

The Community Church of Boston **After Twenty Years**

1920 - 1940

by

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

Minister, The Community Church of New York

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PRICE TEN CENTS
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An Address delivered in commemoration of the
Twentieth Anniversary of the founding of
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON

Symphony Hall
Sunday, January 7, 1940

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"... America shall introduce a pure religion
There will be a new Church founded on moral
science; at first cold and naked, a babe in manger
again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical
law, the church of men to come, without
shawms, or psaltery, or sackbut; but it will have
heaven and earth for its beams and rafters,
science for symbol and illustration; it will fast
enough gather beauty, music, picture, poetry."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Community Church is a free fellowship of men and women united for the study of universal religion, seeking to apply ethical ideals to individual life and the co-operative principle to all forms of social and economic life.

BOND OF UNION

"We, the undersigned, accepting the stated Purpose of this Church, do join ourselves together that we may help one another, may multiply the power of each through mutual fellowship, and may thereby promote most effectively the cause of truth, righteousness and love in the world".

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN

The only condition of membership in the Community Church is this above Bond of Union, which, when signed in the Church Book, makes one a full member of the Church. If you agree with this Statement of Purpose and are willing to sign this Bond of Union, we cordially welcome you to join with us.

THE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON

REV. DONALD G. LOTHROP, *Leader*

Church Office: 6 Byron St., Boston, Mass. CAP. 6284

The Community Church of Boston After Twenty Years — 1920-1940

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Twenty years ago, on the eleventh day of January, 1920, in the old Steinert Hall on Boylston Street, there was held the first service of the Boston Community Church. I had the honor of preaching on that occasion, and took as my subject "The Character and Purpose of the Community Church." John Orth, well-known pianist and teacher, furnished the music. My memory seems to tell me that there were between one hundred and fifty and two hundred persons present in our first congregation.

There had been some earlier meetings of little groups, headed by Dr. Clarence R. Skinner, of Tufts College, and Mrs. Gertrude L. Winslow. I remember a more general meeting in October, 1919, at Wesleyan Hall, at which there were present some thirty or forty people. Dr. Henry W. Pinkham and Dr. George Willis Cooke were conspicuous on this occasion. But the Sunday service on January 11th was the real beginning of our movement. It was only then, after much plotting and planning, and a good deal of hammering and screwing and riveting, that we dared to launch our ship into the waters of public favor and prepare to sail her out into the deeps of contemporary religious life. The waves were running high from the awful tempest of the war. The skies were still dark and the horizons dim. Many a good ship had been beaten down, or was lying timidly in port. But we had a voyage we wanted to make, an adventure we desired to try. Far off there was a goal which we determined to seek, if haply we might find it. So in spite of every unpropitious sign, we hoisted our sails and turned our bowsprit toward the sea. And here we are, two decades later, far advanced upon our quest!

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I
As I look back at these inaugural events of twenty years ago, it is clear that what brought together that little group of men and women in a companionship which took this rather amazing form of a new church in an old city which already had many churches, was the impact of the War. These founders had not known one another before the War, or had met in the most casual and accidental fashion. They had no common religious training or background — some of them no religious associations of any kind. They did not think alike on political and economic questions. They did not belong to any single social class. The only thing they shared was the War, or rather their reaction upon the War. For they were all pacifists, and all had known the outlawry, humiliation, suffering and danger which were the inevitable accompaniment of pacifist conviction in the direful years of 1914-1918. They had lost their friends and therefore had found comfort in one another. They had been driven from their clubs, their trade unions, even their homes, and craved the shelter that another group, however small and inconspicuous, could bring them. What was most grievous, at least to those who were religiously minded, was the treason of the church in this hour of great crisis. For what was the church's espousal of the War, its slavish identification with the state in the foul business of "collective homicide", but a betrayal of its appointed spiritual mission? There were few churches in those days where one could worship without offense a God who was the Father of all mankind, and keep contact with men of every nationality and race as brethren one of another. There was no church in Boston where one could keep faith with that spirit of divine and universal love which makes no distinction between enemies or friends, and insists always upon meeting evil with good. Everywhere it was banners and bayonets, the cry to arms and the prayer for victory, the hate, the lust, the violence that are the

