
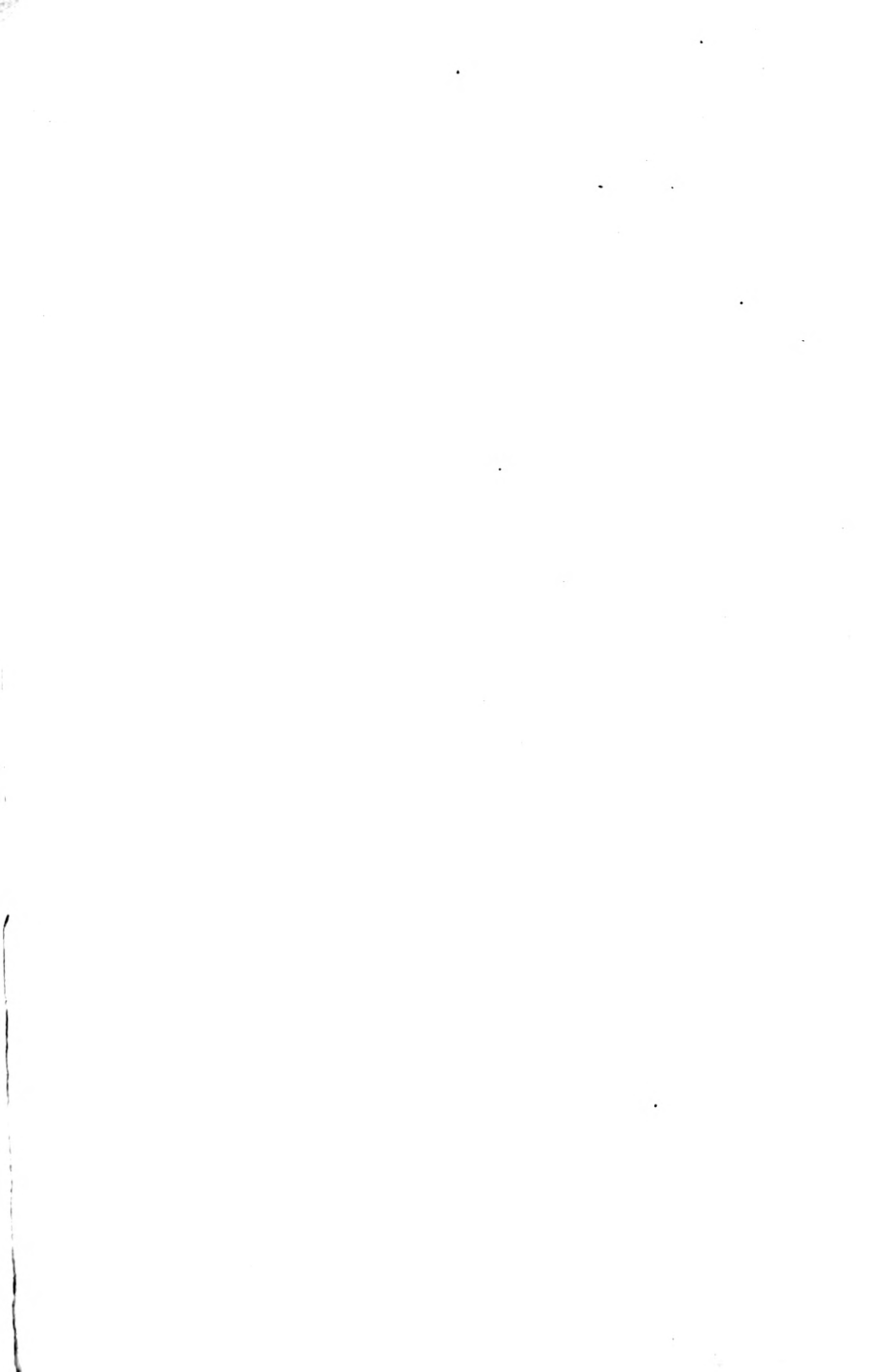


NEW 
CHURCHES
FOR OLD
JOHN 
HAYNES
HOLMES



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^NNew churches for old



NEW CHURCHES FOR OLD

New Churches for Old

A Plea for Community Religion

BY

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

Minister of

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

*Author of "NEW WARS FOR OLD," "RELIGION FOR
TODAY," ETC.*



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TO
HARVEY DEE BROWN
AND
JOHN HERMAN RANDALL
MY COLLEAGUES IN THE WORK OF
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

CORRECTION

The quotation from John Burroughs on page 334 properly belongs on page 2.

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PREFACE

Many books are written these days on the churches. All of them recognize and lament their present pitiable plight. Most of them seek no cause other than the materialism of the age and a certain failure of the churches to keep pace with knowledge and social needs; and offer no remedy other than a general exhortation to the people to remember the importance of religion, and to the churches to bring their beliefs and methods up to date. The futility of these books is itself convincing evidence of the collapse of organized religion in our time.

The present volume is concerned neither with lamentations nor exhortations. Its purpose is not to bring comfort to churches as they exist today. On the contrary, it is written in the deliberate conviction that these churches as organizations are an intolerable interference with the program of modern life, and are therefore to be transformed or replaced as speedily as possible; that Protestantism in all its forms, both orthodox and liberal, is as dead a religion today, and therefore as subversive a social influence, as was medieval Catholicism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; that we are living in an age when new religious forces are everywhere

emerging into conscious life, and therefore should prepare for the coming of a new reformation. In justification of this position, this book undertakes to present (1) an analysis of the situation today, both inside the churches and out; and (2) a constructive program for the organization of new churches to supplant the old.

The program which is outlined in its more immediate aspects in chapters eight, nine and ten, is based on the principles now being worked out in what is coming to be known today as the *community church movement*. These principles are used and commended not in any sense as final; indeed, they are interpreted in this book in radical terms which are likely to be acceptable to few, and have been put into practice by none, of the more than four hundred community churches already established in this country. This movement is an experiment, an adventure of faith; at the best only a splendid first step away from Protestantism, toward the new democratic religion of the future. As such, however, it is the most significant phenomenon in the religious world today, and the inevitable starting point for the discussion of any adequate program of reform.

It should be carefully noted that this book deals primarily with churches, and not with religion. Religion is discussed, but exclusively from the standpoint of the problem of its social organization. This standpoint is fundamental; but involved with it are certain more private and personal aspects of

spiritual experience, which are not to be ignored. These are omitted here not because they are not known to exist, or not recognized as important, but because they do not affect in any way the forces of change which are now at work. Suggestion will be found that these aspects of the religious life must be given place in new churches exactly as in old.

In closing, it may be said that this book represents not only the thought and hope of a single man, but also the experience of a church—the Community Church of New York City. For none of the ideas herein set forth is this institution to be held responsible. But that I have thought along these lines, and had opportunity to try my thoughts, is due entirely to the courage and faith of the people who have sustained me as their minister. In spirit, at least, this book is theirs more than it is mine. It is only fitting that I should close this prefatory word with public acknowledgment of my appreciation and gratitude.

J. H. H.

October 1, 1921.

FOREWORD

Three months after the text of this book was finished, and at the very moment when it was being placed on the printing presses for publication, there came to America from a distinguished churchman across the sea, BISHOP NICOLAI of the Greek Catholic Church of Serbia, a call for just such a new organization of religion as is described in the following chapters.

Starting from the same premise upon which the argument of this book is built—that “Christianity is dying in the world”—the great Bishop asks if America “can not give birth to the church which will be so broad that all humanity can hear its promises, find its comfort, realize its perfect Christ-like reasonableness. . . . Let those of you who find existing churches narrow and cramping,” he cries, “build one which shall be broad and will not cramp! *Forget denomination and remember Jesus Christ.*”

I believe that the community church movement, as described and justified in this book, is an answer to Bishop Nicolai’s appeal. I present his noble words as a Foreword to what I have written, that my readers may know that the world is ready for this answer, and will die if it be not heard.

J. H. H.

WILL AMERICA WATCH CHRISTIANITY DIE?

BISHOP NICOLAI of the Greek Catholic Church
of Serbia

As a moral agency the Christian Church is functioning badly. Humankind, rendered emotionally and psychologically receptive by the tremendous mental and moral experiences of the war, is not turning to the Church for its comfort. When yearning, stimulated minds reach out for comfort in religion, only to find that the religions are divided against themselves, those minds draw back, wondering if, after all, it really is in the Church that comfort lies.

One Church proclaims Church authority as the great requisite to soul salvation; another declares healing of the sick by faith and the belief in that creed to be essential to complete and fructifying Christianity; a third insists upon acceptance of the dogma of the Trinity; a fourth requires faith in Christ's second coming; a fifth demands contemplation as the main part of worship; a sixth links itself inseparably to mysticism; a seventh cries that real salvation comes through works alone.

The division of the Christians of the world into small groups, each sealed in its own room with no communicating doors between—that is the thing which balks the Church as a great influence, which

holds humanity, prone to aspire, in check upon the verge of aspiration.

Revolted by such conditions, the intellectual classes have been driven to agnosticism or atheism; the classes of mid-intellectual development have been kept out of the Church entirely, *or have been converted into that soul smugness which is so great a threat*; the lower classes who lack the time to think, or have not reached an intellectual development enabling them to think alone, *have been poisoned by the chauvinism of one creed or another.*

And so Christianity is dying in the world.

Can not America give birth to the Church which will be so broad that all humanity can hear its promises, find its comfort, realize its perfect Christ-like reasonableness?

I shall go further than to say that you in the United States are capable of producing this great boon for all humanity. I shall declare my firm belief that you are now in process of producing it.

It is not yet organized and it does not yet appear as one Church even in the minds of those individuals who—unconsciously, I think, in most instances—are vigorously promoting it. In the United States, the Church already has thousands of communicants who call themselves undenominational, and, in your various interdenominational movements, evidence of your splendid influence towards Christian unity.

Can not you organize from American Christianity this Church of the Great Light—inclusive as Christ

is—the Church of Good Will? I suggest no operation of destruction for the Churches as they are. But can not religious thought in the United States, the land of freedom and fearlessness, say to all: Retain membership in your own Church as you retain citizenship in your own state, but join also the Church of the Great Light, accepting membership in it as you accept citizenship in the United States.

You may be a New Yorker, a Californian, an Ohioan, but in spite of that, because of that, beyond all that you are an American.

So you may be a Baptist, or a Methodist, or an Episcopalian, or a Christian Scientist, but beyond that you will be a full communicant of the Church of the Great Light, getting from this membership something spiritual comparable to that of far less but of mighty import which you get from citizenship in the United States. Be you Roman Catholic or Puritan you can belong to the Church of the Great Light.

There, I say, is the great opportunity of the United States. In your national life you have been educated to broad tolerance. You will not permanently hold to even slight intolerance in your religious thought. With charity toward all and with malice toward none, by the Grace of God—free! Make the effort, you American Christians! Rise to new heights in religion as your fathers ascended to new heights in humanitarianism and political thought. *Let those of you who find exist-*

ing Churches narrow and cramping, build one which shall be broad and will not cramp! Forget denomination and remember Jesus Christ.

I have watched the progress of America with a thrilling heart. This is the nation which accomplishes impossibilities. Gather up your strength. Rally your tremendous power of leadership; correct the error of the centuries; create the Church of which Christ himself laid down the outlines and of which he spoke the creed: Love ye one another.

The gate of Christianity is closed for the man who has not fulfilled the first law. Let America produce the Church which may.

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NEW CHURCHES FOR OLD

CHAPTER I

THE COLLAPSE OF THE CHURCHES: WHAT IS THE MATTER?

I

That there is something the matter with organized religion in this present day, and something very seriously the matter, is a fact so obvious that it is no longer challenged or contradicted. A decline in the vitality of the churches has been noted by sensitive and honest observers at intervals for nearly one hundred years. This has seldom, however, caused alarm, for the reason that social institutions of every kind are liable to fluctuations of power and influence, determined by changes in economic conditions, personal leadership, and the more or less intangible aspects of intellectual and emotional interest. There is a law of compensation in such phenomena, and what is lost, therefore, at one time is inevitably recovered at another. If the decline seems prolonged and extreme, this fact furnishes only the more reason for believing that a sharp recovery is imminent at any moment. Thus have we lived, during the last two generations at least, not only in a consciousness of the waning power of the churches, but also in an eager and

confident expectation of a great spiritual revival. During the World War this expectation reached an intensity of conviction which was not unrelated, perhaps, to the degree of our confusion at the failure of religion to prevent so incredible a recrudescence of savagery. This vast cataclysm was going to act as a kind of Day of Judgment! It would restore man to his senses, purge him of his indifference and sin, save him to his lost fidelity to the best and highest. The spiritual revival that would follow the war, would give to the churches all their former prestige, and, in addition, unprecedented opportunities of service. That the reapers might be prepared for the harvest, a religious body of unparalleled proportions was created in the so-called Inter-Church World Movement. Everything was ready for an awakening which would still all the disquietude and repair all the losses of the past century. But alas, the war is long since over—and the anticipated revival has not appeared! On the contrary, the churches were never before so weak, the tide of spiritual life never before running at so low an ebb. To our horror we are forced to acknowledge that the declining vitality of organized religion has ended, in this war period, not in recovery but in collapse.

II

Evidence of this collapse of the churches, so long impending and now at hand, is apparent in certain outward and visible manifestations of our social

life. The signs are today so familiar that they need only to be listed in order to be recognized and understood.

That our rural churches are undergoing a process of rapid disintegration has been suspected for many years, and now, since the investigations of Mr. Gifford Pinchot and others, is definitely known. Whole stretches of country-side have abandoned religious practices altogether; in the small towns, Sunday worship is feebly and discouragingly sustained by members of the older generation. The spectacle of abandoned churches is almost as frequent in many portions of the nation as that of abandoned farms and homesteads. Of course, the decline of the agricultural population of the United States, the steady drift of people from the country to the city, the substitution of alien for native stock upon the land, has much to do with the fate which is overtaking the country churches. But there is a change here which is altogether out of proportion to the change which is taking place in the general social environment. The flourishing Protestantism of the country-side of sixty or seventy years ago is passing away, and nothing is coming to take its place. A fine old parish church, set in the midst of a busy town in a prosperous farming community, with its spacious auditorium, once crowded on a Sunday morning with happy families, now occupied by a scattered handful of aging men and women, is the living witness to what is happening everywhere in the rural districts.

The decline of religion in the cities is not so evident as in the country. For one thing, the visible signs of dissolution and decay are not allowed to clutter up the landscape. More important is the fact that in the cities are concentrated those influences which give a certain outward glory to the church which has no relation to the reality of its inner life. Just as the temple worship in ancient Rome was never so splendid as in the days when the traditional religion of the state was nearest to extinction, so the churches in the great political and commercial centers of our time, present an appearance of power and prosperity which conceals rather than expresses the essential facts. In the cities there is the wealth which builds and maintains churches in the same way that it builds and maintains art-galleries, natural history museums, and opera houses; there are the musical resources which make the churches on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and at the festivals of the ecclesiastical year, great concert-halls for the rendition of the finest cantatas and oratorios, requiems and masses; there are the eloquent and far-famed preachers who, like political orators and Chautauqua lecturers, exercise over multitudes of people a magic of the spoken word which is apart from the religious motive on behalf of which they speak. These, and other influences of the same kind, assemble in conspicuous places great congregations which seem to give the lie to the charge that the church is dying. But other phenomena, as

much more important as they are less conspicuous, show that these things of splendor are like the hectic flush on the cheeks of the dying invalid. As a matter of fact, the city churches are in quite as serious a condition as the country churches. Thus, it is only in a few of the more famous institutions, where wealth is able to provide beautiful buildings, fine music and great preaching, or in certain localities where a high degree of neighborhood or community life has been developed, that large congregations assemble on Sunday mornings. In the majority of city churches, the old time Sunday evening services and mid-week prayer meetings have been abandoned; or, if held, are attended by only the meagerest handful of members. New church edifices are usually built much smaller than the old edifices which they replace. This means that the total seating capacity of existing churches bears a steadily diminishing ratio to the total population of the municipalities which they undertake to serve. New societies, of course, are constantly being organized, but not so fast as old societies are amalgamating, or disappearing altogether. The union of several great city churches, each one of which formerly enjoyed an independent life of abounding prosperity and influence, into a single church not so large as any one of its original constituent elements, is now one of the commonest as it is one of the most amazing features of present-day religious life. Not only are there fewer churches in proportion to the population in our

great cities than there were yesterday, but there are in some places fewer churches in absolute number. A well-defined process is now under way which, if continued to its logical end, would mean the disappearance of churches altogether from the modern city.

These facts of country and city life are bad enough just as they stand. The situation becomes still more serious, however, when we go behind these facts, and see what the great denominational machines are doing to prop up the rapidly collapsing fabric of organized religious life. Behind practically every existing Protestant church today there is the denomination to which it is organically attached. This denomination has a central headquarters or machine, organized to perpetuate and advance its own particular sectarian cause. For the service of the interests involved in this cause it is made the custodian of enormous funds, representing on the one hand the accumulation of past investments and endowments, and on the other hand the contemporary gifts of a comparatively few individuals, families and churches which chance to be liberally provided with this world's goods. These funds, now, are used by the denominational machines as a kind of army of reserve, to be thrown into the field wherever the positions at present held are weakening, or new strategic positions must be occupied. Thousands of existing churches of all sects, in city and in country alike, are supported not by gifts from the people of their own communities

but by largesses from their denominational headquarters. The fresh, clear-flowing springs which once sustained them, in other words, are now dried up, and they are kept alive only by streams of water brought to them by pipe-lines laid from distant reservoirs. Of the new churches efficiently organized and oftentimes handsomely housed in city and suburban neighborhoods, the majority these days represent not a natural growth in the spiritual soil of the community in which they are located, but an artificial growth imported and implanted from outside. It is the denominational machine, that is to say, which has rushed in, and imposed upon a locality an institution which it would never have produced of itself. Once established, this institution is sustained indefinitely by an elaborate irrigation system of annual grants, secretarial visitations, gifts or loans of building funds, etc., from national headquarters. If our central denominational organizations should for any reason suddenly cease to function, if their vast financial reservoirs should no longer be available for sectarian propoganda, if our churches should all at once be called upon to support themselves, great numbers of them, both old and new, in city and in country, would wither and fade and ultimately perish, as the people of a land, the ports of which are blockaded by an enemy in war, die miserably of starvation. The present outward appearance of the churches, in other words, is no accurate test of their real condition. The sole criterion of health is that

of self-support; and it is just this self-support which is slowly but surely disappearing over wider and wider areas of modern life. Religious activity today represents, to an ever-growing extent, the momentum transmitted to us by our fathers. We are living on capital which we have not produced but inherited. Put to this generation the challenge to build and support their own churches—and the result, to the traditionally minded at least, would be positively terrifying.

The most impressive indication, however, of this waning religious vitality, of which we are now speaking, has still to be mentioned. I refer to the appalling failure of the ministerial supply. For years it has been noted with alarm that young men, especially those of the better order of intelligence and character, are no longer entering the service of the church as a profession. Men who in other times would have inevitably given their lives to the ministry, now enter the field of medicine, or social service, or even business and the law. The enrollment at most of the theological schools in the country has been steadily declining during the past generation, until today the situation is one of positive collapse. It is conservatively estimated that five thousand (5,000) pulpits were vacant for lack of clergymen in June, 1921, and that only sixteen hundred (1,600) students were in that month being graduated to meet this need. Another five years, at the present rate of supply and demand, will see ten thousand (10,000) empty pulpits, with

nobody to fill them. During the World War it was confidently believed that the spiritual revival which was to follow upon this vast cataclysm, would bring hosts of young men to the service of religion. Stirred to their depths by sudden experiences of peril and death, confronted by the spectacle of a shattered and bleeding world, disciplined to the rigors of daily sacrifice, these young soldiers must surely find God, and yearn, when peace shall come, to give themselves utterly to the work of his Kingdom! Nothing of the kind, however, has eventuated. On the contrary, just the opposite has taken place. The close of the war was followed by the greatest slump in attendance at American divinity schools in recent history. What is worse, there is little prospect of improvement in the future. In one great denomination a total of only twenty-one candidates for theological study is now known, and these are by no means every one of them certain!

In seeking explanation of this phenomenon, investigators are prone to lay emphasis upon its economic aspects. Men do not enter the ministry, they argue, because salaries are disgracefully inadequate. This factor is, of course, not to be ignored, but we believe that it is far removed, all the same, from the actualities of the situation. Who that knows the idealism of many of our American youth can believe that the financial problem is anything more than a complicating feature of the situation? Are men refusing to seek positions on the faculties of our colleges and uni-

versities because the pay of a teacher is only a little higher than that of a clergyman? Are they turning away from the social service field because it offers no promise of large salaries? Are the ranks of our poets, musicians and scholars becoming suddenly depleted because one must starve while seeking the ideal of one's heart? Worth-while men are as eager today to take up worth-while work, involving sacrifice to high ends, as they ever were. But such men must be convinced that the work is really worth-while; and it is of just this that they are *not* convinced in the case of the professional ministry. Few men are today so mean, or so quixotic, as to do it reverence. The idealistic youth, looking abroad over the world to discover the field of service where he can "spend and be spent" with the best results of divine achievement, frankly regards the religious field as sheer waste of effort. What is more, this youth is increasingly being sustained in his judgment by those of the older generation to whom he naturally turns for counsel. Ministers know so well in their own hearts the plight of the churches, that they no longer have courage to persuade the young men of their parishes to "leave all and follow." Parents, even those who are faithfully associated with church life, see so little prospect of usefulness in the ministry that they are unwilling that their sons shall enter the profession. The present condition of our American theological seminaries shows two things with perfect clearness—first, that the rising generation has no confi-

dence in the efficacy and worth of the churches as they exist today; and secondly, that the passing generation is steadily losing the confidence which it once had. Which means that organized religion has lost vitality to such an extent that it is no longer able to accomplish the processes of its own reproduction! Like stock which has run out, it has suddenly become sterile.

Consolation in the present crisis is still sought, by those reluctant to face reality, in the so-called church statistics which are published every now and then. These indicate an increase in church membership at a rate not at all discouraging. Thus in 1920, after a decline not unnaturally occasioned by the war, statistical reports showed a general increase. Such figures would seem to answer every charge of waning interest and depleted vitality in the churches. But what is behind these figures? What do they really mean? We have no doubt that thousands of new names are added to our church rolls every year; but how many old names are ever removed? Church members are strangely akin to political office-holders—few die, and none resign! The membership roll of the average church carries the names not only of those actively and thus genuinely associated with the institution, but of an indefinite number of the “lost, strayed or stolen.” It counts among the “regulars” those whose regularity is attested by nothing better than unflinching attendance at the annual Easter services. It duplicates the lists of inmates in the

old ladies' homes, and competes shamelessly with the headstones in the cemeteries. As for the new names added to the roll each year, these include the "transfers" from other churches, the converts made at elaborate revivals, most of whom are won only to be lost, and the adolescents confirmed in a membership which they do not understand and will not necessarily fulfill. Church statistics are always the most inaccurate, frequently the most dishonest, on record. Against these reports which indicate so happy an increase in church membership each year, we place the grim fact, flung into the face of a complacent nation by the Inter-Church World Movement, a body as remarkable for its integrity as for its piety and zeal—that only sixty per cent of the people of America have anything to do with the churches, either Catholic or Protestant, and that three children out of every four in the country never receive any religious instruction of any kind!

Confirmation of these definite facts as to the collapse of the churches, may be found in certain intangible but none the less impressive "signs of the times" which are plain to all who have eyes to see. Thus, how feeble is the public influence of the churches today as compared with that which they wielded a half-century ago! The opposition of the churches, for example, to the Darwinian theory, in the decades of the '60s and the '70s, shook the world, and the resulting battle between science and religion is remembered as one of the great events of the nineteenth century. Today, *per contra*, the

churches might be opposed no less strenuously to Einstein's doctrine of relativity or Bergson's theory of creative evolution, but nobody would know it; or, if any knew it, they would not care.

In the same way, the ministers of the church have in our time sunk into figures of relative unimportance. Yesterday the minister was a personage of large public influence and distinction; he held great offices, led opinion, and dominated community life. Today the minister, with few exceptions, is completely overshadowed by the college president, the editor, the social reformer and the politician; he has fallen, by a process as gradual but as inexorable as the melting of a glacier, into the comparative obscurity of parish administration. It is common to attribute this decline in the influence of the ministry to decline in the calibre of the men in the profession—and this undoubtedly has something to do with the phenomenon. But much more important is the decline in the whole social status of the church and its ministerial office. There are men of preëminent power in the pulpit today; Bishop Williams is as great a churchman, Rabbi Wise as great a preacher, as America has ever known. But such men possess not a tithe of the influence and fame enjoyed by men of earlier days in no way their equal. As for the scores of able men still active in the churches, the vast majority languish in an obscurity which even the humblest of their predecessors would have despised. The melancholy fact is that the world is no longer inter-

ested in churches and ministers as they are known today. The Sunday utterances of leading preachers were always adequately and occasionally fully reported in the newspapers of thirty and fifty years ago; today, the greatest men, such as Felix Adler, for example, pass unreported. Sermons in the old days were printed in permanent book form, and occupied a prominent place among current publications; today, apart from the writings of a few sentimentalists of a spiritual Ella Wheeler Wilcox type, a volume of sermons is almost unknown. There was a time, be it said, when a man's place in the ministry was his guarantee of position and influence; in our time, this place must be disguised, forgotten, or forgiven, as a first condition of public confidence. The garb of the priest, in other words, has become more often an occasion for scorn than for reverence.

As for the general life of the present day, who can testify that the churches are any longer of much importance? Apart from a few traditionalists and conventionalists, who cares very much whether they continue to do business or not? As social organizations, for example, what churches occupy place in the lives of men and women comparable to Masonic lodges, Rotary clubs, granges, or even political parties? As agencies for public welfare, how can the churches be compared for a moment with city clubs, women's clubs, social settlements, or consumers leagues? As assembly places for purposes of education or reform, are the

churches in the same class with community centres, public forums, current events classes, Chautauquas, or the "movies"? As sources of refreshment and inspiration, are not the churches fast yielding ground to libraries, art-galleries, symphony and operatic concerts, and that love of Nature which is fast becoming as deep a passion to the modern American as to the ancient Greek?

From the lives of the majority of our people, the churches have disappeared. Those who today support and attend them, are members of a generation reared to the practice of religious observance. The new generation has broken free, and turned to other things. Once the channel in which flowed the swelling stream of life, the churches are now become stray nooks and corners in which eddies stir. These eddies not infrequently make much noise; they whirl with a foam and fury that attracts and holds attention. But they are turning always upon themselves; are uncaught by the majestic flow of that central current which seeks increasingly the sea; and, in the end, are doomed to become but "a fen of stagnant waters," choked with dead debris.

III

The outward signs of the collapse of the churches are thus obvious enough. To turn, now, from these external phenomena to the inner realities of which they are the manifestation, is to raise the whole question of the causes of this ecclesiastical catas-

trophe which is upon us. This, in turn, involves the complex workings of all the social forces, political and economic as well as technically religious, which have been active in the western world since the Renaissance, and even earlier in the fruitful womb of the Dark Ages. Before entering upon even a cursory survey of the past, however, it may be well to consider what the present situation reveals. For the same forces which have been at work from the beginning are at work today; and at this late and climactic hour, they possess the inestimable advantage of having at last registered their results and thus revealed the pattern of their operation. This means the simplification and clarification of the whole problem; we can see now what has been going on all the while. Suppose, therefore, that a keen observer, who knew nothing of history, were asked to examine the inner life of the churches today, as related to the life of contemporary society, and tell us what is the matter. What would he say?

The answer of such a man, we believe, would be direct and plain. He would point out that the trouble with the churches, when reduced to its lowest terms, is two-fold.

In the first place, the churches are identified with ideas and practices of life in which the modern man has not the slightest interest of any kind. This man is not only not interested in the things which concern the churches, but he does not even believe in them. He has simply moved out of the world

in which the typical Protestant church was born, and in which it is still living at the present moment. What the churches are thinking and saying and doing, he does not know; or, if he chances to know, he does not care.

Just to attend a religious service on Sunday morning is to witness a spectacle which demonstrates in vivid dramatic form the alienation of the modern mind from all that is most real and precious to the church. Here is a building, the architecture of which is a more or less feeble attempt to perpetuate the glories of Medievalism or the rigorous austerities of Puritanism. Here are symbols which are as meaningless to the average observer as the hieroglyphics on an Egyptian tomb. Here is a literature, offered as sacred, which contains no word written down later than two hundred years after the death of Jesus, and no idea later than the Neo-Platonic speculations of Alexandrian Judaism. Here are readings, prayers, instructions, exhortations, couched in language Pauline, Augustinian, Lutheran, Calvinistic, Wesleyan, and therefore as unintelligible today as the jargon of alchemy or astrology. Here are ideas which embody science, history, psychology, philosophy, of a type which has disappeared long since from every hall of learning, and from all literature save that specifically labeled "religious." Here is an attitude toward the universe, toward life and its destiny, toward society and its problems, which is as strange to the modern man as that of a foreign country, a distant age, or

even another planet. Above all, there is an atmosphere in this place which seems as remote from our every-day world as the atmosphere of a buried city; from it there seems to be excluded everything that breathes of life and joy. Emerson felt this as long ago as 1838, when he wrote in his *Divinity School Address*, "I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no soul entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow storm was falling around us. The snow storm was real; the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him, into the beautiful meteor of the snow." What Emerson saw in the phenomena of Nature is still more vividly seen in the closely analogous activities of human society. Compare a religious service, for example, with a political rally, a patriotic mass meeting, or a public gathering on behalf of some great movement for social betterment! Is it not evident that in the latter we have a vital interest, and in the former a dull conformity to tradition?

If we put by surface indications of this kind, and inquire more nearly into the ideas and purposes with which organized religion is concerned, shall we not find added confirmation of our thesis that the churches deal with matters utterly remote from anything that we really care about today? Shall we follow the churches' own example and take their creeds as the evidence of what they are standing for

in this modern age? By what hocus-pocus of interpretation can these platforms of faith be presented as anything other than what they really are—a record of controversies long since forgotten and of beliefs long since disproved? By what imaginable reversion of attention can persons who have learned the lessons of Newton and Darwin, and are now sitting at the feet of Bergson and Einstein, be persuaded to hold interest in affirmations of the Trinity, the Atonement, the Resurrection, Redemption, Salvation, and the rest—much less to express their spiritual ideals in terms of these conceptions? We do not expect men today to light their houses by rush-light, to travel in stage-coaches or on horseback, to converse in Latin, to live in the thought-world of Plato, or Kant, or even Herbert Spencer. Why should we expect them to accept the ideas or even retain the phrases of the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession? Chroniclers may be interested in these documents, but not prophets; antiquarians, but not martyrs or saints. And yet it is the prophets, martyrs and saints of every age who make the glory of the church!

If not the creeds, which may be a mere formality, after all, shall we take the religious instruction of the children as witness of what the churches are concerned with at this present moment? Surely, what we want our boys and girls to know is what we think essential to the religious consciousness! But what do we find in the Sunday schools? Study of Israelites, Canaanites, Midianites, Edom-

ites, of no more importance to our age than Scythians and Bactrians! Study of Biblical legends, about as essential to the modern mind as Greek mythology or Scandinavian lore! Study of the life of Jesus, in terms of miracle and wonder unchanged by anything that has happened since the days of Strauss! Study of theological doctrines, ethical precepts, tales of heroism and sacrifice, which represent no experience nearer to our own than that of hundreds or even thousands of years ago! And what is done by our Sunday schools, is done again in sublimated form by our theological schools, with their endless courses of Hebrew and Greek, Old Testament and New Testament exegesis, Christian history, doctrine and apologetics. Is it any wonder that children enter Sunday schools only to drift away; and that it is fast getting impossible to inveigle a wide-awake young man into a theological school on any terms!

It may be objected, however, that it is unfair to test the life of the churches today by such criteria as these. The creeds embody nothing that is vital — their retention constitutes a mere gesture of salutation to the venerated past. Instruction in schools and seminaries is defective, and should be drastically reformed, but represents only the natural traditionalism of an institution operating in a field not definitely its own. What is essential in the churches is their service of righteousness, their steadfast witness to moral precepts and spiritual ideals. In an age surrendered to the grossest

forms of materialism, the churches keep alive the thought of God and the vision of his holy spirit. In a period which seems to have lost all sense of moral values, the churches impose standards which shall some day be the salvation of the race. At a moment when society seems to be given over utterly to hatred and bitterness, to strife, contention and barbaric slaughter, the churches proclaim unfalteringly the truth that love is the sole and perfect law of life. The churches are concerned with nothing less or other than the Kingdom of God on earth, and this is a task as vital today as ever.

This contention we shall discuss at length later on. Meanwhile we content ourselves at this point with asking the question as to why churches whose business is thus described to be the moralization or spiritualization of contemporary society, are still divided into more than one hundred and sixty different denominations, each one distinct from all the others on some point not of life but of theology, ritual, or ecclesiastical order? If religion is really organized for the accomplishment of a practical spiritual task in the world of human relationship today, why do we have not one church of God, or Humanity, or the Kingdom, but Methodist churches, Presbyterian churches, Episcopalian churches, Congregational churches, Unitarian churches, Protestant and Catholic churches, Christian churches, Jewish synagogues and Mormon temples? If we ask why a church is Unitarian rather than Congregational, we have to consult

musty volumes in the theological library which tell us of eighteenth century disputes between liberals and conservatives over questions pertaining to the being of God and the nature of man. If we ask what we mean by Presbyterianism, we find nothing to inform us in anything that is being thought or done or even hoped today, but must journey far back to a distant city in a remote age, and study the teachings of an intolerant dogmatist by the name of John Calvin. If we inquire why there is an Episcopalian church in America in the year 1921, we must seek an answer in the England of 1530, the elements of which are strangely compounded of theological dogma, ecclesiastical law, and personal and political events in the history of the Tudors. If we ask about Protestants and Catholics, and add to these the Greek church and the Jewish synagogue, we come to regions as fantastic and unreal to the modern mind as the lands seen by Gulliver in his famous travels. The fact of the matter is, there is not a single one of the historic denominations or churches which represents in its separate organic life anything that is remotely connected with the religious ideas and purposes of the present hour. Their presence in the world today is as anomalous as would be the survival, as organized groups in modern society, of the "blues" and the "greens" of ancient Byzantium, or the cavaliers and roundheads of Stuart England. Their existence serves no purpose other than that of perpetuating the memory of controversies over

matters once deemed of vital concern to the life and destiny of the race, but now a subject merely of curiosity or even jest. Their very names speak a dead language, and carry the odor of a gutted candle. And yet, if challenge is spoken to the churches to deliver themselves from "the body of this death"—to prove the sincerity of their own spiritual professions by dropping their separate names, abandoning their competitive sects, burying their theological and ecclesiastical disputations, and uniting in one all-inclusive organization for the doing of the task of the Kingdom which is alone rightly before them—they hesitate, and in the end, for all the shame of it, refuse! Again and yet again, in recent years, has the chance been given to the churches to throw down their denominational barriers, and become as "one body in Christ." An unexampled opportunity came at the close of the Great War, and was nobly seized by the early leaders of the Inter-Church World Movement. But the churches still preserve, as a woman her honor, their artificial sectarian differences. The most they will consider is the establishment of certain inter-church bodies, like the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, for the doing of work which they themselves either cannot or will not do. Which means, if we are honest enough to recognize plain facts, that the churches in the last analysis are more interested in theological ideas than in Christian work, more concerned with dogmas of the past than with duties of the present

or dreams and visions of the future! Our churches are Methodist churches, Episcopalian churches, Presbyterian churches, Unitarian churches, Protestant churches, Catholic churches, first; and Christian churches, second. Their *raison d'être* is primarily a confession of faith which is peculiar to themselves, and only incidentally a platform of social reform which is common to all right-minded men the world around. To teach their own particular theological doctrines, to make converts to their own exclusive way of life, to advance their own patented, copyrighted, specialized sectarian interest, this is the end and aim of their continued existence. If it were not, then they would no longer exist, for the modern world has no place for Congregational, Episcopalian, and Unitarian churches apart from *churches*. The conclusion is inevitable. So long as the denominations survive, and stand forth as the one distinctive feature of the religious world, it is foolish to talk about the churches seeking "first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness."

We repeat, therefore, that the churches today are concerned with things in which the modern man has not the slightest interest. They live in a different world from the rest of society. Their thoughts are not our thoughts, nor their ways our ways! This is as true in spirit, if not in letter, of liberal churches, so-called, as of orthodox. For while these liberal churches have thrown off many of the fetters of ancient dogmatism, and practice a free-

dom of inquiry which acquaints them with much that is best in modern knowledge and experience, they still remain denominational institutions apart from the main current of life. They represent denominational interests, whose character is determined by historic reactions or rebellions from older bodies, and whose mission is the service of some peculiar opinion or habit of mind. It is no accident that the pews of these liberal churches are even emptier than those of the more conservative churches which they seek to displace, their public influence more insignificant. On all the churches of the denominational order, which means primarily all Protestant churches, liberal and orthodox alike, has fallen the same blight of desuetude. Nobody is any longer interested in their interests. How strikingly is this fact emphasized in H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History*, in which he stops only once, in his more than twelve hundred pages, to state what the churches think about man and his history, and then to confess that he prefers to disregard it. On every question save that of Jesus, Mr. Wells evidently believes that the attitude of the churches is so unimportant as not even to be worth mentioning. When he comes to the figure of the Nazarene, however, he feels constrained to pause—but only to give an acknowledgment to theological interest and opinion which it is difficult to distinguish from contempt. Speaking of the Christian “persuasions” that Jesus of Nazareth is “much more than a human teacher, and his appearance in

the world not a natural event in history," he goes on gently to point out that these "persuasions are not the persuasions of the great majority of mankind." Therefore, he says, "we shall hold closely to the apparent facts, and avoid . . . the theological interpretations which have been imposed upon them. We shall tell what men have believed about Jesus of Nazareth, but him we shall treat as being what he appeared to be, a man. . . . The documents that testify to his acts and teachings, we shall treat as ordinary human documents . . . About Jesus we have to write not theology but history, and our concern is not with the spiritual and theological significance of his life, but with its effects upon the political and everyday life of men." ¹

IV

Mention of Mr. Wells's *Outline* brings us to our second statement as to what is the trouble with the churches. If, on the one hand, it must be said that the churches are concerned with matters in which the modern man has little or no interest, so, on the other hand, it must be said that they are *not* concerned with matters in which the modern man has the most absorbing interest. The churches, to their bitter cost, return the compliment of man's refusal to be interested in theological or ecclesiastical matters, by refusing themselves to be interested in political, economic and social matters. They are

¹ Volume I, page 573.

alienated from the world, in other words, not only because they give peculiar attention to their own esoteric affairs of faith, worship and organization, but also because they refuse or neglect to share this attention with the affairs of the every-day life of men. What would men care how much the churches played with their creeds and symbols, if only they gave their main strength to the business of "God's commonweal."

All this is impressively illustrated in *The Outline of History*. In the earlier portions of his remarkable story of the western world, Mr. Wells gives due place to the great work of the Christian church in forwarding the achievement of man's primary task of securing a unified society upon earth. "Thanks to Christianity," he says, in speaking of the middle period of the eighteenth century in Europe, "ideas of human solidarity were far more widely diffused"¹ than they had ever been before in human history. With the opening, however, of that modern era which begins with "the new democratic republics of America and France," following hard upon the epoch of the Illumination in France and Germany, the churches disappear from Mr. Wells's book as though swallowed by some extraordinary convulsion of Nature. Only twice in the last two-thirds of his second volume, which tells the story of western Europe and America from 1770 to 1919, are the churches mentioned at all. In the one case, the author speaks of the spread of popular edu-

¹ Volume II, page 394.

cation in England in the nineteenth century, and points out that "the disputes of the sects and the necessity of catching adherents young, had produced an abundance of night schools, Sunday schools, and a series of competing educational organizations for children."¹ In the other case, he tells of Darwin's establishment in modern science of the theory of evolution, and describes the futile opposition of "formal Christianity"² to the new era of enlightenment. Aside from these two passing references to insignificant and hardly creditable activities on the part of organized religion, we would never know, from Mr. Wells's narrative, that there were such institutions in the western world as Catholic and Protestant churches. And yet he is telling in this portion of his story of the events which mark the climax of modern history—the political revolutions of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the industrial revolution of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the scientific renaissance of the evolution period, the flowering in manifold good works of social and humanitarian idealism, the rise of Socialism, the organization of trade unions, the genesis of the class struggle, the development of nationalistic imperialism, the Great War, the Russian revolution, and the Peace! Never have so many world-changing and world-shaking events been crowded into so short a period of time. Never

¹ Volume II, page 396.

² Volume II, page 421.

have such forces been let loose in society, to the weal or woe of men. It is these one hundred and fifty years that determine the destiny of all that the race has been striving for these twenty centuries, this period which has prepared the final dissolution or redemption (who can forecast the future?) of civilization. But in all this era of stupendous upheaval and cataclysmic change, the churches, according to Mr. Wells's testimony, have done nothing worth mentioning. Aside from sectarian jealousies and squabbles which unwittingly helped on the cause of popular education, and an utterly ridiculous opposition to the greatest single scientific achievement since Isaac Newton, the record of the churches, in the affairs of modern times, is *nil*.

