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Preface

I was a Baptist minister searching for a Baptist model of spiritual formation and my quest led me to Walter Rauschenbusch. That was thirty years ago during my metropolitan Chicago ministry days as an American Baptist pastor and a Doctor of Ministry student at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. Over the years my attachment to Rauschenbusch as a spiritual guide deepened and has resulted in the book you are holding in your hands.

The life he lived, the writings he composed, and the prayers he offered have moved me along to live in God more fully, more freely, and more fearlessly. The following readings are offered with the hope that the wisdom of Rauschenbusch will further what it means to live in God and will deepen the spiritual life and vitality of those who take time to ponder and pray his words from a century ago. I know from experience that the words still have power to touch the soul and shape the heart more in the likeness of Christ.

As an effort to root the readings more firmly in the soil of Baptist heritage, I have chosen to include verses from New Testament translations by two Baptist contemporaries of Rauschenbusch. Most of the New Testament verses are from *A Centenary Translation* by Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861–1934), published by Judson Press in 1924. She was the first woman to translate the New Testament from Greek into English and have it professionally published. As a resident of Rochester, NY, she knew and respected Professor Rauschenbusch at Rochester Divinity School and she was a co-worker with another Rochester native, Susan B. Anthony. In 1899 she was the first woman elected to

the Rochester School Board, twenty years before women secured the right to vote. In 1921 she was elected the first female president of the Northern Baptist Convention (today ABCUSA), which also made her the first woman president of any American religious denomination. During her term as president, she confronted and resisted an attempted fundamentalist takeover of the Convention with efforts to impose a doctrinal identity and confessional conformity on local Baptist congregations. She brought a message of liberty to her presidency and said that the priority should be on the mission of the church rather than on divisive theological issues. In the Introduction to her translation, she wrote, “The author offers the results of many years of happy work, in deep humility and with a keen sense of the many shortcomings of her work; but in the ardent hope that it may bring to some a fresh sense of the actuality and power of the wonderful records of the One Perfect Life which has ever been lived. In devotion to him who is Savior and Master, she offers this work of love.”

Other New Testament verses are from *An American Translation*, the 1923 translation by Baptist minister and New Testament scholar Edgar Goodspeed (1871–1962), who taught and was chairman of the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Literature at the University of Chicago.¹ Edgar Goodspeed’s translation was a forerunner to the 1946 Revised Standard Version for which he toiled fifteen years on the translation committee. Of his *American Translation* he said in the Preface, “It has been truly said that any translation of a masterpiece must be a failure, but if this translation can in any measure bring home the great

1. The university was established by Baptists, including Goodspeed’s father, with action taken on December 3, 1888 by the Executive Board of the American Baptist Education Society. Leading the effort along with Thomas Goodspeed was William Raney Harper and major donor John D. Rockefeller.