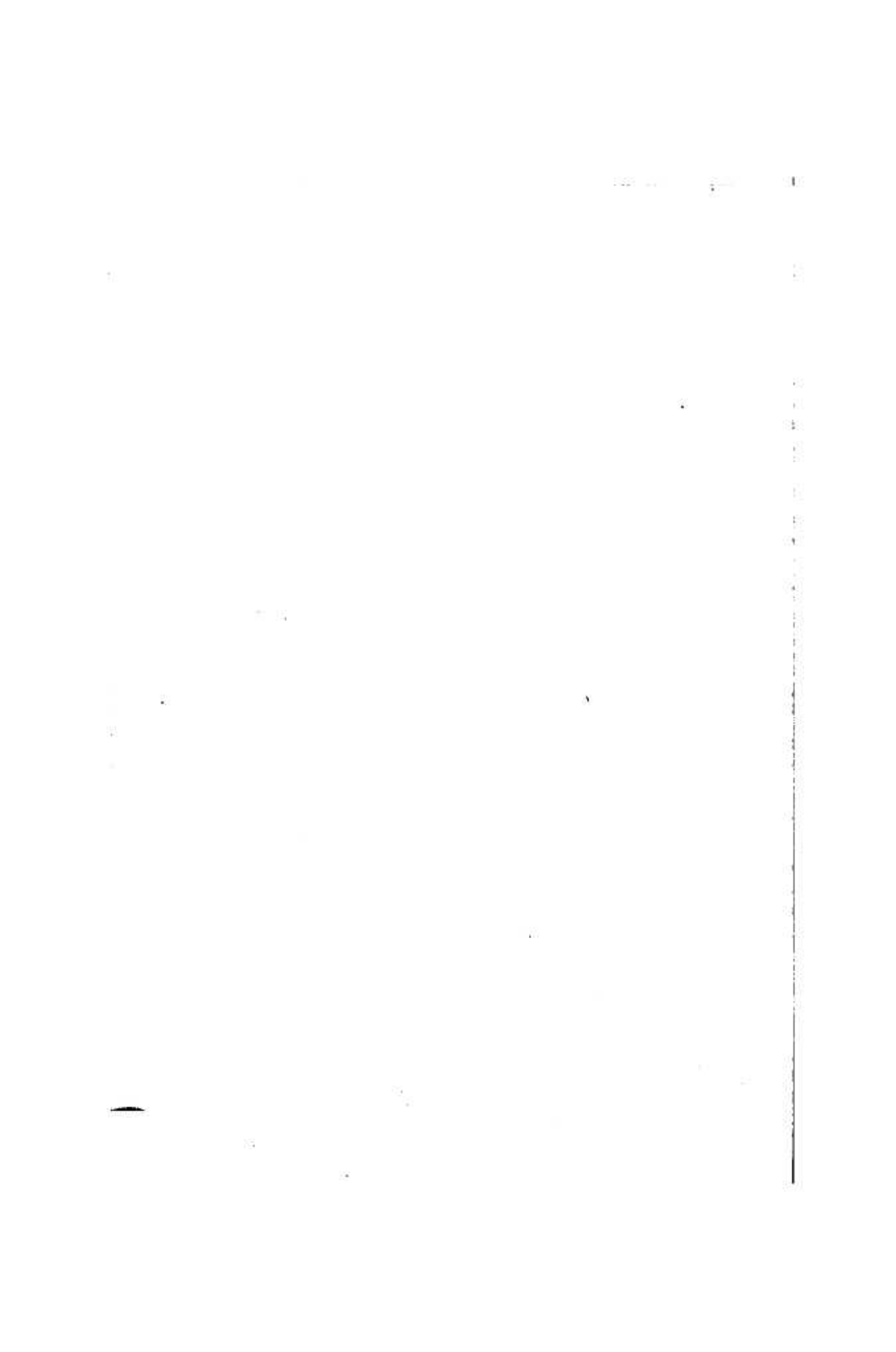
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TO MY BELOVED FRIEND
THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN, THE WISE COUNSELOR,
THE DEVOTED CHURCHMAN,
Robert W. Miller.

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PREFACE

IN presenting the following pages to the thoughtful consideration of those who have at heart and before all else the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, it is earnestly desired that what is written shall not be taken as an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Such a work, indeed, might well engage the best efforts of Christian scholarship, had one the leisure and the courage for so great an undertaking. But the possibility of such a work is beyond me. The incessant demands of uncompromising duty in a large and varied field leave neither time nor strength for that continuity of thought absolutely necessary for such a task. Even these few pages could be written only at intervals while on long journeys, and had there been to my knowledge any work treating directly the distinct and specific question here discussed—this particular theme within the larger theme of Christian Liberty—these pages would not have been written. This brochure, therefore, is nothing more than an humble attempt to indicate the metes and bounds of Critical Thought and Ecclesiastical Authority—a non-partisan attempt

PREFACE

at a solution of a question affecting the peace of the Church, a contribution toward the abatement of antagonism active or suppressed between conservative defenders of the Faith and the progressive interpreters of the same Divine Revelation.

The really valuable work, *The Principle of Authority*, by Prof. Forsyth, of Mansfield College, Oxford; Huffner, on *Christian Liberty*; Förster's *Auctorität u. Freiheit*, and the notable *Lectures on Religion and Culture* delivered by the late Auguste Sabatier at the Religious Science Congress, Stockholm, 1897, did not, I regret to say, come into my hands until after these pages had been given to the Publishers. These works, however, valuable as they are for a general survey of the subject, do not deal specifically with the particular phase here treated. Now, whether this contribution shall definitely settle any particular difficulty, or satisfy the intellectual convictions of opposite parties, is not a matter of so great moment as that it may assist in promoting among reasonable Christians the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. For this purpose it was written, and that, under the blessing of Him who gave His life for the Church, it may accomplish this is the earnest prayer of the author.

R. J. C.