That Mr. Wells's judgment in this matter—wholly unconscious and therefore unintentioned—is to be trusted, we implicitly believe. In nothing is the story of our age more remarkable than in the failure of organized religion to play that important part in the determination of events which marked its activity during the Middle Ages, and in the later more stirring period of the Reformation. How can this fact be explained save on the theory that the churches are not interested in those things which most concern the life of the modern man? The story of modern history, as Mr. Wells outlines it in his book, shows clearly enough what these things are. They are the conditions of his daily life and labor, his conquest of the ills which sap his strength

and blast his happiness, his struggles against injustices that deny him liberty, exploit his toil and rob his children of their heritage. They are the dreams and passions of his soul, writ large for our instruction in the great movements of social betterment which have swept the world like cleansing floods in the last one hundred years. The suppression of the slave trade, the abolition of chattel servitude in America, the extension of the franchise, the advancement of education, the emancipation of women and of labor, the care and protection of children, disarmament and international peace, social justice as applied to wages, hours, employment, housing, health, public ownership of natural resources and democratic control of industry—these are the things which have held his heart, and prompted glad hazard even of life on their behalf. These, and not the Fall, the Incarnation and the Atonement, constitute the drama of human destiny, as we understand it at this moment; and it is in the cast of this drama, that the churches, both Protestant and Catholic, do not appear at all. In only one of these great movements, in which the interest of men has been so intimately involved, have the churches been active agents of reform. We refer, of course, to the struggle for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, which was made exceptional by the presence of unusual conditions of agitation. In every other movement of the kind, the churches have been either indifferent or ineffective—or, as in the anti-slavery movement yesterday and the

labor movement today—utterly and shamelessly antagonistic.

In saying this, we are not unmindful of the fact that there have been great leaders in the churches, from William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker on the one hand to Josiah Strong, Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch on the other, who have interpreted religion in terms of those ideals and movements of social change which hold the interest, because they promise the fulfillment, of man's life. But these prophets, like the prophets which were before them, have been as voices crying in the wilderness! Neither do we forget that, in recent years, the official bodies of many of our denominations, made keenly sensitive to the obligation of the churches to enter sympathetically and helpfully into the every-day life of men, have formulated platforms of social betterment which do credit to the enlightenment and courage of the men responsible for their enactment. But these platforms, like the latter-day platforms of our political parties, are fine words seldom translated into deeds! Say what we will, hope what we may, the churches that stand in rural lanes and in city avenues are not interested in the social passions of the hour. They do not function in those fields of life which are today being watered by the tears and blood of men. They are of no effect in politics; they are heedless or openly hostile to labor's struggle for emancipation; they are silent on the woes of women; they are nationalistic sycophants in the vast issues of

war and peace; even in the traditional activities of charity and social welfare, they are all but ousted from the field by special agencies created to do work which the churches should never have allowed to pass from their control. All about us are the pressing problems of modern life, in their manifold political, economic and industrial phases. These problems are stirring men to the bottom of their souls, prompting them to sacrifices akin to those of the early Christian martyrs, because they know that out of these proceed the issues of life. They are the only things worth living for, certainly the only things worth dying for, at this present hour. They are the things that count today in the vast concern of man's spiritual destiny. Here is religion, if there is any such thing as religion apart from sordid superstitions and routine rites. But the churches, with the exception of a few valiant prophets and wise counselors, do not care. Men may sweat and bleed and miserably die, but the churches are concerned with other things. Like waves of the sea surge the social controversies of our time in streets and homes, in factories, state-houses and universities. The noise of these controversies is as the noise of many waters; it is a roar that shakes the world, and the heart of mankind. But in the churches, as the ocean in the dungeons of Scott's Lindisfarne, it sounds only as

“ . . . a distant roll, . . .

For though this vault of sin and fear

Was to the sounding surge so near,
 A tempest there you scarce could hear,
 So massive were the walls.”*

V

This, as we see it, is the trouble with the churches. They are interested in what does not concern the modern man; and *not* interested in what *does* concern the modern man. Hence the gulf of separation which now divides the churches from the world! But why should such a gulf have ever appeared? What forces have been at work thus to alienate the churches from society, and society from the churches?

To this question there are offered various answers. The strict religionist—a Catholic, for example—will declare that we have here nothing more nor less than the severance which must ever exist between a divine institution and a fallen world. Men are not interested in the church because they are corrupt, and thus concerned with transient things, from which it is the church’s business to deliver them. The church is *in* the world, as the condition of fulfilling its appointed mission of salvation; but it is not, and cannot be, *of* the world. The cause of this tragic separation, therefore, is the wickedness of the human heart. If it is to be ended, it must be through the surrender of men to the compulsions of God as mediated through his holy

* *Marmion*, Canto III.

church, and not through the surrender of this church to those enticements of Satan which are "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them."

On the other hand, there is the answer of the rationalist, or materialist, who sees in this alienation the sign of the corruption not of the world but of the church. Religion, to his way of thinking, is an out-and-out superstition, that is all; and it is the great achievement of the age to have discovered the sham, and delivered society from its bondage. The present-day separation of men from the church, therefore, is simply a chapter in the attainment of human liberty. Men are through with religion, as they are through with magic; through with the priest and his altar, as they are through with the magician and his wand. For centuries, they have been held in the darkness of cult and creed. Now they are on the highroad, in the light, among the winds—free men forevermore!

With neither of these answers to our question, are we satisfied. For one thing, we do not believe that religion is a superstition. On the contrary, we hold with John Fiske in his affirmation of "the everlasting reality of religion." For religion is to be regarded as the effort of man to win the best and highest that he knows. It is the struggle to establish upon the earth the utmost of the dreams and visions of his soul. It is the endeavor to move onward and upward out of past darkness and confusion and hate into future light and order and

brotherly love, through the motive power of the spirit which, as Henry Adams has put it in his *Education*, "is the highest energy ever known to man." Interpreted in this sense, religion is as everlasting as the stars, as permanent as "the foundations of the earth." So long as man endures, religion will endure as the

"Center and soul of every sphere"

of his true being.

On the other hand, however, we have no confidence in the churches, either Protestant or Catholic, liberal or orthodox, as they exist and work among us at the present moment. He who imagines that religion is to be found in the churches, save as it appears in the lives of devoted individuals who may belong to them, confuses "churchianity" with Christianity, and ecclesiasticism and theology with the high things of the spirit. The churches are apart from life, as we have seen, and therefore apart from true religion. They serve no purposes of vital moment, are directed to no ends of eternal and universal portent. There was a time when religion was in the churches. It was the time when men and women were willing to die for the altars at which they worshiped, and the creeds in which they believed. Who thinks it worth while, however, to lay down his life for the churches today? Who would go to the gibbet, or the stake, or the cross, stop the mouths of lions, "be stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, wander about in sheepskins

and goatskins, * * * in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth," for the sake of Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, Methodism, Universalism, even Protestantism? How change so lightly from one church to another, or abandon churches altogether, if such loyalties really matter? It is not that men have forgotten how to die or to be loyal. The call of country summoned men in the Great War to sacrifices which it is inconceivable they would have made for any church. Which means that religion has disappeared from the churches as water from a reservoir, not because the springs have run dry, but because they flow in other courses!

Something has happened. Religion and life are apart, not because life is wicked or religion a sham, but because, as always in such cases, flooding streams have broken loose from channels built too narrow to contain them. Religion and life are apart because men believe that they should be apart, and labor to keep them apart. The fruit of their labor, and of their failure in this labor, is *Denominationalism*. Failure, of course, was certain, for religion is life, and cannot in the nature of things be kept apart from life. The discovery and proclamation of this eternal truth in our time is *Democracy*. The study of these two movements is now before us, as the pathway to that new religion which shall give us new churches for old.

CHAPTER II

DENOMINATIONALISM: RELIGION IN
THE CHURCHES

“Let religion be seized on by sects, as their special province; let them clothe themselves with God’s prerogative of judgment; let them succeed in enforcing their creed by penalties of law or opinion; and religion becomes the most blighting tyranny which can establish itself over the mind. . . . When I see the superstition which it has fastened on the conscience, . . . the dread of inquiry which it has struck into superior understandings, and the servility of spirit which it has made to pass for piety—when I see all this, the fire, and scaffold, and the outward inquisition, terrible as they are, seem to me inferior evils. . . . A sect skilfully organized, trained to utter one cry, combined to cover with reproach whoever may differ from themselves, to strike terror into the multitude by joint and perpetual menace—such a sect is as perilous and palsying to the intellect as the Inquisition. . . . The present age is notoriously sectarian and therefore hostile to liberty. . . . Happily, the spirit of the people, in spite of all narrowing influences, is essentially liberal. Here lies our safety. The liberal spirit of the people, I trust, is more and more to temper and curb that exclusive spirit which is the besetting sin of their religious guides.”

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, in
Spiritual Freedom

CHAPTER II

DENOMINATIONALISM: RELIGION IN THE CHURCHES

I

When we speak of denominationalism, we are inclined to limit attention to the Protestant world. We have been taught to believe that this phenomenon of separation is a unique characteristic of Protestantism, and to imagine therefore that it began to play its part in the religious life of man only with the coming of the Reformation. As a matter of fact, however, denominationalism, in origin at least, if not in outward form and ultimate development, is quite as much an incident of Catholic as of Protestant history. Its spirit and tendency first entered into Christianity in that famous council at Jerusalem, where Peter and Paul agreed to divide the Roman world between them—Peter and the apostles to take Palestine as their field, and Paul to launch out upon the vast expanse of the Gentile empire. Its divisive power first made appearance at the great Council of Nicaea, in 325 A.D., when the body of Christendom was divided into Arians and Athanasians. The movement reached climax in the eleventh century, when the western church at

Rome separated from the eastern church at Constantinople. All through the Middle Ages denominationalism found expression in the so-called heretical sects, which refused obedience to the papal hierarchy in expression of their own separate ideals and purposes as independent Christians. Sometimes, as in the case of the Cathari, for example, these sects were composed of obscure and humble folk, and had little influence in the development of religious thought. Sometimes, however, as in the case of the Albigenses against whom Simon de Montfort led his barbarous crusade, they were large and powerful groups, and had a profound effect upon the spiritual progress of the times. In either case, they were in essence denominations, although they were never recognized as such, and never allowed by the dominant group in the Roman church to develop an independent life or hold an official place in the ecclesiastical world. In spite of all the pretensions of the medieval hierarchy to universality and uniformity, it was divided within itself from the beginning, it marked always with unmistakable clearness and frequently with cruel hate the distinction between orthodox and heretic, and in the end it banished altogether from its circle those who steadfastly refused obedience.

II

What these nonconformists were after, of course, was liberty—that “liberty to know, utter and argue

freely according to conscience" which John Milton declared should be cherished "above all liberties." They wanted to be free to find God for themselves, and to worship and serve God in their own way and to their own ends. In this sense, they were the pioneers of spiritual autonomy. There was no basis, however, for this ideal until the Renaissance had made the rediscovery of the individual which marks the first step in the achievement of democracy, and therefore the opening of modern times. Furthermore, there was no opportunity for the successful practice of this ideal, on any other terms than those of martyrdom, until the release of human energy, incident to the Renaissance, had overthrown the temporal power of the Papacy. Then came the Reformation, which was the deliberate setting of the soul over against the institution as the source of life and the center of authority. The individual, now happily delivered from external control, took into his own hands the determination of his spiritual destiny. He resolved, like Moses, to meet God face to face, and learn of him direct, and not by the mediation of any priest or synod, the commandments of his will. A symbol of this emancipation is seen in what is known in history as the "unchaining" of the Bible. In medieval times, the holy book in the cathedral or the village church was always chained to the desk, in order that it might not be taken away and read by unsanctified eyes. The medieval priests did not dare to let the people study the Scriptures, for this would mean that by

themselves, not merely by the mediatory power of church officers, could the souls of men be brought to God. The moment, however, that the Papacy was cast aside, the chains on the pulpit Bibles in all Protestant countries were removed, as a sign that the Word of God, and therefore his salvation, was now free to all. Wycliff's translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular was an anticipation of this day of deliverance, and therefore a heresy. Luther's German Bible was the sign and seal of the victory achieved by his movement of revolt. That each humblest man could open his own testament, and there in his own heart speak with God and learn of him—this was the essence of Protestantism, and marked the significance of the spiritual transformation which was consummated by this tremendous event.

Such deliverance of the individual from the church, however, could not end in any such dissolution of old relationships as this. It was inevitable that new associations should be formed to take the place of the old, for a religion without a church is as inconceivable as a soul without a body. The spirit, in other words, must "become flesh"; and it did so by organizing itself around the different interpretations which different men placed upon this Bible which had now become a matter of such curious and intense interest. Each leader, having found God for himself—*i. e.*, out of his own experience!—hastened to bring other men to the same experience. This meant, of course, since the age

for the moment was one of extravagant individual adventuring, many leaders, many movements, many groupings, many churches. It meant, in a word, "denominationalism" as we have known it in its true estate for the last four hundred years. Within a century after the advent of Martin Luther, scores of competitive and mutually antagonistic sects were in the field. Today the number of Protestant denominations is variously estimated from one hundred and fifty to two hundred. The last religious census of the United States showed that there were more than one hundred and sixty separate denominations in this country alone. Few of us could name more than twenty or thirty of these ecclesiastical groups, and we wonder what are the units which make up so large a total. But when we recall that many of our churches have divisions "north" and "south," dating from Civil War days; and that one comparatively obscure sect, the Mennonites, is cut up into no less than sixteen denominational sectors—Ammish Mennonites, Old Mennonites, New Mennonites, Swiss Mennonites, Defenseless Mennonites, and so on—we begin to realize what the fact of denominationalism really means. The body of Christ is suddenly seen to be divided like the body of Osiris in the old Egyptian myth, and, like his, to be scattered in pieces about the world!

III

To many persons, in our time, this phenomenon of denominationalism is frankly regarded as an

evil thing for which there is no excuse. It is one of the signs and causes of that collapse of organized religion which was duly noted in the last chapter. To others, however, this division of the churches is only the price which must be paid for that spiritual liberty in which Protestantism had its glorious beginning. Such persons declare that it is not denominationalism in itself, but only the abuse of denominationalism, which has in our time aroused the concern of the Christian world. It is inevitable, they argue, that free men should see the facts of life differently, and undertake to interpret them in different ways and to different ends. It is no more possible, nor even desirable, that men should think alike in their spiritual concerns, than that they should think alike in their political and economic concerns. Just as long as men exercise the right

“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,”

they will disagree as to conclusions; and just so long as they disagree, they will divide into groups or parties for the advocacy of these conclusions. The only alternatives to such division are a voluntary “mush of concession” or an involuntary mash of repression, to neither of which the free man will consent. Just to the extent that he understands the worth of the religious consciousness and reverences the truth, he will insist upon bearing witness to what he sees, joining himself gladly to others who see what he sees, and striving ardently to bring still others to his own angle of vision. It was this

spirit against which for many centuries the medieval church fought doggedly, and at last futilely. In the great upheaval of the Reformation, the uniformity of Catholicism was shattered forever; and there came into the world these beneficent "varieties of religious experience" which in the spiritual as in the physical realm, are the condition of normal development—indeed, of life itself. To bemoan the appearance of division, is to bemoan the recrudescence of vitality; to seek the elimination of division, is to seek the restoration of that ignoble and sterile unity which is synonymous with death. The body of Christ is not in reality divided by the denominations at all! On the contrary, these sects or divisions are only the "many members" which go to make up the one body of Christ. Our difficulty has been not that there are "many members," but that these members have not functioned coöperatively to a single end. Not the use but the abuse of denominationalism, therefore, is our trouble. Of course we would be free; but if free, we must be many men of many minds, and therefore of many churches.

That there is truth in this contention, cannot be denied. We go far astray, however, if we believe that denominationalism is a phenomenon exclusively, or even to any considerable extent, explained by that liberation of the human spirit which was the gift of the Renaissance to men. This in itself would never have produced the situation which now confronts us, as it has long confronted us, in the

Protestant world. For what we see today is not freedom, but factionalism; not coöperation but competition; not variety, but antagonism, of conviction; not group vying with group in friendly rivalry, but army fighting army to the death. In other fields of life, freedom has not necessarily meant division, or love of truth the severance of human comradeship. In science, for example, savants of every variety of doctrine and speculation work happily together in one all-inclusive society, royal or otherwise. They differ endlessly among themselves, they argue and debate and challenge, they organize groups to advance one theory and confute another; but they maintain unbroken the common society of which they are all members together. There is no "schism in (their) body"; denominationalism is impossible in their world. For the love of truth, in which they share together, is greater than allegiance to any particular formulation of that truth; and the spirit of freedom, of which they all partake as of a sacrament, has as its first exaction, respect and tolerance for others.

So also in the social or political field! Here are we all citizens of one great country. Does this mean that we all think alike in matters pertaining to the ideals and practices of government? Do we maintain "one union indivisible" by imposing uniformity of opinion? On the contrary, we free citizens of America are many men of many minds. Some of us are Republicans, some Democrats, some Socialists. Every now and then new groups appear,

like the Greenbackers or the Progressives. But these differences of political opinion do not tend in any way to divide the nation. Partisan warfare, as we call it, does not bring us to the point where we believe that any one group must withdraw or be banished from the national life as a condition of political integrity. We have tried this practice, of course; once in 1861 by the method of secession, when southern Democrats felt they could not stay in the same country with northern Republicans, and once in 1920 in New York State, when Democrats and Republicans united in an endeavor to excommunicate Socialists from American citizenship. Both experiments, however, were failures, and served only to emphasize the basic fact that we are properly and pleasantly the inseparable members of one political household. When we hold patriotic meetings (*i. e.*, the religious services of the state), we ignore all claims of partisanship. First and foremost, we are Americans; love of country transcends and dominates within our hearts all love of party.

Strangely enough, also, inside our religious denominations, when they have become strongly enough organized to certain ends, discordant opinions have appeared without causing any "schism in the body." Take the Baptist church, for example, which has been from the beginning a noble exemplar of the free spirit. In this one fold are found men as far apart as President Faunce, of Brown University, a liberal of liberals, and Dr.

Haldeman, of New York, a pre-millennialite of the extreme order. These men and their followers agree, in all probability, upon no one fact of theological belief, but both find place and are granted recognition in the single organization of the Baptist communion. The Episcopal church presents another instance of the same truth. Here, more than in any other Protestant denomination, the catholic idea of the church has survived, and reverence for the church as an institution has kept its hold upon the heart of the individual. For this reason, among others, this denomination succeeds in maintaining organic unity amid wide diversities of opinion and operation better than any other denomination of the present day. For years, in England, the established church has been divided into the low church, the broad church and the high church. The gulf which divides the extreme low churchman from the extreme high churchman in Episcopacy, is much wider than that which divides the low churchman from the Congregationalist, the Congregationalist from the Universalist, and the Universalist from the Unitarian; and yet together these two precisely opposite types of religious faith and outlook live in the same fold and coöperate with rare happiness and efficiency in the task in hand.

Freedom does not explain the phenomenon of denominationalism. There is something more involved here than the right of the individual to find and maintain his own spiritual opinion.

IV

It is not difficult to get on the track of the further factors that are involved in the denominationalism of our time if we recognize what is so frequently forgotten, ignored, or not known at all, that the Protestant Reformation, whatever it was in the beginning, was in the end not an expression of, but a reaction against, the Renaissance. The reformers themselves were made possible by that free spirit which came into the world with the Revival of Learning in the thirteenth century. They were able to enjoy what never came to their martyred forbears of earlier ages—the boon of spiritual autonomy. No sooner, however, had this movement, primarily directed against the Papacy, attained its end of freedom, than immediately it turned back upon itself and betrayed the ideal which had given it birth. The forces which led to this reaction, and thus made Protestantism in the end a repressive rather than an emancipating force in religion, are not difficult to trace.

In the first place, the Bible was no sooner released from the control of the church than it was itself elevated to a position of authority. So poorly did the reformers understand the meaning of the liberty which they had won, that they straightway sought a substitute for the hierarchy which had held men in bondage for so many years, and found this in the Holy Word which men were everywhere studying with such consuming interest. The chains

were removed, in other words, only to be replaced. Men were granted freedom to read and study the Scriptures, only to be enslaved to the book as they had formerly been enslaved to the priest who read the book. Authority, by its very nature, is inconsistent with the concept of liberty. There can be no real freedom in the world, if anything other than the soul of man is regarded as divine. If a man is free, it means of necessity that he is released absolutely from the control of external power; if he is subject at all, it is only to those august realities of the inner life which constitute his own essential individuality. It was this idea which was implicit in the Renaissance, and which, carried over into the religious field, precipitated the initial stages of the Reformation. But man was not yet ready for the great experience of the open air. Denied one shelter, he must seek another; and he found it, to his great relief, in the Bible. From this standpoint the Reformation accomplished nothing but the substitution of the Bible for the church as the seat of authority in religion.

Secondly, there is that intellectual interpretation of religion, known as dogmatism, which has controlled the development of Christianity ever since the days of Paul. It was the supreme tragedy of the great Apostle to the Gentiles that, in his zeal for Christ, he was persuaded to substitute doctrines about the Nazarene for life lived in the spirit of his word. These doctrines might not have been so bad if they had concerned the moral precepts and

spiritual ideals which were central in the teachings of Jesus; but under the influence of Paul, they were made to comprise certain theories of cosmology, history and divine intention, intellectual acceptance of which was described as necessary to salvation. From this developed that identification of truth with dogma, of religion with theology, which reached its full flower in the creeds of Protestantism. Men read the Bible to find out from this authoritative source what it was necessary to believe in order to be saved. Different men reached different conclusions as to what was laid down in the pages of Holy Scripture. Each man offered his conclusion not as his humble opinion but as the irrefutable revelation of the divine mind, and its acceptance as the single way to eternal life. With the result that Protestantism became nothing more nor less than a series of squabbles between rival theological systems! To flock about the banner of the one true faith, to lift a new banner if none of the old banners carried the right colors—this became the duty of every devout soul. To be a Christian, one had first to be a Lutheran, a Presbyterian, or a Baptist. To live like Jesus was not enough; the essential thing was to believe like Calvin, Zwingli, or Arminius. To accept an idea about the being of God, the person of Christ, or the miracle of Transubstantiation—upon such weighty matters hung the issues of life and death, a clear conscience in this world and a soul redeemed in the world that is to come.

Neither Bibliolatry nor dogmatism, however, would have created the situation now existing in the realm of Protestantism, had it not been for a third and decisive factor—namely, the recovery of the spirit and weapons of intolerance which had been momentarily lost in the spacious days following the Renaissance. Intolerance always and everywhere is the real secret of division. It is because the Roman church from the beginning was intolerant of all nonconformity, that denominationalism, as we have seen, was a factor in the Middle Ages as well as in the Protestant era of our history. Every time a group of heretics was driven from the bosom of the church, a denomination was created; not recognized or labeled as such, but a separatist group all the same. It was this same intolerance, taken over by the reformers to serve their purposes, that split the Protestant world into a hundred hostile sects, and thus brought us the melancholy situation in which we live at the present hour. The only reason why the Protestant churches did not do exactly what the Catholic hierarchy accomplished in its great days, was that no one of these churches exercised temporal power over any considerable area of territory. They flourished not because they believed in and practiced freedom, but because none was strong enough to overcome the others. That they tried hard enough, however, is shown by what Luther did to the Saxon peasants, and Calvin to Servetus; by what happened to the Anabaptists on the con-

continent, to the Separatists in England, and to the Quakers and other nonconformists in Puritan New England. Intolerance was the fashion of the hour. In the religious field at least, society had not advanced a step beyond the dark days of the Inquisition. Men had suddenly become dispersed by the explosive power of a new spirit in the world, and now they were kept apart in divisive and hostile groups by that same impulse to persecution which had formerly held them together in one cohesive mass.

That denominationalism is the spawn of intolerance there is no stronger evidence than the interesting fact that, in the case of many of even our greatest denominations, there was no intention at the start of forming a new and separate grouping of believers. The Puritans of the seventeenth century, for example, had no desire to leave the Establishment; they sought only, as their name indicates, to remain in that body and "purify" its habits and customs. They were emphatically stay-inners and not come-outers. It was only when king and bishop harried them from the land, that they found it necessary to build their own churches and seek their own ways. John Wesley led the mightiest religious revolt of modern times, and founded the largest denomination in the Protestant world today; and yet never at any time in his long, heroic and fruitful life, did he count himself outside the fold of Anglicanism. The home church closed its doors against him, drove him into the highways and

by-ways to preach his word, denounced and spat upon him even as the Pharisees denounced and spat upon Christ; but he sought only as a good member of the church, in obedient exercise of "the law of liberty," to widen its portals for the entrance of the multitudes, and died not knowing that he was to be remembered as the founder of a new and independent sect. William Ellery Channing, the founder of American Unitarianism, refused to regard himself as anything other than a member of "the church universal." He had his own opinions about the Trinity, and taught radical doctrines on the matter of human nature and the free soul; but it was never his desire that these personal heresies should become the orthodoxies of a new denomination. What is at work here in the creation of these separate divisions, is the spirit not of freedom but of intolerance. Freedom of itself would never have taken one of these men out of their churches; on the contrary, it would have widened the churches to contain the men. What freedom has done in the Protestant world is only to create an open field of opportunity, in which intolerance can act for the rank development of a denominationalism which was impossible under the triumphant tyranny of the Papal hierarchy.

Denominationalism, therefore, is no evidence of liberty. It offers nothing that is to the credit of Protestantism. In essence it is the emergence, into modern times, of all that was worst in the medieval church. Death, and not life, is in this process.

For this is a warfare of the members which defeats the purpose of God who "hath welded the body together."

V

This judgment, based on causes, is only confirmed when we survey results. Three things are conspicuous in Protestantism as we know it today.

In the first place, the Protestant denominations, by the very nature of their origin and life, lay emphasis upon the non-essentials of religious experience. It is always those facts which are insignificant, trivial, picayune, which are central in the consciousness of a denominational group. Try by thought and words to distinguish one denomination from another, and how often do you find yourself dealing with anything that is essential to the life of man? I know no nobler body of Christians than the Baptists. I never think of this church, with its heroic prophets, its unsullied loyalty to freedom, its centuries-old witness through suffering and martyrdom to the sanctity of the truth, but what I offer an inward salutation to its people dead and living. But when I am challenged to describe the Baptist church—to tell how it is distinguished from the Congregational churches, for instance—I find myself driven from ideals of truth and legends of heroism to the unhappy discussion of a certain ritual ceremony known as "baptism." I am forced to point out that here is a group of Christians who feel that, in testimony of the full obedience of a

Christian soul, and a condition, therefore, of membership in the church, a person must undergo the experience of baptism—and baptism not by sprinkling but by immersion, and not in infant but in adult years! Why this pagan rite should have so central a place in the life of any group of Jesus's followers, may well be left to the sober doctors of theology to decide; but to one who takes life as the evidence of Christian character, it stands at once as a puzzle and a humiliation.

So also with Unitarianism! There is no church, I believe, which has tried more faithfully to strike the universal note, and to make central the moral and spiritual content of the teachings of the Nazarene. The Unitarians have long claimed, and not unfairly, that their church is to be distinguished from all others by its emphasis upon character and not doctrinal belief as the evidence of Christian discipleship. And yet, through a hundred years of teaching and example, they have failed to gain acceptance or even understanding of this claim. Inevitably when defining the distinctive characteristics of the Unitarian denomination,¹ one finds oneself talking about the nature of man, the person of Jesus, the inspiration of the Scriptures, a dozen or more of theological, literary and historical problems which properly have no place in the religious life *per se*.

When we move away from the most conspicuous

¹ See Ephraim Emerton's book, significantly entitled *Unitarian Beliefs*.

sects of Protestantism to those obscure and curious sects which hold the devout allegiance of earnest people here and there, we find the system gone to seed, so to speak, in points of doctrine or habits of worship which are so insignificant as to be ludicrous. The Mennonites are a noble people who have purchased their liberty with precious blood; but what are we to think of the contention of a considerable group of Mennonites, that hooks and eyes must be used instead of buttons in the clothing of Christian men and women? In Pennsylvania there is a sect of sober folk who are separated from all other Christians by their practice of perpetuating the oriental ceremony of feet-washing. This rite seems to us, in this western world, not only ludicrous but ugly; and yet, if the Bible be our infallible authority, have not these Christians good reason for contending that scrupulous obedience to Jesus's example must include this practice of washing one another's feet quite as much as of partaking of the so-called Lord's Supper? The Adventists can find no Christianity except in the great hope of the Second Coming; and there is a separate group of Adventists who find it obligatory to worship God on the seventh and not on the first day of the week. So the trivialities, and all too often, the absurdities, multiply! Each denomination finds itself distinguished from every other by those things which are in each case non-essentials. We might make a catalogue of each doctrine, practice or ecclesiastical rite which is distinctive of each

separate Protestant body; then, having made our catalogue, we might wipe out deliberately from the whole field of religious experience, every item listed thereon; and, when the process of annihilation was over, I venture to say that there would be removed not one smallest thing essential to the great purpose for which Jesus of Nazareth lived and died. The magnification of non-essentials—this is the first, and by no means the least melancholy, attribute of denominationalism.

As a second and complementary fact, we find that denominationalism not only emphasizes the non-essentials, but also obscures and oftentimes loses altogether the essentials. Not only does the denomination find itself bound to that which is of no importance, but also cut off from that which is of vast importance. Suppose we should set ourselves to the task of working out and listing the basic principles of the religion of Jesus! Would we not find this an easy task, and would we not all find it possible to agree upon the answer to our inquiry? The religion of Jesus—is it not all summed up in the two commandments of love to God and love to man? If we would be disciples of the Master, need we go farther than his own reputed saying, “Ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another”? Can there be any dispute about the Golden Rule? Are we going to quarrel over the Beatitudes? These are the essence of what is known as Christianity, if anything is; and they are all things so simple, so clear, so inclusive, that in

their presence argument ends, contention is silent, and we become as brothers together in the common reverence of the common ideal.

In our separate churches, however, what part do these ideals play? Love, brotherhood, forgiveness of sin, the Kingdom of God—these are mentioned in every church; but when they are mentioned it is Christianity that is being taught and not Methodism, or Episcopalianism, or Presbyterianism, or Universalism. When the sectarian “issue” appears, these first and last things depart, for they are of no interest or importance to the “issue” as such. If for one moment they could be made central, our sectarian divisions would by that very fact be conjured away. We would have nothing to quarrel over, no separate roads to travel, no alien altars to flee. Indeed it only needs some overwhelming cause to grip our hearts, for us to forget our denominational lines and barriers and become immediately true members of the one body of Christ. Thus when the Great War swept the world, and the soldiers marched away to the battlefield, they had not come within the sound of guns before all the things which made them Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants, Anglicans and nonconformists, disappeared in favor of those essential things—humanity, freedom, brotherhood—which made them one. And if that passion of a great cause, generated by war, could have been sublimated and carried over into the days of peace, our denominations would have been consumed as in a cleansing flame.

As it is, however, the cause, such as it was, has disappeared, and men in the churches are again concerned with interests far removed from the hopes and fears of humankind. Were Jesus to return to earth these days, and knock at the doors of our denominational institutions, what would he find within? That which he taught and lived, and for the sake of which he died? Yes—and yet more truly *No!* These central things would be within—but so hidden, buried, lost beneath the accumulation of the trivialities and absurdities of sectarian division, that they would quite escape his gaze. F. B. Carpenter, in his *Six Months in the White House*, tells us that when Abraham Lincoln was asked about his religious opinions, and more especially about his attitude toward the various churches of Christendom, he replied, “I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterize their articles of belief. . . . When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification of membership, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself,’ that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.” The great President was looking for a church which dealt exclusively with the essentials of religion, and this he could not find amid the welter of denominations.

Lastly, there is a third characteristic of denomi-

nationalism, which must be emphasized as the most important of all. This is the process by which the sectarian church tends to become an institution not of public service but of private possession and interest. The Presbyterian or Baptist church, just because it is Presbyterian or Baptist, has some particular, distinctive, and therefore private end to further. Its primary object is not to serve the public interest in any universal human sense, but to take that interest and transfer it to the service of that especial private purpose for the sake of which it alone exists. Inevitably wherever denominations prevail, there is contrast, and often conflict, between the social and the sectarian goal. What society wants and perhaps must have for the fulfillment of its life, is alien and sometimes even antagonistic to that purpose which is the sole concern of the religious sect.

Of this there can be no better illustration than the process which has been followed in the development of education in the middle western states of this republic. As these areas were settled in the early days by the pioneers from the eastern seaboard, there were planted, in all the towns and villages, the various churches to which the newcomers had belonged in their former homes. To these were added some new churches, representative of local evangelistic movements. As children came along and problems of education were thereby presented, these churches organized their separate denominational schools and colleges, and thus, in addition

to competing with the public schools, early gained something of a monopoly in the higher grades of learning. The presence of these institutions, however, did not solve the problems of education in a democracy. On the contrary, it complicated them; for it soon became manifest that these denominational academies and colleges were essentially private and not public in their nature. They existed to teach not the truth, but a certain special brand of truth. They were interested in meeting not the social needs of democracy, but the theological and ecclesiastical needs of this or that Protestant church. In other words, these institutions had for their primary end and aim, the business of "putting something over" on the public mind. When, therefore, these commonwealths developed into the ways of settled life, and the higher aspects of education became matters of genuine public concern, the people found it necessary to ignore or challenge these denominational institutions of learning, and shut them out altogether from the established system of public education. In all these states there were founded the famous "state universities," which are now to be numbered among the educational wonders of the world. And in all these universities, it is a cardinal principle of organization that religion, in every one of its sectarian forms, shall be absolutely excluded!

Now what is true of these denominational colleges, is true in an even deeper and wider sense of the denominational churches. The latter, like

the colleges which they have bred and reared, are private institutions, existing for private purposes which are quite apart from the public interest of a democratic society. Note, for example, the ring of so-called "college churches" which surround the state universities of the west like a besieging army! Each denomination plants at the gates of these institutions of learning, churches representative of its own particular theological interest. Here they stand, not because the community wants them or needs them, but because each separate sect hopes to seize some stragglers from the student body of the college, as marauding Indians used to seize straying children from the white settlements and bring them up as members of the tribe. Their purpose in such cases is deliberately to defeat the public purpose of preparing young men and women for life without bias of political or theological opinion. The success of the churches, in this case as in all cases, is won at the expense of the community. To the extent that they attain their end the community is defeated. They divert attention from the common interest, draw off their respective groups from the common life, make division and competition, not union and coöperation, the practice of society. The denominations can not flourish without making true community association impossible. Which means, in all frankness, that our churches, as they exist today for the fostering of private particularistic interests, are *anti-social* and therefore hostile to public wel-

fare. When this fact is clearly seen, as it is just now beginning to be seen,¹ there will be raised the interesting question as to whether our American democracy shall tolerate the continuance of these centers of social discord and confusion. In more than one case which has come to my attention, the citizens of new communities, building their homes in restricted areas, have covenanted that no denominational church shall be allowed to acquire property or do work among them. Why should not this practice become general? Why should hostile interests of competing churches be allowed longer to divide the common life on non-essential issues alien to the public welfare? Why should not our civic communities provide their own churches—organize out of their own social life, that is, public institutions of religion which shall match in the ecclesiastical field those colleges and universities which they have already created in the educational field? The denomination as a competitor, or even open enemy, of the democratic society in the midst of which it conducts its propaganda and sustains its life, is fast becoming one of the pressing social problems of the hour.

VI

Denominationalism may be briefly described as a division of religious forces on trivial issues to the service of private ends. As thus understood, it is

¹ See Joseph E. McAfee's article in *The New Republic*, March 8, 1919.

the antithesis of religion, and the fundamental cause of the collapse which has now come upon the churches. For what other reason do these churches hold fast to the things which are so utterly remote from the main concerns of life? For what other reason do they remain indifferent to the things which are central to the thought and activity of humankind today? And for what other reason do all attempts to save the tragic situation in which Christendom now finds itself, come sooner or later to failure?

Foremost among these attempts, spiritually as well as chronologically, have been the experiments of the so-called liberals. The Unitarians, for example, of the school of Channing in America and of Martineau in England, stand first among all modern Christians in their endeavor to subordinate non-essentials to essentials, and to establish an organized body of religion which shall be truly serviceable of public interests. To this end, they have undertaken to build an institution which shall be undenominational in spirit, and thus wide enough to include all men everywhere. Not even to the limits of Christianity have the more progressive among the Unitarians confined themselves, but have sought to extend the circle of spiritual friendship to horizons wide enough to embrace mankind. Theirs has been a noble endeavor to establish genuine religious unity on a basis of reality; and yet it stands, like those made by other liberal movements of the time, as an endeavor which has failed.

In spite of the highest type of leadership, their group has taken its place as a separate denomination, distinguished from other denominations by certain peculiar theological tenets; and thus has resulted only in the addition of one more division to the already extravagant number of divisions in the Protestant world.

A second and more direct endeavor to strike at the root of denominationalism, is represented in the movements for church amalgamation which have been attracting so much attention in recent years. These movements are substantially of two kinds.

The church unity movement is an endeavor to unite in a single body several denominational groups which are more or less similar in thought and organization. An illustration is the attempt which was made in Ohio before the war to combine the Congregationalists, the Methodists and the United Brethren into one denomination. Another illustration is the attempt now successfully under way in Canada to unite the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists. In the local field, the movement manifests itself in the organization of the so-called "union church," which represents the combination, in a single town or village, of several different denominational churches. All such undertakings, of course, are to be welcomed and their success desired. Yet it should be evident enough that such process of amalgamation can take us only a few steps toward the great end of abolish-

ing denominationalism and all it implies. For central to the whole scheme is the old theological idea of a creed or statement of faith, as the basis of religious organization. The creed adopted by these union churches is always simpler and broader than that which characterizes the unadulterated sectarian institution. It therefore offers a wider basis of fellowship, and reaches a larger group of persons in the community, than any church affiliated with a single denomination. But in essence the union church represents the same type of institution as the churches which it has superseded. Its new basis of union represents only a new and more firmly integrated center of division from the rest of Christendom. Amalgamation along these lines will reduce the scandalous number of Protestant sects; it will wipe out the ridiculous multiplicity of competing churches. But denominationalism as a problem will still remain.

A more hopeful variety of amalgamation is that embodied in the movement of federation, so notably successful in recent years in the case of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. This undertakes not to unite denominations into a single body, but to recognize them just as they are, and lift them, by federation on the basis of a common program of action, from the plane of doctrine to the plane of life. The creation of the Federal Council represents an epoch in the history of religion in this country. It has added to society a new center of power, and thus done something to

pull the churches out of the mire of inconsequentiality into which they had fallen. But such system of federation, based as it is upon the initial recognition of the principle of theological separatism, touches only incidentally upon the basic problem involved. The fact that the Council, in spite of all its excellent work under what has been on the whole brave and far-sighted leadership, has done so little to stay the progressive disintegration of the organized religious forces of America, is proof of its ineffectiveness.

A third endeavor to save the situation is found in the "institutional church." This transformation of the old theological institution into an active agent of organized social service, represents one of the great religious achievements of modern times. It is a monument to the awakening of Christianity to the essential aspects of human life upon this planet, which it has so long and scandalously neglected. It is the one successful attempt in our time to socialize religion by harnessing the church directly to the service of the community. But when we go behind the practical activities of the institutional church, and come to the church itself, we find at once that there is little here to give us hope. For the institutional church is at bottom the same old church we have always known, with its denominational prejudices, its theological barriers, its frequently undemocratic organization, and its always timid acceptance of charity as a fit substitute for justice. The startling

spectacle some years ago of a world-famous institutional church participating in a Billy Sunday campaign, presents convincing demonstration that the institutional church is simply the old church clothed in fashionable garments.

VII

The trouble with all these endeavors is the same. They are vitiated by the fact that they begin with the churches as they exist today, and work inside the limitations imposed by the organization of these churches. What is being sought is a revival of the classic church-idea, which represents the church as a sacred institution, embodying certain immutable forces and ideas to which society must somehow or other adapt itself. Implicit in every one of these movements of ecclesiastical reform is the conviction that life cannot go on without the churches. But life *is* going on without the churches! This is the central social phenomenon of our time. Only the churches do not know it, or will not recognize it, so great is their obsession with tradition.

In all these endeavors, therefore, we see the last stage in the dissolution, rather than the first stage in the restoration, of Protestantism. Like a frantic mother's struggle to nurse a dead baby back to life, are all these attempts to save religion in a place from which it long since disappeared. What must be had, if religion is to survive and function, is a return not to the churches but to society, an

endeavor to restore not the vitality of institutions but the social consciousness of men. Our work must be founded not on the theological but on the social concept of spiritual experience and idea. For it is never the institution which is central in life, but the people out of which the institution is made. Not the church is holy, but humanity! If we want to revitalize and reorganize religion, therefore, we must begin at the bottom, with the raw material of human nature, and not at the top with the finished and therefore already dead product into which this material has at some past time been fashioned. Men and women, the people, the masses, the multitudes, the proletariat, the great communion of the common life! This is our field of action—here the center of our problem! If we are to do anything for religion, we must plunge into the stream of life, not play upon the banks and eddies. We want religion! We want it not for itself, but that we may harness it to the service of men's needs! Then must we search men's hearts, as they sweat and weep in the ruck of labor, as they join the struggles and share the sorrows of the working world. Unite these hearts in one vast accord of sympathy and action, and there will be no question of uniting churches. For there will be no churches in the accepted sense of the word, but only men living in one life, and working to one end of redemption here and now.

Our task, therefore, is to return to society, not to hold apart from society; to build out of it, and not

impose upon it, the institutions of its life. This means the great experience of democracy, which means in turn the free functioning of society in the creation of the agencies of its own redemption! In our modern political democracy, some of these institutions have already begun to appear, as witness the school and the state. These institutions have grown as native products of the soil. But the churches, as they exist today, are aliens. They stand not as the quick grass springing fresh from out the earth, but as dead rocks molten in the heat of other days. They have no place, save as relics of earlier processes of life. The churches which shall serve us in the future must be new churches, born of our common life, and instinct with its passions. Therefore to understand democracy, as it developed from out the past, and works among us in this present, is the next task that lies before us. In it is the secret of the religion of our place and time; and out of it shall proceed the church for which men wait.

CHAPTER III

DEMOCRACY: RELIGION OUTSIDE THE
CHURCHES

“Without Liberty no true society exists. . . . Liberty is sacred as the individual whose life it represents is sacred. . . . Personal liberty, liberty of locomotion, liberty of religious belief, liberty of opinion, . . . liberty of trade in all the productions of your brains and hands: these are all things which no one may take from you. . . .

