

GS173

Free Religious Association.

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION,

HELD IN BOSTON,

MAY 26 AND 27, 1870.

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1870

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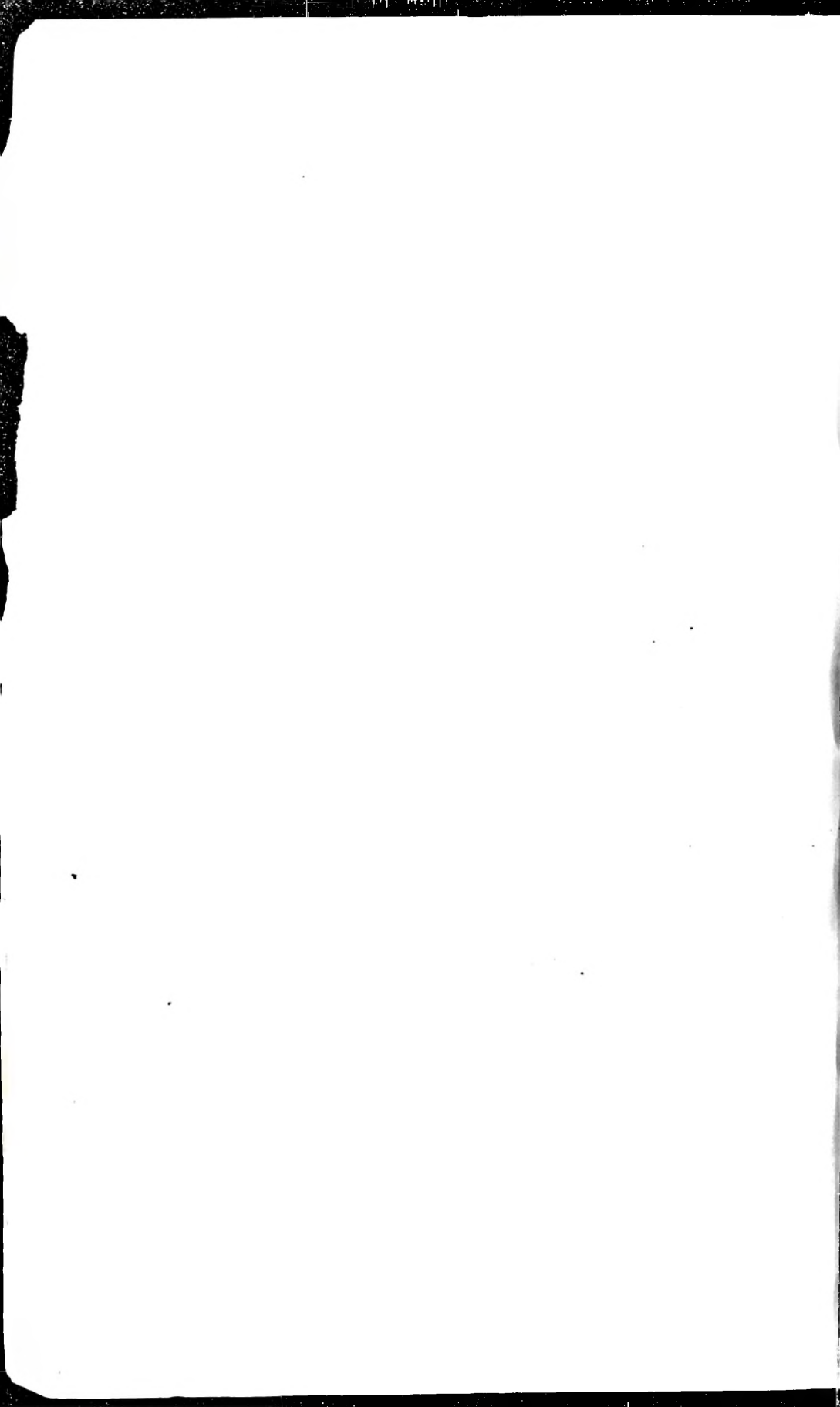
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R E P O R T.

THE Third Annual Meeting of the FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION was held in Boston, on the 26th and 27th of May, 1870.

The Association convened for business in the Parker Fraternity Hall, on Thursday, the 26th, at three o'clock, P.M. ; the President, OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM, in the chair.

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

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL, Treasurer of the Association, presented his Report, showing the receipts of the year to have been \$1,117.98 ; expenditures (for last Annual Meeting, printing, and correspondence), \$943.92 ; balance in the treasury, \$174.06.

Voted, That the Treasurer's Report be accepted.

Mr. HALLOWELL moved that an Auditing Committee be appointed to audit the Treasurer's account next year : Adopted. The chair appointed CORNELIUS WELLINGTON and HENRY DAMON for this Committee.

The Committee to nominate officers for the ensuing year reported that they proposed no change from the preceding year, with the exception of THOMAS W. HIGGINSON for Vice-President, in place of Mrs. CAROLINE M. SEVERANCE, who desired to be excused from further service. They presented the following list, and the officers named were elected.

OFFICERS.

President.

OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM *New-York City.*

Vice-Presidents.

ROBERT DALE OWEN *New Harmony, Ind.*

ROWLAND CONNOR *Boston, Mass.*

THOMAS W. HIGGINSON *Newport, R.I.*

Secretary.

WILLIAM J. POTTER *New Bedford, Mass.*

Assistant Secretary.

MISS HANNAH E. STEVENSON *19 Mt. Vernon Street,
Boston, Mass.*

Treasurer.

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL *98 Federal Street, Bos-
ton, Mass.*

Directors.

ISAAC M. WISE *Cincinnati, Ohio.*

CHARLES K. WHIPPLE *Boston, Mass.*

MRS. EDNAH D. CHENEY *Jamaica Plain, Mass.*

FRANCIS E. ABBOT *Toledo, Ohio.*

JOHN WEISS *Watertown, Mass.*

FRANCIS TIFFANY *West Newton, Mass.*

Voted, That AARON M. POWELL, MARY SHANNON, and ABRAM W. STEVENS be appointed a Committee to nominate a list of officers for the next Annual Meeting.

The Secretary then read the Annual Report of the Executive Committee, as follows : —

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

THE Third Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION is herewith respectfully presented.

The year has not been without interest to the friends of the Association, though there may be little of actual achievement to record. There are many indications, direct and indirect, that the cause which the Association represents is progressing, and that our organization has not been without its use in giving impulse and a more conscious aim and significance to this progress. The correspondence of the Association, which, between the annual meetings, is thus far one of the most important features of its work, reveals a wide-spread and growing interest in its principles and objects. The Association is coming to be recognized as having an influential place and destiny in the religious movements of the time. Though its activity as an organization may seem small, and its treasury may yet disclose no very strong financial constituency, yet the ideas which it stands for are felt to be very vital forces in modern thought and society.

INCORPORATION.

At the last annual meeting a vote was passed authorizing the Executive Committee to take such measures as may be necessary for legally incorporating the Association whenever in their judgment it should be deemed expedient to take the step. It has seemed sufficient to the Committee for the present that they should have the power which this vote gives. No sufficient reason has appeared the past year for using the authority thus put into their hands, and the Association still remains without incorporation.

PUBLICATIONS.

A phonographic Report in pamphlet form of the proceedings at the last annual meeting is the only specific publication we have issued during the year. This has received a considerable circulation, though the sale of it has covered but a small part of the expense of having it printed. Our machinery for the publication and circulation of the Report, as, indeed, of any other matter, is at present very imperfect. Having no place

for headquarters, and no room for keeping publications, it is very difficult for us to do much of this kind of work. The little property which we possess in publications is now deposited in four separate places. The Committee believe that great advantage would accrue to the Association, not only in this matter of publication, but generally, if it could be provided with a central office. If publication were to be undertaken to any great extent, such an office would be absolutely necessary. And publication seems to be one of the most legitimate ways by which the Association may accomplish its work. But the funds in our treasury have never been sufficient to warrant the incurring of the necessary expenditure for headquarters; and the circulation of our annual reports and other publications has doubtless suffered from this cause. For the readier circulation of the Report, the Committee propose, that hereafter all members of the Association, paying to its Treasurer annually the sum of one dollar or more, shall be allowed one copy of the Report free from further expense. All persons, therefore, who at this annual meeting, or afterwards during the year, shall contribute one dollar or upwards to the Association, and shall give their names and post-office address, will receive a copy of the Report.

Under the head of publications we are able to announce, however, that an arrangement has been made with "The Index," Mr. F. E. Abbot's paper, published at Toledo, Ohio, by which a certain part of that journal each week is devoted to the special interests of the Free Religious Association. The offer of this arrangement, which entails no expense upon the Association, was courteously and generously made by the editor and proprietors of "The Index," and was most gratefully accepted by the Executive Committee. It is due to both parties to state that no responsibility rests upon either for the opinions and work of the other in "The Index." Our department of the paper is under the editorial charge of the Secretary of the Association, and is designed especially as a channel for such information with regard to the objects and doings of the Association, and the general principles on which it rests, as may be of interest and value to the members and to the general public.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.

The question has arisen the past year as to the relation of this Association to local organizations formed on essentially the same basis, of which there are now several in different parts of the country. The ground which has been taken in this matter is, that though this Association is American, as its list of officers indicates, it is nevertheless an organization of individuals in their individual capacity alone, and that no delegate system is to be recognized, nor credentials asked for in its conventions, and

that no connection, other than that of mutual good-will and of common effort for the same ends, can properly be established between it and any local society. This Association cannot but be interested in these local organizations. It aims to represent the general movement of which they are a part, and correspondence and co-operation with them is most cordially solicited. The general Association may serve as a central bureau for collecting and imparting information with regard to them; and in many ways they may work together to mutual advantage. But it is a necessary consequence of the principles involved in the free religious movement that this co-operation and auxiliarityship should be utterly free; that no relation of subordination or of formal dependence should be established, even in the slightest degree, between any local religious organization and the national Association, and no membership recognized in either save that of individual free men and free women, responsible only for their own opinions and characters.

CONVENTIONS.

Another question which has received some attention the past year is the feasibility of holding conventions, under the auspices of this Association, in different parts of the country. It has been suggested that a series of conventions might be held successfully, beginning in some city of central New York, and extending West, to the Mississippi and beyond, — conventions where the many religious problems, speculative and practical, which are now pressing for solution upon hundreds of minds in every considerable community, may be brought for discussion. It is believed that there is no difference of opinion in the Executive Committee as to the desirability of such conventions, if they could be ably conducted. The prime difficulty in the way of our undertaking such a work is the want of men whom we can depute for the service, and of money to meet the expense of sending them. The persons specially fit for such service are hard at work in other fields. It is hoped, however, that something may be done in this direction the coming year; that at least one general convention may be held next autumn, under the auspices of the Association, in some Western city. But let not our friends in any large city or town wait for the Association to move in this matter. Wherever they are able to meet the local expense of a convention, and to make the necessary external arrangements for it, the Association will certainly endeavor, so far as lies in its power, to provide speakers and to help forward the objects of the meeting.

THE ANNUAL CONVENTION.

With regard to the general annual convention to be held to-morrow in Tremont Temple, the Committee have thought it wise to make some

change from the programme by which the two previous annual conventions have been conducted; and it may be well to give here an explanation of the change. In each of the last two years, a sincere and vigorous attempt was made to bring together upon the platform of our annual meeting representatives of various religious opinions and sects, and to give to each the opportunity to state, freely and candidly, the convictions that to him or her were most dear. This was done to prove the breadth and fairness of our platform, and with the belief that persons of differing and opposing religious convictions could not thus come together to make a free and earnest comparison of views without imbibing something more of courtesy, respect, and charity for each other's religious opinions and character; and thus something would be done towards that fellowship in spirit which it is one of the objects of the Free Religious Association to promote. And this attempt, so far as it succeeded, was not without value in this direction. It is certainly something worthy of note, in the midst of the sectarian animosities of Christendom, to have merely brought together in one assembly, to listen respectfully to each other's religious views, Orthodox Christians of different sects, the Liberal Christian, the Jew, the Supernaturalist, the Spiritualist, the Rationalist, and the so-called Infidel. It is, moreover, one of the objects of the Association to recognize, and so far as possible to use and work with, the liberal and progressive tendencies that are manifest in all the sects. Least of all would it inaugurate a new sect. But in this effort at liberality and comprehensiveness, grave misunderstandings as to the objects of the Association have been risked and incurred. Many people have come to think that the Free Religious Association has no principles of its own, and no definite purpose, — that its only object is to furnish a wide platform once a year where persons of different theologies or of no theologies may meet for an entertaining exercise in polemics. The Committee have thought it expedient, therefore, to use the opportunity of the convention this year for setting forth more specifically the principles and aims which they believe to be embodied in the Constitution of the Association. Topics and speakers have accordingly been selected with the view of showing how the Free Religious Association may grapple with the speculative and practical religious problems of the time. Yet it must be understood that the speakers, though selected because of their supposed appreciation of, and sympathy with, the general principles which the Association represents, will only speak for themselves, as individual members of the organization, or as friends of its idea. It is hardly necessary to add that in adopting this plan, the Committee do not presume to fix the programme of future meetings, nor to abridge in the least the real comprehensiveness of our platform. They wish, rather, to show how vastly more compre-

hensive is the aim of the Association, than merely to bring together into mechanical juxtaposition for a single day of the year representatives of different sects and non-sects in or out of Christendom. They wish to show that it seeks to reveal and develop those fundamental sympathies of the human mind with Truth and Justice and Virtue, which, lying within and below all specific forms of religious belief, are the germs of all intellectual and moral progress, and in the free development of which the limits of specific religions and sects are to be passed over and obliterated, and mankind are to come into a moral and spiritual unity that shall not be mechanical nor artificially eclectic merely, but organic,—a vital assimilation of whatever is true and permanent in the creeds and codes of all religions and all races.

POSSIBLE MISSION OF THE ASSOCIATION.

Your Committee believe, indeed, that the Free Religious Association has a great mission before it, if it only take the opportunity presented to its hands. The very atmosphere of our age is impregnated with the germs of the mightiest social and moral problems. And this country, from the freedom which it offers, seems to be the historically chosen field where these problems are to have their development. The old question of the relation of religion to civil government, which has generally been assumed to be a settled question in the United States, is coming up anew to demand a settlement on the ground of fixed, substantial principles, and not on the mere accident that a vast majority of the citizens chance to be of one form of religious faith. The question of the relation of religion to the public schools, with its still more subordinate question of the reading of the Bible as a religious exercise in the schools,—a question which is now just opening a gigantic struggle that is to extend through the country,—is but a part of this greater question of the connection between religion and the state, which lies behind, and where the real conflict must finally come. Involved with this are the minor conflicts in regard to Sunday laws, and the unjust statutes in some of the States concerning legal oaths and the religious qualifications of jurors and witnesses in courts. Then there are the multiform problems, speculative and practical, which are raised by modern science and philosophy; and which already, though crudely solved or not solved at all, are affecting the actual life of vast numbers of people. Add to these the great social problems that are now everywhere seeking of public opinion some solution,—as the demand for a new and more equitable adjustment of the relations between capital and labor; the agitation for a readjustment, in accordance with the new light and civilization of the age, of the relations between man and

woman in the various functions of society ; the search for better methods of meeting the evils of pauperism, intemperance, and crime of every kind ; and generally, the call for some more effective application of the intelligence, virtue, and culture that are anywhere stored up in individuals or families, or in favored portions of the community, to the conduct of governments, and to the improvement and elevation of society at large. And add still again the problem, both social and civil, which we in this country have to work out, of a nation which is to assimilate into its own life and institutions all religions and races of men, — which is to do justice and give citizenship to all ; to the African, the Indian, and the Mongolian, as well as to the Caucasian stock ; to the Irish Catholic, the German sceptic, and the Chinese Confucian and Buddhist, as well as to the descendants of Protestantism and Puritanism. Such are some of the problems, aside from those more purely ecclesiastical and religious, which are put into the hands of America to solve. Now, if religion, out of its manifold historic career and experience, out of its claim to touch the deepest things in human nature and to represent man's grandest inspirations, has any aid to offer in the solution of these problems (and if it has not, then it must indeed stand aside as a force that has had its day, and is no longer available in human society), — but if religion in any form can help forward the settlement of these questions, then surely the Free Religious Association, committed to the defence of no dogmas, untrammelled by traditions, having no lines of church authority to hold, utterly disencumbered of all ecclesiastical *impedimenta*, cordially allying itself with science, free to accept truth wherever and however found, and holding itself perfectly plastic to the spirit of the age, should be able to render some service in the struggle with these great problems whose solution is to determine the future of American government and life. Such is a hint of the opportunities which await the personal faith and fidelity that shall transform them into living forces and accomplished facts.

Voted, That the Report of the Executive Committee be accepted, and that the subjects referred to therein be opened to the consideration of the meeting.

Mr. F. E. ABBOT, referring to that part of the Report which stated the arrangement made between the Executive Committee and himself as editor of "The Index," said that he thought it would be for the advantage of both parties to the arrangement, if the terms of it should be very distinctly and publicly understood. He proposed, therefore, the following resolution : —

Resolved, That the Free Religious Association has no regular,

authorized organ of communication with the public, except that portion of "The Index" specially devoted to its interests and edited by its Secretary; and that neither the Association as a whole, nor any one of its members as such, is responsible for statements or opinions contained in any other part of "The Index."

Mr. ABBOT stated that he desired the adoption of some such resolution for his own sake as well as for the sake of the Association. After some discussion, it was suggested that the same end would be reached, if the Association should particularly approve that portion of the Report of the Executive Committee which related to this matter; and Mr. A. M. POWELL moved to substitute for Mr. ABBOT's resolution the following:—

Resolved, That we hereby specifically indorse the arrangement made by the Executive Committee with the editor of "The Index," by which a certain portion of that paper is devoted to the special interests of the Free Religious Association, and edited by its Secretary, it being understood that no responsibility rests upon either party in this arrangement for the opinions and work of the other in "The Index."

This substitute was adopted, and unanimously passed.

Some discussion ensued on other subjects touched upon in the Report. Remarks were made by A. M. POWELL, THOMAS VICKERS, A. B. ALCOTT, JAMES T. DICKINSON, CARL HORSCH, HENRY DAMON, and others.

Mr. DAMON moved that the Executive Committee be requested to take into consideration the practicability of holding, before the next annual meeting, four conventions in the interest of free religious ideas, in different parts of the country outside of Boston; and to arrange for such conventions, if they shall deem them practicable, according to their judgment. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourned to meet at 10 A.M., Friday, the 27th, in Tremont Temple.

SESSIONS IN TREMONT TEMPLE.

MORNING SESSION.

The Convention in Tremont Temple was called to order, shortly after ten o'clock, by the President, OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM, who greeted the large assembly with a few introductory words. The chair was then taken by ROWLAND CONNOR, one of the Vice-Presidents, while Mr. FROTHINGHAM delivered the following address :—

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

I shall attempt in this address to present the idea of the Free Religious Association. I shall endeavor, of course, being an officer of the Association, and a friend of its principle, to make my statement as persuasively as I can ; but I shall also aim at making it honestly, without equivocation or subterfuge, so that, however severely criticised, it may, at least, be clearly understood.

The Association, to-day, for the first time, stands forward in the person of its members and friends, and presents, under various form, its own idea. In former years the Association kept itself in the background. It opened a hall, and provided a platform on which all forms of opinion appeared, and made their declarations of faith, unchallenged and uncriticised. By giving welcome to the several shapes of creed and of creedlessness, the Association declared the extent of its hospitality, its indifference to external modes of belief, its disregard of formularies, its disapproval of sects, its conviction that thought was greater than dialects and definitions, its persuasion that beneath verbal differences there lay an essential, though not perhaps an immediately discernible unity, its faith that reason acting reasonably would arrive at truth ; but in its own name it said nothing. It bound itself to say nothing, being unwilling that any should hold it committed to a dogma, a theory, a scheme, — to any suspicion of a form of opinion which might expose its members to the charge of being a sect or a clique. These meetings undoubtedly served their purpose. If it be contended that they produced no definite results, it may be asserted that no definite results were anticipated. They were symbolical meetings, rather than polemical or

even declaratory. They showed our catholicity, but neither the grounds on which it rested, nor the genius in whose creative energy it placed its trust.

At present, a different demand is urged upon us. The criticism of our enemies, and the inquiries of our friends alike render it imperative that we should say plainly who we are, what we think and propose, why we put forward claims to the respect and sympathy of thoughtful and earnest people. "We see the miscellaneous company on your platform," the observers say: "we note that the religions of the earth sit side by side there, courteously listening to each other. But who are you that offer the platform? Why do you offer it? What do you propose to do with the religions? What talisman is to make them recognize one another? What sound of ram's horn or silver trumpet is to lay flat the walls that separate them? What charmed key is to unlock the casket wherein each shall find its secret? A platform is not a bond; a miscellaneous company of ladies and gentlemen is not an organization; eight or ten hours of promiscuous and incoherent speaking are better calculated to confound such ideas as we have than to convey to us your own."

A sentence in our constitution may have conspired with the apparently heterogeneous character of our previous meetings to beget confusion of mind in regard to our purposes. It is there written, "Membership in this Association shall leave each individual responsible for his own opinions alone, and affect in no degree his relations to other associations." This reads like a frank disavowal of principles, — a disavowal that is rendered emphatic by our invitation to Jews, Theists, Mohammedans, Romanists, Anglicists, Calvinists and Arminians, Unitarians, Universalists, Spiritualists, Positivists, representatives of each and every form of belief, unbelief, and disbelief, existing in the community. May all these remain where they are, and still be with us? Where, then, are we? May they be what they are, and yet be Free Religionists? What, then, is a Free Religionist? Is he a Nihilist, a Nothingarian, a negative quantity? Is he what is left when these have taken all they want? Is he the smell of the empty wine-flask; the puff of poisonous carbon which proceeds from the crucible in which the diamond has been reduced to a gas? Let me explain. We invite the sects to our membership, but *not in their sectarian capacity*. We tell men they need not give up their opinions; but we do not tell them they need not give up their dogmatism. Any person may belong to the Free Religious Association, whatever his creed; but no one can belong who *worships* his creed; no one can belong who holds his creed to be changeless, authoritative, or indispensable. Our members are free to think as they must or may; but they are not free to put a limit to their own or their neighbor's thinking. Accept what theol-

ogies you will, say we ; but accept them in submission to the truth. The Romanist, therefore, cannot belong to us, who believes that membership in his church is essential to salvation. The Orthodox Protestant cannot belong to us, who is persuaded that there is no hope, or faint hope, for those who reject his articles : they cannot, because they will not. Thus, at the outset, we strike a principle ; this, namely, that *credence is subordinated to truth*. Formularies are but attempts at stating conclusions ; articles are efforts at enunciating thought ; all creeds are tentative ; no creed is final ; theologies are guesses, conjectures, having no ultimate but only a partial significance. To use the familiar words of Tennyson, —

“ Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be.
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

Thus, at a blow, paralyzing the force of dogma, and taking from sectarianism its ground, we plant ourselves on a new position. For sectarianism is our chief, I had almost said our only, foe. It was this that called us into existence as an association, and this under all forms, least and greatest, we pursue : the spirit that divides and disintegrates, that reduces truth to opinions, surrounds every opinion with a brazen wall, builds upon it a fortress, and, in this condition of mental feudalism, ravages the domain of Faith by ambush, foray, and feud ; the spirit that multiplies pope-doms, breeds crops of small infallibilities, issues against fellowship the decrees it should launch against evil, and wastes in defences against fidelity the resources that should be used in putting infidelity to the rout ; the jealous spirit that is ever on the watch against the approaches of intelligence on the one side, and the advances of generosity on the other ; the false spirit that makes as many churches as there are denominations and as many religions as there are cliques, all the time deluding men with the idea that the spirit needs houses, when it is the spirit that builds houses, and that alone can live in houses that no hands have builded.

Into our kingdom of heaven no sectarian may enter. The Trinitarian may come in, and the Unitarian : the Calvinist and the Universalist are equally welcome. We have open arms for the believer in the deity of Christ and for the believer in his humanity ; but whoever enters our gate must put off his sectarian shoes at the door. He must be Protestant first, Evangelical or Liberal afterwards. First Christian, then his particular kind of Christian.

Is so much plain ? Then a broader statement will be intelligible. When Tennyson wrote the fine lines, —

They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they, —

he was addressing the Christ, contemplating no larger term. But a larger term there is. If you have followed me thus far, you must go with me one step farther: you must say that as sects are subordinate to the religion they divide, so the religions are subordinate to religion itself which they resolve into departments. RELIGION comprehends religions, as the productive force in a natural species comprehends all its products, and as much more as its own more completely developed action may bring forth.

The race is dominated by several great forms of religion. Something over one hundred millions of men are still attached to the primitive rudimental faiths which ascribe divine qualities to natural objects. Forty millions profess the religions of Zoroaster and Confucius; Brahmanism counts sixty millions, or more; Buddhism numbers one hundred and seventy millions; Islam, in its various folds, contains ninety-six millions; from four to five millions profess Judaism; Christianity, including the Greek and Latin churches, and all the Protestant sects, is the faith of some two hundred and sixty millions of souls.

These religions are organized, instituted powers. They have their holy times and places, their ordinances, priests, and rites, their modes of worship and forms of credence. Each has its creative principle or germ; its form of administration, its sacred traditions, its holy beliefs and books to which it clings with tenacious reverence. Each regards itself as being the one and only true religion. Each claims its special revelation, usually authenticated by miracles, disclosed by prophets, incarnated in redeemers.

These religions maintain their relative positions with surprisingly little alteration. None may boast conspicuous gains; none need bewail serious losses. No superstition has been destroyed; no faith has prevailed. Worships the most rudimental and the most degraded still occupy a place on the historic field, and hold their own in spite of the attacks of modern illumination. They retain their peculiarities, their wild theosophies, their grotesque practices, their institutions barbarous and revolting. The Christian missionaries are untiring in their devotion: they are backed by powerful and determined organizations; and yet they make on the unchristianized world no impression that gives faintest encouragement to the idea that the faith they carry will ever be conquering or predominant.

Each religion seems to have its place of habitation, its climate, and its race; its home from which it does not wander far, and into which it allows no intrusion. If it travels, it must accommodate itself to the countries it visits; if it entertains guests, it forces them to wear its garb.

Let us not be misunderstood. We are not brought to affirm the indifference of religions: still less are we tempted to assert their equality in dignity or worth. That some are nobler than others is a fact too evident to be overlooked. One is leaf, another blossom, another fruit. Indeed,

to compare them is less easy than to contrast them. Strung along in a line from the world's infancy to its maturity, they represent the stages of the world's growth. The sentiment of the Infinite is the creative source of them all. But that sentiment, how variably is it blended! It may be found somewhere to exist as pure sentiment, unmixed with intellect. The religions of India combine sentiment with fancy. The religions of the Semitic race are a combination of sentiment with the moral sense. In China the sentiment has a large infusion of the filial, domestic, and ancestral spirit. We need not hesitate to say, that Christianity is the crowning glory of religions thus far; but we must not turn a deaf ear to eulogiums which other faiths receive from their adherents. The Christian claims that his religion is the religion of the highest races, and the most developed civilizations. He declares that it associates the religious sentiment with the greatest number of regal powers, with the most of sympathy, conscience, intelligence, and imagination; that its theology is the grandest piece of speculative construction yet achieved; its churches the noblest monuments of organized feeling and purpose yet erected; its cultus the most complete expression of the heart's desire, the most comprehensive ministration to its need yet devised; that its sacred books are, as a whole, so much richer than those of any other faith, that they are not altogether unworthy to be called "The Bible." In the purity of its moral standard; the sublimity of its moral ideal; the splendor of its cardinal virtues; the sweetness of its spiritual graces; the strength of its upward-soaring wing; the tenderness of its human regards; its skilful blending of judgment and grace; the awfulness of its abysses; the transcendency of its heights; the vastness of its pictorial representations; the magnificence of the frescoes with which it has covered the adamantine walls of the world; the softness of its angels; the terror of its fiends; the domestic qualities of its Godhead, Father, Mother, and Child; the stateliness of its drama of redemption, whose stage is the heaven-canopied universe, whose scenes are the epochs of history, whose *dramatis personæ* are all created beings, nay, the uncreated Being himself, — in these, and in a hundred respects besides, Christianity, in the view of its disciples, is the queen of faiths.

