

**THE NEXT STEP IN
RELIGION; AN
ESSAY TOWARD THE
COMING RENAISSANCE**

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The next step in religion; an essay toward the coming renaissance by Roy Wood Sellars

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ROY WOOD SELLARS

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THE NEXT STEP IN RELIGION



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THE NEXT STEP IN RELIGION

AN ESSAY TOWARD THE
COMING RENAISSANCE

BY

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Author of "Critical Realism," "The Next
Step in Democracy," etc.

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1918

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TO
HELEN STALKER SELLARS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is positive and constructive, although it may not at first appear such to the reader whose inherited beliefs are freely challenged. But let the reader ponder the fact that the deepest spiritual life has always concerned itself with the appreciation and maintenance of values. He who acknowledges, and wishes to further, human values cannot be said to be irreligious or unspiritual.

The center of gravity of religion has been openly changing for some time now from supernaturalism to what may best be called a humanistic naturalism. The history of this change is traced in many of the chapters of the book. There have been many steps forward in the past, for every age must possess its own religion, a religion concordant with its knowledge and expressive of its problems and aims. The sincerity and adequacy with which this necessary task is done measures the spiritual greatness of the particular age.

I have called the book *The Next Step in Religion* because the time is ripe for one of the great steps forward. The setting of religion must be adjusted to man's knowledge. Let it not be feared that man's spiritual life will be injured thereby. Rather will it be made saner, healthier and more creative.

The first phase of religion reflected man's helplessness and fear. He peopled his surroundings with conscious powers, sometimes adverse, sometimes friendly,

FOREWORD

but always jealous. Man became their slave. As man became less of a savage, these gods of his fancy became nobler. But they still acted like magnets to draw his attention away from his own problems. The coming phase of religion will reflect man's power over nature and his moral courage in the face of the facts and possibilities of life. It will be a religion of action and passion, a social religion, a religion of goals and prospects. It will be a free man's religion, a religion for an adult and aspiring democracy.

A book must in the main carry its own credentials. But there may be those who will wish to carry the quest further and deeper. To those interested in my share in this larger work I may mention my *Critical Realism* and *The Next Step in Democracy*.

R. W. SELLARS.

Ann Arbor, Michigan,
August 5, 1918.