“But when you have obtained the recognition of these liberties as sacred . . . then remember that still above each of you stands the great aim which it is your duty to attain: . . . an ever more intimate and wider communion between all the members of the human family. . . . That your individual life should be linked more surely and intimately with the collective life of all, with the life of humanity, God has made you essentially social beings. Every kind of lower being can live by itself, without other communion than with nature; you can not. At every step you have need of your brothers. . . . All the noblest aspirations of your heart . . . indicate your inborn tendency to unite your life with the life of the millions who surround you. You are, then, created for *association*.

“Association is the sole means which we possess of accomplishing progress . . . because it brings into closer relations all the various manifestations of the human soul, and puts that life of the *individual* into communion with the *collective* life. Liberty gives you the power of choosing between good and evil. . . . Association must give you the means with which to put your choice into practise. Association, without which liberty is useless, is as sacred as religion. . . . Consider association, then, as your duty and your right. (For) we are here below to labor fraternally to build up the unity of the human family.”

JOSEPH MAZZINI, in

The Duties of Man

CHAPTER III

DEMOCRACY: RELIGION OUTSIDE THE CHURCHES

I

In seeking to understand the meaning of democracy, as a religion, we need to go back into the past only a distance of some four hundred years, for this tremendous movement, as we know it in our time, finds its most authentic credentials in the significant fact that it had its first appearance in the spiritual upheaval of the Reformation. It was from the Protestantism of the early sixteenth century, so soon to betray its offspring, that it took its birth. Its progress from that time has been through many lands and peoples. Its story divides itself into not less than three distinct and separate chapters; but its note is always the same, and its fundamental religious character always unmistakable.

In its initial appearance, democracy is a revolt against the idea of institutional authority. Martin Luther struck this note in the beginning, in his assault upon "the divine right" of the Roman Papacy. Here was the church claiming to be the sole repository of truth, and the sole custodian of

spiritual life. Jesus had founded this church on Peter; and Peter in turn had transmitted his prerogatives to his successors; and these, by the miraculous process of "the apostolic succession," had transmitted the exclusive sanction of the divine Christ to the existing hierarchy in Rome. No man could come to God, save through the church; no man could find the way of life, save under direction of the church; no man could attain salvation, except by the mercy of the church. In life and death alike, in other words, the church enjoyed and exercised a monopoly of grace. By virtue of "the divine right" conferred upon it by the Saviour, it held exclusive control over the destinies of men. It was this claim which aroused the wrath and stirred the revolt of Luther. He rebelled against the church—flouted its authority, denied its "rights," shattered the whole idea of its spiritual autonomy. Democracy was launched at the moment when this great reformer dethroned the church by proclaiming that there was salvation outside the shadow of its altars.

A second chapter in the story of democracy was opened some two centuries later, when the movement of revolt spread from the ecclesiastical to the political field. The institution now in question was not the church but the state—the ruler to be overthrown not the priest but the prince. This revolution, long maturing as the fruitage of the Reformation, came to its climax, of course, in the French Revolution, when the feudal doctrine of

“the divine right” of kings came tumbling to the dust. Since that momentous day the movement has spread throughout the length and breadth of the world, both civilized and barbarian, until it is now only in the remote places of the earth that there are left any kings who rule as monarchs used to rule. A few more sovereigns overthrown, a few more constitutions written, and the work of political democracy will be accomplished!

For a good many years it was believed that these two chapters comprised the whole of the story of this remarkable movement of revolt. In our time, however, with a suddenness which is simply terrific, we have been taught that there is another chapter still to come, and this the greatest and most momentous of them all. For who is so blind as not to see that in the modern labor movement we have exactly the same phenomenon in the field of economics and industry, as appeared in the ecclesiastical field with the Protestant Reformation, and in the political field with the French Revolution? The spirit of revolt against institutional authority is moving on; and having disposed of the divine right of the church as embodied in a pope, and the divine right of the state as embodied in a king, it now proposes to dispose of the divine right of property as embodied in a capitalist! For the industrial developments of the last one hundred years have raised up a new institution of privilege and power, this time economic instead of ecclesiastical or political in character; and the spirit of democ-

racy, now thoroughly aroused, goes forth to war against this as against the others. And strange is it to note that many of those who are most familiar with democracy in its workings in church and state, and who have entered most fully into the inheritance of democracy as transmitted to them by their revolutionary forefathers of the centuries gone by, are just the ones who are most terrified at what is now going on everywhere in the economic world, and most eager to stop it! One would never imagine that these persons, bitter opponents not merely of Bolshevism but of the mildest forms of social change, are members of a church and citizens of a nation, which were alike conceived in rebellion and born of revolution! I know nothing in all history which is more ironical than the hostility of the so-called democracies of the world to the present day manifestations of the democratic spirit in economic life. And by the same token do I know of nothing more pitiful than the frantic and of course futile endeavors of this hostility to stay the flood of social change! Democracy is the most triumphant thing in all the world; and what it has already wrought in church and state, it is certain also now to achieve in the economic field. Legislative investigations, espionage and censorship laws, leagues of nations, treaties of peace, armies of intervention and occupation—what are they all before the advance of resistless cosmic forces? Have you ever seen a little boy building his houses and castles in the sand, as the tide of the ocean mounts

along the beach? How outraged, and then alarmed, is the youngster, when he discovers the waters threatening the structures which he has reared! How vigorously he goes to work to stop the advancing waves! As they sweep around his feet, he takes his shovel and pushes them away. As they wash the walls of his castle, he piles on the sand, to make these walls higher and stronger. As the waves break through and flood the house, he seizes his pail, and throws the water back into the sea. But all in vain—the waves will have their way! And so with the industrial changes which are everywhere threatening this day to engulf the mighty structures of industrial autocracy. The uprising against this latest form of institutional tyranny has begun. Democracy has precipitated a new battle, and is moving to a new triumph. The choice before us to-day is no longer to be found in the question as to whether the economic revolution shall come or not. It is to be found rather in the simple question as to whether it shall come by mutual agreement, coöperation, constructive and peaceful change, or by the fire and sword of violence!

II

Democracy, therefore, in its beginnings, is always the same. It is a revolt of men against oppressive institutional authority. But what is behind this revolt? What is the spiritual affirmation, of which such social upheaval is the practical expression?

The answer to this question is to be found in the

great movement of the Renaissance. This, as we have already seen, marked the rediscovery and declaration on a gigantic scale of the truth, so often found and again so often lost, that there is nothing sacred in all the world but the human soul. The Renaissance presented to mankind the individual. Its supreme achievement was the elevation of the single human being to a position of supreme authority. Democracy is the working out of this achievement. When Martin Luther started his crusade against medieval Catholicism, he founded his faith on what he called "the priesthood of the common man." It is not these bishops and priests of the church, he said, who possess the sanctity of God's grace. This grace is granted to every individual and makes of that individual a priest ordained not of the Papacy but of the Most High himself.

Similar was the idea that controlled the great revolutions for political democracy at the close of the eighteenth century. Not the priesthood, but the kingship of the common man was now the slogan of the hour. Not any sovereign of any royal house, but the humblest citizen of the realm, was he who was crowned with divine favor, and who exercised the divine right of authority. It was this belief in the individual which was the inspiration behind our Declaration of Independence, with its sublime affirmation that "all men are created equal . . . and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Now in the industrial field comes the same discovery, and with it the same movement of revolution. We feel today that the commonest worker in field or factory is a divine being upon whom has been conferred, equally with every other man, the heritage of earth. This worker, just because of his divine manhood, is entitled to access to the earth. He is entitled to enjoyment of those natural resources from which flow the tides of wealth which now bless only the few and privileged. He is entitled to adequate food and housing, to free opportunity for his children, to leisure and comfort, to all the basic blessings of associated life. These are the rights which the humblest workers of the world are now claiming for themselves. They assert that there is nothing which should be denied them, nothing to which they are not entitled, nothing which is not properly theirs. These workers, in other words, have discovered themselves; they know themselves to be men; they have laid hold on the sanctity of their own souls, and the privileges of life and love which are their rightful possession as sons of the everliving God. And they move on to that triumphant assertion of their individual sovereignty in the industrial realm, which has long since been claimed and seized in other fields of social relationship!

These are the two sides of democracy—the negative, which is the revolt against authority; the positive, which is the affirmation of the sanctity of life, the rights of men, the worth of the individual.

These together may be described as the old and new testament of the people's Bible. The two can perhaps be combined, and thus summarized, in the one great ideal of liberty, as witness the early and unspoiled achievements of the Reformation! Democracy, in the last analysis, means simply freedom—freedom for every humblest individual, in every walk of life, apart from all institutional authority, to live out the destiny of his own being! The Pilgrims and Puritans crossed the wintry waste of the Atlantic to come to the unknown shores of this country, in order that they might be free—free to worship their own God in their own way. It was freedom in political relations which was in our fathers' hearts when they declared war upon the government of George the Third, and wrote the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence. And now it is this same ideal of freedom which flies on every banner that is lifted by the laboring millions of Europe and America. It is no accident that at the entrance portal of this great republic, which has stood for generations to all men everywhere as the social symbol of democracy, there stands the gigantic figure of the Goddess of Liberty. Her torch of freedom has flung wide its beams into the dark corners of religious bigotry and political oppression. Brighter now today than ever flames the beacon; and when at last its light has driven darkness out of the farthest and deepest corners of the world, the worker as well as the citizen and the communicant will be free of the

shackles which long have bound him. Democracy means free men in a free world!

III

It was the faith of men until well into the nineteenth century, that freedom comprises the whole gospel of democracy. Nothing was ever more beautiful, even though naïve, than the confidence of liberal thinkers in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that all that was needed to establish social order and to realize the fairest dreams of human life, was to set men free of every external limitation or constraint. In the beginning of his movement, Martin Luther believed that the task of spiritual regeneration involved no other problem than that of liberating the individual soul from the tyranny of the Catholic hierarchy. The statesmen of France and America saw no other problem in political democracy than that of emancipating men from the authority of kings, and restoring them to the primeval autonomy of "the social contract"; Thomas Jefferson summed up the whole political doctrine of the time in his famous dictum, "the less government the better." So also, in industry, there appeared a group of men, of the famous Manchester school in England, who believed they had found the solution of every economic disorder in the doctrine of *laissez faire*, by which they meant the principle that every man should be left free in the industrial realm to work out his own

salvation. The same idea was carried over by Herbert Spencer into the field of morals, and freedom set forth in his *Data of Ethics* as the all-sufficient rule of personal conduct. The ills of life, it was believed in those days, all had their origin in the tyranny of autocratic men and institutions. All that was needed to solve every problem, both of individual and social life, was to free the individual, and thus enable him without interference to follow his native impulses and work out his instinctive desires.

This implicit reliance upon the idea of abstract freedom was rooted in a definite reading of the facts of human nature. At bottom, it was said, all men are dominated by the motive of self-interest. To the human being, as to the animal, nothing is important except the desire for self-preservation, survival, individual prosperity and happiness. These are things which all men want, and which they insist upon having at any cost. Now if men can be only freed to act upon this passion of self-interest, there will result a certain automatic adjustment of relations which will guarantee to all persons the peace and happiness which they seek. Each individual, in other words, will be limited in his quest of personal satisfactions by the similar quest of all other men with whom he is associated; and this limitation of one individual upon another, will be certain to act, in the long run, as a kind of balance in the social process. It is sure to bring order automatically out of what would seem to be the

hopeless disorder of conflicting desires and ideas. It was this faith in an automatic regulation of men's lives by the unescapable modification of one man's actions by another, that induced the leaders of the early nineteenth century to believe that no other regulation was necessary, in order to secure the ends of life. Hence their destruction of spiritual hierarchies, political sovereignties, and economical monopolies! Hence their reading of democracy exclusively in terms of individual liberty!

IV

It is the discovery that this sole reliance upon freedom is illusory, which is the dominant fact in the democratic experience of our day. The individual has been liberated in one field of social life after another, only to discover that he is not really free. It has been one of the supreme tragedies of modern times to find that democracy, for all its triumphs, is as far away as ever. We are beginning to feel, if not to know, that while freedom is an excellent thing, it is not in itself enough. As Dr. Richard Roberts expresses it, in his little book, *The Red Cap on the Cross*, "freedom must have a coefficient, if it is to do its work in establishing a true and permanent democratic order!" Left alone by itself, to work "on its own hook," so to speak, freedom is almost certain to fall into one or the other of two supreme disasters.

In the first place, it is likely to be abused.

Liberty easily becomes lawlessness, and the democratic order a degeneration into anarchy. Martin Luther held up his hands in horror at the things which were done by the Christian men and women whom he had emancipated from the yoke of Rome. The excesses of the French Revolution filled Europe with terror, and turned against the revolutionists the staunchest friends of liberty in England and America. Now from Russia there comes the tragic tale of the abuse of the freedom wrested from the Czar. Liberty of itself cannot control the social order; it simply cannot be trusted alone to work out the great ideals of democracy. By the best of men as well as by the worst, by the educated as well as by the ignorant, it is always subject to abuse, and therefore becomes the means of destroying the very thing for the sake of which it was inaugurated!

But the abuse of liberty is not the only danger which is involved. Less terrible, but more frequent, is the neglect of liberty. Freedom once purchased at a great price, and enjoyed for a time as the most precious of possessions, becomes in due course of time a thing of commonplace, and is then neglected. This neglect it is which gives an opening to what is known in history as "the strong man," and enables such a man to seize upon the seat of power, and thus to restore in his own person the autocracy of an older day. Freedom when relied upon as the sole principle of social organization and the single foundation of democracy, again and again does nothing but "clear the ground" for

conflict between competing powers and the dominance of selfishness and strength. Thus in government there appears "the man on horseback"—that sinister figure who has so often ridden rough-shod over the neglected liberty of free peoples. In the industrial field appears the monopolist—the master of privilege—who utilizes the open opportunity of economic life for the accumulation in his own hands of such social power as would have turned a Caesar to envy and despair. Eternal vigilance, we have been told, is the price of liberty; but eternal vigilance is seldom practiced, and liberty, thus neglected, becomes the opportunity for the Napoleons of state and market-place. Thus is freedom lost as soon as won, and democracy destroyed as soon as established. By abuse, or by neglect, the fairest promises of free men, in nearly every case, have turned sooner or later, like the apples of Sodom, to dust and ashes.

This fact of the inadequacy of freedom as the guarantee of democracy, has become manifest at intervals in the past, and is supremely manifest to the men and women of our time. Freedom, we now know, is not enough. Democracy, if it is to stand, must have another and second foundation upon which to build. It must have a "coefficient".¹ And it is the tragedy of every era of abused or neglected liberty that this "coefficient" of freedom has been sought not in new or prophetic principles of life, but in a return to that old, discredited principle

¹ See Richard Roberts, *The Red Cap on the Cross*, page 51.

of authority, which men had thought to leave behind forever. Where does history present to us an instance of more terrific irony than the resort of men who have won liberty for their fellows, or inherited it from their predecessors, to the practice of shameless tyrannies, when they have seen liberty turned to license or captured by power? This was the tragedy of the Reformation, as we have seen. Immediately that Luther saw what freedom was doing to the people of his time, he gave himself to the work of organizing a church as closely after the pattern of the Roman Papacy as it was possible to build outside the borders of Catholicism; and resorted to the swords of princes to sustain his authority. Instinctively, that is, in defence of the very liberty which he had brought into the world, he returned to the uses of that tyranny to the overthrow of which he had given his life.

The same thing has been true again and again in the political realm. The liberals of France knew no way of saving themselves from the confusion and horror of the Reign of Terror, except by giving their destinies into the hands of an autocratic ruler like the first Napoleon. Here in our country we have had a contemporary instance, in the speedy resort of the American government in 1917-1919 to Prussian methods of social control during a war definitely fought "to make the world safe for democracy." During these two years, we were wantonly deprived of liberty of speech, of press, of assembly; and all on the plea that, in such a crisis of the

national life, liberty could not be trusted! Of course, it could not be trusted! Experience, as we have said, has demonstrated beyond question that liberty is a reed upon which alone it is impossible to lean. But alas for the wisdom and imagination of men, that they know no way of saving the situation except by abandoning this very liberty to which their society is dedicated!

The same thing will be true, we may be sure, when, through the establishment of economic freedom, democracy has made its way into the economic realm. We flatter ourselves that such democratic control of economic life will bring us at last the perfect freedom for which men have been laboring so long. But let us not be deceived! In industry, exactly as in the church and in the state, it will need but a moment's peril to rob us of all the freedom which we apparently had won. In Russia today we see a perfect instance of this fact. Here the revolution has taken place, and a vast new experiment in democracy is launched! Every true lover of progress desires this experiment to succeed. But almost from the beginning, liberty has broken down; and autocracy, by the deliberate choice of the men in control, has been lifted into its place. In other words, for the sake of democracy, as we are told, the tyranny of the Czar has been succeeded by the tyranny of the Bolsheviki. The revolutionists tell us that their power could not have been sustained and their work thus continued if they had trusted absolutely to the ideal princi-

ples of social freedom. This is undoubtedly true! But again we raise the question as to why, in order to protect liberty, this liberty should forthwith be abandoned? Here is a paradox which simply defies explanation! Such return to the practice of centralized authority may be justified, of course, in a hundred ways. It may be described as wise, prudent, necessary, inevitable. But one thing at least cannot be said of it, and that is that it is democratic! We may argue until "the crack o' doom," but it will still remain indubitable that democracy is not democracy when liberty is overthrown. Some secret here is not yet solved. Some saving principle there is which we have not yet discovered. Democracy undoubtedly means at bottom the action of free men in a free world; but it is also something more and better than this, and it is this more and better that we must find.

V

In seeking this further democratic principle, where can we better turn than to that intensive study of human nature, which revealed to us the basis for the ideal of individual liberty? In this first examination of man's being, we discovered his primary instinct of self-preservation; and on this we established that political and economic principle of *laissez faire*, which we believed would work out automatically in terms of social order. In this interpretation of human nature we were right, as

far as we went; but we certainly did not go far enough, for there is more in man than the mere passion for survival. Side by side with this basic instinct of the soul is another instinct, equally basic, which is of opposite character.

This instinct, as uncovered in the animal realm, is what Prince Kropotkin has called "mutual aid."¹ Side by side with the principle of "struggle for survival," in which the early evolutionists found the secret of organic development, later evolutionists found the principle of "struggle for the life of others." The brute creatures of the jungle battle not merely in aggression against their enemies, but in defence of their friends, as a lioness in defence of her cubs or Darwin's famous baboon in defence of his forsaken comrade.² Many of them live not a separate existence at all, but pool their interests and thus develop the phenomenon of herds, as of elephants and deer, and flocks, as of sheep. All through what John Burroughs calls "the long road" of evolution, animals have struggled not merely for themselves but for their kind; have been dominated not by the selfish passion of survival but by the unselfish passion of sacrifice. There are "cosmic roots," as John Fiske expresses it,³ "of love and self-sacrifice"; and these roots come to flower in the human soul. Man is indeed a creature who seeks the preservation of his own personality; he is

¹ See *Mutual Aid a Factor of Evolution*.

² See *The Descent of Man*, page 102.

³ See *Through Nature To God*, page 57. Also Henry Drummond's *Ascent of Man*; James S. Bixby's *The New World and the New Thought*; and John C. Kimball's *The Ethical Aspects of Evolution*.

swayed again and again in fundamental things by the motive of self-interest. But side by side with this instinct is the supplementary instinct of sociality. Along with his passion to save himself is his passion to save his mate. Man cannot live alone; he must have company if he would be sane and happy. It is G. K. Chesterton who refers to a certain lunatic asylum in England as a place inhabited by those who believe absolutely and exclusively in themselves. Rudyard Kipling's acute psychological story of the death of one of two men upon a lightship on the ocean and the tragic loss of reason by the unhappy man who was left alone, is familiar. The pages of history, as H. G. Wells has been lately showing, bear nothing but the record of man's unquenchable desire to live in association with his fellows, and of his age-old experiments in the form of tribes, clans, city-states and nations to satisfy this desire. Whether he will or no, in other words, man must love. It is a very part of his nature to seek and hold to fellowship with members of his own kind. The barriers that divide have no such significance as the bonds that unite. At bottom, we are not rivals but comrades, not enemies but friends. We belong together. To be members one of another is as original and fundamental a part of our being as to be ourselves. Nay, to be thus members one of another, is alone to be really and nobly ourselves. For the transition, or translation, from selfishness to unselfishness, from individuality to fellowship,

brings us at last to the triumphant truism that man can realize his own self only through association with and love of other selves. Brotherhood in thought and life is alone salvation. "He who findeth his life shall lose it," said Jesus, "and he who loseth his life . . . shall find it."

Now here, in this tremendous discovery of the social instinct inherent in human nature, do we find answer to our inquiry as to the "coefficient" of freedom. Democracy means free men; but it also means free men joined together in the bond of fellowship. Democracy means the emancipated individual; but it also means the organization of those individuals into a social order that is held together not by outward authority but by inward consent. It is this discovery which brings to us in this modern age our new task of democracy. Yesterday our task was to deliver men from the institutional tyranny of church and state and property. This task, especially in the field of industry, is still undone, and will long remain undone; but today this task of individual emancipation is no longer primary. In its place there stands the new task of finding the ways and means of so ordering free men that they may be controlled and disciplined without sacrifice of individual freedom. The secret of this miracle is fellowship. Already in the religious field there are some groups of Christians who have been able to organize themselves successfully without the recognition of any ruler or the establishment of any hierarchy. Thus among the

Friends do we find freedom, complemented by a spiritual fellowship which realizes the essence of democracy. The same thing has been deliberately sought, but never yet successfully realized, in the sphere of government. Certainly it was this thought of fellowship, as contrasted with authority, which our fathers had in mind when they wrote that immortal phrase about all "just governments deriving their powers from the *consent* of the governed." In the industrial field, even before men have themselves been wholly freed from tyranny, we find great experiments in fellowship in such organizations as the coöperative societies of Belgium, Denmark and Russia, and such labor groups as the trade unions of England and America. On the whole, however, this task is still before us. We have achieved much freedom, only to throw it wantonly away whenever it is threatened. Now, holding fast to the liberty thus dearly bought, it is for us to seize upon the second and higher principle of life, the source of all order and the secret of all joy—namely, the association of man with man in one high fellowship of the spirit—and build out of it that social structure which shall bring at last the realization of our hopes.

What this social structure shall be when ultimately realized in ideal form, we find suggested in our present-day community, with its great variety of institutions and forms of associated activity. The whole basis of democracy, as thus conceived, may be said to be the community. This is the cen-

tral fact, the primal cell, so to speak, which is the unit of the whole. Around the community turns the movement of democracy; out of it proceeds the structure of democracy. Whether it be political government, trade unionism, guild socialism, coöperation, the soviet, the basic unit of integration is still that *locale* where men live and work together, the socialization of which constitutes, therefore, the organism of their common life. The community may be described as democracy made manifest. It is the "body" in which "the spirit" of freedom and fellowship, which is "the Word," becomes "flesh."

VI

Such is democracy in its ideal estate! As applied to religion, it represents the exact antithesis of that denominationalism which characterizes so uniquely the Protestant world. Denominationalism has its origin in intolerance and bigotry; democracy, in that sense of liberty which practices toleration as its primal virtue. Denominationalism works out into a type of separatism which divides men into scores of competitive and warring camps; democracy on the other hand fulfills itself in a sense of fellowship which unites men in the service of one another. Denominationalism inevitably takes refuge in some form of authority for the imposition upon unwilling souls of uniformity; democracy glories in the abrogation of every last trace of autocratic control, and seeks uniformity only as a spon-

taneous development from within of that consciousness of common life which is the community in action. Denominationalism means reliance upon dogmas, institutions, a creed and church; democracy means confidence in men—in men as individuals seeking the fulfillment of their native powers in terms of abundant life, as brothers seeking their happiness in terms of social welfare.

Of such democracy, of course, we have but an imperfect beginning at the present moment. We have entered only, and all too inadequately, upon the use of liberty, which means hardly more today than a gross battle between individuals and groups or classes of individuals, for social predominance. All about us are institutions of authority, sustained and revered as means of establishing some type of order in these internicine struggles. Freedom to tyrannize, to exploit, to mount and hold the seats of power, with not a vestige of that fellowship which marks the fulfillment of the community ideal—this is what our democracy too often means today! But blind is he who sees nothing more in the liberty thus gained and used than a continued battle for power and place. Not always will freedom thus be abused or neglected. As men struggle one with another, as class battles selfishly with class, as revolutions upheave the strata of society and reorder arrangements among men, we can see always a broadening of the social base and a widening of the barriers of brotherhood. Slowly but surely, with much “groaning and travailing to-

gether," freedom is making its way to fellowship, and both to the community ideal. Democracy is not here, but is coming! Some day there shall be among us *a free fellowship of free men, to the end of the common service of the common good.*

This it is which Paul foresaw when, in his first *Epistle to the Corinthians*, he wrote, "We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Nobler still is that modern statement of democracy which is given to us by Edward Carpenter, in his great book entitled *Towards Democracy*. "In the deep caves of the heart," he writes, "far down, running under the outward shows of the world and of people, running under continents, under the fields and the roots of the grasses and trees, under the little thoughts and dreams of men, and the history of races, I see, I feel and hear wondrous and divine things. I seem to see the strands of affection and love, so tender, so true and life-long, holding together the present and past generation. . . . I dream that these are the fibres and nerves of a body . . . a network, an innumerable vast interlocked ramification, slowly being built up; all dear lovers and friends, all families and groups, all peoples, nations, all times, all worlds perhaps, members of a body, archetypal, eterne, glorious, the center and perfection of life, the organic growth of God himself in time."

Here is our final word in interpretation of democracy. Here is democracy become the religion of the

people, of which we spoke in the beginning. Democracy is fellowship. It is the love of free men one for another in a community of experience and service. It is God revealed in the comradeship of human hearts. It is indeed the "organic growth of God himself in time."

CHAPTER IV
THE NEW BASIS OF RELIGION

“I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races;
I advance from the people in their own spirit; . . .

“I, following many, and follow’d by many, inaugurate
a Religion— . . .

“I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough;
None has ever yet adored or worship’d half enough;
None has yet begun to think how divine he himself is,
and how certain the future is.

“I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these
States must be their Religion;
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur.

“Know you! solely to drop in the earth the germs of a
greater Religion,
The following chants I sing.”

WALT WHITMAN, in

Starting From Paumanok

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW BASIS OF RELIGION

I

Democracy, thus conceived in its highest terms as fellowship, constitutes the transcendent reality of modern times. It is life as we know it today. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it is just this reality which the churches, so hopelessly obsessed with the ideas and practices of other days, will not or cannot recognize. Is it any wonder that they have fallen into a state of collapse from which there is apparently no recovery!

But why should the churches recognize democracy, or take its world of secular activity for their own particular field of operations? Democracy, in its political, economic or even ecclesiastical expressions of social endeavor, can hardly be identified with religion. In religion we expect to find God, and here we have gone no higher nor farther than men—men in fellowship, to be sure, but still men. We recall that Carpenter calls this evolution of free society “the organic growth of God in time”; but by virtue of what thought does he rise to such a conception, and by what syllogism can he prove it? Is religion suddenly to be interpreted in a different

way from what it has ever been before? Is God to be regarded not as a being but as a process? Are men, after all, their own gods; are their social institutions churches; is their fellowship one with another, grace? If so, where is the basis of religion? What new foundations can be planted for the old?

II

The answers to these questions must be sought in an analysis of the meaning of religion, as this meaning has been modified by the influences which have been at work in the world since the period of the Renaissance.

According to classic definition, religion may be said to constitute a relation between the two fundamental factors of spiritual reality, God and the soul. Thus Kant defines religion as "a knowledge of all our duties as divine commands"; Tylor, as "the belief in spiritual beings"; Schleiermacher, as "a sense of dependence upon God." More popular definitions are seen in Lyman Abbott's statement that "religion is the life of God in the soul of man," and Minot J. Savage's evolutionary formula that "religion is man's endeavor to get into right relations with God."

In the past only one of the two factors in this relationship has been emphasized—the divine and not the human. The accepted basis of religion, in the churches at least, has always been God. Just how this idea of God originated, how it has been

modified through the ages (polytheism, henotheism, monotheism), by what means it has been verified, are problems which cannot be discussed in this place. Sufficient is it for us to note that, wherever in the past religion has come to the point of organizing itself in the form of temples, priesthoods, sacred books and holy days, central to the whole system of institutions has been a preconceived abstraction known as deity. God is here regarded as an absolute—*the* absolute from which all reality in time and space derives its being. Just how there can be any derivation from an absolute is one of the riddles on which theologians have most persistently exercised their wits. Some have sought an answer in the conception of all things existing in God, as oxygen exists in water; others have thought of God as casting off emanations of his being as a fire throws out sparks into the darkness, or a planet flings its vortex rings into the void; the popular mind has satisfied itself with crude pictures of God as a creator, fashioning the world and its inhabitants as a savage moulds clay images, or a watch-maker manufactures watches. But always at the heart of all these speculations has been the thought of God as an absolute, and, therefore, a being apart. God is the maker of time, and yet himself outside of time! He fills, or at least controls, space, and yet himself is beyond and above all space—"an absentee deity," to quote the familiar phrase of Carlyle! He is the source of all change, and yet himself unchanged, unchanging and unchangeable!

He is revealed "in miracle and sign," and yet himself unsearchable, unseen, remote! Here is the factor which is central in religion as it has always been understood and interpreted in the past. God is the beginning and the end of the whole phenomenon. Religion centers about the deity, as the earth centers about the sun. Religion and theism are synonymous, as, *per contra*, religion and atheism are antithetical.

What this exclusive stress upon God has meant to the other factor in the relationship—namely, man—is shown by the whole history of organized religion. Man's duty in life has been conceived as of a three-fold nature. In the first place, he must find God—discover not by hearsay but by experience that God is the central reality of life. Secondly, he must know God—understand his will as formulated in laws which are the commandments of the soul. Lastly, he must obey God—give allegiance to his will as a good citizen gives allegiance to the statutes of his country, or as a good soldier to the orders of his captain. Upon his fulfillment of these obligations to the divine depends his salvation in eternity. If he would live, in the true spiritual sense of this great word, he must surrender himself utterly unto God. How this shall be done, man is not left helplessly by himself to discover. On the contrary, God has inspired prophets, written scriptures, performed miracles, established churches, worked out and revealed an ordered system of redemption, that man might be left in

no doubt as to where and what is the way of life. But it is for him to say whether or not he shall walk in this way, and thus know God alone.

From this standpoint, religion represents the sharpest possible distinction between the world and God. The religious life must be understood as something altogether apart from life as we live it in our every-day affairs. It is an experience which enters into no other relationship of men. To be faithful to wife and children, to be honest in business, to be loyal to country, to love one's neighbor, to serve humanity—these things are excellent in themselves, and, from the point of view of earth, are duties. But they are secular duties, and not sacred. They are ethical and not spiritual fidelities. They are not, in other words, religion! For religion has to do not with family, or business, or nation, or mankind, but with God; and our duty to God is discharged only by those special observances of faith and worship which the churches have so carefully formulated as a help to man in his quest of the divine. Hence the importance of creeds and rituals, of prayers and sacraments, of scriptures, sabbaths and "holy church"! Of course, to the worldly man these things are vain, for this man does not know nor care about God. He is "of the earth, earthy," and, therefore, the moralities of earth seem to him to be enough. But to the religiously minded man, these things are all in all, for they are the way, and the only way, to God.

III

This understanding of religion remained unshaken until the Renaissance, when there came changes which were revolutionary in character.

These began with what we have already noted as the distinctive feature of the Renaissance—namely, the rediscovery of man. For a thousand years and more, under the obsession of theistic absolutism, the race had been lost in a kind of theological slumber. Through all this time, fittingly known as the Dark Ages, human interest was focussed on questions of the Trinity, the person of Christ, the Atonement, the nature of transubstantiation, the authority of the church, the reality of heaven and hell. The minds that led the thought of the world, from Augustine to Albert Magnus, concerned themselves with nothing but the explanation and interpretation of Christian dogma. There was no art but that of Biblical legend and ecclesiastical tradition, no literature but that of theologian and copyist, no philosophy but scholasticism, no science but magic, no social movements but monasticism and the crusades. The world was as completely forgotten as though it had never existed; man was remembered only as a single factor in a mystic formula of salvation. Alone in all this period of darkness was Roger Bacon, greatest of Europeans, who, as one curious not of heaven but earth, not of godhead but of the

soul, was a modern man born centuries before his time.

For what was native to the mind of Roger Bacon came to Europe only through that Revival of Learning, which brought men fresh acquaintanceship with the ancient Greeks, who felt so keenly "the wild joy of living," studied so curiously the mysteries of man and of his universe, and registered their testimony in so beautiful an art and literature, so profound a science and philosophy. In the Greek mind, "man (was) the measure of all things," and not "fear of the Lord" but knowledge of self "the beginning of wisdom." The renaissance of such a culture among the people of the Middle Ages was like the entrance of the Prince into the garden of the Sleeping Beauty. Instantly there came that awakening which marks the birth of modern times. Touched by the magic of the classic spirit, men shook off their dream-like abstractions of deity and visions of eternity, and, for the first time in centuries, looked at themselves and their world. Petrarch climbing a mountain to view the landscape, Galileo fashioning his telescope and hanging his pendulum, Columbus turning the prow of his *Santa Maria* into the Atlantic, Gassendi and his atoms, Newton and his apple, Harvey and his circulation of the blood, Descartes and his "cogito ergo sum"—these are symbols of an age which shook the world. Exploration and discovery, science and philosophy, art, literature and music, came to their own again. Men looked upward, and

watched the stars; looked outward, and searched the seas; looked downward, and analyzed the earth; looked inward, and knew the soul; looked backward, and traced history; looked forward, and prepared prophecies. Not inferno, purgatory and paradise, but "this goodly frame, the earth"; not angels and demons, but men and women, nations and peoples; not abstract problems of theological salvation, but vast works of discovery, research and social liberation—these now monopolized attention. Man was at the center of the stage. His life in this present world, life within his soul and among his fellows, was the theme of the drama. The principle laid down by Pope for his later age, that "the proper study of mankind is man," was but a restatement of what the race now knew for the first time since the proud days of Socrates and Aristotle.

IV

Second only to the new center of interest is the new method of thought characteristic of modern as contrasted with medieval times. The old method, typically theological, was what is known as deductive. It took its start from certain ideas, universal and absolute, which were accepted without verification in the belief that they were revealed to man by the divine consciousness, or were themselves innate in the human consciousness as the condition of all thought. In either case these ideas were "given," like the factors of a geometrical propo-

sition, and all other truths were arrived at by a process of deduction from these original axioms of reality. Thought, in other words, was a process of intellectual movement from above downward, of inference from things eternal to things temporal. In asking what were the facts in a given situation, nobody thought of doing such a thing as observing or investigating. Rather did they ask what the "first principles" of thought, either as revealed or innate, made necessary in this situation, and then accepted the deduced conclusion without question. If facts which men could not avoid observing, seemed to contradict the deductions from these ideal truths which were "before all worlds," then they could not be facts. They must be chopped off forthwith from the body of reality, like the limbs of unhappy victims who did not fit the famous bed of fabled Procrustes. Facts were nothing as compared with "ideas," to use the Platonic phrase. Facts were in all cases to be adapted to thought, and not thought to facts.

In Christianity, of course, the basic ideas were those inwrought in that great system of dogma, which began with Paul, was elaborated by Augustine, and was completed by the great schoolmen of the later Middle Ages. The Triune God, the created world, fallen man, atonement achieved by the sacrificial blood of Christ, the resurrection and ascension, the last day—these were the truths which were revealed from out the mind of God, and therefore subject not to inquiry but to acceptance.

Whatever else men desired to know must be inferred or deduced from these dogmas of the church. These things stood, like the Ptolemaic earth; and round them as a center swept the lesser spheres of truth.

With the opening of the Renaissance came a reversal of method as revolutionary as the Copernican theory of the universe. The new method, which was coincident with the birth of modern science, and which may therefore be known as the scientific, in contrast to the theological, method, is inductive in process. It takes nothing for granted; accepts nothing as necessarily true; knows nothing either of revelations or innate ideas. It simply finds itself confronted with certain realities of experience, inquires as to the nature of these realities, induces from the facts observed and tested certain hypotheses or postulates of reason, and holds these general propositions to be true until discovery of new facts enforces revision. This method, as can be seen, is the exact opposite of the deductive method. It moves from below upward, from particulars to universals, from things temporal to things eternal. Its adaptations are of ideas to facts, instead of facts to ideas. It knows no certainties, but only possibilities and probabilities. Especially is its spirit investigative rather than assertive, agnostic rather than dogmatic. The inductive method of thought is by no means universal in application. Deduction still has place, as witness its use by Hegel in his idealistic specula-

tions, and by Herbert Spencer in his Synthetic Philosophy. But this place is hardly more than corrective or confirmatory of inductive processes. We think today in terms of facts; are willing to think only as far as these facts can take us.

What this new method of thought means to religion, must be evident. In the Middle Ages, as we have seen, God was taken for granted. So were his attributes, his acts, his purposes! These were known by processes of revelation, were not to be questioned (this was heresy!), and stood permanently as the beginning and the end of knowledge. The world, the life of man, the destiny of man, were what the revelation of God permitted them to be, and nothing other. Today, however, we claim to know nothing of God in the beginning at all. We know only what we see about us or feel within us—in other words, what we experience, and what this experience may reasonably be taken to mean. Our starting point is the world, the human beings who are in the world, above all the souls or spirits which seem to be resident in these human beings. If these realities lead us to inductions of experience which seem to suggest or reveal God—well and good! We will accept him, worship him, serve him. But it is man first, and not God! It is as much of God only as man may seem to suggest or prove! Above all, is it God revealed by man, and not man by God! Our revelation today is from earth to heaven, from clod to God—not *vice versa*, as in old days!

That this inductive or scientific process of thought brings us God more surely than any revelation of inspired scripture or infallible church, there are many to assert. But it is a deity very different in character from the being known to the theologians of the Middle Ages. The contrast may be best summed up in the two words, "transcendent" and "immanent." The immanent God was not unknown before the Renaissance, but he was invariably an outcast. He was the deity of heretics—theologians like Scotus Erigena, mystics like Abelard and Eckhart. The transcendent God was necessarily the deity to live with the deductive processes of medieval thought. By the same token is the immanent deity the God for a scientific or humanistic age. We know God today only as we seem to find him present in nature and in the heart of man. If he lives at all, therefore, he lives here among us, and not there above us.

"Closer is he than breathing, nearer
than hands and feet,"

says Tennyson. And yet, strangely enough, the measure of his proximity in spirit is likewise the measure of his indefiniteness in character. In the days of his transcendence, God was as definite a person as any king or emperor. No one felt any shock when Michael Angelo presented the Divine Being in precise pictorial form in his Sistine frescoes. How great the shock, however, when in our day Sargent painted God upon the walls of the

Boston Public Library! However intimately we may feel the Divine Presence in our lives, we cannot see this presence with any distinctness in our mind's eye. God seems to be like the cloud in the sky. Afar, the cloud takes a definite shape, like Hamlet's "camel" or "weasel." Close at hand, it is only a fog which envelops and holds us. Thus, when God was far away, "on the rim of the Universe," as Carlyle put it, we knew something about him, could see him as well as feel him. Now that he is close at hand, an immanent presence within us and about, we know little of what he is. So do we turn the nearer to earth's realities, and seek in them the "God who is our home"!

V

But there is a third change, incident to modern times, which is still more important than any yet mentioned. We refer to that revolution in man's whole attitude toward the world which is incidental at once to the new center of attention, and to the new method of inquiry, which are characteristic of the present age. What man saw in medieval days, when the transcendent God of revelation was at the heart of things, was a *miracle*; what he sees today, as he follows through that scientific study of the present world which may, or may not, lead to conscious intellectual recognition of the God immanent in all things, is a *natural process*. This change had its beginning, of course, in the dis-

covery of what we know today as natural law—the truth, in other words, that the operations of the universe are all parts of an unbroken system of order, subject to no chance or accident from within, and no intrusion from without. It reached what may be regarded as its triumphant vindication in the doctrine of evolution, which presents all phenomena as manifestations of a single principle of creative life—an *elan vitale*, to quote Bergson, which flows in its upper and human reaches as a river in which “souls are continually being created . . . (as) little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity. . . . As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system . . . so all organized beings, from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion. . . . All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push.”¹

At once the universe became a closed circuit. The supernatural was eliminated, the natural made inclusive of everything. If a phenomenon appeared which seemed to be outside of, or contradictory to, the natural order, this was no longer attributed to divine or supernatural agencies. It was simply assumed that, in this particular case, observation was defective, or knowledge incomplete, and that further inquiry would bring the phenomenon, if it

¹ See his *Creative Evolution*, pages 269, 271.

were real at all, inside "the reign of law." Nor has experience in the last three hundred years ever failed in the end to justify this confidence in the integrity of the cosmic process! Today the postulate of the natural, as contrasted with the supernatural, is become an axiom of thought.

What this change in attitude means to religion, is easily understood. In the old days, religion was uniformly regarded as supernatural in origin and character. Both in the individual life and in the social history of the race, it was an experience which lay altogether outside the area of normal life. Its source was God and not man, and its quality therefore divine in contradistinction to all that we know as human. Revelation, inspiration, conversion, miracles, signs and portents, all these are so many processes or events which indicate the special and abnormal character which religion has borne in all ages preceding modern times, and still bears very largely in this present age.

The sudden shift from the supernatural to the natural, which was so characteristic of the Renaissance and after, was inevitably accompanied by a movement of extreme revulsion, representing an antagonistic and even destructive point of view. This found vivid expression in the free thinkers or rationalists of the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century, of whom Voltaire and the Encyclopedists are the preëminent examples. These philosophers of the Illumination came to think of religion and all its concomitant phenomena as the

product of a vast conspiracy, deliberately concocted by the priesthoods of primitive ages for the intellectual and moral enslavement of mankind. So out of place did religion seem in a world coming to be interpreted in naturalistic terms that no other explanation of its origin seemed adequate. If not supernatural, it must be artificial. The whole theory of conspiracy, confidently, even passionately adhered to by some of the great social liberators of the race, represented an instinctive reaction of the rationalistic impulses from a theological orthodoxy which was miraculous or supernatural throughout.