But the older faiths of India, Persia, China, Judea, speak of their glories and superiorities, too, as rapturously as this faith does. And if we look forward, measuring by the rule of present intelligence, we see those who regard Christianity as very imperfect.

Is Christianity the full and final faith? Does it satisfy philosophy? Does it exhaust feeling? Is it synonymous with reason? It is a gorgeous romance. Is it a complete story of the heart's life? Is it even poetry for the modern imagination? Does it satisfy the dreams of the mature

world? Is it our Tennyson, or our Browning? Our George Eliot, or even our Charles Dickens? Is it open to no criticism? What statement will you make of it that commands general assent? When Mr. Abbot says, Christianity culminates in Romanism, every Protestant nostril dilates with scorn. When Protestantism unfolds its scheme, the Liberals shake their heads. The Liberals produce their interpretation, and an audible smile ripples over the countenance of the by-standers. India is ready to welcome Christ, Keshub Chunder Sen declares; but it can make nothing of the system of dogmas that bears his name. Philosophy looks on Christianity, and says, 'Yes, it is very impressive as a fact in history, very imposing as an institution, very beautiful as a demonstration of sentiment, very sonorous as an example of rhetoric, very superb as a piece of art, a master-work of architecture, painting, and song; but before an advanced intelligence can accept it, there must be important modifications. The dogmas must be restated, the definitions revised, the histories rewritten, the traditions recast. All its theories must be reconsidered, its views of human nature, human life, human destiny. Its Bible must be expurgated, its worship spiritualized, its cultus adapted to actual needs. Nay, its standard of virtue is open to objection; its graces do not sit altogether gracefully on modern men.' In fact, this highest form of religion is less supreme in its domain than the lower forms are in theirs. It does not answer social or intellectual calls.

We are thus brought to our next position, that the soul is more than any religion, — than all religions; a position that would be regarded as being self-evident, as much so as the proposition that the tree is more than its hitherto finest fruits, were it not for a theory of inspiration which makes the religious sentiment the *child* of religion, instead of its *mother*; an impression that the aspect of the religious world — to say nothing of the slightest operation of the philosophic mind — should be sufficient to obliterate.

For history thrusts this fact in our faces, that each separate religion claims its own separate revelation, and discredits every other. Is this claim justified? Are there as many revelations as there are religions? That is felt to be impossible, and declared impossible by the long battle between the revelations to decide which is the true one. There can be but one true revelation; and if each religion declares that to be its own, we must either choose one from the rest, or we must discard them all. But may there not be a progressive series of revelations? May not revelation be partial and tentative? May not the Supreme Mind drop truths one by one into the world, intrusting individual thoughts to individual races, and thus educating mankind for the reception of a complete system of Truth? And so may not each revelation be true in its place and final in its time?

This is a favorite view ; but a little thought exposes its fallacy. The perfect mind must speak perfectly, if it speaks at all. The absolute reason can make no half statements : its first word must be its last. The full meaning of it may not come to us at once ; but the full meaning of it is latent in the utterance. The infinite is in the atoms. If any religion came by supernatural revelation, the first one did ; and the subsequent ones are the interpretations of it. Having said, " Let there be light," there was no need that God should go on to say, " Let us make the grass, the herb, the creeping thing, the four-footed beast, the organized frame of man." They were provided for. The light carried them in its beams ; the first word implied the rest. So when God said, " Let there be inward light ! Let there be soul ! " that was enough ; there was no need of proceeding to say, " Let there be now a Persian manifestation of it, a Hindoo, an Egyptian, a Hebrew, a Christian." These were involved in the principle. How much more natural it is to say that the soul grows its beliefs ; that they answer to the stages of its development, correspond to its moods of feeling, conform to the soil and atmosphere which it supplies. The Bibles are the soul uttering its deepest convictions ; the worships are the soul aspiring ; the creeds are the soul believing ; the churches are the soul associating its powers of sympathy ; the prophets are the preaching soul ; the priests are the sanctifying soul ; the saints are the soul consecrated ; inspiration is a deep breath of spiritual air ; revelation is the uncovering of the world's meaning, the dropping of scales from the eye, the look behind the veil.

Regarded thus, religion is not an *impression* made by God on the heart of his child, but rather an *expression* of the child's heart towards God ; and the religions of the world are less truly regarded as voices out of the eternal silence, than as voices sent *into* the eternal silence. They are the heart's endeavors after the infinite, its struggles for truth, its prayers for happiness, its longings for peace : they are partial because *these* are partial. They become less and less partial, because these gain in clearness and power.

As every thing human changes, so does religion. Like all systems and institutions of man's creating, it has its history ; it is subjected to the action of critical periods and events ; it takes form and color from ruling ideas ; it borrows from the resources of knowledge ; it yields to the sway of feeling ; it owes much to the contributions of science, philosophy, and art ; genius modifies it ; heroism tinges it ; it has its periods of change and revolution ; — in a word, it stands in perpetual and intimate communication with the human mind, and with the generations amid which it lives. If, then, society has a future, so we may say has religion ; if man is undeveloped, so must this portion of him be ; if he looks forward to increase of

power, extension of knowledge, enlargement of vision, so must his soul anticipate the time when it shall give more complete expression to more complete faith.

And now we have touched our principle. The Free Religionist affirms the supremacy of the religious sentiment, and its inexhaustible vitality. The splendor of its past performances justifies the hope of other performances equally timely and noble in the times before us. He does not propose to make a muddle of religions, to reduce them to a minimum, and accept a residuum of carbonic acid in place of the diamond. It is not his plan to strike an average among the world's faiths. He makes the highest pledge of a higher. He does what the liberal believers in all the sects are doing; but he does it in obedience to a larger law.

Let me venture to state a few of the first principles which are suggested by our position in the general religious world.

It is the traditional view that religion, belonging to the supernatural sphere, comes down upon the human mind to control it.

It is the rational view that, the sphere of the supernatural being included in the compass of the mind, religion is one of the mind's expressions.

It is usually taught that the founders of religions were either divine beings, or human beings miraculously taught.

We teach that the founders of religion were exalted types of human nature.

The common belief is, that religion necessarily comes with miracle.

Our belief implies that religion comes by due process of spiritual preparation and unfolding.

The elders said, the Sovereign Wisdom broods over men, disclosing itself from time to time, and demanding obedience to its dictations.

We say, the Sovereign Wisdom is disclosed within men in proportion as they enlarge their intelligence.

Tradition runs, that God stands to the world as the potter to the clay.

Our faith runs, that the divine forces are manifest in and through the organic universe.

It is an old persuasion, that God *makes himself* known in his ways, attributes, and intentions.

It is our persuasion that no knowledge of him is exact, and that all we have our faculties procure for us.

We grew up to think that Jesus exhausted the capacities of human nature.

We have come to think that Jesus expressed the sentimental side of human nature alone, leaving its philosophical side in the shadow.

It is the common faith that man is an exile seeking a home beyond the grave, to which religion introduces him.

It is our faith that man is at home here, and that religion tells him how beautiful and noble his home may become.

It is the old idea that man is in bondage to sin.

It is the new idea that sin is imperfection and may be outgrown.

The religion of the day prescribes a form of cultus.

Our religion prescribes a law of culture.

It is generally believed that the pivot of all modern history is the hour when God revealed himself.

We believe that history is a series of chapters in the autobiography of mankind, each fresh manifestation of mind being a fresh disclosure of the divine intention.

It is the popular impression that science must be held subordinate to revelation.

It is the rational impression that science is revelation.

According to the ruling notion, piety is escape from the world, and refuge in God.

According to the new notion, piety is fidelity to the aims and uses of the world.

Pious opinion declares future blessedness to be the end of the elect.

Reason declares moral uprightness, character, to be the noblest attainment.

It is a principle in what is ordinarily called religion that culture draws men away from the spiritual life.

It is a principle in Free Religion that culture, in its large sense, is a means to the spiritual life.

The common prejudice is that religion must regard liberty with suspicion.

It is our judgment that the fullest liberty is essential to rational faith.

It is a vulgar axiom that the spirit of the age must submit to be dominated by religion, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

It is with us a primary truth that religion must, in the future, as in the past, accommodate its forms to the spirit of the age.

These you will observe are suggestions, not dogmas. Free religion has no creed. It has principles, but it does not undertake to say how its principles shall ultimate. It does not presume to dictate the special conclusions to which reason shall arrive. Think as you will, provided you think rationally. Believe as you will, provided you believe what reason compels. Drop the polemic, the controversialist, the apologist, and be a seeker, willing to stay or to go, whithersoever the spirit of truth leads. Hold all opinions soluble, and you are one of us. We would not dogmatize or limit. We have no patented definitions in spiritual matters, no authoritative answers to the deep questions in religious philosophy. We do not undertake to say what the soul is, or what may be its ultimate destiny. We have no cosmogony or theosophy; no private key to the mysteries of the divine nature; no infallible clew through the secret intentions of Providence. We practise no incantations: we affect no superior insight into dark problems. They are open for inspection still. We refer you to Max Müller and Eugene Burnouf, and the other scholars who are dealing with them according to ability. Mr. Abbot, in the columns of "The

Index," announces what, in his judgment, is the rational view of things from the Free Religious point of vision. Mr. Wasson, who is as good a Free Religionist as there is, criticises Mr. Abbot's religion in "The Radical," and ventures to think his philosophy unsound, and his reasoning fallacious. Free religion is not compromised by the difference.

But what if it should turn out that we are torn to pieces by our own principle? We cannot be torn asunder by our principle, so long as we cling to its back. Our principle is our steed. We do not ask whither it is carrying us, but only that we may have grace to accompany it whithersoever it goes. It may put up at its own inns, and we shall be content with the fare. But what if it turns right round and stops at John Calvin's door or Martin Luther's? What if it trot straight up to the Vatican, as if it were sure of provender in that stable only? What if it should trample over the fine field you have been staking out, and tread your sweet axioms into the mud, as if they were common stubble? Very well. There will be no ground of complaint on that score. Wherever Reason goes, we are constrained to follow. Most of us are radicals; for it was only through radicalism that we came to reason. We had to leave the sects in order to become unsectarian, to reject the creeds in order to be emancipated from the authority of creeds. We owe our point of view to the distance we have travelled from the ecclesiastical towns. To find our post of observation we have journeyed far. We doubt if any can reach it who do not make the same journey. Having reached it, we take our bearings ere we start anew. We shall follow the bearings taken; but we do not expect to sleep all at the same inn. As Free Religionists we are neither Radicals nor Conservatives, but Rationalists. That we are to the end. Rationalism is both conservative and radical; conservative in principle, radical in application. At present, within Christendom, there are no Rationalists. There are controversialists; there are apologists; but there are no rationalists. The liberal Unitarians *as such* are confined to their sect by the line of tradition, and they cannot break away from it though it be no thicker than gossamer.

A gentleman of Boston had an excellent mare, kind in harness, pleasant under the saddle. She had but one fault,—a serious one to her owner, who was fond of driving into the country. The steed could not be induced to cross a bridge. She was therefore advertised for sale in the following ingenious manner: "For sale, a bay mare, five years old, sound in wind and limb, good for saddle or harness. The owner sells her because he wishes to leave the city." The Free Religionist wishes to leave the city. Reason will carry him, but no form of dogma will. Between accepting ideas because they are rational, and making ideas out to be rational because they are accepted, the difference is immeasurable. We

accept such ideas as commend themselves on the score of their reasonableness, be they what they may. That is our principle.

But suppose your steed carries you away to the wilderness? There is no wilderness to the seekers of truth. The valley of Baca is full of wells. The stone is a soft pillow. But you will come to the jumping-off place! There is none. The earth is round: attempts to leap from the planet have not resulted hopefully. Did one ever jump beyond his own shadow?

But pure reason may land you in atheism! Of that we have no apprehension. That it will land us in *somebody's notion* of atheism is quite possible. It has done that a great many times. It has landed pretty much every thinker there. If reason lands us in some form of atheism, the atheism will be populous with angels. If God were a definition, where would be the believer? But seeing that beyond all the tents of definition, the grand order of the universe, the realm of living law stretches onward to infinity, — God is with the traveller, though the church steeple have sunk out of sight. To be in atheism is not to be out of being; for they that harbor the spirit will find the spirit.

But pure reason brings men to materialism, denies spirit, makes death an iron barrier, instead of a portal, shuts us up within the fatal pen of organization. We have no fear of that either. The more mind, the more evidence of mind. Vogt and Büchner profess materialism, and demonstrate intelligence. Huxley talks of protoplasm, and sets us wondering at thought. Moleschott tells us that Light is the author of Life, and bends our head before the uncreated Light. We look for richer interpretations of spiritual immortality than we have received, and hope, pre-judging nothing. If this life be all, this life will be enough. We desire nothing better than the actual appointment of the divine order. If the field of existence be limited, we shall get more out of our patch of ground by subsoiling and culture. We shall substitute quality for quantity, being for existence, the eternal life for the life everlasting. We shall live in deeds, not years, trying to pack away into the moments the values we had seen sparkling on the lazy fields of generations. The soul will not be cheated of its treasures, but will draw on zenith and nadir in proportion as the horizon shrinks, as in cities where the cost of land diminishes the building-lot to a few feet, the architect digs cellar beneath cellar, and piles story above story. We need no more than there is. We shall not be satisfied with less.

But I hear a cry, I heard it at the close of our last meeting, and many times since then it has sounded in my ear: "Why not teach men to live up to the light they have? There is already more light than is used. Why set us off on the quest of new truths, when we need patient consideration of old ones?"

Because, I answer, the actual truths, if truths they be, have not the needed vitality. The complaint is general throughout Catholic and Protestant Christendom that men *will not* use the truth they have. The rolling globe slips through the ecclesiastical and dogmatical fingers, and the fault is in the fingers, not in the globe. Our age cannot practise the accepted religion under its received definitions. The connection between faith and life is broken. We wish to restore that connection. We wish to get the human mind out of its ruts, and set it on the track of truth. Of our results we make no boast. No one criticises our meetings more sharply than we do. Our purpose is to inaugurate a *method* by which the honest relations of mind to truth shall be restored, with a hope of restoring the honest relations between truth and life. Of course, the announcement of such a purpose stirs up sentimentalism and cant and gibberish and manifold fustian, and the winged nonsense gathers in anticipation of carrion. But these things we hate, and shall shake them off. We ask for truth in the spirit of truth; nothing else, and nothing less. We believe that a single truth is worth more in substance and effect than a whole system of dogmas, and we believe that a single ray of the spirit of truth is worth more than a ton of the ready-made article. Mr. Beecher, announcing on one occasion a sermon by Dr. Furness, remarked, that some men will do more with a jackknife than others will with a whole chest of tools. It is because the owner of the jackknife knows how to use it. Compared with the splendid magazine of legends that Christendom supplies, our few simple principles may seem no better than a pocket blade; but if we have reached them by a rational method, they will be more efficacious than the most magnificent schemes that have detached themselves from the living mind. Put the modern man in possession of modern tools, and let him try his experiment. If he thinks that principles are better than feelings, that science will see further than sentiment, that justice is a more efficient instrument than love, that liberty is a nobler emancipator than authority, that self-reliance is a more profitable virtue than self-abnegation, and self-respect a more stimulating quality than humility; in a word, that rational ethics will more effectually meet the wants of our modern world than the evangelical ethics do, — then let no evangelical prejudices interfere with their adoption. The religious sentiment is fatally committed to no style of virtue, no type of character, no mould of grace, but can shape tools to its work.

We are not specially a Reform Association, and it is not quite fair to cavil at us because we do not open soup-houses and dole out old clothes. We deal not with forms, but with essence. Our instruments are sentiments, ideas, principles, and we play upon the sensitive centres of mind. But our work is in the truest sense of the word practical. If we could shake

down the walls of sectarianism, and so reunite the forces that are locked up in separate camps for purposes of internecine war; if we could shame ecclesiasticism out of its practice of running expensive mills that grind no corn and weave no garments; if we could put an end to sentimentalism that is for ever blowing off into the air the steam that is required to propel society; if we could compel believers to find out wherein they agree and to combine forces; if we could disarm churches and put religion on a peace basis; if we could introduce the faiths to one another, and compel them to be courteous, — we should be doing for the poor what no soup-houses will effect; and if, beyond this, we can give the thought of men a fresh hold on divine verities, we shall do something that will make soup-houses unnecessary.

One of our most brilliant speakers this morning will tell you that Western men must have a Western religion. America cannot kneel in Mecca or Jerusalem. No people can live to purpose whose faith and whose life are at opposite poles; who worship in one hemisphere and work in another; who must run off to Mount Zion whenever they want to pray, and hunt up Athanasius or Augustine whenever they want to believe. Effort sinks when the spiritual world is insubstantial or far away. More depressing than untoward circumstances are phantom faiths; for these make a vacuum of the soul which is worse than a pinching of the lot.

But we do care for the lot and the man in it. We are not visionaries or dreamers, spinning our fine cobwebs of speculation, indifferent to the temporal condition of our fellow-creatures. Our scientific theology is not for ornament, but use. Free religion has its own notions in regard to the bearing of the spiritual laws on human society, and what they are you will learn this morning from persuasive lips. In establishing a relation between reason and religion we establish a relation directly between religion and life by which both must be the immediate and immense gainers. That religion is a permanent force in humanity we do not doubt. But experience teaches that no force needs to be more wisely economized or more judiciously applied.

Friends, our idea finds welcome all over the earth. Responses to it come from across the Atlantic and Pacific seas. It stirs high anticipations. Men talk of the sympathy of faiths, the Bible of humanity. The mere thought of a religious sentiment linked with reason has healing in it. The song sings itself. So pregnant is the idea, that virtue flows from its garments, though the wearer speak no word and make no sign. Its name is a power. Men of all tongues hear us speak their language, as on that mythical day of Pentecost.

The word "freedom" has the charm for the greatest souls in their

aspiration, that the word "authority" had once. In religion it alone kindles enthusiasm. Romanists, like Gratry and Dupanloup, speak of liberal Catholicism, and claim for their church the genius to satisfy the free tendencies of the age. Father Hyacinthe dreams of a Christian unity which shall include Catholics and Protestants on a basis of common sympathy and aspiration. M. de Pressensé, the Protestant, a commanding mind among the Evangelicals, exclaims, "It is in liberty, and by means of liberty, that Christianity in its heroic age fought and gained its great battle in the face of outward oppression and prosecution. I know no other way of reconquering the world of our generation." In London, Paris, Berlin, Strasburg, freedom and fellowship in the spirit is the watchword that calls men out of their old connections, and associates them anew in faith, hope, and endeavor. From Florence, Milan, and Geneva, come earnest responses from associations already formed on principles almost identical with our own. The German *Freie Gemeinde* is already a vast and powerful circle of societies, with great lights of wisdom irradiating them.

These distant and various groups are one in an astonishing sympathy of feeling, purpose, and hope. Their hearts beat in unison. They have one interest in the present, one hope for the future, one sentiment of devotion to humanity, of longing after the heaven on earth. They dream the same dream of a better age; they worship the same moral ideal; they cherish the same veneration for the spiritual laws. They share a common rule of duty, a common interpretation of providence. They read history by the same light, construe the present by the same principles, and forecast the future on the same general plan. Their thoughts run in the same directions. Their philosophy bears one stamp. They have no church, as yet. But the spirit can always be trusted to build its own homes. They have no creed. May it be long before they have one. The creative period is always creedless; and we trust that the creative period will long continue.

The PRESIDENT then resumed the chair and said: Different phases of this great subject of rational and unsectarian religion will be presented this morning by several of our friends. First it seems fitting to show something of the philosophical basis of religion as one of the great natural powers of the human mind. You will agree with me that Mr. WASSON is the man for such work as that, and you will now have the pleasure of hearing him.

ADDRESS OF DAVID A. WASSON.

The Nature of Religion.

In a growing plant the eye of science observes definite functions and processes carried on within the narrow limits of the plant itself. It is said that the process of growth consists simply in the formation of minute cells one from another. I suppose it true that the entire body of every vegetable organism is made up in that way. In one sense, therefore, growth is this process, and this only.

And yet there is somewhat else that belongs to all growth, somewhat so obvious that its results are apparent to every eye, and yet so subtle that its nature appears only to the eye of the mind. There is an inscrutable something which prescribes and infallibly secures to every plant a characteristic form. The idea of the oak is in the acorn, of every plant in its seed. It is simply an immaterial idea, so far as we know; not the slightest approach has been made towards any physical observation of it. Nevertheless, all process in the plant obeys it implicitly; every cell is shaped by it; every organ takes character from it; the oak is all oak, — leaf, bark, the texture of the wood, every thing in it, proclaims what it is; and the reciprocation of all organs, the structural unity of the tree, is due to the same organic idea which gives feature to every part. The organic idea of the plant we will call this.

Nor is this all: every plant stands in a system of universal relations strictly necessary to its existence. In order that one grass-blade may grow, a whole sun and whole earth must exist, — a sun capable of shining with a given power, and of holding the planet in its orbit by a given force of attraction, therefore having the dimension and constitution of that sun which actually rules in the heavens; an earth holding a spheric ocean of fire in its bosom, with a solid crust formed from it, and floating upon it with a certain chemic force of its elements, with water and evaporation, and seas to supply evaporation, and the flowing air and vapors to temper it: in fine, for the growth of one blade of grass are required this sun and this earth, with all their physical history and systematized relation and the systematized condition of each. Therefore were we to trace the ideal roots — ideal, but essential — of one tiny plant in the cosmic conditions prerequisite to its growth, they would not be found ramifying merely through some few inches or feet of soil, but, as it were, through all the universe, — reaching down to the heart of the globe, reaching out to take root in the sun, reaching backward to permeate all that history and relation of the solar system which their vital action implies.

Once more : this system of universal relation is of primary importance with respect to growth : all vital activity depends immediately upon it. We await the coming of the vernal sun, then bury the seed in the earth, making it over to the keeping and incitement of its cosmic relations, aware that only the action of these upon it can awake the energy of life within. Ah, if we but always saw with the mind what we see with the eyes ! This familiar fact, were it appreciated, might banish all those small subjective schemes of philosophy that we are pestered with in these days. For it tells us not only that a system of universal relation is implied in all that lives and grows, but that activity, power, function, proceed from the great whole to each particular existence. It is this fact I have been coming to : bear it in mind as we proceed to inquire concerning the place of religion in man.

In the plant there is a scale of three degrees : (1) interior physiological process ; (2) the organic idea which gives it character and structural unity ; (3) that relation with the cosmic organism, on which life and growth immediately and principally depend. In man the same, — with this capital difference that man is conscious : in him the truth of his being and of the relations of his being become luminous, a light of his own mind. Nature is a soul to the plant, man is a soul in himself : it is consciousness that makes the truth of his being his own, so constituting him a soul.

On the lowest scale, indeed, man is not conscious. He has no immediate knowledge of the anatomy of his own body, of the circulation of the blood, of digestion, the formation and elimination of tissue, with the functions of the liver, stomach, brain, &c.

It is precisely that which seems inscrutable in the plant which becomes luminous and self-cognizant in man. The organic idea that, without knowing itself, gives character and structural unity to the former, in man does know itself, becomes in him the sense of indivisible personal identity, and says *I*. This *I* cannot be resolved into the various materials of which one is composed, nor into the interior physiological processes which go on within him. John Stuart Mill, however, has maintained that it might be resolved into the sum of one's sensations at a given moment. But suppose one should say, At the present moment I am this sensation of an ache in my toe, *plus* that sensation of a noise made by boys playing at ball, *plus* a third sensation of seeing roofs and chimneys : the boys, if they heard him, would stop playing to enjoy the intenser amusement of laughing at him. The sense of personal identity is not to be made up in that way, nor in any way : it is simply one's ideal wholeness, or that which we called the organic idea in the plant, become conscious and affirming itself. Man is a plant that mentally comprehends his own being, and so not only exists, but exists to and for himself. The consciousness of per-

sonal identity is not a physical fact at all, but a spiritual fact; and if any one say, "I do not know what a spiritual fact is," I answer, "Well, then, you do not know what self-consciousness is."

But we have found in the vegetable organism, besides its organic idea, its systematized relation to the great whole, upon which all else in it depends. In man there is the like, and he is conscious of it. The plant actually depends upon the cosmic organism, as secondary to it, and vivified by it, but does so unconsciously: man in a way strictly analogous, but in a higher sense corresponding to his higher nature as a conscious or spiritual being, depends upon the universal spiritual whole, is vivified by it, has the principle of his being in it, and is conscious of the fact. Humanity, even in awakening to a knowledge of itself, awakens also, and with immeasurable emotion, to the consciousness of that superior, ineffable relation; and with the word *God* it acknowledges, it seizes, it embraces that divine universal whole, by which it is already embraced. That supreme consciousness is religion, and only with its awakening does man become indeed himself, a being truly human.

The simplest possible definition of religion is therefore this: It is the principle of universality in the individual. If one takes "universal" to mean merely all that is, all facts, all phenomena in the lump, then, indeed, though the definition remains good, his understanding of it is bad. The principle of universality in us affirms much more, infinitely more, than the sum and lump of all particulars; it affirms that the all is one as each of us is one, that there is in it the indivisible wholeness, oneness, of personal or spiritual being; it leaps at the start by the word *God* to the absolute universal, the spiritual oneness of the all; and though it may multiply this word many times, yet each repetition and variation of it is a clutch at the same sovereign fact, the universal in spiritual unity and perfection, the whole that can be such only in being divine.

Here it is that man gets the true scale of his being; here it is that he escapes from the pinfold of his private nature, and through his sense of reciprocal, because conscious, relation with the living, perfect whole, comes back fruitfully to himself, laden, as it were, with divine spoil. Established on that height of the universal, entire, eternal, he can look down upon the world of particulars, upon all that is limited and mutable, seeing that it is limited and mutable, because he has a consciousness of that which is not so with which to compare it. From that height thought issues, with conscious morality and ideal aims; thence progress, thence freedom, are derived, and all that is deathless in the being, all that is glorious in the achievement of humanity. This will presently be explained more specifically; but here I will venture to assert in advance, that until humanity has said *God*, until the import and vantage-ground of that sovereign word are ob-

tained, no man is capable of rational thought in any high sense of the term: all in culture, in civilization, in the development of humanity, in intellect itself, rests at last upon that consciousness which emancipates us from our narrow limits as particular beings, and makes us citizens of the universe in its divine integrity.

That this is the historical fact there can be no question. Even Auguste Comte, who would limit all thought and knowledge to the merest surface of nature, and make man mere surface even to himself, even he recognizes explicitly this fact, though without a glimpse of its significance. The first epoch in civilization, he says, is theological, the second metaphysical, the third positive or scientific. By his own confession, then, all thought, all science, all civilization, rest *historically* upon the ideas of religion; and of this, I repeat, no man tolerably well informed can make question. But how little does this man, who professes a supreme regard for facts, know what to do with a fact so great, so remarkable, so suggestive as this! What to do with it? Why, he simply makes the word "theological" a broom, wherewith to sweep it out of doors altogether. Away with it! the "positive" epoch has come, and now the other may go. Take a parallel case. Suppose we should divide the life of an individual into two epochs, the beardless and the bearded, and that arriving at the latter we should say, Having got the beard, we have no longer any use for the boy, but will abolish him altogether, — the physiological force and structure that produced the beard are obsolete and valueless so soon as this appears. Such is the procedure of the great one-eyed. Science is as the beard of civilization, indicating a mature stage; therefore he would have us think that those productive activities in history that were condition precedent to its appearance should be abolished when it has come to light. This will not do. Necessary bases in history are bases in the mind for ever. Hold fast to that clew, and it will save you much wandering and groping. Necessary bases in history are always fundamental in the mind, — always have the same function here that they are seen to have had in the continuous life of humanity. Therefore when we perceive that historically all philosophic thought, all noble art, all developed morality, all serviceable polity, are subsequent to religion, and derive from it, an iron thread of logic leads to the conclusion that here to-day, here in our living souls, there is in truth the same order of dependence.