native progeny of war. It was as though the altars of God were reeking once again with the blood of ancient sacrifices. The founders of our church could not endure such profanation of eternal sanctities; or if in patience and forgiveness of spirit they would have done so, they were not allowed by those who measured their devotion to God by the degree of their fanatical allegiance to the state. By choice or by necessity, the churches were closed to those who could not reconcile war with religion. What wonder, in that grim hour of desolation, that, as they found and clung to one another, these pacifists dreamed of a church which should be not unfaithful to the ideal of "peace on earth, goodwill to men", and resolved at last to build one! It was as though with the idea that pacifists should never again be without a spiritual home that this Community Church in Boston was conceived and born.

If I look for a second determining influence in the founding of this church, I find it in what was going on in my own church in New York City. That was the winter, 1919-20, when the old Unitarian Church of the Messiah was being refashioned into the present Community Church of New York. We had got to the point in New York where — to put it mildly! — we were not interested any longer in denominations. The scandal of a divided church had never seemed so gross a scandal as in those years of war when the world itself was perishing for lack of unity. If the church was ever to save the world, must it not first save itself by uniting all men in its fold, and thus proving the insignificance of racial, national and creedal differences? The denomination, of course, had its origin in the subordination of religion to theology — in the extraordinary conception that men cannot worship or work together unless first they agree together in matters of theological belief. This idea might seem to be not so ridiculous if the sectarian divisions of an age were determined by the issues which are vital to that age. But these divisions

far outlive the issues which produced them. The denominations of modern Protestantism, for example, represent not living causes but dead traditions of three to five hundred years standing. What we have in these denominations today, in so far as they are living realities at all, is not so much theological as social differentiations. For years, now, every church has tended more and more, in spite of itself, to represent a certain class in the community. We know just where to put the Episcopalians, the Unitarians, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Universalists, the Methodists, the Seventh Day Adventists, in the scale of income and social standing. Theological orthodoxy, in other words, has developed into class consciousness. John Calvin has been succeeded by Karl Marx. Which means that outwardly as well as inwardly, in matters of life as well as of belief, the community is divided by the very influence which ought to bind it together in "one body and one spirit".

It was in order to accomplish this ideal of unity, and therewith end the sectarian and class divisions of the religious world, that the community church movement came along, a quarter of a century ago, to challenge the whole system of denominationalism. It declared that there could be no unity in religion so long as men attempted to organize their faith around the orthodoxy of theological opinion. To seek agreement is to find disagreement, and to command conformity is to achieve non-conformity. In place of creeds as the basis of religious accord, there must be something which, by its very nature, includes men instead of excluding them. This may be found in the concept of authority, as in the medieval age, when most men, in the church as in the state, were willing to yield obedience to authority. But in a free society, where there can be no authority save the common will, this center of integration can only be found in the community itself, which embodies all that is common and therefore universal in the experi-

ence of the race. In the community we are all one. We live together, and work together, and play together, and vote together. Why should we not also worship together, and have one church as we have one library, one art museum, one school-system, and one government? There must always be different religious ideas, but why should these ideas be any more inconsistent with membership in one church than different political and economic ideas are inconsistent with citizenship in one state? The trouble is that through all these years we have laid undue emphasis upon theology in relation to religion. The deepest thing in this American democracy of ours is the fellowship which we enjoy together in the common service of the common interests of a common life. But this fellowship is itself a religious phenomenon. It should be in very truth the essence of religion. And it will be, if and when we can substitute the community for the creed as the beating heart of the spirit.