Today, however, in our better balanced and infinitely better informed time, this supposition of conspiracy as an explanation of religious history, seems as ridiculous as anything that ever appeared in the doctrine of so-called revelation. It also seems unnecessary. For we have come to understand, in the light of modern scientific knowledge, that religion is a social phenomenon which, like all other phenomena of the kind, is a natural product of man's adjustment to his world. Modern students of the question are almost unanimous in finding the origin of religion in the social experience of the race, and thereby affirming its purely naturalistic character. "Religion arises naturally," says Professor Edward Scribner Ames,¹ "being an inherent and intimate phase of the social consciousness" of man. This social consciousness, he continues, must be regarded "as the very essence of religion," thus

¹ In his *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pages 49-50, 110-111, 249.

“identifying religion with social phenomena.” In content religion must be described as only “the most intimate phase of the group consciousness . . . in its first form a reflection of the most important group interests through social symbols and ceremonies based upon the activities incident to such interests.” Even the inner personal experience of religion in the single individual “resolves itself into the question of the origin of his social consciousness.”¹ We are religious, in other words, not because of any fraudulent imposition from without at the hands of cunning priestcraft, but simply and solely because of our natural reaction as human beings to those social experiences and aspirations which are of highest permanent value in the life of the race. In its development, exactly as in its origin, religion never leaves the level of normality. “Religion is subject to the same determining factors as are other social phenomena—such as language, art, domesticity, patriotism. In any society all persons are likely to experience these to some extent, but it is not due to their native endowments alone, nor to accidental circumstances, but to the operation of social forces within the experience and consciousness of each person.”² There are mystical elements in us all, of course; but the mystical is as natural as the physical or mental, and is at work as normally in religion as in art, music, or some great movement of reform. Religion is simply the supreme expression of human nature; it is man

¹ Ames, page 197.

² Ames, page 214.

thinking his highest, feeling his deepest, and living his best.

There is nothing, therefore, miraculous, special or even strange about religion. The church is as natural an institution as the state, the priest as normal an historical figure as the king, worship as inevitable an expression of human life as the drama or the dance. Especially since the coming of evolution, with its transmission of revealing light from biology to history, psychology and sociology, has religion taken its true place in the story of the development of the race. Man's relations with his fellows in the social group, reacting upon the secret forces of his inner nature, give us in religion as native a product of the soul as music, poetry, or family love. Man is essentially religious as he is essentially mystical and social, that is all; and through this channel of spiritual expression, as through other channels of physical, intellectual and artistic expression, his life pours itself forth in resistless flood. There is no mystery, therefore, about religion, save as life in all its forms is mystery. There is nothing terrible about it—nothing unusual, certainly nothing miraculous or strange. What we have here is what we have everywhere else—not a miraculous appearance, but a natural process. It is like the stars flaming in the sky—like the grasses springing from the soil.

“Out of the heart of Nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,

Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below—
The canticles of love and woe."

Religion is therefore natural, human, in origin. It is the expression, or still better, the creation, of the soul. In this fact is the evidence of its validity. As well question man's tears or laughter, as to question his habit of prayer. To regard a hearthstone with reverence and an altar with scorn, is to be hopelessly inconsistent. More real than any God revealed from heaven, is the God whom man has found in, or deliberately fashioned from, the raw materials of his experience. For man is his own creator. He makes the world to suit his needs. He cries, Let there be God, and there *is* God! The divine undoubtedly existed "before all worlds," but God came only with the heart of man.

VI

Such were the changes wrought by the forces let loose by the Renaissance. They all meant for religion one simple thing—the substitution of man for God as the center of spiritual consciousness. In due course, these changes proved their presence in the vast upheaval of the Reformation; but were quickly estopped, first by a Catholicism which committed itself permanently to reaction in the Council of Trent, and secondly by a Protestantism which swung itself back in resistance against the very forces which had given it birth. What was choked

here, however, forced other channels and overflowed the world. Little by little, as the tide of intellectual and social liberation swept about its bulwarks, Christianity crumbled, and at last, under the impact of the evolutionary science and philosophy, collapsed. Movements appeared on every hand which deliberately offered themselves as substitutes for traditional religion—radical Unitarianism, for example, of the Parker type, with its substitution of human nature for divine; Rationalism, with its challenge of faith by reason; Positivism, with its enthronement of Humanity in place of God; Ethical Culture, with its offering of ethics in place of dogma! More serious and significant was that vast movement of revolt against all organized religion whatsoever, which in the past two generations has swept the majority of our western world outside the churches, and thus brought these churches face to face with the most critical situation which they have encountered since the day when Luther nailed his theses to the cathedral doors in Wittenberg. Today the shift in values is become complete. Humanism, not theism, is the basis of our thought. Man, not God, is the center of our faith and the object of our hope and love. We have a new religion, which, like St. John's "tabernacle of God," is "with men," but, unlike that tabernacle, descends not "out of heaven," but builds itself stone by stone upon the earth!

VII

But is this religion? Does not this humanism, which we call a shift of emphasis from God to man, accomplish as a matter of fact the elimination of God from his universe, and thus destroy that very relationship of the soul with God which constitutes the essence of spiritual experience?

So it may seem, to those whose deity is that remote, transcendent, preconceived absolutist abstraction described in the Nicene Creed as "God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible"; in the Anglican "Articles of Religion" as the "one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things visible"; and finally in the famous Savoy Declaration (1658), as the "only living and true God, who is infinite in Being and Perfection, a most pure Spirit, invisible . . . immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most absolute, working all things according to the Counsel of his own immutable and most righteous Will . . ." This deity is dead. Indeed, it is doubtful if he ever really lived. Is it an accident that he was presented and for ages worshiped in a language not understood of the common people? For the God whom men and women have known and loved is altogether apart from the speculations of theologians and the dogmatic legislation of

church councils. They have had no more to do with the God of Augustine and Calvin than with the pope or king himself. Unable to see his person or feel his presence, the common folk have sought the divine in Christ, who took on himself the flesh and "was tempted even as we are"; in Mary, who at least shared with men the great experience of parenthood; in the saints, who walked the earth in suffering, and won their sanctity through virtue; in the Bible, which was transcribed by men, and told of the sorrows and sins of men; in the world of Nature, which, in mountain and glen, river and sea, was haunted by spirits of gracious or grim mystery. They have persisted in believing, as by a divine intuition, that God is not distant but near at hand, not unseen but seen, walking the earth as in the garden of old Eden, wrapped in the commonplace of human love as in the miracle of incarnation. And in this they have been right, as judged at least by the religious geniuses of every age. For these prophets of the soul have distinguished themselves from priests and theologians and ecclesiastics by nothing so much as their humanization of the divine. Jesus of Nazareth, the supreme exemplar of spiritual vision and understanding, was above all things else a humanist. The Renaissance was as truly a revival of his mind as of the mind of the Greeks. Jesus cared nothing about Jehovah of Zion. He scorned the metaphysical refinements of the Jewish law. He hated, like another Isaiah, the feastings and fast-days, the sacrifices and offerings

of the temple. From all these artificialities he turned away, and concerned himself with man and his world. He looked on the birds of the air and the lilies of the field; he walked with men in the pastures and on the highroads; he taught of righteousness, justice, and love one for another; he prophesied of the day when wars should cease, and poverty be no more, and justice everywhere be done upon the earth. This was his religion—the present scene transfigured into beauty; the daily task, lifted to the challenge of more abundant life! This was his God—the passion of tenderness, and the love of brotherhood and peace! This was his heaven—the Kingdom of God interpreted in terms of the commonwealth of man! Jesus had no theology, he wrote no creed, he built no church. He simply lived and taught that life of love which, binding men to one another, thereby binds them together with God.

It is this religion, centered thus in man, which was restored and vindicated by the Renaissance. The forces released by this great awakening smote hard upon the church; but touched, as by a magic wand of life, the human soul. It was as though men had been long hidden away in dungeons, and now, with the opening of great doors, saw again the world and one another. And in both, by sure intuitions of the inner spirit, they discovered God! Not that divine abstraction which is the monstrous birth of dogma, but that warm, ever-present source of creative energy which is in and through all

things. Not that transcendent, absolutist deity who is outside the universe, remote from the life as well as the understanding of men, but that immanent spirit of evolving life which is the inmost center of existence. "God is love"—the love that holds the stars, that unfolds the flowers, that binds the creature to his mate. God is the love that stirred in the dark primeval ooze of the undated past; moved through aeons as an unconquerable "urge" to higher and yet higher forms of existence; and now at last possesses man, whom it has grown from out the quickened womb of earth, and lifts to that great fellowship of heart with heart which is the secret of life eternal. God is the love that binds husband to wife, parent to child, friend to friend, patriot to country, the prophet to truth, the martyr to his cause. God is the love that stirs in every crusade for justice, every high endeavor for liberty and right, every transcendent sacrifice for mankind. To love another human soul better than oneself, to love many souls in tenderness and pity, to love humanity with a passion that laughs at death—this is to find God, and to love and serve him. Which means that religion may be defined, from this humanistic viewpoint, as fellowship of man with man in the service of the common life! The relation of the soul with God, in other words, is indirect and not direct. It is only through their relation of love with one another, that men can find God. For it is this relationship which reveals God. Nay, can we not say that it is this relationship which *creates*

God—that God comes into existence and accomplishes his will on earth, only as men have love one for another, and consecrate this love in a fellowship of service. Jesus certainly implied as much when, in the mystic formula of his time, he said of God—“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹ H. G. Wells nobly paraphrased this definition of divine reality when he wrote that God is “The King who is present when just men foregather.”²

VIII

Such is our new basis of religion! And what is this but the democracy which we have described as beginning with the discovery of man, and ending in its ideal attainment with the fellowship of men? It is in this humanistic sense that the vast movement of democracy, which has been sweeping the world in the last two hundred years, may be accurately defined as the new religion of our time. Religion in the true sense of the word has left the churches, and entered into the world. Not in Catholicism nor in Protestantism can be found the creative spiritual forces which are fashioning God’s Kingdom at this moment. Rather are these to be found where “just men foregather” to advance the cause of democracy by establishing freedom and fellowship in all political, industrial and social relationships among men. This means a new re-

¹ Matthew 18:20.

² *Mr. Britting Sees It Through*, page 442.

ligion, a new church. It means that to us is committed the task of fulfilling the spiritual promise which was disclosed, but all too soon betrayed, by the Reformation. Our age, if it be faithful to itself, shall bring that true reformation for which men have labored and still yearn.

CHAPTER V
SACRED AND SECULAR

“We men of Earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise—we have enough!
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of Man’s immortal dream.

“Here on the paths of every-day—
Here on the common human way
Is all the stuff the gods would take
To build a Heaven, to mould and make
New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime
To build Eternity in Time!”

EDWIN MARKHAM,

“Earth Is Enough,” in

The Shoes of Happiness

CHAPTER V

SACRED AND SECULAR

I

What this new basis of religion means from the standpoint of the new structure of spiritual faith to be reared upon it, would require a volume in itself for the telling. Religion thus interpreted in terms of humanism would assuredly reverence truth and not tradition, practice liberty and not bow down before authority, be humble and not dogmatic in temper, have more interest in this world than in the next, trust reason and the heart of man, cling fast to experience as the sole test of reality. To interpret all these implications of humanism, however, is not our business in this place. For we are concerned not so much with religion in general, as with those particular aspects of religion which are involved in the problem of its social organization. Our subject is the churches and their relation to the vital needs of men. This means that we may consider only those special changes wrought by the substitution of the humanistic for the theistic point of view, which bear directly upon the question of new churches for old.

II

First among such changes incident to the humanistic interpretation of religion, is the wiping out of the age-old distinction between what we have learned to call the sacred and the secular.

This distinction, which divides the world into two "water-tight" compartments, so to speak, had its origin in the traditional absolutist idea of God. This deity, as we have seen, was transcendent in character, and therefore remote, or even wholly separated, from his universe. There were times and places, however, when he came into contact with the earth. There were occasions, in other words, when business was transacted between God and man. Sometimes the initiative in the joining of these occasional relationships was taken by God. Thus, "in the beginning," God created "the world and all that therein is." Later on, for the guiding and guarding of humanity, he ordained certain laws, which were formulated into "commandments" or sacred codes. Thereafter, from time to time, he revealed his presence among men and his interest in their welfare, by performing miracles in the natural world, and by inspiring prophets with messages and visions. His supreme act of this kind, of course, was his sending to men "his only begotten Son, that they who believed on him might have eternal life."

On the other hand, initiative in this matter of bringing God into touch with the life of his children

on the earth, was often taken by men. All the activity of our churches, in days gone by, and still very largely at the present moment, may not unfairly be described as an organized and concerted endeavor on the part of men to open up communication with the deity, and persuade him to enter, if only for a moment, into human affairs. Have not men worshiped and offered sacrifice that God, like a king upon his throne, may be well-pleased, and his anger therefore turned away? Have not men prayed that God may be persuaded to send rain upon the dry ground, or still the waves upon the sea, or bring healing to the sick? Have not men trained and supported priests to serve as ambassadors to the courts of the Most High, who by their knowledge and experience may gain hearings and win favors which would be denied to ordinary supplicants? The whole business of traditional religion—its churches, its priests, its sacraments, its services, its paraphernalia—is nothing more nor less than a persistent attempt to break through the barrier which divides divinity from humanity, and thus “acquaint men at first hand with Deity.”

Now the points where God and man thus come, or try to come, into contact, constitute what is called the “sacred.” Everything outside of these is called the “secular.” The latter area of life comprises men and all relations between men; the former includes only God and relations between God and men. From this standpoint, the sacred is not difficult to define. Saturday is a sacred or holy

day to the Jews, because Jehovah completed the task of creation "on the seventh day"; Sunday is holy to Christians, because Christ rose from the dead on that day. The Bible is a sacred or holy book, because it contains "the word of God" as infallibly revealed to prophets and apostles. The church is holy, because it is here that God is worshiped and his message heard. The services or meetings in a church are holy, having a saving efficacy not contained in other public gatherings, because in them the name of God is invoked and his presence known. The utensils or instruments of worship, such as images, pictures, robes, crosses, eucharist cups, etc., are sacred, because they are dedicated to holy offices and used only in worship of the Most High. Priests are sacred personages, because they have commerce with God in their official intercessions for mankind. In the same way a spot of ground, on which a miracle has been performed, is regarded as sacred. Palestine, because it was the scene of the life and death of Jesus Christ, is "the holy land." Pieces of the true cross, the bones of saints, an amulet or trinket which has been blessed, even the pages of a Bible, are held sacred, and thus believed to heal disease, insure personal safety, or reveal hidden truths, because of their association with sacred events or persons.

Anything, in short, is sacred which may be regarded as pertaining to God rather than to men. Even thought concerning God and his works has a

sacred character which holds it apart from thought on any other subject. This is the origin of the idea that the pulpit should discuss only "spiritual" themes—by which is meant themes which have no conceivable relationship with the burning social problems of the hour; and the church keeps itself altogether apart from the issues of war and peace, capital and labor, women and children in industry, public ownership, etc. These matters, just because they involve preëminently the things of this world, are secular, not sacred; and therefore properly to be considered as outside the province of religious interest and attention. The separation between God and his world, in other words, is absolute; and absolute, therefore, must be the separation between the phenomena which belong to each.

III

It is interesting to see with what success this distinction between sacred and secular has been maintained. The two-compartment mind, of course, is familiar, although it appears only now and then in a way to attract amazed attention. The case of the great English scientist, Michael Faraday, is an excellent case in point. Faraday was a chemist and electrician, whose discoveries are among the most notable in the history of modern scientific research. In his particular department of electromagnetism, his immortal discovery was that of the induction of electric currents—which means that

modern electrical science goes back to Faraday for its beginnings, as modern medical science goes back to Pasteur. In keenness of observation, boldness of experimentation, acuteness of inductive reasoning, and solid worth of material achievement, he was excelled by few, if any, of his eminent contemporaries.

Now contrast with this Faraday's religious life! A member of the greatest scientific societies of his time, he was also a member of the little Sandemanian sect of Christians, an obscure group of English dissenters never more than a few thousand in numbers, and with few exceptions, of which Faraday was the most conspicuous, composed of men and women of the most illiterate type. The theology of this sect, based on an unquestioning acceptance of the Bible as the full, final and infallible revelation of God, was crude in the extreme. Its practices were a rough and almost ludicrous attempt to revive the practices of early Christianity. Its rule of life was confession of sin, abandonment of reason in matters of faith, and humble acceptance of the atoning grace of Christ. To the tenets of this peculiar sect, Faraday gave humble allegiance through all his days; and did this by severing his rational and his spiritual life with an absoluteness well-nigh unexampled in human experience. Answering an inquiry of his friend, Lady Lovelace, about his philosophy of religion, he wrote, "There is no philosophy in my religion. . . . Though the natural works of God

can never by any possibility come in contradiction with the higher things that belong to our future existence, still I do not think it at all necessary to tie the study of the natural sciences and of religion together; and in my intercourse with my fellow-citizens, that which is religious and that which is philosophical have ever been two distinct things." Opening a lecture on Mental Education, he said, "I believe that the truth (of things spiritual) cannot be brought to man's knowledge by any exertion of his mental powers—that it is made known to him by other teaching than his own, and is received through simple belief of the testimony given. . . . It would be improper to enter upon this subject further than to claim an absolute distinction between religion and ordinary belief." A friend writes that "when he entered a meeting-house, he left his science behind, and he would listen to the prayer and exhortation of the most illiterate brother of his sect with an attention which showed how he loved the word from whomsoever it came." It was the characteristic statement of John Tyndall that "when he opened the door of his oratory, he closed that of his laboratory."

Equally impressive is this two-compartment arrangement as it appears in the life of the world at large. Monasticism was, of course, its complete and triumphant expression during the Middle Ages. The monks were holy men because they withdrew absolutely from contact with the world; their lives were sacred because they were devoted utterly to

the service of God. This idea of complete isolation has in our time largely passed away; but still today, even in the lives of men of potent influence in the world's affairs, this separation between sacred and secular makes significant appearance. John Bright and John Henry Newman, for example, were as nearly exact contemporaries as any two of the great men of the nineteenth century. The former was born in 1811, and died in 1889; the latter was born in 1801, and died in 1890. They lived in the same country, for a time in the same city, followed public careers during exactly the same period. They were preëminent as public speakers, Newman being the greatest preacher, and Bright the greatest platform orator, of the century. What is more, they were men of the same type—idealists who were moved to action by spiritual passion. And yet these two great leaders were as completely separated from each other as though they lived on opposite sides of the globe. The name of Newman does not appear at all in Trevelyan's *Life of John Bright*, and the name of Bright is similarly conspicuous by its absence from Ward's *Life and Letters of Cardinal Newman*. The one, as a churchman, dealt with sacred things; the other, as a statesman, dealt with secular. Therefore they moved like planets of different solar systems, swinging in orbits which never intersected, and each catching no single vagrant beam of light from the other.¹

¹ See Henry E. Jackson's *A Community Church*, page 325.

IV

The logic of this idea of sacred and secular, however, means not only the separation of these two spheres of life, but also the subordination of the latter to the former. Sanctity, as coming from God, necessarily involves a primacy, uniqueness, authority, to which nothing in the affairs of men can lay claim for a single instant. From this viewpoint the church is regarded as an institution supreme over all merely human institutions whatsoever, even the state. The Bible stands alone among all the literatures of ancient and modern times; what it teaches must be accepted as the revelation of the will of God, and therefore the law for all men in all ages. The priest, as a man occupying a holy office, must be regarded as superior in character and authority to all other men; hence the distinction which attaches even in Protestant churches to the minister, as signified by his formidable title, "Reverend." The Sabbath is a day which has a worth infinitely greater than that of any other day of the week; men may do as they please on Saturday or Monday, but on Sunday they must occupy themselves exclusively with "redeeming the time."

Such exaltation of the sacred above the secular has led, of course, to the out-and-out enslavement of mankind. For ages men and women have been debased to the ignominious position of mere instruments for the service of ecclesiastical superstition

and power. Mothers bringing their first born to the altars of the temples, that they may be slain as sacrifices to the gods; Pharisees laying on Jews the yoke of the Mosaic law, that they may prove their righteousness; monks and nuns taking the vow of chastity, that they may be delivered from the "sin" of sexual intercourse and parenthood; the Emperor Henry standing barefooted in the snows of Canossa, in sign of his submission as head of the state to Pope Gregory as head of the church; the Puritans binding society in the strait-jacket of their rigorous Sabbath; scientists, from Galileo to Huxley, challenged to submit their conclusions to the test of conformity with creeds and Bible—these are only a few illustrations of what we mean by the subordination of things secular to things sacred, and the consequent subjection of mankind. Through all these ages of blank superstition, men and women were mere means to an end extraneous to every interest that pertained to life in this present world. Everything that was merely natural and human was described as wicked, or at the best of no importance. To feel joy in the beauties of Nature, to give free expression to the native impulses and faculties of the soul, to investigate the phenomena of earth and sky, to join association in comradeship with one's fellows and thus establish home and country, the community of the common life—all this was to surrender to the world, and to forget or defy God. Man had no right to live for himself or his fellows; he must

resolutely avoid the temptation to laugh and play, practice good works, indulge in the luxury of love one for another; he was a sinner if he busied himself with such worldly relationships and activities. Man was made not for himself, but for God; and must therefore conform his life to the things of God. He was made, in other words, to obey the church, to believe the Bible, to accept the creeds, to observe the Sabbath. Such subordination of the secular to the sacred was the condition of his salvation.

V

Into the gross darkness of this enslavement of mankind to the artificial sanctities of the church, broke suddenly the light of the Renaissance. With the discovery of man which marks the revolution of this epoch as fundamentally a movement of humanism, came an enfranchisement of man which marks it as a movement of *secularization*. By this we mean that one consequence of man's great awakening at this moment was an immediate substitution of the secular for the sacred as the focal point of human interest and attention. Everywhere, as we have seen, men turned away from the church to the world, from the expectation of the life to come to the realities of the life that now is, from the observance of sacred duties to the pursuit of secular activities. Liberated from sacramental bondage, they found themselves free to exercise unsuspected faculties in unexplored areas of ex-

perience. This is the explanation of the science and philosophy, art and literature which so suddenly overwhelmed the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and marked the most gorgeous flowering of human genius that the world has seen since the classic days of Periclean Athens. This is the explanation of the social institutions which everywhere sprang up for the service of man's interests in this present world, and in a generation developed to a position of absolute supremacy over the church. This is the reason for the rigid separation of church and state, and that dominance of political over theological issues which so dramatically marks off modern from medieval times. With the awakening of the Renaissance, there came to man a consuming interest in himself and in his world. Nothing could stand in the way of his imperious passion for knowledge, experience, self-expression. He must lay hold on life, though he be damned for it. So a new world was born!

Protestantism, in its early stages of development, was a direct expression in the field of religion of this revolting spirit of the Renaissance. In their rejection of the sacred hierarchy, their scorn of sacraments and indulgences, their acknowledgment of the temporal sovereignty of kings and princes, their anarchical proclamation of "the priesthood of the common man," the early reformers seemed to be headed straight for the secularization of religion along with every other human interest. But the reaction, as we have seen, all too speedily set in!

The reformers were amazed and alarmed at the consequences of what they themselves had done. Therefore were new sanctities created to take the place of the old; the Bible supplanted the church, Sunday observances the priestly sacraments. In course of time, in many bodies of Protestantism, the line of demarcation between sacred and secular was drawn more sharply than it had ever been in the heyday of papal power. Protestantism outdid Catholicism in denouncing art and literature, outlawing science, banning the natural pleasures and pursuits of the secular life as "of the devil." The close of the Great War has brought a revival of this reaction, which shows how basic still in the thought of the churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, is the sense of the distinction between the sacred and the secular, the religious and the irreligious life.

VI

The forces let loose in the Renaissance, however, could not be stayed. They have swept on through the last three centuries to an assertion not only that man has a right to the full enjoyment of his secular interests and activities, but also that this right constitutes in itself a sanctification of these interests and pursuits. Boldly they have hitched their wagon to the star of Jesus's gospel, as it blazes in the immortal declaration of the Nazarene that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Here was a pronouncement by a master

humanist of revolt against the artificialities of "sacred" and "secular," as imposed by the Pharisaical legalism of his day. Jesus laid his ax at the root of the tree by making man—his needs and desires, his works and dreams—to be the center of spiritual values. He set forth thus early the principle which Kant laid down, in the true spirit of the Renaissance, that man was not a means to any end, not even those of religion, but was "an end in himself." If there is anything sacred in the world, therefore, it is made so not by the tradition of some divine decree, not by association with some so-called holy day or book or institution, but by contact with some phase of human life. Whatever serves man's needs, liberates his faculties, gives expression to the dreams and visions of his soul, is the work of his hand and heart—this is sacred! Sanctity is not something that inheres in any portion of time or space. It is not a quality that is native to any section of the cosmos. Sanctity is a creation of man. It is the projection of the human spirit into the world which it inhabits.

Such doctrine, of course, means a complete reformulation of our idea of the sacred, based now on the concept of man and not of God. It means an immediate and indefinite extension from the particular to the general, from the one to the many.

Thus Sunday is not sacred, as distinguished from the other six days of the week. All days are sacred because men use them for their good purposes. Therefore what is wrong on one day, is wrong on

every other day; anything that is right to do on Monday, is right also to do on Sunday. If Sunday has any particular character, it is because men have given it this character for certain uses and observances to the end of human welfare. It follows unescapably that what has been given can at any time, by common consent, be taken away or changed.

Similarly the Bible is not a sacred book, save as all great literatures may be deemed, from their origin in human suffering and aspiration, to be sacred. The Bible is, in the Old Testament, an anthology drawn from the writings of the ancient Hebrews; in the New Testament, it is similarly an anthology drawn from the writings of the early Christians. In both cases, it is a collection of books having a distinctive and very precious spiritual character; but, in essence, in no wise different from the literatures produced by any other peoples of ancient or modern times. From the beginning of time even until now, men have recorded on stone or parchment or printed page the confessions of their souls. In every country, there are books or documents which express to perfection the national genius, or mark such epochal occasions in the life of the group that they come in time to take on a kind of sacred character. Thus the Hebrews had their psalms and prophecies and Mosaic laws, the Hindus their Vedic hymns, the Persians their Upanishads, the Romans their Sybilline oracles, the Chinese their Confucian

books of wisdom; and the Americans today the Declaration of Independence, Washington's "Farewell Address," Lincoln's "Gettysburg Speech," and Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic"! The true Bible would be an anthology drawn from all the great literary sources of ancient and modern times, a true spiritual deposit of humanity. For as James Russell Lowell has so well written—

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves, or leaves of stone.
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While rolls the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit."

Are there sacred objects? None save those baptized by the spirit of human use and reverence. More sacred than the paraphernalia of any church are the homely domestic articles brought to these shores by the heroic voyagers of the "Mayflower," now collected and guarded by pious hearts in the Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth. More sacred than any priestly vestment or utensil, is the little christening dress blessed by the love and wet by the tears of Barrie's mother, Margaret Ogilvie. Holier than an altar is a hearthstone. Nothing has any holiness save that derived from the human lives with which it has been associated. Sacred objects are to be found more often without than within the church.

What about the church itself? Is this sacred? Again the same answer—that it has no sanctity apart from its origin and character as a social institution! The church, like the state, had its beginnings in human needs, not divine purposes. As it serves these needs and gathers in time the hoary reverence of age, it tends, like every other such organization, to take on a character which ultimately develops into a hard and fast dogma of authority. We see this process now going on in the case of the American state, which is fast becoming in the eyes of the people a kind of sacred object, like the Israelitish Ark of the Covenant, not to be changed nor even so much as touched. We are forgetting that, in the eyes of the founders of this republic, “governments are instituted among men” to “secure” certain human “rights,” and that “whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government.” What is here only beginning with the state, however, has long since been completed with the church. Both processes are the same, and neither has validity. The phrase, “holy church,” is a misnomer. The church is not holy by virtue of any quality implicit in either its origin or essential character. It has been made holy, as the home and the school and the state have been made holy, by the lives of the men and women who have served it, and whom it has served. But it still remains, what it was in the beginning,

an instrument of social use, to be maintained so long as it fulfills its appointed functions, to be changed from time to time in any way that may improve its efficiency, to be cast aside or destroyed so soon as its usefulness is done. When society has developed into a true community, the church as such will disappear, for society will then be in itself the church as God's kingdom on the earth.

Even religion must be said to have nothing especially sacred about it. As there are no "spiritual" interests, apart from general social interests, which belong particularly to the church and its pulpit, so there is no one movement in society which is to be characterized in distinction from all others as "religious." What is true is that *man* is sacred. Which means that any movement which is aimed at the fuller liberty and wider fellowship of the human race, is a sacred undertaking and therefore to be regarded as an expression of the religious consciousness! Was early Christianity in anything more truly a religion than in its struggles against infanticide, the gladiatorial games, and the subjection of women? Has the presence of religion in the hearts of men ever more truly proved itself than in the battles, fought in the face of pitiless opposition, for the abolition of the African slave trade, the emancipation of the chattel slave, and the deliverance of men from ecclesiastical and political tyranny? Where is religion to be found now if not in our movements for the conquest of prostitution, poverty, the liquor

traffic, child labor, industrial autocracy, race prejudice, and war? These evils outrage the dignity of human nature, defile the sanctity of the soul, deny to millions of men and women that full expression of personality which alone is life, and therefore bring challenge to religion. "Here are the beggars and paupers," cried Theodore Parker to the slumbering conscience of his age, "a reproach to our civilization. Here are the drunkards, the criminals, the abandoned, sometimes the foe, but oftener the victim, of society. Every almshouse shows that the churches have not done their duty. Every jail is a monument on which is writ in letters of iron that we are still heathens. The gallows, black and hideous, lifts its arm, a sign of our infamy, an index of our shame. . . . Shall justice fail and perish out of the world of men? Shall wrong continually endure?"¹ Not if religion is true to itself! For religion, as W. E. H. Lecky has well defined it, is that "unselfish enthusiasm uniting vast bodies of men in aspiration towards an ideal and proving the source of heroic virtues."² These movements are our present-day crusades for the rescue of that holy sepulchre which is the heart of man.

In this identification of religion with the larger human interests of secular emancipation, we have a perfect indication of our assertion that democracy is preëminently the religion of our place and

¹ See his sermon, "The True Idea of a Christian Church", in *Works*, Volume 13.

² See his *History of Rationalism in Europe*, Volume II, page 216.

time. For what is this movement but an attempt to bring utter liberation to the soul? What does it strive for but the realization among men of that divine fellowship of the common life which is God's Kingdom come upon the earth? Democracy, in all its various political, economic and social phases, seeks simply to take the human and, by a process of sublimation, transform it into the divine. It seeks to take things long regarded as "common and unclean"—that is secular—and prove them to be holy. Its task is the building of this base material of earth into the fair structure of the heaven of our dreams. In any true sense of the word, this is religion. Democracy is nothing other than the spirit of Jesus at work in our time.

VII

But if this is the "sacred," what is left of the "secular"? There is nothing left. All is sacred; or, from the orthodox theological standpoint, all is secular! The course of human events since the Renaissance has again and again been described by the church as a process of secularization. It may much more truly be described as a process of sanctification. The real change is not that the sacred has been secularized, but that the secular has been sanctified. In either case, however, the distinction between sacred and secular has been abolished.

This does not mean materialism or secularism.

Rather does it mean recognition of reality at its true worth. It means acceptance of the world, faith in the soul, conviction that God lives in men and in man's work. Above all things else, it means religion made coincident with life. "The natural and real ordinance of religion," said Theodore Parker, "is in general a manly life. . . . Religion is the sacrament of religion; *itself its ordinance*. Piety and goodness are its substance, and all normal life its form. . . . My religion is not one thing, and my life another; the two are one. . . . Care for the bodies and souls of men, that is the real sacrament and ordinance of religion for society, the Church and State."¹

¹ See his *Sermons of Religion*, centenary edition, page 22.

CHAPTER VI
THEOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

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“Whereas in the time of Jesus, and in the ages which grew darker and darker after his death until the darkness, after a brief, false dawn in the Reformation, culminated in the commercial night of the nineteenth century, it was believed that you could not make men good by Act of Parliament, we now know that you cannot make them good in any other way. . . . Being members one of another means . . . universal suffrage and equal incomes and all sorts of modern political measures. Even in Syria in the time of Jesus his teachings could not possibly have been realized by a series of independent explosions of personal righteousness on the part of separate units of the population. . . . Christianity, good or bad, right or wrong, must perforce be left out of the question in human affairs until it is made practically applicable to them by complicated political devices. . . . Personal righteousness and the view that you cannot make people moral by Act of Parliament, is, in fact, the favorite defensive resort of the people who, consciously or subconsciously, are quite determined not to have their property meddled with by Jesus or any other reformer.”

BERNARD SHAW, Preface to
Androcles and the Lion

CHAPTER VI

THEOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

I

A second phase of the spiritual change which follows upon what we have called the new humanistic interpretation of religion, is the substitution of sociology for theology, of a program of social life for a system of theological dogma. The consummation of this process marks the end of a long era characterized by three distinct periods of development.

First comes, through more than two centuries of time, that organization along theological lines of Protestant orthodoxy, which stands as the first fruits of the Reformation. It is one of the supreme tragedies of history, as we have already seen, that this vast release of energy in the religious world took a course which in the end moved not forward into the light of the new day, but backward into the night which preceded the dawn of the Renaissance. The Reformation, to be sure, apprehended the spiritual autonomy of man, freed him from the over-lordship of the Roman Church, and boldly made him the agent of his own redemption; and thereby set in motion a tidal wave of change

which was destined to sweep to the farthest reaches of social life. But what should have followed from the great deliverance in Christendom itself, never came. Alarmed at the awful logic of its own thesis, the fateful consequences of its own action, Protestantism swung back upon itself, raised up the Bible in place of the Church, put creeds and confessions in place of papal bulls and synodal decrees, modified the sacraments for its own uses, and in general went as far back to medieval Christianity as it was able to go without actually losing its identity.

When the reform movement had run its course and the churches were full-formed, the distinctive mark of Protestantism was seen to be its emphasis upon theology, as contrasted with the Catholic emphasis upon ecclesiasticism. With the one, the central thing was the creed; with the other, the church. In form at least, the Protestant sects dignified the single man, the individual soul, to an extent altogether unknown to the Roman hierarchy. Responsibility for salvation was now upon each one, and not upon the church as a vicarious instrument of heaven. If a man desired to be saved, he must save himself—not in the sense, of course, that he could dispense with the atonement of Jesus Christ, but in the sense that, by his own acceptance, must the grace of this atonement be received into his life. He must have his own experience of grace, initiate his own act of faith. The mediation not of any church but of his own soul

with God, must accomplish his redemption. But when it came to defining this mediation, the Protestants were at one with the Catholics in presenting a process that was external and formal. Faith was not now, as might be supposed, the free adventure of a man with his own soul. If no longer a matter of sacraments and priestly offices, it most certainly was a matter of creeds. Exactly as in the medieval days, in other words, religious experience was not produced within but prescribed without. Here were elaborate doctrines about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, sin and punishment, atonement and salvation, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment—all revealed, of course, in the Bible, and formulated into articles of faith by holy men acting under divine guidance. All of these, now, must be believed, without question or reservation, as the “open sesame” to God!

What had happened, of course, was that the reformers, in their quest for the pure and unadulterated gospel of the Nazarene, had gotten no further back than the writings of St. Paul. Calvin did over again the work of Augustine in rearing out of the raw material of the Pauline epistles a vast structure of cosmology, anthropology, history and philosophical speculation, and calling it Christianity. In Catholicism this theology never gained ascendancy over the rites and offices of the church. In Protestantism, however, it became the central phenomenon of the religious life. If a man be-

lieved, he had done all and was therefore saved. If he did not believe, he had done nothing, or worse than nothing, and was therefore lost. It seems amazing, with our knowledge today of the ethical and social character of the teachings of Jesus, and of the absence therefrom of all arbitrary elements of theological belief, that such perversion of his spirit could be possible. This substitution of dogmas for a way of life, however, had its beginning among the men who lived within a generation of the Master's death, in a perfectly natural desire to exalt his personality and perpetuate his work, and if it was easy for those who knew the Nazarene thus to be misled, how much easier for those who lived centuries later, in an age still undelivered from traditional habits of mind! The result at any rate was full-fledged identification of religion with theology. Hence our description of this first span of spiritual development in modern times, as the *theological* period!

II

The second period, which is characterized by the advent of liberalism as a movement of rebellion against the dogmatic rigors of orthodoxy, began vaguely in the eighteenth century, and reached its culmination in the last half of the nineteenth century. Sometimes the movement embodied itself in separatist groups which were unrecognized, save for purposes of denunciation and persecution, by any authentic Christian power. More often, espe-

cially as time went on and independent thought came to be regarded as not wholly a disreputable thing, the liberal tendency worked inside the church and established definite centers of progressive influence. From the beginning it represented the interplay of a great variety of influences. On the one hand, as in Deism and later Rationalism, it was the protest of the human reason against the manifest absurdities and incongruities of Christian theology. On the other hand, as in the case of the Friends and all mystic groups, it was the soul's assertion of the validity of its own "inner light," as opposed to all outward authorities whatsoever. Again, as with the Universalists, it was a revolt of the conscience against the essential immorality of a theology which began with total depravity and ended with eternal punishment. Frequently, from the early days of Methodism to these latest days of liberal evangelism, it has been a veritable passion to strip away the theological and ecclesiastical encumbrances of the gospel, and get "back to Christ."

At heart, however, as seen in such early anticipations as the heretical sects of the Reformation, and in such extreme and therefore typical developments as Unitarianism, Ethical Culture and free religions generally, this liberal movement is properly to be understood as nothing more nor less than an attempt to recover and restore what was lost in the later developments of the Reformation. "One sublime idea has taken strong hold of my

mind," wrote Dr. Channing, the veritable incarnation of the liberal spirit in religion. "It is the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God."¹ Implicit in the Renaissance, and all that sprang from its fecund womb, was this discovery and sublimation of man "as a free being created to form himself, and to decide his own destiny."² It is this conviction, as we have seen, which liberated man's intellect, and therewith made possible the wonders of modern science and philosophy, exploration and invention, art, literature and jurisprudence. It is this which freed man's will, and revealed to him at once his responsibility and capacity for creative achievement. It is this which taught man of his dignity and rights, and stirred him to those great battles for democracy which have shaken the world. What was done in these other fields, should have been done in religion also; church and creed alike should have been dethroned in favor of the soul. What the Reformation failed to do, however, liberalism has achieved by bringing back into Christianity the forces of enlightenment and deliverance at large in the outer world, and thus opening a distinctive period in the development of the modern religious consciousness. Three things are to be noted as characteristic of the liberal attitude in religion.

First of all, is confidence in man, and an unshakable belief in his prerogative of freedom. "I

¹ See *The Life of William Ellery Channing*, by William Henry Channing, page 445.

² William Ellery Channing, in "The Elevation of the Laboring Classes," see *Works*, page 48.

do and I must reverence human nature," says Channing;¹ "nothing will disturb my faith in its godlike powers and tendencies. I bless it for its kind affections, for its strong and tender love. I honor it for its struggles against oppression, its achievements in science and art, its examples of heroic and saintly virtue." Here is liberalism in its best estate! It places man at the center of things; "the highest dwells with him . . . the sources of nature are his own."² It trusts man in the unrestrained activity of his powers; "within (him) is the soul of the whole, the universal beauty, the eternal One."² It demands for men free opportunity for development, and challenges him, "encompassed by a thousand warring forces, to contend with all, and perfect himself by the conflict."³ It is this confidence in man which has made liberalism the friend of science and art, and the champion of all cultural and humanitarian movements of reform. Interested in man for his own sake, it has sought to foster whatever would ennoble his life and enlarge his spirit. Its concerns, in other words, have been preëminently *human* concerns; and its work, therefore, one of the great humanizing influences of modern history.

It is obvious that liberalism finds validity for its attitude toward human nature in its recognition of the moral sentiment as of central importance in the life of man. This leads to the

¹ See his sermon, "Likeness to God," in *Works*, page 299.

² Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay, *The Over-Soul*.

³ See Channing, as above.

second of the three factors notably characteristic of liberal religion—namely, its substitution of the ethical point of view for the ecclesiastical and theological. What is important in religious experience, says the liberal, is not rites and ceremonies as talismans of salvation, not creeds and covenants as *media* of grace, but those fundamental virtues of the inner life which distinguish if not the believer from the infidel, at least the good man from the bad. The vital thing, in other words, as the evidence of salvation, is not faith but character; not acceptance of dogmas, but fulfillment of the moral law; not conformity to theological tenets, but glad and free allegiance to the best ideals of the soul. The liberal is distinguished by nothing more precisely than by his utter indifference to what a man believes or does not believe about the being of God, the person of Jesus, the resurrection of the body, or the inspiration of the Scriptures. Loyal himself to the most rigorous standards of the truth, clear in his own mind as to what he thinks upon these questions of theological disputation, eager to state his reasons for his belief and to commend these reasons to other minds, he yet respects in others that right of independent judgment which he conserves for himself, and finds not in what a man thinks but in how he lives the *ultima ratio* of the soul. Purity in the inner life, justice and generosity in human relations, integrity of mind, quick sympathy of heart, sincerity of conviction and purpose, and, above all, a love that

knows no bounds and fears no sacrifice—this is the true test of religion. Liberalism, in the last analysis, is interested in virtue—in that moral beauty which is the sign of health in human nature.