But I will not rest in this general deduction. Some brief specifications, such as time permits, shall be offered in confirmation of it.

1. All morality reposes upon religion. What is morality? It is the law of unity, — the principle of universality extended and applied as law between individuals. All good and right between men are as a kiss, making two one: all wrong between men is like a blow, putting the two

asunder. "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you;" be consciously one, that is, with others as with yourself. Love, justice, patriotism, truth, are terms of community, comprehension, holding together,—terms, that is, of universality in feeling and principle: hatred, envy, injustice, treason, deceit, are terms of disintegration and disunion.

What, now, is the principle of all morals? *Utility* say some: what is useful to all is right. I accept utility as the *criterion* of applied morals. What is useful is moral; in other words, it is moral to do good. I never heard of a moralist who disputed that, and am quite unable to regard it as a recent discovery. But the test of applied morals is one thing, the principle of morals in the soul is another. Why must I do what is for the good of all? What is it that utters and enforces that obligation in my own breast; what the ideal exaction which here within says, in a voice of unqualified, absolute command, "Thou shalt do good and not evil"? It is the binding, sovereign principle of universality in the individual, which, because no man liveth *in* himself alone, forbids that he should live unto himself alone, because the universe is a divine whole, requires that the law of wholeness should be kept in every heart.

2. Thought has the same ground. In the history of philosophy note the first question,—this: What is the universal principle? What is it? *Is* it at all? Whence comes the assumption? It is the idea of religion, the ground idea of all thought, which therefore thought can never go behind. Think, if you can, and not assume it. Will you reason of causes? What is cause? Interior connection and unity between this and that. Will you reason from analogy? It is, again, to follow the clew of unity. Will you reason from various phenomena to their law, after the manner of inductive science? The assumption that they *have* a law wherein their diversities are harmonized is the very one we speak of. Why should there not be phenomena without any law? The very imagination, the very question, gives a shock to the mind. But why does it shock? What does it shock? It smites against that ineradicable faith of reason in the unity of the all,—that assumption which, as rational beings, and to be rational beings, we must make.

Now to say *God* is but to affirm that faith, that fundamental idea, as it must be affirmed in order to be complete. For suppose we affirm in the universe a physical, impersonal, unconscious unity, and deny it any higher: what follows? Why, we ourselves, as conscious souls, are in that case more and other than the great whole considered in its wholeness. A mere physical unconscious unity is one that man would break out of by the first glimmer of conscious thought, by the very act of becoming a personal intelligence. He were an alien, an outsider from that moment: looking back to that whose circle he has broken, he could not find his feeling

heart in the heart of the universe, his thinking mind and conscious spiritual being there. That were an unhappy position: by the necessary faith of his reason he must assume the oneness of the all; by his very being as a conscious personality, he were the unthinking of that thought, an absolute exception in the universe. To deny God is to decapitate reason itself. If the universe as a whole is not strung upon a thread at least as fine and spiritual as any thought or desire of man can be, then by such thought or desire he destroys its wholeness, and becomes alien to it; but in that case reason itself were self-contradictory and self-destructive.

3. Finally, it is man's consciousness of the divine spiritual whole, and of his reciprocation with it, that gives him an ideal, makes that ideal substantial, veritable, no vain subjective bubble blown up from his wishes; and which so makes the impulse, the resource, the guidance, and the goal of all progress, individual or social. The law of integrity in the universe is the ideal law of the private heart. Suns rise, stars gleam, skies over-arch, morning and evening are glorious, to tell us what the perfect whole is, and what in ideal possibility, immortally fulfilled and immortally to be fulfilling, we ourselves are. Man is made in the image of God, — made so, that is, ideally, spiritually, in the hope and possibility of his soul; and therefore it is that, his spiritual being once awakened, he must always journey and climb, his true goal ever above, because his true being is there. For if our ideal were nothing else but *our* ideal, nothing else but our subjective imagination projected into a void future, then in pursuing it we were always launching our being toward nothingness, always preferring unreality to reality, always quitting what veritably is for that which is not. Religion substantiates our ideal, shows it to us as veritable in God, who is absolute, spiritual wholeness; and thereby shows all progress as a movement from the less real to the more real, from surface to centre, from phenomenon to noumenon, from partial being, limited and constrained because partial, to utter integrity of being, which is free because it is whole. Weeping tears of joy in hope, pouring tears of grief in penitence, we stand before that perfect divine whole, which because our being is more truly in it than in our separate selves, gives promise unspeakable to the heart that in pure faith cleaves to it, yet awfully and for ever rebukes our actual shortcoming.

Religion has ugly manifestations, no doubt. Well, under the laws of growth, and by the productive energies of nature, noxious weeds, the deadly night-shade, poisonous fungi, are brought forth: who, therefore, would undervalue the laws of growth and the productive energy in nature? Culture and classification are needed in religion as elsewhere: that is the lesson taught. I think its manifestations are always ugly when it is isolated, made exclusive, and protruded by itself. As the principle of pure

wholeness, it requires an interpretation in thought, an application in humane morals, an expression by the genius of beauty, — an expression through all that in which man is enlarged, tending toward expansion and universality of being: when isolated, it is constricted, made self-contradictory, and therefore must be ugly.

Hence its grand epochs are those in which it has obtained more adequate interpretations. Jesus was religious; the Pharisees were religious; his religion was moral, humane, loving, sweet. It may be that some of the judges of Socrates who condemned him to death were no less religious than he: in him, however, and still more in his great disciple, religion obtained a grand interpretation in thought.

This may indicate the work we have to do. Think not to labor in the interest of the future by emptying religion of ideas, and presenting it as a mere force, a mere effort, impulse, push, effecting somewhat indeed, but affirming nothing, without import, without content for the mind. Above all do not seek to take from it that grand idea, without which it were indeed void, the idea of unitive spiritual being, wherein the multiform and multitudinous aggregate of finite things is resolved in thought, rounded in wholeness, ripened in conscious perfection. Who would live in an inhuman or infra-human universe? What soul, indeed, could draw breath in a universe that were really such? But inhuman or infra-human as a whole the universe must be, if in wholeness it does not attain the degree of conscious spiritual being. To accept it practically as inhuman passes the competence of any creature who is himself human, but in opinion it may be so apprehended: in our day there is a powerful tendency in that direction, and confusion on confusion is growing from it.

Let us speedily get through and get done with the period of reactionary opinion, reacting from those partial interpretations of great principles, with which the past at once enriches us and embarrasses. Get through with this, and as in a virgin world, virgin still with all the years of humanity on its head, and all the wealth of history in its possession, begin to build, build on that foundation which no man has laid, and none can remove, though many deny. That foundation for all that is human in man is affirmed by religion: I pray you to know, if by faithfulest study of mind and heart you can know, its eternal significance, and to house it warmly in your breasts.

And you whose function it is to cultivate, to clarify, to interpret and apply this grand and grandest principle, blush not for your work, though bigotry and ignorance disgrace it too often, and enlightened sciolism mock it with smiles of supercilious toleration: there is none greater, none that answers more to the needs of this age, and of all ages. Be sure that to this radical, sustaining, nutritive mother-principle the world must, for its

life must, again come cordially, and with new intelligence; since for the health of States, for the noble union of men in societies, for the prosperity of thought without which man is dehumanized, for the vitalization of morals, for the inspiration of art and all the genius of beauty, for the maintenance of progress and the ennoblement of character, this principle, taken in the fulness of its majestic import, is, has been, must for ever be the first necessity and first resource of humanity.

THE PRESIDENT. — Religion, though free, is practical. It is a social force. We have wished to present that aspect of our movement this morning; and we know of no one better able to do this than Mrs. EDNAH D. CHENEY, who has made the subject a special study, and whom I have now the pleasure to introduce to you.

ADDRESS OF EDNAH D. CHENEY.

Religion as a Social Force, especially in relation to Philanthropy and Reform.

Our President has assigned to me the duty of speaking of Religion, in its relation to Philanthropy and Reform. The very utterance of my subject seems a sufficient argument; for the relation of religion to philanthropy is as natural as that of the mother to the child. How can I separate religion from life? It is everywhere, as diffusive, as necessary, as the air that we breathe. Religion is our word for the relation of the mortal to the immortal, of the finite to the infinite, of the human to the divine. It is the essence and mainspring of life, and must be the moving, vital power in all love of men, which is philanthropy, and all desire of progress, which is reform. As well might we expect all this fair work of nature — every tree and shrub putting forth into new life and beauty — to be accomplished, without looking upwards to the sun, and drinking in his warmth and light, — as imagine that humanity will bud and blossom without constant influx from its Divine Centre.

Religion is the very spirit of our daily life, animating all that we are and do. The ancients rightly used the term "pious" alike to express the reverence given to human beings and that due to the gods.

Every hero of humanity believes himself to be inspired by Divine light and protected by Divine power, and there is no great movement in history which does not find in religion its source and guide. Pious Æneas went forth from Troy into Latium, trusting in the protection of the gods, even as Abraham went from the land of Ur into Canaan at the command of the Lord. This is the grand idea of Hebrew legislation, which gives to every rule of life the sanction of Divine authority. The sanitary measures ren-

dered necessary by their climate and mode of life had to the Jews the force of Divine command.

The day of rest for man and beast was so guarded by this sanction that three thousand years have hardly lessened its authority, and reason has a hard struggle even now against the tyranny of its superstitious observance. The same religious sanction, modified according to the genius of the people, made the authority of Greek, Roman, and Mohammedan power. The Turk believes that the prayer of the faithful must be perpetual; that if a moment passes in which the word Allah is not breathed out into the air with pious fervor, the reign of chaos will come again, and "all this goodly frame, the earth, this most excellent canopy, the air, this brave, overhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, will become a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors."

The Turk is right: there is no safety for the outward world, none for the State, none for society, or our daily household life, but in religion, — that is, in the constant relation of every thing human to the Divine, the perpetual refreshment and recreation from the source of all life. Like the air, religion must be always a new and living force, never cut off from its primal source, but always renewed by free access to the whole unlimited range of Divine life. "Get religion," and bottle it up: it is stale as the air which is confined without renewal.

And yet religion, the great conservator of life and humanity, is also the great iconoclast and destroyer. It is a flaming fire which burns up whatever has not living force within itself to withstand it. Again, it is like the air, the breath and life of whatever is living and growing, the great destroyer of all that is dead. It will suffer nothing useless or stationary under its influence: it will make either better or worse all that is submitted to its action. Religion, which is the very breath of life to true humanity, to real progress, is the radical foe of all old idols and dead traditions. Like life, it is constantly expressing itself in forms, but yet ever freeing itself from them.

Hence it is, that while every one accepts the religious origin and basis of reforms in the past, the reformer finds no enemy so bitter, no inertia so sluggish, no resistance so obstinate as that from organized ecclesiasticism. It is the history of all reform from the prophets stoned in Judea, and the martyr crucified on Calvary, from Socrates drinking the hemlock in prison, to Lovejoy murdered in Alton, that it must contend to the death with the old and traditional church.

It is here, then, that we claim the superiority for the free religious movement in its relation to reform. It is religion restored to its native freedom, answerable to its own consciousness of God alone, unfettered by tradition, unrestrained by formulas and creeds, able to expand itself to its

utmost limits, free to flow into every channel that is open to it, gathering help and counsel from all, binding chains upon none. It is religion, like Pegasus unharnessed from the yoke, that must inspire us with new life and strength to battle against the forces of evil, the great army of negation, embodied in corrupt and oppressive institutions.

Free religion can accept this work, because she has no hindrances in the way. She has no old institutions venerable in their decay, which will crumble into dust at the movement of reform.

The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, allows that he only mentions what will reflect credit on the martyrs, and Millner makes the same confession in regard to the Church; but free religion is no hired advocate with a cause to defend. She can rejoice in a brave deed done anywhere, and accept the truth by whomever spoken. So her armory against evil is rich in weapons, forged by all true souls of whatever name, and she is never afraid that they will be turned against herself; for she is baptized all over in the waters of immortality, and has not even a vulnerable point in her heel where the arrows of truth can wound her.

I shall speak now of only two points in which free religion has a special advantage and superior power over the old organized forms of religion in promoting reform and doing the work of philanthropy. It must be the task, not of a brief half hour, but of many years of thought and study, to apply it wisely to all the varied demands of life and society.

First, free religion has an infinite faith in humanity. It sets no bounds to the possibilities of the human race here and now on this very planet. It knows man only as the child of God, partaker of his spirit, and heir to his infinite resources. Glorifying in all the past achievements of the mighty leaders of the race, it accepts none as the Ultima Thule of progress beyond which humanity cannot go. It is enough for it to know that a thing is good, to be sure that it must be possible. It knows no

“fallen Adam there,—
A red clay and a breath,”

but a new-born babe full of the spirit of its maker, and capable of infinite progress in intelligence and goodness. It recognizes evil, not as a vital force, coequal with God, but as delay and hindrance, negation and darkness, to be overcome only with superabounding light and love and life. It accepts, therefore, the means of reform which are all ready for its use. It asks only man with God, the Divine man, one with the Father, and one also with all humanity, to do God's work on this planet. It demands no miraculous power: it finds power and love enough incarnated in humanity to redeem and advance the world. It sees in man the very agent God has created for this very purpose, to organize and develop the

life of humanity on this earth; and it believes that only faithful use of the powers implanted within us is needed, to accomplish all that we ask for in our wildest dreams or our highest prayers. Swedenborg says, "The very heavens are in the form of a man," and all that we need ask for earth is, that man should rise up to his true stature, and live out in its utmost fulness the life that is possible for him here upon earth.

How perfectly does this apply to the reform which we have seen begun and nearly accomplished, the abolition of negro oppression, and to those which so imperatively demand our attention now, — the Indian and Chinese questions. The moment the full recognition of the negro's manhood was accomplished, the work was done; and the same will be the case with the Indian and the Chinese.

And here is the meeting-point of free religion with true science, which brings me to my second statement.

Baron Quetelet, of Belgium, one of the ripest scholars and profoundest students of statistical science (I quote from the last journal of our own Social Science Association), says: "The more intelligence increases, the nearer we approach the beautiful and the good. The perfectibility of the human species results as a necessary consequence of all our researches."

Free religion is therefore specially adapted to the work of philanthropy and reform by its cordial alliance with science. Reading by the light of ecclesiastical history, what a strange proposition is this, — religion and science one. Was not Anaxagoras exiled in the name of religion, and Galileo put under the tortures of the Inquisition? Did not the gentle Cowper scoff at the researches of geology? and does not every scientific treatise feel bound to justify itself against the charge of conflicting with the dogmas of the popular religion? Are we not again and again warned against the pride of intellect, and taught that it is only by unquestioning faith that we can receive the spirit of God?

But looked at from the centre of things, in the light of reason and common sense, what is more obvious than the unity of religion and science? Religion is the relation to God in the inward heart, through love and faith. Science is the inquiry into God's methods of action in the outward world, the world which we believe he has created, and of which he is the vital essence and sustaining force. What do we fear to find there? That our Father has blundered and failed, or has wilfully done evil instead of good? What faith would that be in a human friend which led us to shun investigation into his words and deeds lest perchance our love and faith should be destroyed?

Free religion is not afraid of the truth. It has no pet dogmas to defend, nor old traditions which must not be shaken. It is not disturbed though the earth has rolled on in space, for ten million of years instead of

six thousand : it knows it has always rolled under the guiding hand of its infinite and perfect Creator. It does not shudder if science teaches that it is gradually approaching the sun, and will finally be absorbed into that great luminary. It knows that it will only be in accordance with the same Divine Law, and that the welfare of all will be secured amid the great conflagration, if such is to take place.

And much as science needs the inspiring power of religion to keep it broad and sweet and sane, always loyal and true to its Divine Centre, just as much does religion need science to guide its hand, and show it how to accomplish the good which love prompts it to desire.

Free religion will return to science the service she receives from her. As Pythagoras said "Divine Wisdom is true science," so the conscious intuitions of religion will give that guiding light to science which she needs.

Faith will assure us of the grand harmony which must exist in creation, and will not suffer the intellect to rest until it proves the law, and justifies clearly to all men that which religion had discerned spontaneously for itself.

Thus we find that many of the grandest discoveries of science have been foreshadowed and predicted by religious men who welcomed the truth of God in their souls before they read its confirmation in his works. When the marriage between religion and science is acknowledged and the couple are admitted into good society, we may hope for yet richer fruits from their union.

Never was the need of this union more clear than now. We have arrived at the point where we cannot rest in the unconsciousness of ignorance. The childhood of the world is past. We must study the laws of nature and of social life, to maintain society in a sound and healthy condition. Life has become rich and complicated, full of difficult problems. The simple wish to help and bless others is not enough to save us from doing incalculable mischief, unless we have profound wisdom to guide our action.

The philanthropist leaves large sums of money to feed the poor, and builds up a pauper settlement which is the curse of the country for miles around. Science should have ploughed his money into the ground, and enabled the people to feed themselves.

The great questions which agitate us to-day are not merely questions of good and evil dispositions. The temperance question, the labor movement, the woman question, the sanitary reforms, the treatment of crime, pauperism, — all demand the most thorough and scientific knowledge to save us from the gravest errors. The saint accepts the saying of Jesus, "The poor ye shall always have with you," and believes it a Divine provision for enabling him to exercise the virtue of giving alms, and so secur-

ing a higher seat in heaven. But the reformer asks, Why must ye always have the poor with you? Why should not society be so organized that every human being shall have a fair chance for his share of this world's goods? — and he turns to science to help him to solve this question. Social science says, The alms-giving of the church has been the fruitful source of pauperism, and hence of intemperance, vice, and crime. You have no right to gratify your own benevolent impulses by this indiscriminate giving: you are bound to seek out causes. You have no right to keep pet beneficiaries for the luxury of bestowing charity, as the English lords preserve their woodcocks for the pleasure of hunting them: you are bound to teach them to help themselves, and to raise them to your own level of independent freedom.

A pious Spanish poet says, that sickness is the sign of God's love. I give a part of the quaint translation,—

“ This frame so weak,
Sharp sickness' hue,
And this pale cheek
God loves in you.

“ More faltering speech
And weary days
Than beauty's blaze
His heart will reach.”

Mr. Emerson says, “Sickness is felony.” Is he not right? Have you any right to let your arms rust when God wants you to fight the battle of life? any right to come with broken tools to work in his vineyard? any right to waste in a year what should serve for a life? Which spirit will be most likely to establish the board of health and clear out the foul alleys in our cities? Let Spain and New England test the question.

Again, how does the old ecclesiasticism speak of death,—

“ As for man, his days are as the grass ;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth :
The wind passeth over it and it is gone.”

This spirit is not confined to Christianity. We find the same wail and contempt of life in much of the heathen poetry and philosophy, in all religion which is introspective and partial, instead of round and whole. Superstition and piety alike regard premature death either as a cruel fate or as an arbitrary exercise of God's inscrutable will. But social science says, “The first great object of sanitary organization should be to watch the death rate,” and it conclusively proves that nothing is more entirely under the control of law than human mortality; and every instance of increased

care, in obedience to the Divine laws of health, clearly reports itself at once in the percentage of mortality.

Nothing can be more holy and tender than Jesus' attitude towards the fallen woman; but the Christian religion has struggled in vain for eighteen centuries against the great social evil. How to prevent it is still the great unsolved problem, which religion and science must work out together. Neither can do it alone.

Again, the labor question cannot be solved by religion without the aid of science. The capitalist may shorten the hours of labor, and increase the rate of wages; but he will not put any more bread into the mouths of the hungry million, unless science steps in and shows him how to apply the forces of nature so that eight hours may do the work of twelve, and an acre of ground well tilled and well harvested may produce the food of three.

The Quaker says these desires after beautiful things cannot be satisfied without injuring your fellow-beings. Your white paint is poisonous: your dyed garments are unhealthful. He cuts them off, preserving his own sense of right, but impoverishing the world of grace and beauty. Science combined with religion says, "The resources of God are infinite. He has given us these longings for beauty and comfort: there must be innocent means for gratifying them: let me go to work and seek them out." He substitutes zinc for lead, and his paint becomes harmless; and he will some day find that he may dye this green gauze as innocently as spring decks the meadows and fields without the aid of arsenic.

Religion will not let us rest, while our enjoyments and comforts are purchased with the debasement and degradation of a human being: science must furnish new means by which the abundance of good things shall be multiplied, so that all may partake of them. Will it be the millennium when the nobleman takes his turn at delving with the spade, and the peasant sits upon the throne? No; but when labor is made so noble and its rewards so rich, that the misery of idle luxury will become too heavy to be borne. But to accomplish this work science must be free, the friend and partner of religion, not her slave.

If religion says to science, "Seek and find, but find nothing but what I bid you," her freedom and power are gone. And this has been the attitude of ecclesiasticism towards science. "You may teach that the earth moves round the sun, but you must not refuse to teach that Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stay their apparent motion and remain to give light for his victory over the enemies of Israel." "You may teach the law of gravitation and demonstrate to your pupils that its operation is universal, and that by its unerring force and constant action the whole machinery of the heavens is kept in harmony and order; but you must

not suffer them to doubt that this beneficent law was suspended that Peter might walk upon the waves to meet his Master." Science thus held in fetters cannot do its legitimate work. It must speak the bidding of its master, not follow out the guidance of truth.

But free religion is not fettered to any such formulas. It does not even feel itself bound to protect and patronize God. If the sincere student comes to it and says, "I have searched through nature, I have penetrated into the heavens with my telescope, and have traced out the law which binds star to star, even to the remotest verge of the Milky Way; I have turned my microscope upon the minutest insects that crowd a drop of water and traced out their nervous organizations in their little bodies, but nowhere can I find your God," — free religion does not answer him with contempt or anathema. But she replies, "Search on my friend: tell us what you do find. Your gaze will not drive God out from the world which he has created. You will not deprive me of the joy of his presence if I find him and you cannot. But you will find many and precious truths; you will find power, harmony, and beauty; you will find deep meanings and wonderful illustrations. You may call the power law or chance or what you will, only seek honestly, and tell me plainly what you do find; and it shall be my own fault if I cannot relate it to any higher truth than I think has been given me to hold." She says with Plato, "While truth leads the way, we can never say that any band of evils follows in her train." The present revelations of science as of religion may be partial and erroneous, but as long as they are sincere and progressive they will lead to good; for in the universe of God every path leads to the centre, if only steadily followed.

This attitude of free religion to science makes our work the most eminently practical one. We are not seeking merely speculative freedom, or intellectual culture. We are trying to clear the ground of the old rubbish of tradition and formula; we are striving to let in the free air and warm sunlight upon the germs of life with which it is filled, so that these shall quicken and fructify and bear fruit, and "the leaves shall be for the healing of the nations."

Religion means to us warmth and life, and love and growth, — what the sun is to the plant, what the dew is to the grass, what the air is to our lungs, — its native atmosphere into which we are born, — from which we need no protection, — into which we can open out our whole natures, and receive it in that we may expand and grow into the full stature and bloom of humanity. We strive to prune away the dead wood, not because it has not served the growth of the past year, but because it is in the way of the living shoots of this year. We know that even the decay of the past may become living nourishment for the present, if only the free forces of nature

be allowed to play upon it, so that seeming to be destroyed it shall really be taken up anew into the current of life.

Free religion does not at this moment tend to express itself in finer cathedrals or sweeter litanies or more glorious anthems. All these are good. We must have religion expressed in art; or, rather, it cannot help so expressing itself when it is full of rich, bounding, joyous life, as it should be. But it may be long ages before we surpass the forms of art which the past has bequeathed to us.

For us to-day the work is eminently a practical one. Our art must be the art of life. Religion wedded to science must give us bread for all, shelter for all, health, freedom, education, for all. Religion must inspire us with the love to pour itself out in good to others, and to ask for them all that we would ask for ourselves. Science must be the hand to execute her will, to search out causes and to devise remedies, and to found the good that we ask for on the eternal rock of Divine and Immutable Law.

Do not fear that life thus developed will become hard and unlovely: when the heart and the head work together, when wisdom does the bidding of love, when religion and science, the love and knowledge of God, have worked out their appointed results, what can the product be but immortal good and beauty?

THE PRESIDENT. — Most of you have heard, doubtless, of “The Index,” and of its editor, FRANCIS E. ABBOT. He has spoken from this platform before, and you know something of his position. You will be glad to hear him speak now on “The Future of Religious Organization.”

ADDRESS OF FRANCIS ELLINGWOOD ABBOT.

The Future of Religious Organization, as affected by the Spirit of the Age.

MR. PRESIDENT, — In assigning to me, as the special topic of my remarks this morning, “The Future of Religious Organization, as affected by the Spirit of the Age,” you have summoned me to a task very perilous to the reputation of any one who ventures to attempt it: I mean the task of prophecy. Certainly I make no pretension to the inspiration which is supposed to be the prophet’s peculiar qualification for his work. But remembering that the “scientific study of theology” is one of the specified objects of this Association, and remembering also that the great apostle of the Positive Philosophy declares it to be an “axiom” that “science has prevision for its object,” I will venture to peer into the future by the light of cer-

tain great principles or ideas. It is the power of these principles or ideas over the human mind which has produced what is called the "Spirit of the Age;" and if I can detect the tendencies they are creating, as active causes in the great religious upheaval of modern times, I think I shall have done my duty to you and to the audience. If I fail to win a great reputation as a prophet, I shall console myself with the reflection that I had, at least, no such reputation to lose.

In America, where society is, as it were, in solution, and where men and women are at liberty to obey natural laws of aggregation, uncramped by the restrictions of an ancient and hardened social system, the solvent power of ideas over imported trans-Atlantic institutions is enormous. The laws of social crystallography manifest themselves visibly in the voluntary arrangements and rearrangements of men in the mass. If any thing is clear to an observant eye, it is that the most important changes are taking place in all our social relations. All institutions in America are changing, and we are all asking ourselves, "What will come out of this universal ferment and effervescence?" Especially in religious organizations we see conflicting agencies at work: every sect has its two parties, progressive and reactionary; and many persons are dismayed at the possible results of their antagonism. For myself, whether wisely or unwisely, I believe that I see the general meaning of the marches and counter-marches, the noise and bustle and battle, which are all about us in this age. I believe that the Church, the great organization of Christianity, is going to pieces, as surely as a ship driven upon a rocky coast; and I believe that some organization of Free Religion is going to take its place. The peculiar ideas of Christianity are growing obsolete to this generation; its peculiar objects are becoming more and more uninteresting, even offensive, to it; its peculiar methods appear more and more plainly to be out of harmony with the spirit of the modern world. But at the same time I believe that never, in the whole history of man, was religion so much thought about as to-day. I am more and more impressed with the intense earnestness which underlies the commercial and industrial activity of the times. Because vast numbers of people take seemingly no interest in the churches, Christians shake their heads dolefully over the godlessness of the world, stigmatize the century as one of unbelief, and sigh for the "ages of faith" when all Christendom was of one mind. All this seems to me a libel on the times in which we live. "When the Son of Man cometh," said Jesus, "shall he find faith in the earth?" If he should come *to-day*, he would find more faith than ever, though not of the kind he meant. The very want of faith which is so lamented is proof of the faith in which I rejoice. Faith in man, faith in ideas, faith in the natural laws which are the "higher thoughts and higher ways" of the God I believe

in, were never so intense as to-day. Why, it is this faith, and this faith alone, which has made America possible; and when you talk to me about the "faithlessness" of the age, its scepticism, its materialism, its devotion to secular prosperity, its indifference to your long, dry, chaffy sermons, I reply, "Thank God, that the world has come out of your tombs of churches, and now sits clothed, in its right mind." All this indicates that life at last flows in its natural channels; that men in this life busy themselves about the things of this life, as they ought. When a higher life comes, as I indeed trust it will come, it will be time enough to attend to the things of that life. Before heaven above, heaven below. The world is right, and the Church is wrong. Nature is wiser than the doctors who do their best to make her sick. They are prescribing for all sorts of fever, when the only disease of the patient is rapid growth and exuberant health.

