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Free Religious Association.

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING

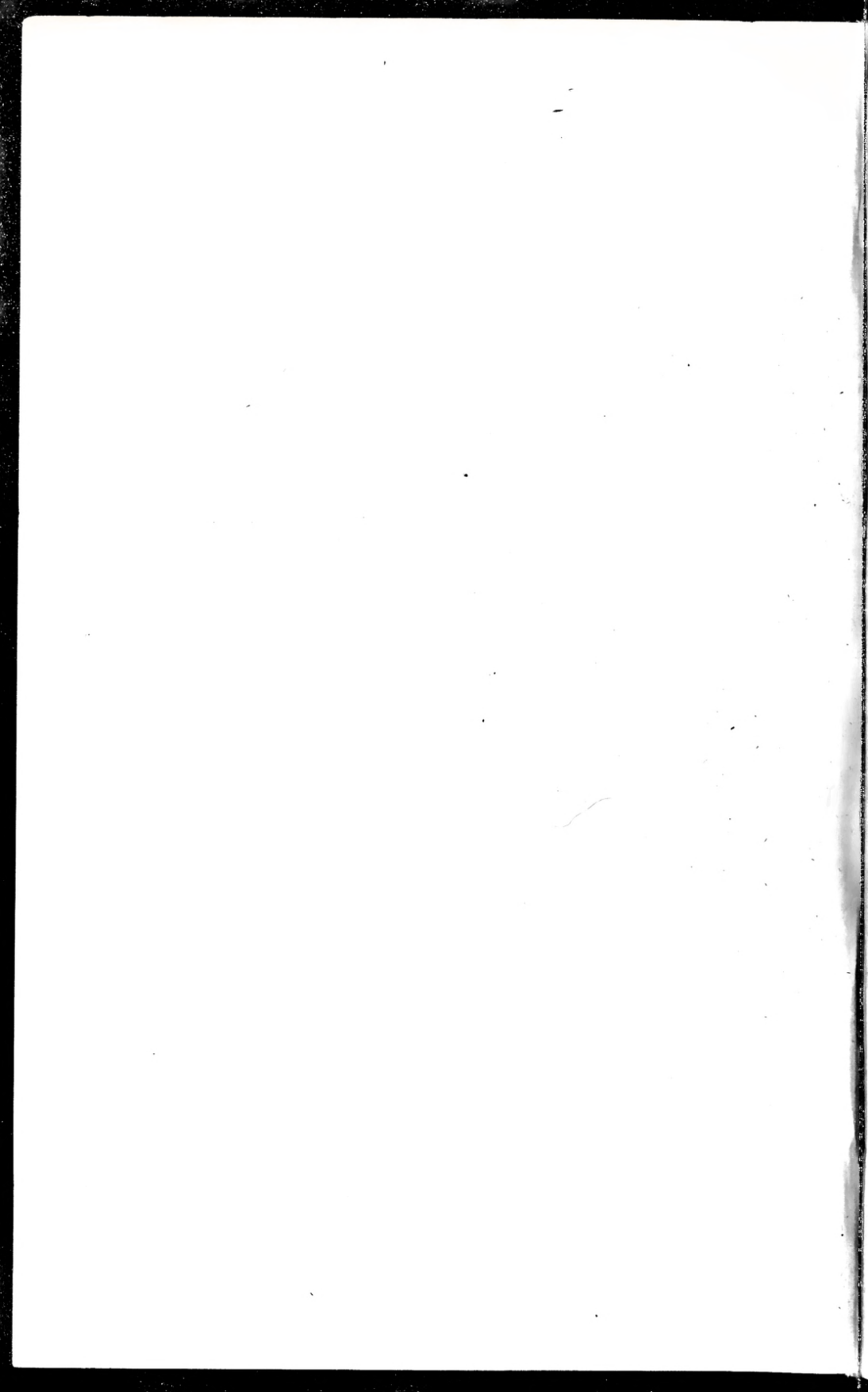
OF THE

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION,

HELD IN BOSTON,

MAY 28 AND 29, 1874.

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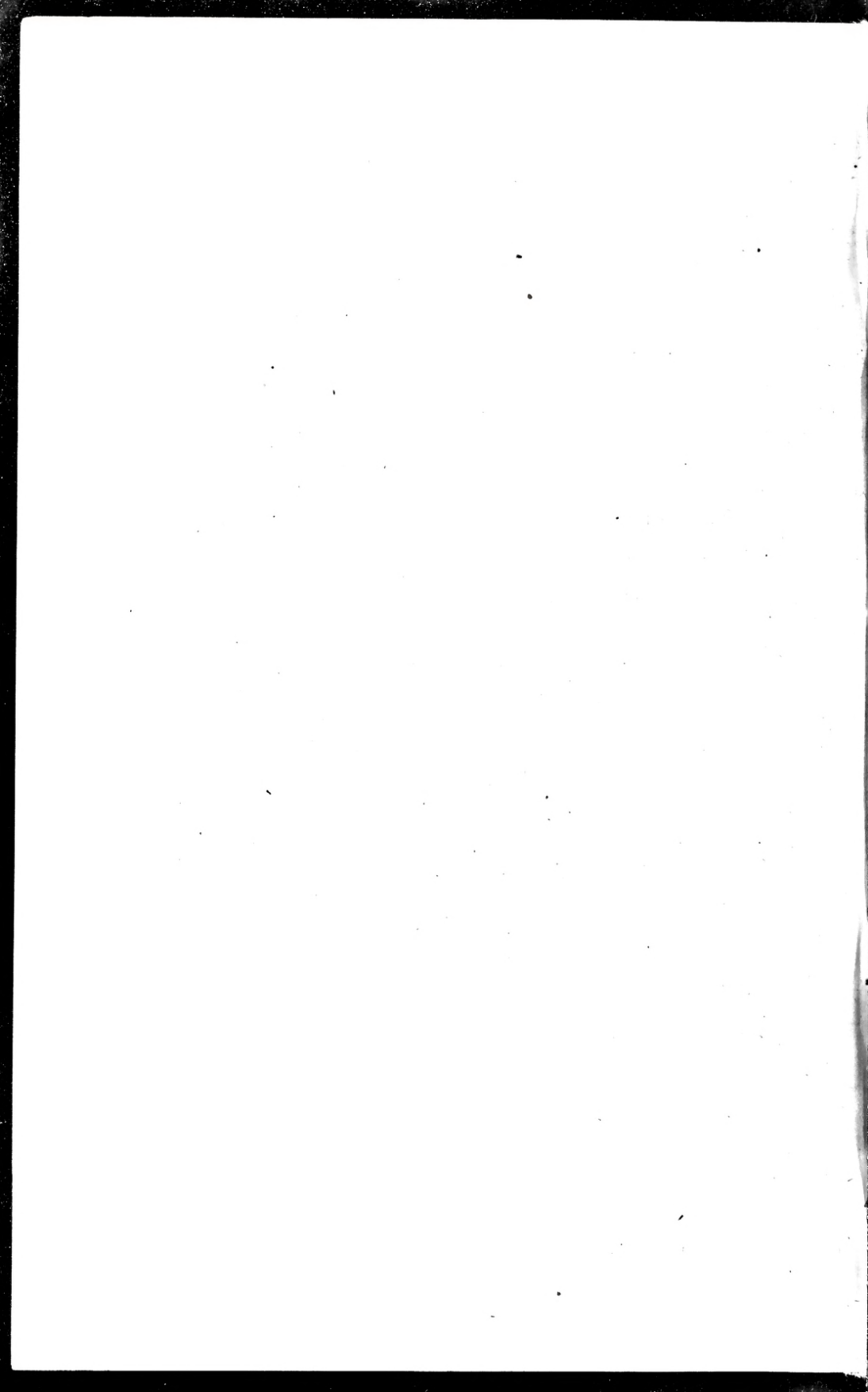
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REPORT.

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING of the Free Religious Association was opened in the lower Horticultural Hall, Boston, May 28, 1874, at 7.45 P.M.

The chair was occupied by the President, OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM, who, on calling the meeting to order, made a few introductory remarks.

The Record of the last Annual Meeting was read by the Secretary, and accepted.

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL, Treasurer, read his Report,— which showed the receipts of the Association for the year (by balance from last account, membership fees, sale of publications, contributions for conventions, lectures, and printing) to have been \$2,557.02; expenditures (for conventions, lectures, publications, office expense, and correspondence), \$2,016.77; leaving a balance in the Treasury of \$540.25.

Voted, That the Report be accepted.

The President announced, as the next business in order, the consideration of two amendments to the Constitution, of which notice had been duly given. The first of these had been proposed to the Executive Committee the previous year by the venerable Lucretia Mott, who desired to substitute some other phrase for the words "scientific study of theology" in the statement of the objects of the Association in the first article of the Constitution. Her objections were to the word "theology," as

seeming to lay too much stress on doctrinal systems of religion. To meet this, and some other objections that had been made to this clause, the Committee had prepared a revision of the statement of the objects of the Association, so that it would better express, as they think, the real intent of the Constitution, and would read thus:—

“I. This organization shall be called the Free Religious Association,—its objects being to promote the practical interests of pure religion, to increase fellowship in the spirit, and to encourage the scientific study of man’s religious nature and history; and to this end all persons interested in these objects are cordially invited to its membership.”

The article as thus amended was adopted, without discussion, by a unanimous vote.

The second amendment that had been proposed was to change the number of Directors, now limited by the third article to “six,” so that the number shall be “not less than six nor more than ten.”

The object of this amendment, it was stated by the President, was to enable the Association to secure on its Executive Committee a larger force of active members in the vicinity of Boston. Probably not more than two new members would be needed now, but it was thought judicious to provide for the election of others as they might be required.

This amendment was also unanimously adopted.

Messrs. A. W. STEVENS and R. H. RANNEY were appointed a committee for collecting and counting the ballots for officers during the ensuing year.

The ballot resulted as follows:—

OFFICERS.

PRESIDENT.

OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM *New York City.*

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON *Concord, Mass.*
 LUCRETIA MOTT *Philadelphia, Pa.*
 GERRIT SMITH *Peterboro', N.Y.*
 ROBERT DALE OWEN *New Harmony, Ind.*
 LYDIA MARIA CHILD *Wayland, Mass.*
 ISAAC M. WISE *Cincinnati, O.*
 GEORGE W. CURTIS *Staten Island, N.Y.*
 FREDERICK SCHÜNEMANN-POTT *San Francisco, Cal.*
 EDWARD L. YOUMANS *New York City.*
 E. B. WARD *Detroit, Mich.*
 GEORGE HOADLY *Cincinnati, O.*
 THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON *Newport, R.I.*

SECRETARY.

WILLIAM J. POTTER *New Bedford, Mass.*

ASSISTANT-SECRETARY.

HANNAH E. STEVENSON *32 Mt. Vernon Street,
Boston, Mass.*

TREASURER.

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL *139 Federal Street,
Boston, Mass.*

DIRECTORS.

JOHN WEISS *Boston, Mass.*
 CHARLES K. WHIPPLE *Boston, Mass.*
 EDNAH D. CHENEY *Jamaica Plain, Mass.*
 JOHN T. SARGENT *Boston, Mass.*
 FRANCIS E. ABBOT *Cambridge, Mass.*
 WILLIAM C. GANNETT *Boston, Mass.*
 HELEN M. IRESON *Lynn, Mass.*
 JOHN C. HAYNES *Boston, Mass.*

The Annual Report of the Executive Committee was then read by the Secretary.

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

IN presenting their Seventh Annual Report, the Executive Committee of the Free Religious Association are reminded by the number of the Report, that they are agents of a society that is no longer very new and can no longer rely on any mere attractions of novelty for the success of its meetings, but must present solid and valid reasons for its existence, if it would draw to itself public attention and win such a portion of the public confidence as to justify its continuance. And the place of our annual meeting this year — the committee, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the agent of Tremont Temple, where we have been wont to meet, having been obliged to call to-morrow's convention in Horticultural Hall — naturally carries the memory back to that first crowded gathering in that same Hall in May of 1867, when the Free Religious Association was first organized. Then the expectant assembly that filled the seats and aisles and every spot of standing-room in the Hall, gathered in response to a simple call for "a public meeting, to consider the conditions, wants, and prospects of Free Religion in America," betokened perhaps not a little of light curiosity as to what was to be said and done under such a novel summons, but was evidence also, most certainly, of a wide-spread and earnest interest in the problem to be considered.

THE PROBLEM OF FREE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION.

That problem was to bring together, if possible, upon some common ground of sympathy and fellowship and into some common bond of activity for human welfare, those who, in the course of religious development and progress, had come to feel either that all sectarian creeds and limitations had been outgrown, or at least that these should not stand in the way of spiritual fellowship and of union in practical work. It was apparent that there were many people — people of earnest minds and hearts, some of them in the Christian sects, some hanging but loosely upon the sectarian churches, some already adrift altogether from the churches, and some, again, that had been bred in other religions than the Christian — who were longing for a new departure in religious organization and expression corresponding to

the new attitude of their own thought and feeling. These people were querying whether it were not possible to have a religious organization which should enjoin no test of speculative opinion as a condition of membership and impose no restraint upon the right of free inquiry, — an organization which should embody the fresh, inspiring life of the present age, and should seek practically to combine perfect freedom of thought with perfect fellowship of aim and spirit. Locally, and under simpler conditions, such organizations in a few instances already existed. But the query was, Is such an organization possible on a larger scale and under more complicated conditions, — possible as a general association, aiming not at local and special but at universal objects, and seeking to remove not only the barriers that separate the Christian sects from each other, but the barriers that now separate into hostile camps the various religions of the world, to the end that people of whatever faiths and beliefs may talk and work together simply as reverent seekers after truth and practical lovers of humanity?

And the Free Religious Association was organized as an honest attempt to answer this question. How far it has solved the whole problem, it is not for us, nor probably in the power of any one as yet, to say. But this at least can be said, that those to whose lot it has fallen to serve on this Executive Committee have faithfully endeavored to heed the spirit of the call that summoned that large gathering of people seven years ago, and have kept in mind also what in their view has been from the start a cardinal principle of the organization, — namely, that the free religious movement was prior to and larger than the organization, and that the organization was not to make nor to manipulate the movement, but to represent it as faithfully as possible in its various phases, and to hold itself free and pliant to be moulded by its spirit to whatsoever service the naturally unfolding exigencies of the movement might seem to require.

TWO CLASSES OF OBJECTIONS.

That the Association in these seven years has accomplished everything that was expected of it by all those who were interested in its formation, cannot, probably, be claimed. There were, doubtless, some persons who looked to it to set up at once an effective system of machinery of the anti-ecclesiastical order and to engage in a vigorous propagandism of what might be called the principles of free religion in opposition to the teachings of the popular sects and churches; and these have been disappointed. Others, again, have been disappointed

because the Association has been less attached to the Christian name and traditions than they at first understood, and has seemed to them in consequence to have drifted into a position where its influence for good is very much diminished. With reference to the first of these points, it may be said that a movement which is the result of changing religious belief, and of changing belief not in one sect alone, nor in one of the faiths of the world alone, but of a change that is slowly taking place in all the sects and in all the more prominent of the world's religions, cannot be fully organized in a day nor a year, nor in seven years, so as to show any very marked external results. A company of people may change their religious opinions and organize a new society or a new sect upon their new doctrines with no great trouble ; but carefully to represent a change that is in process in the heart of religious faith itself, a change that affects the very foundation of the sects and the religions, is a task for which it may be confidently said that no machinery of organization devised by any one body of men in a few years is competent. All the great religions have grown gradually — have grown and not been made ; and the movement which is now animated by the principle, and holds within itself the hope, of bringing all the sects and religions of the world upon the platform of freedom of thought and fellowship in spirit, can be no exception to this law of gradual growth. Had the movement which the Association represents not been so large, more might *seem* to have been accomplished. To have put into operation some of the machinery of a new sect might not have been difficult and would have given the appearance of a larger performance ; for an immediate achievement depends on narrowness of aim. But thus far the Association has kept in view the larger aim, though its results may not be so immediate or visible. Yet we are satisfied that what the Association has done, — that the questions it has raised and the contributions it has made to religious discussions, that the principles it has stood for and even its bare existence, have had and are having an effect upon public thought which cannot be ignored, and which is gradually preparing the way for other forms of work in the future.

As to the other point, — that the Association has not been so "Christian" as it was hoped by some it would be, and has even, as it seems to them, drifted into an "anti-Christian" attitude, — it should be remembered that the position of the Association was distinctly stated in the First Annual Report of the Executive Committee, thus:—

"The Association goes below any one specific form of religion, and seeks to find the common ground on which all religions, or, more properly, religion itself, rests, and plants itself there. It contemplates the ultimate union, not simply of all sects in Christendom, but of all religions, Christian and non-Christian, in one. It looks beyond 'Christian' limits for its fellowship. . . . For the first time in religious history, not only representatives of differing Christian sects, but people of all religious names and of no religious name, are invited to come together as equal brothers, and confer with one another on the highest interests of mankind. Most of us here are probably, by reason of birth and education, counted in the census of the world's population as 'Christian,' whether we make any other claim to the name or not. But on the platform of this Association we do not obtrude that title. We agree here to listen to what our Hebrew friend may have to utter or to what our India brother may write to us of their respective religious faiths, with the same candor and the same integrity and openness of judgment that we accord to a 'Christian' speaker. A believer in the Christian system of religion may, if his conscience so dictate, use his right to speak on the platform of this Association with the purpose of proving the claims of his particular faith paramount to all others, and of converting non-believers to his views; but if he does so, that very act commits him to hear impartially the same claims made for any other faith. One who should come here simply to speak with dogmatic and sectarian arrogance for his own belief, and not cordially to listen to what might be said in behalf of another belief, would not come certainly in the spirit of the constitution of this Association."

So said the first Report of the Executive Committee: and so said previously the name and constitution of the Association from which the sentiments of that Report on this point were drawn. And your Committee are not aware that there has been any departure by the Association from these principles. As a matter of fact the membership of the Association consists of those who hold to the Christian religion and of those who reject it. There are Jews on its roll of members as there are Christians. And there are those who do not call themselves by the name of any specific faith, and who may think that the special faiths are all hostile to perfect free thought in religion and are to be assailed and destroyed. And these various phases of opinion are represented in the Executive Committee. Any change so as to limit membership by certain harmonies of belief would be a violation of that fundamental principle of the Association which guarantees to every member "absolute freedom of thought" and makes him "responsible for his own opinions alone," and would be an abandonment of what has been the most distinguishing feature of the organization from its beginning.

WORK OF THE YEAR.

In accordance with these principles, which have animated it from the start, the practical work of the Free Religious Association has been conducted the past year. That work in itself has been no greater than heretofore ; yet it has been attended by signs of special encouragement for the progress of the ideas and aims which the Association represents. In no single year, probably, since its existence has our organization become so well known to the public as in the year since our last annual meeting. This is largely owing to the holding of a Convention in New York last autumn, which has been the most important achievement of the year.

NEW YORK CONVENTION.

This Convention in its plan and number of sessions was of larger proportions than any which has been held elsewhere by the Association. The time for preparation was necessarily limited, and a number of able speakers and writers from whom the Committee had hoped to secure some service on the occasion could not be obtained. Yet with the resources at their command the Committee were enabled to hold a Convention of five sessions (three of them in the evening), during which a number of vital and interesting topics were ably handled by the speakers present. The time chosen for the Convention was auspicious, it being immediately after the "World's Evangelical Alliance" had held its ten days' meeting, and public attention was aroused to the subjects presented. The three evening sessions were all attended by large and enthusiastic audiences. The morning meetings were smaller, but perhaps were not less valuable. The New York papers by their reports, several of them generous in space, called attention to the Convention far and wide. "The New York Tribune" printed verbatim most of the essays that were read, and gave abstracts — though not in all cases very perfect — of the others and of the addresses. The religious newspapers quite generally took up the subject, most of them, of course, in the way of criticism, and some of them with most ingenious misunderstanding of what had been said and done. Yet there was this satisfaction, that for several weeks the Free Religious Convention was a topic of pretty general discussion in the country, and people who had never heard of its existence before were set to inquiring about the Association that had held such a Convention. Aside, therefore, from the direct influence which at-

tends such a public meeting, the New York Convention for these indirect results may be regarded as a most successful and valuable achievement.

PUBLICATIONS.

The first work of the year was, as usual, to issue a printed Report in pamphlet of the last annual meeting. This was done in the summer, in a style uniform with those of previous years. The Committee have also issued, in tract form, the essay read by Mr. James Parton at the New York Convention, on "Taxation of Church Property." This was felt by those who heard it to be so clear and forcible a presentation of this now very practical question as to be eminently adapted for wide popular distribution. Nearly enough money was collected at the Convention for putting it in type, and the balance of cost has been more than made up by returns from the sale of it. We have also circulated it to some extent gratuitously, sending copies for distribution to members of the Massachusetts Legislature and of the Ohio Constitutional Convention, where the question of taxing ecclesiastical property was under discussion. And we would recommend the Tract to any friends who wish to help the cause of religious freedom for use in this way in similar cases. It is stereotyped and can be supplied as needed. At Mr. Parton's suggestion we printed in the Tract as an Appendix a letter of a Roman Catholic clergyman (which appeared a few months ago in "The New York Tribune") taking the same view of the subject as Mr. Parton takes, — a circumstance which may be worth mentioning, because it seems a happy augury of the breadth and liberality of the Association that the first regular Tract it has issued should be made up of the utterances of a very radical religionist and of a Roman Catholic standing side by side. This Tract is headed, "Free Religious Tracts — No. 1," — and it is hoped to add to the series as proper matter for the purpose presents itself and the funds in our Treasury allow.