Finally, as a consequence of this emphasis upon the moral sentiment and its essential worth in human nature, liberalism is notably characterized by an acceptance of education as the method of individual salvation. Implicit in the whole orthodox concept of religion is a distrust of human nature, a belief that it is corrupt and must be changed. To accomplish this change was the purpose of Christ in his great act of the atonement; and all the devices of the church, whether they be incorporated in sacraments or creeds, are aimed at conveying the efficacy of this sacrifice to men. Now with this idea, the liberal breaks utterly! Reverencing human nature as in essence, at least, divine, he questions the whole system of salvation as it has been presented in the past by Catholic and Protestant alike. The problem of religion, from the liberal standpoint, is not that of remaking human nature at all, but of reordering it. The elements of good are all present in the soul just as it is. The native forces of life are themselves good, if only they be delivered from the entanglement of perversions and repressions which are the circumstance of birth. Men need salvation, as they have always needed it, but salvation not from the past but from the future. They need to be saved not in the sense that they are already lost,

but in the sense that they may at any time be lost through ignorance, misunderstanding, weakness, or neglect. To be lost is to be imperfect, incomplete; to have powers wasted by inward conflict and disorder; to fall short of the full development of the possibilities of virtue that are within us. To be saved, on the other hand, is to fulfill our being, to order and release our powers for efficient action. To be saved is to be moral by being normal. Salvation of this type requires self-mastery; and self-mastery, in turn, requires knowledge—knowledge of oneself, of the world, and of the experience of men. It is for this reason that liberalism has always emphasized education as the one sure means of “saving” humankind.

The general note of such emphases as these, is undoubtedly that of humanism; in this sense the liberal movement in religion is a true child of the Renaissance and early Reformation. As compared, however, with the Protestant orthodoxy into which it broke so rudely with its heresies, this liberalism is more particularly an ethical phenomenon. It was not content merely to attack the content of Christian theology from the standpoint of new scientific and historical researches. It was not interested in revising creeds to match the claims presented by geology, biology, archeology, and the higher criticism of the Bible. What it did was to make a complete sweep of the theological method, and substitute therefor the moral sentiment. Human nature is divine, because it

has capacity for virtue! Character is salvation, because it is the evidence of virtue! Moral training is the method of salvation, because it is the cultivation of virtue! In these propositions, the liberal movement put moral idealism definitely to the forefront of the religious life. It identified religion absolutely with ethics. Wherefore may this second span of spiritual development in modern times be not inaccurately described as the *ethical* period!

III

That liberalism was a prodigious advance over everything that had preceded it goes without saying. The movement marked the definite entrance into the religious field of those emancipating humanistic influences which were elsewhere remaking modern society; and the beginning, therefore, of that new basis of religion which is even now still in process of being laid. In its nineteenth century forms, however, it fell short of the full implications of its message by reason of its adherence, as was perhaps inevitable at the time, to that individualistic interpretation of spiritual experience which from the beginning was so characteristic of Protestant thought. Its discovery of the moral sentiment and its place in human nature, called for a complete reordering of human nature. Its substitution of character for faith in the process of salvation, demanded a fresh study of the whole problem of the soul and its

redemption. This liberalism did not give. On the contrary, it accepted *in toto* the classic philosophy of the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, and asked only that it be restated in terms ethical instead of theological.

The individualistic character of this philosophy is familiar, as it has long been prevalent. For centuries, and especially since the Renaissance, man has been regarded strictly as an individual—*i. e.*, in isolated personality, having no essential connection with any other individual, nor with the natural or social environment of the world in which he lives. Man has been conceived, that is, as though he were utterly and forever alone, uninfluencing and uninfluenced by anything else in all the universe. Even the several parts which together make up his individuality, organic and functional, have been torn asunder as though they were separate and disconnected units, and surveyed not in relation to one another or the whole, but apart by themselves. Thus physiology has studied the individual man as a physical body; psychology, as a soul, or *psyche*; logic, as a mind; metaphysics, as an incarnate absolute. Ethics has discussed the right conduct of the individual; aesthetics, his instincts and aptitudes for beauty; political economy, that amazing animal “the economic man.” The whole purpose of inquiry in the past, says Francis G. Peabody,¹ seems to have been to

¹ See his *The Approach to the Social Question*, page 9.

detach the person from the mass, "as though he occupied a little universe of his own."

What this individualistic habit of thought has meant in religion, is clearly shown in the whole content of Christian orthodoxy. In medieval but more especially in Protestant theology, the single man has been regarded as a separate spiritual entity, confronted with a problem of salvation which involves himself alone. Whether he be white or black, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, born of pure or tainted blood, the denizen of a palace or a slum or the open countryside, makes no essential difference. As regards religion he is simply a soul, without color, race, mental condition, or social status. He is like every other soul in the fact that he exists in a state of sin, and is therefore in desperate need of salvation. But he is apart from every other soul in the fact that there is no dependence, nor even connection, between souls. Men exist, that is, not like the cells of a body, but rather like grains of sand, the particles of an aggregate. Like God himself, they have no relations, save as each is related to God. It is this relationship, with all of its implications of duty and destiny, and not any relationship between one another as members together of the human family, which constitutes, as we have seen, the meaning of religion. A man's business, spiritually speaking, is to "get right with God," to quote the familiar revivalistic phrase. The business of the churches, in turn, is to show how this is to be done. The

crass individualism of the whole philosophy and process is admirably summed up in the classic cry, What shall *I* do to be saved?

Now the liberal movement broke with Christian orthodoxy in many things, but not in this! Liberalism also is individualistic. It also sees the soul in isolation, so far at least as its personal destiny is concerned. It also defines religion in terms of personal salvation; salvation by character, to be sure, and not by faith, but the objective is the same! Of course, its humanistic attitude toward life, its interest in man as a moral creature, its whole understanding of religion in terms of ethics, gives to liberalism an awareness of contacts, one man with another, which is practically unknown in orthodoxy. But it is contacts which the liberal sees, and not relationships. It is the bumping and rubbing of one grain of sand against another, and not the functioning of two interdependent cells in the service of an organism which includes them both as constituent elements of the one reality! The individual, in other words, remains basic. If these contacts have value, it is only because they compose the raw material out of which is wrought the fibre of individual character. If they have meaning, it is only the meaning created by the souls who occasion and then use them. All social phenomena—institutions, laws, customs, political and economic systems—are fortuitous and ephemeral. They gain even an appearance of reality only as they reflect and record, and thus objectify, the

struggles of men to gain, through their moral attainments, that right personal relationship with God which constitutes the fulfillment of their lives. Liberalism, therefore, says Prof. Ephraim Emerton,¹ speaking more especially of Unitarianism, "fixes its attention primarily upon the individual. . . . It has its own lofty conceptions of the function of the family, the state, the church, mankind even, in bringing about that development which is to it the ultimate goal of humanity. It feels the force of the reaction of all these upon the individual in fixing his aims, setting his limitations, giving him his opportunities; but still more powerfully it feels that these larger entities have meaning and value only as they are fixed by the character of the individuals who compose them."

The practical consequence of this individualistic interpretation of life, is an absorption in the problem of personal salvation quite as intense on the part of the liberal as of the orthodox Protestant. That stress is laid on character instead of faith, on the moral instead of the theological process, does not alter the fact that it is personal salvation that he is after. The Unitarian, or Universalist, or Ethical Culturist, exactly like the Methodist or Presbyterian, cries, What shall *I* do to be saved; and while he does not find his answer in sacraments and creeds, confessions and conversions, he does find it in the ancient law of justice, mercy and good faith. This is the explanation of the ex-

¹ See his *Unitarian Thought*, page 199.

clusive importance attached to education, which is essentially the retail method of taking one individual after another in home and school and church, and training each to the knowledge, love and practice of the right. The result of such training, if it be successful, is character, and character is the condition of salvation or the end of life attained! This is the explanation, also, strange as it may seem, of the very quick and generous interest of the liberal in what we know as "social problems." How frequently his religious activities take the lovely altruistic form of philanthropy and social service! He seems characteristically to forget himself in the love of others. And so he does, so far as his own individual feelings are concerned; for man, delivered from theologizing, is as truly made for love as the stars for shining! But this involves no inconsistency, for the philosophy back of his activities remains as individualistic as ever. The liberal is kindly, sympathetic, serviceable primarily because he has learned to believe that such qualities constitute character. This is what it means to him to be good. All the while in his altruism he has in view, consciously or unconsciously, not a far-flung, impersonal, social end at all, but a very narrow, intimate and personal end. He is practicing his moral law, flattering his sense of virtue, sustaining his self-respect. Hence the superficiality of much of the social work that is done by our so-called "best people"! Hence also the ease with which such

work takes on a patronizing air, and all too often degenerates into the disgusting hypocrisies of Pharisaism!

It is the doctrine of social work deliberately professed by religious liberals which offers the conclusive demonstration of the nullifying individualism implicit in the entire movement. What the liberal sees in society, as we have said, is a mere aggregate of individuals. Society, according to his argument, can be saved, ethically speaking, only as the individuals who compose this aggregate are themselves saved. The problem of social redemption, in other words, is the old problem of individual redemption writ large. What we have to do is to concern ourselves not with reforming political or economic conditions, not with altering social arrangements of any kind, but simply and solely with making individual men and women to be morally what they ought to be. To save society, that is, we must first save men; and we can save men only through the redemptive force of personal character. Our social task naturally begins with ourselves, for we contribute to and share in social salvation when, in the struggles and conflicts of our inner lives, we come out victorious. But the quickest road to such victory, is service of others. There is a reciprocal relationship, in other words, in social service. We save others as we save ourselves; and we save ourselves as we save others. But this does not alter in any way the undeviating individualistic viewpoint of the whole. Even in

the noblest struggles for mankind, there is present always the element of personal reward. The process of service, sacrifice and death for others' sakes is, in the last analysis, nothing but the process of our own salvation. Naïvely, almost accidentally, this truth comes out in the familiar couplet of John Greenleaf Whittier, a favorite motto of liberal Christianity—

“Heaven’s gate is closed to him who comes alone;
Save thou a soul and *it shall save thine own.*”

IV

But is individualism thus wrong, as a spiritual motive, if it can rise to such self-forgetting heights as this?

Not wrong, perhaps; but certainly inadequate! There is something far more involved here than mere individualism. This reciprocal relationship of service confounds the very doctrine which it pretends to illustrate and practice. There are suggestions here of the teachings of the Hebrew prophets. There is an irresistible reminder of Jesus’s immortal declaration, “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” Paul is brought immediately into memory with his noble dictum that “no man liveth unto himself.” Man is more than an individual if, by “individual,” we mean a separate, isolated soul. However it may be theologically, from the moral viewpoint, at least, man’s life is inextricably

interwoven with his fellows. He joins not merely contacts with them, but relationships. Through these relationships, which are unescapable, he forms an organism which is society, itself a body with many members. Man is a social creature, his life is a social phenomenon. His problem of salvation leaps the bounds of personality, and becomes at one with the problem of the race.

It is this affirmation of solidarity as contrasted with individuality, which constitutes the new spiritual truth of this age, and marks the third or *sociological* period in the history of the religious development of modern times. What has been the inspiration of all prophets and apostles from Amos and Hosea to Wesley, Parker and Walter Rauschenbusch, is now become the science, so to speak, of man. Even as science, it is not new. Aristotle saw the truth when he laid down in his *Politics*¹ the proposition that "man is by nature a social animal. The individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing, and therefore is like a part in relation to the whole. He who lives not in society, who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god." But we have the material to handle this problem of society today, as Darwin in his day had the material to handle the problem of biological evolution, known so many centuries before to Heraclitus and the later Greek philosophers. Our thought, there-

¹ Book I, chapter 2.

fore, is not a surmise nor yet an inspiration. It is a demonstration.

At bottom is the fundamental proposition that there is no such thing as an individual *per se*. "A separate individual," says a modern scientist, "is an abstraction and not known to experience."¹ For the individual lives at all only in his relations. An individual is identifiable as an individual only by virtue of certain personal qualities which make him a member of a larger or smaller social group. Thus it is not enough to know that John Smith is John Smith. If we would distinguish this John Smith from other John Smiths, and from myriads of men who swarm the world—if we would know him, that is, in his own separate individuality as a person—we must know his residence, his business, his family, his nationality and race, the one hundred and one ties which bind him to society, and which together make up the essence of his individual existence. Cut off a man from all political, economic and social relations, and he is no longer a man, but an impersonal abstraction, a mere "ego" signifying nothing that is human. But unite him with his fellows—make him a husband, a father, a merchant, a citizen, an American—and instantly he becomes an individual. Indeed, the more numerous his contacts, the more of an individual he is. The abundant life is the distinctive life! Theodore Roosevelt was the outstanding personality of his generation for no other reason than that he touched

¹ Professor C. H. Cooley, in *Human Nature and the Social Order*, page 1.

life at more points, identified himself with a larger number of human interests, than any other of his contemporaries. Relations, therefore, are what constitute the man. It is our membership in the one body that makes us what we are.

The social nature of individuality has its beginning with heredity. We are inextricably bound to the forbears from whose loins we have sprung, and again to the descendants who spring in turn from us. Our natures are a recapitulation of the millions who have preceded us; and this recapitulation we gather up, modified by our use of it, and pass on to the millions who come after. Past, present and future, in other words, constitute a single flow, like the current of a river, in which each drop takes the color and direction of the whole. A biologic necessity is upon us which determines within narrow bounds the physical and psychological range of our experience. The white man is not the black man, nor the Englishman the Chinaman, nor the moron the intellectual. Each belongs by birth and inheritance to a social group, into which the other cannot enter even in imagination. And it is inherent qualities of body, mind and spirit which belong to this group and to no other, which give to each the distinctive elements of his being.

More important, however, than heredity as an aspect of sociality, is environment. Heredity was displaced as the primal factor of existence when the science of evolution came to the fore and demonstrated that the substance of life was not something

permanently given, but something constantly undergoing change from one form to another. Life continues, of course, only as it is passed on by the process of inheritance. But what is thus transmitted is not a constant but an ever-changing reality; and the fundamental cause, or at least control, of this process of change, is the influence of environment. What life is, or how it began, we do not know. We are conscious only of that creative force which has been pushing itself forward from the beginning, and making the path which we know as evolution. But this force has not been working in a vacuum. Always it has been enmeshed in an environment which has determined all that it has done. Each separate organism, or embodiment of life, in other words, is at every moment inextricably tied up with what is about it—first, its natural habitat, and secondly, the other organisms with which it shares this habitat. Life is only a process of adjustment between organism and environment—"the continuous adjustment of internal relations and external relations," to quote the familiar definition of Herbert Spencer.¹ Changes in the environment are followed by inevitable changes in the organism, as a necessary condition of its successful adjustment to the environment, and therefore of survival. It is this, and not the extravagant hypotheses of creation, which explains the innumerably various forms of life upon our planet. Even the basic and apparently fixed characters of race and genus, passed on

¹ See his *Principles of Biology*, Volume I, page 99.

by inheritance through unnumbered generations, have all had their origin in this experience of adjustment, and have become stabilized only as a result of relationship with a stabilized environment. Relationship is again our central fact. The individual lives not in himself but in the whole.

Now what is true of organisms in general is true of man in particular. We also are creatures of environment. The abiding racial, national and class distinctions of this world are not to be accounted for on the basis of different inward qualities of human nature, but primarily on the basis of different outward conditions of social life. What is commonly attributed to heredity is only the transmission of early consequences of environmental influence. We are molded permanently in speech, in manners, in habits, in abilities, in morals, in ideals, by the external circumstances which wrap us round, as the head of a Flathead Indian is flattened by the stone which is bound from infancy to the top of his plastic skull, or the feet of the Chinese women are distorted by the unyielding bandages in which they are tightly wrapped. The great majority of men and women are bound in the fetters of material conditions which make impossible a healthy body, an active mind, or a pure soul. Climate, food, clothing, political rule, economic status, hours and conditions of labor, all have their determining influence on the character and moral destiny of the individual. How many of us do not know that we are what we are today because we

were born in the nineteenth century, in the United States of America, in material comfort and not in poverty, were given care and education and not neglect, were guarded by economic security from exhausting labor, unwholesome living conditions, vicious enticements, and acquaintance with immoral standards—that we are what we are, in short, because of the political, industrial and social environment in the midst of which we have always lived! Change this environment in any decisive particular! Make us a Roman slave, a feudal serf, a Russian peasant, a slum denizen of East-end London, a sweat-shop worker in East-side New York, a “hunkie” steel-worker in the blast-furnaces of Pittsburgh, a negro plantation hand in Alabama! And what would there be left of the refinement, grace and straight-out moral worth which we flatter ourselves are basic elements in our native individuality? It is environment which is the secret of being and becoming. It is social conditions which make us in the end what we really are, even as it is the tides which make sweet or noisome the shores of the sea. “How little does heredity count as compared with conditions,” says Henry George.¹ “Change Lady Vere de Vere in her cradle with an infant in the slums, and not all the blood of a hundred earls will give you the refined and cultured woman.”

If demonstration of this thesis were needed, we have it today in the multiplying complexities of

¹ See his *Progress and Poverty*, page 468.

modern industrial society, and the uses to which they are put in reducing the single man to impotence and misery. In the old days, especially in this country, when there was a frontier on the outskirts of civilization, it was possible for a man to live his own life, fashion his own environment, and thus fulfill the promise of his individuality. If society pressed too closely upon him, and denied him reasonable opportunity for free expression of personality, the door of escape was always open. He could set sail across the seas, or march sturdily across the border, out into the wilderness of new lands. But today the frontier is gone. It disappeared generations ago in Europe, and is now in process of disappearing in America. Everywhere society has expanded, until men live together, whether they will or no. At the same time has there developed within society, that stupendous mechanism of capitalistic industry which has mobilized the race to a social dependency and discipline more terrible in peace than the military machine effects in war. The economic organization of the modern world is one of the miracles of history. Its systems of transportation and communication, its vast enterprises of industrial and social activity, its complex machinery of production, distribution and exchange, its enormous expansions of knowledge, efficiency and interdependent life, combine to make mankind more truly a unit than it has ever been before. Society has become what Herbert Spencer anticipated as the "social organ-

ism." But to what ends is this organism adjusted? To ends of service or exploitation, of liberation or enslavement for mankind? Look upon the world as it has developed during the amazing years of the nineteenth century, and what do we see but the progressive subjection of the race? To the remotest ends of the expropriated earth, we see the millions caught in the entanglements of this awful system of property and profits. They swarm in coal mines and copper fields, in steel foundries and textile mills, in sweat-shops, tenements and slums. They labor terribly and live miserably in the best of times; and when scourges of commercial depression, like old-time pestilences, sweep the world of industry, they live as best they can in beggary or die in squalor. Can these who have no homes, possess no books or pictures, enjoy no influences of gentleness and care, be *men* in any spiritual or even deeply human sense? They can exist, if the wage be good and the work not slack; but can they live as God intended that his sons of earth should live? These unhappy mortals have no chance in such environment. They are subdued to their factories and gutters, as the hand of the dyer to the medium in which it works. The moral problem of the individual in such case altogether disappears before the prior problem of the social order.

But how about the human will—that power of creative imagination and activity which sets off man from all other earthly organisms as merely creatures? Is this not present in the lowest and

most unfortunate of men, and free to lift him above the environment which despoils him?

So it may seem to those well and safely born, out of and above the miry ruck of life! But no will is really free which is "cribbed, cabin'd and confin'd" by the economic determinism which is the overwhelmingly decisive factor in modern industrial society. Or if it be free by virtue of inherent strength or fortunate release of circumstance, it can rightly act not to save itself, but to save others by remaking conditions of life and labor which doom men to wastage, misery and decay. What we are confronted by is a social order which is destructive and not helpful to human welfare. The very cruelty and injustice of such a system as now predominates, should stir our souls to some such wrathful indignation as the prophets of every age have voiced against the social outrages of their time. But beyond this is the purely practical question of a technique for delivering mankind from spiritual death. And the cold matter of fact is that the complex organization of modern industry has so changed and at the same time fixed relationships between men, that individuals can no longer, if they ever could, be saved apart from the conditions of the environment in which they live. To save a slum population from physical degeneration, moral corruption and spiritual atrophy, we must seek not to educate and redeem persons, but to wipe out slums. To save the children who crowd our juvenile courts and reformatories, we must seek not

to punish, teach or even inspire boys and girls, but to change their gutters into playgrounds, their tenement abodes into decent homes, their scanty food into abundant nourishment, their wretched pleasures into wholesome recreation. To save our drunkards, prostitutes and gunmen, we need not to rear mission houses and rescue stations, though these are useful for the ambulance service of the soul, but to close saloons, abolish cruel and indecent conditions of labor, train hands and brains to skilled occupations, establish the minimum wage, solve the vexed problem of unemployment, and in general end the intolerable scourge of poverty. The problem of morals today is the problem of commercialized vice, corrupt politics, selfish business, inequitable taxation, labor, capital, imperialism and war. The challenge of the soul today is the challenge to a new moral and social order which shall revolutionize existing institutions of government and property. If the masses of men and women are ever to be anything more than drudges, robbed of vision, hope, love and high adventure, a new society must be created—a society which shall put coöperation in place of competition, public service in place of private profit, solidarity in place of class consciousness and struggle, communal responsibility in place of corporate privilege and exploitation. For such task of social creation, we need new virtues. Not the old “sweetness and light,” the conventional gentleness, kindness and good-will; but courage, faith, patience in struggle,

heroic loyalty to justice, ruthless hatred of evil, love for men that never fails! These virtues will give us character, if we are concerned with character. For character is not being good but doing good. It is not inward sanctity but outward sacrifice. Character is the by-product of service.

V

Such is the logic of that humanism which constitutes our new basis of religion. Our shift of spiritual viewpoint from God to man, has carried us straight from theology, through ethics, to sociology. For the individual is not an individual at all, but a social being; morality is not a science of personality but of solidarity; salvation is the problem of fellowship in a righteous social order. Religion, in other words, is the task of bringing in the Kingdom of God upon the earth!

Religion has ever thus been recognized by the prophetic souls of history—preëminently by Jesus! His gospel was wholly a gospel of solidarity. He sought no salvation of man apart from the common group. His teachings constitute not dogmas of theology, nor yet rules of ethics, but principles of sociology. But the church would never have it so! It has proclaimed with an authority that has passed persistently into intolerance, that religion was an experience not in but apart from life. It has set the church over against the world; and challenged with its creeds the science, philosophy and arts of

men. It has created the autonomy of individual and society, and thus found a doctrine of human interests that are separate and not identical. It has made religion a narrow, selfish, private emotion, which drives the Christian to his solitary pilgrimage of salvation, while leaving the City of Destruction and its unhappy people, his fellow-citizens, to their fate.

But as the church has heeded not its prophets, so men in turn have heeded not the church. Within themselves they have found instincts of association more potent far than papal bulls or synodal creeds. For man is made for love. He is drawn and held to his fellows by a force as irresistible as the gravitation which binds the atoms and holds together the stars within their courses. If he goes apart from them, he is pulled back by the very necessities of his being. If he hates, it is but for a moment; he loves eternally. Man cannot help loving, even if he would. For love is a natural and not an artificial force. It "flows from creature to creature, as electricity from iron to iron. . . . It is a force which does not require either momentary exaltation or habitual elevation in order to manifest itself. It is a force which discloses itself whenever people come together, and it is at work every day and everywhere in society, as steadily and usefully as any of the grosser forces which man hitches to his wagon."¹ It is this which explains the phenomenon of society and its progress. That man is not

¹ Henry D. Lloyd, in *Man the Social Creator*, pages 6, 7.

a savage wandering lonely upon the earth, but a tribesman, a clansman, a citizen, is due not to any divine leadership from above, but to an instinct of his inner nature which has its origin in cosmic sources. Love fuses men into families and nations, as earlier it fused animals into flocks and herds. It creates social forms, and laws, and institutions for its expression; and then destroys them when they would bind the flow of its inexhaustible tide. Revolutions are but the vast upheavals of love, rending the crust of custom and tradition which would confine its holy fires. Man cannot live alone; the self-interest of the individual is his destruction. "The horrors of our Reign of Terror and Armenian massacres evidence the price men are willing to pay for more and better love."¹

History is the love story of humanity. It is the tale of man's struggle to find and know his fellows, and learn the lesson of their common life. From the first emergence of the race upon this planet until now, man has been engaged in this single adventure of solidarity. Democracy is the last and greatest chapter of the narrative—the democracy that seeks to free men from the institutions that hold them apart as prisoners in dungeons; and then to unite them in a fellowship of faith and order that shall endure. In his eternal quest, man has succeeded greatly, and failed more greatly. He has builded deep and wide and high the structures of his universal hope, only to see them fall and all but

¹ Henry D. Lloyd, in *Man the Social Creator*, page 7.

crush him in their ruins. But each failure has marked but the beginning of a yet greater undertaking—as now, amid the wreckage of the Great War, man rises bruised, broken, but undismayed, to gird himself for the task of remaking this sorry scheme of things, that men at last may be united in a world order that shall be permanent.

H. G. Wells, in closing his *The Outline of History*, ventures “to prophesy that the next chapters to be written will tell, though perhaps with long interludes of set-back and disaster, of the final achievement of world-wide political and social unity.” This, we take it, is a religious message, for the struggle of man for fellowship has been from the beginning his true religion. It is the recognition of this fact that marks the transition from theology to sociology. The churches which will sanctify this recognition are alone the temples of the living God.

CHAPTER VII
CHURCH AND STATE

“In losing sight of the connection between religion and nationality, we lose the clue to the struggle between Church and State, which is the capital fact in the development of Europe. As in the first part of the struggle we overlook that the Church is but another aspect of the Empire, so in the later stages of it, we are blind to the fact that under the so-called State, there lurks a new, undeveloped Church.

For State and Church belong together. . . . As the Church without the State becomes a mere philosophical or quasi-philosophical sect, so the State without the Church is a mere administrative machine, the feebleness of which has been brought to light in the revolutions of the nineteenth century. . . . The modern States which boast so loudly of their absolute secularity, or even of their hostility to religion, are not content in practise to be merely secular. . . . They study to form out of their own separate nationalities a new religion. . . .”

SIR JOHN SEELEY, in
Natural Religion

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH AND STATE

I

The elimination of the distinction between sacred and secular, and the transformation of religion from a system of theology to a program of social life, are alike phases of spiritual change which have been long discussed and found wide acceptance. Very different is the discussion of the problem of church and state, since this raises into controversy a question which was apparently settled some centuries ago. For this very reason it is more important to our argument than either of the others, since it opens up to our view the whole prospect of what is involved in our belief that we are today in need of new churches for old.

There can be no dissent from the proposition that the separation of church and state constitutes one of the supreme achievements of modern civilization, and is the foundation on which stands that great structure of spiritual liberty which is today so dearly prized. Furthermore, it must be agreed that, if church and state are to be in the future what they are today, and have always been in the past,

their separation must be guarded as a necessary condition of human welfare and happiness. But are they always to remain what they are today? Who can answer this question with any confidence in the affirmative? For three hundred years or more, democracy has been at large in the world. In the name of liberty, it has challenged the most ancient laws, institutions and customs; and built a new society for the service of man's needs. Today, in the quest of that higher liberty which is fellowship, it is speaking a new challenge, even of those institutions which it has itself conceived and made. In the light of what has transpired since the vast upheaval of the war, and is now transpiring the world around, there would seem to be no institution more unstable than the state, save only the church. Both of these institutions are now in process of radical transformation at the hands of the democratic spirit; and this means inevitably a drastic change in relations between the two! In the old days, as we shall see, it was necessary, as a condition of spiritual liberty, that the church should be separated from the state, and the state from the church. Today, however, as a condition of that fellowship which is the fulfillment of liberty, it may well appear that church and state, as remolded by the new democracy of our time, must be no longer sundered but joined. The reunion of church and state in the common service of the common life, is a consummation which is now immediately in prospect.

II

When history was young, church and state belonged together; religion and politics were one and the same thing. The faith recognized by the king or ruling house was the faith imposed upon the people; it was as necessary for a subject to worship the gods of his sovereign, as to follow this sovereign into battle or accompany him on the chase. Religion, in other words, was a function of the state and heresy was synonymous with treason. If a king for any reason changed the character of the religious rites of his country, the change had to be immediately recognized and adopted by the people as a condition of their continued allegiance to the state. If the king found it advisable to import from abroad the gods of some neighboring country, then it became the duty of each citizen of the realm to add these gods to the already recognized native deities. If the country was overrun by some foreign invader, then was the citizen obliged to transform his allegiance not merely to his military conqueror but also to the gods which were worshiped by this conqueror. Thus when Josiah, as told in the Old Testament, forbade the worship of Jehovah on the so-called high places of the kingdom, and ordered men to pay their vows in the temple on Mount Zion, the people as good citizens found it necessary to tear down their beloved high places, and turn their minds and hearts to Jerusalem. So also when Manasseh imported into

Israel the gods of the Syrians and Philistines, his obedient subjects opened their altars and hearths to the influence of these alien deities. And when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the kingdom and turned Jerusalem to destruction, the unhappy captives by the waters of Babylon found that they must do obeisance to the divine being of this heathen land. God, in other words, belonged to the king, and obedience to the latter involved worship of the former.

This identity of church and state, of religion and politics, made impossible, of course, any such thing as spiritual freedom. Liberty in religion was unknown in ancient times, for the very reason that church and state were one, and religion therefore a mere accompaniment or expression of political allegiance. To be a good citizen of the state involved being a faithful worshiper of the gods of the state; and in the one case as in the other, the king was the arbiter of his subjects' lives.

Only in the case of Rome do we find a suggestion of what we now mean by spiritual freedom. In the republic, as later in the empire, there was practiced a certain tolerance of foreign cults and religions which constituted one of the most remarkable features of ancient civilization. When the legions of Rome overran the territory of some foreign country, it was demanded, of course, that the conquered population should not only recognize the overlordship of Rome, but also the supremacy of the gods who sat enthroned upon the Seven Hills of the

great city. But when such recognition had been offered, and pledged in some act of formal obeisance, the people were given the freest opportunity to worship their own gods and maintain the rights and ceremonies of their own religion. Later on, in the days of the empire, the devotees of foreign gods were freely permitted to bring their altars to the Eternal City itself, and there set them up side by side with the altars of the Roman deities. Even the Jews were permitted to build their synagogues and conduct their extraordinary worship of the one God, Jehovah. Rome, at this time, came nearer to being a genuine congress of universal religion than any other place which the world has known. It was this tolerance not only of native customs, but of religious superstitions, which helped to make the Romans the most successful of ancient conquerors, and to build the structure of their empire upon foundations which promised for a time to endure forever.

How far this tolerance came from being what we mean today by religious liberty, was promptly demonstrated when the Christian religion made its appearance in the empire. Here, for the first time in the history of the world, was proclaimed the principle that there was a power at work among men which was superior to that of the state. To the Christians the church was one thing, and the state was another; and these disciples of the Nazarene boldly proclaimed that when it became necessary to make choice between the two, it was

the church and not the state which must have their allegiance. It is difficult for us to realize the significance of this revolutionary declaration of the emancipation of the soul of the individual from the dominant control of the government. To assert that obedience was due first to God and only secondarily to Caesar was to challenge the supremacy of government, and this was something which was new in the experience of mankind. What such assertion meant both to the individual and to the state, was very soon made manifest. The Christian, for example, refused to lay upon the altars of the Roman gods the offerings which were required by the government in recognition of their sovereignty, and thus made themselves not merely heretics but traitors. They refused to participate in the great religious festivals of the state, and thus put themselves altogether outside the political pale. When ordered to take up arms and do their share in defending the borders of Rome from the Germanic invasions on the Rhine and Danube, the Christians refused to become soldiers, on the ground that their religion forbade them to kill, and commanded them to love and not to hate their enemies. The issue here joined was absolute—no compromise or escape was possible. Immediately, in the case of these Christians, at least, the tolerance of the Roman government was transformed into the most determined and cruel persecution! Such spiritual freedom as was claimed by the Christians, was regarded by the Romans as impos-

sible, if the government was to stand and the empire to endure. It is significant that it was in nearly every case the best emperors and not the worst who persecuted the Christians most savagely. Those rulers who were most keenly conscious of their duties to the state and their obligation to strengthen and maintain the government, were the very ones who regarded the Christians as enemies of society and a menace therefore to the commonweal.

It might be imagined that all this would have been changed when the Christians gained control of the empire in 313, through the conversion of the Emperor Constantine. Surely these people who had themselves been so dreadfully persecuted, would now recognize and grant to others that spiritual freedom which they had claimed so persistently for themselves! But as has happened so often both before and since that time, the persecuted now became, with their accession to power, the most ruthless of persecutors. From the beginning of the fourth century, down to the opening of the Protestant Reformation, religious liberty was as impossible as ever it had been in the classic period of history. The leaders of the Roman church proclaimed their religion to be universal, and visited indescribable tortures upon those who, for any reason, dared to dispute this universality. Church and state, in other words, now became more closely joined than ever they had been in ancient days. Quarrels between the two were frequent; and as we turn the pages of medieval history, we

are tempted to believe that the struggle between church and state in this era presents a real issue of religious liberty. But we should not be deceived into thinking that any such question was involved. The Roman church, during all these centuries, was not a church at all, as a matter of fact, but a great political government which had succeeded to the empire of Rome and was now exercising the proud functions of that great state. If there was a struggle between the Roman church and what came to be known as the Holy Roman Empire, it was not a struggle between two separate and competing powers, but only a competition between the two parties of a single contract. The question at issue between church and state in the Middle Ages was only the question as to whether the church or the state should be the party of the first part in the working out of the contract which had been joined between the two. That religion should be separated from politics, that the church should leave to the state the business of government and the state leave to the church the business of religion, all this was never dreamed of for a moment. Least of all was it imagined, either by pope or emperor, that the soul of any single man or woman was to be allowed to live its own life apart from external dictation. When the pope was at the head of things, the control of politics and religion alike was in his hands: and the same thing was true when the emperor was on the throne. Each was contending with the other

for the single mastery of the two great realms of the world and the spirit.

III

What had been so valiantly asserted by the primitive Christians, only to be lost with the triumph of the church save as certain heretical and sorely persecuted sects kept alight in dark ages the torch of freedom, was now proclaimed in trumpet tones by the Reformation. The Renaissance, as we have seen, started the democratic movement of modern times with a revolt against institutional authority, founded upon the doctrine of liberty for the individual soul; and the immediate result in the religious field was the assertion, over wide areas, of "the liberty of the Christian man." All too soon the reformers, alarmed by the consequences of their own teaching, called a halt. But it was too late! Democracy had begun its work! The political unity of the Empire was crumbling, the power of Rome was shattered, men were everywhere running at large, there was no central authority to exercise dominion. Above all, the Bible was loose! Men were now turning the sacred pages, and reading for themselves what they regarded as the direct revelation of the Most High. Little groups began to gather themselves together into churches, to establish religious rites and practices, to prepare and publish creeds. Great leaders appeared, who started popular movements of revolt. Within half

a century there were scores of Protestant sects established in different parts of Europe. The whole religious world was in ferment, and at the heart of the storm was the solitary soul brought face to face with the authority and majesty of God.

The result of this emancipation of the individual, as regards the relation between church and state, was nothing short of revolutionary. The kings and princes of the various European countries suddenly found themselves confronted by subjects who dared to assert their independence of the spiritual dictator on the throne. Everywhere they saw churches into which they were not allowed to enter and in which their political over-lordship was neglected or defied. Men and women, through the spiritual deliverance which they had won, were now all at once become traitors; so it seemed, at least, to the sovereigns to whom they were pledged to give allegiance. When the king of France, for example, looked upon his kingdom in the seventeenth century, he saw it swarming with Huguenots who refused to recognize his authority as a political representative of the pope, or to accept at his hands the doctrines and principles of the Catholic faith. In England an exactly opposite situation was present. Here a Protestant sovereign, Queen Elizabeth or King Edward VI, for example, saw thousands of subjects who persisted in being Catholics, and thus paying their primary spiritual allegiance to the hated Roman pope. In other countries there were other varieties of trouble of this same general

type. Thus in Germany, Protestant princes of the Lutheran persuasion were horrified to discover in their realms people who would not be Lutherans, but persisted in establishing some peculiar Protestant sect of their own.

It was a strange confusion. And the rulers, as though by common agreement, met the situation by resolute assertion of the old principle of union of church and state. If a subject did not like the religion of his ruler, he must nevertheless submit or suffer the penalties of treason. Thus did the Catholic sovereigns of France harry the Huguenots out of the land, in vindication of their royal dignity and power. In the same way did Protestant sovereigns of England pursue the Catholics; and Lutheran princes in Germany set upon Anabaptists, Calvinists and all nonconformists whatsoever. Even those who themselves suffered the torments of persecution, visited these same torments upon others the instant they gained the seats of power. Thus when the Puritans were driven out of England, and crossed the wintry seas of the Atlantic to these unknown shores, to find refuge where they might be free to worship God, they immediately established a union of church and state which was one of the most oppressive ever known in the annals of humankind. From the beginning in the early Puritan settlements of Boston, Dorchester, Salem, Dedham, etc., citizenship was limited to those who were regular members of the established Congregational church. Any man who

desired to be free of the dominance of this church, as the Puritans themselves had desired to be free of the dominance of Anglicanism in the old country, was refused all rights of citizenship and thus excluded from the social family. In the case of those whose nonconformity was conspicuous, as for example the Quakers, our Puritan forefathers proved themselves to be ruthless persecutors. One has only to read such a book as Mr. Brooks Adams's *The Emancipation of Massachusetts* to discover what the union of church and state, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, meant in terms of tyranny. The reformers believed in liberty as little as the rulers; intolerance was still the accepted practice of the times.

The consequence of these events was the development of leaders who held fast to the early democracy of the Reformation, and saw with clearness that if liberty, which was the touchstone of this democracy, was to be recognized, there must be absolute separation between church and state. Religion must be taken out of the control of the government, and left to the exclusive care and service of the individual heart. Thus appeared that "separation of church and state" which has been one of the watchwords of democracy from that day to this. Everywhere appeared valiant men and women who showed themselves willing to lay down their lives for the sake of vindicating the right of the soul to live out its religion in entire independence of the state. Hundreds of thousands

gladly took the name of traitor that they might thereby prove their fidelity to the things of God. Christ and Caesar, as in the early days of Christianity, came again into conflict, and this time it was Christ and not Caesar who was triumphant. The Anabaptists in Germany, the Huguenots in France, the Mennonites in Holland, the Independents in England, the Quakers everywhere—these are some of the noble groups of Protestants who dared the power of the state that they might free their churches for the true service of religion. In this country, the separation of church and state, as a condition of religious liberty, was first proclaimed by the immortal Roger Williams, who went forth gladly into untrodden wildernesses that he might establish a new settlement where men might be free to worship God in their own way. When Providence was founded, the first chapter of true religious liberty in America, if the story of Plymouth be excepted, was written. Thanks to these noble heretics, the principle of the separation of church and state became one of the central principles of Protestantism. Through the blood of martyrs and the slow but sure growth of understanding, this principle came gradually to be recognized. Finally, with the writing of the Constitution of the United States, which provided for the absolute freedom of all churches from government recognition or control, this principle was established as one of the foundation stones of modern democracy. Nearly everywhere, now, in our

Western world, is church separate from state, and state from church; and thus the spiritual freedom of the individual guaranteed.¹

IV

The importance of this separation of church and state to the cause of democracy, as expressed in the ideal of liberty, must be manifest to all who are familiar with conditions in the past and as they exist very largely at the present moment. It must be conceded, however, that liberty has been purchased in this case as in other cases, at a great price. Separation of church and state, in other words, involves embarrassments and difficulties as well as advantages. Certainly it brings with it some conditions which seem fatal to any final working out of the religious idea.

In our discussion of the distinction between sacred and secular, for example, we discovered that the whole development of religious thought these days is tending toward the necessary reconciliation of these two arbitrary divisions of human experience. We have come to the point where the sacred must be merged with the secular, as the condition of true spiritual democracy. Yet here, in this separation of church and state, do we find perhaps the sharpest division between things sacred and things secular, of which we have experience.

¹ It may be well to note that the issue was presented afresh by the so-called "conscientious objectors" to war. Many of these objected on sincere religious grounds, and yet were conscripted or imprisoned.

The same holds true of the problem involved in the socialization of religion. For is not this an explanation of the reluctance of men to apply vigorously to social conditions those ethical and spiritual standards which they reverence and in so large measure regard in their individual lives? Is this not one of the facts which explains the strange insistence of most men that religious ideals are impracticable, and cannot therefore be utilized in affairs of state? Is there any other one thing which takes us so far into the heart of the mystery of the prevailing immorality of politics and business? Does anything reveal more clearly the reason of diplomatic intrigue and general international disorder? The state, it is agreed, is something apart from the church; industry and politics have nothing to do with religion; therefore may social affairs be legitimately controlled by principles not of right but of expediency. So also, on the other hand, in the matter of persuading the church to act efficiently and uncompromisingly as an agent of social change! Is it not the separation of church and state which has helped to convince men that religion should concern itself only with private and not with public matters? More and more emphatically, in recent years, enlightened teachers have tried to persuade the churches to grapple at first hand with social reform—to lead in crusades for the emancipation of labor, the abolition of poverty, the establishment of international peace, in general the reconstruction of the present social

order on lines of justice and good will; and always have these prophets found themselves confronted by the tradition that the church has properly nothing to do with these problems of social relationships. The separation of church and state has done more than any other one thing to paralyze the churches as instruments of reform; and thus robbed society of the tremendous ethical reinforcement which under other circumstances the churches might well have brought to the task of healing social ills.

It is a heavy price which we have paid for our boon of religious liberty. The separation of church and state was a step in evolution which had to be taken; and when it was achieved, the greatest epoch in history began. But it is not the final step. Other things still remain to be done if man is to be truly free. Our task today is certainly to conserve the liberty which we have won, but also to remedy, if possible, those accompanying weaknesses and disadvantages which its winning has brought upon us. How can the evil consequence of the separation of church and state be obviated, and the liberty of the individual soul be still preserved?

V

The answer to this question is to be found in our new interpretation of democracy in terms of fellowship. What does this mean to our ideas of church and state?