I said that the Christian Church was going to pieces. I believe it, chiefly for the following reasons.

1. Because the Church is growing more *liberal*. This is a symptom which nine radicals in ten take to be a sign that the Church is entering on a new lease of life. But it is a sign that the Church is dying. The conservatives are wholly right in this matter; and the radicals will see it, when they come to take an outside view of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was Christianity ruling the world. When liberty got one foot into its stronghold at the Reformation, its power was shaken; when she gets her whole body inside, its power will be gone. Just in proportion as liberty of thought and liberality of feeling get into the Church, in that same proportion Christianity gets out of it. Christian freedom is Christian disintegration. The reason is that every organization must have its fundamental law; and the fundamental law of Christianity is submission to authority. In every sect, the radical wing is for larger liberty, — and rightly, for liberty is the birthright of man; but the conservative wing is for authority, — and rightly, for authority is the very essence of Christianity. Both are right, for each is faithful to its own idea; and the reason why they don't agree and can't agree is because their ideas are antagonistic. Liberty and Christianity never have been reconciled, and never will be reconciled; and from the moment that liberty began to get into the Christian Church, the Church was doomed. Its fall is only a question of time. When a Christian minister begins to say bold and radical things, like Mr. Murray at Park Street yonder, who is it that applauds, the Christian public or the outside public? The former are disturbed and terrified: it is the latter who are pleased. Do you suppose this quick and unerring instinct means nothing? The people don't reason on the matter; but they have an intuitive perception of the prac-

tical relations of things, and see *tendencies* quicker than *arguments*. Radicals would be wiser if they appreciated this fact. I say it, and say it with emphasis, — the rapidly increasing liberality of the Christian Church is its rapidly approaching dissolution. Give liberty its will, and the walls will all tumble level with the ground. The Catholics, the Protestant Evangelicals, the Unitarians and Universalists, being all more or less infected with the spirit of the age (which is simply the spirit of freedom), are all travelling the broad road of destruction, as Christian bodies. But — and this is why I rejoice — they will only arrive all the sooner as individuals at manhood and womanhood.

2. Another reason why I believe the Church is going to pieces is that it is growing more *united*. This, again, is taken commonly as a sign of strength; but it is, *under present circumstances*, really a sign of weakness, — an alarmed huddling together to resist a common foe. If the influence of free thought both inside and outside the sects were not so evidently on the increase, you would see no such desperate amalgamations as that of Old and New School Presbyterianism, possible only by the sacrifice of what once were deep convictions. The marked tendencies to union among the Evangelical bodies of the country are due partly to a growing indifference to Christian doctrines, partly to a growing spirit of fellowship which, by a noble inconsistency, forgets the doctrines, partly to a secret and well-grounded alarm at the spread of so-called “infidelity.” All these are signs of weakness. The rotting-away of theological fences, the consequent over-stepping of the fences, and alarm lest the fences prove inadequate for protection, — that is the real meaning of these phenomena of concentration. The fences once meant strong convictions, earnest and powerful beliefs worth battling for; now they are held so languidly that the trouble and sacrifices of war are too burdensome, and the congregations go for “peace at any price.” The instinct of fellowship has been powerfully repressed by doctrines; as, for instance, by the “close communion” doctrine of the “regular” or “Calvin Baptist.” But this doctrine, which is the strict logical corollary from Baptist premises, became so weakened in its hold on the minds of the people, that a new sect of “Free-will Baptists” split off by themselves, under the influence of the spirit of the age, to realize a wider fellowship. New sects always start with powerful and earnest convictions; and re-union always remains impossible while this earnestness and strength endure. The centripetal forces which to-day are drawing the Evangelical sects together, and which are overbalancing the centrifugal forces of independent beliefs, furnish daily proofs of the decay of Christian tenets. Indifference to doctrine is weakness, easy-going and illogical good-fellowship is weakness, fear of infidelity is weakness, — that is, if judged from the stand-point of the Christian Church; and these weak-

nesses, which are the causes of the tendency to union among the sects, prove inherent weakness in the Church itself.

3. One other reason only will I mention why I believe the Church is going to pieces: it is seeking to ally itself with the State. I refer to the attempts, laughed at thus far by the country, to get the Church established by law, through a theological amendment to the Constitution. The project seems ridiculous enough, yet it is the drowning man's clutch at a straw. When such men as Dr. Cheever and Professor Tayler Lewis virtually advocate the absurd scheme in the "New York Independent," the significance of the movement becomes more than trivial; and the late Pittsburg Convention, though empty as a bubble, is a bubble that shows the drift of the current. What but conscious weakness and alarm could prompt such a violation of Puritan principles? Is it not plainly a retrogression to Catholic ground? And what could cause this retreat to the Church-and-State theory of Rome, except the fear produced by the formidable spread of free thought? Nothing short of deadly peril to the Church would ever reconcile American Christians to it. *Yet we shall hear more, and not less, of this wild, despotic project.* The instinct of self-preservation is strong in all organized bodies; and, reason being on the side of free thought, Christianity must rely on law. Even the Unitarians, professedly the friends of freedom, know well how to make the law eke out the deficiency of their arguments.

Believing, therefore, that the Christian Church is going to pieces, I inquire whether its fate is to be that of all religious organization. Let us look at a few facts of human nature, from which, I think, an answer may be drawn.

1. If, as I conceive (notwithstanding Mr. Wasson's recent able essay in the "Radical"), the essence of religion is man's effort to perfect himself in all directions, — that is, to develop all the ideal possibilities of his nature, — then it may with truth be said that man is naturally a *religious being*. The gradual but unending progress of the race from lower to higher levels is the most wonderful phenomenon of history; yet this social progress is only the sum total, the generalized result, of individual efforts to achieve perfection of being. The existence of this great law of human progress is to my own mind the most convincing proof of infinite intelligence and moral purpose in universal nature. The first great fact to be noted, therefore, is that man is naturally a religious being.

2. But it is also true that man is naturally a *social being*. The same instinct which makes beavers club together to build a dam makes men associate whenever they have any common objects to accomplish. Common ideas, common aspirations, common aims, create at once a yearning and a basis for fellowship. We are drawn man to man, by forces sacred

and omnipotent. Every pure emotion and high thought and noble purpose seeks to see itself multiplied in many souls.

“As the deep sea reflects the sky,
As in a glass forms re-appear,
So in some heart would I descry
The image of my hope and fear.”

The universal fellowship of humanity, for which every lofty spirit longs to-day with an earnestness hitherto unknown in the world's history, is simply a less intense but more diffused friendship, — a recognition of the law of love, as the true substitute for soldiers and police-officers in the maintenance of social order. The social instinct will find its perfect development in nothing short of the Brotherhood of Man.

3. These two co-equal facts, that man is both a religious and a social being, are the cause of a third fact; namely, *religious organization*. That religion will always be organized, in some form or other, may, I think, be set down as a truth beyond dispute. So long as human nature remains what it is, it will create religious as surely as industrial, commercial, or political institutions. In other words, I believe that *religious organization has a future*; and my subject is not a bootless one.

4. But while these permanent facts of man's religious and social nature insure the permanence of religious organization, in some form or other, it is a fourth fact, quite as sure, that its special forms are all changeable and transient. I deny the possibility of any changeless or permanent *form* of organized religion. The reason is obvious. All institutions, religious or otherwise, are moulded by wants, circumstances, and opinions, which are constantly changing. Changes of public opinion on other subjects react with great power on men's views of religion, and there is no reason to suppose that changes in public opinion will ever cease to occur. It is safe to say, therefore, that the organizations founded by religion in one age will be changed in form by the ages that succeed. This, surely, is the lesson of the past; and it shows how idle are all speculations as to the “Church of the Future.” What Church in Christendom, for instance, has escaped the influences of increasing civilization? If any Church could boast of immutability, it would surely be the Roman Catholic Church; yet finding his Encyclical and Syllabus powerless to arrest the growing influence of secular knowledge and progress, the poor old Pope is compelled to summon an Œcumenical Council from the four quarters of the globe, in order to strengthen the Catholic Church by the new dogma of Papal Infallibility. That is, the Catholic Church is compelled to change, in order to prove its own vaunted changelessness! If Romanism is thus obliged to change, what other form of organized religion can pretend to be unchangeable?

Organization endures ; but organizations shift like summer clouds. In every one of them we see a double law of permanence and change, of life and death. *Metamorphosis of the indestructible* is the eternal lesson of Nature.

Thus we find four great facts which are solid as granite, — that man is a religious being, that man is a social being, that consequently religion must be organized, and that religious organization must at the same time exist and change. These facts I conceive to be scientifically established.

Now when we seek to read the future, not of organized religion in general, but of some particular organized religion, — as, for instance, Christianity, — the success of our investigation will depend on our ability to discriminate between its universal and special elements. The universal element is permanent : the special element is transient. When, therefore, I say that I believe the Christian Church is going to pieces, I mean that it is perishing as a particular form of organized religion. It will partly perish and partly survive. Let me point out what I conceive as likely to last in the Christian Church, and what to pass away.

1. The great purpose of perfecting humanity, which created the Christian Church, is going to last. Humanity will never cease to lift itself up to higher levels. This is the substance of religion ; and Christianity is one of the world's religions.

2. The practice of meeting together for mutual improvement, under the strong attraction of this common purpose, is going to last. The sentiment of brotherhood, the deep craving for a fellowship based on the noblest aspirations of humanity, is as eternal as the human heart, and will continue to draw men and women together in the pursuit of truth and goodness. But I greatly doubt whether the ministry, as now established, will continue. The Free Congregational Society of Florence, Northampton, has taught us all a lesson in this respect, retaining a regular speaker for part of the time, and leaving the supply of speakers for the rest of the time in the hands of a committee of their own number. This combines the advantages of the settled ministry and the lyceum system. The character of the services should be determined freely by each speaker, according to his individual convictions. But the matter of "exchanges" should not be in the hands of the regular speaker, but of the people who are to listen. They have an undoubted right to determine whom they will hear. Quite recently, I believe, the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society of Boston has adopted the Florence plan ; and I am inclined to think that this plan is a foreshadowing of the future.

3. The practice of combining the strength of individuals in a common effort to ameliorate the condition of the world is going to last. The

noblest men and women will always, as now, associate to reform abuses, to alleviate wretchedness, to advance great ideas,— in a word, to better mankind. The love of man which has lent its highest beauty to the Christian Church, and inspired the Sisters of Charity, and other unselfish workers of Christian history, will never grow cold in the human heart. It did not owe its origin to Christianity, and will long, very long, survive it.

These, I think, will be leading features in the organized religion of the future, as they have been in that of the past, since they do but express the very nature of religion itself. In other respects, there will be little uniformity of practice. Especially in the matter of public worship, I should hesitate to express a positive opinion. Music of some sort will naturally belong to any meetings that may grow out of religious aspiration and endeavor. But public prayer should be purely optional with him who conducts the meetings. There will most certainly be perfect freedom, both of thought, speech, and action, in the organized religion of the future: it will be most emphatically *free* religion. For this very reason, it would be presumptuous and foolish to attempt to predict its precise forms or methods. These will take care of themselves, and utter the opinions and sentiments of the time. The organizations of the future, however, will give fit instrumentalities to the great purpose of perfecting humanity in natural ways,— will provide for social meetings for mutual help, improvement, and religious sympathy,— and will create efficient means for the practical work of philanthropy and reform. So much as this I regard as beyond all reasonable doubt: more than this I shall not venture to predict.

So far, therefore, as the Christian Church has met these wants, it will survive. But not *as* the Christian Church. The special element of Christianity is rapidly perishing, and with it will perish all that gives the Christian Church its distinctive peculiarities. Under the special element I include all those beliefs, activities, and sentiments, which cluster about the person of “the Christ,”— which invest the Bible with exceptional claims on human reverence and obedience,— which represent the Church as an institution founded by God, to endure to the end of time. These sentiments, beliefs, and activities are essential to all forms of organized Christianity, and are fated to pass away. Let me state, in general, what is going to perish in the Christian Church.

1. The Christian doctrines and claims which make the corner-stone of the Church must perish. They are based on superstition alone.
2. All the ecclesiastical machinery devised to propagate these doctrines, enforce these claims, and establish the divine authority of the Christ, the Bible, and the Church, must perish.
3. The spirit of persecution, the arrogance of bigotry, the pride of or

thodoxy, the conceit of holding the absolute truth, the *furor* of proselytism, the greed of ecclesiastical aggrandizement, — all these must perish.

4. The Christian name must perish, as wedded indissolubly to the perishing special element of Christianity. The organized religion of the future will create its own name, and raise its own universal flag.

Now to expect that the Christian Church will ever willingly consent to the relinquishment of all this, and thus commit *hara-kiri*, would be the height of folly. I expect no such thing. Enfeebled as it is by the increase of freedom and intelligence and civilization, the Church is still powerful and will fight to the bitter end. Those are wofully deceived who fancy that it will ever wheel into line with modern ideas. It cannot do so and live; and corporations die hard.

I am no alarmist. I hate all wars, even in self-defence. I admire the spirit which rejoices in the "sympathy of religions," and would fain ignore their antagonisms. But I see an irrepressible conflict between the Christian Church and the modern world which has got to be fought out here in America. The question of the life or death of the Christian Church will yet shake this continent to its foundations. It will get into politics, — nay, is already getting into politics. The Bible-in-schools controversy and the agitation of the theological amendment to the constitution are but a hint of what is yet to come. I wish I could feel sure that this great conflict would be settled peacefully at the polls; but I do not feel sure of it. The moneyed institutions of the Christian Church are vast, its social influence is enormous, its slumbering power for evil is beyond all estimate. Representing nobody in this Association but myself, — nay, uttering what I know seems to most of them and to you to be the wild extravagance of theories pushed to absurd extremes, — I do nevertheless avow my own conviction that American civilization and the American government have a domestic enemy in the Christian Church to be compared only to the great slave-power of the South. What the Anti-Slavery Society did to the South, this Association is doing to the Church, — awakening and exasperating an enemy whose hand may yet be raised against the nation's life. Those who are disposed to slight the warning will do well to remember the incredulity of the North down to the very outbreak of the war. The great question of political slavery has been gloriously settled: the still greater question of spiritual slavery is looming up before us. What may lie between the present hour and the hour of final settlement, I can but dimly discern by the light of ideas; but sure I am, that freedom shall yet win her crowning triumph over the Christian Church, to be remembered with the same profound thankfulness with which we now remember the fall of the slave Confederacy.

THE PRESIDENT. — We had thought to have one more address this morning, from one whom it is always an inspiration to hear, JOHN WEISS, — who was to have spoken to us on “Religion as affected by the New Conditions of Life in America.” But he has been prevented from attendance by illness. You will agree however, I think, that the hours have been fully occupied; and the Convention will now take a recess till three o’clock.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The Convention reassembled at three o’clock. The President announced that the subject for consideration at this session was to be “*The Relation of Religion to the Public Schools of this Country.*” The subject was introduced by an address from Mr. THOMAS VICKERS, of Cincinnati.

Mr. VICKERS began by saying that he had not written out an essay, but had brought some notes and documents, and would open the discussion. He considered this one of the most momentous questions ever pressed upon the American people for settlement; and the discussion of it would necessarily include a review of the fundamental character of our institutions, and an inquiry into the scope and purpose, the power and authority, of civil government. The solution of the question might be reached by means of peaceful discussion, but might possibly have to be reached by an appeal to the force of muscle. He thought, however, that there might be intellect and moral power enough in the country to enable us to dispense with the force of arms. He did not believe that the opposition made by those who objected to paying taxes for the support of the Common School system arose from any perversity or depravity of the moral nature: he thought, as a general thing, it arose from a plain want of moral and intellectual enlightenment. The difficulty of discussing this question grew out of the inability of the persons who took the opposite side to distinguish between things that differed; out of a totally false notion which they had concerning the nature and province of religion in general, and the character of Christianity in particular, — concerning the nature and function and limitation of civil governments in general, and the character of this republican government in particular; and concerning the relation of religion to government, and government

to religion. Religion, in his opinion, from its very nature, was not a public matter, but a private one: it did not exist in forms, but in the recesses of the heart and of the conscience. The very moment an attempt was made to exhibit it, it was lost. He read a number of extracts from the speeches of those who had opposed the exclusion of religious exercises from the schools of Cincinnati, and then passages from addresses made at the Pittsburg convention in behalf of amending the Federal Constitution so as to make it recognize the Christian religion, to show that the animus and argument were the same in both cases. The one position logically involved the other. The attempt to introduce Christianity into the Constitution was simply an effort of the old spirit of persecution that never died out in the Church. The proposed amendment to the national Constitution was simply a prelude to an amendment to the various State constitutions, so that they should permit the passage of laws for regulating religion. He did not acknowledge that God or the Christ had any thing to do with the government of the United States; in no sense was the government founded on the Christian religion. He quoted the opinions of Washington and Jefferson in support of this position, and also with great effect a passage from a treaty of the government of the United States with the government of Tripoli. The ends of civil government, he contended, were purely temporal: the true sphere of the State was an exceedingly limited one. The true ends of the State were exhausted in the protection of person and property: it had nothing to do with religion as such, any more than it had to do with what a man should eat or drink. It had nothing to do with the propagation or even the recognition of religion. The whole people were interested in the government, and the manner it was conducted; not those who believed in the Christian religion merely. He would insist upon the absolute secularization of the State. It might be supposed that there was not now a union between the Church and the State; but so long as there was any religious teaching in our public schools, so long as the testimony of a man who did not believe in God was not received with as much weight as that of the man who did believe in God, and so long as the property used for church purposes was exempt from taxation, so long was there a union between the Church and State. The abolition of this union it would be his effort to bring about. The interests of liberty, of civilization, of science, of true religion itself, required the abolition.

At the conclusion of Mr. Vickers' address, the President said that the subject was now open for general discussion, and that he hoped we should hear the various phases of it presented. In order to give opportunity to as many as possible who might de-

sire to speak, it would be well to limit the time of the speakers to fifteen minutes each, and with the assent of the assembly he would so decide.

REV. JOHN L. RUSSELL, of Salem, Mass., first took the floor. He wished, most emphatically, to indorse the doctrine of the essay of Mr. Vickers, and drew some illustrations from his own experience in connection with the public schools of Massachusetts, to show how much the religious opinions and prejudices of teachers and school-committee men had to do with the instruction that was given in the schools. He thought especially that the Normal Schools of the State needed looking after in this respect. It was his opinion that at present they were very strongly under Orthodox influences; and that not only so much religion as the law prescribed was allowed in them, but that a good deal more got in, and of a very bigoted kind. The only safety, he believed, was in forbidding all religious exercises as such in the schools.

JAMES W. STILLMAN, Esq., of Rhode Island, desired to add his voice on the same side of the question. He took the ground that the only object of government is to administer justice between man and man; to protect each human being in the enjoyment of his or her natural rights. All laws and all taxation should be to this end; and whenever government went beyond this object, it committed injustice against somebody. If the State made him pay a tax to support any kind of religious instruction, it wronged him. The support of religion must be a voluntary matter in this country, must be left wholly to one's own conscience. To require the reading of the Bible in the public schools, or to permit any religious instruction in them, was contrary to the spirit of republican institutions. For himself, he did not believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and could not therefore consent to have it read in the schools as such. The indiscriminate reading of it he considered harmful to good morals; for alongside of its good things there were most abominable and wicked things in it. He spoke also of the movement to get religion, and especially the Christian religion, nominally recognized in the Constitution of the United States, and denied the right of the United States to specifically recognize the authority of any of the religions that have ever existed on the earth. Our principle must be absolute separation of church and state.

LUCRETIA MOTT, of Philadelphia, then addressed the meeting. Though nearly eighty years old, she spoke with much of her former ability and vigor. Her presence was a benediction. She wished, she said, to congratulate the Free Religious Association on the advance it had made and the work it had done since its formation, three years ago, when

she was also present. She was especially glad to find it taking up such important practical subjects as that which was under consideration at this session. The Association, she thought, could accomplish great good in these directions of practical reform and progress. Something had been said by some of the speakers of the danger of a conflict of arms in this country on religious questions, and that the conflict might come on this question which the Convention was now considering. She could hardly believe there was such a danger. But if there be, she said, let us all try to avert it. We must trust to free discussion like this, and seek to inculcate right principles. Begin in time, and the truth will prevail without war, to the pulling down of all strongholds of injustice and wrong. As to the Bible, she would wish to make a discrimination there, as in other writings, between truth and error. She could not accept its inspiration as a whole, and could not see why it should be read as a book of worship in the schools or in the churches. She thought ministers should dare to take their texts from other books, modern or ancient, as well as from the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures. Let us recognize revelation and truth wherever we find it. If the question were, to what doctrine does the Bible give authority, in her opinion, she said, the Bible would overturn nearly all the theology in the various churches of the land. But let the motto ever be, Truth for authority, and not authority for truth.

Mrs. U. TRACY CUTLER, of Ohio, the next speaker, desired to speak to the question from the stand-point of the Orthodox Christian Church, with which she declared herself connected. The question, to her, did not seem to be one that depended on our peculiar views of the Bible. She did not see that people need divide on this question according as they accepted or rejected the idea that the Bible is the special word of God. We ought to ask, What do the principles of our government require? Admitting the Bible to be the special word of God, as she did, could we, in view of the profession we make to the world that our government is absolutely free in respect to religion, consistently force the Bible into the common schools? She thought not; and argued that the religious character and influence of the Bible were injured by Protestants insisting on this claim. Freedom to worship and believe according to the dictates of one's own conscience is the American principle. If the government were to interfere with religious education, it would only mar it. The church and the Sunday school and the home must take care of that. The very principles of Christianity, too, in which she believed, forbade her forcing the Bible upon those who did not accept it willingly. And again, if we were to compel the use of the Bible in the public schools, and the children of Catholics and others should stay away from the schools in consequence, we should be fostering a dangerous power of ignorance in the country,

which might be capable of doing great harm in the future both to our civil and religious institutions.

REV. ROWLAND CONNOR, of Boston, agreed with Mrs. Cutler, that we should discuss this question without reference to our peculiar views of the Bible. There were really, he said, three parties on the question. The first, represented by the Catholics, believe that education should be in the hands of the church. They do not believe in separating religious instruction from secular. The two, they say, must go on together, and not only simultaneously, but under the same system. They therefore claim their proportion of the public-school fund to be used for parochial schools, taught in their own way among themselves. Another party, the party now generally in the ascendant in this country, claim that the school-fund shall be kept intact, and that the schools shall remain under the control of the civil power, and shall be open to all. But they insist that the reading of the Bible, and other religious exercises peculiar to Protestant Christianity, shall be continued in the schools, the country being substantially a Protestant country. The third party say the country is neither Protestant nor Catholic, nor of any other form of religion. Its government is purely secular; its public schools, supported by taxation, should be entirely secular, and no public money should be used for sectarian schools, and no religious exercises permitted in the public schools. This last position, Mr. Connor argued, is the only one that, theoretically or practically, is consistent with the principles of American government.

REV. SAMUEL R. CALTHROP, of Syracuse, N.Y., spoke of the distinction between teaching the Bible and teaching the religion which is in the Bible, and which might be found also in a good many other books. And sometimes, he said, instead of the Bible itself, little worthless compendiums of the Bible stories and narratives are used, which are prepared in such a way as to teach the peculiar sacredness of the Bible as a book, while they fail to impress the sanctity of its many grand moral and spiritual lessons. The Bible had been taught to him in his youth in such a formal, officially religious sort of way, that the characters in it never seemed to him real and living. He got his first real religious impressions from the grand lives of Plutarch's heroes, read to him by a sister who made them all glow with the devotedness of her own religious character. In later years, when he came to read the Bible with other views than those in which he had been educated, he found real experiences, and heroic men and women there too. And he believed that what was needed in our schools was not formal religious instruction or exercises in worship, whether according to the Bible or any other book, but teachers of such character that they would win children unconsciously to the best

ideas and the noblest purposes, and inculcate that religion which consists in the love of truth and righteousness, and the consecration of one's faculties to the highest things one knows. Our schools, he thought, would be dwarfed and emasculated without this kind of religion in them; and it was our duty to see that they had this sort of religion, and that nothing else got taught in them in the name of religion. And if the teacher had this living religious character, he (the speaker) would not care with what theology it was associated, so long as that theology was not taught. He could not accept Mrs. Cutler's theology, but he was sure he could trust her to teach his children. And he thought there were certain fundamental principles of truth and righteousness, the sustenance of all high religious character, on which all sects and all the great religions could agree as a necessary element in education.

REV. J. L. HATCH, of Massachusetts, said it was evident that the pressure to keep the Bible in the public schools came from the Protestant belief in it as a special revelation of God. It was not read for the sake of the moral lessons that may be derived from it, but as a religious exercise. The very reading of such a book, no matter what parts of it were read, was regarded as beneficial, — as pleasing to God and somehow securing his blessing. But what good, religious or moral, he asked, could come from the exercise as commonly conducted? Half the time the children did not understand what was read. The exercise was often more comical than religious. The Protestant principle as to the rights of private conscience would exclude the Bible, he thought, from the public schools. This had been admitted by distinguished Protestant clergymen. But they fear the result of carrying the principle to its legitimate consequences, and forsake it at their convenience. He referred also to a resolution passed some years ago in the New York Synod of the Presbyterian Church, to the effect that if the day should come when the Evangelical churches should lose their controlling influence over the public schools, it would be the duty of Presbyterians to withdraw their children from these schools and establish for them parochial schools. The Presbyterians, therefore, had taught the Catholics the lesson they were now practising.

MR. GUSTAVE WATSON, of Boston, desired to say a word on the other side. Many reasons had been presented for excluding the Bible from the common schools, but were there not some good reasons for keeping it in? He thought there were. He would ask the ladies and gentlemen present to recall the time when as children they read the book at the opening of the school, and did they not find in it a satisfaction and charm which lingered yet? He would not claim that it should be read for theological instruction. He would pass over the passages on which there might be

doctrinal differences. But what harm could possibly come from reading the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, the devotional Psalms of David, or any other of the moral and spiritual parts of the Bible? The child is impressible, his mind is tender, and it is then that these things should be taught. Others had spoken of bad things in the Bible. It was wonderful how much fault they could find with the book. But why not remember and speak of its good things, and keep it in the schools for the sake of these? It seemed to him a book of morals as well as religion, and he would have it in the schools as the best text-book in morals that could be found. He thought, too, if the Bible were to be taken out of the schools, every thing that has any reference to religion must follow. Even the simplest songs, if they have any religious lesson, must be excluded. We might sing, perhaps, the brotherhood of man, but we could not be allowed to sing the fatherhood of God. The dangers of keeping the Bible in our schools would be found, he thought, very frivolous when they were examined. Who would say that he was ever injured by the Bible? He feared that its opponents were moved more by prejudice than reason in this matter; or, from their exceeding earnestness in their cause, were deceiving themselves into believing there was a great danger where there was none in reality.

