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of a
Unitarian.

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I HAVE been asked to state, briefly, in this pamphlet, some of the beliefs I hold as a Unitarian.

Now this itself is the first point to notice ; that being a Unitarian I have no right to say precisely, and in set terms, why any other man is a Unitarian ; for there is no authority that can define, or in any way lay down the law as to the terms of my religious belief. Just here, indeed, all Unitarians are agreed, that there is no creed, no book, no church-organisation, no priesthood, which can compel us to conform to any hard and fast intellectual statement of our faith.

I believe in the inalienable right and duty of every man to follow the truth, wheresoever it may lead him. I believe that the only ample and sufficient authority in matters of faith and conduct, is a mind and heart open with reverence and humble gratitude to the Voice of God, as He speaks in the grandest traditions of the past, and in the teaching of the experience of mankind ; open calmly and dutifully to the Voice of God as He speaks in the urgent needs of the present ; open fearlessly and willingly to the Voice of God as He calls to us out of the future, out of the midst of the burning bush of Vision, Hope, Ideal, Aspiration. Personally I should sum this up by saying that the seat of authority

lies in Conscience ; not meaning thereby in a single faculty of the soul, which casts a sudden gleam of light at any and every instant upon the action which is right for me, but the resultant call to the soul of the Voice of the Spirit, speaking out of the past, the present, and the future.

Do not expect to find here a statement of my belief as a mere negation or denial of some other man's belief, however logical that denial might be ; not only because that would be unsatisfactory to you and to me, but because it would be untrue to my own faith which has its roots in a warm, affectionate, outgoing, affirmative desire to enter into harmony with God and with my fellow men.

I believe in the Unity of the Universe ; that there is an ordering, guiding, controlling Soul at the centre of nature, and that Law, unvarying, unalterable eternal Law, diverse in its action, but with all its modes in harmony, rules throughout the whole vast range of the Universe. There are laws in the material world—bodies are attracted to one another with a force which is dependent upon their mass, and so forth,—and they all articulate and dovetail and harmonise. There are laws of the mind—the laws of memory, of attention, of association, and others,—in them we trust implicitly, and are not deceived ; the working of each modifies the working of the others, for all are one within the eternal, all-embracing Law. There is one Spirit that unites and animates and pervades all things, giving them their being, all things revealing the presence of the creative, animating Reality. "The Heavens declare the glory of

God," says the Psalmist, and the poet of to-day responds with—

" Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

There is purpose in every meanest atom of matter. "The world globes itself in a drop of dew." Law governs every function, the action of the function, and the medium in which it acts.

" Everything wondrous, suggestive, with meaning inborn in it ;
Everything marked with the stamp of eternal significance."

I believe in the Unity of the Universe, and behind it one Will, one Power, one Spirit, directing, governing, guiding the whole. I am a Unitarian.

I believe in the Unity of God—the one God, the Father Almighty, the Soul of whom our souls are born, the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe," finding His highest manifestation in the mind and heart of highest men, revealing Himself as Life, as Power, as Will, as Purpose, as Beauty, as Mind, as Soul, as Truth, as Love.

I believe in the Unity of Mankind, in that Love ; in the Brotherhood of Man because of the universal Sonship to God. We are imperfect now—O ! how imperfect, in our consciousness of that Unity, but the Brotherhood is real in fact, and only awaits our recognition by our action, our life. And Unitarians believe in that kind of action and life : they have striven valiantly and well in the past to make more real that

Brotherhood. They have been in the foremost ranks of social reformers.

I believe in Jesus Christ as the supreme religious teacher and leader. I believe that his commandments of love to God and love to our fellow men, his teaching of God's besetting, pursuing Love and Purpose for man, his presentation, in teaching and life, of a religion of the Spirit, of decision, of fruitage, of redemption, are the highest, and the grandest, and the richest, the world has ever known. But not that he was the second Person in a Godhead of three co-equal Persons; not that he was the necessary sacrifice to reconcile a wrathful God to His sinful children, making by his sacrifice "perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world." I believe that by his life, his influence, his teaching, and the manner of his death he redeemed and redeems men—men who are ready to follow where he led, and abide by his teaching, going with him to find, with him, direct and open access to the heart of his Father and ours. Thus and thus only the saviour of men.

And the Bible; the more I know about it and of it, the more I revere it as a repository of truth and inspiration. I see in it a collection of books of poetry, history, biography, prophecy, vision, and general literature: some of it written by very ignorant men, some of it by God-inspired men, pouring out their hearts in words of challenge and power.

I see it as one of a number of collections of sacred books, all sacred and all precious to those who know their contents and their inner meaning: but I see the

Bible towering over them all in its value to mankind, and containing the story of the richest life the world has seen. In these other Bibles there are here and there gleams of light and grand thoughts; but the Bible—especially the New Testament—is surcharged with inspiration and help for the earnest soul, with comfort for the weary and heavy-laden, cheer for those that mourn, and large promise of the life to come.

