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FREE RELIGION.

REPORT
OF ADDRESSES

AT A

MEETING HELD IN BOSTON,

MAY 30, 1867,

TO CONSIDER THE

CONDITIONS, WANTS, AND PROSPECTS

OF

FREE RELIGION IN AMERICA.

TOGETHER WITH

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION
THERE ORGANIZED.

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REPORT.

A VERY large assembly gathered in Horticultural Hall, Boston, on the 30th of May, 1867, in response to the following note of invitation, printed as an advertisement in several of the secular and religious newspapers of Boston and New York :

“ A Public Meeting, to consider the conditions, wants and prospects of Free Religion in America, will be held on Thursday, May 30, at 10 A. M., at Horticultural Hall, Boston.

“ The following persons have been asked to address the meeting, and addresses may be expected from most of them : R. W. Emerson, John Weiss, Robert Dale Owen, Wm. H. Furness, Lucia Mott, Henry Blanchard, T. W. Higginson, D. A. Wasson, M. Wise, Oliver Johnson, F. E. Abbot, and Max Lilienthal.

(Signed),

“ O. B. FROTHINGHAM, }
WM. J. POTTER, } Committee.”
ROWLAND CONNOR, }

The origin of this call is explained in the Address of the Chairman of the Meeting.

The Assembly was called to order at a little past 10 o'clock, and organized by the choice of OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM as Chairman, and Mrs. CAROLINE M. SEVERANCE as Secretary.

MR. FROTHINGHAM, as Chairman, then made the following remarks in explanation of the objects of the meeting :

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT.

As Chairman of the Committee by whom this Meeting was called, as well as the Chairman of the meeting itself, it is proper that I should make two or three remarks, explanatory of the purpose of the meeting.

Let me say in the first place, that this is not strictly the first meeting of the kind. What is proposed here was not initiated here this morning. As long ago as early in February, a private conference was held of some fifty or sixty gentlemen and ladies at the house of a gentleman in Boston, for the consideration of the general question, how far it might be possible to organize or associate the radical elements in religion in the form of a fellowship independent of the regularly organized sects in Christendom. That was a private conference, and the expression of opinion there was very frank and very sincere. The conference lasted nearly the whole day. It would not be proper that I, in this place, or at this time, should give an account of the proceedings of that conference; but it is proper for me to say that at the conclusion of that meeting a committee was appointed, charged with calling a public meeting of a similar character, at such time and place as they might see fit to choose. The committee consisted of five members. My own name was placed first on the list; Mr. Charles E. Norton was second; William J. Potter, of New Bedford, was also nominated, and Miss Shannon, of Watertown, and Mr. Rowland Connor, of Boston. Mr. Norton resigned, declining to serve on the committee, on account of engagements; Miss Shannon shortly left for Europe; and the business devolved on the remaining members of the committee. We therefore, not thinking it worth the while or important that we should fill up our numbers, have called this meeting.

Our duty would seem to be discharged by simply providing a hall, opening it, and advertising the meeting. But we have felt at liberty, friends, to go a little further than this, knowing to what peril promiscuous meetings are exposed, and how soon the hours are wasted away in aimless talk by persons who are unprepared to speak. Feeling also that, as two of these gentlemen were members of the company who signed their names to the call for the first private conference, and as such, knew better what the purpose of the meeting would be, than others could be expected to know, they have taken upon themselves to arrange the meeting. To save time, to economize the moments, to give point and purpose and balance and weight to what may be said, they have decided to invite speakers to occupy the time this morning. It is expected that a more public meeting for more open discussion will be held this afternoon.

And I will state here the principles upon which the committee proceeded when they planned this meeting, and called it. It has been said lately, that the time for a new religious departure had come; that the old parties in Christendom had drawn within their lines; that the doors were open by which people from the outside could come in; but they

were not doors by which people from the inside could go out; and the time had come, therefore, for a new departure.

I say a new departure has already taken place. Egypt has by multitudes been left. A great exodus has long been going on. The vast armies are on the march. Some are just lighting their first camp fires; some are packing up their luggage for the move; some have just stepped into the Red Sea; others are on the other side. Some are just tasting the waters of bitterness, and some have just plucked the herb which sweetens the waters. Some are out among the sands, wandering about, tired, scattered, groping; some are at the foot of the mountain, waiting to hear the trumpet; some have heard the trumpet, and passed on; some have gone beyond the wilderness and touched its utmost verge, and, ascending to the high land, are looking down upon the field before them; others again have gone into the field, have found the promised land, have brought back a report of the fruits and flowers and the people there, have found it a familiar land, the great promised land of the Lord, which the Lord originally gave to all his faithful children; they are at home there. These great masses of people, existing as masses, are, to a large extent, unconscious themselves of their own intellectual, philosophical and spiritual condition. Some, as I have intimated in a figure, are organized, more or less. Some are entirely disorganized. Some are already beginning to crystallize by the touch of circumstances, and fall within their lines. Some, understanding themselves very well, and their own position, are utterly at a loss to understand the position of their neighbors, or to know how they are related to other classes of feelers, thinkers, and believers, who are out on the same general march. Now it is believed that all these persons, however named or declining to be named; however conscious or unconscious of their own position, have, nevertheless, started from the same centre; are heading for the same general point; are moving along in a zigzag course very much but still in the same parallel lines, and are related to one another by certain affinities of feeling, thought and purpose, which make them one in spirit and in faith.

The committee, proceeding upon this hypothesis, which is justified to their own minds if not to yours, have said to themselves, let us give voice as far as possible to all these different masses. We have, therefore, invited no one to speak here this morning who represents any organized sect; no Orthodox man as Orthodox; no Unitarian as a Unitarian; no Universalist as a Universalist. We have called upon the extreme left wing of the Unitarians; we have called upon the progressive movement of the Universalist. We have then addressed ourselves to the vast company of Spiritualists, and said, "Send us a man,

to speak for you." We have turned to the Friends and said, "Send us a woman," and they sent us a woman. We have turned to the Progressive Friends and said, "Send us a spokesman," and they have sent us their spokesman. Then, having satisfied the demands of Christendom, we have gone outside of Christendom. Religion is not Christianity; religion is human. There is first Romanism and then Christianity. There is Protestantism, and then Christianity. There is Liberalism, and then Christianity. And there is Christianity, and then there is Religion. And so we have worded our invitation to free religionists, not to free Christians; and we have gone out of the church, under any denomination. Out there in Cincinnati there are societies of modern Jews, liberal Jews. We sent off a missive to them, and said, "Come and we will give you an opportunity to speak from the inside of your own body; let us know what you think." Then there are "come-outers," (as we say), intelligent men; believing, earnest men; devoted men, consecrated men, who refuse to be called Christians at all; we said, "Let us hear from you." There are men who believe in scientific methods; we have said, "Let us hear from you." There are men who start from the spiritual side; we have said, "Let us hear from you." And then there are worthy men who are strictly universal, comprehensive, absolute, taking in everything by pure thought, the men of pure intuition; and we said, "Give us one of your men to speak for you." And we have asked Ralph Waldo Emerson to do that.

Now I think you will concede that we have been honest and sincere, and faithful to our idea. It would be a pleasant thing to have an open meeting, if the days contained more than twenty-four hours, and the hours more than sixty minutes; but, unfortunately, in the order of a kind Providence, they do not. It would be a pleasant thing to have an open meeting and free speech: unable to do that, we say, trust us for believing that in inviting these men to speak here this morning, we invite you all to speak. We believe every earnest phase of thought and faith to be found in our community is ably, honestly, and sincerely represented in the speakers that we shall bring before you. More than this we do not claim. We ask to be heard not as disorganizers, but as organizers; not as men who would destroy, but as men who would fulfil; not as men who would pull down, but as men who would build up; not as men who would scatter to the winds, but as men who would gather together out of the far corners of the earth, and from the four winds of heaven, those who do sincerely believe, think and feel and worship alike. We have faith in this spiritual affinity for drawing men and women together — a profound faith in that.

We have no criticism to make upon the past, none upon the Catholic

Church, none upon the Protestant Church, in any of its branches, and none upon the Liberal Church. We leave them to their limitations; if they are satisfied with them, we are satisfied that they should be satisfied with them. We say, let those who are unlimited, those out of bonds, come together as a company of brothers and sisters, and take a look into the future, and see how far they are travelling along in parallel lines towards the great Kingdom which we hope will receive us all at last.

Now I have made an explanation in behalf of the committee: it has been much longer than I intended to make, not being one of the advertised speakers. Let me say, before I begin to introduce the speakers of the morning, that there was originally in contemplation, and is now entertained, an idea of association or fellowship in whatever loose, natural, spontaneous form that can be made. A motion to that effect, and the appointing of a committee to draw up some general scheme will be in order. That motion, however, is not debatable at this time. The proceedings will be debatable at the afternoon meeting, which will be expressly devoted to the question of organization. Is anybody prepared to make a motion to this effect?

Rev. EDWARD C. TOWNE, of Medford, said:

Mr. Chairman,—It was a characteristic of the meeting to which allusion has been made, that a large part of the day was spent in free conference; and afterwards the question of organization was taken into consideration. And it was voted at the close of our consultation in that conference that we should have a similar public meeting. It is proposed therefore, this morning, that a committee be appointed to report, at the second meeting, this afternoon, a plan of organization, and officers to be nominated under that organization. And I beg leave therefore, to nominate William J. Potter, Francis E. Abbott, Richard P. Hallowell, H. C. Delong, and Hannah E. Stevenson, as a committee to report upon permanent organization, and also to nominate officers under any plan of organization which they may decide to recommend.

The nomination was ratified on the part of the meeting.

THE PRESIDENT.

I had arranged a certain logical order in the speeches of this morning. Those who first proposed a Conference in Boston in the month of February, were Unitarians, that is, their route was in Unitarianism. I intended, therefore, to introduce to you first of all a speaker from the extreme left of Unitarianism, the Reverend John Weiss; but as I do not see that he is present this morning, I shall take the liberty of calling

the next speaker, whom I had on the list, — a representative of free Universalism ; and I shall introduce as spokesman to you from that body, Rev. Henry Blanchard, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

REMARKS OF REV. HENRY BLANCHARD.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, —

More than ten days ago I received a letter, inviting me to speak in Boston, at a Radical meeting, knowing that I am a Radical. I wrote back in response, that I should be very glad to do so. I supposed at that time, however, that the meeting would be of those who desired to be called Christians ; and though I am very happy indeed to join those who do not want to call themselves Christians, — because I believe that there are noble men and women outside of all Christian churches, — yet I was desirous that some one should precede me, who should speak for free Unitarianism, and that I might catch the spirit of the meeting from him, so that I might not say anything inappropriate to this platform. If I do say anything, therefore, which is inappropriate, I trust you will bear with me.

The letter requested that I should speak of the condition, and wants and prospects of Universalism ; and I shall endeavor to do so as well as I may. I shall not be able to explain the condition of Universalism, unless we go back to the beginning. We are to consider then that the movement began in Calvinism. The first step was that the atonement of Christ included not a few, but *all* men ; and first preachers said that the foreordination of God, who had sent Jesus Christ to be an atonement, was to the effect that all men should be ultimately delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Very speedily, however, Hosea Ballou started a secondary movement. He was a Unitarian Universalist, and did not place the stress upon the atonement that his predecessors had, saying that the fatherhood of God included the salvation of man. But he believed that all men would be immediately transported into happiness and holiness. His preaching marked the second step of Universalism. The third movement was that inaugurated by Paul Dean, when he endeavored to form what was then called the “restoration party” among Universalists ; and that party, although it was then defeated nominally, is now the dominant one among Universalists ; for the great body have followed Paul Dean’s leadership and that of Dr. Sawyer, of New York. The majority of those who call themselves Universalists, in the United States to-day, believe that God’s purpose is to improve mankind, and that bye-and-bye in His own good time, this object will be accomplished ; so that at last, no matter how long it may be postponed, all men shall be made holy and happy. They

emphasize their protest against the old-fashioned belief of the Ballou Universalist. They believe that there is an ultimate connection between this world and the next. They believe that it is not according to the providence of God, that man should leap from a state of unholiness here to a state of holiness in the next world.

Hosea Ballou, 2d, late President of Tufts College, was, and Dr. Sawyer is, just as earnest on this point as any Unitarian would wish them to be. There has been another movement, viz., one against the textual interpretation of the Bible. The follower of this movement said, "I am a Universalist, but I do not accept the old interpretation of the text; it is sufficient that I believe that God is my father, and, because he is, I believe that all men will be saved, and I do not care whether the interpretation of this text has been right or wrong." This was the first liberal movement of the Universalist denomination.

The followers of this say further, that, whether the Bible teaches that all men are to be saved or not; because an Infinite Providence is an Infinite Father, therefore, all men will be saved. And here is an important distinction, because the first conclusion was based on the statement of the Bible, and the other was based on man's consciousness of Deity himself. These men believe that the power that made this earth, has made it for good; and they believe the Bible because, accepting science as highest authority, they do not find the Bible, fairly interpreted, clashing with this, and so accept final universal salvation as a doctrine based on the dicta of science to-day. You will understand, therefore, that the great body of Universalists are wedded to the old belief, which has been the result of the Calvinistic beginning; that the Bible is that authority to which they are to go, and that they must bow down their reason to this, and that whatsoever the Bible teaches that they must accept. As a man said to me once, "If it can be shown by the Bible, that the doctrine of everlasting punishment is true, I shall be obliged to teach that." Such men belong outside of the old Church which planted itself on the Bible as its chief corner stone. Now we have another movement. Perhaps it will be thought by some that it has not sufficient power to be called a movement.