RABBI WISE, of the Hebrew Church, Cincinnati, was the last speaker. The sentiment of the last gentleman's speech reminded him, he said, of his first pair of boots, when in his boyish joy he slept in them. But when the second and third pair came, he was glad enough to get them off at night. So he thought it was with the reading of the Bible in schools. The beautiful sentiment of it was soon worn off, and it became an empty form. And then it would do harm. The harm was in reading it as the word of God, while the child could not be taught to discriminate and understand it. The Bible so considered was the parent of sectarianism and of bitter, bloody strife. He would not have the young educated without religion, but it must be religion without sectarianism,—the religion that consists in truth, benevolence, and justice. But not only were the common schools in this country under sectarian influences, but the colleges were sectarian. It was difficult to find any public educational institution without its sectarian bias. As a free people we ought to get beyond all this. We should have free schools and free colleges, where you can send your son or daughter, whatever your religious faith, and have that faith respected. It was an injustice and anomaly in this free country to have to pay taxes for sectarian schools. Sectarianism was still dominant in this country in many ways. The citizens had to pay taxes for the support of chaplains in Congress and in the army and navy, though many of us don't believe in them at all. Every public document and paper had a religious

idea attached to it,— Anno Domini,— which many of the citizens must utterly reject. “I believe,” said he, “that I have but one Lord, the Almighty! And I have been away from Austria twenty-five years because I had so many Lords there. Is there no place where the poor soul can have rest? Would you not deem it uncharitable if every public document were thus to outrage your religious feelings?” Now that slavery was abolished and the negro set free, let us go on, he said, to free the land from the strife and bigotry of every form of sectarianism. He would yield to none in reverence for the Bible: he claimed a pretty thorough acquaintance with it. But when he saw that this nation was composed of all the nationalities of the Old World and of various races and religions, with no tie binding us together except that of our common humanity and the Constitution of the United States, he would remove every element of discord from the civil institutions of the country, do exact justice to all, and open here a hope of redemption and freedom for the whole human family.

The discussion having continued till six o'clock, the Convention then adjourned till 7½ P.M.

★ EVENING SESSION.

The Association reassembled according to adjournment, a large audience being present. The President announced the subject for the evening to be “The Natural Sympathy of Religions, as indicating the Grounds on which they may come into Practical Unity and Co-operation.” The subject, he said, would be introduced in its general aspects by an essay from Mr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, minister of the Free Church in Lynn, who, though not a member of the Association, is a good friend to its idea; and then other speakers would bring illustrations from several specific religions outside of Christianity.

ESSAY BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

The Natural Sympathy of Religions.

In an age when politics and trade are œcumenical, it would be strange if religion did not drop provincialism and resort to its universal meaning. Shall we not hear those finer responses of race to race and age to age that

affirm the spiritual unity of man? Time and space are tributary; and we gather materials for philosophy that shall indeed be a science of sciences, knowing how to discern the same in the different, the constant factors in history by means of the variable ones. How long shall the unity of virtue be obscured; or the substance of religion arbitrarily divided into natural and revealed; or truth discredited as less true for not being Christian-born, and wisdom as less wise for lacking the credentials of a name?

Richter gives beautiful counsel in his "Levana," that children should learn to receive different religions as lovingly as different languages, in which but one spirit of humanity is expressed. Is it not really due even to them, that we base religious culture on this respect for essential values; leaving free their simple sense that what is true has the same divine origin and authority wherever we may find it, and that what is best in every faith has been shaped out of forces as natural and familiar as the grass and the sky? It is not easy to say whether this is more needed in the interests of integrity, or in those of brotherhood.

The suggestion is so foreign to Christian methods, that it seems as if it must have come from some old eclectic teacher of the Stoic or Platonic schools; yet there was never a civilization in the world to which it could have been nearly so appropriate as to our own, — to this cosmopolitan genius, this encyclopedic science, these endless resources, working to an end beyond themselves.

Thus, to take but one instance, the clear insight of Müller and others, referring comparative mythology to the unity of the race in its spiritual relations to nature, is quietly undermining all the excuses which religious caste has hitherto furnished for treating the heathen, whether in China, India, California, or on the prairies of the West, as the lawful prey of the Christian.

It is a strange mistake to imagine, as some of our moral reformers seem to do, that the effort to lift religions to a common level is antagonistic to the humanities of the age. For one, I demand this universality in the name, not of literary curiosity or of comparative science even, so much as of human love and instant social duty. I hold it time for our scholarship to demonstrate the unity of the religious sentiment, and the ethical brotherhood of the race, from a point of view broad enough at once to rebuke the contempt of weaker races by the strong, to silence the pretences of religious monopoly, and to break the dream of exclusive revelation, so thoroughly that no sane or even honest faith shall ever be heard again proclaiming that all who came before itself were thieves and robbers in the fold of God. I read between the lines of our own lessons in the school of liberty, that Man = Man should receive the fullest appli-

cation of which it is capable as the formula of history. Allow me to say that I found myself democratic in my religious thought in the selfsame hour and from the same conviction that made me radical in my politics. A privileged race or sex cannot be more unnatural in the political order than the asserted absolutism of Christianity among religions is in the divine.

Every great religion contains the sacred personality of man, yet neither confining nor exhausting it. They are religions only because each has in it more than what is distinctive and individual. They are religions, because they are religion, which, in essence and promise, is more than any of its historic forms. And so if we would lay the emphasis justly, it must not fall on the fact that one of these forms has identified even the latest and largest civilization with its name. The point of moment for us is that these divine travellers are on one path, their faces set the same way; the same light in their eyes, if we will but see; a promise in the first the last cannot fulfil alone, a dream that only their mutual recognition can interpret. It becomes us to find in our own experience the secret that explains how they all have met the problems of ages, and answered the prayers of millions.

We must have eyes for the possession of the soul by its own inalienable relations; for its constant tap-roots in deity; for its spontaneities for ever renewed; its tides of the primal and uncaused that prove human nature the genius of God. Yet what we are most concerned with is not the mere common elements in all religions, but the ideal indicated in each by its best thought and performance: because this is its natural point of connection with all grander meanings of these constant factors of growth, and shows its instinctive attraction towards larger life than its own. Properly, its high-water mark is not detected even at its limits of positive attainment, but hides in these ideals and presentiments; wherein all distinctive religions point to their fulfilment, beyond themselves, in a future that will not be mortgaged to their names nor to their claims. So we who are a new nation of the nations ask a Bible of the Bibles, where the best only of all their wisdom shall be gathered, to welcome fresh records of this larger day. And we will all read it with a common liberty and joy; not to define its positive limits, but to recognize its prophetic instinct of what is coming through our free co-operation of beliefs.

What meant the dream of a "music of spheres," haunting poetry, philosophy, science, from the first, and in fact the substance of their inspiration? The answer comes in this inward travail of a humanity longing to be one, which insists on interpreting our music to-day, from Beethoven to the slave songs that beguiled the night of bondage with their tender appeals. And it is a symphony of the spirit the ages sing; and every

faith man has loved and lived by, thus interpreted by its best, is a voice therein. We shall hear it, if the nearest sections do not too loudly assert themselves, for fear of being disparaged.

The forwardness to drown all other religions in the loud blare of Christian trumpets is negation towards religion itself; and only when it ceases will the way be open for us to find the special values of Israelite, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, and the rest. The Talmud tells of a Rabbi who said, "Go not over a bridge unless some one of different faith go with thee; for Satan cannot enter where two religions walk together." There is a gospel in the satire: Christendom has yet to learn it. The claim to exclusive ownership of the path of salvation is the lurking-place of all that imperils wisdom and love.

Akbar, the Mogul Emperor of India in the seventeenth century, believing that wise and capable men existed in all religions, made his court a centre of free discussion for Hindus, Mussulmen, Parsees, Christians, and Jews. Out of this ferment of hospitality came that remarkable work, the Dabistan, or "School of Sects," an impartial report of these different confessions. Its geniality may be noted in such sentences as this: "The leaves of God's book are the religious persuasions." It tells us of one teacher who said he had "learned on his way that the essence of all creeds was God:" of another, "to whom remained no rancor of religion," since he believed that the variety of the rules of prophets proceed only from the abundance of names. We are told of another, who "mixed the purest part of every religion to form his own faith;" and of a Persian Sufi, who said, "If thou art a Mussulman, go stay with the Franks; if a Christian, join the Jews; if a Shiiah, mix with the schismatics; whatever thy religion, associate with men of opposite persuasion. If in hearing their discourses thou art not in the least moved, but canst mix with them freely, then hast thou attained peace and art a master of creation." It is curious for one who observes that every Christian finds arguments in the Bible for whatever he believes, to find that the Dabistan gives the same report of the Veda.

In all great religions there comes a time, sooner or later, when they are possessed by this thirst to go out of themselves into a larger communion, which beset Akbar and his Moslem court. It has made China the common home of three different religions, helping each other not only to a complete toleration, but to a certain sense of completeness. It is disintegrating Judaism and Christianity. It makes the Brahmo-Somaj, or New Theism, of India, and your Free Religious Association. At the poles of terrestrial space as well as of social tradition is found at last this identity of spiritual desire.

Shall I try to indicate to what it points? The highest triumph of a

distinctive religion is achieved only in a self-abnegation that sinks its name and claim in larger sympathies, a new-born sense of finding that for which it was made. For every such faith begins by affirming its own originality and sovereignty; and this point, in which they are all alike, is the bar to their sympathy. How slow they are to learn that ethics and faith descend in the royal blood of humanity, traceable to no beginning, to no prophet and no chosen line! It is curious, for instance, to turn from the claim of Christianity to that of Judaism; each calling itself "the absolute religion, truth of God and love of man," yet each retaining a certain insular pride of negation, which clearly defeats its claim to universal validity: since what can the Jew possibly care for this sensitive horror of your Christian at criticism of the person of Jesus, or the Christian for your Jew's insistence on Moses, as the highest prophet of the unity of God? The Parsees indeed have a sentence which rebukes both for these personal pretensions, reminding them that "each prophet who appears is not to be opposed to his predecessors, nor yet complacently to exalt his law."

But the better insight comes. Religions are of divine seed. The substance of every one was sacrifice; of the best to God, of the lower to the higher. Nature takes them at their word. Sooner or later comes the face to face concourse of beliefs, which opens a higher life through the death of their prescriptive masterships.

One way or another Nature takes them at their word: their symbols, that seemed in each case eternal and final, pass; their sacred names are burned in their altar-fires, and they are changed. But the after-life is their best; for the shell of symbol thrown by, the immortal essence ascends to view, winged like that ideal self which the Persian believed to hover over every soul, unseen. And the latest faith is instructed to modesty and universality, beholding above all differences of transient form eternal identity of spiritual relation and unity of desire.

See how it has been with the older religions, all of which run in the blood of our civilization, though it has claimed to come of Christianity alone. Are we not coming to feel towards what was best in them something of that tender interest with which we recall the intuitions and emotions of our childhood? Here, we see, were historic germs; they guaranteed a progress, in which we are ourselves but a step, and the religion we were born in but a stage; just as the bud guarantees not only the flower, but the seeds that point in that to more summers beyond. No faith ever needed remanding to these duties of natural piety more than Christianity. When science proclaims the law of development, it is sounding a timely recall of civilization to this filial tenderness, of which it did not dream. When it demonstrates that no force can ever be lost, it

necessitates this historic justice, so long neglected in the spiritual sphere ; and theology has to concede that no race or prophet can have escaped continuity with the past.

So the old religions at last are ceasing to be treated as mere "preparations for Christianity;" are being accorded independent validity. They were dynamic forces, not mechanical ; for history is not arithmetic, but inspiration. For them to die was not to be like the footprints on flags we scale off from old sea-margins ; was not to lie for ever as they fell : they mingled with the currents of the imperishable soul.

And now, for all the living religions also, comes the hour when their names and symbols of exclusive authority drop away. And the sacrifice will be new birth for religion itself. Gray with years to which Christianity is but boyhood, China, India, Judea, and the rest, bring their traditions into its passionate crowd of sects. And the mutual recognition begins by supplanting all claims that would fix one birthplace for the Spirit, whether in Zion, or Nazareth, or Mecca, or Peking, or Benares. Never did Nature bring so many spiritual elements face to face, to enforce the sacrifices of growth. Courage, then, to lose the lesser unities in the higher ; to forsake the complacency of belief in finalities, and live, like pious Socrates, in the conviction that wisdom still yearns for delivery, and that we know not yet the full definitions of life that we seek.

What most enforces the special religions to universality, because it owes least to either of them distinctively, is precisely the element of our civilization which is peculiar to it, and really the new lord of life, — its scientific breadth and freedom. But beforehand with science was æsthetic art. And Lessing, a true founder of the modern theatre, was the first to invoke this sympathy of religions in his "Nathan the Jew ;" sublimely indicating the identity of the drama with the genius of brotherhood, as the art of appreciating all forms of human experience to the justification of the best in all.

These personalities we call religions indeed seem to tread the verge of unity, and to wait for some happy moment of recognition to drop the trivialities of dividing names. Is he the Christian who "loves mercy, does justly, and walks humbly before God"? But this is Judaism too : these are the very words of its own prophet, centuries before Christ ; and the modern Jew says just as plainly, "He is the Jew who loves God and man." But Mohammed says also, "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian : he was true Moslem ;" i.e., one resigned to God. Nanac, prophet of the Sikhs, said, "He alone is a true Hindu, whose heart is just ; and he only a true Mussulman, whose life is true." The regent of Hlassa surprised good Father Huc by constantly repeating, "Your religion is the same with ours." How did Buddhism define itself? As a law of mercy to all, without distinction of race, or caste, or creed.

This is the set of every current, — to an insight that names cannot deceive. The Persian Hafiz says, "The object of all religions is alike. All men seek their beloved; and all the world is love's dwelling: why talk of a mosque or a church?" And these best issues are not incidental. Religion essentially seeks universality: it is participation in what cannot be bought up, and engrossed. More definitely, it is the natural unity of the finite with the infinite, and nothing can fully satisfy it which seeks to tie the divine to special revelations. It wants the spiritual sun and air that can visit and endow all men. Therefore, it perpetually reaffirms itself as Nature, till that homely name reaches a meaning in which all forms of faith are fulfilled.

*
NATURE.

For all these forms are but variations on the chords of natural love, fear, and longing for the best. The saint shall detect his own secret prayer in the rudest touch, just as the latest achievement of science but confirms the first trust of man in the elemental powers. Even of *physical* nature we note that her symbols ever return, the inevitable body of each new belief. Your eye for nature carries in it the sense of all the mythologies. The return of the sun upward in the zodiac, that brings you the new birth you share with the poets and the birds, interprets half the sacred fables of the world, Hebrew, Greek, and Christian. Who of us cannot understand that infantile cry of the Veda hymns to the Light; to "Night with her innumerable eyes," to "the Dawn, leader of the Day, restorer of men?" It is a cry of greeting, as well as of dependence; free, glad praise, showing man at home in the universe, not prostrate before it, even then. Our root-word for deity is still that first ejaculation *div*, which meant both Light and God. Do not Plato, the Gospel of John, and the poet who watched the countenance of Mont Blanc fill with the rose of dawn, hold fast the same indispensable symbol of the Highest? Sanskrit hymns to an all-creative divinity in the sun are interpreted across thirty centuries by Tyndall's song of modern science to this source of cosmic life. The symbolism of rivers, trees, and mountains, is a celebration of man's accord with nature that no faith has failed in. Hieroglyphics of life and growth, of refuge and might, of lapse of things and permanence of thought, they know no exclusiveness of time or creed. What a life has the plant in all beliefs, from Soma, gathered for sacrifice on the Himalayan heights, to the Hebrew trees of knowledge and immortality; from the Scandinavian Ygdrasill, type of all meanings in freedom and fate, to our own fir-trees of the mountain solitudes, that recall us from wasting cares and passions of the modern sort to serenity and self-respect!

We find ourselves at home in all religions through their common appeal

to what is simplest, nearest, most familiar. Thus there has everywhere been found a certain sacredness in numbers. It is in the rudest and the ripest culture; it is in all divinity, from the Zoroastrian Seven to the Christian Three in One; it is in all philosophy from Orpheus to Hegel. For numbers are the alphabet of deity, of law, of order, of beauty, of love; when you can count your ten fingers, you have begun to think the cosmos. So a word, the most familiar product of human energy, has been universally the dearest symbol of the divine. There is not one historic faith in which Word does not stand for God. But the word is in man's very mouth. He utters God. What is nearest you and me made the spiritual life of all ages; birth, death, the mystery of change, the bliss of loving and sharing, the self-respect of loyalty to an ideal, the spur of defect, the stress of infinite desire. For the largest expression they can give to these elements are the religions of the world to make common endeavor.

THE ESSENTIAL PURPORT OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

We refer religion to certain central ideas and relations: the unity of God, fate and freedom, and the solution of these by prayer and progress, in the unity of man with God; sacrifice and atonement; inspiration and incarnation; immortality; practical duties and humanities. The diversity of form which these ideas and relations may assume constitutes the difference of religions. *But the whole history of religion itself points to free, broad, essential meanings of them; and these meanings, incapable of monopoly by any special faith, the common presentiment, instinct, and aspiration, from the beginning, mark the only sure path of present and future sympathy between the civilizations of the world.* I have but a few moments for a condensed and rapid sketch of this sublime testimony of essential meanings.

UNITY OF GOD.

Our theism is foreshadowed in the most primitive worship. The first temples are stone circles, cromlechs of a prehistoric world. The latest one is the ideal unity of harmonious powers, of which the circle is still the symbol. In the rudest consciousness, Nature has spoken her secret that the One is greater than the Many. As it shapes its gods out of its fears and its desires, so it is haunted by the intimation of some one all-containing Presence in the image of that personal identity which all these, however dimly, represent; and so the very child's-play of this half-conscious instinct predicts the crowning creed of the ages, that God is one, and revealed in the inmost consciousness of man. For you shall find that these earliest gods are either traced back to a first god, or up to a Supreme, or

else made implicitly one, in the fact that the attitude and purpose of the worshipper's soul is essentially the same, to whichever name he turns. As his tribute is always an upward look, as his prayer is always a more or less similar resultant of blended hope and trust and fear, so the very names of his gods are interchangeable. And how should it not be so? Subjectively, the act of worship is in each case an effort for supreme devotion, and the whole soul goes with it; while, objectively, it is always more or less consciously referred to that all-surrounding whole of space that enfolds all minor possibilities of help and harm.

The nebulous unity of the religious sentiment in the old Hindu Rig-Veda, two thousand years B.C., holds the germs of all later systems, — of Polytheism, of Pantheism, of Monotheism; and so gently and naturally does it shade off into the creed of the Vedanta philosophy which succeeds it, — “the different gods are members of the One Soul,” — that it is impossible to find the point of historical transition.

But in this also, as indeed in all other forms of spiritual pantheism, the unity of God emerges, as identical with power, with goodness, with personality in the infinite sense. An Upanishad says, “Soul is lord and king of all; within this universe, yet beyond it; as birds repair to a tree to dwell there, so the world to the Supreme.”

Not less pregnant with unity was the polytheism of the Greek. It flowered into that worship of “the One in the many” which marks almost every great Greek school from Pythagoras and Parmenides downward; and it issued at last in the Platonists, who, about the time of Christ, summed up their testimony by saying, “All mankind are agreed that there is One God and Father, and all the gods are his children.”

Shemitic monotheism and Aryan polytheism differ very widely; but unity was the mark of deity in the aspiration of both, — as dear to Socrates and Maximus Tyrius as to Isaiah and Jesus, — though these very different orders of mind could hardly have admired each other. By the Confucian, again, the principle of unity is found in an all-co-ordinating Reason, as Shangte; by the Buddhist, in the perfected Human, conceived as for all men and for ever the same. And even the Persian Two Principles come to unity in the fore-ordained and therefore *essential* triumph of Ormuzd, and the conversion of Ahriman and his hosts.

Science has labelled the different forms of religion in their relation to God as Theism, Pantheism, Polytheism. But this must not blind us to their common substance in that relation. The poles of unity and variety co-exist in all forms of human worship, even those we call theistic. Brahmin and Buddhist, Hebrew Psalmist, Greek Stoic, and Roman Eclectic, Plato and Plutarch, Christian Fathers, and the Gnostic heretics, all alike introduce us to the belief in “gods.” Yet it is but to emphasize

the opposite pole of unity. Rammohun Roy put it to his Christian objectors, how as Trinitarians they could charge Hindus with polytheism, every one of whom confessed the unity of Godhead, while holding it to be manifested in millions of forms. We do not call the Catholics polytheists, yet their saints and pictures show that they demand variety in the sense of the divine. To say nothing of what might in one sense properly enough be called the speculative polytheism of the Protestant world, its idolatry of the Bible, the Christ, the Church, the creed, it is doubtful if the recognition of a Supreme Unity was more effectually intercepted in the ancient Greek mind than it is now by the practical fetichism of modern society and trade. There is, indeed, small difference here in the matter of times or confessions. But always the prophet comes to revive the flow of this sacred intuition of the One. To the ancient mysteries by which it was fed, answer the modern transcendental philosophies of religion. It is their work to make it a common centre of sympathy for mankind.

NECESSITY AND FREEDOM.

From first to last, men feel coiled around them the bonds of sovereign necessity. Vishnu's serpent folding the mythologic world, and the electric wires that science puts round the actual globe, mean the fate that lies in natural law, in spiritual experience, in organization, temperament, circumstance, sequence. It is universal in religion; from the Norse faith that every one's lot was writ in his brain at birth, to that finest wisdom, without some sense of which no man ever found content, that makes of deity a pure necessity of freedom, law, and love. Such bywords as "the charmed life," the "lucky star," "the evil genius," such practices as conjuring, fortune-telling, and the casting of lots, are signs of the play of this instinct in the popular mind in all ages and races. Here the great brooding thought of destiny makes ascetics, there fierce fanatics, there again heroes and saints; and all these classes in every faith; and yet, again, it becomes inspiration of special faculty, and brings practical mastery over things and men. Nations obey the larger human currents against which they strive. The fate-tragedies of the Greeks and the fortunes of America enforce the same eternal decrees in the nature of man.

Now every great religion becomes such, and endures as such, by virtue of some power it has to reconcile fate with freedom. This is the indispensable thing in human life; and it completes itself when we transform our limits into liberties, by recognizing the universal laws as the laws of our own personality also, and therein finding spontaneity and self-movement. All metaphysics have floundered among the mysterious contradictions of fore-knowledge and free-will; but men have somehow never failed

to believe that there must be a beam to connect these balanced scales of fate and freedom, whose wires ascend to disappear. Thus the Vedic herdsmen, more than 3,000 years ago, pronounced themselves friends with their gods; and that free bearing is the germ of our Aryan science, that now frees religion from an outside dictation, and makes the universe a home.

It was fine in Lessing to put the saying, "No man must must," into the mouth of a Jew; for this race, spite of its absolutist idea of God, has insisted strenuously on the freedom of the will, and, more than all others, inspired the world's struggles for civil liberty and public justice, by the ardor of its prophets and the heroism of its nationality.

We imagine the East as having been quite crushed under the sole dogma of fate. But it would be easy, taking for text the distich of the old Hitopadesa, or Hindu Fable Book,—

"Twofold is the life we live in: fate and will together run;
Two wheels bear life's chariot onward, will it move on only one?"—

to show the balancing reaction that runs through the whole of Hindu history, literature, religion, and life.

Buddhism preached a tragic gospel of the miseries of existence; yet made, even of this, a stimulus to the broadest and most single-hearted propagandism of love the world ever saw.

The Stoics emphasized the severity of law, natural, ethical, spiritual. Yet theirs is the manliest of philosophies, teaching how to advance to meet one's destiny, as an heir to his inheritance, as a soldier to his victory, as an artist to his ideal; nor yet without tenderness to suffering and moral need, as Epictetus, Seneca, and Aurelius amply show. "Socrates was not in prison," says Epictetus, "for he was willingly there." To this old slave-philosopher corresponds the New World's great martyr for the slave. The book of Epictetus educated the noblest ruler in all history,—Marcus Aurelius. John Brown, inspired by the like ethics of moral destiny, summoned a million bayonets and emancipated a race.

The older Shemitism held knowledge to be the fall, and bade reason submit to faith. Yet Mohammed tells us, its latest prophet, that when he heard the divine word ask him, out of the highest heaven, what he desired most, he replied, "Leave to ask whatsoever question comes into my mind, that my difficulties may be removed." The very essence of Moslem faith seems to be fatalism: the very word means 'resignation.' But Ali's proverb reveals that it found its own secret path to liberty: "Despair is a freeman, hope is a slave." And not only the well-known courage of the Moslem against heaviest odds, but the familiar fact that we are free, not by attaining, but by controlling our desire, is a comment on the noble text.

The saint ever follows his fatal star in freedom: Jesus to the cross, for his Messianic dream; Socrates to the hemlock, for his self-respect; Fichte and Mazzini to lifelong sacrifices, for the absolute of thought, of liberty, of progress beyond the domain of special faiths.

And so may we not say that for all efforts to reconcile personal and spiritual liberty with the universal laws, moral, physical, social, the religious life of mankind must offer open fields of sympathy?

Prayer is another path to this transformation of fate into freedom. You cannot get so far back in history but that it reaches farther back; and the oldest prayer is as confident as the latest science. It was always, and this must be its meaning as a common element of religion, substantially the ideal trust and upward endeavor that turns inevitable conditions into crowns. In the East, it was believed to possess mastery over all worlds and powers; and in Christianity we hear Luther affirming that God has tied himself to prayer.

Till science has taught men that the universal laws are good, they will pray to have them reversed in their personal interest, and for their protection and aid. This is thirst for miracle, common to all historic faiths. It is properly the blind groping of the instinct that man is not made for bonds, but for an ideal freedom to fulfil his spiritual desires. Science has taught, at last, that the freedom lies not in interference with those laws, but in their right interpretation. In Christianity, as in the other religions, this faith in miraculous intervention, in which Jesus and his disciples put their hope, has simply outlasted its due time. The reality thus blindly sought can now be a common hope, intelligently pursued.

PROGRESS.

But the deliverance of fate into freedom is best indicated by a certain sense of inherent ownership in the best, which has always asserted the right and power of man to change his gods.

All religions are aware of this secret of progress. Ever by this the Reformer judges the Word, and reconstructs the heavens. The Hindu saints compelled deities to answer their prayers, and even supplanted them by superior disciplines; for devotion had a previous lien on the universe, — a right of eminent domain antecedent to these gods. And Buddha was held to be human. Yet, in Buddhist mythology, all the old gods kneel about his birth-chamber as the Magi about the manger of the infant Christ.

These illustrations do not stand alone. The soul marches through all her pantheons, and special incarnations, prescient that these forms of deity are her guests, not her final masters; that, having made, she can unmake them by a better ordering of her household. In Hindu,

Greek, Scandinavian Bibles, the gods are confounded by questions from the great constant facts of experience and forces of nature, which they cannot answer, and by feats they cannot perform. In Jove, time and justice master Saturn; then Prometheus, Jove, through Hercules, the son of a mortal woman. Thor and his companions are conquered in wrestling by Old Age, as a woman; in swiftness, by Thought, as a man. And just as saint and hero make the old heavens and hells tremble, and turn Brahma, Jove, and Odin out of their seats, so in Judaism the prophets and Jesus bring the ecclesiastical Jehovah into judgment. Not less befalls the specialized deity of Christian centuries, concentrated in a prescribed creative function, plan of salvation, miraculous mediator, and church. He goes his way like the gods he supplanted, and upon the same necessity: because man claims his own homestead for a nobler meaning of human and divine.

All great religions pursue the essential unity of man with God: all can find common ground in this, that it always means for man what he feels of intimacy and home relation with the laws of life and destiny. Thus, the religion of science teaches that these laws mean his good, his opportunity, his growth. The religion of sentiment said in Jesus, "Trust the Father." The religion of freedom said in Marcus Aurelius, "Every thing is fruit to me, O Nature! which thy seasons bring. It is enough to remember that law rules all." Says the mystic Sadi, to like effect, "He who prays from the inmost of his soul grants his own prayers: he prays not; it is God at once that offers and accepts the prayer."

The progress from faith to faith is ever a fuller affirmation of God in and through man. It rings the changes on the Sufi text: "The perfect man is the book of books, the reunion of the worlds."

SACRIFICE.

Sacrifices are many, but sacrifice is always one thing, giving the best to the best. From the rude herdsman offering the invigorating plant, to the hero giving his life for his idea, and the saint pouring his soul into the sea of God, the sacrifice was never chosen for its mere barter-value, was never the mere reluctant service of fear, or mere atonement for sin. It was man's ideal, what he most loved, made his winged messenger in flame, — or in passion, the spirit's flame, — to make him one with the Highest. Even in human sacrifices, the victim was held to be divine, and went with the step of triumph to the gods, from the bloody teocalli or the funeral-pile. There was always, even in savage rites, joy in all self-consecration, in the giving of one's own best to the ideal best.