But the Committee have in view a much larger publishing enterprise than this. As mentioned in our Report last year, they are desirous of printing a volume of Free Religious Essays, — gathering up from the past annual Reports of the Association, particularly from those destroyed in the Boston fire, and from other ephemeral publications, some of the utterances of most striking and permanent value, and bringing them together into the form of a Book, which shall be a fair and convenient and able presentation of different Phases of Free Religion. Already the Publishing Committee have such a volume un-

der consideration, and have taken some action towards compiling it: and doubtless, if there shall be sufficient money in the Treasury to warrant the enterprise, the Book will be published before another annual meeting. We have now in the Treasury, reserved from last year's receipts specially for this purpose, a most encouraging nucleus of a publication-fund; but to publish a solid book of the kind contemplated is a costly operation; and valuable as we believe the book will be, it yet can hardly be expected to be so popular as to meet at once with a sale sufficient to cover the expense of its issue. We therefore make at this time a special appeal to the friends of the Association to increase this publication-fund, so that the Committee may carry through without further delay the enterprise of issuing a substantial volume that shall, at least to some good extent, be a tangible answer to the now common question, What does Free Religion mean?

LECTURES.

A course of Lectures under the auspices of the Association, similar to those of previous years, was given in the winter in Horticultural Hall, Boston, on Sunday afternoons. The course, which consisted of ten Lectures, was sustained as last year by special contributions made for the purpose in Boston and vicinity, and was free to the public. Large audiences have attended them. We renew the suggestion made in our last Report that these Boston Lectures, or some of them, might easily be repeated in other places by a little local effort to that end. Not by any agency of this Committee, but through the well-directed zeal of one woman, a resident of Waltham, Mass, some of the Boston Lectures of this last season were repeated in that town, which, with the addition of others, made an interesting and successful course. There are other places where such an experiment would succeed. And the hint may here be thrown out whether it would not be well even for the Committee to take the initiative, if necessary, in instituting a course the coming winter, either the same as or similar to the Boston course, in New York city.

OFFICE.

It became necessary last autumn to find storage room for our again accumulating publications, which were lying in the cramped apartments of our printers. The question was therefore revived whether we would establish an office for the Association in Boston. The business to be done did not seem to warrant our incurring the expense of

the sole use of such a room as would be desirable. But an opportunity offered in connection with "The Index Association," which the Committee thought it wise to improve. "The Index" had been removed to Boston, and had been established in central and convenient quarters at No. 1 Tremont Place; and "The Index Association" offered us in its apartments, at a reasonable rent, storage room and room and privileges for a sales-table for our publications. This proposition was accepted, and an office of the Free Religious Association was established accordingly at No. 1 Tremont Place, it being distinctly understood that this arrangement between the Free Religious Association and "The Index Association" was simply for business convenience, and that neither Association became thereby in any way responsible for the other. Mr. Stevens, assistant editor of "The Index" has generously and faithfully had charge of the sales-table, and responded to such orders for our publications as have been sent to the office, and for this painstaking service he deserves the gratitude of our Association. The office, being up three flights of stairs, is too difficult of access for entire satisfaction, yet, notwithstanding this disadvantage, has already proved itself a great convenience, not to say necessity, and, all things considered, very well answers the present needs of the Association.

OTHER SIGNS OF ACTIVITY.

This is specially a report of what has been done by your Committee the past year in behalf of the principles for which the Free Religious Association was organized. But we can hardly forbear mentioning other signs of activity in the same general direction, though outside of their immediate proceedings, and which help to mark the year as one of progress; as, for instance, the organization of some twenty or more Liberal Leagues in different parts of the country, the starting of several local Free Religious Societies for Sunday meetings, the building of the new and elegant Hall by the old Free Society at Florence, the dedication of the fine Parker Memorial Building in Boston, and the readiness with which some of the best known representatives of free religious thought find parlors and churches open to their utterances, especially in the West: these, together with the signs of increasing religious unrest and rebellion against the imposition of authority in the sects and churches, are among the general encouragements of the year. Some of these local movements are doubtless weak in resources, and crude, perhaps, in aim; but they indicate a wide-spread tendency to find some other ground of religious fellowship and co-

operation than dogma and ecclesiastical authority, and hence may be full of promise for the future. And they well indicate, too, the kind of work that this general Association can most advantageously attempt. The most important service that this Free Religious Association seems capable of rendering is to spread ideas, to stimulate mental activity to some high practical end, to extend and deepen knowledge on religious subjects, to send abroad and into the hearts of the people the wise thoughts of enlightened and cultivated men, and so to guide and steady these unresting elements that are emancipated from the popular ecclesiasticism that their power may not be wasted in mere speculative discussions and in an antagonistic individualism, but that they may come together in a natural and free fellowship for their own highest good and for the practical promotion of human welfare.

EVIDENCE FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

And this Report cannot, perhaps, be better closed than by some extracts from the correspondence of the year that show how the fields are opening for this kind of work, and how many minds seem to be earnestly and anxiously waiting for it. But first let us say that one of the most interesting features of our correspondence has been a letter received only two days ago from that sweet-souled native prophet of India, Keshub Chunder Sen, — a letter of affectionate fraternal greeting to the members of the Free Religious Association (which will be read at our larger gathering to-morrow), and which speaks very encouragingly of the religious reform movement in that country. More to the present point, however, will be some selections from American letters. Without looking up any in the past, I quote from two received in the last fortnight. A member of the Association in central Iowa writes to renew his membership; and adds, —

“You may think it strange for me, an entire stranger, and living at such a distance, to ask membership in your religious society. Well, I cannot tell all the *whys*, but one thing is that *I love the Association*, and those that have sacrificed so much for it. When I was young I said that if ever such a time should come that a religious society could be founded on Freedom, I could join it heart and hand: so I think that I have found the pearl of great price.”

He then goes on to speak of a few neighbors and himself coming together in their country school-house, every other Sunday afternoon, to talk with each other on such subjects as shall “tend to the culture of their social, moral, and religious nature.” They are called “hard

names," but to one, he says, who has been "an old-line abolitionist" these are not hard to bear; and when he sees that those who once derided him for "abolitionism" now confess that he was right in that, he has courage to hope that those who now think him so wrong theologically will live to see the day of religious emancipation. He sees around him "a strong under-current in that direction." Another, who has had several years of experience as a religious missionary of another association, writes, —

"The more work I did in this direction [that of free religious thought], the more I saw might be done all over the Western States, but especially in Wisconsin and Michigan. . . . I see that there are Leagues to be organized and agents to be looked up and the entire rural districts over the prairies to be canvassed. Free Religious lyceums or Sunday schools may be, and I am sure must be, built up in many places (unless everything by the *name* of Sunday school is to become extinct ere long.) Reading clubs can be formed such as they now have at Eureka, where liberal sermons and other free religious productions are read. I am confident any man alive with the fire of Free Thought can in a few months do in this way a work that would be seen and felt by all concerned. . . . I wish I could be with you at your annual meeting. I would at least show my opinion on what seems to me one of the great themes and demands of Liberalism. Has not 'Free Religion' something to do in a missionary way? The demand for rational free thought never was as great as at this moment, I am certain. Who will make the sacrifice required, of money, of strength, to carry forward so grand a work?"

Of similar strain is a letter published in last week's "Index" from Mr. C. D. B. Mills, of Syracuse, N.Y. Coming from a recent lecturing visit to the West, he writes, —

"I return with impressions altogether confirmed and strengthened of the openness and fruitfulness of the field. It waits the husbandman with seed and harrow and reaper: whence are the laborers to come? It is not the ordinary missionary work that is wanted: it is instruction, addressing the intelligence, quickening the thought, speaking to the reason, waking of the higher consciousness, and kindling of the loftier ambitions of the soul. It is the broad interpretation of religion, showing how poor and partial is the current doctrine and worship, how sacred is nature, how high and hallowed is life. The people wait the vital word; they want not the dogma, nor any *ism*, nor the emphasis upon historic or personal: they hunger and thirst for the truths of life."

Thus, friends, are we summoned to the work. The field, indeed, is large, and we are few. Yet, with sagacity, energy, and self-sacrifice,

and an increase of our financial resources, we may do something towards occupying it, even if we only extend the kind of instrumentalities we have already used. In these seven years we have done little more than prepare the way. Shall we not now enter the field to sow broadcast the seeds of ideas, from which our posterity shall reap the harvest of a religion which shall be as full of true reverence, zeal, and enthusiasm as have been the faiths that are passing away, but more rational, more unsectarian, and more humane?

Voted, That the Report be accepted.

Addresses were then made by Mr. ROWLAND CONNOR, on the organization and working of the Free Congregational Society in Florence, Mass., and by Rabbi S. H. SONNESCHEIN, of St. Louis, on the new departure of the Jewish faith, and on the hopes of the future that should animate all believers in human progress. Other expected addresses were prevented by the lateness of the hour.

Mr. J. W. WINKLEY, Mr. R. H. RANNEY, and Miss MARY OSBORN were appointed a committee for the nomination of officers at the next Annual Meeting.

Adjourned to meet in the upper Horticultural Hall, Friday, at 10 A.M.

FRIDAY: MORNING SESSION.

THE CONVENTION assembled on Friday morning, according to adjournment, in the upper Horticultural Hall, which was crowded with a large audience. The meeting was called to order by the President, O. B. FROTHINGHAM, who made the following address on "The Validity of the Free Religious Platform:"—

ADDRESS OF O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—It is very pleasant to me to come back to our home. We were born in this hall, and I have never quite become accustomed to the larger Tremont Temple: there is a home feeling here which makes me happy.

It would hardly seem, at this time, as if it were necessary to hold conventions of the Free Religious Association with the view of giving any fresh impression of its aim; and yet to make the idea of the Free Religious Association intelligible has been no easy task. In fact, if we can define a thing perfectly so that everybody shall understand precisely what we mean, there is hardly any necessity for arguing about it. State your case so distinctly and fairly that the average intelligent man will receive it simply as it is meant, and the thing is done. Now, this is what we have been trying to do all these years, and we shall try again this morning. It is a very difficult thing to define our position, for the simple reason that no position in religion or in politics is *supposed* to be easy of definition. The people who take a position are always presumed to have a special occult motive in taking it. They are presupposed to be governed by certain partisan or personal considerations. They must have some "axe to grind," as the phrase goes, which throws the people who look on off the scent. The simple reason why we are not better understood is that our idea is so perfectly plain: it can be stated in half a dozen words; it can be put so simply that no child could misapprehend it; and yet, because it is so plain and because it can be put so simply, nobody believes it! "You must mean something more," people say; "you must have something behind; you must have a purpose of your own

which you keep to yourself, and throw this out as a bait." Now, I am perfectly sincere; we are all perfectly sincere; we have no "axe to grind;" not any of us that I know of, or ever heard of, have any occult motive.

We announce that our creed is creedlessness, — that is to say, we reject the idea of a creed always carrying the suggestion of authority, a creed expressing, not what I believe, but what you should believe. But when we announce our creed as creedlessness, men say we are people of no opinions, and they do not wish to become acquainted with people who have no opinions; unless people have opinions, their standing in the intellectual world cannot be stated. We simply reply, that the principle on which we stand is that no opinions carry an authority not to be questioned, that no statement of doctrines is infallible, — that is all.

Again, a member of this Association, for reasons peculiar to himself personally, withdraws his name from the American Unitarian Association's list of ministers; another member of this Association, one of its Executive Committee, for reasons satisfactory to himself personally, lets his name remain in the Unitarian list of ministers until it is dropped by the Unitarian Association. I do not criticise Mr. Potter, and Mr. Potter does not criticise me, for our different courses of action in this respect. We have our own opinions, our own personal feelings and associations; and yet the outside world says at once, "Why, you see these Free Religionists, who talk about the unity that they have together, are not united on so simple a question of policy as to whether they belong to the Unitarian denomination or not." But the test of our freedom is that we act on our personal responsibility.

Again, we have said a hundred times, and probably shall say a hundred times more before we get through, that we are not a clique of philosophers; that we are not a party of theologians; that we are not propagandists of any system of formulas; that as an Association we neither oppose any faith as a faith, nor stand up for any faith as a faith. The most comprehensive theological statement that you can make will hardly be perfectly satisfactory in all points to every one of us. We say, — and we say it with perfect sincerity, — that we are not building up a church; we are not building up a sect; we are doing our very utmost to avoid doing anything of that sort; our aim is practical. You may smile at our saying that we are practical men; but, however unpractical we may be in other respects, in this respect, as members of the Free Religious Association, in our aim at forming, in our policy of conducting, in our whole spirit of administering it, we

have tried to be perfectly practical. What is the point? Breaking down barriers; removing dividing walls; obliterating authoritative distinctions; filling up pits between churches and faiths, — that is our business: it is pulling down fences. I don't know a better way of putting it than that, — *pulling down fences*. Look at your private yards in the city laid along in a group, each house having its own little patch in the rear, with a high fence around it to divide it from its neighbors, — as many separate areas, fenced off each from the rest, as there are houses. The wind cannot circulate, the sun has no chance to shine there, and it is impossible to raise flowers or even to make grass grow prettily on each separate ground-plot. Take away the fences, substitute open iron-work just sufficient to mark the division of one estate from the other, and the wind circulates, the sun shines, there is no barrier, and each separate yard preserves its individuality, and yet becomes a grass-plot and a flower-bed. Just that thing we propose in religion, — so to pull down the fences, or to remove the barricading walls, that the air, light, and sunshine shall come in and let no darkness rest on the soil. That is surely simple. Now, that is absolutely all; believe me, on my honor, that is all. We know nothing else. You may search my pockets, — I have no ecclesiastical revolver, I wear no sword at my side, I do not hate my brother-man anywhere; I have no hostility to any religion, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Methodist, none whatever; call him by any name you choose, I can take a man frankly by the hand as a human being, who worships according to his own conscience: that is enough, and that is all.

Our foe is sectarianism, not Christianity necessarily; not Evangelical Christianity; not Roman Catholic Christianity: it is simply sectarianism, the spirit that puts up barriers, and makes them authoritative barriers between the different forms of faith. If you will put up barriers simply as definitions to mark the point at which thoughts diverge, only making your definitions portable, movable, and pliable, so that when a neighbor moves a little further off you can readjust your line and keep neighborly intercourse with him still, we have no objection to that. We simply have objection to bounds that cannot be moved and cannot be passed. We will not have a Romulus that would kill his brother Remus for stepping over the furrow which is marked by the sacred plow. We do not say, "If you, Remus, pass that boundary, you are doomed to death at the hands of the priests." Now, is that intelligible or not? Is it not perfectly intelligible? and if there is anybody here who does not understand it, is it not his own fault that he does not understand it? Is it ours?

We are an anti sectarian society. We make sectarianism a definite special object of attack on several grounds. We say, for instance, that sectarianism entails enormous and useless expense on every community, — expense that is estimated by millions of dollars in any large society; an expense that in the single city of New York probably, or in Boston, can be estimated by millions of dollars: taken out of whose pockets? Out of yours, in part. Out of the pockets of poor, hard-working people. It is, to use a not very elegant, but very expressive, phrase of a friend of mine, very “sweaty money” that sectarianism uses. But how is this all done? There is a church with a minister of a very liberal, catholic spirit; men of different shades of belief go there and worship; there is no quarrel, no trouble, no strife. But a sectarian question arises, on a point of the Trinity, or the character of Christ, or the supernatural inspiration of the Bible; and the people divide; there are two churches where there was one before; two ministers, two organizations, where there was one before; and double the expense is required for no practical purpose whatever. The city is not more religious, more pure, moral, humble, worshipful, than before, but less so in all these respects, and it costs exactly twice the sum of money to carry on the work. Now, multiply that instance, as it is multiplied in a great city like Boston or Chicago, and the expense entailed is inconceivable. Look at the shades of Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Episcopacy in the city of New York. As you walk down the Fifth Avenue, there is a great temple on this side, and then there is a great temple on that side, and then on the other side there is a great temple going up that promises to be more expensive and gorgeous than any of the rest. None of these churches are filled; the salaries are enormous, the music alone will cost seven thousand a year, all simply for the purpose of making this particular church outrival that particular church, which has a shade’s difference of doctrine; while the people are losing ground, losing earnestness, losing love of truth, losing interest all the time in vital religion. Now, we say, put away these dividing lines, — at any rate make them simply lines of definition and not lines of exclusion, lines that shut out nobody and confine nobody in, — and you will save the country millions on millions of dollars every year. The Bible Society is sectarian, the Tract Society is sectarian, the organizations for converting the heathen in this way, and for converting the heathen in that way, are all sectarian, and all bring to bear the particular methods of this or that special sect. Now, we say, that is an evil; not a speculative evil; not merely an evil in opin-

ion ; but an evil which touches the pocket and affects practical life, — an evil which everybody can understand if he will take a slate and pencil and figure it out.

But more than this we say : we say that sectarianism bears very powerfully and very clearly upon education. If there is any interest in this country that is of supreme practical moment, it is that of the education of the people — the lower education in the public schools, the higher education in colleges, seminaries, and universities. Now, one of the largest religious denominations in the country — the Roman Catholic — refuses, on sectarian grounds, to combine with the Protestant population of the country in the support of common schools, and cripples our whole common school system ; and the Protestants, on their side, with an equal vigor, protest, on sectarian grounds alone, that they will keep the Bible there, let the Roman Church go or come. Remove sectarianism and you have your common school system intact ; all the people at once can take an interest in it, the whole power of the community can be thrown upon the solution of the problem of popular education ; and it is solved as soon as the sectarian question is passed. I listened last week in the Social Science Conference of New York to an elaborate essay by President White, of Cornell University, on the "Higher Education of America." In that essay he stated, argued, and proved, that the "Higher Education of America" suffers more from the sectarian spirit than from any other single cause. There are more than three hundred nominal colleges in the United States, sectarian colleges ; here Catholics, here Methodists, here Unitarians, here Universalists, here Baptists, and so on, — each one supported, or claiming to be supported, by its denomination alone, making no appeal to any other ; so we have this fact of three hundred and sixty starving colleges instead of one magnificent State College in every State in the country, which might be abundantly, over-abundantly, endowed with all the means of any college in the world, I was going to say, certainly with as much as any college on the continent of Europe has now, without straining the efforts of the people even to the point at which they are strained to-day. The University of Berlin, one of the great Universities of Germany, costs less money, educates more people, educates them better than any one of our State colleges, or any half-dozen of them ; and yet it costs less than the colleges of a single State in our confederacy. Now here is a strong practical point. Remove this sectarian feeling, and at once the higher education of the people is provided for as well as the lower. Dr. McCosh, President

of Princeton College, challenged to some extent Mr. White's statement, and said it was overdrawn; and yet Dr. McCosh himself, on this very occasion, protesting against Mr. White, said, "Why, you must have some sort of religion, and if you have some sort of religion, you must have a particular kind of religion; you cannot have a religion that is made up a little of Presbyterianism, and a little of Episcopacy, and a little of Unitarianism, and a little of Universalism," — conceding the whole question. We say, let all the religious questions be put out of view in a college, and have your education based, not upon sectarian principles, but upon scholarly principles alone; and let it be the education of the mind, and not the building up of a sect. Is not that a practical point?

Again, the evil influence of sectarianism is seen in the diminished power and earnestness with which men pursue the truth. We all know, in the abstract, that the truth is the only thing in the world worth anybody's having. We all say that. We all say that to love the truth, to seek the truth above and beyond everything else, is the greatest quality of the mind, and yet nothing is plainer than that the sectarian spirit cripples in high minds as well as in ordinary minds this determination to find the truth and nothing else. As I was coming from Newport last summer to Boston, there got into the car with me, and sat on the same seat, a young man who was a Congregational preacher in Boston. He introduced himself to me pleasantly, and we talked half the way to Boston on this very matter. He said, "I have attended your meetings from the beginning; I have been always interested in your movement, and have heard everything you have got to say; and while I have a very sincere respect for your motives, your purpose and your position, I cannot quite concede the ground that outside of sectarianism the truth will be more surely found and stated." "Is it not the fact," he said, "that each sect hammers away at its own idea and perfects that, and thus by putting all sects together you have a mosaic which represents entirely the truth?" Exactly the reverse is the case in my opinion, — because the moment you have a sect, you enclose a dogma which stands for the truth. It must not be questioned. Nobody is allowed to come in who does not believe it, and people are perpetually persuaded to come in by force of believing it; to guard it, to strengthen it, to fortify it by outside appliances, to preserve its significance and power, becomes the aim of every member of the sect; and the result is that the dogma does not represent, but hides, the truth.

I had a letter not a very great while ago, apparently from an earnest

man,—I never saw him,—who said he had passed the whole of his life as a Congregational preacher, and at last—he was over sixty—it had suddenly dawned upon him that there was something to be learned outside of his sect. “Now” said he, “I want to know something about your position. My position has always been this: I studied the doctrines; I defended them; I read no books that did not advocate them; I not only believed them, I knew, I was perfectly sure, that was the truth, and sought no further. Now,” said he, “I find it was all a mistake, and my life has been a mistake.” A very eminent Congregational minister of New York, a gentleman of great reputation, of scholarly attainment, a man of learning and of liberal ideas, said to me himself in his own study something substantially the same. His health had given way and he was on the eve of going to Europe. He was sorting his books; some of them he was to leave and some to take with him. On the floor in a corner was a huge pile of literature, and some smaller books on the shelves. “What books are these?” I said, pointing to those on the floor. “Oh, those are theological books, my old professional books.”—“And what books are these?”—“Oh, those are the books I have not had time to read yet.”—“And among them, what?”—“Well, some of the new sciences,—Herbert Spencer’s works for instance: I have had them a great while, but have never looked at them.”

