

**PROTESTANTISM AND PROGRESS;  
A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE  
RELATION OF PROTESTANTISM  
TO THE MODERN WORLD**

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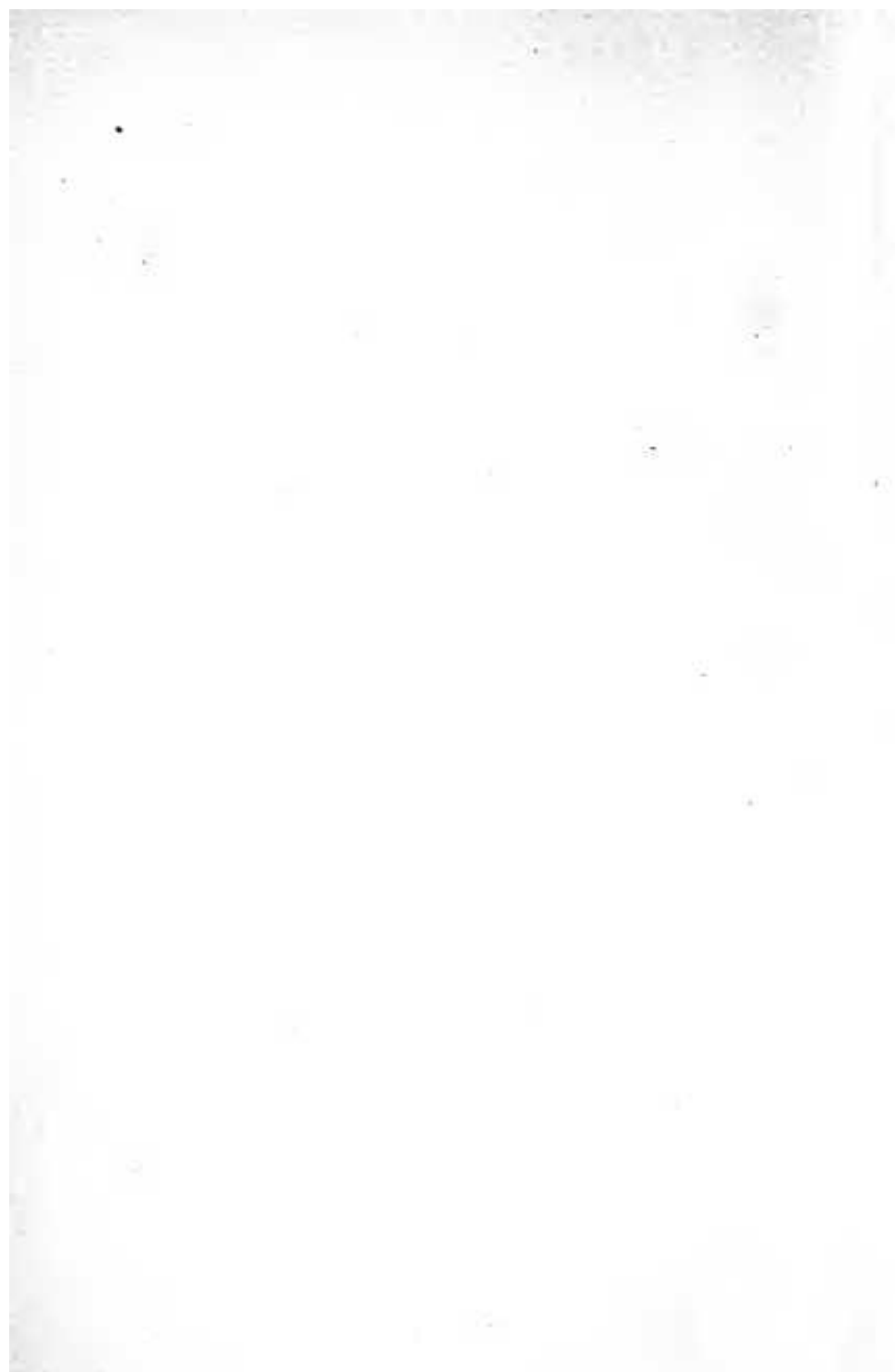
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## PREFACE

THE publishers of the English translation of this little book of mine have requested me to write a special preface addressed to the English reader, and I have very willingly consented to do so. The purpose of such a preface can only be, I think, to say a word about the place which this book occupies in relation to my work as a whole, and, as it would argue a want of modesty in me to assume that the latter is widely known, briefly to indicate its general character.

In the aim which has guided my studies, two main interests may be distinguished. The first is that of gaining an insight into the intellectual and religious situation of the present day, from which the significance and the possi-



bilities of development possessed by Christianity might be deduced. That has led me to engage in historical investigations regarding the spirit of the modern world, for this can only be understood in the light of its relation to the earlier epochs of Christian civilisation in Europe. As Adolf Harnack has described the genesis and the disintegration of Christian dogma, so I should like to examine the present situation and its significance for the fate of Christianity in the modern world. For anyone who holds the opinion that in spite of all the significance which Catholicism retains, the living possibilities of development and progress are to be found on Protestant soil, the question regarding the relation of Protestantism to modern civilisation becomes of high importance. And the question is by no means to be answered in so simple a fashion as common opinion was, and is, accustomed to answer it. It must be treated with complete objectivity and impartiality, and,

so far as matters of fact are concerned, the results must be convincing alike for believers and unbelievers, Protestants and non-Protestants. The investigation must be strictly historical, and in no way biassed by theological prepossessions.

In regard to the other main interest, the matter stands differently. Taking the aforesaid survey of the situation as its basis, it endeavours to distinguish those elements in modern civilisation which have proved their value from those which are merely temporary and lead nowhere. It seeks further, and above all, to give to the religious ideas of Christianity—which I hold to be the sole really religious force in our European system of civilisation, and which I also believe to be superior to the religions of the East—a shape and form capable of doing justice to the absoluteness of religious conviction, and at the same time in harmony with the valuable elements in the

modern spirit. This department of my work is, of course, based on very personal and subjective, although at the same time carefully reasoned, convictions and presuppositions. Here, of course, it is impossible to look for the same general acceptability of results as in the previous case. It is quite possible to follow me in the former, and part company with me in the latter.

The present book belongs distinctly to the former circle of interests, and personal religious views are carefully excluded from the purely historical analysis. It was thus possible for a lecture which I was invited to deliver at the ninth Congress of German Historians to form the kernel of this book. It gives the quintessence of my investigations on the special point of the relation of Protestantism to the Modern Spirit, and, by way of a strict examination of cause and effect, it seeks to determine how much the Modern Spirit actually owes to