The followers of this believe men are wiser to-day than they were in the past. They say that men ought to do away with those old superstitious ideas of believing in absolute subjection to Jesus Christ, great as he is, in order that they may bow down to the Infinite Spirit. They should be classed with the Quakers, because they lay emphasis upon the spirit of God; not chiefly Jesus, though they honor him, and not merely on the Bible, though they reverence that with all their hearts. In the next place, there is a strong anti-congregational feeling, resulting

from the lack of culture. Not understanding how men can believe in the Bible, or in Jesus at all, unless these are accepted in a certain way, the majority of the Universalist clergy do not like the liberty of Congregationalism. They use the arguments that are so sound in behalf of organizations to establish academies and colleges, so as to make these apply in favor of a machinery to crush it.

I believe this anti-congregational spirit is an evil. Churches should be independent, having their own creeds, if any, and choosing their own minister, who shall be free to speak his best thought. I left the denomination because I was not willing to owe allegiance to denominational authority. I told certain honored leaders my view on certain questions, and asked them if they desired me to go out of the denomination. They replied, "If you do not change your views we think you ought to go." And I did go, and I hope that others will go outside also. I see, too, that the warmest men are the ones most interested in ecclesiastical machinery, and most apt to get into the engineer's seat. They will use their power to silence all dissent. Because of this result, therefore, I deplore the lack of culture. Let me say a few words with regard to what is being done for the cause of learning. The lack of culture which I have been dwelling upon, has been felt by many noble, earnest men, and to-day, therefore, many are giving money and time for the erection of academies and colleges. There is no denomination in the United States that desires more earnestly than the Universalist does, to have its ministers and laymen receive the culture which its leaders lacked. All honor, therefore, to the men and women engaged in this great cause. I see, also, a growing liberality on the part of the laymen. I am somewhat at a loss, therefore, to prophecy concerning the prospects of the denomination. I think I see two tendencies; the first is towards the establishment of what might be called Episcopalianism. There is a desire to have ritualistic services and a ministry quite distinctly separated from the people; and something of a desire to have a church government, like the Episcopalians. The tendency, therefore, is to become a thoroughly organized body, modified somewhat by a tendency to become liberalized by degrees; because the spirit of the times must reach this, and because the schools and colleges will help towards liberality, and so at last, as the Episcopal and Methodist bodies are becoming liberal Christians, the Universalist denomination must move on to the same result. This thorough organization prevents a union with the Unitarians. It prevents the body from co-working with other liberal bodies at present. No one, desirous of securing a free religious association, can hope for any assistance from an organization so compact, sectarian, intolerant as this. Indeed, friends, I do not see, myself, how it is possible to

have an association so broad as to include all religious men ; and I wish the question to be considered whether it is practicable to have any other union, than one which may be called a liberal Christian one. God knows, it thrills me to see on this platform to-day, and in this house, the representatives of so many different opinions. God knows I am thrilled by the hope of union of all devout men. I see the need of some organization, outside of all Christian churches, but I do not see that it is possible to draw the Christian into this.

I want to see all Liberal Christians in one body. As one of these, I will work with any broader organization, — and I doubt not that there are many good, true, earnest, devoted men and women who will be glad to work with any free, religious organization, which may result from this meeting to-day.

The President then introduced LUCRETIA MOTT, of Philadelphia.

REMARKS OF MRS. LUCRETIA MOTT.

OUR President announced me as a representative of the Quaker Sect, or the Society of Friends. I must do our friends at home the justice to say that I am not here as a representative of any sect. I am not delegated by any portion, or by any conference or consultation of Friends in any way. I am here, as some say, “on my own hook.” And if I can be heard, in my feebleness, it will not be to present to your view, as our first speaker has done for Universalism, the various phases of the society of Friends,— the Orthodox portion, the Hicksite portion, the Progressive Friends, or any of these,—because I think people generally are more interested in these divisions of their own denominations than outsiders, or than the other sects are. And I do not know whether it is so profitable a use of the time to enter into the little differences which have caused divisions among religious denominations, as to take a more general view of the advantages and disadvantages of religious organizations.

I had not understood, in coming here, the precise nature of the meeting ; I did not know how Radical the Convention was expected to be. One speaker, who has just sat down, has deprecated the idea of dissent from all congregational association ; but it seems to me that a convention on so broad a basis as I had understood this to be, should learn better than to deprecate any religious dissent or “come-outer-ism” from organization, and that there should be understood among us the charity, the toleration (if I may use that “proud, self-sufficient word,” as some one has called it), to bear all things, and to recognize the march of the religious sentiment in all ages. And I have regretted, since I sat here, that our friend, known to so many, and probably to all of you here,

— William Lloyd Garrison, — who is not in the country, is not able to be here. He is the representative of no religious (as such) or sectarian organization, although the Anti-Slavery Society, by its advancement of right and justice, has found itself eminently a religious organization, I think.

The movements of the present age are striking and deeply interesting. The fact of a Jew being called to a Unitarian pulpit in Cincinnati recently, and the fact of a Jewish sermon being published in one of the papers in Philadelphia, and being commented upon with favor since that time, — these facts, as well as other evidences, go to show the enlarged ideas and enlarged spirit of the religious world, — or at least of Christendom. — in this country, and in England. Look at the divisions and subdivisions, and the free inquiries now in the Church of England. First a few individuals here and there came out, and then there came others, and great scholars among them. And this was also noticeable among the Unitarians; and these were so liberal that for years, I believe, no Unitarian association in this country has ventured to reprint their Radical works. Following these, there were the seven essays, with their products startling the church, and an examination was made on a charge of excommunication. Following these, was Bishop Colenso, going still further, and making the others almost admitted to be Orthodox, since he went so much farther than they. Thus I see in the English church great confusion, from the dissenting spirit. The various dissenting churches in England and in this country (I will not take the time to enumerate them), have been coming forward in recognition of the religious ideas that are implanted in all human hearts, the universal religious elements of our constitution. As culture, and education, and civilization advance, these associations are gradually coming out of the old superstitious, traditional ideas in which they have been educated; and although the articles of faith remain the same; although the articles of the church, or the various creeds, in their verbal standing, may remain untouched, and it would appear that they were indeed the same; some of them Orthodox, as they are termed (we all claim to be Orthodox, I suppose), and some of them old and very strange notions, yet if you hear them explained now, — though people admit that they believe what the creed really says, — they put very different interpretations upon it. Still although these persons do shorten the creeds every time, each still remains Orthodox just as much after the shortening as before. And we have now had movements through the Unitarians and Universalists, and, more especially perhaps, through the Spiritualists; for although I have never attended their meetings, and know but little of them, except what other persons have told, yet I

understand that they have effected more against the dogmas of the time, than other congregational organizations have as yet done. I know our Friends are very jealous of any association with Unitarians or Universalists, or even with the Progressive Friends. And therefore I say that I am here representing myself, and not the Friends, although I am much attached to the organizations to which I belong. And I shall hope that in the discussion which may follow, there may be the broadest recognition of existing sects and denominations; that there shall not be a con-sociation and continuance with existing denominations; but on the other hand that there shall be such a recognition of the come-outer element, if I may so call it (I do not know what to call it), — a dissent from organization.

I believe, as fully as that the command was given to Abraham, that the command is now to many, "Leave now the kindred of thy father's house, and go into the land that I shall show thee." As George Fox was drawn away from all organizations of his time, and had to retire alone, and there be instructed from a higher power than himself, from the divine word; and claim that as the highest authority for action; no Bibles, no human authorities, no ministers, no pulpits, no anything that should take the place of this divine, inward, everyday teacher, so simple in its instruction, — as he, I say, was thus called out from all his kindred, and from his father's house, and brought unto the land that was thereafter shown unto him; so I say there is an increased number now of this description. I remember especially one whose book I have read with very great interest, who even from Spain, came out in advance of the friends of progress and of the most liberal Unitarians in England and in this country, — Blanco White. I regret that those who were called to the reformation in the land were not satisfied with being destructives. Immediately they went to again constructing. Our friend, I think, before me, deprecated the idea of the destruction of religious organization. I do not know that it is to be deprecated. I know that there can not be any movement, any fellowship of anybody together without some form or some rules of government. But in a republic like this, if I understand self-government aright (I wish there was some better nomenclature; we have the term self-government, and we have the same term to represent self-government in a republic), we have yet to learn something that shall recognize independence of the mind, and the truth that maketh free, and that by which if we are made free we are free indeed. I have as full faith in the religious experience and devotion of those who have withdrawn from all religious association, going occasionally to hear the liberal preaching around them. Now I cannot say that these are not just as

religious in their devotion as the most sectarian observer of forms. Many of these believe it to be better to come out more openly in the matter of prayer. They believe it a very wise recommendation of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that divine Son of God, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, there pray in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

I say I represent myself. I am a kind of outlaw in my own society. It is a universal custom for us to rise in time of prayer. It is considered out of order for any to keep their seats. I have not felt free to do this for many years, and have been subjected to reproach and contumely by those with whom I have been associated. It is very difficult for us to be non-conformists with those with whom we associate. It seems to me that we show this infidelity (if I may so speak), this denial, in our indisposition to follow in some of the acts of conformity more than in any other way. It is of little matter to me what the creed shall be as regards trinity and unity, as regards what has been explained here as Universalism, or in a more limited way. We know so very little of the after life, that I am glad that the intelligence of the age is leading us to apply our religion more to this life, and to every-day practice and every-day necessity, and uprightness and goodness, and to enter into our heaven here.

I was interested a few weeks ago, at the opening of a new Unitarian house of worship in Germantown. One of the speakers said that they had got a "regular built church." It had a font, and table, and pulpit, &c., and he did not like the idea that churches should be converted into lecture rooms. Now it seems to me that it is a great progress, that a church may be used sometimes for lectures. I want our friends to be liberal enough; and I should be glad to see a more general disposition to have a church or place of worship a freer place of gathering. And when our friend was speaking in Germantown, a large portion of the people present were Friends, and large numbers that had been admitted into that society were unaccustomed to the baptismal font; and it seemed to me that he was behind the age in speaking in the way he did. But I notice that the father of the young Mr. Neal who was to be ordained, in turning over the pages of his Bible, chanced to open to the passage in the last of John the divine, that had always been rather a favorite one, where it speaks of the new Jerusalem that cometh down from God out of heaven, and he read that in that new Jerusalem there was no temple found. Now if that be the case, why may we not suppose that some of these regular radical supporters have entered this new Jerusalem. But how are we to judge of them, and how are we to judge whether these persons who love their baptismal font and com-

munion table, love the Lord Jesus Christ? How are we to judge whether they do or do not, except by their every day practice and good works. We must hold these up, and with this view.

I do not wish, as a single individual, to commit the society to which I belong, in any wise. But I would desire that the convention may result in so enlarged a charity and so enlarged an idea of religion, and of the proper cultivation of the religious nature and element in man, as to be able to bear all things, and to be able to have that extended charity that is not offended, and does not deprecate going on before, and to have charity for those who are behind, and also for those who go on before.

May we then in thus coming together learn charity; and if we want an organization, let us not suppose that it must necessarily be an organization similar to any in existence, that are recognized as churches. I do not mean the Quakers; but we can have an organization, and have it understood that there shall not be a regular minister who shall be obliged every appointed day to have a sermon prepared, and a prayer, perhaps, whether in the spirit or not. I often pity your ministers who have to come forth with their prepared sermons every Sunday. Why not carry out the precept that when anything shall be revealed to him that standeth by, let the first hold his peace.

I remember some thirty years ago, that on being introduced to Dr. Burleigh (we do not like to say "Reverend" among the Quakers), by Dr. Channing, I asked him why there should be a monopoly in excluding woman from the pulpit. He said, "It is something that never entered my mind." I believe a large portion of the people never thought of the thing. But believe me, my friends, when I tell you that this monopoly will have to be broken up, and that there will be a ministry among us of a freer character than that which has been known heretofore.

Now, I do not know how far I have presented what was required by the platform this morning, but these are the thoughts which were in my mind, and which I have attempted to give forth, without any preparation.

THE PRESIDENT.

One word in regard to the matter of representation here. The word has been used several times; I think it was used by myself. Let me say, however, that there is, strictly speaking, no representative here this morning. No body is represented here. The liberal Unitarians have appointed no representative, nor the Universalists, nor the Friends, nor the Spiritualists. The committee, wishing that the public should be addressed on certain lines of thought, and on certain

subjects, looked over the whole ground and selected a man, who from his position and well-known reputation, his ability, his cast of mind, and his general practice was supposed by them to be the acceptable person to speak on the subjects presented. I must mention this, because I have had just put in my hands a note of the vote of the Society of Spiritualists passing resolutions in view of this very meeting, and expressing a desire to be represented at it, and nominating a gentleman to represent them. The committee, on looking over the whole field, wishing that Spiritualism should be spoken of, hit, in their own minds, upon a man who they thought would speak of it most soundly, and explain its general principles. And therefore they asked the Hon. Robert Dale Owen, whom I have now the pleasure to introduce to you.

REMARKS OF MR. OWEN.

SPIRITUALISM AS A PHASE OF THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT OF THE DAY.

HONORED with a request to address you here to-day on Spiritualism, as a Phase of the Religious Sentiment of the Day, I comply, hoping to say a few useful words on a subject much obscured by misconceptions.

The term—losing, in a measure, its broad, proper, original sense—the term SPIRITUALISM, in modern days, has come to be taken in a partial, contracted sense. In the minds of many it has been restricted to a class of phenomena, very curious, very interesting to the student of psychology, startling to him who has not traced their antecedents scattered throughout history, but yet to be regarded as one branch only of a subject vast as human wit can fathom, old as the oldest records of human history in the universe, profound and important beyond any that can engage the attention of men.

Man cannot live by bread alone. By nourishing and cherishing the body he may, indeed, maintain animal life. But such life, when there is nothing higher, is not worth acceptance by a being with an immortal soul. The spiritual element is as necessary as the physical to worthy and happy human existence.