This was the vision seen by my New York church after the vast calamity of the War. It took the community as the basis of its organization, and as its aim the creation in the community of an ideal brotherhood of men. Live coals from this flame upon our altar, you carried to yours, and here they burn today. Our churches are the same! They are free not in the sense that they have thrown away the creed, and put nothing in its place—the great weakness of liberal churches generally; but free in the sense that they have put the community in place of the creed, and therewith released men from that primary subjection to denominational allegiance which has made religion the enemy of the common life. Our churches are themselves a community in which gather all sorts and conditions of men, of every race, nationality, and religion, who find in one another that "unity of the spirit which is the bond of peace." We have discovered, even amid the prejudices and hatreds of this contemporary world, the secret of

fellowship, and projected within ourselves the prophecy of what some day will be universal upon the earth. For "fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; and the things which ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye shall do them."

But there is a third influence which fashioned the habit of this church. I refer to the determination of its members from the very first that the Boston Community Church should be a church of social idealism and social action. It should be fundamentally concerned not with theoretical but with applied religion. A church, of course, must have manifold activities. It must foster, if it be a church and not a club or other secular society, the intimate spiritual practices of worship, meditation and prayer. It must cherish the tradition and maintain the practise of education, not only for children but for adults. It must serve the needs of the individual soul, and to that end administer comfort, inspiration, and moral guidance. But no one of these functions, nor all of them together, can be regarded as a substitute for social action, by which I mean the deliberate attempt of the church to go out into society,—into the city, the nation, the world—and there destroy the evils, correct the injustices, end the exploitations and oppressions which weigh upon men's souls like chains upon their limbs, and make impossible their freedom as the sons of God. It is not enough to make the church itself an ideal community. This ideal must be taken out into the real community of day-to-day political and economic relationships and there be made to change the kingdoms of the world into the likeness of God's kingdom on the earth.

The first impact of this social challenge came in this case from the peace question. We have seen how it was a little group of hard-pressed pacifists in Boston who gathered together in the first meetings of this church. They wanted a refuge from the storm of violence and

hate which the War had released upon our age. But they were not escapists, who were running away from the problems precipitated by the War. On the contrary, their desire was not so much to save themselves as to do what they could to save the world from the destruction impending upon it. They sought by association in this new church to multiply their strength for the work of ending war by establishing durable conditions of peace. And from those earliest days to this present year, through all the two decades from 1919 to 1938, this church has been a more effective peace society than most of the definitely organized peace societies with which I chance to be familiar.

But this is not all! To be active in one social field is sooner or later to be active in all. Steadily through the years this church has widened the area of its good works. It has fought poverty in exactly the same spirit it has fought war. It has defended civil liberties from the attacks of bigots and fanatics. It has espoused the cause of prison reform, and sought to end the abomination of capital punishment. It has assailed militarism, political corruption, economic exploitation, racial discrimination, and religious bigotry. It has remembered always the Negro, the unemployed, the workers, who are still denied the elementary rights of manhood in a democracy. Its work in the Sacco-Vanzetti case was a model of what a church may do when confronted by a wrong which has its origin in the pride, power and prejudice of the chosen classes of the community. This church has never been interested in the perpetuation of the *status quo*, in the defense of law, custom and tradition, in the vindication of respectability against the outcry of oppression. It has sought only to save the people through the application of social justice to the common life, and therewith to establish in our day that "true church" defined by Theodore Parker in his day, when he said:

"A church should be a means of reforming the world.

... It should bring up the sentiments, the ideas, and the action of the times, to judge them by the universal standard. ... If there be a public sin in the land, if a lie invade the state, it is for the church to give the alarm. ... But that is not all; (a church) should be a society for the promotion of good works. ... Look around you in the streets of Boston! See the ignorant, look at the poor, behold the wicked. In the midst of these wrongs and sins, the crimes of men, and society, and the state, is the church to say nothing, do nothing? If I thought so, I would never enter the church but once again, and then to bow my shoulders to their manliest work, to heave down its strong pillars, arch and dome, roof and wall, though like Samson I buried myself under the ruins of the temple which profaned the worship of God most high. ... A church which aspires to be a true church must be a church not merely of theology but of religion, not of faith only but of works, a just church by its faith bringing works into life. ... To apply Christianity to life, and make the world a better place — (this is to) be a live church, leading the civilization of the times."