Here was the point; as long as he was an Orthodox minister he had no time to read Spencer, though the volumes were on his shelves. Now that man, but for his sectarian position, which had to be recognized, and which absorbed his time and energies, would have read Herbert Spencer and the “new sciences,” would have been an enquiring mind and a truly catholic spirit. That very man, on an occasion not so very long ago, being outside of New York, in some country village where people were not supposed to know, made an ordination sermon. In that he found occasion to speak of Unitarians, and he spoke of them very severely; among others he spoke of Dr. Channing,—he didn’t suppose anybody knew enough to correct him,—and said that when Dr. Channing came to die he recanted his opinions. There happened to be in his audience a friend of mine, and a member of my society, who heard the statement and told me. If that man had been a lover of truth more than a lover of his sect, could he have said such a thing as that?

Again we say the spirit of sectarianism is fatal to love, fatal to charity. Always in sects we see brother against brother, friend against friend, neighbor against neighbor, church against church. It is

mortifying to take up religious newspapers: political newspapers are bad enough, but religious newspapers are quite as bad. There is an excuse for political papers, because they are partisan organs: the party owns them, supports them, they play into the hands of managers. It is a money-making business on both sides. The party depends upon the paper and the paper depends upon the party. Is it so in religion? It ought not to be so. Religion means charity, brotherhood, love, truth, knowledge, peace, and good-will; and yet open any religious newspaper, — I care not what sect it represents, — and you will find misunderstanding bordering upon misrepresentation, and the spirit of evil partisanship in every instance. This we say is an evil, a very palpable and tangible evil, which it becomes earnest and right-minded men to do away with; and this Free Religious Association is organized to help do away with it.

I said we have as an Association no doctrine, no creed; but two positions, as it seems to me, must be assumed before we can take the ground we do against sectarianism. We must, in the first place, declare all religion to be essentially of the same stuff, to be cardinally the same in substance. Call it what you will, Christian, Hebrew, Heathen, Chinese, Buddhist, Brahman, Egyptian, essentially, at the bottom, it contains the same principles of ethics, the same cardinal conceptions of the Supreme Being, the same doctrines in regard to man's nature, the same general standard of the religious life, the same general portraiture of the good and acceptable man. We do not say that one is not more complete than another; we should be fools if we did. Does not the world grow? Does not the human mind become larger and broader? This being so, to charge us with the statement that there is no difference between Christianity and Brahmanism, that there is no superiority of Christianity over Shamanism, why, it is ridiculous! We may err, but we are not such simpletons as that. We might as well be charged with holding that the astronomer of to-day is no wiser than in the time of Tycho, that Lord Rosse's telescope is not superior to the telescope which Galileo used. But we know that the principle of the lens which both Galileo and Lord Rosse used is precisely the same. We well know that neither of them could have seen a single star beyond what the natural vision would take in, unless assisted by the power of the lens, and we know it is the increased power of the lens, acquired by a finer skill in grinding glass, which makes modern astronomy superior to that in the times of Galileo. We should agree — most of us at least — that Christianity is superior to any other religion to which humanity has given birth. It should be so; for the

most enlightened races in the world have taken it up, the wisest people in the world have moulded it, the most artistic people in the world have decorated it, the people of highest aspirations have brought their wealth of spiritual nature to enrich it, and it stands the monument, the brightest monument in the history of man, of a great world-religion. In the character of Jesus, its great moral Exemplar and Redeemer, in the nobleness of its Scriptures, in the beauty of its art, in its idea of the angelic world, in its whole conception of the universe, it is vastly superior to any other single religion. Yes, we can admit that. We only say that the lowest religion that was ever known is of the same cardinal stuff with Christianity. That justifies us in saying that all religions are of the same mother, that all assume the same fundamental principles, that all tend or aim towards the same social and spiritual result. If you claim inspiration for Christianity, we say, "Very well; but the facts demand that you concede inspiration to Mohammedism, to Brahmanism, to all other religions of the world." We say, more naturally, all religions are the growth of human intelligence, the flowering out of the human mind, according to the laws and conditions of its growth. In the East, imagination predominates, and the prevailing religion is imaginative; in Italy, where the institution-power predominates, religion is an institution; in the North, where the idea-power predominates, theology is stronger; in the West, where the spirit of movement and of progress is more powerful, there the religion becomes blended with other elements of civilization, and is mixed, fluctuating, and progressive.

The human mind, we say, created all the religions, wrote all the bibles, instituted all the forms of worship, framed all the great systems of theology, reared all the cathedrals, painted all the pictures, and built up the great conceptions of the material and spiritual worlds,—the mind did it,—this human mind. If we cannot do it now, yet it was done once. Because we cannot build cathedrals, it is useless to say cathedrals were never builded by human art. Go to Milan, go to Rome, or anywhere in Europe, and there are the colossal structures, miracles of human genius, done under the natural inspiration of religion. You say the human mind could never write the Bible. But, the Bible is only a collection of literature, of higher literature, and it took some thousand or two thousand years to do it. Consider the literature of England for a thousand years past. Did not the human mind make that? Yet it is a grander literature than the literature of the Hebrews; more original, more thoughtful, more scientific, with more

originality of mind in all directions. You say the human mind could not have constituted the character of the Christ. Grant the character of Jesus to have been as lofty and pure and beautiful as you like. I will not question it. I have no disposition to abate one jot from the dignity, the nobleness, the loveliness of Jesus. Yet we know where he came from; we know his nature, his antecedents; we know his surroundings; we know the things he said, perhaps — perhaps we do not. We find acts of his that we question; we find words of his that we doubt. Take it, however, for all in all, we say, "Here was a wonderful person, a product of humanity in its hour of genius." Let him stand there. Bow the head before him, or the knee before him, if you will. I have seen people before whom I could bend my knee, men and women who were superior enough to me for that. I do not hesitate to say so. Bow your knee to Jesus if you will, but remember he was a product of this marvelous human nature of ours which we do not understand, which none of us have fathomed, which we have not reached the confines of nor exhausted; and along with him, in different departments, put Buddha, Socrates, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, as also products of the human mind in other phases of its manifestations. We say it is possible: there is no miracle about it; nature will do it all.

But you ask, "If the human mind has such wonderful creative power, if the human mind has made all these great religions, why did it stop? If the human mind is a creator, why does it not still create? Does it not stand as a palpable fact that these great religions, seeing that they keep their old place, were moulded and shaped by certain special providential agencies fitted to do their work and then sink into the background? Does it not follow that they were not products of the human mind but of the divine mind, that they were revelations given to man but not revelations *of* man, impressions made upon him, not expressions made out of him? And since Christianity remains as the crowning religion of the race and no improvement is made on it, and no new religion has had birth in modern civilization, why not own at once that Christianity is a divine, providential, and final religion?" I deny the fact; I deny that the human mind has ceased to be creative; I deny that the human mind has stopped creating religions. Does that affirmation sound bold? The religions of the world do not comprehend all the humanity of the world. All Christendom is not Christianity. There are thousands of people in the city of Boston who are not Christians. There are probably ten thousand people in the city of New York who are not Christians.

They say nothing about religion, they join no other churches, because there are none; they do not go to church at all; and if you should get behind the surface of their minds you would find that there was no Christian belief there, that they have drifted away, far beyond the Christian faith. So it is in every great religion of the world. All the religions put together do not include the whole of believing humanity. Mankind, as Emerson says, grows beliefs. It does to-day: all over the ground, in all our great cities, those who look keenly can see these new religions sprouting up, the young grass of the future summer coming fresh from the still vital soil. Those who see it do not all understand it. Those who have the rudiments of the new faith in them are not all aware of it.

Consider this matter of Spiritualism. I am not a Spiritualist, but I recognize the fact, that hundreds of thousands of people, millions of people (some say five, some say ten millions of people), are. What is the peculiarity of Spiritualism? That it knocks down the barrier between this world and the next. Knock down the barrier between this world and the next, and what happens? Your whole system of mediatorial religion is gone. No mediator is any more required, no Saviour, no Redeemer, no great sacrifice, no altar, no priesthood; Christianity is swept away, Romanism is dispensed with, Evangelical Protestantism is gone entirely, by that one construction. Spiritualists do not all understand it, though many do. Not all conceive as yet the full consequences of saying that the barrier between this world and the next is cast away. On that barrier the existence of Evangelical Protestantism and Romanism depends. All depends upon the integrity of that stone wall. All the Romish and Evangelical churches of Christendom assume the existence of a bottomless gulf between the two worlds, and their whole system of religion is but a system of ferry-boats to cross the water.

Now, fill up the pit, grade it over, run your tracks across, say there is but one life, but one career, but one world, but one Providence, but one system of forces, and this kind of religion is gone. The advanced Spiritualist knows this perfectly well. There are hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands of Spiritualists who have drawn this inference, who have come to these conclusions; and if you get behind the surface of their minds you will find that theirs is a great religion, an entirely new and fresh growth of religious creation, with an ethics of its own, a philosophy of its own, a beauty of its own, a human life and human character of its own, just as distinctly drawn out as in Christianity itself. Here, I say, is a new reli-

gion ; that it is a new religion, created by the human mind to-day, within this generation, is beyond dispute.

Again, take this thing that is called the Religion of Humanity,—the Religion of Humanity according to Comtism, or as it is expounded by Mr. Bridges of London. It is a conception crude, jagged, incomprehensible to the multitude, unintelligible to all but a few, starting with the first principle that there is no personal God, but that humanity is the great creative being. Taking that principle, intelligent men, thoughtful, philosophic men, have constructed a system of religion in all respects a wonder, rich, suggestive, artistic, humane, progressive, reformatory, that has the power of taking hold of the social religious nature and of moulding human life with an energy that was known to Christianity only in its best days. Now, I believe there is a future for that, laugh at it now as men will. There is nothing organized, nothing formulated, nothing definite, nothing concluded ; but people are shaping it, making studies upon it, drawing inferences from it ; and it will not be a generation before the Religion of Humanity has its buildings, its ministers, its temples ; it will not be half a century before you have a new religion stealing into modern Christendom just as Christianity stole into the Roman Empire.

I simply allude to this as a sign of the times, something mostly in the future, something of which nothing very respectable can be said to-day ; but within it is a germ, a living germ, which shows that human nature is still alive and creative. As I said, we of the Free Religious Association confidently stand by and see our position authenticated by facts. We are not mere speculators ; and if we say that Christianity is not all of religion and that all the existing religions are not all the religions, but that there is something more to come in the future, we have ground for saying so, and for so believing.

Free religion takes several different phases. We do not define them authoritatively. We do not classify ourselves in regard to them. They are held by the members of the Association and of its Executive Committee in perfect peace and good will, without offense, without criticism, without remark. One will say, "I call myself a Christian, I believe that all that is involved in free religion can be found inside of Christianity." Very well : certainly, if you think so, say so ; the Association welcomes you to its membership, and its platform is open for your statement.

Another says, "No, I think that we must go outside of Christianity to find free religion. We recognize Christianity, but we recognize other religions. The great family of religions we accept, and we will not, by

calling ourselves Christians, do injustice, even by an implied conviction, to any of those other grand faiths ; therefore we say free religion is Non-Christian." Another says, "I go further, and maintain that free religion must be Anti-Christian ; there are elements in Christianity that are despotic and tyrannical and must be thrown down, put away, obliterated, before free religion can have a really free course."

We are met here this morning to state these several phases. We shall, in the first phase, state the case of those who contend that all the principles involved in free religion may be found inside of Christianity, — of those who hold to the Christ in name and to the Christian religion, and believe that this religion, rightly understood, is as free as any religion need be.

Then we shall have a statement in behalf of those who believe that Christianity is opposed to free religion and must be attacked. Next, a statement that free religion is best promulgated outside of Christianity, not in antagonism to it, but outside of it. The first statement will be made by our very good friend, Mr. CALTHROP, a Unitarian Minister, of Syracuse, N.Y., whose orthodoxy will not be called in question by you or by me. The next statement, the Anti-Christian statement, will be made by Mr. ABBOT, who can make it better than anybody else, as you will certainly agree. The next statement, that of the Non-Christian, or Extra-Christian, aspect or position of free religion, will be made by our friend, THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON, and I know you will say he is just the man to represent that side.

I have spoken a great deal longer than I meant to, but simply in order to prepare the way for these gentlemen whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you ; and we will begin with Mr. CALTHROP, who will now address you.

ADDRESS OF REV. S. R. CALTHROP.

One word to enforce what our President has said in regard to this platform. This platform is not, ought not to be, and I trust never will be, a "Christian" platform. To so name it would be an insult to the gentlemen of the Buddhistic, Hindoo, Chinese, or Jewish Religions whom we ask to meet with us on equal terms. Certainly, also, this platform is not an "Anti-Christian" platform. That would be to omit the word "Free" from its name. It might still be a religious platform from which all Christians were excluded, — a very natural alliance perhaps, but one not universal. It would be an odd

thing to have a universal free Congress of Nations *Anti-English*. And again, this platform is not an "Extra-Christian" platform, because that would mean the same thing in a milder form. It would be merely your International Congress of Nations with the English, we will say, left out in the cold. The Free Religious platform, then, is a place where the religions of the earth can shake hands and say a mutual "God bless you" and "God speed."

Now, I am not here to say there is no other religion but the Christian religion: the whole includes the parts. I am simply here to speak for those persons who are born with Christian nerves and constitutions, blood and bones, and under Christian circumstances and traditions. I am here to claim for myself and those born under like circumstances precisely what I claim for my Buddhistic brother; and if his rights are in danger, I stand up for him first of all. I should be foolish indeed to suppose that my exotic thought could go right into China and into that Eastern world, and instantly supplant Buddhism, and do for that world what Buddhism does to-day. To do it, a thousand years of labor would hardly suffice: and what, in the meantime, are those millions to do if they now have no light at all? So much, then, by way of preliminary.

And now I ask your thoughtful attention to the reasons why most of us here ought to stand, as I think, where I do. My friend, the Rabbi here, answers me that he is glad to stand as I do, — that is, by his own religious name and traditions. It would be a shame for him to refuse the splendid inspiration of his own faith; he knows that inspiration better than I, and he can witness for it better than I, and can cleanse its impurities better than I. It is not my business even to state these impurities and corruptions. Let me keep my own doorstep clean. But I have a certain religious history, and that history gives me my religious position and duties. I have a universal history, and I have a special history. Let us first, then, see the universal history; and upon this you will find that all the speakers to-day will be substantially in accord. Paul said, eighteen centuries ago, "The promises of God are yea." In nineteenth century language, that delights in longer words, the same thought is stated by saying the universe is an affirmation and not a negation. Atheism, pure and simple, may be left out of the question as mere negation; for what is Atheism? Suppose I were to say this desk made the world, made the universe and the galaxies. You would smile at me, because this desk is a very little thing; but take away that desk, and say the vacancy made the world. It is still more foolish, is it not? Atheism means no answer

at all to the problem. Atheism means the human mind giving up in despair and saying, I cannot understand. Atheism says an everlasting No to the world ; and so inevitably your answer tends towards Yes. The universe, then, is a reality ; to solve it you have got to find a power that shall do all that ever has been done or ever can be done. You have got to give to your primal Force, if you will so call it, power enough to keep the galaxies centered ; you have got to put into your primal Force mind enough to produce all the minds that have ever lived on the earth and in all worlds ; you have got to provide for something capable of evolving angel intelligence, capable of evolving all the poetry, beauty and wisdom of mankind ; you have got mentally to manufacture a power which is as much beyond the finite being of all worlds as man is above the mummy ; and when you have got that Power, that Life, I do not care what you call it, provided only that you bow the knee before the infinite beauty and splendor and greatness.

Now science, with its doctrine of "nothing can come of nothing," is going to re-affirm this grand instinct of the heart of man. Yet more, it is going to re-affirm, one by one, the most sacred beliefs and hopes of men ; and, in its restatement of them, it is going to prove, as never before, that they rest on the solid rock of Reality. Does any one doubt this? Well, see that already science has re-affirmed the trustworthiness of the common sense of mankind as to the Reality of the Universe without us. Now thought, in its metaphysical stage, so far from doing this, had only confused and distressed men, by throwing a haze of doubt and a sense of unreality over the whole outward universe. But not only does science pronounce the universe to be real in exactly the sense that men and women have always understood it to be real, but it gets rid at once of a thousand perplexing questions by showing that this Reality is a Reality of Growth. Stars grow ; galaxies grow ; suns, planets, moons, grow ; strata grow ; plants, animals, men, grow ; thoughts, institutions, grow : and so now let us put into one word, if we can, just what science means by the universe being a Reality of Growth. Science knows distinctly two things : first, a real universe, and, secondly, real people, with real senses and real thoughts, inside the universe ; and says the whole scheme of the world and of life is impossible and unintelligible unless you take a real universe surrounding a man and a real man surrounded ; and so science bids us look at each particular limb of man and each particular organ and function of his mind as something real, produced by a real universe. It sees light surrounding eyes, and it says light creates eyes. There is a real light yonder, a real eye here. The light is not made of the

eye, but the light makes the eye, and the eye is the thing which pronounces that light is. Now our eyes at last have come up from the lowest possible grade, where our monad ancestors merely saw a dim glimmer passing over the uniform surface of a single cell, — have mounted up to such perfection that it is supposed to be religious to say that we have got perfect eyes. Yet we see only one octave of color. I believe that eyes are yet to be born on this planet that will see seven octaves of color. So with regard to the ear: that has been a slow creation too, under atmospheric force. You have only three thousand tuning-forks; my monkey ancestor had only a few hundreds, and my monad ancestor had none at all; and so I hope that my children's children's children will have a hundred thousand or a million. And so on through all the faculties of man. Each is a Reality of Growth.

But now see what we have arrived at. Science says that this real leg, with all its nerves and all its muscles and all its bones, has got secret and subtle connections with real forces outside of it. My limbs bow themselves instinctively to the law of gravitation. Space and time have been around organisms since time began, and, at last, nerve connections, infinite in their number, have been made in bodies, so that we instinctively know we are living in vital connection with real space and time. A real something outside, a real faculty inside; a real faculty inside, prophesying a real thing outside. Now this is true of every faculty of man from his foot up to his forehead. Let us see now what it says here, on the top of the head. There is a real organism up there, isn't there? The doctrine is that nothing can come of nothing. The human mind has got an outward eye. It came of light, the light around every man. The human mind has got what we call an inward eye, — conscience, the sense of justice, love, &c. Is that made by no reality, by sham? The doctrine is that organisms cannot be produced without reality. You can get dream and fancy and myth without it, but legitimate, real organisms, never. And so in me I have an organism which yields a consciousness of truth, justice, spiritual light, beauty, goodness, and a love which lives forever; and I know very well this inside faculty is produced by an Infinite Justice, Truth and Beneficence outside of man. The Reality without *must* correspond with the Reality within. This may perhaps seem vague now, yet some day it will be the simplest matter of science. For if you produce these qualities of yourself, it is inevitable to say that a real thing is produced in the human race without a real thing to produce it from. Where did you get

your organ from? But the real universe keeps enforcing justice, enlarging science, and expanding art. The reason is, the Infinite Mind is getting organized here and is making its spokesmen and spokeswomen speak with louder tongues.

We then together bow — all religions, knowingly or unknowingly, bow — before an Infinite Power which produces the beauty and glory of things. This is the universal element, common to all religions; the everlasting foundation on which all religions rest.

We must now consider, in the second place, the connection of the universal with the special, and the true relation of species to each other. You may say, if you please, that the special is the universal working under conditions, under the limitations of time, place, and circumstance. To bring the Infinite completely into the consciousness of the dwellers in time appears to be the master difficulty of the universe. When you think of an infinite power which throws its streams of life and force into you, it is a wonder that things do not go up into heaven at once; but when you carefully investigate the intense conservatism of nature, which is necessary to her endurance, then, on the other hand, the surprise is that any progress should be made at all. When you think how absolutely essential it is to birth that the life of the child should come from the parent, it is hard to see how new things get into this world at all. Now, here is exactly the difficulty of science. When you come to special organisms, the Evolutionist is met by this demand: Show us the evolution of a single species. Those who have studied species know the intense permanence of them: how, after millions of years, the likeness is still undimmed. Now, it so happens that in religion you can put your finger upon the birth of species, and show exactly how the progress started, and get some glimpse at its laws. The Evolutionist tells you that you have to suppose, in the first place, an exceptionally favored locality; secondly, an exceptionally receptive organism; and then there will be a possibility of a movement upward; and therefore you have to look to your exceptional locality and organisms, and then you get the phenomena of religious progress, or the origin of species in religion.

When Sextus Tarquin got possession of the town of Gabii he sent a secret messenger to the old crafty statesman, his father, and said, "I have got the confidence of the people: what am I to do next?" His father did not answer a word, but took the messenger into his garden, and took his cane with him, and came to a beautiful poppy bed. He took his stick and snipped off the heads of the tallest poppies; the messenger carried back word of this action to Sextus Tar-

quin, who understood his father's meaning to be that he was to cut off all the progressive and most powerful minds in the town. He did so, and where was Gabii? And so when Protestantism swept through Europe, and Spain, being the strong tower of Catholicism, cut off the tallest poppies in its domain, what became of the Reformation there? So you can easily kill out your rising faculty, your new thought, your forming species. A thousand times a new thought or movement has thus been killed. You perceive, then, the necessity of careful investigation of places where the thoughts had a chance.

