

**PROFESSION OF FAITH  
OF A SAVOYARD VICAR;  
A SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

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Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar; A Search for Truth by Jean Jacques Rousseau & Olive Schreiner

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**JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU & OLIVE SCHREINER**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH  
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A SEARCH FOR TRUTH**



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PROFESSION OF FAITH  
OF A  
SAVOYARD VICAR.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU,

CITIZEN OF GENEVA.

ALSO,

A SEARCH FOR TRUTH.

BY OLIVE SCHREINER.

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"You will find that this exposition treats of nothing more than natural religion.  
It is very strange that we should stand in need of any other!"—ROUSSEAU.

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### PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

**J**EAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, like M. de Voltaire and Thomas Paine, was a Deist,—a believer in a Deity who governs and controls the universe,—and, like these celebrated réformers, he has also explained and illustrated his belief with arguments drawn, not from the dictum of revelation, but rather from the open book of Nature, which is the common property of all mankind. He has given us, in words of candor and sincerity, the *Profession of Faith* of the Abbé M. Gaime, and the rational views of the catholic priest were also substantially his own.

This profession of faith of the eloquent Vicar of Savoy is remarkable for its unsectarian spirit, and also for its broad and enlightened views. It is justly tolerant towards all religions, and agrees with the Materialists, Pantheists, Secularists, Agnostics, and Deists of the present day in ignoring the authority of inspiration, miracles and prophecies as a basis for religious belief; and disagrees only with the Materialists in this, that while they believe with the other sects in all that is moral, beneficent, and good, they do not, like the Deists, personify that goodness by ascribing to it supernatural powers and calling it God.

John Locke, in his *Letters on Toleration*,\* says that "Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and im-  
"partial liberty, is the thing that we stand in need of,"

\* *Letters Concerning Toleration*, by John Locke, London, 1706.



and this benign doctrine of religious liberty is also commended and advocated by the Savoyard Vicar. "God forbid," says he, "that I should ever preach up the cruel tenets of persecution,—that I should ever induce my auditors to hate their neighbors, or to consign others to damnation. Had I any protestants in my neighborhood, or in my parish, I would make no distinction between them and my own flock in every thing that regarded acts of christian charity. I would endeavor to make them all love and regard each other as brethren—tolerating all religions, while peacefully enjoying their own."

This is a religion that few will oppose. It consists of deeds rather than of words. It has counsel for the ignorant, sympathy for the erring, charity for the oppressed; and is, in short, a religion of humanity.

"There is in the inmost heart of poor Rousseau," says Carlyle, in *Heroes and Hero Worship*, "a spark of real heavenly fire. With all his drawbacks, and they are many, he has the first and chief characteristic of a hero: he is heartily *in earnest*. In earnest, if ever man was; as none of these French philosophers were. He could be cooped into garrets, laughed at as a maniac, left to starve like a wild-beast in a cage;—but he could not be hindered from setting the world on fire."

The beautiful and profound allegory—*A Search for Truth*,—that follows the Vicar's *Profession of Faith*, though written by a young lady scarce beyond the years of childhood, seems inspired by the embodied wisdom of ages—inspired alike by the subtle power of genius and the pure and immutable spirit of truth.

PETER ECKLER.



## INTRODUCTION.

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**A**BOUT thirty years ago a young man, who had forsaken his own country and rambled into Italy, found himself reduced to a condition of great poverty and distress. He had been bred a Calvinist ; but in consequence of his misconduct and of being unhappily a fugitive in a foreign country, without money or friends, he was induced to change his religion for the sake of subsistence. To this end he procured admittance into a *hospice* for catechumens, that is to say, a house established for the reception of proselytes. The instructions he here received concerning some controversial points excited doubts he had not before entertained, and first caused him to realize the evil of the step he had taken. He was taught strange dogmas, and was eye-witness to stranger manners ;\* and to these he saw himself a destined victim.

\*In his *Confessions* Rousseau describes more particularly the "strange manners" to which he here refers : and was greatly shocked to observe that his exposure excited no concern at the *Hospice*. On the contrary, he "was sharply reprimanded by one of the administrators for his babbling" and was charged with "bringing scandal on a holy house and making much ado about nothing."—E.

He now sought to make his escape, but was prevented and more closely confined. If he complained, he was punished for complaining ; and, lying at the mercy of his tyrannical oppressors, found himself treated as criminal because he could not without reluctance submit to be so.

Let those who are sensible how much the first acts of violence and injustice irritate young and inexperienced minds, judge of the situation of this unfortunate youth. Swollen with indignation, the tears of rage burst from his eyes. He implored the assistance of heaven and earth in vain ; he appealed to the whole world, but no one attended to his plea. His complaints could reach the ears only of a number of servile domestics,—slaves to the wretch by whom he was thus treated, or accomplices in the same crime,—who ridiculed his non-conformity and endeavored to secure his imitation. He would doubtless have been entirely ruined had it not been for the good offices of an honest ecclesiastic, who came to the hospital on some business, and with whom he found an opportunity for a private conference. The good priest was himself poor, and stood in need of every one's assistance ; the oppressed proselyte, however, stood yet in greater need of him. The former did not hesitate, therefore, to favor his escape, even at the risk of making a powerful enemy.

Having escaped from vice only to return to indigence, this young adventurer struggled against his destiny without success. For a moment, indeed, he thought himself above it, and at the first prospect of good fortune, his former distresses and his protector were forgotten together. He was soon punished, however, for his ingratitude, as his groundless hopes soon