II

Such are the forces, as I see them, which went into the making of this church — the passion for peace, the ideal of fellowship and the challenge of social change. The mention of Theodore Parker shows that this Community Church, however radical, is not new in this great city. For it is remarkable that Boston, pre-eminently the mother of liberal movements of every kind, has at the same time always been the mother of other still more liberal movements to the left of liberalism. It is as though liberalism were doomed to produce its own especial heresies. This process began, curiously enough, with William Ellery Channing, who had no sooner established Unitarianism as the heterodoxy of New England Congregationalism than he himself be-

came the heretic of Unitarianism. Thus, he fought the denominational tendencies of the new body, declared that he was "very little of a Unitarian", and proclaimed his primary membership in the universal church of all good men. He espoused the cause of liberty to a degree which horrified the Boston Brahmins, whose liberalism was fast hardening into a creed as dogmatic as that of the old-time Calvinists. Throughout his ministry, he championed peace and denounced war with a vehemence that seemed to his alarmed parishioners to border on the seditious. In his declining years he extended a thorough-going social idealism to the issue of slavery, and therewith forced a break with his church which to the end was never healed.

What began with Channing mounted rapidly to its terrific climax in Theodore Parker, who was at once the supreme theological and social heretic of his day. It is difficult to determine whether his transcendental religious ideas or his radical social doctrines the more scandalized the conventional, prosperous and powerful liberals of Boston. Born and bred a Unitarian, Parker served the first seven years of his ministry in a quiet Unitarian church in West Roxbury. But the founding of the independent 28th Congregational Society in Boston was a declaration of war against the liberal citadel, and to the end of his days the great preacher was an outlaw of Unitarianism. With his death in 1860, and after the interim of the Civil War, the task was taken up and carried on by the Free Religious Association, which for a full half-century of time sustained the militant tradition of a liberalism to the left of liberalism. Is it an accident, I wonder, that the founding of this Community Church came coincidentally with the passing of this Association — the demise of the one being separated by only a few months from the birth of the other? It is as though, in all this succession, a process of reincarnation were at work. For over a hundred years, now, the presence of a left liberalism

has never failed in Boston. As I look around this church, I see the faces of many who were reared, as I was reared, in the meetings and annual conventions of the Free Religious Association. As I gaze upon this congregation, grown from a mere handful to a great host of people, gathering here from Sunday to Sunday in Symphony Hall, the successor of Music Hall, today the largest liberal religious congregation in America, I seem to see, as though come to life again, the great Music Hall congregation of Theodore Parker, which was in its day the largest liberal religious congregation in this country. And as I sense the spirit of this church, and feel its pulse, I seem to recognize the presence of the immortal Channing who, after turning away from his beloved Federal Street Church, proclaimed in 1841, the last year of his life:

"I belong to the universal church, nothing shall separate me from it. . . . We must shun the spirit of sectarianism as from hell. We must shudder at the thought of shutting up God in any denomination. We must think no man the better for belonging to our communion; no man the worse for belonging to another. We must look with undiminished joy on goodness. . . . To confine God's love to any party, sect, or name, is to sin against the fundamental law of the kingdom of God, to break that living bond with (the) universal church which is one of our chief helps to perfection."

Yes, the Community Church is not new. It is as old as the oldest tradition of free religion in America, which begins not with Channing in the nineteenth century but with Roger Williams in the seventeenth. It is a left liberalism born again, to challenge a right liberalism suddenly become orthodox and conventional. When we stooped to lay the foundation stones of this church, we found at our feet a torch which had been dropped by other hands. That torch we picked up, and lifted high. And now it flames again — a light in the darkest age that man has ever known.