Now let us look at Judaism. You will see that for one phenomenon it had a race of prophets, and a belief in the living Spirit which comes over and into men as inspiration. Now, if the Jewish people had cut off all those prophetic heads, where would Jewish progress have been? Does not this seem to show a little the necessity, as a condition of progress, of able minds, touched with a high idea, before other minds can grasp it? Cut off Phillips, Parker, May, and Garrison from the anti-slavery movement, — cut off its great men as fast as the crop comes up, and where is the republic of to-day? This, then, is the divine place for exceptional minds; and of course the higher the minds the more complete the manifestation of their uplifting power. Now, a friend of mine says that the universal in each religion is its sole and essential great truth, and that it shares this with all others; and that the specialty in the religions is the necessary antagonistic part of the religions. Very well. If each specialty is necessarily antagonistic to all other specialties, all special claims are false, or all but one are false, because you cannot have two necessarily antagonistic truths. But what are the facts in regard to our special religions? It happens to be a fact that five hundred years before the Christian era a beautiful mind rose up in India and vowed before the universe that he would try to make an end of evil and pain and sorrow and wrong; and the fire that was in his heart smote millions of hearts, and they said, Let us bring pain and wrong to an end by means of justice and truth and love to all. That is a fact; that is to say, the wonderful influence of one man must have had power to set the human heart longing and working and aspiring: and Buddhism came. It is also a fact that right into the midst of wild Arabia there came one man who lifted up a nation of Bedouin chiefs into a great, new faith, and every man was exalted by the contact and lifted up by the personal magnetism that belonged to Mahomet. Now, are these two facts necessarily antagonistic? Of course, if Mahomet and Buddha were each to insist that he was the *only* teacher, there would be

antagonism at once. But if each lovingly acknowledges the mission of the other, to people and times wide asunder, where is the antagonism? Truly seen, on the contrary, they illustrate each other. Each helps to make the amazing personal influence of the other no longer seem fabulous, but credible and possible.

Turning to our own religion, we see the same great truth illustrated. We must consider the whole Egyptian, Jewish, Persian, Greek, and Roman inspiration as one vast stream of religious influence, of which our complex Christianity is the continuation. It is the largest stream because more streams run into it and its sources are found over larger areas of humanity. When I look on all those majestic rivers flowing into it, I should say we have got in Christianity a Mississippi of a religion. After that Jewish people had been guided to truth and beauty, for hundreds of years, and other great elements of religion had mingled with Judaism, then comes the flower of the Jewish religion, the Prophet of Nazareth, and says this belongs to the world, — not only to a handful of people in Palestine, but to all people everywhere. And so the beauty of Jesus is not that he is jealous of Buddha, jealous of a man who tried to bring up the Hindoo to love his neighbor! — we have not so learned Christ, — but that he yearns to do for the West what Buddha longed to do for the East: namely, to make an end of misery, pain, and wrong, and to bring in the kingdom of heaven; and the glory of Jesus is that his personality had an influence so deep, persuasive, and penetrating that to-day his life-blood flows in millions of Christian breasts. We say, therefore, if your special claim is made in any narrow and exclusive way, then some other special claim comes immediately into conflict with it. But if my special claim shakes hands with your special claim, — if Jesus clasps hands with Buddha, and says, “Brother, the grace of God comes to us both, anointing us for our tasks,” — then the special claims no longer antagonize, but fraternize and help.

And we find, I think, if we look a little further, that in the first place this view emphasizes the universal claim of all religions to the living God and the living truth; and, in the second place, that it maps out to each section of the world its special duty. Now, it would be an odd thing, in the city of Boston, if Mr. A, B, C, and D, down to X, Y, and Z, had no special tasks, but each should try to do the other's work: they would never get anything done at all. I say, therefore, it is not my business to pick out the faults in Buddhism and show them to the world; nor is it in my power to bring out all its excellences. But with perfect good-will I say to the Buddhist, “You are

the possessor of your own inspiration ; it is your business to manifest its glory, and we will lovingly and thankfully accept the blessing." It is not, my Christian friend, your business and mine to be everybody else but ourselves, — to be a perfect mush of religions. We have our historic line of inspiration, and that marks our post of duty. We are to guard, clarify, and develop our own religion, not to stand sympathetic towards all other faiths and antagonistic to the one faith that has reared us and made us what we are. For this reason one of our free religious tendencies needs watching. Some of us, while they do not feel at all that it is their business to criticise the Buddhist, yet feel a terrible duty upon them to show where the Christians or Hebrews are in error ; they feel a divine commission to show how full of sectarianism the church next door is. Well, that is a right tendency, but it must not be exclusive and negative merely. It is perfectly proper for the student of Shakespeare to get together in one work all the poor passages in Shakespeare and say, "That is in Shakespeare." It is not a very gracious task, but it is a necessary kind of work. But if a man stopped his criticism of Shakespeare there, and didn't give Hamlet and Othello a chance, what would you say of his criticism? So it is your duty and mine to find out the errors and shortcomings of our own religious system. It is a part and parcel of our duty to the world, as the legatees of this vast inheritance, to clear up all the swamps in the estate and fill up the pit-falls and burn the rubbish. But this work may be done sympathetically and affirmatively. And to my friends who criticise Hebrew literature I wish to say one word. You heard, twenty years ago, in criticism of the Genesis story of Eden, that God repented and walked in the garden in the cool of the day. That was pronounced absurd. The poetry of it was not seen ; the spiritual meaning of a legend or myth was not investigated ; it was only judged as if it were a literal narrative of outward facts. Criticism of the Bible was in the same tone in which Thomas Paine criticised it in the prison of La Force, — "I haven't a Bible by me, but it doesn't make any difference ; I can do very well without one!" Of course it was to get at the surface merely, and anybody could do that. Now the sympathetic scholar takes those passages thus criticised and finds exactly the opposite objection, — too much meaning for their alleged time and place of authorship. He says these very passages — the story of Paradise for example — are altogether ahead of the ideas of the primeval Jewish people, who began away down in very low conditions of intelligence. Can you suppose them not to have had image worship, when Rachel sits on the little gods of her

father and he cannot discover them, and is in a terrible way because his divinities are gone? In such passages as that you will see that the Jewish religion began very low. Now, sympathetic criticism goes farther than that, and says that is the glory of it; the glory of humanity is not that man began perfect with Adam, but that he began down there in a monad, has already grown upward from that to his present stature, and means to keep on growing; and the glory of the Jewish religion is that it began low down in the rude worship of nature, and at last arose to the vision of the divine splendor which shone on the face of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. It is a glory of growth, and not a perfection to start with in one little spot.

So, in the second place, your critic, as a Christian, has to know the glories of his religion. We are the guardians of a splendid inspiration which has come down to us; and if we were to let it go, the Buddhists over yonder would come over to us in America and say, "Where are those neglected books?" just as the Buddhist missionary went from China to find in India that the faith was dead and no longer Buddha's name held in reverence, but in its place degeneracy and corruption. And so it is your business and mine to take this religion of ours and clear it of its imperfections, and to take all the excellences of it that we know, or ought to know, and bear them in our heart of hearts, — to reproduce the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love and tender sympathy, inside ourselves; and then all the disputes as to external things will be of little moment.

And so, true friends, the issue thus imperfectly stated may be put, with your permission, in a word that I used here in Boston one year ago to a little company. Free Religion does not mean tender and sympathetic relations with all religions under heaven except Christianity. It does not mean a glorious insight into Buddha's character, and a caricature of the character of Jesus. It does not mean sympathy with Zoroaster and alienation from Moses or Isaiah. It does not mean the eye of an artist for the beautiful lineaments of Egyptian or Roman hero or saint, and the eye of a sign-painter for Paul or John. It does not mean our going from our own house of faith to inhabit the houses of our neighbors. You don't know it perhaps, but you would catch cold in the Chinese Pagoda, and the dance of the dervishes would make you sick, and the incense floating in Buddha's temples would put you to sleep. Nor does Free Religion mean pulling down, fraternally of course, all other religious houses under heaven and inaugurating a universal camping out while a new building shall be built. I suppose it must be done fraternally. I will pull down the house of the

Buddhist and he shall pull down mine, fraternally. I believe I can imagine a song of triumph coming from the person who is pulled down. Now, millions of tender hearts, whom we have in charge, would die under the process. It is very laborious to camp out when you don't know how to do it, as the new soldier discovers. Well, what then is the task? It is to have sympathizing relations with every effort toward the Infinite under heaven; to rejoice to know that God loves his Chinese or Hindoos just as much as he does his Hebrews or Americans. It is to be sure that we never patronize the Spirit-born; it is to be sure that we never constitute ourselves examining chaplains to the Holy Ghost; it is to stand firmly on our own feet where we are, and not only accord the same right, but to insist and beg that our Buddhist and other friends stop where they belong. They are noble where they are, but how exotic they would be if they tried to plant themselves in our places. This difference of costumes is a fixed fact. Don't let us see them in a coat, which we buy at Parker's, on Washington Street, looking just like everybody else. You would know them in their own costume and in their native religion and poetry, uttered amid Eastern circumstances and in their own sunny climes. And so we are shut up to this, if we want to do practical work, and don't want to be living in a wretched round of fancy or doubt. We have got to stand just where God put us; we have got to cleanse the house of God in our midst and build a temple to his name here and now: gladly giving forth all of good we have inherited from our fathers in the spirit; and gladly receiving from others the message they too have received from heaven; and so hastening the time when the great religions of the world shall no longer be so many hostile camps; but shall at last know each other to be, not enemies, but sworn brothers, standing side by side, giving and receiving the good word which the Father is forever speaking to his earthly children.

The PRESIDENT. We cordially say "Amen" to Mr. CALTHROP. I was a little afraid he was going to criticise too severely the custom of the Christian churches, but we are more than content and satisfied. I have now the pleasure to introduce to you Mr. F. E. ABBOT, of "The Index," who will speak in the defense of the Anti-Christian attitude of believers in religious freedom.

ADDRESS OF FRANCIS E. ABBOT.

It falls to me in this discussion to take the least attractive and the least lovely attitude of the three positions to be represented on this platform to-day. I am conscious of speaking, therefore, at a certain disadvantage, because I know that to almost all of you, perhaps to all, the word "Christian" is associated with the holiest and tenderest feelings of your own childhood; with your mother's love; with the best thoughts and the best sentiments that have surrounded you from your infancy up. It is no gracious task to intimate anything that should withdraw from that word any of these associations. It is sufficiently disturbing to see that one stands aloof from the word, regarding it without a positive allegiance. It is still more disturbing, and must be, for one to say that that word stands for something which must be religiously opposed. I repeat that, when it falls to me to say this and to represent this attitude before you, I am conscious of doing so at a great disadvantage; for I can hardly count upon the sympathies of many, if of any, in your number. Nevertheless, I must speak the word that comes to me.

The first question to be settled, when we are discussing the relative truth of the Christian, the Extra-Christian, and the Anti-Christian positions, must be, What is Christianity? And who shall define it? Now is it fair, is it just, to go to the heretics of Christendom to get the true definition of Christianity? Is that the method of scholarly criticism, to go to those who are not recognized by the great bulk of Christians as representing the Christian faith, and take your definition of Christianity from them? Does that seem to you the exact, the fair, and the just course to pursue? Would you then go to the Liberal Christians, — to the Unitarians, to the Universalists, to any other of the small handful of so-called Liberal Christians, — and take from them your definition; or would you go to the hundreds of millions of Orthodox Christians, whose substantial faith, notwithstanding great diversities of church polity and minor points, is yet essentially one and the same thing everywhere? Who, if not the Christian Church, as a whole, has the right to define Christianity? I must deny absolutely the right of any other party in this broad world to define Christianity than the Christian Church itself, by its universal *consensus*. That seems to me just; that seems to me fair; that seems to me to be the only course that a scholar or even an honest man can pursue, at least if he sees the real nature of the case. That is why I go to the Christian Church — the great Orthodox Christian Church, includ-

ing the Greek, the Roman, and the Evangelical Protestant — for my definition of Christianity, rather than to the rationalistic or so-called liberal bodies of Christendom. I believe that this first question must be answered, then, in this manner: it is the Christian Church itself that must give the definition of Christianity, and not the avowed heretics and the reputed infidels of the Christian communion.

What, then, is the answer that this great Christian Church (by which I mean all the institutions which have grown up out of the Christian religion) gives to our question, What is Christianity? I will not tire you with going through the list of doctrines; you know them all. I will simply sum them up as Christian Orthodoxy itself, — the fundamental doctrines of the fall of man, the depravity of man, the wrath of God, and salvation by faith in Christ alone: doctrines in which three hundred millions of Christians agree as essential and fundamental to their faith, — doctrines which only a small handful of two or three hundred thousand exiles believe to be unessential. The characteristic principle of AUTHORITY, now represented by the church, now by the Pope, now by the Bible, determines what Christianity is, leaving us no option to evolve a new or fantastical definition out of our own modernized ideas of what is true and right. In all its forms the Orthodox Christian Church claims to hold still the same great fundamental doctrines on divine authority, and defines Christianity substantially in the same way. Christianity, it says, is the religion of Christians; and Christians are those who depend for their salvation on faith in these chief doctrines of the authoritative Christian gospel. This is the answer given to our question by the church itself: justice and common fairness, as well as scholarly criticism, demand that this answer be accepted as the definition of Christianity.

It is not true, then, when I am criticised for having or framing a narrow definition, that I have any definition at all of my own. I make none. I have none. I simply find, and accept what I find. It would be an impertinence to come before you, or before the world, and say, "This is my definition, and I call upon you to accept it." I have no definition of my own. I say, "There is the church's definition of Christianity; there is the definition which Christianity has written out on the great page of history for itself: take that." By that must the radical's position be determined, if I am sound in my view; by that definition of Christianity must we settle the question, Which is the true position to hold, the Christian, the Extra-Christian, or the Anti-Christian?

It would be a very long and tiresome task, were I to go through the

whole history of Christendom, and trace out for you what has been the working of Christianity, thus defined, in the world, — what it has done for man and what it has left undone ; what good and what evil it has accomplished in the long course of the ages. Enough for me to say that in fairness we must credit to the Christian Church, and to Christianity thus defined, both the good and the evil they have done. We must recognize in Christianity all the conserving and evolving powers it has called into play ; we must recognize the great historic place that the church filled in the middle ages, and still fills to a large extent to-day ; we must accept with generous approval and hearty applause all the noble words that have dropped from the lips of Christian teachers, all the divine and beautiful deeds that have been done by Christian believers, all the sweet and beneficial influences that have proceeded from Christian souls ; yes, amen to all that ! I do accept them, and I am grateful for them. Far be it from me to disparage a single one of those noble and beautiful things.

No ! But I insist also upon the other side ; I insist that you must also credit to the Christian Church the long story of persecutions, — the black and hateful record of crimes which have been done in the name of the church, in the name of Christ, in the name of Christianity. These things have happened, not by accident, but through intense devotion to the claims of Christianity upon the obedience of humanity. The Inquisitors were not bad men ; they were simply Christians of fiery earnestness, and they carried their devotion to Christianity so far as to over-ride and violate the inalienable rights of the human soul. Charge up, then, to Christianity all the doings of all its followers, and from this large survey you will derive the only truthful and just estimate of its real character. Institutions express the nature of ideas, — the innermost nature of ideas. What institutions do in the world is what the ideas tend to do. What the ideas contain in themselves are germs of action ; and I insist that this is the only fair, just, and proper way to consider the history of Christianity. Thus, therefore, would I treat it.

Is it not true, then, looking at the working of the Christian Church in this light, that from its birth down to last Tuesday the influence of Christianity has been thrown against freedom of thought ? Has it not been everywhere and always the opponent of the scientific spirit, the free spirit, the secular spirit that would disincline men to accept Christian doctrine, — the spirit which would sow distrust of the great fundamental ideas of the fall of man, the depravity of man, the wrath of God, the atonement and salvation by Christ alone ? These ideas

have been the very centre of the Christian faith. Whatever called them in question must be put down and crushed ; and so it has been from the very start. Freedom, at every point of history, has been brought in direct collision with this great Christian system,— a system of faith which has been the great enemy of light, and progress, and modern thought. I cannot go into any lengthened argument or bring up illustrations. I must leave my argument in the brief, sketched as best I can sketch it in charcoal only ; for the time is short and there is much to say. But I must take this position, that whoever faithfully studies the history of the Christian Church, crediting it with both the good and the evil it has done, as recorded on the historic page, must come to this conclusion : that the net influence of Christianity in history has been to repress, and not develop, the freedom of the human mind.

This ground may seem dogmatic and unsupported by truth, but I must take it, and go on. To say that Christianity is essentially *an organized slavery of the human mind*, may seem dogmatic, may seem harsh, may seem bitter, may seem malevolent ; but it is the honest and earnest conviction of at least one man in this audience, and I can speak for no more. It is my deep conviction that the innermost spirit of Christianity is hostile to the natural evolution, the free development, of human thought ; and for that I must unflinchingly stand. Come what may, stand what may, fall what may, freedom of thought is infinitely precious to mankind. The principle of freedom is not negative, but positive. It means to be untrammelled and unhampered by any human authority, by any church, or by any state, in the search for truth ; and that, I say, is the one principle for which we are called upon in this age to stand. It is this positive principle, it is this love of freedom, that has made me Anti-Christian : that, and that alone. I have no personal quarrel with the Christian Church ; I will bring forward no private grievances, for I have none ; I have entered my own path, and abide by its results ; I have no reasons why I should be angry with the church, and tear it down or hurt it. There is nothing personal about my position. The simple fact is that my position is not a voluntary one. It is not one I have chosen for myself, but I find in this age, from which I draw my mental as well as my physical nutriment, a great stream of tendency, a great onward movement of the human race towards larger liberty, and this great wave has caught me up and thrown me where I am. It is no will of mine, no choice of mine ; no ! But I see whence I came and whither I am going ; I see that I have been borne out of the very

heart of the Christian Church to the heart of the Anti-Christian camp, if you choose to call it so. I simply accept my position, not made by me for myself, but made for me by the times and by my own simple wish to be true to the duty of the hour. This, then, I want to emphasize: the Anti-Christian position is not the main one—it is the incidental one. Anti-Christianity is anti-slavery, and anti-slavery is pro-freedom. That is where I am. I am for freedom; and whatever fetters or limits freedom, that I am against, call it what you please. I say, therefore, that the Anti-Christian position is simply the position of one who is burning in his very heart's core with the passion for freedom, and sends out his thought everywhere in all directions, to find out and bring back what truth it may. The positive side is the free side. "Pro-Freedom" is the word, not Anti-Christianity; that follows of course, if Christianity is opposed to freedom. Let me emphasize this thought that the Anti-Christian attitude is simply incidental, while the great positive thing is a burning devotion to the spirit and the principle of spiritual liberty. That is the great human truth for which I stand here to-day; and I care nothing whether it be Anti-Christian or Christian, provided I can have that truth and that principle preserved.

If I am correct, then, in holding that Christianity itself is a denial of freedom, that this denial is in its very warp and weft, and cannot be got out except by destroying the whole fabric, then I say that all freedom-lovers, whether they know it or not, are Anti-Christians. I hold that every Protestant is more or less an Anti-Christian. I hold that every Liberal Christian is still more an Anti-Christian; I hold that the American Unitarian Association is in its drift an Anti-Christian association; I hold that the Free Religious Association is an Anti-Christian association; I hold that any and every body of men who try to live by freedom are, just in that proportion, Anti-Christian. The Catholic Church, — which none would admit in this audience, I suppose, to be other than hostile to liberty, — we know its history; we know its intense activity to perpetuate slavery of the mind, — I suppose there is none here, except it be perhaps a stray Catholic, who will deny that the Catholic Church is opposed to freedom. Very well, then; so far as the Protestant agrees with the Catholic, so far he is against freedom. Does not the Evangelical Protestant plant himself on the same substantial theology? Does he not profess also to believe the fall of man, the depravity of man, the wrath of God, and salvation by Christ alone? Is not that in both their creeds? But the fall of man — that is denied by Darwinism. The total depravity of man — that is denied

by experience. The wrath of God — that is denied by justice. The atonement and salvation by Christ alone — that is denied by reason and common sense. The man outside of Christianity denies all this, and thinks freely. The old dogmas can only be held to men's attention by the chains of ecclesiastical authority and the greater chains of ignorance. That is the reason why the Catholic Church cannot educate the people, and why it keeps the Scriptures in an unknown tongue, and concentrates learning and intelligence in its own clergy. So is it everywhere ; wherever Christianity has prevailed, intellectual darkness has brooded over the land. That is the reason, friends, why the Protestant Evangelical body comes forward, every now and then, with a new case of heresy, like that of Prof. Swing, of Chicago ; a man whom it would be an honor to any denomination to hold within its communion, and yet a man who has been hounded down by persecution and obliged to withdraw from his own denomination because he dared to think. This is not because his persecutors have been unfair and unjust, but because they have been true to the fundamental principles of their religion. I do not blame Prof. Patton or the other prosecutors of that case. I charge the evil of the trial, and the misery it brings, and the public scandal it causes, all to the demands of the ideas themselves, — to the system which those men were enlisted to defend. I have no quarrel with men ; it is ideas that interest me. I can throw open my arms as wide as you please, and take in every honest man ; but I take him as a man, and not as a sectarian. I cannot take in a Catholic as a Catholic ; but as a man I would do the utmost in my power for him. So I charge to the Christian system every such case as Swing's.

Last Tuesday, I listened all day to a similar case in our own city, tried before a tribunal which in numbers is not great, but in character and intelligence is very respectable, — the Unitarian Association, I mean. I was drawn there by an intense desire to witness the last battle between Christianity and freedom. I went to listen to the debate on the *Year Book* and the exclusion therefrom of our friend Mr. Potter's name ; and through all the debate I saw the same issues staring me in the face, and I wondered how they could fail to be equally plain to every other there. I saw those good men (good on both sides ; conservatives good, radicals good ; both earnest, both honest in the main, and filled with a good spirit), I saw them battling and striving to get over an historic necessity which was too strong for all their efforts. They were all pledged at the outset to be Christians ; they were all pledged, radicals and conservatives alike, not to call into ques-

tion that name, "Christian-Unitarian;" and the radicals among them were trying to discover how it was possible to retain that as the name of their body, and yet to admit into it one who will not call himself a Christian. Well, friends, it is no discredit to any man to say he cannot accomplish a contradiction; there is no reason to blame the Unitarian Association that they could not see their way clear to retain the fellowship of a man whom they all seemed to love and respect, without falling into a contradiction. They had to choose between one of two things: they must either take in a Non-Christian and thereby sacrifice the Christian ground they profess to occupy, or else they must exclude their friend for the sake of remaining all Christian. How could they help themselves? It was not their fault: it was the fault of Christianity, if fault it be; it was the fatality of the case that decided that question. In the most liberal branches of the Christian Church, even those that profess unbounded fealty to freedom, you see the same historic necessity, which is at bottom a logical necessity, working and compelling them to exclude members whom they love and honor from their common fellowship. Certainly they themselves perceive this same truth in the case of Evangelical and Catholic Churches. This seems to me to be the hard fact which we cannot get over: that Christianity always includes, with all the beautiful things which it has said and done, this suppression of individual liberty.