The state, as it has long been constituted, and is still very largely constituted at the present time, may be defined not unfairly as a private corporation, or group of individuals, organized for the control and exploitation of the people. Louis XIV, of France, is the classic personification of this definition. "L'etat, c'est moi" was his proud declaration when his rule of the French people was brought into momentary question. The government of France, that is to say, was his private possession, to be utilized for the exploitation of the French people and to the advantage of himself and his underlings. Thomas Carlyle was referring to this fact when he drew the pathetic picture of "the widow (who) gathers nettles for her children's dinner, and a perfumed seigneur lunching in his palace (who) hath an alchemy whereby he will extract from her every third nettle and call it rent." Our American forefathers understood this conception perfectly when they organized the Revolution against George III. They knew that the English state was owned by this monarch, and was used against them through the pretence of Stamp Acts and Navigation Laws for purposes of private robbery and exploitation. So clearly did they see this fact that when they sat down to write the Constitution of the new government which they established on this side of the Atlantic, they were moved primarily by a conception of the state as something to be feared and guarded against. Every possible means was resorted to for taking away as much

power as possible from the national government and distributing this power among the several states, and through these states to their individual citizens. To this end, the most elaborate system of "checks and balances" was established, with the idea of enabling any one branch of the government to interfere successfully with the operations of other branches and thus prevent them automatically from controlling the people. They had seen the state, as in France, used by feudal barons to pile up riches and corruption. They had seen the state, as in England, owned and controlled by landlords and merchants for the exclusive benefit of their private fortunes. They had seen the state, as in Prussia and Russia, used by a military class for purposes of war, conquest and military glory. And these forefathers of ours did not propose that the state here in America should thus be seized and employed against the people. And they builded better than they knew! For since that Constitution was written, the great power of modern capitalism has arisen. Behind our visible government, as Theodore Roosevelt taught us in the days of the Progressive Party, has gradually grown up "the invisible government" of great manufacturers, industrial magnates, corporation monopolists, which has for years used the state in this country as a private machine for the economic exploitation of the people. Throughout the whole range of human history, down to within the last hundred years of our own time, the state has thus

been a private corporation, established and maintained for purposes of public exploitation; and it is the discovery of this fact which has led to the great democratic revolutions of modern times. First in the political realm and now in the economic realm, the people have risen in revolt against those who have used the state for their private advantage; and are now proposing to take possession of the state for themselves, and use the powers of this vast machine for public benefit. It is this work of transforming the state from a private to a public corporation which constitutes what we mean by the democratization of society. Democracy is fellowship—coöperation in the common service of the common life! It signifies therefore the outlawry from the state of the private individuals, kings and monopolists alike, who use the state to rob the people. It means the rising of the people for the conquest of the state that it may be shifted from private to public hands and thus devoted exclusively to universal human ends. That the state may be owned by the people, controlled by the people, and used for the people to the end of fellowship, is the high purpose of every democratic movement of our time.

If this be the definition of the state as it has existed always in the past, and very largely still in the present, what shall we say as to the church? Has this not also been a private corporation, used by private individuals for private purposes? There can be no question about this fact in the Middle Ages, for in those years the Roman church was

simply and solely a vast machine for plunder and exploitation. There never was a corporation more closely bound, more selfish, more corrupt than that organization of priests and prelates who owned the papacy and handed it along as a private inheritance from one generation to another. The Protestant Reformation ended this reign of iniquity and through the establishment of innumerable sects and denominations delivered mankind from bondage to this single ecclesiastical hierarchy. But when we look at those Protestant bodies, what do we find again but a set of private corporations? These churches are no longer corrupt in the medieval sense of the word; they are most of them moved by a fine spirit of piety, and are serving the cause of God and humanity as they truly understand it. But they are by nature institutions of private profit rather than of public service. Certainly in almost none of them is there any true spirit of democracy. Inside some few of these churches there are conditions of organization which are democratic, both in spirit and method; but the test of democracy is to be found not inside the church but at the portals of the church. What are the conditions of admission? What must a man do to become a member of this corporation? Ask this question, and immediately it is discovered that there are restrictions and obligations which make it impossible for other than a comparatively small fraction of the body of any community to enter into the life of any single church. Our American democracy, for example,

has to all intents and purposes repudiated every Protestant church by reason of the fact that the people have refused to join, in any large majority, these organizations. They insist that these churches make use of a tolerant democracy for the service, in each and every case, of their own private interests and advantages. Hence the attack upon the church as well as upon the state, by the new democratic spirit of our time! Just exactly as this spirit is seizing upon the state, that the state may be delivered from the hands of a few and passed over into the hands of all, so is this spirit making ready to seize upon our churches that they also may be delivered from the hands of the few and passed over to the hands of all. The purpose of the democratic movement of our time is fellowship. Which means the democratization of every social unit, which means in turn the transformation of all private corporations into public bodies, which means again in turn the mastery by the people of the social institutions which they have created and maintained!

VI

It is this changing character both of church and state, under the influence of the new democratic spirit, which is destined to end the separation of church and state as no longer necessary for the protection of religious liberty or for any other noble purpose. A democratized state will mean simply an organization owned and controlled by the people

for the transaction, in the highest and most efficient way, of social business. A democratized church will mean in the same way an organization owned and controlled by the people for the transaction, in the highest and most efficient way, of spiritual business. In both cases they will be coördinate branches of a single fellowship in which the people are at work for the expression and service of their common lives. The state, in other words, will be the community functioning politically; the church will be the community functioning spiritually. They will together be coördinate branches of the one all-inclusive community.

Take, for example, a little town in the northern part of New York! Suppose we went to this town on a certain Wednesday night, when the town meeting was being held. There we would see some two or three hundred persons gathered together as citizens for the consideration and transaction of the social business of the community. Now suppose we stayed over in this town until the following Sunday, and went to church. We would then discover that this town had a single church which was not denominational but "community" in character. The Methodist, Baptist, Universalist and Congregationalist churches, which once existed in the town, have been disbanded and their people have all come together into the one common church. When we entered this gathering on the Sunday morning and looked about us, we would discover that we were in the midst of exactly the same two or three

hundred persons whom he had seen in the town meeting on the previous Wednesday night. This church, in other words, is simply the community gathered together on Sunday morning for the fostering of the common religious life of the people, as the town meeting (the state) is the community gathered together on a Wednesday night for the consideration of the common political interests of the town. The members of this church are members not because they are Baptists, or Methodists, or Universalists; they are members of the church for the same reason that they are members of the town meeting—*because they are citizens!* In the one place as in the other, we have an institution belonging to all, used by all, and directed to the service of all. The community has found its common life through the realization of that fellowship which is at the heart of democracy, and has built these institutions of church and state which are necessary for the service of this life.

VII

In such an illustration do we see what is meant by the union of church and state through the operation of the democratic spirit. So long as the state is a private corporation, it cannot be joined to the church lest it exploit the spiritual needs of the people for private gain. So long as the church is also a private corporation, it cannot be joined to the state lest it exploit the social needs of the people for

private gain. But when both church and state alike have been transformed by the process of democratization into a free fellowship of the public life, each is joined to the other by a kind of divine necessity.

It is this which brings us to the crown and climax of our argument, which is the declaration of the reunion of church and state in the democratic era which is now before us! Church and state are to be absorbed, so that the one shall be indistinguishable from the other. This does not mean that the church shall absorb the state, or that the state shall absorb the church. *It means rather that church and state alike shall be absorbed by the community.* They shall be reunited not by directly joining the one to the other, but by joining both to that common life of the people of which they are each the expression. The state, in any true fellowship of democracy, is simply the people working out the problems of social life. The church, in any similar fellowship of democracy, is again the people working out the problems of spiritual life. We are leaving behind us our worn out and corrupt institutions. We are ending the reign of individuals or groups of individuals. We are bringing in the day of the people. And in and through the people shall the social institutions, most conspicuously church and state, be joined together for the service of what the people want and need.

Zechariah had the vision of what we are now dreaming when he saw the "man with the measur-

ing line in his hand” preparing to measure Jerusalem. “And behold, another angel went out to meet him,” who proclaimed unto him that Jerusalem should be a city without walls, “for Jehovah will be unto her a wall of fire roundabout and . . . be the glory in the midst of her.”¹ St. John, on Patmos, saw something of the same thing when he beheld the New Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven from God.” And he also saw one who was about to measure the city. And when he looked upon the city, he tells us that “he saw no temple therein; for the Lord God (was) the temple thereof.”² Here, from Old Testament prophet and New Testament seer, is the picture given of that “holy city” which is the city of the Lord. *The city*—that is the temple; the presence of God, the light and glory of the city! State is become church; church is become state; the people are God, and God is the people! Needed no longer are our old divisions and distinctions, for the freedom of the one is sanctioned by the fellowship of all, and the glory of God’s presence become the salvation of mankind.

¹ *Zechariah II.*

² *Revelation XXI.*



CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: PRINCIPLES

“It must be done, sir! It must be done! Our religion has been Judaized, it has been Romanized, it has been Orientalized, it has been Anglicized, and the time is at hand when it must be Americanized! Now, sir, you see what Americanizing is in politics; it means that a man shall have a vote because he is a man. . . . Just so a man’s soul has a vote in the spiritual community; and it doesn’t do, sir, or it won’t do long, to call him ‘schismatic’ and ‘heretic’ and those other wicked names that the murderous Inquisitors have left us to help along ‘peace and goodwill to men.’”

“It won’t be long, sir, before we have Americanized religion as we have Americanized government, and then, sir, every soul God sends into the world will be good in the face of all men for just so much of his inspiration as ‘giveth him understanding.’”

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, in

The Professor at the Breakfast Table

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: PRINCIPLES

I

Our argument brings us at last to the threshold of the new church which shall be the institutional embodiment of our new religion of democracy. We have seen the collapse which has come upon the Protestant churches¹ because of that reaction from the liberating influences of the Renaissance, which has ended in the intolerance, trivialities and basic private interests of the denominational order.² Coincident with this, we have seen that great movement of democracy springing first from the influences of the Reformation, and then breaking loose from the bonds of Protestantism, and sweeping on from the attainment of liberty to that farther goal of fellowship which is the "coefficient" and thus the guarantee of liberty.³ That this democracy in its political, economic and social phases is itself the true religion of modern times, the definite fulfillment of the gospel of the Nazarene prophet, we have found in that new basis of religion uncovered by the revolutionary upheavals of the Renaissance,

¹ See Chapter I.

² See Chapter II.

³ See Chapter III.

the Illumination and later periods of intellectual and spiritual awakening.¹ The implications of this discovery we have traced out in the relations of the sacred and secular,² the individual and society,³ church and state,⁴ as definite religious problems. The conclusion brings us to a concept of a society of free men, dedicated to the end of fellowship, developing out of its own needs and for the service of its own purposes, those native institutions which are the incarnation of its life. The state, the school—and now at last the church!

This new church has been anticipated, in one incidental feature or another, by nearly all the progressive religious movements of our time, for these have been feeling their way more or less unconsciously toward the attainment of that very goal which seems now to be at hand. Thus the new church of democracy is like all union and federated churches⁵ in reacting against the denominational divisions of Christendom. It shares with institutional churches⁶ their emphasis upon the social aspects of religion. It is at one with Unitarian and other liberal groups⁷ in freedom from dogma, reliance upon reason as the guide to truth, and insistence upon the worth of the life that now is. It follows the Positivist movement of Auguste Comte,⁸ which made so stirring an appeal to the

¹ See Chapter IV.

² See Chapter V.

³ See Chapter VI.

⁴ See Chapter VII.

⁵ See Page 68.

⁶ See Page 70.

⁷ See Pages 67, 122, 159, 169.

⁸ See Page 122.

leading intelligences of Victorian England, in its reverence for the scientific method and its deliberate exaltation of humanity. It sees in the Ethical Culture Society ¹ a forerunner in such vital matters as the rejection of creeds as a bond of union and the interpretation of life exclusively in terms of moral idealism.

Furthermore, this new church of the new democracy is like all churches in possessing those specific functions which distinguish a church *per se* from other social institutions. It is no mere secular agency. It is a church in the sense that it assembles the people on Sunday mornings for fellowship and communion in the high things of the spirit. It is a church in the sense that its ministers teach and preach, and thus lead the public counsels to heights of vision and understanding. It is a church in the sense that it solemnizes matrimony, christens little children, invests with dignity the last rites of the dead, and thus sanctifies in every way the permanent relationships of human life. It is a church in the sense that it serves as a school of moral idealism, a refuge from hardship and distress, a fountain of good works, a power-house for the generation of spiritual energy. It is a church in a thousand different ways in which men have understood and supported churches from the beginning of the world.

Yet is this church as new as the social democracy

¹ See Pages 122, 159.

in which it has its origin! Apart from the fundamental features of religious expression which are universal, this church represents a complete reversal of all former values, a new beginning in the field of spiritual organization. Other churches are *churches*, in the old traditional sense of being institutions apart for the salvation of mankind. The most progressive of them represent only cautious and uncompleted adaptations to the idea of man himself, preëminently in his social relationship, as the source of spiritual experience and hence the seat of spiritual authority. But this church is different! It is not a church at all, in the old sense of the word. *It is itself the community*, functioning in this instance spiritually, as in other instances it functions politically or educationally. For this reason we call it the Community Church, and define it in terms of its character as an expression of community idealism.

II

The Community Church is first of all to be described as *undenominational*. In this particular it offers the sharpest kind of contrast to the existing churches which it is so surely destined to supplant. These churches, as we have seen, are denominational institutions. They are identified primarily, that is, with a certain historical movement in theological thought or ecclesiastical organization, and only secondarily with those basic commu-

nity or social interests which comprise the fundamental life of the people. Thus as we walk the streets of any city or town, and look at the churches which we pass, we observe that this church is Methodist, that that church is Presbyterian, that this other church is Unitarian or Christian Science, and so on through all the long catalogue of Protestant sects. Each church, in other words, is a representative in the community of a certain organized religious movement which had its origin in a more or less remote age, perhaps in a foreign country, and which has its headquarters, so-called, in another city and sometimes even in another land. It stands here not as something which has grown up out of the community from within, as a spiritual expression of community life, but as something which has been imposed upon the community from without, as an expression of a form of thought and a way of life which may be as alien as the philosophies of India or Peru.

What has actually taken place a thousand times in new communities established on the frontier, or in new suburban or residential districts opened up on the outskirts of a great city, is an illustration of what we mean. Immediately after the people have begun to plant their homes in this community, the denominational representatives or field-secretaries begin to appear, along with merchants, druggists and real-estate agents; and each one proceeds to set up his own particular place of ecclesiastical business, and engage in feverish competition with

his rivals for business. To the extent that he succeeds in his work, he draws off little groups of people from the general life of the community, and identifies them religiously with interests which lie almost wholly outside the boundaries of the locality in which they live. The nearest that any of these denominational churches ever comes to growing up naturally out of the community, is when a few townspeople come together of their own accord, and undertake to organize a Baptist or a Methodist institution as an expression of the theological views and purposes which they hold in common. But even in this case, we have people going outside the community for help and association, and imposing upon the community, as an agent of propaganda, an institution which nobody wants but themselves.

The denominational church in any city or town is thus not only divisive, but dispersive in its influence. It comes into and abides in a community, frequently supported by outside capital, for the purpose of converting the people to some peculiar brand of religious thought; and when it has done this in the case of a few scores, it proceeds forthwith to separate these men and women from their neighbors, and identify their interests with those of an outside and perhaps very alien organization. Thus the members of a denominational church enjoy fellowship not primarily with their fellow-townsmen whom they know, and with whom they are associated in every other social activity, but

with their fellow-Baptists or Episcopalians or Greek Orthodox in some other part of the country or the world, whom they do not know, and with whom otherwise they are not in contact. As a Unitarian clergyman, for example, in a Massachusetts town, I was associated in spiritual fellowship not with my Congregational neighbor whom I saw daily, and with whom I worked intimately in other community affairs, but with Unitarian clergymen in Seattle, or Moosejaw, or Kalamazoo, whom I met not at all, or casually at some church conference. My church had for more than three-quarters of a century enjoyed an intimacy with denominational headquarters in Boston, which it had never enjoyed with its nearest neighbor, the Baptist church, located just across the street. For the first allegiance of a denominational church is not to its community but to its denomination! It deliberately cuts through the life of the community, and thus divides upon religious lines a citizenry which is otherwise united.

Now it is just this division, or dispersion, of religious life which the Community Church, faithful to its name, seeks earnestly to avoid. The Community Church sets itself apart from all other churches as they exist today, primarily because it accepts as the basis of its organization no denominational affiliation of any kind, but simply and solely the community in which it stands. It comes into being not as something imposed upon a town from without, but as a natural and spontaneous

outgrowth of the life of the town itself; and it represents not the particular ecclesiastical interests of any outside organization, but those universal human interests which bind the people of a town together as members of the same community. It holds the same relation to a town or city, as regards its origin and character, as any other public institution. When a new community is established, and the citizens come together to organize their common life, they establish a public school, a public library, a social or community center; and some time also they will establish a public, or community, church! All of these institutions, the church exactly like the school, belong properly to the people, serve the people, and express the democratic aspirations of the people. They are works of fellowship; and are true to their appointed function only as they express and serve ideals of fellowship.

It is because of its identification in this way with the general interests of community life that the Community Church is called a *community* church, and not a Baptist, or Presbyterian, or Universalist church. It is a community church because it draws its life directly and exclusively from the community in which it is placed. It is a community church because it turns back into the community, in forms of leadership and public service, the life which it has thus developed. Its influence is not dispersive, but concentrative. It gathers all the people of a single community into a single organi-

zation of this community, and dedicates them primarily to the welfare of this community. Its members pledge no allegiance, and seek no end, but that of the community in which they live and those ever widening concentric circles of community life of which the local community is the beginning. Of course as the community church movement develops, there will be many community churches in many cities and towns; and in the larger cities, there will be different community churches in different neighborhoods. These churches will be certain to seek association with one another in some form of fellowship and brotherhood. But this fellowship will never be a denomination; will never seek to impose itself upon any community; and will never draw to itself that primary devotion of the individual member, which properly belongs to the community alone. The people of a neighborhood, gathered together in a church for work and worship, as their children are gathered together in a school for education—this is the first picture of the Community Church which we would present.

Incidentally, also, it may be said that this is the one idea which offers any prospect of a solution of the problem of denominationalism. Pathetically strenuous efforts are now being made on every hand, as we have seen, to end the scandal of sectarian division. The cry of "church unity" is heard today more often than any other slogan. Conferences are being held, organizations formed, programs formulated, all to the end of bringing to-

gether into a single body the churches which have so long been severed from one another. Nothing, however, seems to be accomplished, for what should be the obvious reason that the only basis proposed by anybody inside the churches for their reunion, is that congeries of theological ideas and purposes which has from the beginning been their occasion of division. What is needed is a wholly new basis of organization, a unit of integration altogether outside the area of old-time controversy and intolerance. And where can this be found save in that community which is now gathering to itself all the activities of our modern social democracy? We shall get rid of denominationalism, with all its waste, inefficiency and unbrotherliness, only when we have resolutely shifted the center of gravity in religion from theology to life, from the church to society.

III

If we turn back now to the type of church with which we are ordinarily familiar, we discover that a second characteristic is its nature as a private, in contrast to a public, institution. This church stands in the community as the representative of a certain kind of theology, a certain habit of worship, or even a certain spirit or point of view in matters religious. As such it is supported and governed as a private corporation for the propagation of a private kind of theology, or worship, or point of view. Every attempt, of course, is made

to reach the public, and the church has every appearance of being a genuinely public institution. Thus it opens its doors freely on Sunday mornings, welcomes all who would come to its services of worship, and usually today places free seats at their disposal. Furthermore it makes a practice of inviting the public to join its ranks, and thus assumes a fine and usually sincere attitude of democratic hospitality. But the test of a church's character in this regard is the organization not of its congregation but of its membership. When we come to the question of actually "joining a church," as it is called, we find at once that there are conditions of admission. These conditions may involve acceptance of a creed, confession of faith in Christ Jesus, conformity to prescribed practices of worship, in general, sympathy with certain theological or spiritual habits of mind. They may be said to run these days all the way from the most rigid tenets of orthodoxy to the more tenuous and intangible principles of liberalism. In essence, however, they all mean the same thing—that a candidate for membership must "belong" before he can be received. The church, in other words, is exactly like a club—*i. e.*, a private institution controlled by a private group of persons for the service of private interests. In this, there is nothing illegitimate; a club is a perfectly proper type of organization in a democracy. But a club, be it said, is a *club*, whether it be religious or secular in character, and is not to be confused

with a church which should include the whole and not a fragment of the community.

The inevitably private character of the churches we know today, is explained by the fact that centuries of tradition have taught us to regard religion as a private affair. We look upon it as a matter which concerns the individual—what is more, concerns those intimate inner experiences of an individual's life into which no other person is able, or should properly be willing, to intrude. What is more natural, therefore, than that religion should be held apart from the public gaze, and protected by shrines and sanctuaries? What more can we ask than that devout souls, who have organized a temple for the cherishing of their own particular faith, shall be willing to share it with others on terms which will guarantee its security from profanation? If the church is thus a private institution, it is only because religion is by its very nature a private experience. To ask a church to be public, in the sense that a school or community center, for example, is public, is to ask it to be something less, or at least other, than it is.

With this interpretation of religion, as applied to the problem of its social organization, the Community Church takes decisive issue. What is essential in religion, it declares, is not what is peculiar to this or that individual life, but what is common to all. Religion is a universal instinct of the soul. It is "the property of every human

being," says William Ellery Channing.¹ Rooted deep in the soul of human nature, it is rightly to be described as a racial characteristic. Men are in nothing so much alike as in their experience of religion, unless it be in their search for fellowship on the basis of this experience. It is this search which produced the church, which "grew," says Channing again, "out of the principles and feelings of human nature. Our nature is social. We cannot live alone. We cannot shut up any great feeling in our hearts. We seek for others to partake it with us. . . . In this law of our nature the church has its origin."² Religion, in other words, is "the most social of all our sentiments." The church, therefore, is properly to be regarded as the community, or the common life, functioning in the higher ranges of its endeavor; and any church which is faithful to the impulse which produced it, must by that very token be universal.

It is this which makes the Community Church to be distinctively a public institution. It refuses to take on the aspects of a club, or a chapel, or a guarded shrine; rather does it seek analogy with the public school, the public library, the social center, or the courts of law. Today in spirit, tomorrow in legal fact, this church belongs to the people, for them to use as their own. The Community Church, in other words, makes its membership coincident with citizenship in the community in which it is planted. It has no terms of admis-

¹ See sermon on "Spiritual Freedom" in *Works*, page 179.

² See sermon on "The Church" in *Works*, page 431.

sion to its fellowship, theological or otherwise. Any man or woman who is a citizen, or even a resident, of the community, is by virtue of that one fact alone a member of the church. He is as free to come to the church and exercise his rights of membership, as he is free to take his child to the public school to receive the advantages of an education, or himself to go to the library to read its books, or to the ballot-box to cast his vote. Every man, of course, will not want to exercise his right of membership in the Community Church, as every man does not choose to exercise his rights of citizenship in the state. This is a matter of individual choice. The point is that any man who wants to do so, can do so. Nobody can say him nay. If he is excluded from the church, he must exclude himself.

The Community Church is thus the community functioning spiritually. It is democracy expressing itself socially in terms of moral and spiritual idealism. It is the people at work together in the realm of their own souls. It is this conception which brings us face to face with the prospect of the reunion of church and state; but in this there is no peril, as we have seen, provided that the state is free, and the church unbound by theological dogmas or ecclesiastical tyrannies. Says Prof. Durant Drake, of Vassar College, "The union of church and state was dangerous so long as the church was autocratic and dogmatic; make it democratic, a federation of free local organizations;

make it undogmatic, a place where thought may be free and fearless, and we can again let it become an institution belonging to the community as a whole.”¹

IV

This brings us to a third point of definition! The churches, as we know them today, are identified with some kind of creed, or statement of belief, which constitutes an essential part of their organized life. They take pains to indicate their conviction that theology, to some extent or other, is a necessary constituent of religion. Thus most churches have elaborate creeds, and offer these as a condition of admission to their fellowship. In recent years, especially in the so-called liberal churches, these creeds have largely been done away with; but even here there is left an affirmation or understanding which would exclude from fellowship any member of the community who was an atheist or non-Christian. Even those radical churches, which have freed themselves from all theological bonds, have gone to the other extreme of setting up a structure of denial which is as exclusive as any of the creeds of Christendom. The so-called People's Churches, which sprang up in the days of the free-thought controversy, were so dogmatic in their repudiation of every accepted doctrine of Christian faith, that it was quite impossible for any conservative person to enjoy

¹ See his book, *Shall We Stand by the Church?* page 151.

fellowship among their members. Thus either positively or negatively, theology has intruded, and has made the church a partisan of orthodox, liberal, or radical interpretations of religious thought.

Now the Community Church divorces itself absolutely from theology and the theological point of view. Neither the acceptance nor the rejection of a creed is recognized as having any significance. What a man believes or does not believe is a matter of no concern to the church *as a church*, for theology in all its aspects, both positive and negative, has no place in the life of the institution. Theology belongs properly to the individual, who must believe something about the universe in which he lives, and must formulate his beliefs into some kind of a theology. But a church as such cannot have such a theology, save as a group of individuals impose their ideas upon their fellows, or all of them together engage in the nefarious business of compromise for the sake of an agreement. Theology, by which we mean religious philosophy, has no more place in the church than political philosophy in the state. What would we think, for example, if men should suddenly undertake to impose the creed of the Republican Party upon the nation, to the end that all citizens would have to be Republicans as a condition of retaining their citizenship? What *did* we think when, in New York State in 1920, attempt was made to identify the commonwealth with the orthodox political philosophy of the Democratic and Republican

parties, to the extent at least that Socialists were not allowed to send their chosen representatives to the Assembly at Albany? Such an act, of course, we recognize in our sober moments as a flat betrayal of the ideals of our national life. America is not a Republican, or a Democratic, or a Socialistic state. It is altogether outside of existing philosophies of politics. Individual men can be Republicans, Democrats, or Socialists, if they will; but the state itself can know no party. The essence of democracy is the free spirit—the right of every citizen, without jeopardizing his citizenship, to think as he will upon matters political; and the incarnation of this spirit in universal fellowship.

The application of this principle to the church involves the relegation of all matters of theology where they properly belong—to the unfettered thought and conviction of the individual. What holds the members of the Community Church together is not identity of belief on any religious issue—not the doctrine of the soul, nor the hope of immortality, nor even the concept of a Divine Being; but the sense of a common need, the desire for common welfare, the consciousness of membership one with another in all the things of life. If a man is a citizen of the community, we have said, he is by reason of that fact a member of the church. It would be as absurd and unjust to shut him out because he is a materialist, a theosophist, a spiritualist, a Unitarian, or a Methodist, as it

would be to exclude him from society because he is a Republican or a Socialist. The Community Church, like the democratic state, is inclusive. Membership in the one, like citizenship in the other, is extended to all on the basis not of ideas but of human nature. Which means again that the Community Church is the *community!*

V

A fourth point of importance in the definition of the Community Church is its social character and purpose. Religion, as we have seen, is essentially social in its nature. It has its origin in the sympathies of men, in their passion for one another. Yet are the traditional churches all about us preëminently individualistic in temper. In this the liberal churches are identical with the orthodox, for while the former have indeed substituted ethical for theological standards of activity, yet like the latter they still make the individual soul the prime object of concern, and in the cultural perfection of the soul, find the attainment of their end.

The Community Church, *per contra*, substitutes the social group for the separate individual. It interprets religion primarily in terms of social reconstruction, and dedicates its members primarily to the fulfillment of social idealism. So distinctive to the community church movement of our time is this note of creative service in so-

ciety, that it is not uncommon to find churches described as "community churches" for no other reason than that they accept community or social welfare as the first article of their creed, and develop social machinery for the practice of their faith.¹ Much more than this is required, as we are just now seeing, to make a genuine and fully-developed community church; but this aspect of social consciousness and activity is none the less indispensable. No church which lacks the social vision can qualify as a community church. Any church which catches this social vision, is to that extent already become a community church. Programs of social change, therefore, rather than methods of individual regeneration, take first place in the life of this type of church. It seeks primarily to save society which is "the one body," and the individual only as a "member" of this "body." Thus does it mark its recognition of the transition in religion from theology to sociology, and its acceptance of that humanistic interpretation of life which is the basis of this religion!

VI

A final question pertains to the relation of the Community Church to Christianity. Is the Community Church a Christian church, like the churches with which we are familiar; or does it

¹"The Community Church includes any church which maintains an adequate program of service for the community as a whole"—Orrin W. Auman, in *The Community Churchman*, July 1921.

put Christianity away and seek to present itself as not merely an undenominational, but a universal church?

In answer to this inquiry, it must be stated that the overwhelming majority of community churches which are appearing today, are Christian churches. This is an inevitable corollary of the fact, so often cited in these pages, that the Community Church is to be understood fundamentally as that type of religious institution which exists for the purpose of giving organized expression to the spiritual life of the society in the midst of which it is placed. It is first and foremost the community seeking to express and organize itself in terms of religious experience. In this sense the Community Church must represent, in the beginning at least, that which is already present in the hearts and minds of the people who comprise the community. In addition, of course, it attempts to develop, as well as to express, the higher realities of the spiritual life. But the Community Church is distinctive from all other churches in this particular—that it begins where the people are, and gathers them together at that point where they have already learned to stand together as neighbors and fellow-citizens. In a community, therefore, which is already Christian, the Community Church is itself a Christian institution. Where the citizens all accept Jesus as their saviour or leader, the church which they sustain as fellow members is naturally dedicated to the service of the Nazarene. As he

is already, in the individual experience of the men and women concerned, the personal incarnation of spiritual idealism, so is he naturally to them as well the headstone of the church edifice. Nothing else is possible if the Community Church is to be true to itself as the embodiment of the religious side of the community life. As well expect a public school to teach Hebrew to the children of the Gentiles, or the public library to gather French books for the reading of an English-speaking town, as to expect a community church to remove Jesus from the high pinnacle of his unique spiritual eminence in a community where no other prophet of the free spirit is known or adored. In most communities, therefore, at present, the Community Church is naturally and inevitably a Christian church. Nothing else is to be expected, or indeed, from the standpoint of true democratic idealism, to be desired.

In its ultimate form, however, the Community Church cannot be a Christian church. On the one hand, such identification with Christianity would constitute a betrayal of the idea of religion as a universal instinct of human nature. All men, as we have seen, are naturally religious, and seek to give expression to the spiritual impulses which move within their souls. It is this fact which has produced the great variety of religions which have appeared in different ages and places, and under the inspiration of different prophets. All of these religions must be regarded from this view-

point as, within their limits, sound and good. All are surely to be recognized as integral parts of the sum total of human experience in the spiritual realm. Christianity at its best is only one particular expression of the one spirit, determined by prophetic leadership, by historical accident, by intellectual modes of thought, by great crises in moral and social life. The same thing is true of Judaism, as of Confucianism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism. Back of all these faiths is the soul. When the great Parliament of Religions gathered in Chicago in 1893, the world saw therein the promise of the one religion which should some day end all differences of sect and creed, and unite mankind in the one great family of God. Now the Community Church, if faithful to itself, is but an attempt to embody in a single church what was embodied universally in that Parliament. It seeks to take men where they are already gathered together and living the common life, and lead them to the spiritual fulfilment of this social promise.

On the other hand, the Community Church cannot be in any exclusive sense a Christian church, for the reason that it must be faithful to the ideal of the community as the unit of spiritual integration. Now the community, as we know it at least in this country, has citizens who are not Christians. Here in our civic family are Jews, Bahaists, Hindus, Buddhists, and Shintoists. Shall the distinction between Episcopalians and Unitarians, between Catholics and Protestants, now be denied;

and this distinction between Christians and so-called pagans be acknowledged? If so, where is our community? If the non-Christian is fit to be a citizen of the state, why should he not also be fit to be a member of the church? What I see in Jesus, my Jewish brother sees in Isaiah, my Bahaist brother in Baha O'lla, my Buddhist brother in Buddha. But behind the prophet, who means the most to each, there stands the one supreme ideal of truth and love; and we unite, if not in the person, then in the spirit of which the person is the incarnation.

The Community Church, therefore, must be more than a Christian church. If it is to reflect with any accuracy the life of the community, it must recognize spiritually every citizen. Take the situation in our large cities, for example, where Christians no longer constitute the whole or even a predominant part of the population. In the Borough of Manhattan in Greater New York, in a population of less than three millions, there are considerably more than one million Jews. In other words, one person out of every two or three in this great area has no connection of any kind with Christianity. By tradition, and in certain cases by personal conviction, these men and women are members of another race, children of another culture, the followers of prophets known to Christianity only as the forerunners of the Christ. These persons, it is to be noted, are members of the community; they are recognized on equal terms

with Christians as neighbors and citizens. They vote, they do business, they walk the streets, they rear families and sustain homes, just as their Christian contemporaries do. They are admitted in every way into the community life of their city. Indeed, in many of the institutions of the city, as in the theatres and newspapers, they have long since become the predominant factors. Now what shall the Community Church do, if these people desire to be members of such a church, as they are already members of such a community? If it is true to itself, must not the Community Church, under such circumstances, organize itself on lines which are not exclusively Christian? Already it proclaims itself as distinctive from all other churches in the one great fact, among others, that its doors are flung wide open to all who live in and contribute to the community life. Fidelity to this proclamation surely means that in such a place as Manhattan, Jews must be made as welcome as Christians! And let it be noted that this welcome must be offered to them as *Jews*, for our Hebrew comrades have as much right to preserve fidelity to Israel as Christians have to remain loyal to Christianity.

The logic of community religion, in other words, involves ultimately an escape from Christianity, as it has already involved an escape from Presbyterianism or Congregationalism. There can be no stopping short of the far and high goal of universal religion. In saying this, let it be noted with all

emphasis that the Community Church is not to be regarded in any sense as anti-Christian. We have already learned that, in eschewing denominationalism, the Community Church is not anti-denominational. It has no quarrel with Presbyterianism, or Unitarianism, or any other Protestant sect. It recognizes them all as having played their part in history, and as representing important aspects of thought and moral aspiration; and then seeks to unite them on that high plane of spiritual vision where they properly belong. So in its attitude toward Christianity! The Community Church seeks not to oppose Christianity, or to weaken it, or even to ignore it. On the contrary, it would receive it as one of the noblest and most beneficent of world religions, and build it into the structure of the new universal religion which is some day to capture the imagination and hold the allegiance of mankind. The Community Church, so far from being anti-Christian, is to be regarded as Christianity *plus*. It takes Christianity for what it is, and then adds to it those contributions of experience and idealism which can come from other races and other faiths. The main thing is that the altar of community religion shall be so wide and beautiful that all men will come to it gladly, and find there companionship alike with God and man. Like Jesus himself, the Community Church will thus seek not to destroy Christianity but to fulfill it.

In this sense of the word, may it not be sug-

gested that to just the extent that the Community Church transcends the limitations of Christianity, it becomes truly Christian? May we not dare to assert that the Community Church, which has a welcome alike for "Jew and Gentile, bond and free," is the one church which really represents today that spirit which was in Jesus? We search the Gospels in vain to find any evidence that the circle of Jesus's disciples was closed to any man who would enter it in the spirit of love. It is impossible to carry back into his day the sectarian differences which now divide the Protestant world. Equally difficult is it to recognize in his spirit or practice any distinction between Christian or Jew or pagan. Indeed, the word "Christian" did not appear in the lifetime of Jesus at all. It was only later, when men and women had begun to narrow their minds, and open their hearts to prejudice and fear, that a certain group of those who followed Jesus came to be known in Antioch as "Christians." Certainly if Christianity is to be what Jesus intended it to be, it must be at least as inclusive as his own spirit. And this, as we know, was as wide as the circle of humanity and as deep as the depths of human woe. We are inclined to believe, therefore, that a universal religion marks the ultimate fulfillment of the true Christian religion; and that the Community Church, therefore, in this one distinctive aspect of universality, may be regarded in the highest and best sense of the word as "Christian."

VII

Such are some of the principles and purposes which distinguish the Community Church from the typical institutions of religion with which we are familiar. Is it not possible to summarize this contrast by stating that the Community Church acts upon the idea that the community and not the church is the central thing—that the community is “the real presence” of God, the repository of his truth and the realization of his Kingdom? The ordinary church of our time, and every time, regards itself as a basic, a holy thing. It thinks of itself as “coming down out of heaven from God,” and thus bringing revelation and salvation unto men. The more liberal churches, of course, do not speak of themselves in this way. But these churches still believe that they have something indispensable to give to the community, that men and women should come to them for instruction and conversion, that without their ministrations the world would be without religion and therefore without redemption. To some extent or other every church, orthodox and liberal alike, is guilty of the fundamental blasphemy of believing that society was made for the church and not the church for society.

Now the Community Church does the revolutionary thing of avoiding this exaltation of itself. It makes the community the primary thing, and the church the secondary! Emerson once said that the

Bible might be destroyed from cover to cover, without loss; for in such case, men would write it again from out their own inspired souls. Similarly may we say of the churches, that they also might be destroyed without loss; for if this were done, the people would straightway rear new churches to give voice to their needs and service to their ideals. Indeed there would be gain in this process in the end; for, in place of institutions which represent ideas and methods which have not died out with the generations which produced them, we should have institutions instinct with the life of *this* time, and vital therefore with its hopes.

It is something of this desired substitution of new for old which is now proceeding in the present community church movement. This phenomenon represents the creative spirit of democracy at work in the chaotic field of religion. It is the people proclaiming their native spiritual power, recognizing that God is "in the midst of them," building anew tall altars on which he may be worshiped and made known. The Community Church is proud of the fact that it comes not "down out of heaven," but up from the earth. It rejoices in the assurance that its roots are deep in the soil of human hearts. It acknowledges that it is from the people that it draws its life, and to the people, therefore, that it must make return. The Community Church is rightly named. It is not primarily a church at all; rather is it the community in spiritual action. Like every other democratic institution—the state,

the school, the social center—it is the work of men's hands, the instrument of men's hearts, the expression of men's souls. Not the people for the church, but the church for the people—this is the secret of this new hope.

VIII

Such in principle is the Community Church, which is destined so surely to succeed the traditional churches of Protestantism. These churches are dead, or are now dying. The new democratic spirit of the times has made these institutions as impossible as vehicles of the contemporary religious consciousness, as the medieval church of Rome. A new Renaissance is upon us which makes inevitable a new and greater reformation. And the church of this reformation is the church not of another Luther or John Calvin—not of any man or Bible or creed—but of the people. Democracy is coming at last into its own, in religion as in politics and industry; and the church of democracy is none other than this which we are learning now to call the Community Church.



CHAPTER IX

**THE COMMUNITY CHURCH:
ORGANIZATION, MESSAGE AND WORK**

“You must understand, this is no dead pile of stone and unmeaning timber. *It is a living thing. . . .* When you enter it you hear a sound—a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men’s souls—that is, if you have ears. If you have eyes, you will presently see the church itself—a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. . . . The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes: the sweet human flesh of men and women is moulded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable: the faces of little children laugh out from every corner-stone: the terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building—building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness: sometimes in blinding light: now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish: now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. Sometimes, in the silence of the night-time, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome—the comrades that have climbed ahead.”

CHARLES RANN KENNEDY, in

The Servant in the House

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: ORGANIZATION, MESSAGE AND WORK

I

In turning to the discussion of such problems as those pertaining to the organization, message and work of the Community Church, we come face to face with matters of prophecy. The principles of the Community Church are already evident as a present reality of thought. These more practical questions, however, have yet to be worked out in terms not of abstract speculation but of concrete experience. We have here phenomena which are subject to development, and therefore wait for the future for their answer.

II

We may be fairly definite, however, in our forecast of the organization of the Community Church, for the reason that this represents simply the task of extending into the religious field those ideas and practices of democratic relationship which have already been made familiar to us in the field of politics. Three hundred years of Congregational-

ism which, ecclesiastically speaking, is democracy applied to the problem of church government, have done much to point us the way.

From this point of view, we may say that the Community Church, after the pattern of the community out of which it springs, will be controlled on the basis of a universal franchise. All members will have equal voice in the management of the church, in other words, just as all citizens have equal voice in the management of the municipality or the state. There will be no priestly offices of any kind—no bishops or presbyters, deacons or elders—and therefore no centralized authority. There will be no division between church and parish, except as such division may be made necessary by the laws of the state. There will simply be the one body of the congregation inside the church, as there is the one body of the citizenry outside the church. This body will do business on the basis of the town meeting idea; it will elect its own officers, manage its own finances, own and control its own property until such time as it is taken over by the community, discuss and determine its own policy and practice. In one word, the Community Church will act as the community acts, for the church *is* the community functioning in the religious field.

The executive direction of the Community Church will be placed in the hands of a popularly elected board of managers, composed of men and women chosen by vote of the people for comparatively short terms of office. There will be no qualifications for

membership on this board, financial or otherwise, save such personal qualifications of character, ability, and interest in the church, as would naturally commend themselves to the judgment of a popular constituency. There will be standing committees, as for example a finance committee, chosen by the people and responsible to the people; and special committees appointed on frequent occasions for special work. The autocratic control of a self-perpetuating vestry, or an independent and irresponsible board of trustees, will be altogether unknown. The Community Church will control its officers as directly as a town meeting controls its selectmen and its clerk.

The financial support of the Community Church will be democratic to the core—which means that it will be established on the basis of individual voluntary subscriptions! That ancient and hoary abomination, the pew-rental system, will be swept out of the Community Church as Jesus swept the money-changers out of the Temple at Jerusalem. It is by no means one of the least of the merits of this institution that it tends to end forever the separation in the Lord's house of rich and poor, of those able and those not able to pay. Many of our existing churches, of course, have "free seats," as they are called; but hospitality extended to the general public, however graciously, by a private group of persons owning and controlling a church, is one thing, and the organization of this church on a basis of public ownership and control is another

and very different thing. The Community Church abolishes pew-rentals not as an act of hospitality or patronage merely, but as a step in the sweeping process of socialization. The door is open to anybody who will enter, not merely to the pew at the services of worship on Sunday, but to the governing constituency of the organization at the annual business meeting on Monday. Every citizen, as we have said so often, has equal rights of ownership, as well as use, in the Community Church; and the sign or symbol of his exercise of this right is his subscription, large or small, to the institution's support.