Yet, even among the cultivated and the intelligent in this world, there are two classes. To one of these the spiritual consciousness lies dormant. They are not usually scoffers. If allusion be made to another phase of existence, they do not deride or deny; they but allege that, in their judgment, others have no sufficient grounds for affirming. Some of them desire to believe, and sigh because they cannot. Others assert their belief, especially on the first day of the week; yet the spirit within them is dead; it is not a living, moving element, coloring daily thoughts, influencing daily actions, brightening daily existence. At best it is but as the wavering faith of that father, moved by anguish for the fate of his

dumb child, when he cried out, with tears : " Lord, I believe, help then mine unbelief."

Like these doubters and half believers, I seek the positive and hold to the practical ; the fault I find with their philosophy is that it construes the terms in a sense falsely restrictive. They cling to human reason ; and therein they are right ; but they narrow down, to petty proportions, the expanse of field throughout which reason can make discoveries ; assuming, it would seem, in advance, that realities are to be found only in this material phase of existence, and that man's observations are untrustworthy when, in search of evidence, they are extended beyond it. These men speak of reason as a certain German Cavalier, unworthy pupil of Kepler, spoke of Galileo's telescope when it first brought to human eye the Satellites of Jupiter. " It does wonders on the earth," he said, " but falsely represents celestial objects."

Enlightened Spiritualists, if I may assume to speak for them, neither deny nor disparage the proofs touching a future life which are derived from analogy, nor many of those which come to us from self-styled orthodox sources. But they allege, that, by pursuing the inductive method, important additional evidence is to be had, and that it is our duty carefully to examine it.

Even antecedent to such examination they submit whether, if this earthly scene be the first phase of human existence, to be followed as soon as the death-change occurs by another, it be not a reasonable conclusion, arguing *a priori*, that there should be interventions between these two places of being ; occasional intimations from that world towards which we are all fast hastening, intended to cheer the pilgrims on the road thither ; earnest of a better land in the future, appearing now and then to sustain, in season of doubt or despondency, the feeble and the faint hearted. They think it rational to believe that, under the economy of a wise and benevolent God, all this may happen.

I met, last summer, at a watering place, one of the dignitaries of a sect considered much more orthodox than the Unitarian. He introduced the subject of Spiritualism, and we dropped into a long, quiet conversation. At the outset I begged him, if he felt free to do so, to tell me in what light he had been led to regard Spiritualism and spiritual phenomena.

" I will answer frankly," he said. " I see around me evidences of infidelity, widely spread and steadily increasing. As an illustration," he added, " in a recent conversation with a Professor from Harvard, that gentleman expressed the opinion that, of the principal scientific men in our country, three-fourths or more are unbelievers ; not outspoken infidels, but men who, if pressed home for an opinion, confess that they see

no sufficient evidence for any existence beyond the present. Even in our own profession," proceeded my clerical friend, "scepticism, in some of its forms, intrudes. A few weeks since, I was called to the death-bed of an aged brother in the ministry, a man who had devoted a long life, with rare faithfulness, to the duties of his profession; an exemplar in faith and in conduct. As we spoke of the evidences of Christianity, I noted a shade of sadness on the dying man's face. "Ah, Bishop," he said, "the proof, the proof! If we only had it!"

"The spread of Materialism," I remarked, "is even more evident in Europe than among us."

"It prevails," rejoined my reverend friend, "over the civilized world. The evidences of a life to come which sufficed to satisfy our ancestors are deemed insufficient to-day, by many of the most honest and able of their descendants. Saddened by such a conviction, I have been looking around for the remedy. I had often observed that God in his providence, appeared to grant the means of satisfying human needs, in proportion as these arose. I saw that the spirit of the age needed stricter proofs to sustain the great truths of our religion. Would not these, in His own good time, be vouchsafed? I look anxiously to Spiritualism and its phenomena for the answer."

As I listened to this common sense view of the case, I regretted that some of those who are in the habit of asking: "What possible good can Spiritualism do?" were not there to hear our conversation.

It has been a popular objection to these phenomena, referred to by my friend, which have usually been called physical manifestations, that they are simple to baldness, lacking imposing air and devoid of dignity. But we do well to bear in mind that the noblest superstructures ever erected by Science have been based on the rudest facts, on the simplest observations; so rude and simple that, for ages, the world had passed them by, not noting their importance. God's ways are not as our ways. He does not sound a trumpet before his doings. For the greatest work he sometimes selects the humblest instrument. Unlettered fishermen first spread the great truths of Christianity.

The value of these phenomena, if they be genuine, consists in this, that they furnish an absolute solution of the Great Problem; affording, in regard to the reality of another world, proof stronger than any which historical evidence can supply;—stronger, to use Tennyson's words,

"Because things seen are greater than things heard."

No conviction derived from the testimony of others can match that which results from such an appeal. Archbishop Tillotson, in an argument against the *real presence*, says: "Infidelity were hardly possible to men, if all men had the same evidence for the Christian religion which

they have against transubstantiation ; that is, the clear and irresistible evidence of sense."

Spiritualists do not allege, or believe, that any of the phenomena in which they find proofs of immortality are miraculous. They believe in the universality of Law. They do not regard the signs and wonders that came to light in Jesus' day, as exceptions to natural law, but as phenomena which occurred under laws, ever in force, but with which we are imperfectly acquainted. They see reproduced, under their eyes, modern types of most of these signs and wonders, and they find, in such reproduction, one of the strongest arguments to sustain the general truth of the New Testament narrative. If it can be shown that the various spiritual gifts declared to have been manifested eighteen hundred years ago—the discerning of spirits, the power of prophecy, the gift of healing, the Pentecostal diversity of tongues, something analogous to what has been called the exorcising of evil spirits, even that marvellous faculty to lead the hidden host which called forth from the woman of Samaria, the invitation to her neighbors, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did"—if these various incidents recorded in scriptural narrative are matched, though it be in humble phase, by what prove to be realities of the present time, can stronger argument be found in reply to Strauss and other sceptics when they remind us that what we reject as incredible, if alleged to have happened to-day, does not become credible by being moved back two thousand years into the past. Thus we allege that the phenomena of Spiritualism sustain the general truth of the gospel narratives.

The *general* truth which is, after all, the essential; not each separate detail. Intelligent Spiritualists reject the doctrine of infallibility. They have no belief in *plenary* inspiration. They accept the advice of one of the Oxford Essayists, Dr. Temple, Chaplain in ordinary to the Queen of Great Britain, when, speaking of two great volumes which he ascribed to the same author—the book of Nature and the book of Revelation—he said, that if discrepancy appear between them it behooved us to consider, in the first place, whether we had not incorrectly interpreted the phenomena, and, in the second, whether the message might not have come to us perverted through the messenger. This is what orthodoxy must come to, if she would save the essentials of her creed.

But Spiritualists go a step further. They hold that a spiritual message itself may be an error, and that of this we must judge, reverently yet freely, as by our reason we test any earthly allegation, let it come from a source however accredited. This conviction is derived from another item in the Spiritual creed.

We believe that there are the same varieties of character in the next

world as in this. We believe that when we cast off the natural body, there is, indeed, a potent change from the lower to the higher, yet no instantaneous transformation of the soul; no apotheosis of some, and degradation to demon-life of others. When Death calls, he neither deprives us of the virtues, nor suddenly relieves us of the vices, of which he finds us possessed. Both go with us. The moral, social and intellectual qualities which may have distinguished us in this world, will be ours in another, there constituting our identity and deciding our position. So also of the evil. That dark vestment of sin with which, in a man's journey through life, he may have become endued, clings to him through the death change close as the tunic of Nessus. He too retains his identity; his earthly short-comings determine his spiritual state.

We believe, then, that the spirit of man passes the ordeal without other metamorphosis than that which its release from the fleshy envelope and its acquisition of clearer perceptions effect: undimmed now, unobscured by the heavy veil of the material, gradually relieved from the weight of bodily grossness and physical infirmity; a great gainer, too, by this, that, through the agency of the spiritual senses, there is opened up a wider and more luminous horoscope; and thus drawn closer to the great Source of Wisdom; yet essentially the same spirit still. It changes there, indeed, but not by miracle. It changes, even as now it does, by the intervention of motive presented, by the agency of will, by the influence of surroundings; but of surroundings better and nobler than those of earth. It changes, as it changed here, by its own aspirations. It inhabits a world of progress still; a world of active effort, not of passive beatitudes, nor yet of irrevocable doom. While there is life there is hope, and there is life beyond the veil.

We believe that the Christian world has been, and still is, blighted with false conceptions of Death. Death is not, as Plato taught, the opposite of life. He is life's best friend; a friend through whose agency life is embellished, ennobled, perpetuated. To Death, at the close of a life well spent, man owes Paradise. Yet orthodoxy has taught us to think of this greatest of benefactors and reformers as the requiter of sin, the Avenging Angel, the fell destroyer. Men robe themselves in black when he appears; mourners go about the streets. The great punishment, the evil of evils, the primeval curse, declared to have been entailed on man by Adam's fall, is held to be that summons which calls him hence. Yet, under Omniscient Goodness, nothing so universal, so inevitable as death, ever was, or ever can be, essentially evil. Is it a better land to which we go? Then, when the time comes, should we not rejoice in our going? Spiritualists find, in communications purporting to come from the other world, unless it be from some spirits of inferior stamp, almost

entire unanimity in this, that the enfranchised spirit rejoices in the change, and would not, if it could, on any condition whatever, return to its earthly bondage.

Under any theory of death there must, indeed, when the summons comes, be natural grief to those who remain ; such grief as a mother feels when she parts with a beloved daughter, perhaps about to reside in a foreign land, though it be in opulence and with the husband of her choice. But grief from such a cause is not bitter nor despairing. It does not drape itself in mourning. It is softened in many ways. There is the knowledge of her child's happiness ; there are frequent letters, messages, proofs of love ; there is the hope of return. But when the departure is by death, does a tutored faith, based on the ordinary promises of religion, suffice to replace these visible signs ? Does the mourner need nothing else ?

There are some truths the evidence of which no argument can strengthen, because they appeal directly to our consciousness, and are adopted unchallenged and at once. A pious mother loses her child—though the very phrase is a falsity ; she but parts with him for a season—but in the world's language and in her heart's language, she loses her only child by death. If, just when her bereavement is felt the most despairingly—in the bitter moment perhaps (the winter storm raging without,) when the thought flashes across her that the cold sleet is beating on her deserted darling's grave ;—if, in that terrible moment, there should reach her suddenly, unexpectedly, a token visible to the senses, an appearance in bodily form, or an actual message perhaps, which she *knew* came that instant directly from her child ; that appearance or that message testifying that he whom she had just been thinking of as lying, wrested from her loving care, under the storm-beaten turf, was not there, was happier than even she had ever made him, was far better cared for than even in her arms ; in such a moment as that, how poor are all the arts of logic to prove that the sunshine of such unlooked-for assurance, breaking through the gloomy tempest of the mother's grief, and lighting up her shrouded hopes, has added nothing to the measure of her belief in immortality, has increased not the force of her convictions touching the Great Future, has raised not from faith to knowledge the degree of credence with which she can repeat to her soul the inspiring words, that, though the dust has returned to the earth as it was, the spirit is in the hands of God who gave it !

How many desolate friends and lovers, how many bereaved parents, has Spiritualism, with its living evidences, thus redeemed from the depths of hopeless despair !

The true spirit in which to interpret the great Change is embodied in

the touching words of a mother who stood beside the death-bed of a beloved daughter. A few moments only before the spirit was released, she bent over the dying girl, kissed her pale lips, and said, "I wish you joy, my darling!" and so, undismayed, saw her depart.

Spiritualism embodies other influence not less munificent. It opens up to us a Heaven such as the best and wisest may eagerly desire, and with the pursuits of which the most active and energetic may ardently sympathize. This is needed. To human beings, as they are upon earth, the everlasting life of the "rapt seraph that adores and burns" has no living charm. Men sometimes reason themselves into an artificial fervor of enthusiasm, pending which they experience a certain longing to join the angelic hosts and share their changeless avocation. Yet, for the most part, it is the reason that frigidly argues; not the genial impulse of the feelings that adopts and gladly assents. In Protestant Christendom the heart of the millions is not reached by the prospect of eternal life commonly presented to them.

Spiritualists believe, that, when we pass into the next world, we shall not be restricted to one occupation, nor inspired exclusively with one sentiment. They believe that our duties will be as manifold and our enjoyments as various, as here upon earth. How numerous and distinct are the virtuous emotions that now move the heart of man! The promptings to acts of benevolence and deeds of good-will, the stirrings of magnanimity, the efforts of self-denial, fortitude, courage, energy, perseverance, resignation, the devotion of love and the yearnings of compassion — what a varied list is here! Are these to perish with the body, or, at best, to slumber throughout eternity, inactive or unemployed? Spiritualists believe that the life which now is, will have a sequel and a complement in that which is to come. Spiritualists believe that he who has labored long and patiently to control and discipline a wayward nature — who has striven in this world, with earnest and patient effort, after self-culture, moral and intellectual — will be allowed to prosecute the task, here so imperfectly performed, there, where there is no flesh to be weak if the spirit be willing. They believe that the philanthropist, whose life has been one long series of benefactions to his race, will not be called upon to surrender, at death, the exercise of the godlike impulse which bids him succor the afflicted and heal the broken heart. They believe that even he whose days have been spent in exploring the secrets of nature will not be compelled to relinquish, with his earthly body, the pursuit of that science to which his heart was wedded. They look forward to a better world, but to a *world* still — the abode of emancipated spirits, but of *human* spirits — a world where there is work to do, a race to run, a goal to reach — a world where we shall find, transplanted from earth to a more genial

soil, high resolves, noble aspirations, stainless actions, Hope to encourage, Mercy to plead, and Love — the earth-clod shaken off that dimmed her purity — still selecting her chosen ones, but to be separated from them henceforth no more.