A few weeks ago we were all of us horror-struck, aghast, at the news of the great calamity in Mill River,—a terrible flood bursting from the Williamsburg Reservoir and carrying destruction to three or four villages. In reading the accounts of it, I saw a statement that through the lower side of that great dam had been noticed for some time little rills of water spouting out, which were supposed by the people to be springs that had made their way through the embankment, and not to have come from the waters behind. They came really from the vast mass of water behind the dam. If they could have spoken, they would have said, "We do not want to break down this dam; we do not want to remove this precious barrier, which protects these simple and unpretending villages; we only want to get out of the reservoir; we only want to be outside; we do not want to hurt the barrier; we don't want to do any harm; we only want to get through for ourselves; we only want to escape from the confinement." Well, did they not, in coming out, carry out part of the dam, atom by atom, down the valley? Did they not prepare the way, at last, for that ruthless rush of the flood which swept away the barrier and brought ruin and destruction so far and wide? It is, it seems to me, just so with every man

among you who says he is Extra-Christian, but not Anti-Christian. In making your own way out, you weaken the great barrier which I, instead of wanting to break down, pray to remain; for it protects the world from the tremendous floods of superstition behind. Let that barrier stand; I would not break it down. The water is there behind it; but I would open the flood-gates and draw off the water, and let the river take its natural course. That is the way I would go to work. I would not try to tear down the barriers between the churches or the sects. I would try to enlighten the masses in the Christian Church by the method of instruction, give larger truths and ideas, and thus draw off this confined terrific power from behind the barriers; then we can remove the barriers at our leisure and plant our grain in the water's bed. So, I say, every little rill which is bursting forth from the Christian Church is Anti-Christian. Every such rill is carrying away that which makes the dam, and is helping to bring on the impending catastrophe that must follow.

It has been said in the New Testament that Jesus declared to his disciple Peter, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That is true; the gates of hell will never prevail against any religion whatever. By the great surging attacks of licentiousness, of vice, of disregard for all social and moral law, never will Christianity be removed from the world or the walls of the Christian Church be broken down. No. There is no power in vice, no power in error, to break down or even to shake a genuine truth, but there is a power in the truth itself to supersede all limitations of itself with a more perfect faith. The church of Christ, though built upon a rock, is washed by the great waves of the broad ocean of truth; and those waves are grinding, grinding, grinding away at the solid rock on which the church rests, until by and by the waters will flow over the place where it stood. That I believe. The religion of the future will come from the ruins of all those special religions, which are mutually antagonistic, and whose "special claims" never can "shake hands." That is a fond dream; they never can shake hands while *yes* is *yes* and *no* is *no*. These religions must all give place to a broader one, a cosmopolitan one, one which must be boundless in its nature, one that is not identical with any one of the special religions, but is greater than them all. All these special faiths must give way to that at last, and then for the first time will the spirit of Anti-Christianity, which is simply the spirit of pro-freedom, become universal throughout the world. That is the coming of the unbroken human fellowship, and the unfet-

tered union of soul with soul in the love of truth and the love of man, and the common upsurging of the human heart to that Power which we so little know, but from which we cannot withhold the allegiance of our inmost being.

The PRESIDENT. Before continuing the discussion, the Secretary will read a letter he has received from Frederick Douglass.

The SECRETARY. We hoped, Mr. Chairman and friends, that we should have Frederick Douglass here with us to speak to-day. Some of us who were at Florence a few weeks ago, at the dedication of the new free hall in that town, found out for the first time that Frederick Douglass, who was there, was in very full sympathy with the Free Religious platform, and that he had something interesting and valuable to say with regard to the influence of the old religious faith with which he had become acquainted in the South when he was a slave; and he said then, in response to an invitation given to him on the spot, that he hoped he might be present here to-day. The Committee afterwards sent him a written invitation urging him to come, but he was obliged to send this reply, I am sorry to say, in the negative.*

The PRESIDENT. The discussion will now be continued by Col. HIGGINSON, who hardly needs any introduction to this audience.

ADDRESS OF COL. T. W. HIGGINSON.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, — Mr. Abbot's point in regard to the recent disaster in Western Massachusetts brought to my mind another incident of that casualty which comes home more to my sympathy perhaps than any other, and which suggests the thoughts that were vaguely in many minds, I dare say, during this discussion. It is a strange thing that in that fearful flood, when granite dams proved nothing, brick walls crumbled, bridges were swept away, roofs of houses afforded no solid raft to carry anybody in safety down the stream, there was yet one little craft that rode the storm from its launching to its landing, and carried its little captain quite safe. That particular craft was a cradle, the captain of it was a baby, the first mate was a baby, and the crew was the same baby. The baby had

* See Appendix for the letter.

known that cradle as a place of absolute safety on land hitherto: in its first experiment on the water the cradle was a place of safety still. The baby floated down in the cradle, laughed and crowed, or cried and bewailed, as it went along that swift voyage; nobody knows. At any rate, it landed at last, and was taken back to its mother's arms unhurt, that little child: and now the only question, I suppose, remaining in that family, suggested by that particular transit, is, What are we going to do with that cradle? On this point, I notice that our two friends who have spoken have diametrically opposite opinions. "What to do with the cradle?" Mr. Calthrop would say, "Why, the baby must stay in it of course; if he outgrows it, have another one built on the same pattern." "What should we do with it?" says our friend Abbot, "Smash it, for fear somebody else should be taken and stowed away within its uncomfortable limitations."

I stand here, ladies and gentlemen, in the most humble position as the defender of that cradle. A cradle is a convenient and comfortable appendage to a family,—in fact, I don't know what most of us would have done without one; but there comes a time when a man outgrows his cradle, and the decision of his life has to be made. There is the first question, What shall he do with himself? shall he stay there? There is the second question, What shall he do with it after he goes out of it? And I find myself on the decision of each of these questions in that most painful position, quite opposed to two of my best friends, and only hoping that in the brief statement of my own position I may emulate in some small degree the candor and the courtesy which marked their statement of theirs. It is the pride of the Free Religious Association that its members differ from one another. It is also their pride that they are able to state that difference very frankly without going to pieces. We may be most of us born and bred with a little taste of fighting, but, at least, we keep it from people outside. Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, describes a Scotch shepherd who was very proud of his dog, and he said to some one who was stroking the animal, "Oh, but there's a great deal of *sairiousness* in life for that beast,—he just never gets enough of fighting." There is a terrible amount of seriousness in our lives as members of the Free Religious Association, but at least we get enough of fighting outside to satisfy us, and nothing can exceed the peace and harmony which prevail at our meetings. That metaphor of the cradle may not do complete and full justice to the position of my friends, or to my position: metaphors never do, and therefore metaphors are never arguments, and it is dangerous even to use them;

but I think it will not be very hard to show briefly my reasons for dissenting from each of those two arguments so persuasive and so sincere.

First, as to that matter of the Christian name. I traveled with Mr. Calthrop through all the wide range of his argument, — wide indeed, for it began with monads and came down to that highly collective unit, the Free Religious Association, — and yet I did not hear, from beginning to end, a single word that precisely touched my own position. I heard him say or imply in regard to those who are born in a Christian land, bred in Christian civilization, trained by Christian parents, that it is their duty to call themselves Christians, to stand by the flag in a manner. He did not tell us where that obligation ended, or where the obligation of truth to one's self begins. There are men in this audience who are atheists, have been so from childhood, never asked for any better faith, never found any better tonic anywhere else, materialists through and through, resenting the invitation to believe in God as an insult. Is it their duty, in deference to the land that bore them, to forswear every consideration of their souls and take the Christian name? Or our friend the Rabbi, here on the platform, born in Vienna, trained at the universities of Heidelberg and Göttingen, Christian institutions throughout, is he to call himself a Christian, from deference to local training, when all the private traditions of his family and his personal convictions go the other way? Or take a step further: one like myself, born in the very mildest and most vanishing type of Unitarianism, — and how vanishing a type of dogmatism that is those who have observed any of the microscopical investigations going on over our friend Potter can judge, — what is one like myself, bred from childhood to consult his own reason and his own conscience, to seek for light everywhere, and to follow the best light he could find, — what has he to do about the Christian name? How can he call himself a Christian when, from the best investigation he is enabled to make, he is not strictly a Christian? That is the trouble. You know you can call yourself a great many things if you are willing to tell a lie, but if you are a fellow-countryman of George Washington and cannot tell a lie, what are you going to do about it? No matter what others may say or think, if to you Jesus Christ is simply and absolutely a man, how can you, without man-worship, call yourself technically a Christian?

Thus far I am with my friend Abbot: I do not make my position; it was made for me before I knew anything about it; it was made for me before I went to Sunday school; it was made for me before I

studied theology. One day, at the theological school in Divinity Hall, at Cambridge, I met my fellow-student Frothingham. He was then a comparatively unsuspected, seemingly innocent, virtuous, deserving young man, — not one of the million crimes that have since been discovered to coil their fiery serpents around his head had then come to light, — he was as good as any of us, and I said to him, I remember, “If we believe that Jesus Christ was a man, and we seem to believe that, how can we call ourselves Christians, thus lettering ourselves, as it were, with the name of a man?” And he said, with that total depravity which even then doubtless secretly characterized him, “I am not at all anxious to call myself a Christian; I am perfectly willing to be known to the world as a Frothinghamian” — and I think he has held to that position pretty faithfully ever since.

It is not a new position to many of us, I fancy, to find, on coming to maturity, that even without taking into account all those vast schemes of Christian doctrine to which Mr. Abbot has referred, when we merely reduce Christianity to its simplest terms in doctrine, — the recognition of Jesus Christ as an infallible authority different in kind from all other authorities, — we not only are not Christians, but never have been Christians. Such, at any rate, being my simple experience, my friend Mr. Calthrop’s suppositions did not reach me.

Then, again, we are constantly told, “Even if you are not a Christian in this intellectual sense, you may be still a Christian in the recognition of an authority higher in degree than any other, not necessarily different in kind. Take the best authority you can find anywhere, get the best, — as they say in the war of the dictionaries — label yourself by that name; men do it in other spheres of life, why not in religion?” I know they do it in other spheres of life, and how much good have they got by it? Men have called themselves Aristotelians. The consequence was that for years and years the advanced minds of Europe were perplexing themselves to find out, not what was true, but what Aristotle said in “the book,” as his writings were called, — nothing more than that. Men have called themselves Newtonians; and in that charming autobiography of Mrs. Somerville, you will find her saying that in her youth mathematical science was at a low ebb in England, because reverence for Newton had prevented English mathematicians from employing the “Calculus,” through which the French had accomplished so much. Men have called themselves Shakspearians, and our greatest critic has pointed out that the English dramatists have Shakspearized ever since his day. Men have called themselves Swedenborgians, and the finest mind

among American Swedenborgians, Henry James, called attention twenty years ago to the fact that there were already Swedenborgians who were making the infallibility of Swedenborg an article of faith. Danger rests upon this subservience even to the noblest authority; safety begins with each rising generation of young men when some one appeals to them, as Emerson appealed to all of us years ago and said, "Be yourselves." Then, after we have got that into us, if we still recognize the authority at all, it is in that exceedingly comfortable way in which Henry Ward Beecher still claims to be a good Calvinist; for he says, "I faithfully believe what John Calvin believed, or what he would have believed if he had lived in these times and believed as I think he ought to."

There is a danger on the spiritual side, on the moral side, on all sides, in carrying your recognitions of any human authority so far as to call yourself by its name. It is often easier to decide whether a thought is true or not than whether it is Christian or not. It is often not so hard to settle whether your moral code is right or wrong as whether it is Christian, or otherwise. The whole history of the temperance movement, of the anti-slavery movement and the woman suffrage movement proves it so. A woman said to me not long ago, a woman of an absolute purity that one reveres, but narrowed by her theology,—she said to me, speaking of banishing wine from her table, round which her young sons were growing up, "I should feel that I was insulting my Saviour if I excluded wine from my table." Thus perilous, thus formidable, is the result which follows from limiting one's moral and spiritual standard even to the loftiest standard. Take your own conscience as your guide, and you have something that can be educated through great examples. But anchor yourself in absolute subservience to any one example, even the greatest, and you may find yourself, at least if you are consistent, much as a gifted woman once told me it was with her in the Roman Catholic Church to which she had belonged and which she had left. She said she found herself revolving and revolving in a narrower circle every year, until it seemed to be getting about as big as a walnut, and she came out of it.

And then again, apart from these special dangers, how shall we take the Christian name who find every fiber of our souls yearning for contact with all of nobleness, all of beautiful tradition, all of superb mythology, that the world can yield? In this day of universal travel, of universal science, when the farthest parts of the earth are being ransacked for their literature and their my-

thology, how shall we call ourselves Christians and yet embrace, as we long to embrace, the sympathy of this grander brotherhood, the statements of this wider faith? How trivial seem our little Congregational and Presbyterian churches, even our Episcopal churches, before the historic grandeur of the Roman Catholic, that church which has had kings for confessors, and made nations for converts, carrying to all the world, in its way, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; making as its own standard that which has been believed "always, everywhere and by all," *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*. And yet when you once cast your eyes outside of Christian limits, what a child of yesterday the Roman Catholic Church seems! Why, how young it is, if you come to that, how small, how few converts, how trifling its range compared with this vast range of spiritual activity of the human race! I am not satisfied with Unitarianism. It is so much less in its compass and range than Orthodoxy. I am not satisfied with Orthodoxy. It is so trifling compared with Roman Catholicism. I am not satisfied with Roman Catholicism, which after all is simply the older branch of but one religion of the world. I long for something more than a cathedral above us, for a tradition more grand. I don't think we, any of us, in this age, ought to be satisfied with anything less than a theology to which the whole human race has contributed, and a liturgy to which the whole human race adds its prayers.

The human race is outgrowing our special and limited religions. You may take the robin's egg from the nest on yonder tree, and so near is the bird to being hatched, you may crack it with the edge of your nail and the bird is free. But all your power and all your patient fidelity and all the mucilage and sticking-plaster you can put on it will never get that birdling back into that little egg again. So complete is the sense of satisfaction, such is the feeling of freedom which comes from once finding yourself, not merely out of these little sectarian names, but out of the name of the larger and grander sect which is Christianity, that you will find when the egg is once broken, the bird is free forever. You had better let him use his wings, even if he comes to mischief in consequence.

And yet, on the other hand, is that bird to turn back and blame the egg, or that institution of egg, which somehow does in its own way hatch birds for good or for evil into being? Here again I must differ from my friend Abbot, — whom I love to agree with, because I always hope that by agreeing with him I may perhaps catch something of that courage and fidelity of conviction that leave him too much alone. He has recognized what it is needless for me to repeat. The sweetness,

the virtue, the love that still for multitudes around us are engraved in Christianity, he has recognized that. I recognize in return what he has said, that if the brightest pages of the past are written with the name of Christianity, so also are some of the darkest. I recognize that, but where I take issue with him is this. I think that his view of Christianity is too scholastic, too much of the closet and the office, too little of the world of practical life. It is true, as he says, that when we are interpreting the word "Christianity" for ourselves, we must interpret in view of all accuracy, all strictness of construction; but I cannot agree, as he says, that in interpreting what Christianity means for others, we are to insist on that same strictness. Let each man interpret for himself, and let us judge him according as he interprets it. God forbid that I should hold any man, because he calls himself Christian, to be Christian in any other sense of the word than that which he habitually recognizes. Words change. You cannot keep a word unaltered. It is the business of a man who lives among men to take words at their current valuation for current purposes. You must deal with Christianity for what it is to-day, not for what it was in the past.

I think it is a mistake to go about the world treating all our fellow creatures as if they were their ancestors who lived a great many centuries ago and behaved very differently. Let us take the facts as they are. Clergymen in Boston in old times had those who differed from them tied to a cart and whipped through the town. Am I to carry the natural animosity of those days in dealing with a modern clergyman who simply puts me into his buggy and drives me out over the Brighton Road behind his Morgan mare. Because clergymen in other days lighted the fires of the Inquisition, am I to keep up that good old honest "no popery" resentment to the man who offers me nothing more perilous than a lighted cigar? It was all very well for Miles Standish to go among the Indians of Massachusetts in his iron helmet and iron corslet, but am I called upon to make a visit in similar armor to the peaceful Indians of Martha's Vineyard, merely because their great-grandfather may have tried to scalp my great-grandfather? The principle of change rules human events. We cannot leave it out of sight. We cannot accept the kindness, the courtesy, the amenities of life that the civilized world gives us in these days, and yet return them with the old war-whoop and the tomahawk. It is impossible.

Theology is everywhere softened. In this week's "Independent," Dr. Taylor Lewis mourns that there is not a really evangelical pulpit

left. The old woman says in the story, "If you take away my total depravity, what else have I to depend upon?" That is the position of some of those good men, and so they are moaning over it at the rate of two columns a week in "The Independent." We are not dwelling in a world of theologians who act consistently up to their theories. Why, in those old Puritan times in Massachusetts, as one form of punishment or penalty for certain crimes, a certain offender was doomed to "go and talk with the elders," and yet barbarous and cruel punishments were forbidden in another clause; so they were very inconsistent. We are not sentenced to that. The only difficulty is to get the elders to talk with us; and that is very hard in the Free Religious Association, for I corresponded with half a dozen of them three years ago and could not get one to appear upon this platform. No, the times have changed, and Christianity, refined and softened, loosening its own barriers, still retaining them in theory but not in practice, cannot be met as before. Its persecution would nerve us, but its toleration disarms us.

Oh, but, my friend Abbot would say to me, "Remember the proposed 'Christian Amendment' to the United States Constitution." If ever anything has happened in America to indicate the truth of what I have been saying, it is the history of that Christian amendment up to this time; for if anything ever organized Liberal Leagues for us, if anything ever rolled in petitions to Congress and to State Legislatures, it was that little caucus of discontented theologians stranded somewhere out in Ohio. No doubt they found here and there in the denominations some to go along with them, but for one whom they found they sent a dozen another way. But there is another thing, one more final, one higher ground yet to be considered. I don't wish to fight against Christianity or the Christian Church, but only against their excesses and abuses. We cannot spare the Christian Church from the world yet, till it has done its mission and been discharged in the natural way. Spare the Christian Church — why, we cannot even spare the Roman Catholic Church. My friend Abbot was rather hard upon the elder branch just now, I thought, when he said that it had never been anything but an enemy to freedom. Sail down the beautiful Rhine, and you see on either side of you castle after castle, once the terror of every peaceful citizen, but now in ruins. Sail down that river with the remembrance of those iron times haunting your imagination, and you land at last at Cologne, and as you enter the door of that magnificent cathedral you find yourself in the only place that in the middle ages protected the freedom of mankind against those robber barons.

No matter if it in after times became a tyranny ; all organizations run that risk sooner or later ; no breadth saves them wholly. We may have a tyranny in this organization sometime or other, though it will not be till we get some other President. All these organizations are dangerous, — theological, scientific, no matter what. And yet remember, how at a much later time, when among our early American colonies there were but two in which freedom of religious thought was distinctly recognized from the outset, — the Quaker colony of Rhode Island, and the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland. And even at this time, looking at the vast work of the Roman Catholic Church, looking at the shoals of Irish emigrants pouring upon our shores, these young girls scattered one by one into every family, unprotected, unguided, each with nothing on earth between her and ruin except what the traditions of her church keep alive in her heart, who can say that he would, if he could do it by a single waving of his hand, extinguish even the Roman Catholic Church from the world?

And as we cannot say it of that, of course one cannot say it of the Christendom of which the Roman Catholic Church is but one sect. It is easy to see the faults of an old institution that has the sins of ages accumulated on its head. Don't let us forget that after all there are certain things for which the church has stood, and still stands, — for which, as yet, even that new science of to-day, which Mr. Abbot loves so much, has not yet stood, — the spiritual realities, the heart of man, the love, the patience, the meekness, the trust, so long cherished by Christians, not yet developed by the modern science that threatens it. We talk about the superiority and dignity of the scientific method. Was there ever an old school theologian who hated Arminianism with a more good, thorough-going, almost unquestioning, hatred than our dear Agassiz hated Darwinism? We talk about the quarrels of theologians, — why, the one natural history magazine of New England was filled, for months after months, with the quarrels of the scientific men in regard to the bones of a single animal, with a long name, which was dug up in Colorado ; and they carried it so far that the editor had to shut down on them at last, and let them print extra leaves at their own expense, and their angry controversy only died as their pockets grew empty. It is easy to see the great results that science is bringing us, but remember that religion, even the Christian type of religion itself, is giving us also a great deal. Science, secularism, give us "The North American" and "The New York Nation," — periodicals of great intellectual value, but whose maxim is not, as our friend Frothingham quoted, the Irishman's, "Wherever you see a head hit

it," but, "Wherever you see a heart hit it." It is, on the other hand, Christianity that still gives us newspapers like "The New York Independent" and "The Christian Union," that scatter by tens of thousands through the nation such a breadth and liberality of doctrine that "The Independent" was criticising "The Index" a while ago for stealing its thunder. Secular science gives us Harvard University, and no woman inside its doors. The only person on the Board of Overseers who wanted to have them there was the only doctor of divinity on the Board of Overseers, and there he is. [Pointing to Rev. James Freeman Clarke, who sat on the platform.] But Evangelical religion gave us Oberlin College and the Boston University, which know no distinction of sex in knowledge.