This is the germ of the mystic desire, into which all religions have flowered, to be absorbed into deity. Its substance was always the longing

for a life in the real and eternal. The Eastern dreamers did not seek annihilation, but to know their limitations no more. Even Nirwana was described as "bliss;" "the harbor beyond storm;" "union with the perfected ones;" — a goal that was well worth the conversion of a world. From the Brahmin whose escape from illusion lay in passing into the One Eternal Life, to the latest lover of truth, who finds that he knows truth only when he becomes it; through Sufism and Platonism, and the Johannie Christ's oneness with the Father, and Paul's pantheistic instinct of "God all in all," and Boehmen and Tauler, and Fichte's invocation, "O Exalted Will, I am not separate from Thee," — there runs the one inevitable yearning to go out of finite self, to enter into the real and eternal, as the one way of the blessed life.

How is it this gospel of sacrifice runs through all religions, flames in the life of every hero and saint? How is it that even the creeds that look most like thirst for annihilation are full of its energy, and point to man's identity with his ideal?

The answer must be, because it is natural and human. The eye of the boy who has bravely forgot himself in serving another, or helping the right against the stronger side, is radiant with the same fire that burns in the souls of these mystics and pantheists, dreamers as they seem. Science and the intercourse of races have lent fresh values to the present life no past religion has taught. But still, as much as ever, it is through a dream that noble doing comes to pass. A little book, the *Theologia Germanica*, was but a dreamer's thirst to be lost in God; but it awoke Luther to his reformation-work. To be "lost in God" once meant to destroy the senses, and deny the world. Now, it implies perfecting every power and converting eternal ideas into institutions. But the loss always means self-abandonment to the best; and in this sense it becomes a germ of the universal religion. How could man be slow to learn this open secret of power? It is what multiplies the mother's strength when her child is in peril; makes the charge of Winkelried resistless; gives men eloquence when indignation or sympathy makes them forget themselves; turns work to beauty and effort to play.

INSPIRATION.

So what we essentially mean by inspiration was always ready for men; one thing at one price. Whenever one committed himself to his ideal, that bursting of bonds cleft a path for unforeseen resources out of the soul's infinite reserves of power. It was no exceptional election, nor mechanical possession, but a constant fruit of sacrifice; the method of Nature, who in all her realms causes the loosing of atoms from their fixed hold to condition the birth of a higher energy. How can that be a stinted, locked-up favor

to a single dispensation, which has come to every one who would accept its conditions? It makes no infallible teacher, but it *is* an infallibly constant law. All religions hint this deeper sense of inspiration. Jesus himself asks, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Sufism says to its devotee, "Why dost thou not thyself produce inspiration, and be always illumined?" Mohammed is reported to have invoked the wrath of Allah on his own people if they should "make the tomb of their prophet an altar of prayer." The best Romans taught the same liberty of inspiration. "Good men," says Seneca, "are in God's intimacy; he prepares them for himself by disciplines; the benignant Father does not leave them in ease." Judaism blooms into the same faith. "Wisdom in all ages, entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God, and prophets." No other idea of inspiration can unite the differences of faith.

INCARNATION.

Incarnation is but a theological expression for this common sense of religion: its many forms rest upon the universal instinct that God is *in* the world, not away from it; and eminently that he is in human nature, consecrated to the best. The distinctively Christian idea would concentrate it in one personality, as the only pure expression of a fact that now means no less than humanity itself, in its endless progress and development. But this present and coming meaning of the fact for all religions is what concerns us, not that idiosyncrasy of one religion. The purpose to which all their history is directed has its pivot in no prescribed interpretation of history. Ideals are manifold. Judea emphasized faith and love; Greece, wisdom and beauty. But must not the reality of God in man make one of these as emphatic as the other, and include, beyond Jesus and Socrates, whatsoever, yet undreamed of, is to come of the union of all human desires for the best?

All personal forms of incarnation have been more or less shaped by mythology; but they are all successive expressions of a common impulse to assure man's highest good. To the Christian incarnation answer the Eastern avatars; and all these are like that of Krishna, to the intent of "replacing a world subverted by sin on the foundations of right." All divine assumptions of humanity were held to be for the purpose of saving it. In this Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus are one. For the Buddha is properly a form of incarnation: the ideal he embodies being the divine bliss into whose unity millions of Buddhas are supposed to be already absorbed. And Confucius is an incarnation; though the ideal he represents is the principle of moral reason, not very clearly conceived by the Chinese mind apart from its concrete embodiments.

Every person supposed to have incarnated deity has of course betrayed

the imperfection inevitable to individual life and thought. But there is a certain presentiment or germ in all these personal idealizations that points beyond their objects: I mean the secret aspiration of man for an integral personal culture, of each for all, and of all for each. And they pass away when that comes which promises real fulfilment of this prophetic desire; when the opportunity of such personal culture shines in the idea of universal progress, the movement of the race as one. By no other than this universal meaning of incarnation can the religions be brought into a common hope.

ATONEMENT.

Not less do all religions make provision for escape from moral evil, and recognize the retributions of violated moral law. The primitive Aryans of the Veda were too much absorbed in their free confidence in life, to picture a positive hell in the future; and we, the latest representatives of that family of nations, are supplanting such ecclesiastical figments of terror and revenge by ideals of better business for both God and man to be absorbed in, — for God than punishment, and for man than misery. But the sense of moral defect has never been ignored, nor yet the essential fact been unperceived, that one's own endeavor must remove it, and brings an infinite help. As the Veda prays, "O Varuna, merciful and forgiving, teach us our offence, that we may lay it aside, and so free us from thy bonds," — so we have learned to invoke truth, justice, labor, love, as the powers whose service alone can break the bondage of an ignoble past. Even transmigration, the Oriental expression of these "bonds of action," was an ever-repeated appeal to this same atonement of better behavior.

Shemitic religion intensified conscience into even a morbid sense of the rights of penal justice. Aryan religion emphasized that free relation of man to the universe that invites the next step to efface the last false one, by its own truth. And it is now bringing the other more Shemitic element in our culture, to its proper proportions.

But both forms pursued the one faith that a nobler future can redeem the past. This is the substance of man's experience about remedy for moral evil, to which theological definitions of sin and plans of atonement can bring in no new credentials of authority. And the special forms of atoning sacrifice that come of them, from the vicarious sin-offerings that stained the Hebrew altars, to the dramatic death of deity on the cross to satisfy infinite penalties, are but unenlightened strivings to meet this haunting experience, that neither love nor justice can endure that wrong should go unredressed.

And while the definitions and the dogmas pass, men will unite, where

only it is possible, on this faith of universal religion ; that there is power to redeem every past, in redressing every wrong.

IMMORTALITY.

The religions are so many runes for mastering death. Each is an affirmation of the immortal who inhabits history, and who delights in this manifold play of his power to show an inalienable hold on life. But the master is ever the same, and his craft is simple after all : this rhythmic prophecy of immortality is just his sense of an inestimable value in life.

The fiction that Jesus brought man the first real assurance of immortality was actually a pulpit commonplace but a few years ago. What an escape to have learned whether by historical study or by common sense, that always and everywhere life has had dignity adequate to save it from being granted subject to death ! Even the crude instinct of a future state of being, that deposited weapons for its purposes in sepulchral mounds — the one faith, coeval with mankind, found recorded in the bone-heaps of the post-tertiary geologic age — means that man believed he should not die, because life has powers, uses, joys. From the West Indian slaves, who were wont to cut off the wretched mockery of existence to which they were doomed, in the expectation of being born again in the bodies of children in their African home, to the cultured friendship that finds assurance of reunion beyond death in the revolt of every conviction against the destruction of ties that had boundless worth, — wherever the hand of this instinct of a future life upholds, it is an ideal estimate of life itself, as liberty, as love, as use, that makes that confidence so strong.

Mosaism was silent about the future life ; Christianity emphasized it more than the present. Yet the modern Jew rightly enough finds faith in it implied wherever his fathers rose into enthusiasm for the value of life as justice and love ; and that old Christian emphasis on the future world was but the effort to save the priceless treasure of existence, by transference of its infinite meaning out of a visible world which Jesus and his disciples held to be under doom of speedy dissolution. I do not think it so high a conception of this world's rights as that of the Stoics of the same age, who tried to put their best life into laws and manners. But it was none the less true that the other world was so real to those early Christians because of a great estimate of the meaning of life itself.

So that the same conviction weaves the garment of immortality out of the most diverse conceptions of the worth of the present world.

Buddhism could not believe in absolute extinction while it crowded life, as it did, with a great humane purpose. Must not Nirwana have reflected back that living love from its "port of refuge," into which millions

of Buddhas had borne a perfected helpfulness which had made them divine?

China, the oldest rationalist, brings its floral tribute to immortality, at the shrines of innumerable ancestors. It is but the appreciation of life through that earliest type, as well as source, of its highest moral values, the family.

And let me say this also. When I see the denial of immortality ennobled, as it is very apt to be, by great estimates of duty and uses of opportunity, I am wont to be persuaded that the content with which these inspire their possessor and reconcile him to his doubt, is itself a practical assurance of inalienable life, — eternity, as it were, organized into character, deeper in him than his own consciousness of time, whether past or future.

Hindu philosophy is full of questions and answers on this theme of themes. The seeker plies death with persistent catechism, not to be put off; and always the reply is, "To know God, and to be one with Him, is immortality." Plato proves it from the self-motive powers and nobler performances of the soul; and Socrates' faith in it is based on his love of associating with just men and sharing their aims.

And this oldest of arguments for immortality outlasts the tales of personal resurrection; which are, after all, but the materialism and surface play of the instinct.

What an absolute conviction flamed upon this whole nation when it asked itself, over the martyr graves of its noblest youths, if such energies as these could possibly be, now and henceforth, lost to the spiritual universe! But similar recognitions are universal, and make all religions of one cast. Apart from the common right of all to a future life, there has always been a certain finer sense in which immortality was conceded to those who best fulfilled whatever might be the recognized ideal of life; a special mastery over the invisible, corresponding to that over the visible and present, which we call fame. This was the force of the principle in Greek art which forbade things mean and ignoble to be represented, as offending the sense of immortality to which art should appeal. This, too, has always given the control of the future world to those who won love and praise in the present; and centred about the real or supposed deaths of a good Osiris, a generous Baldur, an all-merciful Buddha, a sympathetic Jesus, whole loyal mythologies, in evidence of such control.

Nowhere has man escaped the instinct that associates immortality with moral dignities. Even the old worship of animals is full of this recognition, just as the strongest prejudice against their continued existence is even now overcome by any sign of moral capacity in them. Transmigration itself was but the working out of moral consequences: and it was a certain suggestion of eternal justice in the mysterious accuracy of ani-

mal instincts that led to the association of them with the rewards and penalties of a future state. This moral recognition is illustrated in the Hindu epic, in the story of the king who refused to enter heaven without the faithful dog who had shared his toils and knew his heart. Let us hope that our civilization is preparing to receive that specially Oriental gospel of humanity to the creatures, which Christianity has not greatly urged.

The old preacher drew his question, — “who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward” after death? — out of a bitter scepticism about human virtue and the uses of life; and men are still never so much inclined to that question, as when they see the life of an individual becoming apparently exhausted of those moral and spiritual capacities that make it worth having. It is only through the commendation of existence itself to respect by real personal and human values, that belief in a future life can be hereafter helpful as a common experience to the spiritual intercourse of races.

ETHICS.

It is now coming to be seen that the best ethics of all great religions are of one spirit. The trite axiom that conscience has always had the same essential function involved more than Christendom has read in it, and opens into an unimagined joy. What revelation compares with this, that every great civilization has flowered up somewhere into a passion of universal love? It is in Buddha, in Confucius, in Jesus, limited only by the inevitable horizons of their lives. Eloquent with this are the hymn of Phocylides, the ethics of Epictetus, the plaint of Job. It legislates in the Mosaic command to love the neighbor as one's self, the stranger not less than the Hebrew; and it flames in the vision of the later Isaiah. Nor are any of these instances in contradiction with the religions they grew up in. Every one of them is the natural fruit of its own soil. Everywhere in the age of Jesus arose the proclamation of human brotherhood. It is even more absolutely affirmed in the writings of Seneca, Cicero, Lucan, Philo the Jew, and the whole philosophy and practical influence of Roman stoicism, than in Paul's claim for all men of a brotherhood in Christ; for all these make the relation to be inherent in a common nature, not derived through a specific channel.

“The Golden Rule,” again, is explicit in Jesus, Seneca, Hierocles, Isocrates, Thales; in Confucius, the Tobit of the Apocrypha, the Rabbi Hillel; and implied elsewhere, in many precepts of a somewhat different turn of language. The love of enemies, the nobility of forgiveness, has full expression in the Old Testament books of Ecclesiasticus, Exodus, and Proverbs, in Plutarch in Phocion, in the old Hitopadesa, or Fable

Book of the Hindus, the Christian Gospel, and the whole literature and life of Buddhism.

The protest of the spirit against the form, of the moral intuitions against the pretence of efficacy in mere ceremony and rite, is common to the laws of Menu, the Hebrew prophets, the Bhagavadgita, the Avesta, the New Testament, and the Koran.

Hesiod, divinest of Greek moralists, declares those to be "foolish who know not how much half is better than the whole, nor how much blessing is in mallows and asphodel." That primitive independence and self-respect came to its perfection in Epictetus, the freest of slaves, and Marcus Aurelius, the most single-hearted of rulers. I read a tropical form of the same aspiration even in the ascetic efforts of Brahmin and Buddhist to master the senses; and a very practical and real conception of it in the Chinese ideal of the "superior man," who "stands self-sustained by his integrity, and, even though silent and without desire to command, draws all men to honor and love him."

Sincerity, justice, fidelity to trusts, are the commonplaces of all scriptures. Aristotle's description of a good action as "an end in itself" is at home with all the sages and seers. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee," admonition alike to Hebrew priest and Egyptian king, is bound upon the brows of every historic faith. All great religions have not accorded equal respect to the heroic virtues. Yet where have they failed to receive the spontaneous homage of mankind? Christianity has given us no book so stimulative of self-reliant behavior as Plutarch or Xenophon, whose examples of what was held admirable in the Greek and Roman world are, in the main, as valid to-day. Confucius ransacks the old records of his people to find types of generosity, sacrifice, courage; and Buddhism pushes these imperishable ideals of duty into the wildest extravagance of legend.

The instinct of social man everywhere, however imperfectly realized in the best civilization, is hinted by Augustine, when, escaping his Christian dogmatism, he says that all nations under heaven are agreed upon the sentence, "Do as thou wouldst be done unto." Æschylus and Sophocles praise the eternal unwritten laws of morality and their supreme sanctions, with a reverence never surpassed. That social organization and continuity depend on them was recognized in the Persian belief that the Lord of Eden lost his kingdom by a lie; and that religion rests on their observance is the meaning of that oldest Greek faith, the supremacy of the oath over all the gods. Every enduring civilization in history may point to the ages of its persistent vitality as so many witnesses to an observance of mutual obligations, and a reverence for the principle of mutual help; for without these no state can live. And the ripest doctrine of Interna-

tional Law, that the State is a moral person, and exists for the general good, but repeats with larger experience the very language in which Cicero reports the sense of all ancient political wisdom: "The very foundation of law is that nature has made us for the love of men."

The Roman Stoics unfolded that fine moral sense which the best Greek thought had given to the word "nature," into the ideal of a universal citizenship, of equal rights and mutual good-will. It was largely through their influence that the common customs and rules of the various nationalities were eliminated to form the basis of "pretorian equity," and thus ultimately resolved into that grand system of Roman jurisprudence, to which the best principles of modern law go back; the constant antagonist of ecclesiastical oppression, the earliest emancipator of children, of women, of slaves.

The contemporaneous civilizations will bring unlooked-for elements of ethical sympathy with us, in a certain democratic quality, — the natural fruit of their religious experience. Thus the most persistent element of Hindu life is not the old system of four castes, which has long ago fallen into utter disintegration, but the organization of the village communities, a system of local self-government, whose liberties have been cherished by the people with intense affection. It has outlasted all the changing policies of invading races, and even the present British rulers of India are compelled to respect it. The Chinese are in many respects the most democratic people in the world, as their system of free schools, four thousand years old, testifies: incomparable, too, in all economies of patient toil, and all arts of mutual care. The sacred fire of Zoroaster is a spiritual flame that burns in the upright, industrious, humane lives of the enlightened Parsees of Bombay. Even the Buddhist monasteries of Thibet are crowded by swarms of peaceful and laborious brethren. There is no private nor public virtue, as there is no branch of art or science, practical, æsthetic, speculative, in which the modern Jews do not stand fully abreast of the Christian world. There is no literature so pure as the Chinese; none where the domestic affections are more delicately pictured than in the Hindu. The ethical interest of the Ramayana, as well as of the Iliad, turns on the sanctities of wedded life; and I really know not any thing in Oriental theology so disrespectful to woman as the Bible story of the fall of mankind through her means, and the implication of her inferiority conveyed in the Christian idea of atonement solely through the merits of a man.

It is, indeed, the condition of woman that the East forces especially home to our sympathies; but a similar interest is revolutionizing Western life also; and we shall find the older civilizations to abound not only in ideal recognitions of her claims, such as her mythological place in India as divinity of letters, science, and art, as well as deliverer from moral

evil, — but in practical ones also, such as her equality with man under Buddhist rules.

DISPARAGEMENT OF HEATHENISM.

It is easier to doubt whether all this evidence is of much substantial value, than it is to comprehend how much it really involves, as ground of a sympathy that must somehow be effected. The harmony of the races will not be advanced by disparaging the practical worth of heathen ethics, as if there was some dividing line between Christianity and other religions, with dream on the one side and reality on the other.

Pagans and Christians are apt to be very much alike in many things, and among these is ignorant contempt of outsiders to their own faith. It is like the breaking of the egg-shell to a young bird, like the dropping of scales from the eyes, for a disciple of the sects to take in the fact that pagans had actual human interests; that they loved, feared, hoped, toiled; that their faces shone when they had been magnanimous, and dwindled and darkened when they had been base. Good people, who have gone through with their second birth, will reach a third, which may be better, when they comprehend that vanity was never, in any religion, nor in any stage of culture, written on brave and noble conduct.

To question the practical earnestness of the great ethnic teachers, and refuse effective meanings to the terms they employ in common with the founders of Christianity, is not scholarship: it is to satirize history itself. Would man have cared to remember those who had not lived for their ideas, who had not made them masters of events and institutions? It is a wise proverb: "His word thunders whose life lightens." Fame is no fancy painter. Her eye is for eternal values.

Why should practical reformers seek to exalt Christianity by emphasizing the miseries and vices of the pagan world? What is called judging religions "by their fruits" condemns all religions, if it condemns any. The spirit by which the reformer judges enormous wrongs, which eighteen centuries of Christian opportunity have not removed, is itself as old as heroism and love; and the wealth of practical resource at his command is not mere fruit of special religious traditions, but flows in secular interests and moral demands that have rolled in on us past the church's sea-walls of stones and sand. So far as our best is the product of any historical religion, it is the product of all history, whose robe is seamless, whose movement is one. And indeed the wisdom of our day savors even of Plato more than of Jesus, though men may try to persuade themselves that they practise, or desire to practise, the intense individualism of many of the New Testament precepts. Our celestial motion is in a direction quite away from the pole-star of a "kingdom not of this world."

THE HOPE OF EACH RELIGION TO ABSORB THE REST.

Negations are needful ; but we must deny only to affirm the more. So when we say that it is vain for Christianity to dream of absorbing all other faiths, we would note that its very error is its cry for a better path. For this instinct of adequacy to meet universal needs is common to all of them. Not one has clung to a corner and hid its treasure. Not Judaism : for its cry to the nations to come up and serve Jehovah rang through the world. A third of mankind has Buddhism swept into its wide-open folds of brotherhood. Confucius sways an empire of empires ; and China, expelling foreigners only because they were religious and commercial pirates, entitles herself, not more complacently than the Christian Church, the Central Kingdom of the world. The serene philosophy of Plato, of Epictetus, of the Wisdom of Solomon, of the Hindu Upanishads, affirmed itself universal, the science of virtue and of release, and patiently waited its time. So even the religions of the desert, as we may call them, those that summoned man apart, to a burning thirst for living waters, an intense concentration on personal election and salvation, — the religions of Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, — transformed their passionate egotism into the most boundless absolutisms in history, claiming for themselves divine right by special revelation to impose their formulas upon collective humanity.

What means this inevitable sense all great religions have of a right to master the world ; now by the sword, now by love and sacrifice, now by prophetic vision, now by a dogma or a name ? Though we may smile at their common delusion, we will recognize the larger truth it strives to utter. Man could never read this till he had reached a point from which he could freely study all their special claims. What in reality each religion affirms is the adequacy of the human faculties to find what they need. Only its confessors have not noted this : that they held it to be valid for all men, simply because they felt it true for the human nature they shared with all. Yet this is the significance of the fact ; and it guaranteed that a time should come when all belief that assumes this common nature to be inadequate would drop away ; when the mutually exclusive claims it produces, and the whole notion of miraculous testimony for the enforcement of these, must be resigned together. And this time is now come. The assumptions in question are a bar to sympathy : they can form no element of the coming unity. Their mutual refutation is their common destruction. But the inspired confidence of religion in its own destiny is thus justified in the very death of the outward pretensions of each religion to absorb the rest.

THE FUTURE.

Yes: our new liberty is in the true historic line. Ages ago, the gods of the nations were gathered into the Roman empire, to disappear in the new religion of the Christ. The gods of many nations disappeared; but the religions held on their way. Now we approach a larger unity. Its initiators are freedom, science, the intercourse of races, the love that comes with larger life, — fresh expressions not of one religion distinctively, but of the natural religion that is yet to know itself the common pulse of mankind. How should it mortgage to the Christian name a yet unpredicted life? It will claim for itself all great personalities of the past. It will not spare Jesus from among “the loftier brothers, but one in blood,” holding dear all their “looks of beauty and words of good.” But we may be sure that it will not accept baptism in any name that is associated with past antipathies of faith, nor be bound to any thing which such name can be made to signify for all. Great unities of the races are approaching, in the spheres of thought, of liberty, of labor. These are the elements of its future faith: only these can supplant the antagonisms of which distinctive religions have been the most prolific source. Old civilizations cannot accept each other’s religious symbols. Their common solvent must be a fresh life, not an old creed or experience; and that life must not come as an outside gift, but as a common and free aspiration.

What a failure is this huge machinery for “converting the heathen”! The missionary blows his penny-whistles of authoritative text, dogma, miracle, and the intelligent among the heathen smile; the ruder mock. “Have we not ten of these to your one?” Let him set up schools, or help the Brahmo-Somaj emancipate woman, and he works to some purpose. But shall God barter away the world’s free future to an ambitious sect?

On the coming unity all specialities must tell, but not one can be imposed: this spiritual chemistry is vast enough to transform them all. Who can tell into what issues? And the time may surely claim that immunity which the soul enjoys from labelling its essential life. The rapid disintegration of creeds indeed seems to me to have its immediate value in the emphasis it enforces, on personality and independent power. This is real. This, for me, is adequate. The efforts you make to organize the new hopes are of course provisional: names and methods change; forms of association flit. The life that fills overflows the cups; it chooses its own ways; it overmasters our ways; it is the hidden stress of all ways.

The Brahmo-Somaj of India, the reformation of Jewish Theism, this Free Religious Association, are but opening invocations in the new tongue the whole time is learning to speak, by the inevitable expansion of every speculative idea and every practical relation into universal meaning.

The first fringes of April grass about our thresholds always seem the brightest of the year; and the earliest birds bring whole summers in their song: yet they are but heralds of a spring that is already stirring every sod. So this universality you seek to express is the underflow of all minds and hearts. It is the common sense of the century,—its unconscious drift, its conscious power; the School of its schools, the Master of its masters, the Reformer of its reforms; and if it breaks the thread of dependence on many cherished names and traditions, it is only that it may reveal deeper continuities that bind the whole movement of history to the whole possibility of living man.

THE PRESIDENT.—I now have the pleasure of introducing to you one of the officers of our Association from the beginning, who, however, has not been able before to be present at our meetings. Last year he sent us an address in manuscript: this year he comes in person, and will now speak to you of the “Permanent and Progressive Elements of Judaism.” I present to you Rabbi ISAAC M. WISE, of Cincinnati.

ADDRESS OF ISAAC M. WISE.

Permanent and Progressive Elements of Judaism.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Three years ago, I received a paper inviting me to attach myself to the Free Religious Association. Being a scion of the German school, I am somewhat transcendental in speculation and careful with words; and therefore the words FREE and RELIGIOUS appeared contradictory to me. Can any thing be free which is religious? can any thing be religious which is free? I consulted Mosheim’s, Lardner’s, and Neander’s history of the Church, and found the sword and the pyre, dungeons and tortures, the worldly arm of the most worldly power in the service of the Church, to enforce her creeds and dogmas, her disciplines and sacraments. This is religious in history, but it is not free. It is brutal force on the one side, and mental slavery on the other. The populace must be religious in the style established by authority,—this was the invariable line of policy in the Church.

Again, I examined the history of modern revolutions from 1792 to date, and what did I discover? All prominent captains of freedom’s legions, from Robespierre to Mazzini, were and are the outspoken opponents of religion in the form in which they found it. Also the captains of the American Revolution, although individually profoundly religious, discovered that freedom and religion in the popular form were hostile to one another, and in order to protect freedom were obliged to insist upon

a decided and complete separation of Church and State. In history, therefore, I found no ground for a logical connection of the terms FREE and RELIGIOUS. In history, whatever is free is not religious, and whatever is religious is not free.

I left the history of the past, and consulted my own experience and judgment, however limited they may be. Is not religion, in the common conception, a system of dogmas and observances, of symbols and mysteries, to which man, together with his understanding and his moral feelings, must submit, in order to be religious? Either he with soul and body is subject to the dogmas and rules of a church, or he is irreligious. In this case, where is his freedom? Evidently he must renounce it, in order to be religious; for freedom signifies the unlimited ability of being guided by the dicta of understanding and conscience. The symbol, the mystery, the dogma, which surpasses the understanding, which I have no right even to investigate, and no means to comprehend, is evidently an imposition on my freedom, a limitation in the exercise of liberty. Is not the Pope or the Lama very religious? but is he free? The believer is religious, the free man thinks. I could not reconcile the terms FREE and RELIGIOUS.

I felt obliged to leave the general standpoint of the world's religion, and to inquire into the history of my own race; and there, to my greatest satisfaction, I discovered that I was born in a free religious association which is as old as authentic history itself. I came to the conclusion that I ought to be not only a member, but the President of the new Free Religious Association, for mine was the birthright; but I gave the preference to Rev. Mr. Frothingham, whom I held to be as free a man as myself, and became a member of the Free Religious Association.

Give me your attention, ladies and gentlemen, and I will explain why I consider myself born in the oldest Free Religious Association; in a religion without symbols, mysteries, dogmas, or any other imposition on freedom.

From my standpoint, one handed down from sire to son in my race, the books of the Old Testament are the only written source of religion. They contain, in theology, ethics, and politics, the final object of the historical development of the human family, the ideals to be universally reached; and also the outlines of the historical process in reaching these ideals, in rising from step to step, in the progress of ages, to the final objects of knowledge and conception. The biography of every live person in this nineteenth century is a complete index to the history of all past centuries. Like the human family, every progressive human being in his development passes all the phases of successive history. The whole race and each individual are of the same character. Some persons or sects may stop short in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth century;

but the representative sons and daughters of this century, in their development to this advanced standpoint, must have passed all phases of history.

In our Bible we discover not only the final object of all historical development, but also the historical development itself, to the most advanced standpoint. The history of Israel is the miniature history of the human race to its very meridian. Individuals and nations are governed by the same law, and must pass the same latitudes as Israel did. A brief review of specialities will illustrate this general principle.

GOD AS ELOHIM.