Spiritualists believe, it would not be correct to say, in Swedenborg's Science of Correspondences, a doctrine which, as applied by that philosopher, I confess that I do not understand, and see no good reason for entertaining, but in that which might properly enough be so called ; not that we shall find, in the next phase of existence, though even this is alleged by some, dwellings, and gardens and natural landscape, such as exist on earth ; but something corresponding to these ; fair homes and beautiful surroundings, grateful to spirits, suited to spirit life ; of a reality beyond earthly realities, but in what form, under what precise phase, it may never be given us here to know : our mortal state — our earthly language even — being inadequate.

In like manner they believe that Death will disclose to us, in our new abode, the counterparts of laboratories of science, studios of artists, halls of instruction, temples of worship. They believe with Paul, that there is a spiritual as well as a natural body, and that it is clothed, though not with the tissues of earth. They believe that friends recognize each other as they arrive ; and that the day of death, with its sad partings on this side, is a day of happy re-unions on the other.

There is another article of belief, universally accepted in the spiritual creed ; we believe that human affections and sympathies, stronger than death, sometimes attract back to earth the disembodied spirit ; the mother yearning after her helpless children ; the lover separated from his betrothed ; the husband still longing to cherish and protect his widowed partner. We believe that, under certain conditions, spiritual guardianship can be exerted, and that it is often exercised, sometimes by loving relatives or intimates, sometimes by spirits, a part of whose mission it seems to be, like that of the *diamon* of Socrates, visiting this world, to warn and to protect those to whom in the earth-life, they had been unattached and unknown.

But as we find in our present phase of being, both good and evil motive ; as men are moved, sometimes by the promptings of affection, looking with eye single to others' good, and sometimes by desires that are of the earth, earthly ; so it would seem, is it also in the next world. Spiritualists believe they have evidence that a frame of mind of exclusively wordly cast, a character that never bestowed a thought upon anything beyond the earth, and was troubled only by the cares of possession and the pursuit of gain, — may for a time, draw down the spirit, earth-bound, though freed from the body, to gather cumber and sorrow amid

the scenes of its former care. If so, how strong the motive not to suffer the present and the temporal, necessary and proper in their places, so to engross as to usurp the place and exclude the thoughts, of the future and the spiritual!

Necessary and proper in their place; let us bear that in mind. The present is an appropriate and essential stage of human progress. Its labors must not be set aside that we may idly luxuriate in rapt contemplations of the future. There is a beautiful monkish legend which, in this connection, suggests a wholesome lesson. To a certain friar, after many beseeching prayers, came, one evening, the appearance of the Saviour of the world, filling his lonely cell with dazzling splendor. As he gazed, entranced, on the celestial vision, the bell sounded the hour at which it was his office to distribute to the poor of the convent their accustomed dole. With a sigh, his thoughts reverted to earth; but he resolutely departed on his labor of love. That ended, he repaired to his cell. Beyond hope the heavenly visitant still blessed his sight. "Son," said the radiant Presence, "hadst thou neglected thy daily duty, I should have departed and thou wouldst have seen me no more."

As to the motives, beyond those already indicated, which may attract to this world the denizens of another, there is a certain difference of opinion among spiritualists. Some believe they have detected evidence that communications and influences occasionally come to us from spirits in the other world who are moved by malevolent intentions, unfortunate beings, slaves of the senses, unfitted yet for higher enjoyment, and attracted still to former scenes of sensual indulgence. If this be so, it is evident that communion with spirits of such a character might, to the weak-minded, be as pernicious as intercourse with similar beings during their life on earth; and that the danger is as great of yielding to indiscriminate influence of spirits as of admitting promiscuous company from among men.

My own personal experience, extending through twelve years, has yielded no reliable examples of this. I believe it to be true, as a general rule, applicable both to mundane and to ultra-mundane communications, that, in our various moods, we usually attract those who resemble us in sentiment and character; yet, in both cases, there may be exceptions; many allege that, in their spiritual experience, they have found such. In that case it becomes a duty to take precautions which shall seclude from influences that might tempt to vice; just as we would do, if similarly beset by worldly intrusions. A resolute will and timely prudence may suffice for our protection in either case; especially if fortified, as I think virtuous effort is wont to be, by beneficent spiritual agency. That, in many cases, this may be called out by "effectual fervent prayer" there seems to be sufficient proof.

I have not found any reliable evidence that physical power exerted by spirits, though sometimes sufficient to produce death, if violence were intended, has in point of fact, resulted in causing to any one serious personal injury. This seems to indicate either that power for evil, exerted by spirits towards human beings, is restrained, or else that, among the class of spirits which visit earth, vicious motive does not prevail.

Upon the whole the better opinion seems to be that the chief dangers in communion with spirits arise either from the tendency of the human mind, when engaged in a novel study and meeting with extraordinary results, to indulge in extravagance and drift into easy credulity and crude hypotheses, or else from too exclusive devotion, throughout a long term, to one subject; a habit which tends to unsettle the judgment and produce an abnormal condition of feeling and of mind. Such extremes are of unhealthy influence, intellectually and morally. Implicit faith, adopted without reference to internal evidence or to the dictates of the judgment which God has given us, whether that faith be in dogmas of mundane or of ultra mundane origin, leads to a state of things where would be lacking not only the exercise of reason, but, at last, reason itself. Use, to an extent which it is difficult to determine, is necessary to continued existence. The eyes of fishes, found far in the interior of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, shut out forever from the light of day, are rudimental only.

Such considerations as these have caused doubts in the minds of many as to the expediency of investigating, by experiment, the broad question touching the reality of ultra mundane intervention. It is an inquiry, they think, fraught with danger to human welfare and happiness. Some danger, beyond question, there is. What thing in nature is one-sided? What study may not be injudiciously undertaken or imprudently pursued? Something, in all human endeavors, we must risk; and that risk is the greatest, usually, for the most important objects. All religious researches involve more risk than secular: they demand, therefore, greater caution and a more dispassionate spirit. Are we to avoid them for that reason? Would the world be benefited by their interdiction?

So far as facts indicate the existence, in the next world, of spirits still stained with the vices of this, they afford us a grave and a practical lesson, Evil habits contracted here, cannot be cast off, like a soiled garment, as soon as we go hence, nor yet atoned for by vicarious suffering. Would we fit ourselves for the enjoyments of a higher sphere? We must begin now, while yet we may. We must abstain from selfish and unbridled license of passion; bearing in mind that such excesses may blend to spiritual light. Their possessors may awake in another world, strangers and aliens, stumbling as if in outer darkness; perhaps incapable not only to enjoy but to perceive.

In this view Spiritualists regard their doctrine, wisely interpreted, as one which leads us upwards to the highest destiny. We are, in a measure, the architects of our own future: inflicting our own punishments, selecting our own rewards. Our righteousness is a meed to be patiently earned, not miraculously bestowed, nor mysteriously imputed. Surely a wholesome doctrine! What motive to exertion in self-culture can be proposed to man more powerful than the assurance that not an effort to train our hearts or store our minds, made here in time, but has its result and its reward hereafter, in eternity?

Thus, if it should appear, that through the spiritual phenomena, whether spontaneous or evoked, to which the attention of the modern world has been invited, we may attain some knowledge of our next stage of life, it will be impossible to deny the importance of studying them. As the result of that study we may obtain rather outlines, discerned as through a glass darkly, than any distinct filling up of the picture of our future home. Yet enough may be disclosed to produce, on human life, a most salutary influence, and to cheer the darkest days of our pilgrimage here with the confident assurance that not an aspiration after good that fades, nor a dream of the beautiful that vanishes, during the earth-phase of life, but will find a noble field and fair realization when the pilgrim has cast off his burden and reached a better land.

The essential we may substantiate. If reliance can be placed on the best authenticated examples of the phenomena in question, they not only prove (what, indeed, naturally suggests itself.) that it is the body only which imposes the shackles of distance, but they afford evidence also that the released spirit instinctively seeks its selected ones, and attains the spot where cluster its affections.

But if, hereafter, the principle of insulation which prevails throughout this earthly pilgrimage is to give place to the spirit of communion unchecked by space; if in another phase of life desire is to correspond to locomotion; if, there, to long for association is to obtain it, if to love is to mingle in the society of the loved; what an element, not of passive feeling but of active organization, is human Sympathy to become! And how much that would render this world too blessed to leave is in store for us in another!

If we sit down in our calmest and most dispassionate moments to consider how much of our highest and least selfish pleasures, moral, social, intellectual, has been due to a daily interchange of thought and feeling between kindred minds and hearts, and if we reflect that all the other losses and crosses of life have been as nothing when compared with those which, by distance and by death, our severed sympathies and affections have suffered, we may be led to conclude that the single change above indi-

cated as appertaining to our next phase of life will suffice there to assure a happy existence to pure minds and genial hearts ; to those who in this world, erring and frail as they may have been, have not wholly quenched the spirit of light ; with whom the voice within has still been more potent than the din without ; who have cherished, if often in silence and secret, God's holy instincts, the flowers that are still to bloom ; and who may hope, in that Hereafter where like will attract its like, to find a home where never shall enter the Summoning Angel to announce the separation of its inmates—a home of unsundered affections among the just and good.

Restricted as to time, I feel how bare and imperfect is the outline which I have been able to give you of Spiritualism, its doctrines and its tendencies. It is a subject that cannot be set forth in an hour, nor satisfactorily studied, except through years of patient observation.

The essential is that we should study it with enlarged views, in its broad phase, as one of the vital elements in an enlightened Christian faith. The scriptures teach that, in former days, direct communications from Heaven to Earth were of frequent occurrence ; and they nowhere declare that these communications were to cease. *They* are Spiritualists to whatever sect formally appertaining, who believe that such intercourse has not ceased, but is still to be obtained, if we seek it wisely and in a Catholic spirit, direct and genuine. Such a belief awakens gratitude to God, for this modern expression of His eternal love and care for man.

Spiritualism is spreading as fast as its best friends can desire ; and, I think, in manner the most desirable, not as a distinct sect ; not as a separate church, with its written creed and its ordained ministers and its formal professors. It spreads, silently through the agency of daily intercourse, in the privacy of the domestic circle. It invades the churches already established, not as an opponent but as an ally. It modifies the creed and softens the asperities of Protestant and Romanist, of Presbyterian and Episcopalian, of Baptist and Methodist, of Unitarian and Universalist. It leavens, with invigorating and spiritualizing effect, the religious sentiment of the age ; increasing its vitality, enlivening its convictions.

It is not a sect, yet no sect ever spread with the same rapidity, nor ever obtained, in so brief a term of existence, a controlling influence over so large a fraction of manhood.

By many its truths are disputed still ; but, except by the bigoted or the ignorant, they are no longer despised. In my judgment, they will richly repay a study. It is good to take with us through life a great and encouraging subject. We feel this the more as we advance in years. As to that of which I have been speaking, eminently true is the happy

expression of a modern author, that, "in journeying with it we go towards the sun, and the shadow of our burden falls behind us."

THE PRESIDENT.

Unitarianism was a little late. It is very apt to be a little late. It was rather late this morning. I hope it will not be late to-morrow. I shall ask your attention now (though I shall not have to ask it) to Rev. John Weiss.

REMARKS OF REV. JOHN WEISS.

Mr. Chairman :

I am afraid you will not say, "Better late than never." I am afraid that I shall not speak the words you want to hear to-day. I certainly shall not speak adequately, for I feel impressed with the greatness of this movement, and of this occasion. I feel very much impressed also, when I look over the heads of the men and women who compose the immortality of this audience, who are sitting and who are standing before me. As if, indeed, I could say, or as if anybody else on this platform could rightly say, or rightly prefigure and lay before you, what is to be the prospect of free religion in America — the greatest of all subjects, as great as the war through which we have passed ; as great as the result of this glorious contest, and with the same meaning ; for free religion in America means emancipation of the souls of the men and women who live in this Republic. Emancipation ! How is that to be done ? Not by Unitarianism of any stripe or color. Not by anti-supernaturalism ; not by supernaturalism of any sort. If I this morning were disposed to press my own view, and to state my position before you, and to insist upon it that the road to free religion in America lies through *my* idiosyncrasy, I should say to you that the first thing you had to do was to empty all your minds clean of all belief in the miraculous ; of all belief in the preternatural ; of all past or present belief in any form of supernaturalism ; and to remand yourselves back to the operations of your intelligence ; to the strictly scientific movement of God's thought ; of the divine mind, as it is presented to you in the daily facts of the universe ; of history ; of the ordinary life of man and women ; — to believe nothing that does not belong to the logic of God.