No, I cannot see as yet that science is so far displacing Christianity as to make Christianity legitimately a dead letter to the world. The time may come when equal intellect, with more of heart, equal thought, with more of tenderness, shall give us something before which the Christianity of to-day, or of all days, shall find itself but an incomplete thing, and shall withdraw itself so peacefully that it shall not need the word "anti" to dispel it.

And yet, for the reasons already given, I can see no consistent position for many of us except that which might be called "Extra-Christian," simply outside of Christianity, because we cannot confine ourselves to it, — an attitude taking in Christianity, with what is best of all religions of the world. But for Christianity itself I have not merely the same sympathy that I should have for Buddhism if I was within its temples, but a nobler sympathy as for a still nobler religion. When the first large company of colonists came to the Massachusetts Colony, it is reported that, as they left England, the clergyman who was the leader of them looked back over the stern of the vessel, and said, alluding to the earlier Pilgrims who had settled Plymouth, and who had called themselves Separatists, "We will not say, as the Separatists did, 'Farewell, Babylon! Farewell, Rome!' But we will say, 'Farewell, dear England! Farewell, the Church of God in England, and all the Christian friends there!'" And as we look back upon the Christian Church, if we leave it, I see no reason why we should not echo the loving words of that farewell.

The Convention then adjourned till 3 P.M.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

THE CONVENTION re-assembled according to adjournment, and Dr. BARTOL was introduced as the essayist.

ESSAY BY REV. C. A. BARTOL, D.D.

The Religious Signs of the Times.

The prophet is but a weather-wise man, a sort of "Old Probabilities" for the social sky. Atmospheric and electric signals hint such as are finer still. Let me avoid mock or useless ones, like those on the railway yonder, which, planted at an expense of quarter of a million of dollars to give warning of an approaching train, after all will not work, and are but a dumb show of safety, occupying room, save as a vain promise of security, to no end.

The first sign is the Unitarian "Year-Book," now destined to become a famous publication because from its list of ministers has been dropped the name of a man who does not call himself a Christian. This was affirmed to be only a matter of statistics. Mr. Frothingham had withdrawn his name, why should not Mr. Potter? What a clerical error of over-hasty classification! Mr. Frothingham is Mr. Frothingham, my friend, and your honored President. Mr. Potter is your Secretary, a quite independent person. We do not profess to be birds of a feather. But the maintenance of the official act, after warm discussion in the late meeting, with considerable show of unanimity, proves it to be more than an item of information. It fixes as with a mordant the unequivocal ecclesiastical color. Denominational discipline seems mostly confined to younger men. It is comparatively safe for an old one to be an agitator! Is it as the conspirator Metellus said to Cinna of Cicero, that "his silver hair will purchase us a good opinion"? Perhaps Jesus would not have been crucified at threescore. Mr. Potter no longer calls himself a Christian. Do people go round so calling themselves? Channing preached Christianity, but I never heard him call himself a Christian. I cannot call myself a Radical or Free Religionist. This matter of naming is not so easy as Adam or any of his children might think. We must not put men like cattle in

pound. With the proceeding Mr. Potter himself had nothing to do, save courteously to answer certain inquiries propounded to him, and to say that his name remained on the Unitarian list by no thoughtless oversight of his own, his replies showing masterly strategy of perfect simplicity, wiser than any serpent and more harmless than any dove ; making the initiative indictment and the final sentence both to come from the power for which the Unitarian Association, itself a creature of the Unitarian community, is responsible. This is the first formal exclusion of a man from the so-called liberal body by a verbal test, — an unchristian thing in that name of Christ which was never used as a label in his own time, however afterwards at Antioch a derisive brand. He said “name” as a synonym for “spirit.” He welcomed Greek, Jew, Gentile, barbarian, Syrophenician, or Samaritan, while he reserved his thunders for professors of his name. We have revived the old scholastic dispute of Nominalism and Realism ; for that Mr. Potter is in every quality a real Christian in their own sense none of his judges doubt ; but if not nominal too, his head must fall. Well, if to be a Christian is to be that and nothing else or more, to have received influence from no other, Greek, Gentile, or Indian quarter, to make Christ a finality and fetich, and his religion the boundary of the human mind, and give up testing and re-testing its claims on the ground that it has settled all questions and allows none to be raised about itself, God, man, or destiny ; if Christianity be a monopoly of the bread of life for its priests to sell at their own rates, — then no Christian am I, and no Christian is any man to whom thought is sacred and reason a law, all systems partial, and every great sentiment directly inspired. He does not call himself a Christian ! Who does or dares ! “Christian” does not cover his whole experience. Does it anybody’s ? Because a name is not taken, is it refused and expunged ? Names are important ; but a name is not a principle, and a term not a touchstone. Only an ecclesiastical fiction can make it such. When a live man or his name is sacrificed to a notion, our scheme of salvation is undermined.

The process with Mr. Potter was considered a trifle too insignificant for argument or correspondence. So was that stream of water big as a man’s finger in the Connecticut dam ; and the alarmed observer was forbidden to carry the news of its slight escape lest it should prejudice the people against the water-works ! But the fifteen minutes’ delay cost a hundred and fifty lives. So through unsound places in Church-embankments the reservoirs of an artificial prosperity will run out. The erasure of “William J. Potter” is said to be an

innocent advertisement, and no intolerant act. Nay, it is a sign! As well might ships off Hatteras neglect the cautionary signal from the prairies or the hills. The Unitarian scribe, Executive Board, and any denominational organ only represent a now triumphant sectarian tendency whose clash with free thinking will raise in the ranks a new and long storm. "The Year-Book" is spoiled. I see not how any free man can be content on it. So I congratulate your Secretary on his removal. According to the Jewish law the sacrifice for sin was of no stiff bell-wether which might have been found, but of a man without spot. Authors of mathematical and insurance tables sometimes offer thousands of dollars for the detection of an erroneous figure. A worse erratum in this business will be discovered than any misreckoning of interest or wrong time of sun-rising or the tides.

The Unitarian denomination has been esteemed rich in ability and character, as it ought to be to make such exclusions. It must judge for itself how well it can afford to spare men of whom it will lose many with this one, to resist the providential evolution and become itself a fossil, or fall into a trap of terminology to die. But when any development is arrested, it is for the soul to bud and burgeon anew. Unitarian Christians have put a large bounty on Radicalism and Free Religion. They have warned off the bright spirits, and given generous souls notice to quit. Their exaggeration and over-emphasis of a name is in strange contrast with Paul's avoidance of it when King Agrippa says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and the brave apostle answers, "I would thou wert both almost and altogether *such as I am.*" Has the Christian name in it magic, like Othello's Egyptian handkerchief? What is Christianity? Not a name, but a method. To put the means before the end, or to value it for aught but the end, is superstition. When Christianity banishes goodness and truth, men will ask, What is the use of being a Christian? It must be wide as the world and great as the soul, to swallow all or be swallowed itself. When any platform is not large enough to accommodate a true and honest man, it loses for all men its charm and romance. Movement has stopped, and crystallization begun. There is no longer any lure of generous enterprise for youth to follow, no hope of discovery, no Eldorado for the soul. The time has come for the sexton and the funeral rites.

The next sign is the Brooklyn Council. If Mr. Potter stands for liberty, Mr. Beecher for privacy. Under a continental scandal, he says to orthodoxy and the American community, "This is my and Plymouth Church affair, and you but a huge Paul Pry, from whose imper-

minent curiosity I retreat to my covert, on my reserved rights under the soul's constitution. I screw down the lid against your unwarrantable investigation, and stand guard over the screws. Is there coffin or skelêton in my house? It is my property; I have bought the burial-spot; I warn off all resurrectionists as thieves. There is no foundation for the stories about me, which I decline to answer in detail. But please to understand, once for all, I have no casket of corruption or infernal machine to show."

Here is a sign to consider indeed. With the hinted and, I would fain believe, baseless allegations I have no concern. I am but bound to discuss here the implied title to crush the indictment in such personal or ecclesiastical way. There is tenable ground for privacy. Romish and Greek casuists sought a sound doctrine of reserve in opinion and action. All people have not, of course, right to know what I think or do. Jesus says the closet-whisper shall have a house-top proclamation. It is not true of all whispers, and ought not to be. The door of the mouth closes on how much in this opaque dome of the head! People talk magnificently of the window in their breast which they want us to look through. Not with coarse eyes! Be your bosom a dead-wall to the malign tattler and insolent spy! Inquisitiveness is insult. Much should be said *sotto voce*, *sub rosa*, to *esoteric* ears. Delicate feelings resent being interviewed. Many not shameful things we ingenuously refuse to address to a reporter's pencil. The maid would not speak were you going to tell! You shall not run your lightning-express or end of your telegraph-wire into my closet. "Does the Kennebec Corporation meet in your office to-day?" an old lawyer was asked. "No: and I shall not tell you when it does meet!" was the reply. Looking at those glass-beehives, which show all the interior workings, I think how uncomfortable human creatures would be with such a standing invitation for spies. Boys cannot let an unguarded pane alone with their stones: and men are boys.

But this privilege of privacy has limits and laws. Humanity is such a nervous net-work as to preclude absolute individuality. The claim is false to withdraw from notice any conduct which society is properly interested in or may be injured by. If I am seriously questioned in such real or suppositious case, I cannot justly affect in my reputation or character superiority to accusation or suspicion. I feel a stain like a wound. Although there be interiors which no painter has any business to sketch, and a minister or church may perhaps forbid inquiry into particulars of local management, if they so choose, as social and ecclesiastical, no less than political, centralization should be shunned,

yet the prerogative of silence ceases when described and dated imputations lie at the door. No virtue can afford with professed or self-conscious dignity to slight widely circulated and accredited taunts, however great dignitaries may treat the matter with the phrase "vile women," so easy, *de haut en bas*, to fling! General slander may be despised, but not a specific charge; nor, though the law of the land hold a man innocent until he is proved guilty, can he in conscience be allowed to couple general denial with refusal to examine. Whoever would stand in honor invites scrutiny and challenges jealousy, as Cæsar, being advised not to venture in the Roman streets, said, "I must be seen;" or as John Bunyan, under the quip of impurity, defied any woman on earth, in heaven, or hell, to appear a witness against him. For the standard of morals cannot even in imagination be lowered for any man's convenience. No gifts of intellect can atone for ambiguous behavior. No ethical act or relation must be withheld from the light; and nothing should we do or design on which we are ashamed or afraid to have the light fall. Do you doubt my transaction? I insist on examination! The honest merchant shows his books. I open God's book of account in the volume of my heart. To hide like Adam and Eve is to confess.

Sincere love for the Brooklyn preacher and cordial good-will to his church prompt these remarks. If any man could neglect libellous tongues or pens, who but he, with the hearty love for him of the American people, and the memory, like a long track of light behind, of his services to his country, while old, hard, stony superstitions fall on either side as, with amazing power to pull, he plows his splendid furrow of a large humanity before? But, because he belongs to the nation, the nation is careful for his fame. Sanctity, seeming to be without candor, passes for cowardice and hypocrisy. Doubt shears a man, though a Samson, of his locks of strength. Nothing you confess can be so bad as what you cover! As builders subject to pressure and strain materials for a costly structure, so we must test the composition of men of high rank and merit, trying our benefactors, though we rear to them equestrian statues, as of Washington and Grant.

Especially when mistrust saps the basis of human honor and weakens the church, a smoothing-plane is not the tool required. What do we see? A synod of seventy churches, holy and hoary-headed ornaments of orthodoxy, from all parts of the land, summoned to an exigency so grave, at great expense of time and money and missing of shepherds by the deserted flocks, meet and part without touching the point in debate! With hosts outside that outnumber and are half

hostile to the church, who shall measure the detriment of so ill-advised a course? In all the miracle-plays of former times, never such a religious spectacle! The trusted authorities, "in the face of all Israel and the sun," do not ask, "Are our garments white?" but, "Has there been an informal step?" Was a member regularly dismissed, after the Congregational Order? Has the Westminster Assembly Polity been kept? Again with mountainous labor the mouse has been born; but that mouse, as in the fable of Æsop, will gnaw the net that imprisons the lion. Strange handling of a serious problem, to lift it beyond the proportions of a neighborhood quarrel into dimensions wide as the world! For the question is no less than this, Shall purity in principle, and in theory at least, be maintained? I venture to say, No orthodoxy, no liberality, no Christianity can stand the strain of a negative reply. Yet New England and New York Trinitarian Congregationalism is committed to the query, and staggers through the land under the intolerable load. Alas! has it actually come to the *filthy rags* which it so long ago declared all righteousness to be? Is it demoralized by its emphasis on divine grace and disparagement of human worth? and is a new Antinomianism the foe which mankind has to fear? The finding of the mighty council was that there had been some impropriety in a single case of withdrawal, without dismissal from church-membership, which, if not repeated, might not be seriously blamed. Like the little boy in Dickens' story, Plymouth Church, having done nothing, was not to do it again! A soft beard-ing of the Douglas in his hall; a gentle stroking of the dragon that growled out of his shaggy hide; a sportive encounter with the leviathan that counts such "darts as stubble" and "laugheth at the shaking" of a conventional "spear"!

But there is somewhat even wild beasts must respect. Against a natural law there is no block, against a moral one no reply; and the assumption to conceal which has been made involves a ruin which no establishment, however broad and numerous, is stout enough to resist. If the question be of fancy, this nation has no superfluous vitality to spend on it; if it be of fact, have the carcass removed. Church and theatre get pretty close in our times; and no *fiasco* of a dramatic performance has ever been more complete. What is it but a sign of religious decadence, when the moral is postponed to the ecclesiastical, in this second issue so much more flagrantly than in the one first named. Like a duel in which discretion proves the better part of valor, the dispute has ended in a sham-fight. A freethinker was taunted with demoralizing God in his doctrine. He answered, "By whom has God

been demoralized in this case?" "Your kingdom," said a veteran thinker to a clergyman, "is passing slowly away." But the realm of religion depends on no ministry so-called. The empire of law is just hinting its boundless reach.

The third sign is "The Index," the organ of Free Religion, springing like a fresh shoot from the decaying trunk or wind-wafted seed of "The Radical," as that perhaps from "The Dial," planted forty years ago. Of our friend, the editor, so much is true, that he makes a conscience of science. He repeats the motto of Montaigne's seal, "What do I know?" We have not got beyond Pilate's "What is Truth?" a question that disintegrates every system, dissolves institutions, and turns the solid world into a passing smoke before the all-searching soul. This terrible solvent of spiritual chemistry we must have. The farmer wept and swore when, over the crucible, a smell of sulphur was disengaged from the iron-pyrites which he thought was gold. We need an assayer for every precious-looking creed: and have it at No. 1 Tremont Place, Boston. We must not complain if the office be not also a mine. Bring your ore: you shall at least learn if it be silver or lead! It is refreshing to have one man who takes nothing for granted. If not much be proposed, it is something not to overstate or pretend. Faith as a grain of mustard-seed that will grow is more than a globe of matter without a germ. We rejoice in *sincerity* more than in any discovery. It is the condition of all discoveries, and itself the discovery of God. The worst of party is compromise, that sacrifice of conviction to uniform and drill which is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. "The Index" stands for frankness. It is not the voice of a conclave or committed to men. If it yield criticism more than creation, let us prize the veto that saves us from the destruction of *majorities* which present all our dangers on their bold and horny front. We cannot flatter the radical literature with the registry of any great accomplishment. The new theology has not come yet out of "The Fifty Affirmations," "Impeachments of Christianity," "Liberal Leagues," or exclusions of God and Christ from the Constitution. But how much rubbish has been removed from the room for the prospective temple! Street improvement makes lanes of disorder at first: and moral architecture calls demolition to its aid. "Only so much of supernatural as makes its way into nature and human nature," is the Radical and Free Religious cry. There is honesty, heroism, humility, grandeur, in the abnegation of a heaven to dwell in or God to adore that is not real to the yearning mind.

But science has metes. Beside knowledge, is the thing known, irre-

solvable into an intellectual process, save in the perceived identity of object and subject, thoughts and things. A definition of a feeling has been called "the mind's opinion of that feeling." Love is the substance of science, beginning of creation, and residuum in every experiment. Can I turn the world into a theory, my instinct into my statement, reality into intuition, and what I behold into a beholding? No! something is left, some peace of God and speechless benediction that passeth understanding. Pascal says, "All that is visible is but a scratch in the vast range of nature;" yet, adds Papillon, that profound French critic just deceased, ill-deserving the name of "butterfly," "the experimentalists insist on worshiping this scratch." God and heaven, by reason of infinity, are not demonstrations, but dreams; yet dreams of the human soul, never yet quite roused from sleep. Ideas are firmer than all material facts.

Is there not some risk of over-action of the intellectual? Goethe, growing old, was said to have "a determination of blood to the head." "Are there not many men," asks George Sand, "in whom the loving faculties have been starved by the travail of the brain?" In "Isidora" she adds, "O power of sweetness and goodness, so penetrating, it is thou, and not the intelligence, that should rule the world!" But nothing is so intelligent as the heart. Superficial study is a stricture of *that*, which has imagination for its courier and fellow-traveler through fairy-land. Wonder has fable for its handmaid. Strauss complained that, at the free religious meeting in Berlin, the service was dry and lacked the comfort of reference to a biblical legend. So the last rag was stripped from his ideas! Theodore Parker had little sense of the meaning of myth, and so naturally thought Voltaire greater than Goethe. The scripture-tale to him was either true or false, with scarce any middle ground of Oriental picture-writing or allegorical sense. He began with thinking the Book of Ruth inspired; he ended with supposing the Bible meant that the Lord ate veal with Abraham. He understood not the Old Testament idyls. So to his glorious iconoclasm he added no spiritual structure.

With the courage of our opinions let us have breadth. Job is poetical, and therefore can be bold. Beyond bald prose let us have beauty, though but to adorn the tomb, like the author of that wondrous poem, "*Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*," who sings, —

"O Thou,
Who e'en in Paradise didst form the snake,
Forgiveness give and take!"

In Goethe's "Truth and Fiction," the fiction is the better truth. Tradition necessitates analysis; but synthesis is the end, for reconstruction better than of the disunited States. Radical folk and Free Religious have a star in saying, as did the old Abolitionists, what they think of each other's views, and not standing on compliments. They keep nothing hermetically sealed. Every thing is for every body! God suffers nothing which we hide from man. What we shut up in a club or clique spoils, and is uneatable as the overkept manna. Let the word, if it can, go through the continent and light on the decks of the ships; and our thoughts be open as the public fountain and squares.

The next sign is Butlerism. We spend our wrath on the man who is but an exponent. As truly, though in another way than Daniel Webster said it of George Washington, he is "a pure American production." We would drive him a scapegoat into the wilderness. We forget the many goats beside and behind, on the left hand, to scare if not overpower the sheep on the right. We flatter the sovereign "people," as though *that* were another phrase for "purity." Is this an honest nation, the only one on earth that does not even pretend to pay its debts, that relies not on reason and right, but the panacea of universal suffrage, and rejoices in the government of the majority, without thinking of a possible one of rascals and thieves? Intelligent men in business and the professions shirk their civil duty, and call politics a pool which they will not dirty their hands in. Unless some angel trouble that pool we shall not be healed! We have just escaped going up in a paper-balloon, filled with Western gas, because of a previous inflation of this great country with the conceit that it needs no coin, and satisfies its creditors with promises, and, as magnificently as Falstaff, flouts "security." The popular conscience is not nice. It admires smart and unscrupulous men who attend to business, engineer jobs, and put things through. Congress and the legislatures represent their constituents in every statute.

When my fellow-townsmen on Cape Ann complained of speculators, I asked, "Are they not elected after they speculate?" Did New York convict Tweed or itself? What a knot of thieves, merchants cheating the revenue, informers biting like gudgeons at the moiety-bait, confidential clerks, spies for the fine which officers higher than Jayne and Sanborn are suspected of grabbing, as lawyers, the lion's share of, while the examining committee find the transactions in the Treasury too loose to fix the responsibility, — as Warren Hastings, the East Indian plunderer, said, when he remembered the lacs of rupees which

he had passed through, he stood astonished at his own moderation! Trustees of funds in villages, tellers in banks, conductors on railways, and ticket-takers borrowing each other's bells to embezzle in the street-cars, present a picture far from pleasant to survey of a too general surrender of principle to greed. What is the cause? We have plenty of religion, such as it is. How becomes the common conscience so blunt? Because the church spends itself on dogmas, and does not expound laws! What Dr. Wayland said of the Baptists is true of all sects, that they preach too little morals and too much creed. We want some new abolitionists, to turn priests of form into prophets of reform. We cannot hang a nation; but let us indict the community for the monsters it generates! In the dispute at Hell Gate, in "Paradise Lost," of Sin with Satan, the mother gets as good as she gives her child. General guilt bears the whole brood of devils. State and church are the "Chang and Eng" that must live or die together. I hail Radicalism and Free Religion in the hope of no sentimental spasm of a few elect, at a camp-meeting or in an ill-ventilated vestry, but a revival of the body politic.