Our Bible maintains that the first representatives of the human family, Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, knew of the existence of a Supreme Being; i.e., this knowledge is innate, it is an attribute of human nature. To them, God was the Elohim; and this word indicates the standpoint of their theology. The term Elohim, so much older than the Hebrew's religion, is a compound of the masculine El, the generic power, and the feminine Elo'ah, the prolific power. The two terms combined into one plural designate the centre and union of all power. Therefore Elohim is the creator, ruler, and lawgiver; in the strictest sense of the term, Almighty.*

Primeval nature was terrible in itself. The grandeur of its unfinished mountains, bare rocks, thundering cataracts, gigantic trees, huge wilds, frequent and violent earthquakes of the heated globe, and the atmospheric convulsions to produce equilibrium, could only inspire terror and perpetual apprehension. Danger and death threatened everywhere and continually. The primitive man in that terror-inspiring home, surrounded by ferocious beasts of superior strength and superior means of attack and defence, and struggling perpetually against hunger, thirst, and hostile elements, beheld the Deity revealed from the standpoint of his own surroundings, and discovered him as the Almighty, the terrible, jealous, and revengeful God. His standpoint would not possibly lead him to a higher or another ideal of Deity. Elohim originally signified pantheism, from which the corresponding Pagan ethics and theological aberrations naturally issued.

GOD AS EL SHADDI.

When the earth with its atmosphere had reached its present state of calm repose and vernal beauty in the temperate zones, and man by the progress of culture had become master of the soil, lord of the animals, and his own protector against the inclemency of the elements under the

* It is uncritical, to say the least, to hold Hebrew theology responsible for the terms Elohim, or Adonai, which are synonyms, and much older than the Hebrew people, or even the Hebrew language.

patriarchal tent, manners, conceptions, and doctrines also assumed milder forms. The terror-inspiring Deity disappears from the tent of Abraham. The genial climate of Palestine, the productive soil, the domesticated animals, the peace of nature and the abundance of sweet dainties, made a new standpoint for the patriarchs; and Abraham conceives the Deity as El Shaddi, the mighty supporter of all, the bountiful giver of all which is good and desirable. This El Shaddi speaks to the patriarch kindly, benignly, paternally; the terrible Elohim disappears almost. It is not God who changed: the standpoint did, in strict harmony with the changes of culture. The patriarchal ethics common to all agricultural nations of milder climes are the natural sequences of the El Shaddi theology, which gave birth to the various benign gods and goddesses who unfold the sweet gifts from the mysterious lap of nature, together with the tutelary divinities who protected man in the peaceful enjoyment of the sweet gifts of the earth and of his own heart. With the El Shaddi standpoint, pantheism ceases and anthropomorphism begins. God is no longer the undefined and undefinable all and every thing: he becomes a great, supernatural, and ideal Man, a personal and discernible Deity, who takes particular cognizance of certain families, speaks to certain individuals, to whom he appears in person, and therefore could be represented by the Pagans in human shape with human passions and actions.

GOD AS JEHOVAH.

Absolute theism stands as high above pantheism and anthropomorphism as induction above perception: the latter are the fruit of perception; the former, the result of induction. They are the visions from particular standpoints of observation, like the various branches of phenomenal science; while absolute theism is the universal result from the universal standpoint. It is the philosophy of philosophy. The former are the offspring of observation; the latter is the result of self-contemplation, the discovery of God revealed in the understanding and conscience, as observable in nature and the totality of history. In absolute theism all special standpoints, by which the Deity is localized and temporized, are divested of their specialities, and the universal God becomes discernible to the understanding. This universal God, beheld from the cleft of the rock, where man is placed, — viz., in the centre of the creation, and in the centre of history, so that he can see the past only, that which is fact already, — this universal God is the Great I AM, the Jehovah of Moses, as the word fully expresses. For the term Jehovah is a compound of the three tenses of the verb *hayah*, "to be," or "to become" (the two poles of the metaphysical axis), and signifies he is, he was, and he will be, time without end, the Eternal; and in the second place, he becomes, he became, and he will

become, substance and essence itself, the cause of all entities and their modifications. All that is, was, or will be, is in him, for he alone is essence; and by him, for he alone is substance. All things, suns, earths, moons, men, trees, and so forth, have but relative existence; God alone is. They are realized ideas of Jehovah, and as such they always were, and always must remain in him. The substance itself is immutable. All power, goodness, observable in nature and history and in man himself, who is the microcosm in the macrocosm, are manifestations of the Eternal One, and the sum total thereof is the revelation of Deity.

This is the Jehovah, the universal God, as taught by Moses. Philosophy has added nothing to this theology. A definition of substance is impossible. We can but affirm that it is, but we know not and cannot know what it is, or how it is. The ancient philosophers failed to explain how God is, and the modern philosophers from Spinoza to Hegel were entirely unsuccessful in their attempts to explain what God is. The word Jehovah describes the limits of human knowledge. It expresses the highest and universal beheld from the highest and universal standpoint. "No man can see me and live."*

ETHICS AND POLITICS.

With the universal God and the universal standpoint, universal ethics and politics, as the necessary sequences thereof, must have come; and they did come in the brief words, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," which Confucius, Hillel, and Jesus expounded by the golden rule; and "God is king;" i.e., the absolute wisdom and justice is the Sole Sovereign of the human race. In principle nothing can be added thereto, nothing diminished thereof. If man exists only, inasmuch as he is in God, in love, wisdom, and justice, and all else is momentary, temporal, and perishable, then he truly lives only so far as he loves, thinks, and acts wisely and justly. If all men partake of the same divine nature, then all are of one nature: they are one. Hence the individual is not a unit, the race is. The individual cannot love himself, think and act wisely and justly to himself; he can do all this to the race only of which he is a part. Hence he can live only in love to the human race. Again, if the race is a unit, inasmuch as all partake of the same divine nature, then none but God can be king, because he is the majesty, the centre of all excellencies diffused in the human family. If I must love my neighbor, how shall I tyrannize over him? No man possesses absolute wisdom and justice: God alone can be king.

* It is certainly uncritical to make a trinity of Jehovah because the word is composed of three tenses. It is tenseless as eternity is.

THE HISTORY.

So we have reached the ideals, the final object of historical development, as laid down in the Bible. The people of Israel, in the course of their history, went by all standpoints from rude fetichism to the highest absolute theism; from the barbarous slaughtering of Canaanites to the supreme law of humanity; through all forms of religion, ethics, and politics to the highest and universal standpoint in each. The Bible stories must be understood as phases of development, particular standpoints, temporized and localized, which must be divested of their specialities, to receive their respective positions in history, and their proper place in relation to the universal idea. If Joshua supposed God had commanded him or Moses to accomplish the extinction of the seven nations, he did so from a temporal and local standpoint, formed by the state of civilization and force of circumstances at the period. If the Jew saw in God the mere God of Israel or of Palestine, Paul saw Him in a son of God, and John in the Logos; they temporized and localized the Deity, as those do in ethics who claim justice in heaven and on earth only for themselves and their friends. All particular standpoints, all phases of development, are represented in Israel's history; and all of them must be passed through by the entire human family, to reach the ideals in religion, ethics, and politics, as set forth in our Bible.

REASON TO GUIDE.

Who shall guide man in this path to perfection? How are we to distinguish the universal from the temporal or local standpoint, God from the gods, justice from compacts of selfishness? History itself as little as the Bible can guide us in this matter, for they contain both the ideal and the history of development towards it, the universal and all particular standpoints, truth and the various shades of aberrations. If the Bible is to guide, what are we to do with its immoral incidents, the unreasonable tales and myths, the local or temporal presentations of Deity? The religious sentiment called faith cannot guide, for it is evidently uncertain. Whence the various and contradictory views of the Christian sects, all claiming the guidance of faith, if it is reliable? By faith, crusades were organized, inquisitions instituted, *auto da fes* celebrated, tens of thousands were massacred. How could faith be a good guide? Imagination cannot invent a doctrine revolting to reason and conscience, which, at one time or other, has not been adopted by faith as a divine precept. By faith, all sorts of superstitions and barbarities have been preached, believed, and practised. Faith is not our proper guide. The ethical sentiment, conscience, must guide, it may be maintained; but this is also an unsafe

guide. Conscience, too, has misguided, and does misguide individuals and nations. The conscience of those parents who drown their new-born daughters because they cannot afford to give them the proper education and outfit; and of those barbarous sons who kill their feeble and aged parents, because they are burdensome to themselves and others; the conscience of fanatics and enraged mobs, of despots and their obedient coadjutors, is human conscience. Conscience, clearly, is an unsafe guide.

Reason, the understanding, is THE guide which God has given us; the highest and last arbiter in all matters, human and divine. Reason is the supreme authority; and there is no appeal from its decisions. By reason we distinguish correctly the true from the false, right from wrong, the universal from the particular. Faith, conscience, history, and Bible must submit to reason. This is the touchstone to distinguish gold from brass, the precious metal from the dross. Whatever cannot stand the test of reason is worthless, and to be cast away. This was the case in all ages of history, and will be so for ever. With the progress of reason, faith and conscience are purified, humanity is elevated, and the ethical feeling sanctified. Truth is the only Messiah. Reason, says a Jewish authority, is the angel (the mediator) which stands between God and man. Reason has redeemed the human family from barbarism, and will complete the work of redemption. If I speak of reason as the highest authority, I do not mean my reason or your reason; I mean reason itself, universal and eternal, in which and through which the human family is a unit, and God is revealed to man. Reason must distinguish the universal standpoint from the particular ones in the Bible and elsewhere. Truth is the seal of God. Reason is the connecting link of God and man,—like the rays of light that connect the earth with the sun. Therefore science, the favorite mistress of reason, is the ally of religion and truth. Research, criticism, inquiry, and all other exertions of reason, are divinely appointed means for the progress of humanity to its lofty ideals of God, truth, and happiness.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, I was born in a free religious association; for it is not Isaac M. Wise, of Cincinnati, it is the Jew who has spoken to you. Therefore, I might consider myself entitled to the Presidency of this Association, but resigned my claims because I believe Rev. Mr. Frothingham to be as free a man as myself. To the Free Religious Association, I must say in conclusion, Go on and prosper. As long as the Association supports freedom, truth, progress, humanity, and the elevation of human nature; as long as reason is its supreme authority, philosophy the motto of its banner, truth its acknowledged redeemer, and the fellowship of all good men its desire,—here I am, one with you, in the name of the eternal truth and reason inherent in every human being.

THE PRESIDENT. — Unfortunately, we cannot keep up this agreeable method of having the religions outside of Christendom spoken for by their own representatives. But Col. HIGGINSON is a cosmopolitan in religion, and has consented to say a word for the Mohammedan faith.

ADDRESS OF T. W. HIGGINSON.

A Glance at Mohammedanism.

I have been requested to say something upon the religion of Mohammed, in connection with the sympathy that has just been affirmed to exist between the great religions of the globe. Dr. Johnson said that the two great objects of interest in human history were the Christian world and the Mohammedan world. "All the rest may be regarded as barbarous." And Mr. Charles Leslie, an Englishman who wrote in 1712 to prove that Mohammedanism and Unitarianism were essentially the same faith, declared that "the Mohammedan religion hath made so much noise in the world, its progress hath been so surprising and speedy, and its continuance amid an infinite number of revolutions carries with it something so sublime, that history cannot afford us any event that deserves to be more narrowly considered."

Who was this Mohammed? He was a man who, without the aid of princely or military station, with no claim to miracle, with no aid from prophecy, overcame the most ardent prejudices of one of the most ardent races the world ever saw; converted them all from idolatry, threw down the three hundred and sixty idols in their great temple, and made them all fanatics in behalf of the unity of God. He became the ruler of a region of the world unconquered before, unconquered since. Leading his followers farther, he introduced a career of victories that spread the Saracen empire farther in eighty years than all the great Roman armies had penetrated in eight hundred.

Conquering every thing else, it all but conquered Christianity, and did displace it; holding at present two out of the three successive centres of the Christian world, — Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome. Jerusalem was the apostolical metropolis, and the site of the great temple. The mosque of Omar stands where the temple stood, and Jerusalem has been for twelve centuries, almost uninterruptedly, a Mohammedan city. Constantinople was for a thousand years the imperial metropolis, and the cathedral of St. Sophia was the centre of eastern Christianity. Constantinople has now been for four centuries the metropolis of Mohammedanism, and the famous cathedral is now a mosque. Rome alone is left, and three centuries ago Rome itself seemed still in danger.

You say that this was not done without the aid of carnal weapons. Of course not. Carnal weapons belonged to the period. That Christian king who of all others bears the epithet Saint (Louis IX.) bade his crusaders, when they met an unbeliever, not to attempt to reason with him, but to run the sword into him up to the hilt. But the Koran requires persuasion first, and only permits the use of the sword when the conquered have refused to surrender and become tributaries, — never on religious grounds alone. Accordingly the most remarkable Mohammedan conquests were made without violence. It was peaceful missionaries who converted Turkey; and the Tartar hosts, who from the twelfth to the fifteenth century overran Asia, embraced universally the faith of their Moslem slaves. During the eight centuries when the Moors held Spain not a single instance of cold-blooded cruelty was recorded of them. They took half the Spanish churches, and made them mosques, leaving the Christians to worship undisturbed in the other half. It was the only mild and tolerant religious epoch that unhappy peninsula has known.

But you say, Mohammedanism is a dead religion. Then it walks after death. There is no religion now upon the earth which makes such progress. As Spain and Portugal once proudly divided the New World between them, so Mohammedanism and Christianity are to-day proselyting the globe: the one taking Asia and Africa; and the other, Europe, America, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. All African travellers — such as Barth, Wilson, Johnstone, Winwood Reade, Du Chaillu — agree that Mohammedanism is grasping and transforming that vast continent. "Within the last half-century," says Captain Canot, "the humanizing influence of the Koran is acknowledged by all who have dealt with the interior tribes." Barth says that the greater part of the vast Berber tribes were once Christian, and are now Mohammedan, and that the latter creed is fast overpowering the pagan nations at the equator. He says that the Mohammedans maintain government in Africa, where the Christians cannot; and that they abolish slavery there, while the Christians do not. Winwood Reade complains that Christianity fails to stop theft among the negroes, and says that nothing but Mohammedanism accomplishes it. All agree that wherever this religion takes the place of paganism, schools and libraries are established, gambling and drunkenness cease, polygamy is limited, woman begins to be elevated, and has her property-rights guaranteed; and instead of human sacrifices, you see the cottager reading the Koran at her door.

So in India, according to that eminent English official, Colonel Sleeman, Mohammedanism is making converts by thousands where Christianity makes but a handful. This is chiefly, he thinks, because English Christianity is pervaded by the spirit of caste, while Mohammedanism is

democratic, and offers its converts an immediate social support to take the place of what they lose. The London "Spectator" of about a year ago revealed a system of active propagandism among the Moslems in Hindostan, especially in Dacca, compared to which even Jesuit missionary effort seems little. The Mohammedans have their secret agencies everywhere; they know all that is done by the government; they outstrip all government couriers; they have converted whole regions where Christianity has scarcely a foothold; they think that their "century of expiation" is almost over, and that their religion is to control the East Indies again. And indeed I do not see how any one can trace upon the maps of Asia and Africa the comparative career of these two great religions, without being convinced that each is the stronger on its own soil, but that they are both instruments in God's hands to destroy idolatry, and carry the religion of the world a step farther on.

And it is to be remembered, in comparing the great religions, that Mohammedanism is the only one that has sustained itself at the height of pure monotheism. Never rising to the height of the purest Christianity, it never has descended so low as the most corrupt Christianity. It regards the Roman Catholic religion as idolatrous, Greek Christianity as idolatrous; and the doctrine of the Trinity itself is abhorrent to a devout Mohammedan. Yet it is not a cold moralism, but a faith of the most ardent devotion. "I love this people," said Lamartine, travelling in the East, "for it is the people of prayer." "I have seen," says another traveller, "a congregation of at least four thousand souls assembled in the mosque of St. Sophia, with silence so profound that, till I entered the body of the building, I was not aware that it contained a single worshipper."

In history it has adapted itself alike to the high culture and chivalry which it taught to Christendom in the Middle Ages, and to the needs of the wildest tribes. It gives them all alike a standard of morality and abstinence. Creating a less exalted philanthropy than Christianity gives, it keeps its average proselytes more sober and more patient. "A true Mohammedan," says the cold and accurate historian Hallam, "is rather an ascetic than a voluptuary." It cannot resuscitate a worn-out race like the Turks, any more than Christendom can revive the American Indian. It could not without long struggle abolish slavery, even in Tunis; but Wilberforce said that it carried on the slave-trade more humanely than did Christendom. What is to become of any religion, if you judge it by the crimes it tolerates? Judge each religion by the high-water mark of its prayers or by the low-water mark of its vices, — which you will, so long as you apply the same test to all. Injustice begins when you set the flood-tide of your own religion against the ebb of its rival.

Bishop Southgate visited Mohammedan towns where no liquor-shops were tolerated except in the Christian quarter. Another traveller records that an Eastern trader whom he knew, receiving some valuable goods, left them unguarded in the desert all night outside the town, and said to the traveller, when he remonstrated: "There is no danger: there is not a Christian within fifty miles." It would be absurd to judge Christianity by such anecdotes as these; and yet it is as just as to judge Mohammedanism by the atrocities of the Turks in Crete.

In one respect especially we are apt to do gross injustice to this religion. "No Eastern lawgiver," said Bonaparte, "ever restricted polygamy so much as Mohammed." Bishop Southgate, travelling in the East, declared that "the institutions of Mohammed in regard to woman are deserving only of praise. He raised the Arab woman from her degradation, and only suffered to remain the evils he could not cure." We still often see it stated that the Koran allows to women no souls, whereas it gives them an equal privilege in heaven, except that it unjustly leaves it to the husbands, and not also to the wives, to decide whether husbands and wives shall be reunited. By the Mohammedan law (as some of you doubtless read with surprise in Hepworth Dixon's "New America") the property-rights of the wife are better guaranteed than under our own. No marriage settlement is required; for whatever property the wife holds remains hers, without any possibility of control from her husband. And, in respect to other rights, it must be remembered that the most eminent of Mohammedan saints was Rabia, a woman; that women have been public lecturers on theology in Mecca itself; and that in the Moorish academies of the Middle Ages woman had the place that Harvard College denies her to-day.

Sir William Jones, in his voyage to India, found in the island of Johanna, a secluded speck in the Atlantic, off the coast of Africa, this inscription (in Arabic) above the door of a mosque:—

"The world was given us for our own edification,
Not for the purpose of raising sumptuous buildings;
Life, for the discharge of moral and religious duties,
Not for pleasurable indulgence;
Wealth, to be liberally bestowed,
Not avariciously hoarded;
And learning, to produce good actions,
Not empty disputes."

I have never seen, in any Christian Church, a nobler inscription; and we, though the children of Christianity, cannot afford to ignore such teaching.

There is one God: that is the central point in the creed of Islamism, and the point of sympathy between it and the purest Christianity.

Let us be grateful that they aid each other in carrying it around the globe. There are more than three hundred and sixty idols left standing among us ; let us imitate the courage of Mohammed, and do justice to his religion.

THE PRESIDENT. — We are soon to learn something of the religion of China, in this country, by practical contact with it. But Rev. WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING, who knows the subject thoroughly, will now tell us what we may expect of that religion.

ADDRESS OF REV. WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING.

Religions of China.

Why was the nation and land, which we from tradition call "China," named by its rulers, scholars, and people THE CENTRAL EMPIRE, CHUNG-KWOH? Not merely because they believed their sacred mountain to be the centre, whence blew the four great winds, and flowed the four great rivers ; nor chiefly because they considered themselves as being midmost among the nations. But they took this title of Central because they claimed that their government, laws and social forms were the product of the harmonious union of Heaven and Earth, — the meeting point of all creative powers. Theirs was the Central Empire, because it was organized from the Central Principle of Universal Order. And where did they find the test, standard, and arbiter of this Central and Universal principle? They found it in the reason and yet more in the heart of Man, — of each man, of all men. The Central, Universal Principle of Chinese religion, ethics, laws, is found, in essence, in Sincerity of Heart. This is a high claim. But here, beside me, are the books, whence can be proved, at length, how earnestly these claims have been asserted by the "Men of the Central Empire," — as they loftily name themselves, from the earliest ages to the present day. All real scholars know this fact. And now briefly let me describe the Religions of "China," which are Three in number.

I. THE TAO-ISTS, or the followers of the "Eternal Reason" — the "Tao," — as the Way of life, shall here be mentioned first, — not only because Lao-Tsze, their eminent teacher, born 604 before the Christian era, preceded Confucius by some fifty years ; but because that profound sage perpetually refers to the "skilful philosophers in olden time who had mystic communication with the Abyss," — the original principle of "Unity," — to the "ancient sages, deep, simple, circumspect, still," who were the "associates of Heaven, which was the supreme aim of antiq-

uity." It is through this wonderfully pure seer, indeed, as it appears to me, that we ascend to the primitive revelation of truth given to this ancient people. And how sublime in simplicity it is! Hear his first word: "The reason which can be reasoned is not the Eternal Reason. The name which can be named is not the Eternal Name." And again: "Something existed before heaven and earth. It stood alone and was not changed. It pervaded everywhere. It was still. It was void. In its depth it seems the first Ancestor of all things. It appears to have been before God. It may be regarded as the Mother of the Universe. I know not its name, but give it the title of Reason. If I am forced to make a name for it, I say it is Great. . . . Reason is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; a King is great. Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from Reason; Reason takes its law from what it is in itself." Again: "Virtue in its grandest aspect is neither more nor less than following Reason. Reason is indefinite, yet therein are forms; impalpable, yet therein are things; profound and dark, yet therein is essence. This essence is most true; and from of old until now it has never lost its name. It passes into all things that have a beginning. How know I the manner of the beginning of all things? I know it by this Reason. . . . Would you go before it, you cannot see its face. Would you go behind it, you cannot see its back. But to have such an apprehension of the Reason which was of old as to regulate present things, and to know their beginning in the past, this I call having the clew of Reason." Thus does this simple-hearted sage aspire "to go home to the origin," as he says. "Great Reason is all pervading. It can be on the right hand, and also at the same time on the left. All things wait upon it for life, and it refuses none. When its meritorious work is done, it takes not the name of merit. In love it nourishes all things, and it is ever free from ambitious desires. It may be named with the smallest. All things return home to it, but it does not lord it over them. It may be named with the greatest. . . . Lay hold on the great form of Reason, and the whole world will go to you. It will go to you and suffer no injury; and its rest and peace will be glorious. Reason in passing from your mouth is tasteless. If you look at it, there is nothing to fill the eye. If you listen to it, there is nothing to fill the ear. But if you use it, it is inexhaustible."—"The Spirit, like the perennial spring of the valley, never dies. This Spirit I call the Abyss-Mother."—"Going home to the origin is said to be a reversion to destiny. This reversion to destiny is called eternity. . . . He who knows eternity is magnanimous. Being magnanimous, he is catholic. Being catholic, he is a king. Being a king, he is Heaven. Being Heaven, he is Reason.

Being Reason, he is enduring. Though his body perish, he is in no danger."

Here, then, in oneness with Eternal Reason, Lao-Tsze found the Central Principle of Unity. Do we say that this doctrine is mystical? But it is no more mystical than the doctrine of Socrates and Plato, of Aristotle and Zeno; of the Hebrew Psalms and Prophets; of the Sermon on the Mount, the Proem to the Gospel of John, and the Pauline Epistles; of the great Mediæval Saints; of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel; of Henry More, Price, and Coleridge. And now let us see the practical application of his principle; and first to personal perfection. He says: "There is nothing like keeping the inner man. The Sage embraces Unity, and so is a pattern for all the world. He puts himself last, and yet is first; abandons himself, and yet is preserved. Is this not through his having no selfishness? Thereby he preserves self-interest intact. He is not self-displaying, and therefore he shines. He is not self-approving, and therefore he is distinguished. He is not self-praising, and therefore he has merit. He is not self-exalting, and therefore he stands high; and inasmuch as he does not strive, no one in all the world strives with him. That ancient saying, 'He that humbles himself shall be preserved entire,'—oh, it is no vain utterance! Verily, he shall be returned home entire to his origin." And again: "By undivided attention to the passion nature and increasing tenderness, it is possible to be a little child. By putting away impurity from the hidden eye of the heart, it is possible to be without spot. By loving the people and so governing the nation, it is possible to be unknown. There is a purity and quietude by which one may rule the whole world." Thus by tenderness and purity of heart would the sage become like a little child. "To keep tenderness I pronounce strength," he says. "Use the light to guide you home to its own brightness. . . . This I call practising Eternal Reason."

And thus seeking "simple goodness like water," the Sage should strive in all social relations, to rule, not by force, but by influence. "He who knows the masculine nature, and at the same time keeps the feminine, will be the whole world's channel, the centre of universal attraction. Being the whole world's channel, eternal virtue will not depart from him; and he will return again to the state of an infant. He who knows the light, and at the same time keeps the shade, will be the whole world's model. He who knows the glory, and at the same time keeps the shame, will be the whole world's valley. Being the whole world's valley, eternal virtue will fill him, and he will return home to simplicity."—"Of all the weak things in the world nothing exceeds water; and yet of those which attack hard and strong things I know not what is superior to it. Don't make light of this. The fact that the weak can conquer the

strong, and the tender the hard, is known to all the world; yet none carry it out in practice. Therefore the Sage says, 'He who bears the reproach of his country shall be called the lord of the land. He who bears the calamities of his country shall be called the king of the world.'

And this spirit of self-sacrificing gentleness, blending masculine strength with feminine sweetness, should flow abroad in abounding benevolence. "The Sage is ever the good saviour of men. He rejects none. He is ever the good saviour of things. He rejects nothing. His I call comprehensive intelligence. For the good men are the instructors of other good men; and the bad men are the material of the good men for them to work upon." — "The Sage has no invariable mind of his own, he makes the mind of the people his mind. The good I would meet with goodness. The not-good I would meet with goodness also. Virtue is good. The faithful I would meet with faith. The not-faithful I would meet with faith also. Virtue is faithful. The Sage lives in the world with a timid reserve; but his mind blends in sympathy with all. The people all turn their ears and eyes up to him; and the Sage thinks of them all as his children."

But thus living personally, and acting socially, according to the law of Universal Reason, the "Mother of the Universe," the Sage would apply the same principle to government. "In governing men and in serving Heaven there is nothing like moderation. This moderation is the first thing to be obtained. When this is first attained, one may be said to have laid in an abundant store of virtue. Such a one has the mother of the kingdom and may endure long. This I call having the roots deep and the fibres firm. This is the Reason by which one may live long and see many days." — "For what did the ancients so much prize this Reason? Was it not because it was found at once without searching; and by it those who had sinned might escape? Therefore it is the most estimable thing in the world." — "Recompense injury with kindness." — "Begin to regulate before the disorder comes." — "Reason, as it is eternal, has no name. But though insignificant in its primordial simplicity, the world dares not make a servant of it. If a prince or king could keep this, every thing would spontaneously submit to him; and the people without orders, would of themselves harmonize together. . . . Would that I were possessed of sufficient knowledge to walk in the great Way of Reason. The great Way is exceedingly plain, but the people like the cross-paths. . . . The Sage, when he wishes to be above the people so as to rule them, must keep below them. When he wishes to be before the people, he must in person keep behind them. In this way, while in position over the people, they do not feel his weight. Therefore the world delights to exalt him, and no one is offended." —

“The Reason of Heaven does not strive, yet conquers well; does not call, yet things come of their own accord; is slack, yet plans well. The net of heaven is very wide in its meshes, yet misses nothing.” — “When the people do not fear death, to what purpose is the punishment of death still used to overawe them? There is always the Great Executioner. Now, for any man to act the Executioner’s part, I say it is hewing out the Great Architect’s work for him. And he who undertakes to help for the Great Architect rarely fails to cut his own hands.” — “I have three precious things, which I hold fast and prize, — Compassion, Economy, Humility. Being compassionate, I can therefore be brave. Being economical, I can therefore be liberal. Not daring to take precedence of the world, I can therefore become chief among the perfect ones. But in the present day men give up compassion, and cultivate only courage. They give up economy, and aim only at liberality. They give up the last place, and seek only the first. It is their death. Compassion is that which is victorious in attack and secure in defence. When Heaven would save a man it encircles him with compassion.”

