

**THE POWER AND PROMISE
OF THE LIBERAL FAITH: A
PLEA FOR REALITY**

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The Power and Promise of the Liberal Faith: A Plea for Reality by Thomas R. Slicer

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of the Liberal Faith

A Plea for Reality

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ALL SOULS, NEW YORK

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE INHERITANCE OF UNITARIANS . . .	5
THE POWER OF UNITARIANISM	28
THE PROMISE OF UNITARIANISM . . .	81
IS GOD YET PERSONAL AND IMMEDIATE?	108

THE INHERITANCE OF UNITARIANS.

"After the way which they call heresy, so serve I the God of our fathers."

PAUL was before Felix; but Paul was also under the shadow of an ancient and heroic faith. The throne of a Roman governor could not dim the glory of Hebrew traditions. No threatening of the modern Jews of his day could make him forget his ancient lineage. No charge that he was "a heretic" could convince him that the way in which he served God was not "the way of our fathers,"—his and theirs who accused him. The appeal is against Orthodoxy to an older Orthodoxy.

This is the attitude of the Unitarian of to-day. We, who are the heirs of the fathers, who hold an inheritance from a very ancient past, claim and can prove (and those who are not of our own way of thought must pardon the dogmatism of

the statement) that, so far as one ancient thing can be like anything modern, we are the heirs of the apostolic age; that what Jesus thought and said is the substance of our teaching; that what the apostles contended for, their attitude toward life, dominates our thought. Their usage is not ours. As was well said by the Hon. Carroll D. Wright, in speaking to 'the delegates from India, Japan, Belgium, and England, Scotland, and France, in the meeting to celebrate the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the American Unitarian Association, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath fixed the bounds of their habitations," and hath given them one speech,— the speech of the spirit, by which they uttered the things of God unto the sounding deeps of the soul of man.

" How purely hath its speech come down
 From man's primeval youth!
 How grandly hath its empire grown,
 Of Wisdom, Love, and Truth!"

We claim to be the heirs of Christianity from its beginnings. We therefore set before the union of our churches in their National Conference this statement: "These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man. We cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims." The Early Church included every man who would come: the Unitarian churches emulate its example. We know no process of exclusion. The man who falls away from the standards of moral life excludes himself. He would not need any edict from the pulpit or any deliberation of the society with which he had stood connected: he would find the solicitude for his sin penetrated by a reproach for his lapse from virtue that would, I think, make it impossible for him to long remain unrepentant with people to whom