Spiritualism, as in Robert Dale Owen, is another sign,—a sign of discontent with the Calvinistic doctrine of doom. When a clergyman said, "God is no doomster, only men insist on perdition," I answered, "This necessity is the same thing." He replied, "Not a necessity, but a certainty," still making his corner of eternal woe. Against fate and the pit no wonder a more generous faith should rise, which, counting its votaries by millions, is scarce disposed of by ridicule. The manifesto of spirits, that materialize to communicate, strikes the knell of this old inhuman doctrine of underground waiting, to rise at the far-off trump to vicarious reward or punishment, as Christ or Adam gets the upper-hand. Said the old Catechism, "After incalculable ages your mother shall ascend to bliss or sink to bale." "Your mother is present and wants to speak to you," cries the new gospel. A Universalist mother told Lyman Beecher she would rather go to hell with her children than to heaven without; and the old gentleman enrolled her name on his books. The voice of nature is still strong! If there be no other alternative, welcome then to the raps for a revelation, to the mahogany-table for a Bible, to inspiration on a slate, and to the pulpit, like the old tripod, of a trance. It must be confessed not much instruction comes. Prophecy gets muffled in the medium. There is debenture, a tax amounting almost to prohibition, on the goods at this custom-house. That friends survive and are happy, is the sum of value that gets through. Yet it is better than Genevan blasphemy or Sad-

ducee-unbelief to fill up this cave of hell and open the concave of heaven, making it abut on earth, with no sepulchral sleep, only angels to bring miraculous fruits and give an example for the finest of modern charities in a flower-mission from the skies. When an orange was brought to me, if I remember right, by Starr King and Father Taylor, if I felt no more immortal than before, neither was I sensible of any suspicion or scorn; and I preferred it to that fixed smell of sulphur of which the Bethel preacher once said "we all have some sentimentality"! Build religion on ancient marvel? Behold, all around, in a thousand séances, wonders a plenty, the supernatural a drug, Sinai superseded, the mountain transfiguration antiquated and obsolete before flying shapes and twangling harps, passing the Red Sea or that of Galilee matched by Home's levitation at the ceiling, while for Nebuchadnezzar's furnace and lion's den we have the Davenport brothers' hands superhumanly untied in a box! Inexplicable phenomena abound so as to become dull. We find we have mistaken the ground of reverence, which rises, not from losing the trail, but tracing the law which keen eyes see running everywhere, as the Indian marks the track now in the sand and now in the stream, now in a bent shrub and now in an upturned leaf. Valuable as the physical discoveries may be to emancipate from a hard worldly skepticism, the noble soul wants no map of heaven or chronology of a future life. It asks not the incitement of recompense or to "read its title clear." Glory is cheapened when held out to goodness as a bauble or feast. A hound will jump after a piece of meat in the air: let us not make Paradise dog-cheap! Virtue must be shut up to its own motive, or it will not remain virtue, but become salary and hire. Cake for children: but no spiritual confectionery-store! Nothing in Jesus was sublimer than the failure of his sight in the garden, his sense of abandonment, when, though God forsook him, he did not forsake God. We have a lot in that Gethsemane! Dead ghost hunting lowers the tone. He that listens for the echo misses his aim, though from Paradise come the report. The garden is there, no doubt: but the Divine Wisdom puts blinders on our vision to keep us to the road. A glance at heaven is better than a gaze. Let there be some screen to this blaze of bliss! That earthly duty may be done the celestial gates must be partly closed. *Spirit* is more than *spirits*, though their swarm eclipsed the sun. Religion is reception of God; and to drink of his river now is more than any projection beyond the grave. Disappearance of time in duty signifies inheritance of eternity; and forever, on earth or aloft, the *un*-manifested and unmanifestable is more than any *manifestation*.

The next sign is Mrs. Woodhull and socialism, so prevailing among Spiritualists in her interpretation that it is doubted if she should be allowed to speak. But the doubt is not in my mind! Marriage too must be discussed. Is it sensitive and sore? Then something "rotten" in this "Denmark" refuses to be probed and laid bare. Principles are everlasting: but marriage is an arrangement, a civil statute, religious sacrament, social convention, mutual contract, personal bond, a lock in the order of life, the hinge of every door that swings in the sun, the little brick the house is made of, the foundation of the home, the underpinning of church and state; but not a principle: and all we can say of its importance as an institution only emphasizes the need of exposing whatever evil qualifies and imperils its good. We can conceive, as Jesus did, of society without marriage, in a re-constitution on earth or in the sky. But the impulse which it is meant to rule, made strong that the race might not fail, cannot dispense with the conjugal harness yet, or have the rein thrown on its neck. It would be an uncaged beast, escaping from the menagerie into the street or the woods. Steel rails hold the gliding train: what a beast or dragon, fiercer than all the iron horses, and for more crashing overthrows, ungoverned appetite would be! Wedlock is not its only, chief, best, or noblest restraint: yet it is a discipline whose need no argument has set aside. Its sincere assailant has her mission, but has offered no working-plan, only a wild scream for freedom and vague doctrine of selection in its stead. It is a false philosophy of freedom, which subordinates mankind to its members. We are children of a race which we do not constitute, but owe ourselves in all service and sacrifice to the welfare of; and the doctrine of extreme private liberty, at whatever cost to the commonwealth, either as morals or metaphysics, is alike erroneous, selfish, and bad. The reformers must put more thought into their task! Meantime, let whatever mischief marriage may cover be set forth. Only by being examined can it be saved. Eternal vigilance is the price not only of liberty, but of order and life. Something unsound was suspected in the Mill-River dam. But scrutiny was refused as hurting the stock! So, for some thousands in timely repair, a million was extorted by the demon of the flood, with scores of friends and lovers laid so pale and low, an anachronism of human sacrifice on the shrine. Marriage is not the river-bed, but basin and canal: the levee against animal propensity with its unfathomable source and immeasurable tide. Build and shape it well, or look out for the bursting bevel and foaming crevasse! Think not the

legal sanction covers and purges any sin. Away with mercenary matrimony, the ambitious alliance, the convenient bargain, mismatches of disposition and age, the prostitution which human law allows to run from the brothel to the house under its shield, the license that slips in its cloak like a thief in the night from the den to the dwelling and the dwelling to the den, the wandering imagination and the actual abuse; and let works of loyalty and purity prove a love which flesh is sanctified by because it is not of the flesh. Then nature will be supplemented by art; in such regulation as protection requires, inundation will be checked; and the new deluge, that sometimes seems necessary to cleanse the earth, for awhile held back.

The Washington dial is a wise and kind Cassandra! If I announce foul weather as well as fair, and advise cautionary signals, it is from no despair, but from a hope that begins to wax and will never wane. We are born with great expectations. Our confidence were betrayed if they fail! We talk of progress. It has scarce taken its first step.

The seventh and last sign is the general breaking up, after a long, hard winter, of the ice for free navigation on the river of God. The man everywhere, Colenso, Cheney, Savage, or Swing, is too big for the establishment; and when he rises he carries the ridge-pole of the tent with him. We are not at the end of our course. It is commencement-day in the great university! Like the earth in primeval chaos, the moral world is still "without form, and void, and darkness covers the face of the deep." All the ages are dark ages compared with that to come. All history is but twilight before dawn. Yet, behold the heralds and greet the light-bearers like the cherubs with torches in Guido's "Aurora!" Waking early to meditate my theme, while yet the night seemed hardly to have withdrawn a corner of her veil, I was surprised with the cheerful warble of the birds among the trees. What ray of the morning from the far horizon, what suspicion of splendor, had reached them to correspond with their song, I could not tell. But some imagination of the sun warmed their breast and stirred their note. It is not day-break yet for man! In long eclipse he lives, and in the shadow of the planet which is his home. Yet he imagines the sun! Music of prophecy is heard. Forerunners are seen of a better millennium than any prophet paints. As good as the angel's "Hail" to Mary, every fresh voice is our *Annunciation*.

The PRESIDENT. It was proposed when we arranged the programme of this convention, that we should have, if possible, at this afternoon session some protests and criticisms from those who make objections to the Free Religious Association. But though we have critics, it is difficult to get them to come here; and some whom we invite and expect to criticise, turn about and bless us. Of course we never expected anything but a blessing from Dr. BARTOL, and I think you will agree with me that we have received it in that essay. And now another of our friends will continue the discussion. We have with us a gentleman from St. Louis,—a Jewish Rabbi with a beautiful name, meaning in English, Sunshine,—who has come all the way from the Mississippi because of his interest in the Free Religious movement. I introduce to you Dr. SONNESCHEIN.

ADDRESS OF RABBI S. H. SONNESCHEIN.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I stand here before you as a Jew; and since the word "Jew" is not any longer represented in the national Webster's Dictionary as a word with an opprobrious meaning, I can fairly consider myself here as being among American fellow-citizens who will honor that name.

But I would have, with the well-known modesty of the Jew, never accepted a call to address, with my poor German tongue, the distinguished citizens of Boston, if I had not felt that it is my duty as a Jew to represent here our denomination fairly and squarely, having been asked to do it by your Secretary; to tell you, the friends of all progressive movements in churches and politics, what Reformed Judaism means. To a great many it may assume the appearance of a knife without a blade and without a handle. Reformed Judaism,—what does that mean? Is not Judaism the remnant of that old cast-off religion, of that old citadel of superstition, which has well-nigh vanished amidst the forces of modern civilization? No: I can without any self-conceit say, in the name of truth, No, The Hebrew race, originated by Abraham, never failed, whenever called upon, to acknowledge the truth even at its own cost; and so I shall tell this afternoon some truths that may even fall back upon the Jew. I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge that the Jews have very often committed the gravest mistakes, coming even near to religious and scientific crimes, because the Jew is not an angel. The Jew is a human, erring

being, and we were even cautious enough not to accept a member of our own race, however spotless his character may have appeared to our ancestors, as a God,—because no human being can have the perfection of God. You see, my friends, that I do not dwell much upon phraseology. I speak as it is in my heart. I may make perhaps some blunders in the grammar, but I do not mean to make blunders in the truth.

What is Reformed Judaism? Judaism is the representation, the embodiment, of a long course of historical facts. Judaism is to be traced back to the remotest regions of history, and is still looking forward to the most distant future; and so you may not expect that I shall give you even the outlines of it. I suppose you are very well versed in the history of ancient Judaism, and some other co-religionist of mine may have previously, upon this same platform, told you many interesting things about the theological and the doctrinal significance of Judaism. What I have to say is of Reformed Judaism; and Reformed Judaism means, genuinely and earnestly, to be in full coincidence and in free sympathy with the Free Religious movement of this day; and I have only to explain to you how it comes to that. Old Judaism, called the Hebrew Biblical Judaism, is the germ and the root; the Talmudical Rabbinical Judaism of the middle ages is the trunk and the branches; and Reformed Judaism seems to me to be the blossom, not yet the fruit. There may be many blossoms yet cast off by many storms of the age, but I hope that some fruit will remain, and give the germ for a new idea in religion, as it has often proved in the course of human progress. The Orthodoxy in Judaism was not so much the result of the dead letter of the law. Orthodox Judaism, or rather, as you may call it, Talmudical Rabbinical Judaism, is by no means the counterpart of what Paul of Tarsus described when he said that the letter kills. Not so, my friends. If there is any living thing, or rather to say, if there ever was any living religious body, fully alive to the interests and to the necessities of religion, it was the Talmudical Rabbinical Judaism. For about five hundred years, while it seems that every ecclesiastical movement was in dead stagnation, there was an animated life, like that in a beehive, among the Rabbis of the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and even eleventh centuries. Talmudical Rabbinical Judaism did not mean a warlike religion. It was only a kind of self-defense, the erecting, the establishing of a wall, of a fence, as the Rabbis themselves used to call it; it was their favorite expression, “The laws that we establish, the increased ceremonies and habits that we introduce, are made only

to support and to protect our church against the inroads of our enemies." It is like the custom of the American farmer ; when he has even the largest estate, he fences his farm to show that it is his property. So the Jew of old, and of the middle ages, was very jealous that nobody should claim anything which belonged to him ; and his fence is called the "Talmudical Rabbinical Law." But as sometimes the chains that hold up the drawbridge of a fortress may become so old and rusty that, if the time comes when the inhabitants of the old citadel wish to go out, they cannot move the heavy drawbridge, and the chains must be cut off by force, so Judaism of these days could not handle those heavy ancient rabbinical doors in order to come out into the fresh air of the nineteenth century, and they were compelled to cut them down ; and that was the first step of Reformed Judaism in Europe.

Reformed Judaism can be looked at from four different points. The Talmudical Rabbinical, or Orthodox Judaism, consisted of sanitary, of social, of ritualistic, of ecclesiastical measures. And so Reformed Judaism must direct its attention to all these four points. But certainly it did not determine to do the work all at once, but to take one point after the other, the easier first and the more difficult last, — not for being a little afraid of not being able to do the heavier work first, but in order not to disturb the peace of its communicants ; for the Jew was always careful not to deprive any member of his race of the title to belong to Judaism. Even nowadays you will find that the most stubborn, the most determined, the most conservative Orthodox Jew, will shake hands in brotherly love with the Jew who has at the same moment in his presence even declared that the Bible is not the word of God. We Jews need not give up our name : it is not a name given us by ourselves ; it is a name we have received. Why should we give up a name which has no meaning at all? Free Religionist—there may be somebody who will look for and try and find something to scoff at in that name. Christianity may be a name that will give dissatisfaction and offense to a great many. Any sectarian name, any denominational term, is to be criticised ; but Jew is a very harmless name. What do you care whether you are called Yankees or New Englanders? Is that a name anybody can find anything harmful in? So it is with the name Jew ; and we cling to our name because it represents race and ancestry. Jewish blood is running through our veins, and Jewish bones and muscles are framing our bodies, and we cannot help it, but we can be anything else, — we can be even Christians, — and still be Jews. A great many of the Jews of old

sided with Paul and the other apostles, and were called Jews for three or four hundred centuries nevertheless. Now Reformed Judaism does not maintain the name Jew for any sectarian use, but only to hold up that banner of liberty that was always protected by the Jewish army. Although you may doubt that, yet I could give you samples, even the fairest samples of this characteristic of my faith, that you would admire and adore. But I shall leave that out ; I am not here for boasting of my title and to give the reason for it. I shall merely go on giving the reasons for Reformed Judaism.

Now, first, the sanitary aspect. The laws of Moses, since he meant to give his nation not only a sound mind but also a sound body, knowing very well that in a sound body a sound mind is the better off, gave us sanitary rules according to the scientific notions of the time. But why should we now, since science, especially natural science, the knowledge of the laws of God and of the laws of human organization, is so much ahead of that knowledge which Moses and his disciples possessed, — why should we of this day not criticise these sanitary laws of old and give up all those which do not prove to be facts of science? And this the Reformed Jew does. The Reformed Jew of seventy years ago, when he was going to trespass upon these old sanitary laws, did it in his corner where nobody saw him, because he was a little afraid of his brother, but he does it now in the open air ; and I assure you I enjoy my “Christian” meal, this dinner I have eaten to-day after the manner of yours, as well as my grandfather did his a hundred years ago. I do not see that I am sick for it ; I do not see that I lose any strength of my body by it ; but, on the contrary, it seems to me as if I would gain a new body by partaking of something I was never used to before. But this same ancient sanitary law was a kind of medicine to the Jew who was confined within the walls of the ghetto of old ; he had his regular meals, and the times were fixed by rule, so that when the simple cup of milk came for his supper he did not dare to touch it unless six hours had passed away since his dinner. That was well enough ; it was a wholesome regulation ; he was confined in a small narrow room without much fresh air, and, being compelled to observe strict sanitary laws, he was the healthier for it ; and therein lies the whole secret of the longevity of the Jew in the ghettos of old.

Then comes the social aspect of Reformed Judaism. You know very well that the Jew was shut out of a great many commercial pursuits. For instance, the Rabbis themselves forbade the Jew to trade in pork. It was not because pork was a forbidden food for the Jew. It

had quite a different reason. I may tell it in a few words. When the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Titus, so tells us the Talmudical tradition, the Roman soldiers used to make a laughing-stock of the Jews by the following act: There was a private understanding between some of the outposts of the Roman army and the priests inside of the city that they should allow certain animals to be brought into the city for feeding the foremost ones of the battle in the Temple, and so they held up daily some half a dozen oxen, &c. One day the Roman soldiers put into the crate, or elevator, some half a dozen swine; and the Jews were so incensed, that from that day the Hebrews, in a council in Jerusalem, forbade trade in pork. But to-day, since the actual dealers of Chicago and St. Louis and anywhere in the West don't care very much whether they buy the pork from a Jew or a Christian, if only the price and the quality of the animal suit them, so the Jew prospers frequently now even in that direction; and by this simple remark you will have an insight as to how modern times work upon the commercial interests of the Jew: that he moves in circles that he never knew before and prospers in them.

Then comes the question of intermarriage. The Bible itself has a great many samples where even prophets, kings, &c., married the daughters of heathen. Why should a Jew not marry a Christian girl, or a Jewish girl not marry a Christian man? You will wonder how it came to pass that the Talmudical law was more strict in that respect than even the Bible itself; but that was done also merely in order to protect the Jewish law from inroads. They were afraid that from other quarters there might be brought into that weakened and nearly dead body of Judaism some elements that would destroy it altogether. But now, since the doors are open, since we know each other, since even a Jewish boy may read the heart of a Christian girl, and a Christian boy may read the heart of a Jewish girl, why should their hearts not be joined in holy love, notwithstanding the Talmudical law? Again, there is the ritualistic point. I must only glance over these things. There is, for instance, the law of Passover. You have heard of it,—how strict the Talmudical Jew observes the Passover. Even a bit of leavened bread may destroy the happiness of a Jewish household at Passover. I remember in my youth to have been a guest of grandfather and grandmother, and we were enjoying our meal. It was a holiday, and especially dear grandmother flattered and petted the grandson with the best bits on the table. But all of a sudden, when I was just about to take a piece of fowl, there was a deathlike pallor on all the faces; everybody dropped their forks and knives; I

looked, but saw nothing there. "What is the matter?" I asked. "Don't you see, grandpa has found a grain of wheat in the stomach of the fowl, and that is the reason that we have stopped eating;" and then all the table-cloths and all the things on the table had to be removed and new had to be brought in. Even the water that the Jew drank on Passover was cleaned again and again. It was not enough that it looked pure, but it must be beyond the possibility of having been touched by a crumb of leavened bread. According to the Talmudical law, if some boy throws into the Reservoirs of the Central Park of New York a piece of bread, the whole Jewish population of the city must starve for want of water. Now is Reformed Judaism not right in that it says that these heavy chains of ritualism, which became rotten and useless, must be cut off in order that we may breathe the fresh air of progress, and in order that we may enjoy society with our fellow-men?

There is another point of the ritual question on which I shall be a little more earnest. The prayer, — you know very well what a stumbling-block to the modern drift of thought the prayer is. Now, to tell you the truth, my friends, although the Jew prayed a great deal, although the Talmudical law provides that every Jew must pray at least three times in the day, still the prayer-book of old was nothing but a kind of anthology of Biblical passages, — psalms, prophetic selections, and so on. But in later times, when the great attraction of public worship was gone, — when it was, for instance, not allowed to play an organ or a violin or to sing a joyful tune, because the Jewish feelings had become callous, — then they tried to lengthen the worship by some other means; and any second or third rate Hebrew reader, who had occasionally the leisure time to read a Hebrew poem, and was the minister of the congregation (I mean not the Rabbi, but what you call the sexton rather), added to the old prayer-book some favorite song of his, and that became by and by a holy hymn. The grand songs of the Hebrew school are still appreciated as being the utterances of devout hearts, but the common prayer-book is so enlarged by the fanciful efforts and music of these men, and even sometimes by their crazy poems, that it became quite a necessity for the enlightened Jew of modern days, who understood Hebrew as well as the Hebrews of old, to obliterate everything that is not written in the pure spirit of ancient Judaism. That was the first step in reforming the exercise of prayer; but that was not all. There was another stumbling-block. Although we understand Hebrew, although we enjoy the Hebrew expressions, although we revere that tongue of our ancestors, although

we never would give a Hebrew Bible for the best translation in English or German, still the prayer must be the expression of the feelings of the heart; and since the Hebrew language is not any more our mother tongue, since it is only the language of our scripture and our tradition, since it is only a dead language known to the theologians only in the Jewish denomination, we find it proper that, instead of the Hebrew prayer, the English, the German, the French, or any other living language, shall be introduced to give any worshiper or visitors in our synagogues or our temples an opportunity to utter the language of their hearts. We also refrain in our prayers from any allusion to things of the past that have been considered by the Talmudical Jew only as a kind of consolation for the future. When the Jew of the Talmudical era thought the Messiah would come, and must come, it was not so much a dogma with him as a mode of spiritual encouragement. I could give you proof that a great many Rabbis of the time, that a great many scholars among the Jews, rejected the idea of a personal Messiah. They gave to the people, dejected and scattered, a belief in the coming Redeemer; they said, "The Redeemer, the son of David, will come, and will bring you back to your old glories and to your old beloved Palestine, and will make you happy again." Would you not praise the men of old for giving the masses in Judaism such a material and mental consolation? But now the masses, even amongst us, do not look any more towards Palestine. We look no more for the coming of a Messiah. We understand and know perfectly well what the most sanguine men of the Talmudical and the middle ages said, that even Jesus of Nazareth is a kind of a Messiah, making preparatory steps for the coming salvation. We understand it, the people understand it, and for that reason we give up any allusion in our prayers to any return to Jerusalem and any restoration of the Jewish Empire.

