

for us only to look into one another's faces for the last time as members of an anti-slavery society, to clasp hands once more in mutual congratulation and benediction, and to render up to God the trust received from him, and go our ways to other work."

Its mission fulfilled, the society has passed into history. Those who were its members are admonished that the work is not yet complete. Among the letters read at the meeting was one from CHARLES SUMNER,

in which these words occur: "But all is not yet done. The country must be lifted in deed and life to the level of the great truth it has now adopted as the supreme law of the land. In this cause it is an honor and a delight to labor, and I assure you that I shall persevere to the end."

Emulating this noble example, and inspired by a kindred purpose, let each aid in what remains to be accomplished.

GSL444

THE RADICAL CLUB, BOSTON.

THE April meeting of the Club was held at Dr. BARTOL'S, and a pouring rain seemed not to diminish the customary good attendance.

The essay, by Mrs. EDNAH D. CHENEY, was on the development and organization of religious ideas.

Referring to the beginnings of things in the material world, she spoke of the germ and the cell, the foundation of all vegetable growth and the commencement of all animal life. Whence, she asked, comes this germ power—this life, enabling the new structure to appropriate to itself whatever around is fitted to its inward nature? The materialist can not answer this question. He has to stop short in the chain of cause and effect, and refer this power to a source which he may name but can not understand. The spiritual thinker answers that it is the power of the divinity within us. It is the consciousness of this inheritance of

divinity which gives us our innate faith in immortality. The idea of a divine heritage is expressed in all the mythologies, and, however false in fact, is true as a symbol. Thus the typical man is the direct child of God. In all genuine organizations, whether of church, state, or community, there must be a central root running down to the divine source, and there must also be a circumference, limited by circumstances, and absolutely requiring from time to time to be broken up to give place to new life. And it is not in the centre but in the circumference that creeds and nations differ so widely. In the deepest spiritual communion, Jew and Greek, Christian and Mohammedan, alike draw near to the divine centre, and meet there. Every human soul has access to God, and affinity with him. It is individual peculiarities which make sects differ so widely.

Nevertheless, sects are necessary. The difference between the Greek and Latin churches is but the difference between the Grecian and Roman characters. Churches, like nations, are necessary formations round a central idea. Yet, with the essence of the divine in all for a meeting-point, there is still the intense individuality of every germ which makes each nature and each religion itself and not another. The obstinate hold with which the Jews have clung to their old religious ideas and their peculiar forms of faith has often been quoted as a miraculous proof of the truth of prophecy, yet it is only a singularly striking instance of the power of individuality, the tenacity with which the germ retains its character unchanged through many differing circumstances. This same tenacity of faith is seen in various eastern nations. The Abyssinian church is nearest to Judaism of all the Christian churches, and its members are the only genuine Sabbatarians in the Christian world. Variety of sects is not an unmixed evil. Genuine devotion to any truth helps progress. The evil begins when a sect, or a church, or a party tries to put down the others. And we smile, or weep, at the inconsistency of human nature when the religious body which claimed for itself the largest liberty becomes in its turn the consolidated church, and hates and persecutes others with the same bitterness and rigor from which itself has suffered. Thus, the Lutheran persecuted the Anabaptist, the Independent drove out the Presbyterian, the Puritan hung the Quaker, the Unitarian is now shutting the gate against the

Radical, and doubtless the moment the Radicals of to-day feel themselves impelled to precise statement and positive work, they will think, like Dickens's barber, that they must draw the line somewhere. Indeed, no church having vital and progressive power was ever wholly free from the persecuting spirit.

The finest result of culture is to secure not merely tolerance of others, but a broad, clear-eyed justice. There is perpetual need of the rational organization of religious ideas, and all sects help to mould the primary elements of the spiritual life into forms fit for practical use. Some individual souls are strong enough and free enough to draw directly from the great Fountain. Thus SOCRATES received at first hand from the divinity. But most of us need to have our spiritual as well as our material food gradually prepared and assimilated for us. Not every one can live on potatoes and PLATO in the woods, like THOREAU. We feel the need of a home; and the religious home into which we were born has been called Christianity. It is linked with every sacred tie. No wonder men hesitate to lay it aside. We are Christian as we are American. The Christian system is the grandest and completest yet organized, and it has not yet done its full work in the world. But a true home will be open and hospitable; and when in the name of Christianity it is said that we must know *nothing* but Jesus Christ and him crucified, it is time to rebel. To be a Christian is not to be more than a man, but to be only a particular and limited kind of man. But the sects, like the knights-errant of old, insist that

all shall acknowledge *their* lady the most beautiful.

The central peculiarity of Christianity is its assertion of high ideal principles, and its tender regard for the poor and lowly. Its chief shortcoming perhaps is in failing to adapt the truth to actual conditions, and to recognize scientific law. Let us credit the system fairly with the evil and the good that have come through it. As to slavery, for instance; why should we not freely confess that JESUS made no express provision against it? Social science exerts itself to provide for general welfare here and now. Christianity took little thought for this world, being concerned mainly to provide for the next. COLERIDGE tells us, He that loves Christianity better than the truth will soon love his own sect or party better than Christianity, and will end by loving himself better than all.

THE DISCUSSION.

Mr. ABRAHAM FOLSOM said he thought it time to drop the old symbols, including the name Christian.

Rev. WILLIAM H. CHANNING praised the essays of Mrs. CHENEY and Mrs. HOWE for eminent comprehensiveness, clearness, purity, judicial calmness. This, he said, is a foreboding of what is coming. Women seem intended to excel us. May not their superiority be yet seen in mathematics, on the stock exchange, at the ballot-box, and in solving the problems of legislation?