I do not desire to press that view upon you this morning, or to claim your attention for that, which I do in my very heart of hearts, believe is going to be the route of emancipated America, — faith that is in the divine thought of God's mind ; not in Scripture ; not in prophecy ; not in the old stories of the Old or New Testament ; not in any new story whatever, but in the ordinary processes of history, of psychology, of an-

thropology, and of all scientific, all vital, substantial truth. That many of you differ from me on this point, I have no doubt. I see here in the Hall, this morning, old-fashioned Unitarians, who fought at Syracuse for the preamble, the sense of which, that lay underneath the fight, being that our Lord and Master was a supernaturally constructed, and supernaturally nourished man. And I see in the hall excellent old Unitarians and very excellent new Unitarians, who tried to persuade me that I could fight for such a preamble as that, because they did n't mean anything by it, except what was strictly said, namely, that there was in some way or other, such a thing as a Lord and Master. And I see in the hall, believers in the modern doctrine of spiritualism, who have just listened to a statement from one of the most distinguished members of their brotherhood. I do not believe in old Unitarianism ; I do not believe in the supernatural Lordship of Jesus Christ, nor of any other man ; I do not believe one fact, or one story, or one suggestion of modern spiritualism. Not one jot or tittle of the whole, on either side, do I believe. Of course you will let me say so. In the interest of free religion, I am free this morning to tell you what I do, and what I do not believe, as you are free also to make your statement here. But I wish to advance beyond this, and to reach that heart of the question which lies far beyond any form of Orthodox or Liberal belief. It is this, that free religion in America depends upon the way in which your souls press onward to find the presence of God in America ; to find the ever-present inspiration in your minds, and in your hearts this moment, while you stand in that aisle this morning. I believe, friends and brothers, that, casting aside all preferences, every limitation, every partial belief, not stopping to emphasize even anti-supernaturalism, nor the single thoughts that are subsumed in this great movement, as God himself this moment subsumes you all, men and women, and at this moment takes you up in the hollow of His hand, we must have the liberal religion of His immediate presence. And if we ever emphasized what is subsumed, it is that we may proceed to the great work of emancipating our minds from all the Old Testaments and New Testaments supernaturally intepreted, from old statements and new statements, from specialties of every description, from partialities and personalities, from temperaments of every shade and color, leaving them out of the way, putting them down and tramping them under feet, — as we press forward to discover and obey that voice of what the Heavenly Father means this morning, as He speaks to our secret heart ; to hear God's immediate purposes for to-day's America. To every kind of religionist, what does He say, what does He propose, what is the secret whisper, what is the secret pressure of that divine influence, that is now striving to fuse you all into one blood and one faith, and make you in

truth and in fact, brother, and children of the ever-present Father ; for He tells you this morning what your religion ought to be this afternoon ; He will tell you this moment what you shall do when the hour of noon strikes to-day, the hour of duty, the hour of present need, the hour of brotherhood, of pure philanthropy, of simple truthfulness between man and man, the hour of Yea and Nay. Whatsoever is more than that will bring evil to free religion in America ; your minds will not become emancipated, and there will not be organized here a true and perfect Commonwealth of God. Press onward to that, with the bayonet thrust of criticism, with the touch of your moral purpose. Press onward to that, letting the light of your moral sense shine before the men of this country, — that, and not your theology, that, and the light of the morning of the moral sense that dawns to-day, and will shine to-morrow before your fellowmen, will convert them from Orthodoxy, and from their moral infidelities — yes and from Atheism, because it is the ever present light of the ever-present God. Press on, press through all obstructions, all obstacles ; tear down this insurgent barricade, piled up from the rubbish of all the streets of all the cities in America ; things so insignificant in themselves, that become, when heaped together, a barricade against the incoming, the inflowing of the Father. Tear down the obstructions and let the tide roll in. Let your heart be opened to receive that tide which beats against your hearts and minds this morning ; those little indentations upon the great shore of time, into which the waves of eternity shall come, bringing God's gracious breath, and bracing us with the clear, fresh brine of God's hard truths now spoken to America. Then America may have free religion — greatest of all her religions — and the last result of the great war that is still waged for America's emancipation.

THE PRESIDENT.

I think that if that is the last word of the Unitarians, we are all ready to respond heartily. We are yet to hear from the Progressive Friends, and you are invited to listen to Mr. Oliver Johnson.

REMARKS OF OLIVER JOHNSON.

THE PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS.

I HAVE been requested to give an account of the Society of Progressive Friends, its origin, its principles, and its aims ; and I will endeavor to do so with all possible brevity.

The society had its root in primitive Quakerism, and was the immediate result of divisions in the Hicksite or Liberal wing of the Quaker body upon questions of moral reform, especially upon the anti-slavery

question. Among those who are not familiar with the history of the anti-slavery movement in this country, the impression is quite common that, from the outset, it received the hearty co-operation of the Society of Friends, which, with a single exception, was the only religious body in the land that forbade its members to hold slaves. But this impression is altogether erroneous. Individual Quakers, some of them eminent in the Society, did indeed espouse the cause; but the body as such, represented by its monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, not only showed it no favor, but exerted a very powerful influence against it. The strong anti-slavery spirit of an earlier day — the spirit of Woolman, Lay, and Benezet — had given place to indifference and compromise. The fact that Quakers did not themselves hold slaves was urged as a reason why *they* should be excused from taking part in efforts for the abolition of slavery! The ecclesiastical system of the body, in some respects the subtlest and most potent in the whole Christian world, was brought to bear against the new movement. The Society's houses of worship, with few exceptions, were closed against anti-slavery lectures; its most influential preachers and elders exhorted the members not to allow themselves to be drawn into an agitation originating, as they said, "in the will of man," but to "keep in the quiet," to "wait God's time," and "mind their own business." Those who, in opposition to this counsel from the "high seats," took part with the abolitionists, were treated as unsound, and spoken of, in public and private, as having brought reproach upon the denomination by "going into the mixture" — in other words, by joining with those outside of the body in philanthropic efforts. A religious society which had its birth in one of the fiercest excitements recorded in ecclesiastical history, and whose founders were "sons of thunder," making the earth tremble beneath their feet, had so far lost its ancient spirit that it could not bear the excitement necessarily caused by the earnest enforcements of its own boasted testimonies. The contrast between ancient Quakerism and that which could not bear the cross of reform, was fitly described by one who said that, whereas in the days of Fox, one Quaker was enough to shake the country for twenty miles around, it now took all the earnest men inhabiting that space to shake one Quaker!

As I have said, some of the noblest men and women in the Society of Friends, of both the Orthodox and Liberal wings, in spite of the coldness or opposition of the leaders, joined the anti-slavery movement at an early day, and remained faithful to the end. The first * President of the first Anti-Slavery Society — the parent of, all the rest (organized in Boston January 1, 1832) — was a Quaker; the poet, whose trumpet strains did

* Arnold Buffum.

so much to stir and rouse the people to a sense of the slave's wrongs, was a Friend; and every important anti-slavery meeting had its sprinkling of "broad brims" and "plain bonnets," worn by men and women whose Quakerism was too vital to be smothered by ecclesiastical authority, too firmly rooted to be swept away by floods of superstition from the high seats, and who had the courage to follow the "inner light," though in so doing they were compelled to disregard the "advice" of the yearly meeting. The zeal of these in the cause of the slave involved the whole sect in the agitation which the leaders were so anxious to avoid. Monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings were scenes of earnest conflict between those who opposed and those who favored the anti-slavery societies. Not a few of the latter were disowned, while others turned sadly away from the meetings of the sect, grieved and disgusted by conduct which seemed to them wholly inconsistent with its fundamental principles. In 1841, the disownment of the late venerable and beloved Isaac T. Hopper, by the New York monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, caused intense excitement in the whole Hicksite body. Friend Hopper was widely known, especially for his efforts to assist the escape of fugitive slaves, no less than two thousand five hundred of whom, it is said, were indebted to him for aid in their flight from the house of bondage. In 1840 he became a member of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and its agent for the publication of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. He was arraigned upon a charge of being "concerned in the publication of a paper calculated to promote disunity among Friends;" and for this, and this only, was he expelled from the sect! Charles Marriott, another venerable man, whose name was a synonym for every virtue that can adorn the Christian character, was also expelled for the same reason. The leaders intended and hoped, by these and other similar acts of ecclesiastical tyranny, to overawe and silence the abolitionists in the Society. Vain delusion! They only created a more intense excitement, and fanned into an open flame the smouldering fires of anti-slavery in almost every monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting in the country. The conflict deepened, till, in 1848, the Green Plain (Ohio) quarterly meeting, a constituent of the yearly meeting of Indiana, asserted its independence, taking the name and adopting the Congregational system of church government. In 1849 a considerable number of persons, mostly members of the Genesee yearly meeting (Hicksite), met near Waterloo, Seneca County, New York, and organized a society under the name of "Genesee Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends." It subsequently took the name of "Progressive Friends," but is now known by the name of "Friends of Human Progress."

The first Society that took the name of "Progressive Friends" was organized at Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio, in September, 1852. Most, but not all, of its members were seceders from the Ohio Yearly Meeting (Hicksite). This society, I believe, is now extinct.

The next society that took the name was organized at Kennett, Chester County, Pa., in May, 1853, by a Conference, the object of which was thus set forth in the call of the same :

"The various religious denominations in the land are arrayed against the progressive spirit of the age, and by their very structure, assumptions, and regulations, cannot occupy a co-operative position, because they impose fetters upon freedom of speech and of conscience, by requiring a slavish conformity in matters of abstract faith and sectarian discipline. This has led and is leading to extensive secessions from such organizations in all parts of the country, leaving the seceders generally in a scattered and isolated condition, whose talents, influence and means might be profitably concentrated for the advancement of the world-embracing cause of Human Brotherhood, and who are yearning for some form of association, at once simple, free and attractive."

The call invited "not only the members of the Society of Friends, but all who felt the want of social and religious co-operation," to come together and "deliberate upon such a plan of organization as may commend itself to the judgment of those assembled, and to take action upon such other subjects, pertaining to human duty and welfare, as may appear to demand the attention of the assembly." The Conference was numerously attended, and resulted in the formation of a society under the name of "The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends," the aims and purposes of which were set forth in a carefully considered "Exposition of Sentiments," addressed to "the friends of pure and undefiled religion, and to all seekers after truth, of whatever name or denomination." This document was extensively published, and, having found admission to the *New York Tribune*, attracted the attention of many friends of progress and reform throughout the country, by whom the new society was greeted as the happy augury of a new era in the history of religious associations.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Society, as presented in the "Exposition," are the following :

1. It has no creed, but invites to membership "all who recognize the Equal Brotherhood of the Human Family, and who acknowledge the duty of defining and illustrating their faith in God by lives of personal purity, and works of beneficence and charity." "If, by any possibility," they say, "there should be found here and there a sincere inquirer after truth, who may not feel himself included in this invitation, we shall still

bid him welcome to our assemblies, and listen with patience to whatever his highest convictions may prompt him to offer." "It is our cherished purpose to restore the union between Religion and Life, and to place works of goodness and mercy far above theological speculations and scholastic subtleties of doctrine. Christianity, as it presents itself to our minds, is too deep, too broad, and too high, to be brought within the cold propositions of the theologian. We should as soon think of bottling up the sunshine for the use of posterity, as of attempting to adjust the free and universal principles taught and exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth to the angles of a man-made creed." "Identity of object, oneness of spirit in respect to the practical duties of life, the communion of soul with soul in a common love of the beautiful and true, and a common aspiration after moral excellence, — these are our bond of union."

2. It has no discipline, and seeks to keep itself free of moral contamination, not by rules for the expulsion of bad people from its fold, but by constant activity in works of reform, which attract evil-minded persons only through what is good in themselves; in other words, by keeping the moral atmosphere of the body so sweet and pure that the devotees of sin and wrong cannot find a comfortable refuge therein, but must choose between reforming and withdrawing. A church which finds itself under the necessity of expelling immoral persons from its pale by a formal vote, is no longer worthy to be called Christian, and ought to be at once dissolved. On the other hand, the right of any individual to withdraw from the Society, without being required to give reasons for so doing, and without being subjected to official censure, is distinctly recognized. The association sets up no claim to supernatural or divine authority, but confesses itself to be simply *human*, a means and not an end, the servant, not the master, of its members, to be perpetuated not on account of any inherent sacredness in itself, but only so long as it is found to answer the purposes for which it was made. It is scarcely possible for a society resting upon such principles to become a covert for superstition and despotic authority; but if it should ever be thus prostituted, its destruction would be alike easy and inevitable, since there is no ecclesiastical system — no *institution* — to be taken out of the way.

3. The society has no prescribed forms of worship or procedure, nor is it bound by any precedents, whether made by itself or others. Its members meet together upon terms of perfect equality, with only such restraints upon speech and action as are imposed by mutual respect and affection, and a common desire that everything should be "done decently and in order." No subject that concerns the moral and religious welfare

of the human race is out of order in its assemblies ; and, having no ecclesiastical or sectarian machinery to be worked, it is free to enter at once upon the consideration of those great moral and practical issues which, in the providence of God, are ever demanding attention, and which, in most religious bodies, are either thrust aside or permitted to occupy only a subordinate place.

But, while the society welcomes to membership all who wish to co-operate with it in works of practical goodness, without inquiring what may be the character of their creeds, and while it is mainly devoted to philanthropic labors, it must not be inferred that it puts any check upon its members in the discussion of theological questions. No one is asked or expected to keep silence upon such questions, but all are encouraged to speak their minds freely, as well as expected to listen candidly to views differing never so widely from their own. It is only by a free and untrammelled discussion of such topics that we can hope to arrive at the truth ; and Progressive Friends believe that in doing the will of God by laboring together in works of charity and mercy, they qualify themselves to discuss theological questions with profit. "He that doeth the will of God," said Jesus, "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."

4. The society recognizes, not only in its name, but in its very structure, the law of human progress as applicable to religious associations, no less then to individuals. It repudiates as superstitious and absurd the too prevalent idea that churches organized after a prescribed pattern, hold a mysterious organic relation with God, and are the official channels of divine influence. It does not for a moment suppose that it is possible for one generation to make a religious society that shall completely answer the wants of another ; and hence it holds that such societies should be so simple in their structure that they may with the greatest possible facility be charged to bring them into harmony with every newly-discovered truth, and made to conform to the ripest experiences of their members.

Thus far I have spoken only of the yearly meeting ; but I must not omit to say that the Progressive Friends of Pennsylvania hold a meeting every First day, in an edifice erected by themselves twelve years ago, and known as Longwood Meeting House. This meeting has been conducted hitherto after the manner of Friends, except that it has not an order of persons set apart as ministers or elders, and allows all to speak who may wish to do so. When it is known that good speaking may be expected, the meeting is generally large ; at other times it is small. There is nothing in the principles of the society to forbid the employment of a salaried religious teacher, and many of the members have so far overcome the prejudices resulting from their Quaker education as to be

in favor of doing so. A Sunday School has already been established under very encouraging auspices, and a cabinet organ in the meeting-house shows that the society has made such progress that it begins to appreciate the value of music as a means of exciting and deepening religious feeling.