There is, finally, the ecclesiastical aspect. What would you think, my friends, if I should tell you that for the five years I have been working as a Jewish Rabbi in this country, I have never missed any occasion to tell my people in my pulpit that the marvelous stories of the Bible, that most of the laws of the Bible, are not worthy to be believed and recognized as facts and truths? Nobody thinks to-day to excommunicate me. There may be some personal reasons for some men to try to excommunicate me. There was three years ago, if you remember, a great stir among the American Israel to excommunicate some half-dozen Rabbis because, in a conference they attended, one of them said, "I do not believe in a personal God." The same congregation that

may have sympathized for a little time with that effort for excommunication, have already invited me to preach to them. I tell you the Jewish Rabbi of the Reformed school may dare to be in the fullest sympathy even with the results of the researches of my friend Abbot, who is Anti-Christian, and Anti-Jewish, and anti-anything! We say, give us the truth, and in the face of the truth, we shall acknowledge it. We have the old saying, "The seal of Jehovah is truth," and anything that bears the stamp of that seal we respect and revere; and if "The Index" is sealed by the seal of Jehovah, I will read it and acknowledge it. And all the old conceptions of revelation, of the coming of the Messiah, of the depravity of man, and everything of that kind, we gave up from the first moment we cut down the old citadel, the old fence. We are students of modern life. We read modern history, we are receiving education in modern colleges, and we accept and we acknowledge everything that may be shown to us as the truth. But so long as we see going on among the different denominations battle after battle, so long as we do not see that the time has come yet for a real religious peace and harmony upon earth, we are entitled to maintain our peculiar name and fame as Jews. What would you say to the architect who lays the corner-stone of a mighty building that he knows will take years and years to finish, what would you say to such an architect, if he would not obey the rules and advice of his physician, who will tell him, "You are not strong, and if you hope to live to see your building completed, beware of too much exertion and exposure"? Would that architect not be stultifying himself if he would not follow the advice of his medical friend? Would you not admire him for his moderation and self-restriction in keeping aloof from everything that might harm his health? Is he foolish in assuming that he may live long enough to have laid, not only the corner-stone of the building, but also the cap-stone of the dome? In the same position is the Jew. He remains a Jew because the Temple of Universal Religion, the Temple of the Religion of Humanity, is not finished yet. He laid the corner-stone. But here a Christian friend may say, as I have read, if I am not mistaken, in the proceedings of the Free Religious Association five years ago, that one said, speaking right after a Jew (I shall not state it verbatim, but I remember it quite well), "Christ brought into the world a new revelation. He first taught the world of a God who is the Father of all, watching with paternal love over every creature." I ask you, my friends, Christians, Free Religionists, Atheists, whatever you may call yourself, I ask you, for the truth's sake, is such an assertion a fact? Did Christ bring into the world a new revelation in this

respect? Did not the prophet of old, the psalmist of old, proclaim this same God who is the Father of all, the Guardian of all, the merciful King of all? Who was it that spoke of God's "loving kindness and tender mercies"? Is it not in the Hebrew's Bible? And why should the Jew of America not expect to live long enough to say to the Christians, "We recognize your error," and to hear them respond, "You Jews were right; the God you have adored and worshiped, eighteen hundred years before Christ, is the same God the Christians worship eighteen hundred years after Christ"? Why should the Jew give up his name? It would be the act of a coward for him to leave the vessel, although it is quite near the harbor, and to try to swim ashore for himself. We see the land here, we are American Jews, we are happy enough to see it very near. Here upon this platform, which is like an island near the mainland, a Jew can stand on *terra firma* and say, "I too hold influence." Why as Jews should we not live long enough to help all the good men of the world to lay the cap-stone as well as we have laid the corner-stone?

And now, in conclusion, I only want to ask one thing. I said yesterday evening that we asked the Free Religious Association for help; and now I ask that the Free Religious Association will accept our help also as a little mite toward achieving its end: for one thing that I read in this same Report of five years ago, or perhaps in "The Index," as being said and written by our President Frothingham, brought me to the conclusion that I am a "Free Religionist,"—that I was a "Free Religionist" even before I was in America, and may be the Free Religious Association is older than my landing in this Republic. But let me conclude by reading the words of Mr. Frothingham: "We can trust the great powers to vindicate their own supremacy. They need not that we should help, only that we should not hinder,—that is all." The Jews had no help whatever: on the contrary, they were hindered a great deal; but still we shook hands above the "bloody chasm" of the past, and are brethren again. Why should the Free Religious Association not have the same hope? They will not be hindered so much because they can help themselves,—they are Americans. And if the cap-stone shall be laid in a hundred years, perhaps sooner, perhaps later, then may it bear the same inscription that the corner-stone has. It will read perhaps exactly with these words that I found in the latest biography of our beloved, departed, heroic Theodore Parker, and that are said to represent Parker's faith: "There is one God and Father over all, absolute and immutable, whose love is infinite and therefore inexhaustible, and whose tender

mercies are over all the words and works of his hand ; and, whether in the body or out of the body, the farthest one from the fold may yet get home."

That inscription is engraved and impressed upon the corner-stone of the Religion of Humanity laid by Abraham, and that inscription will shine everlastingly from the cap-stone of the dome of the finished Temple.

The PRESIDENT. Before introducing to you Bishop FERETTE, of the Greek Church, who has strayed from his bishopric into radicalism, and who will speak from his own practical observations of religions in the East, you will be kind enough to listen to a cordial and eloquent letter from our friend KESHUB CHUNDER SEN, of India.*

Bishop FERETTE followed in an address on the importance of withdrawing all state endowments from churches, whether in the shape of direct gifts of money or of exemption from taxation, illustrating the topic by the evils of the system of church endowment existing in France. This was a theme, he said, nearer to his heart than that on which he had been invited to speak, and one of serious import to America. He advocated the separation of Church and State,—at least to the extent that the State should not recognize any system of doctrinal theology, and should, even by law, render invalid any sectarian bequest. The sectarian spirit was the bane of religion and the bane of politics and society, and the State should rather tax it than endow it. He closed by reading the draft of a law which he thought would remedy the evil.

At six o'clock the Convention adjourned.

* See Appendix for the letter.

SOCIAL FESTIVAL.

IN the evening a Social Festival, similar to that of the previous year, was held in the new Parker Memorial Hall. The occasion was equally successful, as at the first experiment, in bringing the members and friends of the Association together for better social acquaintance, and also in adding a considerable sum of money to the Treasury. Mr. T. W. HIGGINSON presided, and the time was agreeably diversified with conversation, music, brief addresses, and the interest of the refreshment-tables. This Festival is likely now to become an established feature of the Annual Meeting, and it is hoped that those friends of the Association who cannot be present in person will make it the occasion of sending their annual donations for carrying on the Association's work ; and also that those who can be present will not, in their enjoyment of the good time, forget the Treasurer. The following hymns, written for the occasion, will fitly close our Annual Report :—

“THE LIGHT WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN.”

BY SAMUEL LONGFELLOW.

Air, “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

O Life that maketh all things new, —
The blooming earth, the thoughts of men !
Our pilgrim feet, wet with thy dew,
In gladness hither turn again.
From hand to hand the greeting flows,
From eye to eye the signals run,
From heart to heart the bright hope glows ;
The lovers of the Light are one.

One in the freedom of the Truth,
One in the joy of paths untrod,
One in the soul's perennial youth,
One in the larger thought of God ;
The freer step, the fuller breath,
The wide horizon's grander view,
The sense of life that knows no death,
The Life that maketh all things new.

"IF THAT WHICH IS DONE AWAY WAS GLORIOUS, MUCH MORE
THAT WHICH REMAINETH IS GLORIOUS."

BY W. C. GANNETT.

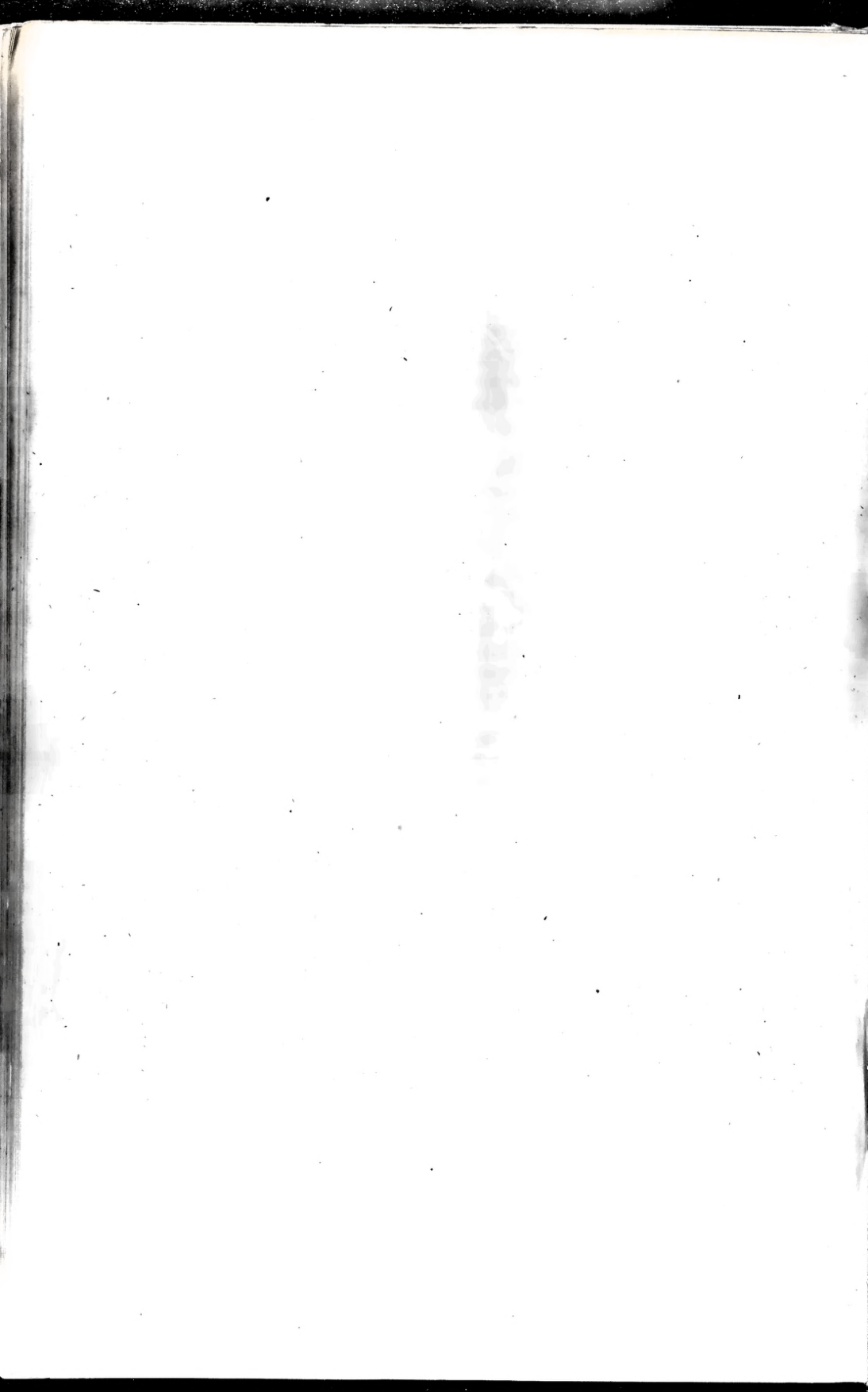
Air, "Autumn."

Fairer grows the earth each morning
To the eyes that watch aright,
Every vision is a dawning
Of some marvel come to light,
Of some unsuspected glory
Waiting in the old and plain ;
Traveler ne'er told the story
Of such wonders as remain.

As we seek — the quest is duty —
Inward towards the heart of things,
Everywhere the gate called Beauty
Fresh across the pathway swings ;
Each we enter, foolish mortals,
Thinking now His throne to find,
Just to gaze on grander portals, —
Still the Temple lies behind !

O my miracles ! you flowers,
Laughing secrets in my eyes !
Well I know the Heavenly Powers
Hide from me your best surprise.
O dear brothers 'neath the flowers,
Glory that was torn away !
Vanished faces light these hours
More than all the shining May.

Faith I love ! I love you deeper
That to lose you would be gain ;
Seed may perish, if the reaper
Comes home singing after pain.
All our creeds are hinting only
Of a faith of nobler strain, —
God is living ! Who feels lonely
With the Glories that remain ?



APPENDIX.

LETTERS.

FROM KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

THE BRAHMO SOMAJ OF INDIA, }
CALCUTTA, April 17, 1874. }

Dear Friend and Brother,—

Accept my love and greetings. To all those who are co-operating with you in promoting the cause of Free Religion in America, and strengthening the ties of brotherly love among the missionaries of truth in distant lands, my hearty good wishes and affectionate regards. I sincerely regret I did not receive your cordial message in time, or I would have gladly sent a response for your May meeting last year. It was perhaps through inadvertence you posted it round the Pacific, instead of *via* England. Hence the unusual delay. I trust, however, my present letter will reach you in time for your next annual meeting.

Both from your letter and the Report of the Free Religious Association you kindly sent me, it is clear that the tide of liberal thought is steadily and mightily rolling onward in your part of the world. The success of "The Index" is a striking fact. I wish we could get the paper in exchange for our "Indian Mirror," which is a daily paper, devoted to religious, social, and political reformation, under the auspices of our church. The evidence you have given of the remarkable activity of the liberal press during the year 1872 is most encouraging. The books you mention, judging from your flattering remarks, are alike creditable to the authors and the spirit of the age, and will no doubt greatly help the development and extension of pure faith. May all those whom God has called to the battle-field fight valiantly and earnestly, and may their example inflame the zeal of their weaker brethren, so that with able leaders and a numerous band of faithful soldiers, with ample resources and an extended and powerful organization, we may eventually be enabled to overcome all opposition and unfurl the banners of victory.

It is indeed of the utmost importance that all scattered forces should unite, and our roving brethren, unknown to each other, should meet in a common home and unitedly and lovingly further their common work. Dogma unites men and forms communities. That we have seen. Love too can unite the children of the one true God, even where there is no dogmatic and sectarian tie. This the world has yet to see. May all true-hearted Theists in different parts of the world be one in faith and love and hope, and combine to hasten the advent of the kingdom of God!

Here, too, our church prospers. The Lord is working in our midst and evolving fresh truths and ideas, for which we thank and bless him with hearts full of gladness. He is so kind and merciful to us and our motherland! How he is cheering and sanctifying the souls of our countrymen and countrywomen? Not a month passes but we have some new tokens of his love. Sweet is it to glorify the God of love.

Let us then, brother, join hands and hearts to sing the glory of our common Father, and further the cause of truth in the world.

Believe me yours affectionately,

Mr. William J. Potter,

KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

Secretary of Free Religious Association of America.

FROM FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Dear Mr. Potter,—

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 15, 1874.

I have delayed attention to your kind invitation thus long in the hope of being able at last to return you an affirmative answer, but circumstances are against me. I cannot be present at your Free Religious Convention in Boston. This is, of course, of smaller consequence to others than to myself, for I should come more to hear than be heard. Freedom is a word of charming sound, not only to the tasked and tortured slaves who toil for an earthly master, but for those who would break the galling chains of darkness and superstition. Regarding the Free Religious movement as one for light, love, and liberty, limited only by reason and human welfare, and opposed to the works of those who convert life and death into enemies of human happiness, who people the invisible world with ghastly task-masters, I give it hearty welcome. Only the truth can make men free, and I trust that your convention will be guided in all its utterances by its light and feel its power. I know many of the good men and women who are likely to assemble with you, and I would gladly share with them the burden of reproach which their attacks upon popular error will be sure to bring upon them.

Very truly yours,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

FROM D. A. WASSON.

STUTTGART, 5 ALLEEN STRASSE, May 8, 1874.

My Dear Mr. Whipple,—

It was a pleasure to me to see the circular of the Free Religious Association, which has just now come to hand, and to be reminded by it of the country, the coadjutors and friends, that, with less perhaps of partiality, I hold only dearer as years increase. I see in that Association, not the nucleus of a new sect, one more sect added to the overplus we have already, but an institute for discussion of the largest problems in the largest spirit. As such it should be welcome to all those who know in what age they live. I have, for my own part, no quarrel with Christianity, but recognize in it an ideal of goodness that is in its way unsurpassable, as nothing can be more golden than gold itself. Some antiquated dogmas, again, of Christian theology seem to me adumbrations of truths that many have cast away along with their obsolete forms, and that will have to be recovered, restated, and made familiar to the modern mind. But also it seems to me idle to pretend that, after Newton and Darwin, after Nieburhr and Baur, we are just where we were before, and need to inquire only within the limits of formal Christianity. Farther, I cannot but think it mischievous, almost criminal, to instruct men that they must choose between acceptance of these limits, on the one hand, and materialism, atheism, on the other. That has been but too much done already. Numbers, daily increasing numbers, take the alternative as stated, and, incapable — creditably incapable, I should say — of being mediævalists in religion while moderns in everything else, say, "Well, materialism, atheism, be it then." This is pressed upon my mind by the vast spread of materialistic doctrine among the people with whom I have been two years living. It does not indeed appear to me that there is more of materialism in Germany than in America; but it has a different character. In this country, it is the materialism of science; in ours, of money-making. In the one case it is manifested as opinion; in the other, as motive. In Germany it leaves the church; in America it perhaps joins the church, recites the creed, and *deacons* out the bread and wine. It is plain that, theoretically or practically, one or both, the attitude of the world toward religion has changed; that new mental needs have arisen, and that the old answers to the old questions do not now answer. After all has been said that can be said about the Christian religion, there is still a question, becoming a very serious one, about *human* religion; and it scarcely serves to discourse of the coat when there has got to be a doubt about the cloth. Under the head, "How to cook a salmon," the advice was given, "First catch your salmon." Our theological cooks have their methods and sauces, but while they are getting up a fire, preparing their pans and collecting the condiments, it turns out that the fish is in the sea, and will not bite at the old bait. The Christian dressing is the best, but what use to talk of it to men to whom the reality or value of the raw article has become questionable? Pardon what seems, or is, a trivial metaphor; if I speak in a light way, it

is not with a light mind, for indeed the situation is no light matter. It is wholly plain to me that, while Christianity contains an immortal ideal, the Christian institution, the Christian ecclesiasticism, with its "plans of salvation," its confessions, symbols, sacraments, is dying at the root. The churches still make converts, but on cheaper and cheaper terms. The old creeds are still recited, but more and more in the style of a tourist who visits a cathedral to say that he has seen it, or of a man who buys a library because every gentleman should have one. Even what are vaunted as manifestations of faith manifest the want of it. See these people in America, who go about praying, not *to* God, but *at* men. What is prayer to them? A social force, like fashion, having its effect, not between earth and heaven, but between mouth and ear. A great change goes inevitably on. The church resembles a town whose business has decayed; the enterprising, daring minds migrate to seek their fortune elsewhere; the timid and ease-loving stay, with those who are detained by tender considerations of kindred, domestic ties, etc. The town remains, but grows somnolent. A wit said that Newport is Newburyport without the *bury*. The ecclesiastical institution, Augustine's "City of God," has come to have much *bury* about it. Look for the daring activities, and you find them in some rampant Chicago, itself not perfectly pleasing to the mind, but "going ahead" and making the future. It is time that this state of things was recognized. Without preaching a crusade against the old towns, *somebody* should look after the Chicagos, give them sobriety of thought, moral texture and tone, the fine spirit of culture, the deep spirit of reverence, — should take up for them the old truth, and make it new; and share with them the new truth, to give it the ripeness of age. I see in your Association a look that way, and trust it will look to some purpose. You will keep it large and hospitable, I hope; not the organ of a small, speculative polemic, not the exponent of an *exclusive* modernism, and cheap because exclusive, as if nobody had thought until our day. He that shuts the "spirit of the age" out of religion, and he that would shut up religion in that spirit exclusively, are simply rival jailors, opposite and alike. The merely modern mind has its own limitations, some of them very stringent ones. There can be too much spirit of the age. Progress only in that spirit is like those fertilizers which force the land without feeding it; there is a crop for this year and an exhausted soil for the next. We want the organic, structural spirit of all ages, — all that has made civilization and that sustains it. Do not think me renegade if I say that the mere modernist — for an example of his limitation — is trying to get more out of liberty than there is in it. Liberty, simply as such, is inorganic, indeterminate; not structure, but mere let alone. At best, it is but the timber in the forest, which, observe, has to be felled before you get your ship or *chalet*. But your president, I see, has the last winter been emphasizing the word *discipline*. That was to me a cheerful token. There the organic, the structural thought, comes in. Man has not a human condition without liberty, and liberty itself is not human

without discipline. I attribute many of the moral confusions which prevail with us to our having a blind eye upon that matter. Our Jeffersonian liberty would have done us to death long ago, if that puritan discipline which Jefferson so hated, and which was indeed too priestly, had not been behind it.

Enough, you will say, of this ; but indulge me a moment more. What I wish to suggest is this : the world is in for a hard time ; and that the time may not prove too hard, some things must be seen to. The old is dying out, and the new — well, it is new, raw, half-made. Civilization is removing into another habitation. This removing is at best an ugly, topsy-turvy business, demoralizing to all domesticities ; but removing into a house that as yet is but a composite of wall, scaffolding, litter, and out of doors, upsets orderly habits in a peculiar degree. That is the modern situation. Indeed, there are many who have moved out, and will not even try to move in, but camp around, gypsy fashion. Well, I do not say, Stay in the old homestead ; that is tumbling down. But I do say, Get a whole thought about the new one, and *mean structure*, with the liberation of human virtue within it ; not Bedouin freedom, that liberates the beast to enslave the man. You do not need my counsel, but I offer what I have ; and if the guest at my table has as good dishes at home, so much the better.

Give my greetings to your friends and mine, and assure them that, in my own way, I am working as sincerely as they, or as any, for the new time ; and not working without good hope, though aware that, as ever, courageous hearts and clear heads can alone give hope its fruition. I am conservative, no doubt of it, and mean to be so, as Nature is ; being of opinion that without a good deal of conserving our world would not probably be here. Only I have no intention to conserve rotten wood ; and if a resolution to see when the wood *is* rotten be radicalism, count on me for a radical. It is a question of eyes, this of conservative or radical. The conservative principles that go into a good wall are a good thing, and the radicalism that means building solidly, at the right time and place, is another good thing. Your Association means both, I trust.

Faithfully yours,

D. A. WASSON.