III

But if this church has its rootage in the past, it has its growth in the present, and also its efflorescence in the future. What interests me supremely in the Boston Community Church is its spirit of experimentation, its new ventures in the field of religious expression, its contributions, as I definitely believe, to the fashioning of a new type of religious institution in society. Let me enumerate some of the things which you have conceived and tried, and which are unknown to the tradition of the church:

(1) First, there is the fact that you do not have a preacher at the head of your church, but an executive director or leader, whose business it is to maintain a pulpit which shall be occupied by the ablest speakers of all varieties of opinion, conservative, liberal, and radical, who can be obtained far and wide throughout the land. This is not to say that your leaders are not themselves preachers. Dr. Skinner, who directed the affairs of this church through so many years, is one of the outstanding liberal preachers, as well as teachers and scholars, of our day. Mr. Lothrop is one of the ablest preachers among our younger men. But the relation of these men to the church was not, as it is not, fundamentally a preaching relationship. This pulpit is directed by your leader to the end of opening it in hospitality to authoritative speakers on all phases of ethical and social life. You receive here week by week a succession of men, carefully chosen for their knowledge, experience, character, and eloquence. The result is a ministry of wellnigh unparalleled variety and power. I know of nothing to compare with it excepting pulpits maintained in much the same spirit by certain of the great universities of the country. This is something new in the practice and policy of the church. It is a contribution of inestimable value to the pressing problem of the functioning of religion in our time. The con-

gregations which gather around this pulpit from week to week, seldom to see an old face, frequently to hear a new voice, would seem to indicate that we have here a program of prophecy which is as effective as it is novel.

(2) Secondly, you have learned to ignore all distinction between the clergy and the laity. You see in the profession of the educated ministry no exclusive, and certainly no magic, claim to unique authority in things religious. You have swung full circle, in other words, around that orbit which was begun when our Protestant forefathers rebelled against the priesthood of the church, and proclaimed in bold defiance what Luther called "the priesthood of the common man." I doubt if you ever ask yourselves the question — or, if you ask it, are very much concerned by the answer — as to whether the preacher in this pulpit on any particular Sunday is a clergyman or a layman. You listen to him not because of his profession, but only because of his dignity as a man, his authority as a teacher, his ability as a speaker. It would be interesting to survey the list of preachers in this pulpit during the last five years, and discover how many have been ministers and how many something else. My own guess is that the ministers would be in a slight minority. This is not because you distrust the ministry, or under-rate its importance, or ignore the special place of leadership which it must always hold in the field of religion. The professional man, as a trained specialist, is indispensable. But there is a superstition about a profession, any profession, which is disastrous. And this you have escaped. In the same way, you have escaped the superstition of sex. Women have the same access to this pulpit as men, and exercise within it the same authority. All of which means that, in the church within as in the world without, you have come to recognize the unique sanctity of personality! It is not the man who speaks here, nor the woman, least of all the profession, which counts. It is the soul alone, as it stands clad in

the garb of virtue, ordained by the authority of truth, and blessed by the benediction of the spirit.

(3) Thirdly, you have learned to acknowledge an individual, in his own essential worth of personality, not only in the pulpit but also in the pew. Here in this congregation there are neither deacons nor elders, rich nor poor, high nor low, native nor alien, black nor white, Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. Station has no recognition, family no reverence, wealth no privilege. When a man enters within this place, he becomes divested of every distinctive characteristic which sets him apart in other places from his fellows, and straightway is clothed with that humanity which is the common possession of us all. Whoever he may be, you see not his color, nor his creed, nor his nationality, nor his education or lack of education, nor his poor or splendid clothes, but only himself as a man; and he wins or loses, survives or perishes, in this fellowship on the basis alone of his ability, his character, his mental integrity, his loving kindness. The world being what it is, and the times being what they are, I count it one of the proudest moments in the history of any church when this Boston Community Church, comprised overwhelmingly of whites, chose by due process of nomination and election a Negro to be the President of the congregation. Had he been chosen *because* he was a Negro, it would have been as bad as though some other man had been chosen *because* he was a white. But he was *not*! This friend of ours was chosen to our highest office because we knew his ability, trusted his fidelity, honored his character, and admired his career. The color of his skin had no more to do with his election than the color of his eyes or the cut of his coat. This is democracy, and it is also religion.