But "God is not dumb that He should speak no more," and I believe in the Living God, who speaks to-day as well as in days gone by: that men are still inspired to write sacred literature; that "God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His word"; that the Bible of the race is still being written.

I believe that man is a child of God's Love and not a child of wrath: that the more we look into the story of the ages of the past, whether told by the rocks and the cave walls, the ancient scriptures, or the story of civilization, the more do we find history to be a striking, thrilling tale, speaking forth from every page of the rise of man "from the brute to the heir," from a life like that of the beast of the field to the consciousness of his sonship to God. I believe that *every* human being is a child of God: that we are all born of His Love because He needs us for the fulfilment of His purposes, and that He needs us eternally; that none can fall beyond the reach of His Everlasting Arms.

I believe in Heaven; in a wondrous and beautiful life of joy to come; a life stretching away before us, cycle after cycle, a life that will eternally show forth the Spirit that is in us and "open out a way through which

the imprisoned splendour may escape.”

I believe in personal immortality—that the personality of each one of us, purged, purified, deepened, uplifted, divinely united with other personalities, will live on in the great heart of God, for evermore. And if not this, then something better, so grand that I cannot even conceive it.

And I believe in Salvation. Not what seems to me the hard, proud belief that a man can save himself by his own unaided efforts ; but salvation in the sense of redemption or liberation ; that it is the duty of every man deliberately and humbly to open his being to all noble influences, actively to seek out sources of such influence, to read what will uplift, to look upon the beauty that will stir within him the love of loveliness, to look often upon his ideal, to open his soul to the Over Soul, to place himself in the stream that leads towards right and good and God, and submit to be carried by its current, refreshed by its waters, borne on its breast, on to the City of God.

I believe in worship, and in the Church of God, in the power of fellowship in prayer and the corporate search after the Will of God. But because I am a Unitarian, because of all the beliefs of which I have spoken, I believe that every church should be unfettered and free for the worship of God in spirit and truth, named with no name of sect, or party, not even by the theological term by which I wish myself to be known. And in this I stand upon the ground occupied by our leader, Dr. James Martineau, one of the finest minds and most devout religious teachers of his century, when

he said in a now famous utterance, “ If anyone being a Unitarian shrinks on fitting occasion from plainly calling himself so, he is a sneak and a coward. If, being of our catholic communion, he calls his chapel or his congregation Unitarian, he is a traitor to his spiritual ancestry and a deserter to the camp of his persecutors.”

In other words I do not believe in sectarianism. You remember how well Tennyson puts it in “ Akhbar's Dream ”—

“ For every splinter'd fraction of a sect
Will clamour ' I am on the Perfect Way,
All else is to perdition.' ”

Shall the rose

Cry to the lotus ' No flower thou ' ? the palm

Call to the cypress ' I alone am fair ' !

The mango spurn the melon at his foot ?

' Mine is the one fruit Alla made for man.' ”

Look how the living pulse of Alla beats

Thro' all His world. If every single star

Should shriek its claim ' I only am in heaven,'

Why that were such ophere-music as the Greek

Had hardly dreamed of. . . . ”

Sectarianism is the bane of the Christian Churches to this day. It has caused them to enlist their best energies under banners of minor and often unimportant issues ; it has bred among their members an unspiritual pride and self-assertiveness which wars against religion ; and has dissipated their strength in disgraceful wranglings and weary, fruitless cleavages and strife. As the Rev. E. W. Lewis once put it, “ We may go on gulling ourselves for a long time with fine words and fair sounding phrases, but to say that Life Eternal can be received only on terms arranged by an organisation, is one of those preposterous assertions which, whenever

they crystallise into conduct, must become an 'offence which smells to heaven.'

I may be excluded from the fellowship of this sect or that, but I claim fellowship, on the other hand, with some of the greatest Companions upon the Way; with Jesus himself, who opposed the sectarianising leaders in the national church of his own day, and called men to worship "our Father," in spirit and truth; with the Quietists—peace-loving souls of many ages, who have reverently stepped aside from theological strife, and digged down for deeper things; with the mystics—yes, I take my stand with the Christian mystic, William Law when he writes, "God is one, Human Nature is one, Salvation is one, and the Way to it is one; and that is the desire of the soul turned to God." And I claim another fellowship, wider still,—the great army of everyday, ordinary men and women, who care not for problems of philosophy or theology, whose life lies in common ways, hallowed ways none the less, who in their countless numbers though toiling in lowly paths of life, have yet felt through all "an undersense of greatest," a Presence that makes life worth living, who cherish a faith in the Living God, who find in worship an inspiration, a necessary help and stay, which binds them to their fellow men and to God.

I believe that what the world wants to-day is not creeds, but faith; not dogmas, but rational, sincere beliefs,—beliefs upon which men are prepared to act; not the power of the priest, but the power of religion; the consciousness of the Presence of God, and the practice of that sacred communion. I believe that

what the world needs to-day is that we should be men and women of prayer; in an age shot through with materialism, and apt to follow where the crowd points the way, this above all—in private life, in the office, in the schoolroom, in the workshop, in social service, in the Church,—the revealing of the sons of God.