He agreed with the essay almost entirely. He would ask, however, whether Christianity does not contain living principles? Its limitations are not inherent, but have been

superadded; while its truths teach still more clearly the truths contained in other religions. There are abundant applications of these truths to be made in Christendom to-day. The law of love working freely is needed everywhere on earth to make Christian nations really Christian, and also to convert the rest of the world.

A voice asked, Where does Christianity teach that the divine is incarnate in *every* human being?

Mr. CHANNING answered, In the 17th chapter of JOHN, and in all the teachings of PAUL.

Rev. JESSE JONES said the Old Testament taught us that God made man in his own image, and JESUS, assuming the truth of that scriptural doctrine, adopted it and taught it.

Mr. LONGFELLOW remarked that PAUL declares of all men that which JESUS says of himself as to individual union with God.

Again the voice asked whether a heathen, before PAUL, had not said that we all are God's offspring?

Mr. CHANNING said the problem is how to make man as he is best show forth his union with the divine. The Persians taught that every one has his divine idea. God has a distinct plan for every single soul. But men keep limiting and circumscribing us, so that each one's individuality is lost unless he has strength to break bounds. The thing we need is to allow and assist individual development according to God's idea.

Rev. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE said that, though there were details in which he disagreed with the essay, he felt in it the spirit of movement and progress. Christianity,

he thought, was going on to solve the problem of inspiring men with love for God and their brethren. It has infused a leaven into the community which, in proportion to its operation, makes bread out of dough. Christianity spoke of a "kingdom of heaven" on earth. We have not yet reached this; and we may well ask ourselves whether we, as radicals and as liberal Christians, get more and more of the spirit of progress.

Christianity spoke also of God in man, and this by mediation through one man. We have a mediation in Christ expressly for the purpose of taking in all mankind. Its doctrine is, "I in them, and thou in me, that we may be made perfect in one;" the doctrine of God coming into humanity through his best beloved.

For his own part, Mr. CLARKE said, since he saw that there was a great deal to be done before the ideas of Christianity were carried out, he proposed to remain a Christian. He thought it a good thing, however, for those unable to stand *in* Christianity to stand outside, and see what they can find there. He looked with great interest on this experiment, and would encourage every one who desired to try it. Why should not every one try it who wished to?

Dr. SPURZHEIM had introduced a new phraseology, which impressed some people more strongly than the equivalent terms of the old one. He called religion "veneration." Well, if men who had cared nothing for religion, began to cultivate veneration, here was progress. Philoprogenitiveness was a much higher-sounding term than love of children,

and the phrenological catechism led some men to be better fathers.

Mr. FOLSOM saw no need of referring back to the old phraseology and the old ideas. Why need we refer to that young Jew? We should take a step forward—believe in ourselves—believe that God dwells in us also. The idea of atoning blood is a bloody thought; untrue, and demoralizing in its influence. The instruction given to that old half-civilized people will not suffice for us. The laws of life are better understood now, and we must live in accordance with them.

The gentleman who next spoke said that he, like Mr. ABBOT, wished to stand outside of Christianity; and as to the doctrine of messiahship, JESUS spoke of himself as *a* Messiah, not *the* Messiah.

Mrs. HOWE said she had come there to learn. She found much truth and beauty in the essay, but wished it were possible to discuss it without falling into the ruts of controversy. She knew nothing more catholic and inclusive than Christianity, and did not believe there was any antagonism between it and science. That promise of the Holy Ghost which began to be fulfilled at the Pentecost was that each one should be inspired by God just as JESUS was. Belief in Christianity did not imply disbelief in any other religion. Her hope was, that that faith would take in all other faiths, meeting all on the plane of fraternity, of universal spiritual hospitality.

Mrs. CHENEY explained that the essay had spoken of opposition to science by the organized Christian

church, not by Christianity itself. This is a historical fact, manifest from the time of GALILEO to the opposers of geology in our own day. The emphasis of Christianity has *not*, by its teachers, been thrown in favor of science. On the other hand, some teachers of science have exalted it at the expense of Christianity.

Mr. BALCOM, an English gentleman, understood to be a minister of the orthodox persuasion, said he had been glad to hear the calm spirit of the essay, and its bearing rather for Christianity than against it. He thought Christianity was the infinite coming down to the finite.

Mrs. CHENEY here interposed to say that that was precisely the point of the essay. The limitations that had been spoken of in Christianity were referable to its organization, and were such as necessarily came with organization.

Mr. BALCOM went on to express his interest in the discussion as well as the essay. If he lived near Boston, he would come to the Radical Club rather than to the conferences of his ecclesiastical brethren, since he learned here more of what he wished to know. He had particu-

larly enjoyed the remarks of Mr. CHANNING and of Mr. CLARKE, and he wished no better Christianity than the latter had expressed that morning. He thought Christianity did not limit us, nor prevent us from going to glean where we could. PAUL wants us to be filled with all the fullness of God; what more can we desire?

The last speaker was Mr. MORSE, editor of *The Radical*. He said we must accept the idea of mediation, since all helpful souls aided each other. The trouble is, that JESUS, by the popular representation of him, is made a hinderance rather than a help. We gladly concur with the good things he has said, but the attempt to make all his utterances compulsory upon us naturally provokes resistance. The right course is gladly to receive from all sources. Mrs. CHENEY's excellent essay would not of itself have aroused controversy. Why should we attack and defend? Why refer either to JESUS or SOCRATES as authority? Let us praise whatever we find to be good.

And then the Club adjourned.

C. K. W.