Lastly, it should be emphasized that the real Community Church will have an equipment adequate to meet the needs of community, and not merely the traditional parish, life. This does not mean the waste and extravagance involved in the erection of elaborate institutional buildings. It means simply a church house with offices, class rooms, assembly rooms, libraries, and a theatre recognized as important in every way as the auditorium for Sunday worship. Such equipment, of course, implies a "faculty ministry"—not one clergyman worked to death, degraded to the indignities of a Jack-of-all-trades, handy at everything and too tired and distracted to be preëminently good at anything; but a group of men, each one trained to the practice of a single profession—preaching, religious education, personal ministrations, social service, general management—and each

one a leader in his department. Such a ministry will be easy to maintain when one community church has taken the place of ten or a dozen competing denominational churches, and resources therefore have been pooled. The Community Church is intended to be what all too few churches have ever been in the past—*efficient!* It will be adequately equipped for the great task of the Kingdom.

III

In our discussion of the message and work of the Community Church, we can be much less definite and confident than in our discussion of the various aspects of its organization. For organization, like principles, is bound to be much the same wherever in a democracy the new type of religious institution makes its appearance. The message and work of a Community Church, however, will vary according to the needs of the community in which it is placed, the character of the people who compose its membership, and the kind of leaders which it develops. A Community Church in a prosperous suburban town is likely to speak a somewhat different message to the world than a Community Church located in a grimy and poverty-stricken factory village. A Community Church in a rural district, where farming is the occupation of the people, is likely to undertake a different work from that attempted by a Community Church planted in the heart of a great municipality. There can be no

uniformity in matters of this kind—nor should there be! For the very virtue of the Community Church is the fact that it is an institution growing out of the soil of the community and therefore giving expression to the peculiar character and needs of the community.

The ordinary denominational church, with which we are familiar, comes to a city or a town with a message and work that are definitely prepared beforehand, like the play produced by a group of strolling players. An Episcopal chapel in a little seaside village goes through the same performance as a great cathedral in the city. A Presbyterian church speaks the same message to a group of day laborers on the lower East Side as to a group of prosperous idlers on upper Fifth Avenue. If the word and work are by some chance adapted to the community to which they are offered¹ the church enjoys some measure of prosperity. If they are not adapted, however, the church languishes and ultimately dies, like an exotic plant, or is deliberately kept alive by the hot-house ministrations of the "home office." Seldom does the denominational church think of making itself over to suit the needs of the particular people whom it has come to serve, and thus become an accurate expression of their lives. The whole idea is that the people must be made over, or converted, to the church, not the church to the people! The ordinary sectarian church would rather die, or abandon a community as though its

¹ As by the great Labor Temple in New York, a community church in all but name!

people had no religion to be cultivated or directed, than abate one jot or tittle of its Methodism, Episcopalianism or Unitarianism. With the Community Church, however, it is different. This institution, as we have said so many times, is a product of the community's life, and therefore as sensitive as an organism to its environment. It is as native to the soil as the pine tree to the state of Maine, or the palm tree to the state of Florida. A Community Church at any one time will be what its community is at that same time. And as there are various communities, so also will there be various community churches. The principles and organization of these churches must necessarily be very much the same; but their message and work can conform to no one type, and measure up to no one standard. Just as it takes all kinds of people to make a world, so must it take all kinds of community churches to make a religion!

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties involved in the matter, there are certain things that may be said about the message and work of a Community Church. There are uniform characteristics that are bound to appear, just because the Community Church is a community church, and not specifically a Baptist, or Methodist, or Universalist church.

IV

In the first place, as regards the message of the Community Church, it must be conceded that it

will be characterized by a freedom which is unprecedented in the history of Christianity. This emancipation of thought and speech will come about, not because of any superior virtue in the people who compose the Community Church; they will be the same persons that they were when they were Presbyterians or Congregationalists. It will come about simply as a result of the shift of allegiance from the particular denomination to the whole community. The pulpit will be delivered because it will be responsible to a public sentiment which represents all elements of opinion, and not to an ecclesiastical orthodoxy which represents but one.

The trouble in this matter of freedom in our churches can be traced straight back to the simple fact that the typical church is a private institution, supported by a selected group of persons for the propagation of a sectarian interpretation of religion. The clergyman, under ordinary conditions, is not a timid or hidebound person; he expresses his opinion at the town meeting, or at the ballot-box, or in the newspaper columns, as freely as any other man. The members of the church are not bigoted persecutors; in the every-day affairs of life they are tolerant of differing opinions. Put these people together in the normal relations of community activity, and there is freedom for the formation and expression of individual opinion. But in the church the relations are not normal, but abnormal. When minister and people enter the church on

Sunday morning, they are no longer citizens together but—Presbyterians, let us say! What it is to be a Presbyterian has been determined by centuries of tradition and practice. It is written down in creeds, and published in sacraments and rites of worship. The very moment that Presbyterians assemble for any purpose as Presbyterians, and not as citizens, they are conscious of a certain standard to which they must conform, as the members of an orchestra are conscious of a certain pitch to which they must tune their instruments. The same people assembled by accident as citizens of the community, would practice entire freedom of utterance and conviction; but assembled by intention as Presbyterians, they become bound at once by the standard of the faith “once committed to the saints,” and now imposed upon themselves. Every one is mindful of a standard to be maintained—of truth not to be discovered but preserved. Any deviation from the pitch, so to speak, is instantly detected, and awakens loyalty to defensive action. Not public sentiment, with its large varieties of opinion, but the orthodoxy of the inner circle, is here in control; and freedom, therefore, banished from the sanctuary.

Now in the Community Church, of course, all this will be changed. When the members of a Community Church come together on a Sunday morning, they assemble not as members of a denomination but as citizens of the community. They represent all varieties of theological opinion

in the church, exactly as they represent all varieties of political opinion in the town; and naturally enough, they expect the minister to "say his say" on the questions under discussion in the pulpit with the same freedom and candor that they expect the mayor or the governor, or any other political leader, to exercise on the platform. Public sentiment, in other words, is the controlling factor inside the Community Church as well as outside; and as this public sentiment includes all elements of opinion, it will, naturally, be tolerant of these elements. Of course, in every community, there are prevailing, or majority, opinions; and if the minister of the Community Church sets himself deliberately against this opinion on any burning issue, he will inevitably suffer. But he will suffer not in freedom, but in popularity! So also there are occasions, as for example in war times, when public sentiment runs high, and under provocation becomes as intolerant and cruel as any inquisition of the Middle Ages. It is probable, for example, that under the conditions current here in America since 1917, the freedom of an ideal Community Church would have suffered as terribly as the freedom of the public schools. But this is an abnormal condition of hysteria and panic, from which it is unfair to draw conclusions. Furthermore it is distinctly to be noted that, in this terrific period, it was the denominational churches which went under first, and the public institutions last. Freedom disappeared from the churches long before it did

from the state. But it must be frankly admitted that the Community Church cannot escape the frailties of human nature. It will always suffer from the same diseases that prey upon the community at large. But the Community Church will at least be as free as the community in which it is placed; and to this extent freer than the great majority of private institutions. When a church is responsible not to a selected group of persons, who have but one opinion on any issue which concerns their life as a sect, but to all the people who have all sorts of opinions on all the issues which concern their life as a community, we shall have at last a free church, worthy of the democracy of which it is the highest spiritual expression.

Again, in speaking of the message of the Community Church, we would emphasize that this message will have a great deal to do with matters of theological discussion. It has already been made plain that the Community Church has no creeds of any kind. Theology is taken out of the institution and handed over to the individual; it is a matter always not of institutional fiat but of individual opinion! But it is not to be assumed from this fact that all theological problems are ruled out, or of their own accord disappear, from the community pulpit. Such a thing is impossible, even if it were desirable, which it is not! For man is a theological animal just as truly as he is a religious animal. He lives gladly and curiously in the realm of the intellect. He is so constituted by nature that he wants

answers to questions, solutions to problems. When he encounters the unknown, every instinct of his being demands that this unknown be transformed as speedily and surely as possible into the known. Now in religion he finds more questions unanswered and problems unsolved than in any other field of experience. Here the unknown stretched to bounds that baffle calculation, to say nothing of comprehension. Here, therefore, his demands are most insistent. And it is nothing more nor less than the honest attempts of his intellect to satisfy these demands that constitute what we mean by theology. The trouble with our churches in the past is not that they have theologized, but that they have set arbitrary limits to the process of theologizing. They have been guilty of the monstrous crime of asserting that our questions about the infinite and the eternal have been answered, that the unknown has been explored to the very end. They have even gone so far as to state the secret of creation, and to insist upon our accepting this statement as a revelation from God. With the result that theology, to say nothing of its falsity, has been made absolutely a dead thing! It has become a matter of formula and rote. Nobody has any interest in what any conventional theologian has to say, for everybody knows what he will say before he begins. The doctrines have been taught him by the church, and it is his business, parrot-like, to repeat them.

The Community Church, now, is destined, in course of time, to restore theology to its original

position as a science of inquiry. By refusing to offer any dogmatic solution of what must always remain in the very nature of the case a mystery, and by encouraging every individual to enter upon his own quest of the unknown and bring back his own testimony of discovery and correction, the Community Church will lift theology onto a plane of interest as high as that of any of the great sciences of our time. The minister will not only be expected but requested to discuss the vast problems of God, immortality, the origin and character of the soul. People will assemble to hear him, as they gather to hear a lecture on astronomy or geographical exploration. The sermon, if well done, will be as fascinating as a novel. For nobody will know, as they know now, what conclusion will be reached. The minister may work out to a belief in God, or he may not. He may accept the transcendental deity of the idealistic philosophy, or he may find more satisfaction and comfort in the idea of an evolving God who is still finding his way and trying his experiments. In discussing immortality, he may accept the doctrine or reject it, as the evidence may seem to him to dictate. The point is that in a Community Church, freed from every last vestige of theological dogmatism, the minister, like every other individual, will simply be one inquirer into the mystery of the unknown making confession not of what others must believe, but of what he himself has found. Under such conditions, theological discussion will flourish as it has not flourished since

the great days of Aquinas and Albert Magnus. The message of the Community Church will be theological to a degree that will surprise us.

Supreme over everything else, however, in the message of the Community Church, will be the social note. That message of socialized religion, for which we have been struggling so long and on the whole so unsuccessfully, will at last come into its own in this new type of religious institution. It was only a few years ago that there came what was known as the social awakening of Christianity. A great social enthusiasm came breaking upon the world, like the opening of the buds in spring; and this enthusiasm spread to the church, and seized upon the hearts of eager and sensitive young men. For a time it seemed as though the churches were going to be transformed, and the social spirit, so implicit in the gospel of Jesus, become the dominant factor in religious life. Great prophets appeared, like Washington Gladden; great books were written, like Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*; great platforms were formulated, like that of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But the churches as a whole, as we can now see after the interval and in the light of the experience of the war, were not affected. They remained the same highly individualized, and therefore essentially unsocialized, institutions that they had been from the beginning. And as we now look back upon this period, we can see that it must necessarily have been so—and must ever be so, as long as churches

are organized along the lines which are accepted at this moment. For the ordinary church, as has been pointed out, is by its very nature a private and not a public institution, and is therefore concerned primarily with private and not public affairs. Its concern is not with the citizens of the community, but with its own members. Its interests of course begin with itself and its prosperity, and not with the community and its welfare. Its problem must be not the relation of citizens to one another in the community, but the relation of each individual citizen to itself, as a soul to be saved, a member to be won. All of which means that the denominational church can never be an institution of socialized religion! Its message can never be primarily a social message. Its business is to further the propaganda of the particular denomination which it represents. This means that its business is private, and not public; and its concern the individual and not society.

The Community Church, however, in contrast with the denominational church, can have no other practical message but the social message. When the members of such a church come together, they gather as members primarily of the community; and the interests which are uppermost in their minds, are community interests. There are no Presbyterian doctrines to divert their attention; no outside sectarian demands to exhaust their energy; no competition with rival churches on the next block to narrow their vision and stiffen their selfishness.

They are free of every consideration but that of their relations together as neighbors in the one community, as associates in the business of the public welfare, as servants of the common good. How will it be possible for the minister of such a church to avoid discussion of community problems? How will it be possible for the members of such a church to seek any other instruction than that of justice, righteousness and good will? Many things about the Community Church may be uncertain, but this one thing is sure, that the social message will flame from its pulpit like a beacon from a lofty hill. It is because I see in this reorganization of the church along community lines an opportunity for the preaching and hearing of the social message such as I am convinced can never come in the existing denominational institutions, that I have become conscripted, as it were, to the furtherance of this movement. This is the "way out" of our impasse in this matter of socialized religion. We must have community churches, that we may have pulpits in every community which will proclaim "the Gospel of the Kingdom"!

V

So much for the message of the Community Church. What now shall we say about its work?

Central to all its activities will be the Sunday morning services of worship. These will be very different from what we see about us at the present moment, for they will in every case be community

services, by which we mean that they will be services of communion and not of disunion. Nowadays the community divides itself up on a Sunday morning into all sorts of fragments. The majority of the people, long since disgusted with these private clubs known as churches, do not go anywhere for worship. The rest disperse in a hundred different directions, each one seeking a little company of persons, with whose opinions he agrees, or into whose secrets he has been initiated. Families are often divided in this process, brothers going to one church and sisters to another. Even husbands and wives occasionally separate, a temporary divorce proceeding being enacted when they approach the altars of God. A community is cut up into a larger number of pieces, and is therefore less of a community in the true sense of the word, on a Sunday morning than at any other moment of the week. We are at that time most conscious of the differences that divide us, and least conscious of the interests, purposes and ideals that inevitably unite us. If it is possible to conceive of a method of tearing people apart, and defeating the ideal of a common life dedicated by a common spirit to common ends, which is more disastrously successful than that of denominationalism, the world has not discovered it.

Now the Community Church unites people on a Sunday morning, instead of dividing them. The single church in the small community, or the many churches in the many neighborhoods of the large community, will gather together all of the people

within their districts and lead them in a great act of spiritual communion one with another. I know of one Community Church, already established in a little town, which comprises within its membership ninety per cent of the inhabitants of that town. These people represent no less than thirteen different denominations; and under ordinary circumstances would divide themselves up on a Sunday morning into thirteen different congregations. But in this town, these people all come together in the one place, for a common act of dedication to the best and the highest that they know. Ninety per cent of the population of this community is assembled, or represented, in the Community Church on every Sunday morning. They do regularly together, as a matter of course, what the citizens of other communities do only by a great effort at a union service on Thanksgiving Day, or a patriotic assembly on the Fourth of July. Sunday, in other words, is the community day. The Sunday morning service is the weekly gathering in consecration of the community life. The Community Church, in its work, will hallow this day and this service; and as the Community Church movement develops throughout the country, it will become the great occasion for the expression of the democratic idealism of America.

Secondly, in its work the Community Church will organize a forum, for the development of those ideas and processes which cannot find proper expression at the Sunday morning service. No

Community Church will be complete without a forum; for the church, we must remember, is the community, and the community must have opportunity for community discussion of public problems, and this discussion can properly be held only in the best atmosphere of moral and spiritual idealism. Few of us realize to what an extent in recent years the forum movement has fostered the community idea, and the forum meeting suggested the possibility and desirability of the Community Church. These forums, when successful, are indeed the Community Church in embryonic form. They are the people of a neighborhood gathered together without regard to any other interest than that of their common concern with a problem of public thought and public welfare. We have now only to extend this forum gathering, to integrate its helter-skelter membership into a definite organization, to lift its activity above the plane of mere discussion to that of service and devotion, to fuse its energies, concentrate its many-mindedness, purify its spirit, in order to transform it into a genuine Community Church such as we are discussing at this moment. The forum movement must be very definitely regarded as an anticipation of, and preparation for, the Community Church movement. And now that the two movements are together in the field, they will tend to become ever more and more closely allied, until the one is always and everywhere associated with the other. Every forum will inevitably tend to develop into a Community Church; and

every Community Church will necessarily organize itself, among other things, into a forum. The church, may we not say, will be the forum worshipping; and the forum will be the church debating!

Thirdly, the Community Church will not forget that work of personal ministration which has from the beginning been a prerogative of religion. This will consist, on the one hand, of religious education for the young; and, on the other hand, of spiritual counsel and advice for those of maturer years. Religious education by the church will some day, of course, be made unnecessary by a system of adequate public instruction which will not eliminate those moral and spiritual elements which are so essential in the right training of the rising generation. This happy end, however, will not be achieved until theology has been dethroned from its central place in the religious life and the age-old distinction between church and society successfully eliminated. Meanwhile the Community Church must train its children to a true understanding of those ideals of fellowship which are the essence of our new religion of democracy or humanism. This means, from the negative point of view, a curriculum altogether delivered from the traditional studies of the Bible, church history, creeds, and ecclesiastical virtues; and, from the positive point of view, a curriculum occupied with investigations of social institutions, the social virtues necessary to the maintenance and extension of such institutions, the lives of the saints and martyrs who have glori-

fied these virtues, and the literature and art which record the sacred story of human brotherhood. The historic development of the family, the school, the state, the church; man's struggles to organize his life on a basis of good will; the rise and fall of civilizations; democracy, its meaning and significance; economic needs as a factor in social development; evolution, especially in its ethical and spiritual phases as presented for example by John Fiske and Henri Bergson; great movements for human betterment, such as the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the emancipation of women, the prohibition of the liquor traffic, prison reform, single tax, and socialism; great servants of humanity, such as Lao-tse, Buddha, Socrates, Jeremiah, Jesus, St. Francis, St. Xavier, Savonarola, Huss, Wesley, Parker, Garrison, John Bright, Tolstoi, Jane Addams, Wilfred Grenfell, Romain Rolland, and Mahatma Gandhi; the philosophical principles of coöperation and mutual aid; the story of religion in its non-theological and therefore universal humanistic aspects—these are some of the subjects which will be presented and studied in any well-organized school of community religion. A book of the type of H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History*, written with clearer insight into spiritual influences and values, and supplemented by abundant first-hand material from literature and contemporary life, may not unfairly be presented as a text-book for such a school.

Personal ministration to those of older years will

have its place in the Community Church, as the work of physicians, organized more and more on the basis of public service, has its important place in the community at large. Ideal social conditions are central to religious life, as ideal sanitary conditions are central to physical health. But always, in the one case as in the other, there will be those unhappy individuals who through weakness, ignorance, or deliberate excess, find themselves in need of healing. For such the church has ever been a place of refuge and restoration; and so it will continue to be under any form of ecclesiastical organization in the future. But in the Community Church this service will be put on a basis of exact science, such as is now being offered, for example, by psycho-analysis; and in the hands of skilled experts, trained to this task of service as their specialty. The Community Church, in other words, will have its clinic for the diagnosis and cure of the besetting ills of man's inward spirit.

Lastly, and most important in this matter of the work of a Community Church, is the problem of community service. For it goes without saying that the chief work of such a church will be social in its character. It will find, indeed, the crown of all its labors, the justification of its very existence, in what we may call applied or socialized religion. Inevitably it will organize itself into a kind of community center for the initiation and direction of every form of practical service for the common welfare. Indeed the community center, as we know it

today, may not inaccurately be described as the Community Church at work. It is significant that where the Community Church establishes itself, there is no need for the community center to go, for the Community Church builds a community center for its work as inevitably as it builds a sanctuary for its worship. We have a community center movement in this country today, only because we have in most localities churches which are too busy in denominational rivalry with one another, or too blinded in service of their denominational interests, to give attention to the social welfare of the communities in which they stand. As the forum is destined to coalesce with the Community Church, so also is the community center; for the Community Church must practice the message which it preaches.

In this practical social work of the Community Church, two things must be said with great distinctness.

In the first place, this work will not be of the charitable and philanthropic type ordinarily associated with church activities in society at large. The Community Church, in obedience to the new social philosophy of our time, will concern itself primarily not with persons but with conditions. It will seek not so much to relieve distress as to reform and thus wipe out the social causes which produce distress. The Community Church will deal at first hand with the community—its festering ills, its crying injustices, its pitiless exploitations

of the many by the few. It will face unafraid the problems of property, of private ownership of public resources and utilities, of the use of capital, of the system of profit, of the hundred complexities of our new industrial civilization which have created new miseries for old, and perpetuated slavery into an age of freedom. The Community Church, in other words, true to its name, will seek to establish a true community; this will mean a battle to the death against every political and economic privilege of wealth which now stands in opposition to the commonwealth. At the least the Community Church will be an agent of reform, at the most of revolution; for it is concerned that "God's Kingdom shall come," by which it means, as did the Nazarene, that God's will shall here and now be done on earth.

Secondly, it is to be noted that the work which the Community Church will undertake will be dictated by the community to the church, and not by the church to the community. Ordinarily, as in the case of the institutional church, for example, the church knows exactly what the community wants or ought to have! It attempts to dictate in matters of practical service, just as it has attempted to dictate in matters of worship and belief. But not so the Community Church! It must never be forgotten that this church belongs to the community, and not to some outside organization, or movement; that it is an outgrowth of the community life, and therefore a natural expression of

that life; that it is just as much an instrument in the hands of the people as the government or the schools. This being the case, the Community Church will register as accurately and immediately the sentiments of the community, as the barometer registers the density of the atmosphere. The church will rest in the hands of the people as a pliable tool, to be used for whatever the people want. In its practical work, therefore, the Community Church will not so much serve the people as express the people. The church will not do something *for* the people, but the people will do something *with* the church. The community and the church will be at the center of things, and what is done will be the will of the community.

For example, in New York City in recent years the social workers have been busy with the organization of neighborhood associations, and now, today, of so-called community councils. These are attempts not to dictate to the people or even to serve them, but to awaken the people to a consciousness of their own needs, and put in their hands public instruments through which these needs may be satisfied. A true neighborhood association, or community council, is a simple organization of the people in a certain limited locality, for the discovery and expression of neighborhood interests, and the service of these interests by the people themselves in their own way and to their own ends. Now all these organizations would be unnecessary if our churches were community and not denominational

institutions. What these neighborhood associations are doing, our community churches will be doing when once they have found their place and won the confidence of the people.

Another illustration is furnished by the remarkable National Social Unit undertaking which was carried forward so successfully some years ago in Cincinnati. This is an attempt to do in a somewhat more intensive and thoroughly democratic way what the loosely organized neighborhood associations are doing in New York. Thus its organization, as finally perfected, includes a citizens' council, chosen by block councils, which are elected in turn by residents living in a unit-area of thirty-one blocks; an occupational council, composed of representatives of seven skilled industrial groups; and a general council, made up of the other two councils, and having full control of neighborhood programs for civic betterment. Its result is the awakening of the people of a given area to a consciousness of their social needs, and their organization under their own leadership for the satisfaction of these needs. What is produced is a highly complex and amazingly efficient social machine, democratic in every part, through which the community is able to express itself with ease and power. The Community Church will need and therefore produce just such machinery as this. Indeed, when religion has become thoroughly socialized through its identification with community needs and aspirations, the churches.

throughout the land will themselves be the social units through which the community will function.

Further illustrations of our meaning are found in the public health activities of our time, the social and recreational movements, the great reform campaigns conducted by such bodies as the Consumers' League, the National Association for Labor Legislation, the National Child Welfare Association, etc., the organizations for the protection of civil liberties, all political movements looking toward the establishment of economic justice and industrial coöperation. Even the trade unions and the more radical class movements in society have at their heart, in however strange and perverted form, the vision of the whole community functioning happily and freely as a working organism. From the most conservative to the most revolutionary proposal for social change, there runs a consciousness of community values and community ideals, which is the one constant quantity in the equation of reform. Everywhere today we are thinking in terms of community life, and working for a heaven which shall be here and not beyond the grave.

Do I mean to identify the Community Church with these movements? Are our churches, if transferred from the theological to the community basis, to become mere public health and recreational centers, mere organizations for political reform and industrial agitation? Not at all! No church that is a church can be confined to these activities, however central they may be in any true expression of

that spiritual life which finds its fulfillment in the democracy of fellowship. What I see in these phenomena is a spirit at work in narrow fields of particular endeavor, which will some day be caught up and put to work everywhere in the higher life of man. What I see is a new religion, now unconscious of itself, which will some day create new churches in which it will "center and function for the projection of those farther community ideals which none of us are today sufficiently socialized to conceive." ¹

VI

Contemplation of all these aspects of our problem shows how fast we are moving, both in the churches and in the social field, toward the development of community religion. The one really vital movement in Protestantism today is the effort of progressive men and women to make the churches to be active forces in the social life of city, state and nation. The great preachers are prophets of social change; the live churches are agencies of social redemption. More and more religion seeks to justify itself by its social vision, and to work out a technique for the practical fulfillment of this vision. On the other hand is the growing realization of the truth that the social service activities of our time are essentially religious in character. In them is the spirit of consecration, the love of men, the

¹ HARVEY DEE BROWN. In pamphlet, *Sociological Aspects of a Community Church*, published by the Community Church, New York City.

yearning for the Kingdom. Our settlement houses, imperfect and incomplete as they are, nevertheless are as truly the expression of the religion of our time as the monasteries were the expression of the religion of the Middle Ages. Our campaigns for public health, the abolition of poverty, the democracy of labor, are as genuine and heroic adventures of the spirit as the crusades to the Holy Land. Canon Barnett is a saint as truly as Francis, Jane Addams as surely as Teresa. In more senses than one the settlement or social center is the modern church, and the social worker the modern priest.

It is this identification of religion with the cause of social change, and the great movements of social change with religion, which points unerringly to the advent of the Community Church. For the Community Church, be it said again, is the community functioning spiritually. It is democracy at work in religion. It is the people entering into their last and most precious inheritance. For the history of our time is the history of the conquest of social institutions by the common people. One hundred and fifty years ago, in America and in France, the people decided to take possession of their governments; and from that day to this, the history of politics has been the history of the progressive democratization of the state. Fifty years ago, the people entered upon the prodigious task of taking possession of industry; and today, in Russian revolutions, and British Labor Parties, and reform agitations everywhere, we see the progressive

triumph of the democratization of the economic system. Now comes the turn of the church, to do at last what it promised but failed to do in the great days of the Reformation. For religion, as Dr. Joseph E. McAfee has stated, "like every other social concern, must be brought under community control, if democracy is fully to vindicate itself."¹ In religion, as in politics and industry, the people will have their way; and the Community Church is the temple which they will build.

¹ See article in *The New Republic*, January 18, 1919.

CHAPTER X
THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

“The new era is ushering itself in by a new religion, and that religion is not merely the Christian religion, but an expansion of it. . . . Religion now becomes the sum of all human aspirations; worship the sum of all human services; and all the workers are the worshipers. The Church loses one by one its functions, and ceases to exist as a separate institution . . . but its place is taken by the universal communion of a humanity pressing forward to the prize of its high calling.”

HENRY DEMAREST LLOYD, in
Man the Social Creator

CHAPTER X

THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM

I

Our discussion of the Community Church would be incomplete if we did not turn from theory to practice, from prophecy to reality. For this movement has within a comparatively few years become something more than a program and a promise. Community churches are rapidly appearing in all parts of the United States, more particularly in the middle and far west; and presenting, therefore, a problem of practical concern.

The most fertile field for these churches seems to be the rural and thus sparsely settled sections of the country where, as we have seen, the old-line denominational institutions no longer flourish. Many communities in these areas are beset by a ridiculously excessive number of churches, no one of which is able to win adequate support in competition with the others. In such cases, the tendency is strong today to combine these churches into a single institution, to be sustained by the community as a whole. In other villages or townships, the churches have killed one another off, and thus

have disappeared altogether. In such cases, religious life tends to revive in the form of an institution which represents a combination of community church and community center. In some states the condition of the churches in the rural districts has become so scandalous that the denominational machines have been forced to take joint action to save the institution; and always they find the community basis the one upon which they can most easily and effectively do their work. Thus in Ohio, at a conference of clergymen representing twelve different Protestant denominations, it was agreed that, in any community of one thousand inhabitants or less, one church was adequate; that in such communities where there was more than one church, all should be abandoned except the one strongest institution in the field, or, if this was impracticable, all should be combined in a single union or community church; and that in such communities where there was no church today, one should be established on strictly undenominational lines. A similar program has been drawn up by a conference in Montana representing eight denominations. There can be no question that the future of organized religion in the rural sections of this country is wrapt up with the destiny of the community church idea.

A second field where community churches are appearing most rapidly and flourishing most vigorously is that of the suburban or residential districts of our great cities. In such places there is a nat-

ural uniformity of population which makes easy the development of a well-ordered neighborhood or community life. Now as this life rises above the threshold of consciousness, and enters upon the fulfillment of its purposes, it finds intolerable the idea of a division in religion which exists nowhere else in the social group. Why should there not be one church in common, as there is one recreation hall, one library, one high school, one park and playground, in common? This is the question that the citizens of such towns inevitably ask themselves when faced by the challenge of organizing their religious life; and inevitably they answer it by turning away from the old sectarian disputations of their fathers, and building a single church for the whole community. Incidentally this is a return to the old idea of town and parish, which held sway in the early days of the Puritan settlement of New England, but in a new spirit as broad and humane as the old spirit was intolerant and autocratic.

Lastly, we find today isolated community churches appearing in certain of our larger centers of population. These are old churches reorganized and rededicated by members who are clear-visioned enough to discern, and wise enough to heed, the signs of the times; or new churches established by persons who see no hope in any phase of Protestantism today, but hold with Emerson that "no greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship."¹ These churches represent the boldest

¹ See his "Divinity School Address" (1838).

experiment in the religious life of the present day. In communities which are not in any real sense of the word "communities," but chaotic masses of heterogeneous human material, seething whirls of unamalgamated social, racial and religious elements, they hold aloft that "kindly light" without which our democracy would be hopelessly lost "amid the encircling gloom." If this democracy is to be saved, it must be by religion lifting

"High . . . against whatever darkness,
 . . . a burning lamp . . . a flame
 The wind cannot blow out."¹

But religion understood not in the traditional theological sense, but in that new sense of spiritual fellowship which is the community in vision! "Religion," says Henry Demarest Lloyd,² "is that group of ideas which *binds men together.*" It is the spirit of these ideas which the community churches in our great cities cherish, against odds which, like an earthquake, shake the world!

The appearance of these churches may well stir confidence in the minds of all who see in a movement transcending and superseding Protestantism, as Protestantism transcended and superseded Catholicism, the hope of the continuance, as a social influence, of organized religion. It would be foolish, however, as it would be also dishonest, to deceive anybody into believing that these community churches, in either city or country, are at

¹ Edna St. Vincent Millay, in *The Lamp and the Bell*, page 38.

² In *Man the Social Creator*, page 33.

this moment true to type. The Community Church, as interpreted in the ideal sense, has yet to appear—and on a day far distant from our own! All of these churches which take the name, fall short in form; they are evangelical and thus exclusive, or they cling from necessity or choice to old denominational affiliations, or they embody class distinctions abhorrent to pure democracy. Many of them fall short in understanding; they have not thought through the logic of this ideal of community religion as affecting Christianity, or the relation of church and state. But what we have here, of course, as in every such situation, is the process of evolution. The significant fact about these churches is *not* that they have not arrived, but that they have started. What is well begun is half done! All that is needed, now the spirit of change is thus effectively at work, is knowledge of adverse circumstances that impede development, war against the hostile forces that deliberately interfere with progress, answer to doubts and questions that stir even in the friendliest minds, in order to effect a release of energy which will sweep the movement on to triumph.

II

First among the conditions unfavorable to the rapid and full success of the Community Church is the traditional idea which has been stated¹ but

¹ See above, page 228.

must now be amplified from this standpoint, that religion represents a private rather than a public or community interest. The majority of people, especially those who have received religious training of any kind, are simply not in a state of mind to understand, much less appreciate and accept, the doctrine that the practice of religion is essentially a community affair, and should be properly organized, therefore, on a community basis. Religion means nothing to such people save as an intimate individual experience which may be regarded as a medium of personal salvation, or an influence to personal righteousness, or even an open door to social standing. The church has to them no attraction or even worth, save as it provides a kind of private chapel or shrine, which may serve as a refuge from the common life of the world in which we are all too often lost. To humanize religion in terms of social function, and present the church in the guise of a social institution—to fuse the sacred with the secular, transform theology into sociology, and seek again the union of church and state—means simply to wipe out everything that is distinctively spiritual and abandon religion altogether. The Community Church is to these people not a church at all, but a community center, to be called such in the name of honesty if nothing more!

This attitude, naturally to be expected in the light of Christian history, and certain to be broken down in course of time by processes of education, would cause no discouragement nor alarm were it

not for the fact that these processes are constantly being interfered with by forces that are not unwilling to serve their own interests at the public expense. The denominations, in other words, are busily at work! They see clearly enough what the development of this democratic movement in religion really means. They understand, without any special tutoring on the subject, that every successful attempt to identify religion with life and the church with the community, means the progressive disintegration of their authority and influence, and therefore of their social primacy and property interests. It is just because the movement of secularization has advanced so fast and so far in recent times that the churches have lost their hold upon the modern world, and are now tottering upon the brink of collapse. The great denominational interests of Protestantism know perfectly well that if they are to be saved at all, this movement must be stopped. Religion must preserve its private, personal, unworldly character. The interests of religion must be more sharply than ever identified with the interests of a particular creed, or formula, or sectarian organization. Therefore, in every place where their hands are not being forced by the utter disintegration of organized religious life, the denominational bodies are doing their utmost to thwart local tendencies toward church union, to maintain the ascendancy of theological over social interests, to prevent the capture of the church by the community. What Catholicism is doing in its

parochial schools is only an extreme illustration of what most of the Protestant denominations are doing, much less openly and efficiently, in their prayer-meetings, Sunday schools, theological seminaries, and revivalist campaigns. They are deliberately setting themselves in opposition to the basic democratic interests of our American life. Active as a divisive force in a free society struggling against enormous odds for the realization of universal human fellowship, they appear more and more in the guise of a great conspiracy against the social integrity of the nation. Infinitely more serious than the alien groups among us, set apart from the common understanding and the common will by foreign tongues and customs and modes of life, are the sectarian churches similarly set apart by foreign creeds and rites of worship and offices of hierarchical control; for the alien groups remain fixed, and make no invasion of the common life, whereas the churches are constantly seeking to draw men off, as an electric plant for private profit draws water off from the flow of the Niagara river. The whole tendency of our denominational churches, in other words, is to break up the solidarity of our social life, and thus to defeat the ideals of the republic. Just to the extent that these churches are true to themselves, they are untrue to democracy. They are each and every one of them to be described as *anti-social*. What a thoroughly intelligent and aroused community consciousness will do with these private institutions, so inherently

subversive of the public good, remains to be seen. But that no general community movement or religion is possible until these agencies of private propaganda and interest are abolished, or, as now seems likely, perish of their own desuetude, is obvious.

III

Mention of a community consciousness brings us to the second great condition in society today which is unfavorable to the progress of the Community Church movement. We refer to the obvious fact that we lack the deep sense of community interests and values, without which the Community Church can not be produced, much less sustained. "A church of this kind," writes Rev. Harvey Dee Brown,¹ a social worker of long and successful experience as well as the minister of a community church, "cannot be handed down to a modern community out of the purposes and logic of an older religious and theological individualism. It must arise from the people themselves out of their new community habits, and their collective human relationships. Until these relationships are more careful of the common health, more just and discriminating, more glad with social fellowship, more intelligent and more symbolized by common act, the beautiful and righteous communal spirit which will establish public churches for its self-

¹In his pamphlet, *Sociological Aspects of a Community Church*, page 13. See above, footnote, page 276.

recognition, worship and expression, cannot arise. The evolution of the community life, both its body and its mind, must precede the birth of the community soul. 'That is not first which is spiritual but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.' "

That we lack this soil for the growth of the Community Church is evident enough. The crass individualism of our American consciousness has long been the despair of those who have come to see, with Mazzini, that democracy means not merely liberty but association. At bottom we do not know what association means. We are suspicious of any attempt to develop the political structure of society, either national or international, and thus enlarge the area of socialization. Our industrial life is a welter of contending and competing groups, tending steadily to a class struggle which threatens to engulf mankind in economic ruin. The whole social and international crisis which is upon the world is due to nothing so much as a failure of the creative intelligence of the race to organize the forces of the common life in harmonious and coöperative functioning. It is not that people are bad and need to be made good, not that they hate and need to learn how to love, which causes the present disorder of our civilization. It is rather that our social machinery is disruptive in its effect. Men are torn apart rather than united by the instruments of social life. The channels through which the goodness and the love of people can flow, and

fulfill themselves in friendly social relationship, are hopelessly choked, or else have not been constructed at all. In other words, we have as yet no real community life on either a small or a large scale; and until that community life is developed, we cannot hope to have a genuine Community Church.

Nevertheless, we need not be discouraged. On the contrary, there is every reason for good cheer; for the whole trend of thought in our time, as we have seen, indicates that the individualistic days are passing never to return. We are coming rapidly to the knowledge and acceptance of society as an organism with a single life and destiny for us all, as the guiding principle alike of thought and action; and in obedience to this principle, are more and more learning to act together in the common service of the common good. Our Red Cross Society, our public health and recreational activities, our neighborhood associations, community councils and social units, our political and social reform agencies, our programs of economic reconstruction, our international movements for disarmament, our leagues or councils of nations,—all these are so many expressions of the dawning social consciousness of this stirring age. In the same way are these the creators of this consciousness, for “the finest output of their efforts passes into the soul of the community in whose creation they thus participate.”¹ A vast preparation, therefore, for the

¹Harvey Dee Brown. See above, footnote, page 276.

coming of the Community Church is under way; the very appearance of community churches in increasing numbers throughout the land, is itself the best kind of evidence of the reality of this preparation. But such evolution of community thought and life must pass far beyond anything which we know or even foresee at this moment, before we can hope to have a Community Church that is true to type—a church, that is, rooted in the community, maintained and managed by the community, and devoted wholly to the interests of the communal life.

It is the rise of this community consciousness, with its inevitable production of the Community Church, which precipitates the question as to what it will do with our existing denominational churches when it comes to power. How can it help destroying them, if they still retain strength enough to constitute a menace to social health? Twice before this has the democratic will, lifted momentarily to an exalted consciousness of group interest, annihilated private institutions which were living at the expense of the whole. Chattel slavery had to go, and the liquor traffic had to go, in the name and for the sake of that higher "law of liberty" which is the common good. Why does not denominationalism belong to this same pariah class? What is to prevent an enlightened and aroused social conscience from placing it in this class? "There are countless ways by which men in a free country may encroach upon their neighbors' rights," said William Ellery Channing in

1837.¹ "In religion the instrument is ready made and always at hand. I refer to opinion combined and organized in sects and swayed by the clergy. We say we have no Inquisition. But a sect skilfully organized, trained to utter one cry, combined to cover with reproach whoever may differ from themselves, to drown the free expression of opinion by denunciations of heresy, . . . such a sect is as perilous and palsyng to the intellect as the Inquisition. . . . The liberal spirit of the people, I trust, is more and more to temper and curb that exclusive spirit which is the besetting sin of their religious guides."

In all probability the progressive disintegration of our sectarian bodies will make unnecessary drastic social action for their abolition, after the example of the slave-pen and the saloon. Yet these bodies inherit vast momentum from the past; their foundations are imbedded deep in the traditions and affections of great hosts of people; and they possess properties of enormous magnitude and power. They may very well, therefore, survive in part at least into an age which will conceive them to be not only scandalous and inconvenient, but intolerable. In such case, would not society, wide-awake to its basic interests of unity and fellowship, be obligated to expropriate and end them? We are not sure! The right of any group of citizens in a democracy to combine in a private society

¹In his sermon "Spiritual Freedom." One volume edition of his Works, page 180. See above, page 40.

for the furtherance of private interests not absolutely in contravention of the public good, is undeniable. The recognition and protection of this right is the one sure test of that "liberal spirit" of which Channing speaks; its denial or limitation is one of the first and most insidious signs of tyranny. But of this at least we are sure—that the social conscience, when it matures, will "temper and curb" denominationalism to the extent of stripping away the public mask which now conceals its private character. The sectarian church, for example, will enjoy no special privileges, as for example exemption from taxation. Its position will be practically that of the private school in relation to the public school. Such change of status will perhaps be all that is necessary to protect society from an influence "notoriously sectarian, and therefore hostile to liberty."¹

IV

In these two factors—an imperfect religious sense, and an imperfect community sense—we have the chief obstacles in the path of the advancement of the Community Church movement at this present moment. Equally serious in kind if not in degree are certain objections to, or criticisms of, the movement, which appear in many minds, some of them not at all unsympathetic.

Closely analogous to the problem of the commu-

¹ William Ellery Channing. See above, footnote, page 293.

nity consciousness which we have just been discussing, is the objection that our democratic machinery for the control and management of public interests is altogether inadequate for such a task as we would impose upon it. This objection, of course, has its primal origin in the hard, cold fact that the history of public schools, public libraries, state and municipal universities, has not been so conspicuously successful, from the standpoint of community welfare, as to warrant anybody in urging very vigorously the surrender of our churches to public control. Inadequate facilities for our school children, narrow and provincial policies of administration, intrusion of political ignorance and corruption, suppression of freedom of thought and speech, prostitution of public instrumentalities to private uses—all these evils are too common to need argument to show that new methods of democratic functioning must be developed, if the way is to be made clear for the safe establishment of the church as an out-and-out community institution.

Behind this objection, however, there is something deeper than the mere facts of inadequate and incompetent control of our social interests. Fundamentally at work here is that constitutional distrust of the American mind of everything that is public or social in nature. So inwrought in the very fibres of our being is our traditional individualism that only recently, as we have just now seen, have we developed any social consciousness at all.

Utterly remote from us has been the mind of the pagan Greek who saw in his city the sublimation of his life, or even the mind of the Christian Augustine, who fashioned his immortal dream of the future after the pattern of what he called the "City of God." The result of such an attitude has been the exaltation of the individual at the expense of society, and of private initiative at the expense of public experiment and adventure. We have neglected our social responsibilities, thrust them away from our attention and concern, degraded them as an intrusion upon the central things of life, and thereby robbed them wantonly of the dignity and beauty which are their own. Contemptuous or impatient of them ourselves, we have gladly surrendered them to those who enjoyed or profited from their manipulation, and thereby created that very corruption of democracy which now we offer as the all-sufficient justification of our conduct.