The yearly meeting never fails to attract, day after day, a crowd of people too large to be comfortably accommodated in the meeting-house. It is always an occasion of high moral and social interest, and the people among whom it is held value it accordingly. It has done much in the last fourteen years to break the bonds of sectarianism, to disseminate enlightened and liberal views of religion, to promote the struggling reforms of the times, and to prepare the way for a more complete co-operation in works of practical righteousness of all those of whatever name, whose hearts are one in the faith that the whole human race are one brotherhood, and that pure religion and undefiled before God does not consist in forms and ceremonies, and systems of theology, but in loving God and doing good to mankind. To this end all its energies have been constantly directed, and with results which encourage us to persevere in our labors. Among those who have felt a warm personal interest in the movement, and who, at one time or another, have given it the benefit of their personal presence and efficient aid in the yearly meeting, may be gratefully mentioned William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, T. W. Higginson, Samuel J. May, Lucretia Mott, David A. Wasson, Moncure D. Conway, A. D. Mayo, Frances D. Gage, George Thompson, Theodore Tilton, Anna E. Dickinson, and Theodore D. Weld. Our printed pages are luminous with the thoughts of these earnest reformers, and with those of Lydia Maria Child, Samuel Johnson, John G. Whittier, Samuel Longfellow, James Freeman Clarke, Gerritt Smith, Charles K. Whipple, Joshua R. Giddings, and many others, whose devotion to truth has endeared their names to the friends of progress in every part of the country.

Our fifteenth yearly meeting will be held next week, commencing on Thursday and closing on Saturday. Our beloved and highly-esteemed friend, Robert Collyer, of Chicago, has promised to be with us on the occasion, and we are anticipating a season of more than usual interest and importance. If, among these present in this conference, there are any who feel attracted to our meeting, they may be assured of a cordial welcome to the hearts and homes of the Progressive Friends of Pennsylvania.

THE PRESIDENT.

A great deal has been said about opposition between science and religion. There are some persons who believe that science and religion are one. Francis E. Abbot will say a word to you on that point.

REMARKS OF FRANCIS E. ABBOT.

Brothers and Sisters:—

I have for months looked forward to this day with hope and earnest expectation. It will, I am convinced, be memorable in the history of free thought and unsectarian religion. If, with a deep and unselfish devotion to the spiritual welfare of mankind, we here and now form an association which, respecting to the uttermost the sacred freedom of the individual soul, shall yet efficiently unite our individual endeavors to hallow American civilization by a profounder consciousness of the Divine, I believe that our fellowmen will not willingly let die the memory of this day. No man can foresee its influence or results. Such a fellowship will take up a work neglected or refused by all existing churches. If faithful to its own principles, it may yet prove the first stone of the church of Humanity, which, accepting the name of no man or nation, shall build on simple faith in human nature, and stand with open doors of perpetual welcome for all who are moved by aspiration for larger truth and purer life. A mere handful of men and women though we are, I cannot think of the spiritual grandeur of our undertaking without a sense of awe,—without a deep and burning enthusiasm kindled in the very core of my being. We are but instruments in the hand of the Infinite Spirit. He alone is the architect of our edifice: let no self-will or self-seeking of ours mar the perfect beauty of his handiwork.

Why are we here to-day? What is the meaning of this assembly, and of the movement out of which it has grown? I have been requested to give my own answer to these questions, and something within has forbidden me to refuse the attempt; but no other person will be at all responsible for what I may say.

The radical movement, then, is not a “Christian” one in the common meaning of that word, although, in its best meaning, I believe it is eminently Christian. We profess no especial discipleship to Jesus. We are disciples simply of the Spirit and the Truth, wherever they are found. We acknowledge no authority, whether in thought or action, but the intrinsic authority of truth, righteousness, and love. To this we bow most reverently. We utterly discard that principle of authority upon which all organized “Christian” churches are built, and take our stand on the ground of spiritual freedom,—free religion.

The reason of our present meeting, and the dominant idea of the whole

radical movement, are to be found, I believe, in those two words,—Spiritual Freedom. They mean faith in religion, faith in science, faith in the natural harmony of these two. It is this equal and perfect faith in religion and in science, as natural friends and allies, which distinguishes us from others. The “Christian” church has faith in religion, but not much in science; the world outside has faith in science, but not much in religion; they both believe in a natural enmity between religion and science, and are therefore at deadly feud with each other.

Now this collision between the church and the world, religion and science, seems to us mistaken and disastrous in the last degree. Science can alone teach us what we ought *to think*; religion can alone make us what we ought *to be*. Properly understood, they belong to entirely different spheres, and cannot clash; they move in parallel planes, and parallels never meet. When men are content to let Science create their creeds, and Religion create their characters and lives, the ancient quarrel will be healed. It is only the usurpations of dogmatic theology, pretending as it does to be religion, and arrogating the right to dictate to men their beliefs, which have engendered this fierce conflict between the scientific and religious tendencies of the age. There is no theology, except as part of universal science. Religion is simply a *fact of human nature*, — the fact of aspiration and upward endeavor; of development into the spiritual ideal of gravitation towards an infinite spiritual Life: and the interpretation of this fact, together with what it implies, belongs to science alone, the universal interpreter of all facts. The old theology, upheld more or less by all organized “Christian” churches as part and parcel of religion, if not religion itself, must utterly perish, with its various roots of “infallible authority,” and its countless branches of creeds and dogmas; a new theology, created and guaranteed by science as the sober interpretation of the facts of man’s spiritual nature, must grow up and take its place. In this way, and, as I believe, in no other way, can faith in science be made compatible with faith in religion. Alas for mankind if faith in either is suffered to die out of human hearts! Backward will turn the shadow on the dial-plate of human progress, to point either to the darkness of mediæval superstition or to the godlessness of a French Revolution.

But of such a result there need be no fear. The radical faith in spiritual freedom means at the same time *faith in free thought*, which is only another name for Science, and *faith in spirit*, which is only another name for Religion. There, I believe, lies the key to reconciliation between the church and the world, — there, and there alone. We believe in Science with an enthusiastic faith; let it prove what it may it cannot prove a lie. We claim to be in profound sympathy with mod-

ern thought, and hail with joy every fresh discovery of Science, no matter what it proves or disproves. We wish to show that true thought, whether ancient or modern, leads to a more earnest faith in God. Put a deeper faith in Science, and you touch Religion; put a deeper faith in the laws of the outward universe, and you come to the inward universe of the human soul, with all its experiences, — its sorrows, its trials, its temptations, its aspirations, its ascent to God. Modern thought is fast emptying our churches of all who persist in thinking for themselves, and too often empties the souls of those who leave them of all faith in religion. We do not propose a war of extermination against all the churches of Christendom; but to those who find the churches profitless, we believe that our radical word is a word of faith and new inspiration, and we are bound to proclaim it.

Yes, friends, science and religion, born, as they are, the one from man's head, and the other from man's conscience and heart, must be one and harmonious, if human nature itself is one and harmonious. They are one in God's thought, and by and by will be one in man's experience. If, as I believe, science grows from our heads, and religion from our consciences and hearts, then we may bring these two faiths in science and religion into the unity of a single faith. And what is that? **FAITH IN MAN, — FAITH IN HUMANITY.** Faith in man, with all his faculties, unfettered and unrestricted, — that, I am convinced, is the one great idea common to all earnest radicals. Here we have a great, inspiring, positive, radical idea, common to all who believe in free religion. Radicalism is not a theory, a philosophy, least of all a negation. It is a mighty, affirmative faith in man. It prompts to the elevation and reform of human society in all possible ways, to the increase of fellowship and co-operation among men of all nations and all creeds, to the development of the individual soul into its highest and holiest ideal. It has brought us together to-day; and now, what is it going to do with us? Are we going home after our meeting, back to our homes in country and city, to say we had a good time, we heard some good words, and we feel better for it? Is that to be all? God forbid! God forbid that this shall be all that shall come of this meeting! If we do not pledge ourselves now and forever to the service of mankind in every efficient way, God forgive us for our infidelity! If we go home, as we came, separate, without forming a fellowship for the spread of **RELIGION WITHOUT SUPERSTITION**, God forgive us for our weak-heartedness! But I believe we shall be true to the great duty of the hour. The times demand an association which shall aim at the increase of human brotherhood in spiritual bonds. We proclaim here the natural union of Science and Religion, whom God hath joined together, but

whom man has put asunder. We celebrate here the nuptials of the Spirit and the Truth, and the joy which the vision of that marriage creates in our own souls, we long to awaken in the souls of our fellow-men. The peace that has come to us, we burn to carry to others also. If we are radical enough,—if we are fired with a faith in our own idea intense enough to make us follow its leadership,—we shall not shrink from the great duty laid upon us. There is yet worse bondage than that of slavery,—the bondage of superstition and of vice. What a grand word was that favorite text of old John Brown,—“Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them.” Friends, take that home to your hearts, and let it lead to a deeper and more whole-souled devotion to the spiritual emancipation of mankind. Garibaldi proclaimed to his followers, “Let those who are in love with cold and hunger, wounds and death, follow me!” Such to-day is the summons of our radical idea,—“Follow me!” We do not expect to hold delightful meetings, and enjoy oyster suppers, and listen to fine speeches; we expect to work for great ideas, and to encounter bitter bigotry, hatred, slander, and social persecution in the work. That is the bill of fare we offer you; who will come and taste our dainties?

Brothers and sisters, we want to work for humanity. We have a new gospel to proclaim,—the gospel of religion and science, two in one,—the gospel of faith in man carried out to its extremest consequences,—the gospel of repose in the Infinite Love which works through Universal Law. ’Tis a good old word,—I like it. Gospel is “good news.” We have a new gospel of good news, a radical gospel, the gospel of the “enthusiasm of humanity.” God grant us power to publish this gospel with the earnestness and self-sacrifice and fire of apostles,—grant us a new Pentecostal outpouring of courage and fidelity to truth! Now, as of old, the sneer will come,—“These men are drunk with new wine!” And so we are. It *is* new wine, and is fast bursting the old bottles. Friends, it is time to make new and better ones, fit to receive the new vintage of God. Will you help us in the work to-day?

THE PRESIDENT.

There are those, in this age of science and speculation and doubt, who question strongly enough whether religion can legitimate itself in the intellect. I would not have you suppose that we doubt that. D. A. Wasson will say a word to you on that subject.

REMARKS OF D. A. WASSON.

Not exactly whether, or how, religion can be legitimated by the intel-

lect; for I think, — and it is the point of the remarks with which I will briefly engage your attention, — that religion is its own logic and its own verification, — that it speaks with an absolute voice, in every tone of which there is a “Thus saith the Lord,” — and that it cannot be substantiated and its import sustained otherwise than by itself.

Most men feel in our age that the grounds of religious credence have been shaken. Some centuries ago it was enough to believe simply in the church. Every man found it as natural to do so as to breathe; and belief in the church included and substantiated for him the whole body of religious and moral faith. But that day has passed, and cannot be recalled. Then there was a belief in the Bible as infallible to the letter and in its literal interpretation. This also did eminent service. It stayed the hearts of two centuries at least, making men strong for noble work; for men have strength to do noble work when, and only when, they are strong in the firmness and constancy of moral faith in their souls. That belief also has passed away; and now no one is able to rely upon it as men could only fifty years ago. And yet it is true now as of old, and as it will be forever, that the souls of men live in the life of their faith. It is their hold upon supersensual reality whereby they stand. It is a light that never shone on sea nor shore, that alone can make clear their pathway. They sink as in fathomless bogs, if they have nothing firmer than the earth, upon which to tread. And they need, they imperatively need, to feel that in the spiritual journeying, which they are human souls only as they undertake, they walk upon sure ground — that their feet are upon a rock immovable as eternity, and that they walk by a guidance which is not probably only, but indubitably, trustworthy. They find this no longer in the bulls of popes and decisions of councils; they do not find it in the letter of the Bible: and yet it *must* be found. Accordingly, there is much inquiry among earnest and thoughtful men to this point, — what are the grounds, whence comes the original premise, of spiritual belief?

Now, there is a class of persons, — with whom in many particulars I sympathize warmly, — who hold to the following as a clue: You are to think up to God from the outward world, from organized Nature, climbing assiduously step by step, till at last by inference upon inference you reach the eternal throne. By a similar process, starting from below, finding your original data in that which the senses reveal, they would have you arrive at all which it is the supreme privilege of man to know as true. This seems to me a false process. In my judgment, the faith of humanity will never be legitimated in this way. Faith, as I think, sets out as it were from the heavens, — begins at the highest point, and is able to read a divine import in the letter-press of nature, because

it brings that import with it. Let me try, — though very briefly, — to make this point clear by referring to some obvious analogies.

Suppose I wish to think a house, to think it from its origin. Where shall I begin? Shall I go to the quarry, and examine the properties of rock, to the forest, the mine, the clay-pit, and inspect the properties of wood, iron, brick-clay and the like? And having ascertained these properties, shall I reason from them to the house, as if this must logically result from them? Clearly, I shall find in them no logical implication of a house. They do not of themselves make the house, they convey no logical suggestion of it. We must begin at a different point, — from that where the edifice really has its origin. The house begins in the mind of a man, in the thought of certain uses dictated in part by his physical wants, but still more by his higher sentiments. He thinks of all required by a family in the state of cultured civility, the refinements of the table, the hospitalities of the household, decent privacies, elegancies, socialities that have also the grace and sanctity of retirement, and whatever else belongs to the use and beauty of domestic life. It is that thought which makes the house; that spiritual force conjures the rock from the quarry, the wood, iron and clay from their several places, and confers upon them uses, which they are indeed fitted to subservise, but which they do not in themselves suggest, and which, moreover, cannot be logically inferred from them.