(4) It is this sense of democracy in pulpit and pew alike which has undoubtedly led to a fourth feature of this church's life — namely, a forum, to follow

regularly its Sunday morning service. You believe, and act upon the belief, that the people have rights in this assembly as well as the preachers. Among these rights is the right to be heard in question or in challenge. So when the preacher is done, you ask him for further information; you suggest doubts as to his convictions or conclusions; you insinuate your own ideas as to the truth. This church is unique in this principle and practice of free discussion. There are those who argue that it degrades the church to the level of a forum. But when did the forum become a degrading expression of democracy? I count this forum feature one of the noblest aspects of this church's life. It is democracy at work in religion.

(5) Fifthly, you have organized your church along lines so strange and therefore unfamiliar as to be almost unrecognizable as a church. If there are those who do not know, or will not concede, that the Boston Community Church is really a church in the technical or traditional sense of the word, this is one of the reasons. Thus, you are not interested in men's societies, or women's societies, or young peoples societies, in themselves. If men, or women, or young people want to come together, it must not be for their own sake — for their play, or pleasure, or self-indulgence — but for the sake only of some high service in the community. The organizations distinctive of this church are not those characteristic of the ordinary parish, but rather those multifarious and incessantly active committees or groups which discover some job of reform to be done in the city, in the nation, or even in the world at large, and straightway organize to do it. Thus, you have your peace committee, and your cooperative committee, and your civil liberties committee, and your race relations committee, and those especial committees for emergency action in some quick crisis in the community. Yours is a church in action. You have your sentinals on the walls, your soldiers in the field. Let there be any good

fight for the kingdom in Boston, in Washington, in Geneva, and this church will have its banner at the front.

(6) Lastly, you have learned to see religion as coincident with life. You have refused to believe that the church can dwell apart from any experience of men. If the sweat and tears and blood of humanity are involved, then the spirit is involved. It is not a matter of economics, and politics, and art, and literature, and business, and education — and religion. No one of these things separately, but all of them together make up life, and life in all its endeavors after righteousness and truth becomes religion. So you have insisted upon bringing into this pulpit the discussion of all kinds of economic, political and international questions, which to the average person are not religious at all. And you have made it your concern, in all the activities of this church, to direct your energies to the betterment of those human relations almost universally accounted secular and not sacred. Your conviction has been that of Theodore Parker who said years ago, in his immortal discourse on *The True Idea of a Christian Church*, his installation sermon in Boston, "We should build up a state where there was honorable work for every hand, bread for all mouths, clothing for all backs, culture for every mind, and love and faith in every heart. Truth would be our sermon, . . . works of daily duty would be our sacrament, prophets inspired of God would minister the word. . . . The noblest monument to (God), the fairest trophy of religion, is a noble people, well fed and clad, industrious, free, educated, manly, pious, wise, and good."

IV

I might name other distinctive features of this church. But these are enough to indicate its pioneering character, its progressive influence in a period of reaction, its creative impulse in a society threatened with disintegration and collapse. Which brings me in con-