It is true that our social machinery is inadequate for the tasks it has in hand, to say nothing of new ones to be added. But the logic of this fact is not the withholding or the withdrawal of our most precious interests from the control of the social group. Are there any who today, even under the worst conditions of public administration, would return our schools to private hands, or disendow our state and municipal universities, or close our public libraries? What we need is an ever closer and more exact identification of all

our private interests with the public interest, so that the community, in city, state or nation, will of necessity take on a sanctity so wonderful that we will feel ourselves bound to it as a priest to the altar of his God. The salvation of our democracy is to be found not in the restriction of its operations, but in their extension and enlargement, so that the first and not the last concern of the individual will be the public welfare. It is the old maxim of more democracy being the cure for the ills of democracy! And what can be more effectual to this end than the deliberate casting in of the destinies of the church with the community? Such change would not be without its price. But the church would register for itself the inestimable gain of socialization, and for the community that exaltation of function and purpose which would in the long run save its life.

V

A common and very practical charge brought against the community church movement is that it represents in actuality, if not in theory, the organization of one more denomination, and thereby discredits the very principle of undenominationalism which it is trying to foster. Here is a movement, it is said, which indicts Protestantism for its sectarian divisions. It denounces these divisions as a betrayal of the religious spirit, and condemns the various churches of the Prot-

estant world for their failure to unite and thus become one great and universal embodiment of the spiritual ideal. Then, as the very first step of its own undertaking, this movement which so abhors divisions, proceeds to separate itself from all existing ecclesiastical groups and set up another church of its own. Instead of overcoming denominationalism, therefore, the Community Church simply adds one more to the one hundred and sixty odd sects which now make the Protestant world a realm of chaos instead of order. The Community Church constitutes its own best refutation; in the very fact of its organization, it undoes itself. It should be the very genius of this movement to work inside and not outside existing religious bodies, and thus by some such action as that of the federation principle, which is now so beneficently at work, help on the great end of the unification of Christendom.

The answer to this interesting criticism is twofold. In the first place, the alleged sectarian character of the Community Church idea is apparent rather than real. It may be that in certain places, under certain conditions, the Community Church must take on the form of a new denomination, and thus add one more to the existing number of churches in one community. But behind this Community Church, in such case, is a new principle of organization which points the way to the ultimate extinction of sects, and the union of all persons and groups into one great religion. The de-

nomination organizes itself apart from the rest of the religious world, because of certain ideas which it wants to propagate or certain forms of worship which it desires to practice. Even where such separatist terms are not emphasized, there will be found to be present in the denomination at least a certain habit of mind, or way of thinking, which draws a certain group of people apart from their fellows and encourages them to set up and maintain their own private religious institution.

Now the Community Church breaks absolutely with this denominational principle or tendency. It shifts the basis of organization from the exclusive doctrine or ritual or type of thought, to that community grouping of citizenry which constitutes the essence of our American democracy. It makes its conditions of membership identical with those of citizenship in the city or town in which it is doing its work. It is thus in character an inclusive and never in any sense an exclusive body. If it exists apart and builds its own separate shrine, it is only because the religious conditions in its particular locality are so hard and fast, competition between existing churches so fierce, that there is no opportunity for the presentation of the new idea excepting in this form of a church of its own. The very planting of this institution, however, is the first step in the disintegration of all existing churches. Little by little, as the Community Church commends itself to the people and its idea

of inclusion spreads abroad, denominational barriers will crumble, sectarian churches lose approval and support, and thus the whole base system of Protestantism disappear. Once it is seen that the Community Church emphasizes the community and not the church, and seeks not to dwell apart from the community but to rise out of it and from it as the spiritual expression of its life, then it becomes instantly apparent that this charge of compromise with the denominational principle is false.

Secondly, there is the pragmatic answer to the criticism. The great majority of community churches today do not in any sense represent the organization of a new sectarian group added to those already existing, and thus contribute to the present confusion. It is only in certain large cities, where the Protestant churches still retain some strength and vigor, that the Community Church even gives the appearance of taking on a sectarian character. Here, to a certain limited extent, it adjusts itself to its environment as the first condition of survival. In all other places, however, it creates its own environment and thus reveals at once its essential spirit. In rural communities, as we have seen, the Community Church represents the amalgamation or absorption of previously existing denominational churches, and thus their disappearance from the field. A certain town in upper New York State, which five years ago had a Congregational, a Baptist, a Metho-

dist, and a Universalist church, and today has only the one Community Church, is a good example of what we mean. In suburban communities, newly built and organized, the Community Church appears literally as the church of the community, and denominational churches do not appear at all. In one such town in California, it is expressly provided in the charter that no sectarian institution shall be allowed to enter and acquire property during a certain term of years. In these communities there is provided a habitat in which the Community Church appears at once in its fully developed form, and in which therefore we can see it as it really is. Always this church is conspicuous for nothing so much as its non-sectarian character, and from the moment of its inception sterilizes competition.

VI

A third criticism of the Community Church is that suggested by the complaint that its field is narrow, and its opportunity of usefulness therefore extremely narrow. "The field is the world," has been the cry of Christendom for lo, these many centuries. Now comes along a movement which deliberately undertakes to shut itself off from the world, and tie itself down to the one and perhaps very small community which constitutes its *locale*. To serve the life which is close at hand—to perform our nearest duty, as Carlyle was never tired

of emphasizing—is of course a basic principle of effective action; but to limit our service to our own doorstep, so to speak, is to rob ourselves of that wider field of opportunity which calls to us without ceasing. The church, of all institutions, should be universal in its appeal. Its sympathies should be as wide as the circle of humanity; nothing human should be foreign to it. In thus fulfilling its world-wide mission, the denominational church surely has advantage over any community church whatsoever. In innumerable towns and cities throughout the nation, there are churches of its own faith, and thus members of its own family. In neglected wastes at home, and pagan areas across the seas, there are mission stations which carry its name and bear its message of deliverance. Wherever there are men it goes, and there dedicates itself to the task of love.

From the more superficial standpoint, this criticism seems to have a certain impressive validity. The Community Church is indeed exactly what its name implies, an institution first and foremost of the community in which it stands. Its roots strike down into its own soil, and it breathes the air and feeds the needs of its own especial habitat. But what of the community itself, of which the Community Church is this spiritual expression? Is this community limited to itself? Does it exist only for itself? Is it cut off from contact with other men in other places? Does it know nothing of world-wide needs, and hear and answer no cries

from distant fields? This may have been true in years long since gone by. The word "community" still has a certain connotation of remoteness, surviving from the time when town was separated from town by long stretches of forest or prairie, and the sea cut men off by so terrible a barrier that such a seer as St. John felt that in "a new heaven and a new earth," there could be "no more sea." But all this is of the past! Our world today is all of a single piece, so to speak; there are no longer any lost communities. We are knitted together even as the cells of a single organism. The World War was a demonstration of this unescapable unity. An ugly political quarrel, breaking out in a remote section of the Balkans, set all Europe aflame in a fortnight, and ultimately engulfed all the five continents and seven seas of the globe. No race, no nation, no city, no remotest village or hamlet, was untouched by the conflict. No community, in other words, lives any longer unto itself. Each is bound by a million threads of vital human interest to every other community throughout the world. The myriad strands of cable, telegraph and telephone wire, the railroad rails and steamship highways, and now the invisible courses of the air which belt the world, are, as it were, but a symbol of the spiritual bonds which draw us together and make us one. Now, if never before in history, each place is an epitome of the whole populated earth, as each man is an epitome of his race. To plant a community church,

therefore, in a community, is to plant it in the world. For a community church should embody and set forth at one and the same time the spiritual aims and purposes of its own community, and thus of all humanity. What mankind needs and dreams of and passionately strives for in one place is the same as in every other. The Community Church, therefore, is the one church which is universal, as it is the one church which is humanistic. The Presbyterian church is primarily a Presbyterian church; the Methodist church, Methodist; and so on! Each represents sharply a segment and not the circle of the human race—each is a part and not the whole. The Community Church, on the other hand, is whole in the sense that it embraces all mankind. Here for the first time, in this system of community organization, do we find a fulfillment of Paul's vision of the many members and the one body. The foot is doing the work of the foot, and the hand the work of the hand; the ear is busy with hearing and the eye with seeing. Each is in its appropriate place, and engaged at its appropriate task; but all are serving the one body, and together they constitute the body.

As for missions, particularly those in foreign fields, it is unquestionably the community church movement which is going to save these to the work that they are really appointed to do. What is the weakness of missions today, and the real threat of their speedy disintegration, if not that scandal of division which seems an even more flagrant and

inexcusable betrayal of the Christian gospel abroad than at home? Presbyterian missions and Baptist missions and Congregational missions, all contending jealously for the souls of Indians or Chinese, present a spectacle which would be inexpressibly comic if it were not so tragic. Think of seeking to persuade the heathen mind, before you know your own! Under the pressure of failure, appalling economic waste, and the growing contempt of all influential opinion in foreign lands, this situation is rapidly being changed. Theological competition is yielding to coöperation on the basis of common Christian service. Missions, in other words, so far as they are being led wisely and intelligently today, are becoming unified community institutions. Support along denominational lines is more and more an embarrassment rather than a help. Which means that, in the not distant future, the Community Church will be the one effective "base" for the mission campaign!

But there is more involved here than the mere matter of the organization and support of missions for their work abroad. A wholly new philosophy of missionary activity has come to the fore in recent years, and is rapidly transforming the whole character and purpose of the work that is being done. The old theological type of mission, dedicated to the task of saving the souls of the heathen from hell-fire, is no longer in high favor. We have come to see this traditional undertaking for what it really is—an impudent intrusion into the sancti-

ties of the alien mind which can do little good and incalculable harm. Today, therefore, this work of converting individuals is giving way to the more enlightened work of developing communities to higher standards of social welfare and happiness. Whereas the old-time missions broke up the native community life which they encountered in these strange and hostile lands, the modern mission is seeking to foster this life, and thus preserve its essential elements of good. It tries to do in a native Asian or African village what a settlement-house at home tries to do in a city slum—make friends with the people, protect their interests, guard their institutions, purify, beautify and enrich their common life. Thus a mission today establishes improved conditions of sanitation, introduces modern methods of agriculture, fosters educational and cultural influences, builds schools, colleges, hospitals, and social centers. It takes the community for what it is, and instead of imposing upon it alien teaching and rites of worship, builds out of its native constituent elements the best that modern knowledge and experience can provide. The present-day mission, in other words, is an agency not of theological propaganda but of communal idealism. As such it is a prophecy of that break-up of denominational religion which is everywhere impending; and an anticipation abroad of that new humanistic religion of democracy which is everywhere making its appearance at home. Let there be no doubt as to the relation between the

Community Church and foreign missions. In so far as the latter are destined to continue at all, they will be the natural and beneficent instrument of that community religion which seeks brotherhood and peace the world around.

VII

A final objection pertains to the problem of public worship in the Community Church. Is it possible that all sorts and conditions of men can ever be persuaded to worship together in a common assembly on Sunday morning? The population of a community includes atheists and theists, agnostics and believers, Jews and Christians, orientals and occidentals; in the bounds of Christendom alone, it comprises such highly contrasted types as Roman Catholics, Methodists, Quakers, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Second Adventists and Holy Rollers. Can all these various groups be expected to find a common spirit of understanding, or a common medium of expression? Does it not seem reasonable to suppose that our different churches represent not so much different ideas as different temperaments among men; and that they do their work along separatist lines not because men are obstinate or tolerant, but because some men express their religion one way, and some another? Why should we expect, or want, to persuade men to worship in one kind of church, any more than to read one newspaper, or frequent a single type of

theatrical entertainment, or enjoy one particular kind of art or music? It takes all kinds of people to make a world! Variety, and not uniformity, is the source of life! Think of the mass, the "revival," the prayer-meeting, the congregational service, the Quaker "silence"—are these not all contributions to man's spiritual experience, and do they not all have their place as expressions of his inner life? Is there not question, after all, as to whether all sorts and conditions of men should worship together; and very serious question as to how such result, if desired, is to be accomplished?

The difficulties involved in this query are so apparent, or seem so apparent, that few students of the problem have attempted to do more than suggest some kind of working compromise. Temperamental differences have been taken for granted, and an adjustment sought which would please as many, and offend as few, persons as possible. One chasm has seemed to be impassable—that which separates the ritualist from the congregationalist, the high-churchman from the low-churchman. Thus Dr. Irving Maurer, of Columbus, Ohio,¹ picturing in prospect the Community Church of 1974, describes its edifice as "in reality a double building. A sound-proof tapestry separated the church into two great rooms, one of which was rich with religious symbol and devotional art, the other of which was plain and simple, without painting or

¹ See his pamphlet, *The Church of God in Columbus*, published by the Community Church of New York, page 4.

ornament. The first room was intended for the ritualists and the mystics, and the second for the people with the unpriestly idea of religion. The remarkable thing about the church was that this great tapestry screen could be raised, and that every church service finished by the two rooms being made one, with common music and a common sermon. Another thing you would (note) through a more lengthy observation, was that there were many kinds of service on every day of the week, for on Friday evening the Jews would begin their celebration of the Sabbath, and the Seventh Day Adventists would do the same, and on each day the various religious conceptions called for a bewildering variety of ritual or order of worship."

Some such compromise as this would seem to be unavoidable, men being what they are. But are men in this way what they are, or rather what they seem to be? What such an ingenious picture as this of Dr. Maurer's really visualizes, to our mind, is not the inward temperamental differences of men, at all, but the outward chaos of religious practice superimposed upon men by ignorance, superstition, and direct ecclesiastical teaching. As long as men insist that they must worship in a certain definite way, in order to satisfy their innate spiritual demands, the rigor of the democratic principle in community religion will exact that they be permitted to do so. The rights of religious minorities, in other words, must be respected! The Community Church, if true to its name, will

never fail to give full and free opportunity to every group of persons who acknowledge particular rites and ceremonies, to hold their own services in their own way, not outside but inside the common church. The Eucharist, for example, unacceptable perhaps to the majority of worshipers in community churches, would be administered at special services for those desiring to participate.¹

When we get behind these forms of outward worship, however, do we not find that this idea of inherent temperamental differences separating men into distinct classes, such as high church and low church, is in reality fantastic? Human nature is no such "Joseph's coat of many colors" as all this! There are varieties of temperament, of course, and these varieties crave and thus find delight in different modes of outward and visible expression. But they appear not at all in isolation, in single men or groups of men, like patches on a quilt, but all together, in various admixtures, in all men. Human nature, in other words, is of a single piece. One individual represents not one separate element, but all elements thrown together. In some of us, one element may be strikingly predominant; but other elements are all the time present, and may on occasion spring into momentary and startling ascendancy. Most of us, however, have all elements strangely compounded within us, and are subject therefore now to one mood and now to

¹A community church in California, the only church in the town, invites an Episcopalian priest to come at intervals to administer the sacrament.

another, according as one element or another takes control. What the Community Church will do, in this matter of worship, will be to offer different kinds of public services at different times, to meet not the unchanging needs of different groups of men, but the changing moods of all of us together. Sometimes we will rejoice in the pomp and pageantry of ritualism, sometimes in the simplest forms of congregational worship, sometimes in the soothing quiet of "the silence." All these the Community Church will as easily provide as the community or municipal repertoire theatre provides regularly tragedy, comedy, romance, farce, and opera.

But back of all this, as the central expression of the spiritual aspirations of the community, will be what must be created as the English Book of Common Prayer was created, or evolved as the Song of Roland or the Niebelungenlied was evolved—a Ritual of Communal Devotion! How poor is our American democracy, that it has developed in poetry and song no formal expression of its ideals which may serve as "glad tidings of great joy for all the people!" How pitiful are our struggles to express fittingly the aspirations of the common heart of man, when we arrange a union church service on Thanksgiving Day, or assemble the multitudes on Armistice Day or the Fourth of July for a patriotic service of dedication! Yet are these gropings the prophecy of what some day we shall have—a Ritual of scriptures, anthems, responses and heroic song, which shall serve the

people in all their regular exercises of devotion, as the mass now serves the Catholic, or, still better, as some noble pageant serves a city on some special occasion of memory and high hope. This Ritual will appear in due time, as appeared the canons of the Old Testament and New; and, as the expression of a people's life, will serve them in their worship.

VIII

I see a Sunday morning in the future, with all the people gathered in one great temple for devotion. They come gladly—young men and maidens, old men and children, to sing and pray and meditate on high things of the spirit. At this hour business ceases and pleasure is unsought. Houses are empty, theatres closed, books and newspapers laid aside, the noise of the streets become a silence. The Community is at worship!

It seems a fantasy. But living, not dead, things are in this church! Scriptures which contain Tolstoi with Isaiah, Whitman with the Psalms, the words of Lincoln with the words of Jesus! Anthems and hymns which sound not as praises chanted by courtiers to a king, but as the music of a people singing as children the gladness of their souls;

“Each singing what belongs to him or her, and to none else . . .

Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.”¹

¹ Walt Whitman, “I Hear America Singing.”

Prayers which confess not fears, ask not favors, cry not for mercy, but, like the shout of multitudes, lift the heart in courage and deep joy! And a sermon like John Ball's of old, which tells "how it shall be when the measure of the time is full," how "the Fellowship of Men shall endure, however many tribulations it may have to wear through," for "fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; and the things which ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them; and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on forever, and each one of you part of it."¹

Here speaks "the word Democratic, the word En-Masse"; here is

"Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action formed under the laws
divine."²

It is no fantasy we see! Religion is now the people's own. The church is theirs, and with one accord they take it to their hearts!

¹ William Morris, *The Dream of John Ball*.

² Walt Whitman, "One's Self I Sing."



CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

“The true Church towards which my own thoughts tend will be the conscious illuminated expression of catholic brotherhood. . . . It is curious how misleading a word can be. We speak of a certain phase in the history of Christianity as the Reformation, and that word effectually conceals from most people the indisputable fact that *there has been no Reformation*. There was an attempt at a Reformation, . . . and through a variety of causes it failed. It detached great masses from the Catholic Church and left that organization impoverished intellectually and spiritually, but it achieved no reconstruction at all. It achieved no reconstruction because the movement as a whole lacked an adequate idea of catholicity. It fell into particularism and failed. It set up a vast process of fragmentation among Christian associations. It drove large fissures through one common platform. . . . People are now divided by forgotten points of difference, by sides taken by their predecessors in the disputes of the sixteenth century, by mere sectarian names and the walls of separate meeting places. In the present time as a result of the dissenting method, there are multitudes of believing men scattered quite solitarily through the world.

The Reformation . . . lies still before us. It is a necessary work. It is a work strictly parallel to the reformation and expansion of the State. Together these processes constitute the general duty before mankind.”

H. G. WELLS, in

First and Last Things

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

I

Christianity, as it first appeared in Palestine and was carried by Paul to the Gentiles, is the greatest movement for human emancipation that history has known. Its advent marks the dawn of the hour of most auspicious promise that ever came to man. The substance of this primitive Christianity was the moral passion and hope of Israel; in all that properly belonged to its composition, it was Jewish to the core. Its quickening spirit was the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, the last of the prophets and himself the supreme religious genius of all time. Its gospel was the "good news" of a righteous society established on earth as a brotherhood ordered by the law of love to the end of peace—a gospel of simple human relationships delivered of the superstition, formalism and racial exclusiveness of later Judaism. Its field was a world unified by the conquest of Roman arms and the discipline of Roman rule, and by its own spiritual failure prepared for a religion which should transform an empire of force into an autonomous fellowship of good will.

In its early development, the Christian movement seemed to be the seed from which should spring that long-awaited "tree of life whose leaves were for the healing of the nations." It established at once within itself a community of interest and ideal unparalleled by anything that mankind has seen either before or since that time. Here were joined in one family, as it were, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, citizen and alien, bond and free; the divine dignity of souls, and their fellowship in Christ, wiped out all distinctions of race, nationality, sex, social status, and made the church, like its God, to be "no respecter of persons." These Christians were united by the good hope of "the Kingdom," which in their eyes was no future paradise in heaven, but a new society close at hand upon the earth. They founded and maintained, right in the heart of Rome, scattered groups of free democracies which were at once a challenge to the empire and a prophecy of the social order which was to succeed upon its overthrow. They organized a community of goods, that no man might be poor and none rich, but all be equal in need and opportunity of service. They welcomed to their fellowship every one who would come, to labor and suffer for the better day. As their movement spread from city to city, from province to province, like warm life-blood coursing through a perishing organism, it seemed as though Rome were to be quickened to the fulfillment of that dream of universal brotherhood and peace among men which has been in the hearts of all true prophets since the

beginning of the world. When at last, in the fourth century, after indescribable martyrdom, it triumphed, and Rome henceforth came to signify a church and not a state, an empire not of the sword but of the spirit, the millenium was apparently at hand. If postponed by the break-up of the political fabric, it was only to find surer and nobler realization when, in the collapse of civilization, the papal hierarchy remained as the sole organization left to hold society together. And more than once, in the later ages of medieval rule, under inspired and heroic leadership, the church seemed about to enter upon its true inheritance of the unification of humanity! It is startling indeed to contemplate by how narrow a margin, and by force of what trivial circumstances, the Roman church missed its destiny. It had the idea of universality, a sound understanding of spiritual fellowship, the vision of a world-state which should be the church visible on earth, and at intervals the statesmanship capable of realizing its farthest hopes. Furthermore, for a period of centuries, as though by some divine appointment, the world lay ready to the molding of its purpose. But chance, and at last corruption, balked the best opportunity that mankind ever had to unite its interests, and thus avoid the strife which has made the modern world a thing of horror and dismay.

II

Many forces entered into the spiritual spoliation of Roman Christianity. Ignorance, superstition,

theologizing, all played their part; but the dominant influence that doomed the church to defeat, was what may be best described, perhaps, as ecclesiasticism. The papacy could not resist the temptations, nor escape the corruptions, implicit in worldly power. Finding itself taking the place of the empire and exercising its functions of sovereignty, it little by little became the empire. It became institutionalized after the exact pattern of the vast political structure reared by Augustus and his successors. The divine right to rule was asserted in both cases in the same terms. The pope assumed the rôle of the emperor; the cardinals, of the senators; the bishops and archbishops, of the provincial governors; the creeds and rituals, of the Roman code. The free democracy of the primitive churches was supplanted by a centralized authority of regal type. The communal poverty of early days transformed itself into a wealth which outdid the splendor of the Caesars. The church now, like the empire before, existed not to serve the people, but to tax them, plunder them, exploit them. It was an institution existing for its own ends, and therefore eaten up by lust of power, luxury and ease. When the political order reappeared as the Holy Roman Empire, the papacy devoted all its energies to struggle with this new rival for an overlordship which would insure it in perpetuity the temporal power to match its spiritual power. For centuries, the history of the church is the history of a great and corrupt empire of this world; the story of its

popes is the same as, and at times worse than, the story of most kings and princes. Before the blight of ecclesiasticism religion withered up and disappeared, save as it lived on in certain obscure heretical groups where the rule of the hierarchy did not reach, or was revived in the sweet piety of a St. Francis or the heroic courage of a Savonarola.

It was the Reformation, born of the Renaissance, which rescued Christianity from this bondage to the world. The great gift which Protestantism conferred upon mankind was emancipation from ecclesiastical tyranny. Finding its immediate occasion in a revolt from the hideous corruption of a single pope, it was at bottom a revolt against the whole idea of external authority, made inevitable by the intellectual and spiritual awakening of the Renaissance. Central to the life of this amazing period, was the discovery of the individual soul as set over against institutions of every kind whatsoever. It was democracy at work in its first great endeavor after freedom and the rights of man. The princes, who did so much for the Reformation, were aghast when they saw what the movement meant to the common people; they would have been still more aghast could they have seen to what lengths it was destined to go in later centuries. But they carried through triumphantly, and with a right good will, the battle against the papacy. The Reformation at least ended the blight of ecclesiasticism, if it did nothing else. There were reactions, to be sure, when the reformers found it necessary to

bring order into the chaos of revolt, as witness the organization of the Lutheran church, the Anglican church, and other centralized ecclesiastical bodies. Romanism also made an impressive recovery of power and prestige. But the work was done; man was free, if he would use his freedom. What was or still is undone, can be safely left to time and to the waxing knowledge and experience of humanity.

III

But Protestantism, if it freed mankind from one corruption, brought along another of its own. In place of ecclesiasticism it put not religion but theology; for the tyranny of the church and its officers, it substituted the equal tyranny of the creed and its dogmas.

The theologizing process was, of course, not unknown in Christianity. It was at least as old as Paul and Augustine; it had taken form in Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds. But in the medieval period, this aspect of religious organization was subordinated to ecclesiasticism. It needed the revolt against the church, and the resulting search for some new center of authority to save the race from what was regarded as the anarchic consequences of liberty, to bring theology to the fore, and make Protestantism to be synonymous with denominationalism. For all of the last four hundred years, religion in Protestant Christendom has meant acceptance of some particular type of theo-

logical belief. It is appalling, if not positively amusing, to note the historical, geological, sociological, as well as Biblical, ethical and philosophical ideas which one has had to include in the paraphernalia of his mind, in order to qualify as a Christian. By some happy chance, or from the sheer necessities of the case, it became possible to believe, after the discoveries of Galileo and Kepler, that the earth moves about the sun, and after Columbus's voyage, that the earth is round, without sacrificing one's religious character and standing. But until comparatively recent times no acceptance of the Christian gospel was possible without simultaneous acceptance of the story of the Jews as set down in the Old Testament, the creationist theory of the origin of life, the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, the miracles of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead (at least in the case of the Nazarene), and a philosophy of history based on the central idea of the Atonement; and even today, in most Protestant churches, these ideas are still used as the familiar test of spirituality. They are at least as generally characteristic of thought inside the churches as their rejection is characteristic of thought outside the churches. What on earth such questions of temporal fact have to do with religion, is something which might well baffle the fabled wisdom of the ancients. Bernard Shaw has recently pointed out¹ that science has found it possible to believe in the law of specific gravity, without necessarily believ-

¹ In his *Back to Methuselah*, see Preface, page LXXXIX.

ing the story that, on its discovery, Archimedes ran wildly through the streets of Syracuse crying "Eureka! Eureka!" Music gives its laurels to a pianist or composer without inquiring if he accepts the legend of Mozart's writing of his "Requiem." No Nobel Prize for literature has yet been denied to any writer because he questioned the Homeric origin of the *Iliad*. But Protestantism has insisted upon identifying Christianity with questions of history, Biblical criticism, and biological and geological science; and thus as effectively substituted theology for the religion of Jesus, as the medieval church did ecclesiasticism. The result, as we have seen, is denominationalism which, with its multifarious separation of men on issues of no importance, has cast a blight over the spiritual consciousness of the race quite as serious as any cast by the papal tyranny of Rome.

It is this situation which calls at this moment for a new reformation, as effective in its attack on Protestantism as the Reformation of Luther and Calvin was effective in its attack on Catholicism. It is not enough to correct the errors of orthodox theology on the basis of the latest information imparted by modern scientific studies. This is what the liberals have been all too content to do, on the supposition, apparently, that all will be well if the Darwinian theory of origins is substituted for the Mosaic, and the conclusions of the higher criticism of the Bible accepted without reservations! What is needed is something much more fundamental and

therefore revolutionary. We must get rid not only of theological errors, but of the whole theologizing process itself. We must disentangle religious experience and idealism not only from dogmas that are old and untrue, but from the whole concept of dogma. The method of Jesus gives us our example! The Nazarene was a man of his time, and accepted easily the prevailing ideas of his time—the Mosaic theology undoubtedly, demonology, the Messianic philosophy of history, and so on. But no one of these ideas was central to his spiritual thought, or ever played more than an incidental part in his teaching. The Gospels could be rewritten today, in the light of the most recent information, and not affect by so much as the alteration of a phrase the basic principles of his religion. The same is not true of the epistles of Paul, for the apostle, unlike his master, was a theologian. But Jesus's mind was free of the whole theologizing method. He was concerned with life and not with thought, with spiritual experience and not with intellectual opinions. So with the churches, if they are to be faithful to his religion! Theology must go today, as ecclesiasticism went yesterday—even that theological remnant which sets Christianity apart as a separate religion, charged with a mission of peculiar sanctity. Religion, as the spiritual expression of the higher processes of human life, cannot in the very necessities of the case, be narrower or less inclusive than this life itself. It is the final condemnation of theology that it tends ever to make

religion a contracted and thus exclusive thing, and shut men off from contact with their fellows. To find religion is always to find unity, and therewith a universal fellowship of humankind.

IV

From this standpoint, the reformation demanded by our age may be summed up as a restoration of primitive Christianity. As the great Reformation went back to Paul, and, getting rid of ecclesiasticism, secured liberty, so this new reformation must go back to Jesus, and, getting rid of theology, secure fellowship. It must seek to establish throughout the world what was established in those early Christian churches in ancient Rome—a solidarity of human interests, a brotherhood of men bound together in love, equal not only in rights but in duties, dedicated in fellowship to the bringing in of God's Kingdom on the earth.

But what specifically does this mean? What does first century Christianity involve in the society of the twentieth century? To speak simply of brotherhood and love does not carry us very far! Says Henry D. Lloyd,¹ with commendable impatience, "He is not the leader who tells us that love is enough, is all, is the law, is life, is God. He is the leader who guides us to the next application of these thousands-of-years-old truisms in the affairs of today. He is the wise man who can tell us what

¹ In *Man the Social Creator*, pages 10-11.

answer this law of love makes . . . to the social life of our time.”

There were difficulties in understanding the practical aspects of solidarity even in the days when Jesus and his disciples lived in the open and gathered their food from the corn-fields and the lakes, as witness the question about “tribute unto Caesar.”¹ These difficulties were multiplied when the gospel was carried to the cities of Asia Minor and Greece, and thus brought into more intimate contact with the laws and customs of the pagan empire, as witness Paul’s truculent injunction that “every soul be in subjection to the higher powers . . . for the powers that be are ordained of God.”² Even so, however, the task of love was simple in those far-away days, as compared at least with the task as it presents itself in the highly complex civilization of modern times. What does Christianity mean in a world of railroads and steamships, telephones and telegraphs, mills, warehouses and stock exchanges? How is one to effect solidarity or practice fellowship amid the competitions of modern business, the struggles between capital and labor, the indescribable hatreds and suspicions of international relationships? What road to a life of love is open to a man who is caught in the intricacies of subways, sky-scrapers, tenements, factories, and the ever-present overmastering machine? The problem is different today from what it was in

¹ See *Matthew* 22:17.

² See *Romans* 13:1.

the first century A.D. The humblest man encounters every day factors of experience so intricate in character and so stupendous in range, that to expect him to work out its implications and imperatives in terms of human brotherhood, is almost as unreasonable as to demand that he write out the mathematical formulas of the Einstein theory. We are caught today by social forces which we do not yet understand, and certainly have not yet learned to control. Even the "leaders of the people," so-called, "such as bear rule in their kingdoms,"¹ seem at most times to be but the sport of titanic winds that sweep the world as though from cosmic sources. If we could escape from social bonds, and live alone as hermits of old, or lose ourselves in separate communities of the type of the early Christian churches, we might learn again what it means to enjoy a fellowship with men that is quick to serve and eager to forgive. But as it is, we are caught like fishes in a net, or involved like cogs in a machine. We are a part of this great mechanism which we call society; and if love cannot be so adapted or directed as to be made to function effectively in this mechanism, then it must disappear altogether from the world. Ezekiel, when he saw the vision of the four wheels, saw living creatures with them. "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go,

¹ *Ecclesiasticus* 44:3.

they went . . . for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”¹ Are not we “the living creatures” of the prophet’s vision; and are not we challenged to put the spirit of man’s life, which is the law of love, into “the wheels” of this vast civilization which now run wild to crush us?

In the answer to this question lies the definition of the specific task of religion in this terrific day. We need a reformation, but a reformation in no such general terms as a restoration of primitive Christianity—a revival of simple love and brotherhood and peace. The new reformation must be a scientific affair. It must handle the business of religion as a technical expert handles the business of production in a factory, or of distribution on a railroad. We want not only abstract ideals but concrete formulas—not only the *what* to do, but the *how* to do as well! This means the detailed working out, in terms of modern social conditions, of the technique of solidarity. It means the mastery of the mechanics of love or fellowship as applied to landlordism, capital and labor, commercial exploitation, economic imperialism, international war. If we are to have churches which are to live and serve society as effective agents of spiritual transformation, they must take the gospel and make it as vivid, real and *practical* a thing in the life of twentieth century Yorkshire and Pennsylvania, as it was in the life of first century Palestine and Galicia. They must gather up the prophetic power

¹ *Ezekiel* 1 :19-20.

of all the emancipating religions of the past, and harness it to the task of so refashioning the existing social fabric as to make it as easy to serve and uplift a fellow-creature as it is easy now to exploit and overcome him. The Luther of our time will be a social engineer, who will do for love in programs of social change what his immortal predecessor did for faith in creeds of theological belief.

V

Our reformation, therefore, means socialization of religion in terms of modern life. The obverse side of this reformation is of course a social revolution which will constitute the "Christianizing of the social order," to quote Walter Rauschenbusch's phrase, or, as we choose to call it, more inclusively, the moralization or spiritualization of this order.

If religion, as organized in the existing churches, has no social message to tell us what solidarity or fellowship means today, so society in turn has no spiritual ideal to direct its action to humane ends. We are smashing on with breathless haste and exhausting energy, making goods, selling them and thereby making money, reinvesting money to make more goods, selling these to make more money to reinvest—and so on, world without end! But are men happier than they were; or, in any true sense, richer? Have they found "the more abundant life" in proportion to their more abundant production and distribution of material things? On the con-

trary, were they ever so poor, so wretched, so distracted, so close to madness, and the great, proud edifice of their building so close to complete collapse? The absence of moral purpose, of spiritual vision, from most that men have been so feverishly doing these last few hundred years, is the consummate and perhaps fatal tragedy of this age. Only one thing has shown that the soul of man still lives. Only the momentum of one great passion has kept society in motion to some goal. We refer to the great movement of democracy, sweeping on through the last three centuries from triumph to defeat, and then again to triumph. This is the revolution! This also, brought to conscious spiritual life, is religion—the only real religion that we have; and hence in itself the reformation that we seek.

VI

Democracy, by which we mean “the spirit of the Universal and Beloved Community,”¹ is therefore the religion of this age. It is thus also the unit of integration of our new faith. Churches hitherto have been organized around an ecclesiastical formula, or a theological belief. In the one case, has been the priest; in the other, the creed. For both now is substituted the community, which shall be henceforth the only church that we may know. This involves, as we have just now seen, a reciprocal

¹ Josiah Royce, in *The Problem of Christianity*, volume II, page 428. See above, page XIX.

relationship of change. In attempting to save the church as a social institution, by organizing it anew on the basis of solidarity, we are thereby helping to save humanity. By bringing the church back to love, in other words, we are bringing love back to society. But also, in saving society, we are saving the church; the revolution is the reformation! For we can have no true church until we have a true society—no community religion until first we have a community.

This means, for our present-day task, an exact reversal of the historic method in religion from antiquity until now. "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first!" Hitherto the church has been the direct objective—an end in itself. It has been imposed, as an institution of divine origin and commission, upon society for its guidance and upon men for their salvation. Now society takes the place of prime importance; it is among men, and not in the church, that God is to be found! Our spiritual task thus becomes the establishment of human fellowship, the organization of love to the creation of solidarity. We must build, that is, a community—a community as wide as the world, as inclusive as mankind. Then, out of this community, as a flower springing from a fruitful stem, will come the church; or rather the community itself will become the church, as the plant becomes the blossom, in evidence of the fulfillment of its destined life. For the true church is the community at worship. It is the glad gathering of men

in celebration of their fellowship, and in dedication of it to high uses.

The day will come when social struggles are no more, when "wars and rumors of wars" are passed away, when race prejudice is become the memory of an evil time. Then fear will be gone from out men's hearts—and with fear, its spawn of suspicion, hate and death. For ill-will there will be good-will, for dissension unity, and for strife the reign of peace. And men in that day will live as brothers of one family, and work happily together for the common good. There will be a community on earth; the community at its moments of highest life will be a church; this church, and therefore this community, will be the presence of the everliving God.

“The old religion is a tree that has borne its fruit. It is dying at the top; it is feeble at the root. It no longer touches men’s lives as of old. The great things that are done today are not done in the name of religion, but in the name of science, of humanity, of civilization.”

JOHN BURROUGHS, in

Accepting the Universe

APPENDIX

“This is a task which seems to me not unworthy of those who, through the life of the spirit, have wider relations with the universe—this lay church which today, more than any other, preserves its faith in the unity of human thought and believes that all men are sons of the same Father.”

ROMAIN ROLLAND, in

Above the Battle

APPENDIX

Several attempts have been made to summarize the distinctive characteristics of the Community Church. We present, herewith, the following:

(a) By JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

The Community Church is an attempt to apply democracy to the field of religion.

Democracy means the association of free men and women in the spirit of fellowship to the end of the common service of the common good.

The unit of democratic organization is the community; and the agents of democratic action are those public institutions, such as the school, the library, the social center, through which the community functions.

Among these public agents in each community should be the church which, when organized, will be known as the Community Church.

The Community Church is *undenominational*. It eliminates affiliation with any sectarian body whatsoever, in favor of identification with the community in which it is placed.

The Community Church is *public*. It accepts the universality of the religious instinct, and welcomes all men, regardless of sect, class, nation or race, on a basis of membership identical with that of citizenship in the community.

The Community Church is *free*. It recognizes no creed, or statement of faith, but leaves all matters of theological belief to the unfettered thought and conviction of the individual.

The Community Church is *social*. It interprets religion in

terms of social service, and dedicates its members to the fulfillment of social idealism.

The Community Church is *democratic*. It is organized on a basis of self-determination; recognizes a single constituency of members who are voters; and places its affairs in the hands of a board of managers responsible in all things to the congregation.

The Community Church is the community functioning spiritually. It emphasizes the community, not the church, as the source of religious life, and itself as a free agent for the expression, not the control, of this life.

(b) By JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

The Community Church is an institution of religion dedicated to the service of humanity. It is distinctive from other churches as follows:

1. It substitutes for loyalty to the single denomination, *loyalty to the social group*. Its first affiliation is not with any denomination, but with the community as a whole.
2. It substitutes for a private group of persons held together by common theological beliefs or viewpoints, *the public group of citizens held together by common social interests*. It excludes none but welcomes all, regardless of sect, class, nation or race, on a basis of membership identical with that of citizenship in the community.
3. It substitutes for restrictions of creed, ritual, or ecclesiastical organization, *the free spirit*. It relegates all matters of theology and worship where they belong—to the unfettered thought and conviction of the individual.
4. It substitutes for the individual *the social group*, as an object of salvation. It interprets religion in terms of social reconstruction, and dedicates its members to the fulfillment of social idealism.

5. It substitutes for Christianity as a religion of special revelation, *the idea of universal religion*. It regards the religious instinct as inherent in human nature, and all religions as contributions to the fulfillment of man's higher life.
6. It substitutes for the theistic, *the humanistic* point of view; for absorption in the next world, *dedication to a better life in this world*; for the church as a sacred institution, *the idea of present society as fulfilling the "Kingdom of God"—the commonwealth of man*.

The Community Church is the practical acknowledgment of religion as the Spirit of Love incarnate in human fellowship. The core of its faith, as the purpose of its life, is "the Beloved Community."

(c) By HARVEY DEE BROWN, associate minister of the
Community Church of New York

1. The basis of the Community Church is the community in which it lives. It springs from the community and expresses the life of the community. Membership in the church is on the same basis as membership in the community—namely, citizenship.
2. The home of the Community Church, its buildings, offices and equipment, will be owned by the community as the schoolhouse, public library, or city hall; and the control and management of the church will be by the community, democratically administering its affairs according to the will of all the people.
3. The message of the Community Church will deal with the interest of the community and the problems which confront its common life. The message may deal with philosophical or even theological matters, but if so, it will be because the interest of the community moves in this field and the people desire to have these things discussed.

4. The work of the Community Church, apart from its meetings and teachings, will be the promotion of the welfare of the community in its various phases. The community itself will determine the things it desires to have done and also the ways in which they shall be carried on. In this and elsewhere the will of the community democratically expressed shall be paramount and controlling.

(d) By JOSEPH E. MCAFEE, author of *Religion and the New American Democracy*

The Community Church seeks:

1. To express the common religious consciousness. It recognizes that all are religious by virtue of their being human, and all have the right and duty to express their religious nature sincerely. It is *universal*.
2. To insure liberty of thought and speech. It recognizes that questions of doctrine and of personal religious experience are properly matters of individual concern, to be socially tested only by their product. It is *free*.
3. To enlist all in the service of the common good. It recognizes the universal individual obligation in social welfare, and seeks to point out an avenue of usefulness to each member of the community. It is (a moral) *dynamic*.
4. To effect a religious organization amenable to the will of the community. However initiated or maintained, it recognizes that each person must have a share in the organization untrammelled by aught but his own desire, that the ultimate control properly belongs to the entire population unit concerned, and not to a selective group. It is *democratic*.

(e) By HENRY E. JACKSON, author of *A Community Church*

The cardinal virtues or distinguishing characteristics of a Community Church are as follows:

1. Freedom from the domination of dogma, substituting intelligence for it.
2. Freedom from the domination of money, substituting character for it.
3. Freedom from the domination of sectarianism, substituting brotherhood for it.
4. Freedom to liberate and make known the religion of Jesus, recognizing it whether labeled by his name or not.
5. Freedom to serve the community rather than itself, losing its life as an organization, if need be, for the sake of the cause.
6. Freedom to organize democratically with the right of self-determination, each member having one vote.
7. Freedom to work for whatever concerns human welfare, abolishing the distinction between sacred and secular.

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