Or suppose we try to think the genesis and growth of a plant. Where, again, is the true beginning? Shall we set out by examining the properties of its constituent elements, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, sulphur, &c., — seeking to find in them tendencies, from which the plant may be, and must be, logically inferred? Obviously, we shall not get on in that way. It is the vital genius of the plant, the living idea of it in its wholeness, which, going before the association of these elements, and exercising upon them a subtile transforming control, makes them to be somewhat, which, in themselves they neither are, nor tend to become, nor suggest to the intelligence of man.

Let us apply these analogies. There is a method of thought much in vogue, which assumes that in order to arrive at mind, at morals, or at spiritual ideas, we are to begin from below, and infer these from inferior elements. By this method there has already been attained a scheme of metaphysics, a theory of morals, and lastly, a system of speculation which is dignified with the title of Natural Theology, — a strange cob-web, I think, as ever was spun. Its application to metaphysics I would gladly consider, but have not leisure here and now. Its application to morals, this I must find leisure to consider.

It proceeds thus: There are courses of conduct which contribute to

the good of mankind, and others which oppose it. There is a varying body of opinions concerning the bearing of actions upon the said good of mankind. These opinions, taken collectively, constitute, it is said, the morality of the human race, such as it is. The morals of humanity, accordingly, are simply the sum total of its judgments upon the practical tendency of actions, — whether likely to prove beneficial on the one hand, or on the other hand injurious, to the general interest of men. That is an easy-going kind of theory, and it seems to jump with the humor of this age. We are fond, now-a-days, of easy, off-hand explanations, which leave room for nothing “mystical,” — many, at least, are so.

But what is it that *binds* the individual to the general good? The bond, the BOND, — whence comes that? The ideal obligation, felt in every man's soul in proportion as he is indeed a human being, — this constitutes the essence, the fact itself, of man's moral genius; and it can no more be composed out of this dust-heap of opinions than the vital genius of the plant can be composed from elements outside of itself. An architectonic principle, a shapely and shaping genius, it utilizes those judgments, those opinions, interfusing them with the sacred significance of Law. Hence, while mere error of opinion has in it nothing interesting, and becomes ludicrous in its excess, error of moral judgment may, if only it exhibit with might the pure stress of moral obligation, engage interest intensely, and communicate to the wildest vagaries an air almost of majesty. The Puritans erred in opinion strangely, and we should say erred ludicrously, were there not that in their sombre enthusiasm, — that moral daring, that lofty response to the name of duty, — which redeems all errors from ridicule, and makes blunder itself sublime.

Those thinkers from below, who insist on making up principles out of the native powers of inferior elements, do indeed attempt to supply this bond, or rather to furnish for it a plausible substitute. Some say that the sole sanction and bond of duty is the fear of punishment. Whatever, therefore, one can do with impunity, he has the right to do. Might, therefore, makes right: if a thief can punish others more heavily for resisting his theft, than they can punish him for stealing, it follows that, though they have the correcter opinion as to that which tends to the general good, he has the force and bond of right on his side. Glosin's motto, “He who takes it, makes it,” would be good scripture; and the commands of God himself would be valid as commands only because he is stronger than all mortal strength. Others, as Professor Bain, regard this bond of duty, this sense of obligation, as the factitious product of education. We are made, forsooth, to *feel* ourselves morally obliged to

regard the good of others, though the feeling is nothing but a mere brewage from words! Mankind cheats each new-comer into this useful, but intrinsically false, persuasion! In other words, the sense of obligation is, in the purest meaning of the word, a *superstition*; so that these partisans of enlightenment have set aside the superstitions of Catholicism or the like, only to find that a universal superstition is the source of all rectitude, the guardian of all civilization, the sole pledge of man's fealty to man!

I put aside all made-up moralities; and the analogies which have been mentioned may serve to show that I have the method of nature to sustain me in doing so. The spirit of man beholds the Good, and bows itself in inevitable adoration. The moral spirit of man cries out of its inscrutable depths, "I OUGHT," when the Good is discerned; and knows of a surety that in doing so, it utters no voice limited in worth and import by the measure of one's self-interest, by his attachment to himself, by his preference of pleasure to pain, but speaks from the spirit and utters the voice of the Eternal Whole. When, with a pure heart and a clear perception, he makes that majestic confession, the whole universe of God is the echo and legitimation of his words. He gives voice to that through which 'the most ancient heavens are fresh and strong,' which is the up-building genius in every breast, and the marriage bond of souls, making across mountains and seas, across clashing interests and dividing times, the everlasting unity of the human race. For this is that vernacular of humanity that remains unbroken forever, the same in all tongues and intelligible to every ear, the word eternal, the speech, not only of all the world, but of all worlds, of earth and heaven!

Again, the word *God* has been said by Coleridge, — and he has spoken few things more profound, — to be that by which the Reason enunciates its faith in itself. This, therefore, is its primal enunciation, the true Beginning of all discourse of reason. In thinking God, or reasoning the belief in him, I do not begin with setting religion aside, annulling provisionally its import, making God problematical, and then proceed, by inspecting the world around me, to see whether that will affirm for me the significance which I have made bold to silence in my own spirit. But the process which I decline is adopted by the professors of "natural theology." They would compose a God inferentially. They ask the world to push up a line of logic, which shall reach at last to deity. It is the modern fashion of Babel-building; and one which, as I think, no confusion of tongues is requisite to render abortive, — this necessity being precluded by an antecedent confusion of mind. Let me give an example or two of this method.

One way of proving the existence of God has been to reason from our

notion of cause. Every effect has a cause; the world is an effect; the world therefore has a cause. We arrive therefore at that

“Great First cause, least understood,”

(very little understood, I should say), of which Pope, and so many of his kith and kin, thought there was clear evidence. But *first* and *cause*? The two words contradict each other. We know of causation only as the chain of connection between phenomena. Its very import is to deny an absolute beginning. Every effect has a cause; but every cause is an effect. So much as we know the one fact, we know the other. There is precisely the same evidence, the same force of presumption, in the two cases. We can indeed conceive of pure spiritual substance, absolute creative efficiency, the Original without days, from which the visible world exists *now*; and this, by accommodation of a word, may be named absolute cause; but in postulating such a cause, we resort to the pure import of Reason, to the ideal faith of our souls, bringing a significance to outward nature, instead of deriving one from it. It is no observed law of causation, no logic of things, which can lead to that conclusion. A *conclusion* indeed, or inference, it cannot be; this faith is of the soul itself, a primal idea and enunciation of man's spiritual intelligence, or it is nothing.

Again, there is the argument of Paley, the “argument of design.” We see design in the world; we infer a Designer. Yes, we see design. For example, in the fang of the adder or the cobra one may perceive design, a good deal of it, and admirably effectuated. That nice little sack of excellent venom, so safely bestowed, so ready for use, with such an ingenious mechanism for its instantaneous compression; that exquisitely fine tube running up the tooth, so fine that its issue at the point leaves it still keener than whetted steel, sure to reach the quick, and discharge into the veins of the victim, be he saint or sinner, hero or hypocrite, the effectual drop;—all this might well be the despair of the chemist and the mechanician. I see in it unsurpassed design and incomparable execution. It shows indubitably a matchless artificer. But does it give evidence of God? If one say that it does, I shall have to ask him what he means by *God*. It is clear to me that he and I do not use words in the same sense, and therefore shall hardly come to a common understanding.

I must beg leave to tell a story. Chief Justice Parsons, a latitudinarian in theology, was once holding his court in a village where was settled as clergyman, a very stringent and very logical Hopkinsian. The favorite article in the Hopkinsian creed was the “sovereignty of

God," or his right to make men for the express purpose of damning them eternally, provided he could so best promote his own glory. Sunday came, and the clergyman, aware that the great judge would be among his auditors, brought forth a discourse upon his favorite topic, which he had striven even beyond his wont to make unanswerably logical. Invited to dine with the judge, at the village tavern after church, he said to the other with the frankness of a gentleman, "I would gladly know what you thought of my sermon."

"I thought it," answered the great man, "one of the ablest arguments I ever heard, — precise in the statement of premises, clear in method, irresistible in logic, every way indeed a masterly discourse. If the pulpit has many such proficient in logic as yourself, the bar will have to look to its laurels."

"It would be affectation in me," responded the preacher, "not to acknowledge the gratification your praise affords me. You will not refuse me liberty to say that there is no living man whose approval I should value more highly; and it pleases me the more that I had supposed your views of the character of God to differ radically from my own."

"How?" cried the jurist. "Do I understand you? The character of God?"

"Why — yes, sir, — my topic, you know, was the sovereignty of God."

"I beg your pardon a thousand times," said the other; "I thought all the while you were speaking of the Devil!"

Perhaps the application of the story to the case in point will be seen without difficulty. The "argument from design" must creep and coil with snakes, raven with wild beasts, and make friends with all the ferocities of nature, all the horror and uncleanness of the world, to a degree that does not suit my tastes; and when, summing and distilling the whole, one brings what he calls *God* out of the logical alembic, I should beg leave to suggest to him, as Wendell Phillips did to a colored Demosthenes, who called Washington "a scoundrel," that, purely as a question of literary felicity, I might doubt the appropriateness of the epithet!

It might be remarked further that, upon the showing of this famous argument, the distinction between theist and atheist is purely formal. The atheist sees order and intelligence in nature, — sees and acknowledges all of it which there appears. Paley sees the same, neither more nor less, but chooses in opinion to separate it from Nature, and conceive of it apart. The substantial recognitions are necessarily identical; but what the one leaves where he finds it, the other, as mere matter of formal opinion, separates from that in which it appears. A fig for the difference, I say.

Religion, — what is it? It is the absolute affirmation of Spirit, made in and by the soul of man. That is my definition of it. Spirit, pure, universal, free, embracing all necessity, and holding all in the everlasting solution of divine freedom; — this is forever postulated in the soul of man. That absolute affirmation is religion, reflected in the spontaneous worship of humanity. It is the affirmation of Spirit as *with* man and *for* him, electing him to the participation of its eternal empire. The spontaneous worship of humanity testifies to religion as natural or native; religion itself is essentially the affirmation of God, of free, sovereign Spirit, neither foreign to man, nor limited by him. Put this aside, and its significance goes with it. But natural theology first excludes its import, and then looks for its presence in its absence.

Let us repose no trust in these self-defeating methods. Setting out from the self-enunciation of Spirit in the soul, — setting out from above, — we may come sweeping down upon the world, with eyes to see what that has not the tongue to tell, furnished with the premise of another logic than that of things. Then, having the true word of command, we may bid the rock come forth from the quarry, and all the elements of nature to serve the architecture of our thought, — may speak, and be obeyed. For one, I ape no more the brute vernacular of the world, nor ask that to instruct my soul what it shall say; but rather come to teach that the mother-tongue of Spirit. The genius of the living Whole is within us, it is ours, and the essence itself of our spiritual being. Where religion is, God is, — the voice and the speaker, — the everlasting Word proceeding forever from the Father in the sonship of humanity, — the Word spoken in innumerable souls, and syllabled in a thousand dialects; here breathed in the mild accents of meditative wisdom; there hymned sweet, flute-like, infinitely melodious, from the lips of enchanted saints; again, blown across the passionate turmoil of time in the trumpet-blasts of indignant prophets; but ever the same Word, ever the voice of Spirit, saying, I AM. The logic and legitimation of religious belief are found in religion itself. Spirit self-affirmed, — this is the premise; and with this we have the whole vast conclusion, which is the spiritual thought, the spiritual life and achievement of humanity, before us.

THE PRESIDENT.

Two more words, friends, and after that, a recess until three o'clock, when the afternoon meeting will be held. The first word from Thomas W. Higginson.

REMARKS OF THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

Mr. Chairman and Friends:—

I hope the lateness of the hour will give to me at least that grace which the public craves, which the public speaker ought rarely to claim for himself, the grace of being brief. I have shared in the enthusiasm of the morning, tempered perhaps by a little of the sadness of maturity, in remembering how twenty years ago there were meetings held like this, almost on this spot; how twenty years ago we heard the same noble aspirations and inspirations from young Unitarianism, echoed as bravely by young Universalism, and seconded, not by Quakerism, but by that spirit which is more than Quakerism, the spirit of Lucretia Mott. What remains to us from all that noble promise then? The young Unitarian ministers who then seemed to lead the way; where are they? Gone, most of them, out of the denomination and out of the ministry, or else shrivelled into conservatives and advocating a creed. Those young Universalist ministers, where are they? It is they in part who now control their body, and keep it immoveable. And now, looking back upon that time long past, it seems as if nothing were left of it to be represented in this organization, except one grand reality, the persistent soul of Lucretia Mott. She can say of that movement of long ago, as the sad patriot said of Irish liberty, that she sat by its cradle, and she followed its hearse. But I rejoice that she witnesses now that which goes beyond the grave, the resurrection of that spirit of freedom; and I only hope she will not pray that the Lord's servant may now depart in peace, until she has helped a little more to bring the appointed season on earth.

Mr. Chairman, my faith in the immortality of truth, and in the spirit of freedom, is as unbounded as in boyhood. My faith in organizations to bring it about, especially in organizations that take the form of churches, and the limitations of the Christian name, has faded year by year. If it is necessary that any one should stand here, as some one suggested, to speak for those who do not claim for themselves the Christian name, who have never claimed it for themselves (reverently be it spoken), I desire that in default I may be that one. For, if I have seen anything clearly for the last twenty years, it is this, that whatever noble significance may be put upon the word Christian, yet where any body of men accept it as a bond of union, or even where any man singly accepts it as a personal distinction, the body weakens itself, or the individual sacrifices his strength, and thenceforward has to spend half the remainder of his life in proving that he has a right to the name. If we believe that Christ was the greatest of men, let us say so. If

we believe that Jesus was the noblest of our leaders, let us recognize him, as far as we can recognize any leader. But the moment we take his name, or any other human name, as a basis of union, from that moment, it seems to me, even if the integrity of the soul remains, the freedom of expression is gone; and from that time forward, we cease to spend our lives in simply being men, and try to find some equivocation, some knot-hole by which we may creep into manhood, and claim to be technically Christian at the same time.