clusion to the most remarkable fact about this institution of free religion — that it came into existence, and has grown and flourished, in an age of indescribable social disaster! This church was born, as we have seen, at the close of a war that all but wrecked our world. It is now commemorating its twentieth anniversary at the outbreak of a second war — or is it the same war begun again? — which has brought our whole civilization face to face with doom. In these past two decades, we have seen humanity struggling with every condition of disorder and violence which has ever afflicted the race in its darkest hours of calamity. Revolution has followed in the wake of war; kings have fallen, governments been overthrown, the stable institutions of society cracked and riven with civil strife. Financial disturbances and economic depressions have swept whole nations into bankruptcy and despair. Democracies have yielded to dictatorships, and established ways of culture to the recrudescence of barbarisms of ancient times. Inward disillusionment has matched outward disturbance, and moral standards and spiritual principles given place to the sheer brutishness of tyranny and terror. Our own country, far removed from the centers of disorder, has none the less been swept by the engulfing storm. Everywhere have materialism, militarism, and mania been dominant in human affairs. What chance has religion in such an age? What wonder the churches, when not persecuted or out-and-out destroyed, have tragically languished, and all but given up the ghost?

It is in such a time, the most terrifying since the vast era of the decline and fall of Rome, that the Boston Community Church has carried on its work without surrender or even compromise. In an age of war, it has plead for peace; in the face of totalitarianism, it has clung to democracy; in the midst of prejudice and hate, it has preached and practiced brotherhood; in challenge to ideologies as dogmatic and fanatical as any of the past, it has had resort to the all but forgotten

simplicities of the free mind, the loving heart, and the heroic spirit. In a society which ignores religion, or ridicules it, or out-and-out denounces and destroys it, this church has put its trust in the soul of man as akin to the being of God, and patiently, steadfastly, triumphantly wrought the new fabric of religion for the coming age. And it has grown from strength to strength in the sympathy and support of men!

The success of the Boston Community Church, in such a crisis of human destiny, is its supreme achievement. Not success necessarily in any terms that the world would recognize as success! Success rather in terms of the vindication and fresh prophecy of truth. What this church has done, ideally speaking, in its twenty years of life, is to prove again the everlasting reality of religion; and, practically speaking, to work out some of those new forms in which a changeless and yet ever changing religion will continue to find expression. This, dear friends — this church which you so fondly love and faithfully serve — *this* is the church of the future. I have little confidence in the historic churches, either Catholic or Protestant, or even liberal. They will last for a long time, and do much good. But this crisis spells the coming of a new age, as the Reformation and its wars four centuries ago spelled the passing of medievalism and the coming of modernism. It is in this sense that our time is not merely a time of destruction. If we are breaking old forms, it is only to release imprisoned life. In which process we are discovering a new religion, or an old religion in deeper and truer meaning, as in the same way we are discovering a new politics, and a new economics, and in the end a finer culture! For religion this means a new church. And it is this church which you have been planning and building through these years. You have at last been doing what Prof. Josiah Royce said long ago must still be done:

"Since the office of religion", he wrote, in his *The*

Problem of Christianity, "is to aim towards the creation on earth of the Beloved Community, the future task of religion is the task of inventing and applying the arts which shall win men over to unity, and which shall overcome their original hatefulness by the gracious love not of mere individuals but of communities. Such arts are still to be discovered. . . . The core of faith is the Beloved Community. . . . And we must help towards the coming of (this) community by helping to make the work of religion inventive of new social arts. . . . There is nothing else under heaven whereby men have been saved or can be saved."

V

So you end your twenty years — and begin straightway another twenty years, and more! I salute you and congratulate you, not as one who is a stranger without, but as one rather who is an associate within and who has shared therefore the labors, sacrifices and joys of these two decades. For your work has been also my work. I cling to it, I boast of it, I pray for it. It is a wonderful work — so wonderful that it brings us light in the hour of darkness and hope in the moment of despair. Whatever the catastrophies of our time, *we* need not be afraid. For in this church,

"As lofty as the love of God,
As ample as the wants of man",

we hold the future as a lamp that sheds its beams into the night. We have only to trim this lamp, and guard it well, and lift it high, for ourselves and for mankind to find the way. Like Browning's Paracelsus,

"(We) have done well, though not all well.
..... If (we) stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; (we) press God's lamp
Close to (our) breast; its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom. (We) shall emerge one day."