Mr. Chairman, I know how many there are who cannot endorse in their souls words like these. How should many of those here present endorse them, when they have not spent forty years of life, as I have, in proving them to be true? What we need, what this age needs, is religion, an absolute religion, an eternal religion, the religion of Christ, because it was religion before Christ, and he could not have been religious without assuring it. This is the "free religion" that is needed in America, — love to God and love to Man — and any one who can help forward such religion by staying in church or in pulpit, let him stay there; and he who can help it by going out, in God's name let him go. For six or eight years I have addressed no religious meeting, and except a few military ceremonies in South Carolina, I have taken part in the exercises of no pulpit, of no religious organization; and this has come in my case not from any sudden revolution, nor religious struggle (for I never had a religious struggle in my life), but simply from the gradual growth of convictions in my own soul. When I hear these brave men speak, who have spoken this morning, I wonder, as Lucretia Mott wondered, how they can be so large, and yet find a pulpit, in Unitarianism or out of it, any pulpit to hold them. It is not my purpose to question their integrity, or their wisdom, but to bow before it, seeing that it may be more true and reliable than my own; but I speak from my position as they speak from theirs.

Free Unitarianism and free Universalism have been trying to form organizations for twenty years, and there is no more organization now than there was then. And in the case of the Progressive Friends, there is no more of an organization of them now than then; and it is because the spirit that is abroad in this age is foreign to organization, and is indifferent to the building up of churches. There is a growing indifference that does not proceed from sleepiness nor from pre-occupation in unworthy things. The other day at a Unitarian church meeting, the question was raised whether a certain lawyer was a Unitarian. Somebody at last said that he was. "How do you know," said somebody. "Why," said the speaker, who was a simple-hearted Sunday School teacher, "I always supposed that he was a Unitarian, because he never went to

church." It is by that negative standard, and by that only, that any religious organization in this age is strong. It is that men are outgrowing the need of it; it is because we are getting into a second generation of dissent, when a race of men and women are growing up who do not care to spend their time in attacking the dogmas which they never supported. Why should a man devote himself to attacking Orthodoxy, when he was brought up under so mild a form of Unitarianism that he hardly knew that there was such a thing as Orthodoxy? The safety that is given by the simple religious training such as a great many of us got in Unitarianism, and such as others got in the society of Friends is, that there is not a trace of these dogmas left upon them, and that they never had the technical religious experience to go through.

I remember a young girl in a revival meeting, one of the purest souls I ever saw, — and when the minister came along after the services, as she sat on a back seat waiting for some comrade, the stormy, harsh revivalist asked her, "Has the Lord blessed you?" "Yes," said the pure-hearted girl, looking up out of her bright, innocent eyes, "he has always blessed me;" and the revivalist passed on. What could he do with such a catechumen as that?

I remember once being questioned by some Orthodox ministers in regard to religious experience. I told them of two little boys out in Brookline, who were stopped by robbers. The older of the boys told the robbers, with frank simplicity, that he could not give them any money, because he had none. That seemed to be rather a hopeless case. It was not likely that they were going to rob a boy who had no money. But when they turned to the other one and asked him the same thing, his answer was, "I cannot give you any money, for I have n't got any pockets." That was irresistible. No hope there. A boy who had n't even a pocket; what could you do with him? I told these Orthodox divines, — two of the most eminent in the country, — that, so far as I could ascertain, that was my position exactly. And when I expected them to look horrified, they burst into laughter; and one of them was so impressed with the story that he has told it several different times at Sabbath School, not however with the same application.

Mr. Chairman, I say these things because they are the simple truth, as it appears to me. More fortunate than some others this morning, I was not invited here to speak for any human organization, past or present, but simply for myself. When they asked John Brown, in Virginia, if he came down there under the auspices of any party, he said, "No, I came down under the auspices of John Brown." In this age of disintegration of religious forces, I think that stronger, far stronger is he who stands alone, because he has behind him, not alone the sympathy of

some one religious body, by accepting which he forfeits more on the other side, but he has the vast sympathies of the world with him, Jew, Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. But how sad, how pitiable a thing it would be to sacrifice the greater, and receive only a feeble strength elsewhere.

And again, this vast sympathy that we gain, may keep us in sympathy with the partial religions, whose precise forms and nomenclature we have long outgrown,—for we see in them also something that is still dear to many hearts, or they could not live. There is no question, and none of you should have a question, of the vast value to many a soul of the rites of baptism, of confirmation, of church membership, and the keeping of the Sabbath. To you it may be incredible how any man cares for these things; but God knows the strength that these give to many intellects—half trained they may seem to you,—and consciences which you may think half enlightened. I have seen many a Southern freedman with his quaint songs and half-pagan dances, which half the hearers in this room would think more convivial than moral; and yet I have seen, trained upon that poor diet, exhibitions of spiritual strength which the noblest of you might be proud to emulate. True sympathy teaches true largeness of soul as well. And it teaches more than that; it teaches the only means by which you will ever convert the world to a larger faith,—that you should exhibit high moral results from the faith you hold. Mr. Cecil, that great theologian of the last century, said that if one moral and upright man should deny Christianity, he would do the faith of England more harm than all the sneers of Voltaire, or all the sentimentalism of Rousseau.

It was the identity of Theodore Parker's creed with the heroic life that he led, that made his name and history immortal from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore. It is not the arguments of spiritualism that are strong; even the clear brain and honest heart of our friend Mr. Owen cannot put these arguments in so distinct a shape and form of creed as shall satisfy any intellectual man beside himself. It is not the arguments of spiritualism; it is not its inferences; they are shared in common with other bodies. It is not its facts; they are often doubtful, though I think sometimes also true. It is not any of these influences that has made Spiritualism run like a ploughshare through sects, and bring seeds and blossoms from the ground where there was only a desert. The simple fact that there are tens of thousands in immortality, who, whereas they were dead in the churches, live now in spiritualism, gives to it its strength. It is only last night that I talked with an officer's widow who is living alone in this hard world with her two hands to rely upon, and not even a pension, and she said to me, "I should have com-

mitted suicide for the sake of being with my husband, if I had not believed from my soul that once every week, at least, I have an authentic message from him through a medium." It is such facts as these that make spiritualists. The books are weak, the arguments are powerless, the preachers, like the speakers in the churches, deal in fine phrases that mean nothing. But what men want is to do their duty here, as Theodore Parker and the Abolitionists have taught them their duty; and to be taught faith in another world by anything that can give it to them. Anything that can give this, makes men strong.

If our meetings do this, they do much, if they only come together once a year. If we attempt more than that; if we attempt some new organization, some sub-sect; our movement will mistake its object. God grant that such a gathering as these crowded halls have seen this morning may not be thus wasted.

The closing remarks of the morning session were by Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose appearance before the audience was greeted with much enthusiasm.

REMARKS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Mr. Chairman, —

I hardly felt, in finding this house this morning, that I had come into the right hall. I came, as I supposed myself summoned, to a little committee meeting, for some practical end, when I should happily and humbly learn my lesson; and I supposed myself no longer subject to your call when I saw this house. I have listened with great pleasure to the lessons which we have heard. To many, to those last spoken, I have found so much in accord with my own thought, that I have little left to say. I think that it does great honor to the sensibility of the committee that they have felt the universal demand in the community for just the movement they have begun. I say again, in the phrase used by my friend, that we began many years ago — yes, and many ages before that. But I think the necessity very great, and it has prompted an equal magnanimity, that thus invites all classes, all religious men, whatever their connections, whatever their specialities, in whatever relation they stand to the Christian church, to unite in a movement of benefit to men, under the sanction of religion. We are all very sensible, it is forced on us every day, of the feeling that the churches are outgrown; that the creeds are outgrown; that a technical theology no longer suits us. It is not the ill-will of people — no, indeed, but the incapacity for confirming themselves there.

The church is not large enough for the man, it cannot inspire the

enthusiasm which is the parent of everything good in history, which makes the romance of history. For that enthusiasm you must have something greater than yourselves, and not less.

The child, the young student, finds scope in his mathematics and chemistry, or natural history, because he finds a truth larger than he is; finds himself continually instructed. But, in churches, every healthy and thoughtful mind finds itself in something less; it is checked, cribbed, confined. And the statistics of the American, the English, and the German cities, showing that the mass of the population is leaving off going to church, indicate the necessity, which should have been foreseen, that the church should always be new and extemporized, because it is eternal, and springs from the sentiment of men, or it does not exist. One wonders sometimes that the churches still retain so many votaries, when he reads the histories of the church. There is an element of childish infatuation in them which does not exalt our respect for man. Read in Michelet, that in Europe, for twelve or fourteen centuries, God the Father had no temple and no altar. The Holy Ghost and the son of Mary were worshipped, and in the thirteenth century the First Person began to appear at the side of his son in pictures, and in sculpture, for worship, but only through favor of his son. These mortifying puerilities abound in religious history. But as soon as every man is apprised of the Divine presence within his own mind, — is apprised that the perfect law of duty corresponds with the laws of chemistry, of vegetation, of astronomy, as face to face in a glass; that the basis of duty, the order of society, the power of character, the wealth of culture, the perfection of taste, all draw their essence from this moral sentiment, then we have a religion that exalts; that commands all the social and all the private action.

What strikes me in the sudden movement which brings together to-day so many separated friends, — separated but sympathetic, — and what I expected to find here was, some practical suggestions by which we were to reanimate and reorganize for ourselves the true church, the pure worship. Pure doctrine always bears fruit in pure benefits. It is only by good works, it is only on the basis of active duty, that worship finds expression. What is best in the ancient religions was the sacred friendships between heroes, the sacred bands, and the relations of the Pythagorean disciples. Our masonic institutions probably grew from the like origin.

The close association which bound the first disciples of Jesus is another example; and it were easy to find more. The soul of our late war, which will always be remembered as dignifying it, was first, the desire to abolish slavery in this country, and secondly, to abolish the mischief of the war itself, by healing and saving the sick and wounded soldiers, — and this by the sacred bands of the Sanitary Commission. I wish that he

various beneficent institutions which are springing up, like joyful plants of wholesomeness, all over this country, should all be remembered as within the sphere of this committee, — almost all of them are represented here, — and that within this little band that has gathered to-day, should grow friendship. The interests that grow out of a meeting like this, should bind us with new strength to the old eternal duties. I will not detain you a moment longer.

Voted to take a recess till 3 P. M.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

On re-assembling (the Committee on organization not being ready to report) the meeting was addressed by ROWLAND CONNOR, who spoke very earnestly in favor of some free and comprehensive plan of associated action.

WM. J. POTTER, as Chairman of the Committee on Organization, then reported the following articles of Association :

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION.

I. This Association shall be called the Free Religious Association, — its objects being to promote the interests of pure religion, to encourage the scientific study of theology, and to increase fellowship in the spirit ; and to this end all persons interested in these objects are cordially invited to its membership.

II. Membership in this Association shall leave each individual responsible for his own opinions alone, and affect in no degree his relation to other Associations. Any person desiring to co-operate with the Association shall be considered a member, with full right to speak in its meetings ; but an annual contribution of one dollar shall be necessary to give a title to vote, — provided, also, that those thus entitled, may at any time confer the privilege of voting upon the whole assembly, on questions not pertaining to the management of business.

III. The Officers of the Association shall be a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and Assistant Secretary, a Treasurer, and six Directors, who together shall constitute an Executive Committee, entrusted with all the business and interests of the Association in the interim of its meetings. These officers shall be chosen by ballot, at the Annual Meeting of the Association, and shall hold their offices for one

year, or until others be chosen in their place ; and they shall have power to fill any vacancies that may occur in their number between the annual meetings.

IV. The Annual Meeting of the Association shall be held in the city of Boston, on Thursday, of what is known as "Anniversary Week," at such place and with such sessions as the Executive Committee may appoint ; of which at least one month's previous notice shall be publicly given. Other meetings and Conventions may be called by the Committee, according to their judgment, at such times and places as may seem to them desirable.

V. These Articles may be amended at any Annual Meeting of the Association by a majority vote of the members present, provided public notice of the amendment has been given with the call for the meeting.

These articles were adopted, and the following officers elected under them :—

LIST OF OFFICERS.

President. O. B. Frothingham, New York City, N. Y.

Vice-Presidents. Robert Dale Owen, New Harmony, Ind. ; *Thomas W. Higginson, Newport, R. I. ; Caroline M. Severance, West Newton, Mass.

Secretary. W. J. Potter, New Bedford, Mass.

Assistant Secretary. Rowland Connor, Boston, Mass.

Treasurer. Richard P. Hallowell, Boston, Mass.

Directors. Isaac M. Wise, Cincinnati, Ohio ; Charles K. Whipple, Boston, Mass. ; Edward C. Towne, Medford, Mass. ; Frank B. Sanborn, Concord, Mass. ; Hannah E. Stevenson, Boston, Mass. ; and Edna D. Cheney, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Remarks incidental to the question of organization were made by A. B. ALCOTT, E. C. TOWNE, F. B. SANBORN, LUCRETIA MOTT, Mrs. C. H. DALL, C. C. BURLEIGH, and F. E. ABBOT. The meeting then adjourned *sine die*.

* Elected to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation, on account of numerous engagements, of Hon. Isaac Ames.