And finally, although living in the midst of war and civil disturbance, this great teacher of the Way of Reason was as earnest an apostle of peace as any Christian Father, or modern Friend, or latest advocate of Woman’s influence. Hear how broadly and magnanimously he preaches the gospel of mercy and good-will. “He who in the use of Reason renders assistance to a human ruler does not use weapons to force the people. His actions are such as he would wish rendered to himself again. Where legions are quartered, briars and thorns grow. In the track of great armies must follow bad years. The good soldier is brave only to effect some good purpose. He ventures nothing for the sake of power. He is brave in need, but never a bully. He is brave in need, but never overbearing. He is brave in need, for he cannot be less, but not violent.” And again: “Ornamental weapons are not instruments of joy, but objects of hatred to every creature. Therefore he who has Reason will not stay where they are. The Superior Man in his home makes the left hand — the weak side — the place of honor. But he who goes forth to use weapons of war honors the right — the strong hand. Weapons are instruments of evil omen. They are not the tools of a Superior Man. He uses them only when he cannot help it. Peace is his highest aim. When he conquers he is not elated. To be elated is to rejoice at the destruction of human life; and he who rejoices at the destruction of human life is not fit to be intrusted with power in the world. He who has been instrumental in killing many people should move on over them with bitter tears. Therefore those who have been victorious in battle are disposed after the order of a funeral.” And not only does the Sage

thus hate war and love peace, but he teaches, with a profound and penetrating wisdom never surpassed, that Pacific Policy is omnipotent. Hear him. "When a great kingdom takes a lowly position, it becomes the place of concourse for the world: it is the wife of the world. The wife by quietness invariably conquers the man; and since quietness is also lowliness, therefore a great kingdom, by lowliness toward a small kingdom, may take that small kingdom; and a small kingdom, by lowliness towards a great kingdom, may take that great kingdom. So that either the one stoops to conquer, or the other is low and conquers. If the great kingdom only desires to attach to itself and nourish — that is, benefit — others, then the small kingdom will only wish to enter its service. But in order that both may have their wish, the great one should be lowly." — "Those who of old were good practisers of Reason used it not to make the people bright, but to make them simple. What makes the people hard to govern is their having too much policy. He who encourages this kind of policy in the government of a kingdom is the robber of that kingdom; but he who governs a kingdom without it is a blessing to that kingdom. To know these two things is the very ideal of government; and a constant knowledge of this ideal I call sublime virtue. Sublime virtue is profound, immense, and the reverse of every thing else. It will bring about a state of Universal Freedom."

The last words of Lao-Tsze in his truly sublime book of the "Tao-Teh-King," or the "Book of Reason and Virtue," "The Way of Truth and Life," are these: "Faithful words are not fine. Fine words are not faithful. The good do not debate. The debater is not good. The knowing are not learned. The learned are not knowing.

"The Sage does not lay up treasures. The more he does for others, the more he has of his own. The more he gives to others, the more he is increased. This is the Way of the Sage, who acts, but does not strive. This is the Way of Heaven, which benefits, but does not injure."

Such, in outline, is the Religion of Tao-ism as set forth by its chief apostle. With the mere statement that under several dynasties this faith has swayed for a season the Imperial Court; and regretting that time will permit no reference to its later forms, as presented in the "Book of Recompenses and Penalties," we will pass to the Second Religion, which throughout the course of the Central Empire has been most widely prevalent. This is the doctrine of the Scholar-Class, who among us are popularly known as, —

II. THE CONFUCIANS. This form of religion has been so amply exhibited by the Jesuit and Dominican Fathers, by Leibnitz and Du Halde, and their German and French compeers, — and by many English writers, from Collie and Morrison to the most trustworthy translator of all, Dr.

James Legge, — that intelligent persons must be supposed to be more or less acquainted with it. Leaving aside, therefore, what is familiar, let me guide your thoughts to the central doctrine of the grand sage and saint, K'ung-Foo-Tsze, or Confucius, as the Jesuits first taught us to call him.

This great philosopher and statesman is too often spoken of as a mere expounder of ethical precepts and conventional proprieties; and would that by a sketch of his life and his ideal aim, the injustice of this superficial estimate might be proved! Yet even such brief extracts as time will allow me to present, may serve to show, that although this admirable philanthropist was a teacher of morals, he was pre-eminently a Religious and Social Reformer. His initial word is Reverence. And Reverence for the Supreme Sovereign of Heaven is the corner and capstone of his temple of society, — underlying and crowning all modes of Reverence.

K'ung-Foo-Tsze never presented the form of religion that he inculcated as his own, but always as an inheritance from the Ancestors of the Empire, and especially from the poets, sages, and rulers of the famous Chow dynasty, who lived five hundred years before his time. His first work was to republish the books of this Golden Age, — so pure, high, large, so fitted to renovate all ages, appeared to him to be the spirit, laws, and manners of that heroic generation. Let us listen to a few passages from these books, that we may judge whether he revered them too earnestly.

The most ancient of these books, to the study and explanation of which K'ung-Foo-Tsze devoted years of profound study, is the Yih-King, or Book of Principles and Changes. But as the philosophy embodied in this volume is too mystical for popular treatment, consisting, as it does, of a system of analogies between the Natural and Spiritual worlds, it will be better on this occasion to pass at once to the second of these Sacred Books, the Shoo-King, or Book of History. Its tone may be learned from two or three sentences, as follows: "The Royal path is right and straight, without perversity, without one-sidedness. Seeing this Perfect Excellence, turn to it. This amplification of the Royal Perfection contains the unchanging rule, and is the great lesson. Yea, it is the lesson of Shang-Te;" that is, literally, of the "Supreme Sovereign," or God. And it is well to pause here a moment to say, that throughout the Shoo-King this Ruler over all, Shang-Te, — or the equivalent, Tien, Heaven, — is everywhere declared to be the Supreme Being, whose justice, mercy, and righteous providence direct the universe and govern humanity, humbling the proud, exalting the lowly, comforting the sad, avenging wrongs, loving and caring for people and rulers alike. The passage goes

on: "The multitudes instructed in this amplification of Perfect Excellence, and carrying it into practice, will approximate to the glory of the Son of Heaven, and will say, 'The Son of Heaven is the parent of the people, and so becomes the sovereign of the empire.'" Again: "Your management of the people will depend upon your reverently following your father. Carry out his virtuous words, and clothe yourself with them. . . . And seeking what is to be learned from the wise kings of antiquity, employ it in the tranquillizing and protecting of the people. Finally, enlarge your thoughts to the comprehension of all heavenly principles, and virtue will be richly displayed in your person. . . . Heaven in its awfulness yet helps the sincere. . . . It is yours, O little one! it is your business to enlarge the regal influence, and harmoniously to protect this people. Thus shall you assist the king, consolidating the appointment of Heaven and renovating this people." — "Oh! early and late, never be but earnest. If you do not attend jealously to your small actions, the result will be to affect your virtue in great matters, as when in raising a mound the work is unfinished for want of one basket of earth. If you follow this course, the people will preserve their possessions, and the throne will descend from generation to generation." Again: "The king speaks to this effect, 'Head of the princes, my younger brother, my little one, it was your greatly distinguished father who was able to illustrate his virtue and to be careful in the use of punishments. He did not dare to show any contempt to the widower and widows. He revered the reverend; he employed the employable; he was terrible to those who needed to be awed. It was thus he laid the first beginnings of the sway of our small portion of the empire, and one or two neighboring states were brought under his improving influence; until throughout our western regions all placed in him their reliance. The fame of him ascended up to the High God, and God approved. Heaven gave to him the great charge to exterminate the dynasty of Yin" (the ruling Emperor of which was a most atrociously cruel tyrant), "and to receive its great appointments, so that the various states and their people were brought to the condition of order.'" After listening to such extracts, how can any one deny that the fundamental principle of this book is Religion?

Yet more does this religious spirit of the early Central Empire appear in the She-King, or Book of Hymns and Poems, some passages of which astonish us by their close resemblance to the pure piety of the Hebrew Psalms. Thus a young King prays: "I know that one must watch incessantly over himself, that Heaven has an intelligence which nothing escapes, and that its decrees are without appeal. Let no one say, then, 'Heaven is so high and so far above us that it scarcely thinks

of things below.' I know that it regards all things ; that it enters into all ; that it is present incessantly to all. But, alas ! I am so young, so little enlightened, so inattentive to my duties ! Nevertheless, with all my energies I strive to lose no time, desiring with ardor this only, that I may attain to perfection." Again : " He who alone is King and Supreme Lord humbles his majesty even to take care of things here below. Always attentive to the true happiness of the world, He extends his regards over all the face of the earth. He sees people who have abandoned his laws ; but the All-High does not abandon them. He watches over them. He examines them. Everywhere He seeks for a man after his own heart, and wills to extend his rule." Again : " The Supreme Sovereign regards the Sacred mountain. It is the home of peace. It is an eternal kingdom, where are seen no trees whose leaves fade and fall. It is the work of the Most High. There has he placed the youngest in room of the eldest ; for it is only Wān whose heart knows how to love his brethren. He causes all their happiness, all their glory. The Lord has heaped upon him all blessings, and given him the world for a recompense. The Supreme Sovereign penetrates the heart of Wān, and there he finds a secret and inexplicable virtue, whose sweetness diffuses itself abroad. It is a marvellous combination of precious gifts, — intelligence to rule all ; wisdom to enlighten all ; counsel to govern all ; reverence and gentleness to make itself beloved ; energy and majesty to make itself feared ; a grace and charm which win all hearts ; virtues always the same and incapable of change. It is an inheritance which he has received from the All-High ; a blessing which he has transmitted to posterity." Once more : " The Supreme Sovereign has said to Wān, ' When the heart is not right, its desires are unregulated, and one is not fit to save the world. But you are incapable of such defects. . . . I love a virtue pure and simple like yours ; it makes no noise ; it is without display ; it is never extravagant ; it is free from violence. It might be said that your sole genius and wisdom are to obey my commandments.' " And finally : " Heaven penetrates to the depth of all hearts, as daybreak illumines the darkest room. We should strive to reflect its light, as two instruments in full accord respond to one another. We should unite ourselves closely to it, as two tablets which seem to make but one. We should receive what it gives in the very instant when it opens its hands to bestow. Nothing is easier for Heaven than to enlighten us. But our own unregulated passions close the entrance of our souls against its influence." Similar extracts might be multiplied without end ; but surely these will suffice to prove the ignorance or unfairness of all who scoff at the religion of the ancient Chinese. These sacred hymns of the She-King breathe a devout Theism, — gratefully conscious of

dependence on the All-Good; reverent in awe of the Holy Witness, Judge, and King; earnestly aspiring after communion in life, thought, deed, with the All-True.

Thus much for the Sacred Books, to the editing and expounding of which K'ung-Foo-Tsze consecrated the best years of his life. And leaving aside the other Sacred Books, and the first and second of the so-called Classics, "The Discourses and Dialogues," and "The Great Learning," let us give a few moments to the third of these, for which the world is indebted to the grandson of the Sage. This book deserves patient study; for in it is embodied, as the best Chinese scholars declare, the very genius and spirit, not only of K'ung-Foo-Tsze, but also of their nation. Its name is "Chung-Yung," which literally means "The Central Immutable," or "Correct Fixed Principle." The Catholic Fathers called it "Medium constans vel sempiternum." Abel Rémusat has named it "L'invariable Milieu." Morrison interprets it "The Constant Medium;" and Collie, "The Golden Medium;" while Dr. Legge translates the title "The Doctrine of the Mean." But such renderings do but partial justice to the profound and comprehensive thought that inspires this book, which is this, "How from a Central Principle to evolve Universal Harmony, by a Method of Distributive Order." The first chapter, indeed, strikes the key-note of the whole system, in a few all-significant sentences, thus: "1. What Heaven has conferred is called the NATURE; an accordance with this nature is called The PATH of Duty; the regulation of this path is called INSTRUCTION. 2. The path may not be left an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path. On this account, the Superior Man does not wait till he sees things, to be cautious; nor till he hears things, to be apprehensive. 3. There is nothing more visible than what is secret, and nothing more manifest than what is minute. Therefore the Superior Man is watchful over himself while he is alone. 4. While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of EQUILIBRIUM. When the feelings have been stirred, and they act in their *due degree*, there ensues what may be called the state of HARMONY. This EQUILIBRIUM is the great root, from which grow all human actions in the world; and this HARMONY is the universal path, which they all should pursue. 5. Let the states of Equilibrium and Harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth." Thus, Equilibrium is the root, Growth is the trunk, Harmony is the tree full grown. In these words — Equilibrium of Nature, the Way of Order, and Harmony in Act — is given the Central Universal method of K'ung-Foo-Tsze, and of his compeers. "The Master said: Perfect is the virtue which is according to the constant, invariable prin-

ciple. Rare have they long been among the people, who could practise it. . . . Alas! how is the Path untrodden," referring, for illustration, to the ancient sages. And again: "When one cultivates to the utmost the Principles of his Nature, and exercises them on the method of Reciprocity, he is not far from the Path. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others." Once more: "Earnest in practising the ordinary virtues, and careful in speaking about them, the Superior Man dares not but exert himself, if in his practice there is any thing defective; and if in his words he has any excess, he dares not allow himself such license. Thus his words have respect to his actions, and his actions have respect to his words. Is it not just an entire SINCERITY, which marks the Superior Man?"

Here we reach (as was said in the outset) the very centre of the Central Principle, in Sincerity. Sincerity means "Fidelity to the Heaven-given Nature." "Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who without an effort hits what is right, and apprehends without an exercise of thought; he is the Sage, who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains to sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast. To this attainment there are requisite the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it. . . . When we have intelligence resulting from sincerity, this condition is to be ascribed to nature. When we have sincerity resulting from intelligence, this condition is to be ascribed to instruction. But given the sincerity, and there shall be intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be sincerity." "Sincerity is the end and the beginning; without sincerity, there would be nothing. On this account, the Superior Man regards the attainment of sincerity as the most excellent thing."

And now having once attained — either by Nature, the way of Heaven, or by Instruction, the way of Man — to Sincerity, from this centre we may grow to the perfect life. "Sincerity is that whereby self-completion is effected, and its way is that whereby man must direct himself. . . . It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transform

ing and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may become with Heaven and Earth a Third." Thus the perfectly Sincere Man grows to be the Saint, and becomes endowed with transforming powers. "It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can *transform*." — "It is characteristic of the most entire sincerity to be able to foreknow. . . . Therefore the individual possessed of the most complete sincerity is like a Spirit." — "To entire sincerity there belongs ceaselessness. Not ceasing, it continues long. Continuing long, it evidences itself. Evidencing itself, it reaches far. Reaching far, it becomes large and substantial. Large and substantial, it becomes high and brilliant. Thus it contains, overspreads, perfects all things. So large and substantial, the man possessing sincerity is the co-equal of Earth. So high and brilliant, it makes him the co-equal of Heaven. So far-reaching and long-continuing, it makes him Infinite. . . . The Way of Heaven and Earth may be completely declared in one sentence. They are without any *Doubletness*; and so they produce things in a manner that is unfathomable. It is said in the She-King: 'The ordinances of Heaven, how profound are they and unceasing!' The meaning is, that it is thus that Heaven is HEAVEN. And again it says: 'How illustrious was the *Singleness* of the virtue of King Wān!' indicating that it was thus that King Wān was what he was. Singleness is likewise unceasing." Thus Singleness — utter freedom from Duplicity — is the essential life of the true Sage, or Saint. "It is only he possessed of all sagely qualities that can exist under heaven, who shows himself quick in apprehension, clear in discernment, of far-reaching intelligence and all-embracing knowledge, — fitted to exercise rule; magnanimous, generous, benign, and mild, — fitted to exercise forbearance; impulsive, energetic, firm, and enduring, — fitted to maintain a firm hold; self-adjusted, grave, never swerving from the central invariable principle, — fitted to command reverence; accomplished, distinctive, concentrative, and searching, — fitted to exercise discrimination. All-embracing and vast, he is like Heaven. Deep and active as a fountain, he is like the Abyss. He is seen, and the people all reverence him; he speaks, and the people all believe him; he acts, and the people are all pleased with him. . . . All who have blood and breath unfeignedly honor and love him. Hence it is said: 'He is the equal of Heaven.' . . . Call him Man in his Ideal, how earnest is he! Call him an Abyss, how deep is he! Call him Heaven, how vast is he!" — "It is said in the She-King: 'Looked at in your apartment, be there free from shame, where you are exposed to the light of Heaven.' Therefore the Superior Man, even when he is not moving, has the feeling of Reverence; and while he speaks not, he has

the feeling of Truthfulness. It is said in the She-King: 'In silence is the offering presented and the Spirit approached to; there is not the slightest contention.' Therefore the Superior Man does not use rewards, and the people are stimulated to virtue. He does not show anger, and the people are awed more than by battle-axes. It is said in the She-King: 'What needs no display is Virtue. All the princes imitate it.' Therefore the Superior Man being sincere and reverential, the whole world is conducted to a state of happy tranquillity."

Such is the ideal of the Sage, developed from the centre of Singleness or Sincerity, up to the degree of the Saint. And in this beautiful image K'ung-Foo-Tsze was represented, as in life he had appeared to his revering grandson. Is not, then, the assertion verified, that in character and influence he was a Religious and Social Reformer? Indeed, was he not in himself the embodiment of Religion?

That this conception of the Sage-Saint as the "Ideal of Man" was not confined to K'ung-Foo-Tsze and his immediate circle of disciples, might be proved from the writings of his grand successor and expounder, a century and a half later, — Māng-Tsze, or Mencius, whose sublime doctrine of the essential goodness of human nature has never been surpassed in any age or nation. But time will not allow even a passing quotation. Let us close, then, this view of the Second Religion of the Central Empire, by some final exhibitions of the Saint, as drawn from later writings of this School. K'ung-Foo-Tsze is reported as having distributed men into Five Orders, briefly as follows: "1. The first and most numerous order is made up of those who do to-day what they did yesterday, for no other reason than because it has been done before; who never act spontaneously, but allow themselves to be passively led; who are incapable of embracing large views of human affairs; and whose understanding is governed by the organs of sense. They are commonly called the People. 2. The second order includes those who have been sufficiently trained in science, letters, and the liberal arts as to propose to themselves ends and the means to attain them; who, without having penetrated to the depth of things, can yet give a reason for what they say or do, and can thus teach others. They may be called the Lettered Class. 3. The third order consists of those who never depart from the rules of right reason, and do good for its own sake; who plunge into no excess, and are the same in prosperity and adversity; who regard all mankind as equals, in having the seeds of the same vices and virtues, not esteeming themselves above others; who, not content with ordinary science, pursue knowledge to its remote sources, so as to obtain it in purity. They may be honored with the name of Philosophers. 4. The fourth order consists of those who, under all

circumstances, regard with reverence the central immutable principle, and have fixed rules of moral action which they on no account transgress; who fulfil their least obligations to the minutest detail with scrupulous exactness and untiring perseverance; whose every deed is intrinsically good and fitted for example; who despise toil and anxiety, when the object is to recall men to duty and to enlighten the ignorant; who serve all without distinction of rank or fortune, and without regard to interest, not even exacting the sentiment of gratitude. These are the Sincere or Virtuous. 5. The fifth order, the highest to which human merit can attain, is composed of the Superior Men, who combine the rarest qualities of heart and mind with the habit of pleurably discharging all duties which nature or morality can impose upon a reasonable and social being; who do good to all, like the Heaven and Earth, never intermitting their beneficence; who are as imperturbable in their mortal career as the sun and moon in their courses; who see without being seen, and act as it were insensibly, like spirits. The very few who attain to this degree may be called the Perfect Men or Saints." This tradition certainly attests the perpetuity of the ideal of the Saint. Again, in this School it is taught that "the name of Saint designates one who knows all, sees all, comprehends all. His thoughts are all true, his acts all holy. All his words are lessons in wisdom; all his deeds are rules for conduct. He unites in himself the Three Orders of Being. He possesses all good. He is altogether heavenly." Once more: "The Saint is at once so elevated and so profound, that he is incomprehensible. His wisdom is boundless. The future is unveiled to his sight. His love embraces the Universe, and quickens all around him like the breath of spring. His words are inspiring and life-giving. He is one with Heaven."—"The heart of Heaven is in the bosom of the Saint, and its truth on his lips. The world can know Heaven only through the Saint."—"Heaven is invisible; the Saint is Heaven become visible." The Saint is named "the Divine Man," "the Celestial Man," "the Unique Man," "the most beautiful of men," "the marvellous man," &c. Finally, it is said: "The Saints and Sages are called the Sons of Heaven."—"The Saint has no father: he is conceived by the operation of Heaven itself."

Now critics may cavil at these sublime conceptions of the Sage-Saint—as the Third with Heaven and Earth, as able to transform all things by the power of a good life, as inspired with heavenly wisdom, as the image and incarnate form of Heaven, as the Heavenly Man, as the Son of Heaven—for their mystic enthusiasm; but certainly no candid person will deny, that in these conceptions the disciples of K'ung-Foo-Tsze have exalted Ethics to the degree of Religion, and

of a singularly pure and spiritual Religion. And before Christians permit themselves to condemn this Ideal as extravagant, it may be well to compare it reverently and deliberately with the Saints of all communions in the Christian Church, whether Apostolical, Catholic, or Reformed.

And now let us pass to a very rapid sketch of the Third Religion, which has at various eras moulded the minds of Emperors, Ministers, and People, and which still is received by multitudes in several states of the Central Empire. This Religion is usually called,

III. FO-ISM, the "Chinese" rendering of Buddhism. And referring all who wish to pursue the subject to the masterly works of Abel Rémusat, Klapproth, Stanislas Julien, &c., let me use the few moments at command for an illustration of Fo-ism, by selecting from the rich literature of this school one most remarkable book of worship. It is called by its translator, the Rev. Samuel Beal, "The Confessional Service of the Great, Compassionate Kwan-Yin." This name has been variously translated by Rémusat, Klapproth, Julien, Sir John Davis, and Chinese Scholars, as meaning "the Being who contemplates with love," "the manifested Self-Existent One," "the manifested Voice," "She who hears the cries of men," "the Goddess of Mercy," &c. But, in view of a name frequently used in this Liturgy, and the spirit and end of this form of worship, it might well be called "The Confessional Service of the Great, Compassionate Heart." For its aim is an act of consecration to the service of a beneficent and compassionate Being, who is constantly manifested to all creatures throughout the universe for their deliverance from the consequences of sin and error. Of this Being, it is said: "By her compassionate heart, she has pledged herself by a great oath to enter into every one of the innumerable worlds, and bring deliverance to all creatures which inhabit them. For this purpose she has enunciated Divine Sentences, which, if properly recited, will render all creatures exempt from the causes of sorrow; and, by removing these, will make them capable of attaining to Supreme Wisdom." After preliminary services, the worshippers offer this prayer of invocation: "Oh would that our teacher Sakya-Mouni, and our merciful Father Amitábha, and the other Buddhas of all regions,—not passing beyond their own limits of perfect Rest and Love,—would descend to this sacred precinct, and be present with us, who now discharge these religious duties! Would that the great, perfect, illimitable, compassionate Heart, influenced by these invocations, would now attend!"

Next follow various prayers and chants, in order that "the worshippers may be filled with holy joy and reverence, without confusion of heart." And then comes the central act of communion, which consists of *Vows* and *Confessions*. It is thus opened: "Whatever worshipper

desires to recite the Sentences of this Service, in order to excite in the midst of all sentient creatures the operation of the Compassionate, Merciful Heart, ought first to go through the following vows. . . . Kwan-Yin, addressing Buddha, said: 'World-honored one! whilst the recitation of these Divine Sentences is ineffectual to deliver creatures from the evil ways of birth, I vow never to arrive at the condition of Buddha. So long as those who recite these Divine Sentences are not born in the various lands of all the Buddhas, I vow never to arrive at that condition myself. So long as those who recite these Divine Sentences are unable to attain to every degree of spiritual perception, I vow never to arrive at the condition of Buddha. So long as those who recite these Divine Sentences do not receive full answers to their prayers, I vow to remain as I am.' Then, in the midst of all the congregation, with closed palms, standing perfectly upright, her eyebrows raised, a smile on her lips, exciting in all creatures the Great, Compassionate Heart, Kwan-Yin began to deliver these comprehensive, effectual, complete, Great-Compassionate-Heart, divine Sentences. . . . Such then is the Vow: Never will I seek, nor receive, private, individual salvation, — never enter into final peace alone; but for ever and everywhere will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature, throughout all worlds. Until all are delivered, never will I leave the world of sin, sorrow, and struggle, but will remain where I am." — In what church, of what age or nation, was ever offered a purer, larger, gentler vow of utter consecration to Infinite Mercy?

And next follows the **CONFESSION**. The Liturgy continues thus: "The worshippers, having finished the sentences, ought to consider that all the obstacles which prevent spiritual progress spring from sins committed in our condition as sentient creatures; that from the first, till now, the sins of all created beings have been constantly going on, and that now the web of guilt has become intricate and complicated. Every age has entertained its own peculiar crimes, which, descending from parent to child, have caused the sorrows of our present state. Without repentance there can be no remission. Our sins, therefore, ought to be well considered and weighed, that so they may be forgiven and destroyed. Bowing low, therefore, say thus: 'We, and all men from the very first, by reason of the grievous sins we have committed in thought, word, and deed, have lived in ignorance . . . of every way of escape from the consequences of our conduct. We have followed only the courses of this evil world; nor have we known aught of Supreme Wisdom. And even now, though enlightened as to our duty, yet with others do we still commit heavy sins, which prevent us from advancing in true knowledge. Therefore, in the presence of Kwan-Yin and the Buddhas of the Ten Regions, we would

humble ourselves and repent us of our sins. Oh that we may have strength to do so aright! and that may cause all obstacles to be removed.'” Here with a loud voice add: “For the sake of all sentient creatures, in whatever capacity they may be, — would that all obstacles might be removed! — we confess our sins and repent.” After a complete prostration, the worshippers then continue: “We and all men from the first, from too great love of outward things, and from inward affections towards men, leading to sinful friendships, — having no wish to benefit others, or to do good in the least degree, — have only strengthened the power of the three sources of sin, and added sin to sin; and even though our actual crimes have not been so great, yet a wicked heart has ruled us within. . . . Now, therefore, believing from the bottom of our heart in the certain result of sin, and filled with fear, shame, and great heart-chiding, would we thus publicly repent us of our sins; . . . we would separate ourselves from evil and pursue good; we would diligently recount all our past offences and earnestly follow the path of virtue. . . . Hitherto we have only gone astray; but now we return. Oh would that the Merciful would receive our vows of amendment!” And then each one giving the personal name, together the worshippers prostrate themselves and say, “With all our hearts do we repent; and here do we prostrate ourselves before the Sacred Presence, and all the countless beings of the infinite universe.” Then follow particular confessions.

But the service does not close here. Having thus by Vows and Confessions recognized the unity of the human race, and indeed of the whole universe, spiritual and natural, in sin and sorrow, struggle and salvation, and having thus consecrated themselves, individually and collectively, to the service of the Great, Compassionate Heart, the worshippers then unite in this act of INTERCESSION. “Having myself returned to my duty to Buddha, I ought to pray for all men, that they may attain to perfection of wisdom. Having myself returned to my duty to the Law, I ought to pray that all men may be deeply versed in the wisdom of the Sacred Books, and acquire perfect knowledge. Having myself returned to my duty to the Assembly, would that all men may agree in the great principles of Reason, and maintain peace and worship in the Holy Assembly!” Thus from beginning to end this service is one of self-sacrificing consecration to Infinite Mercy. And here must close, for this time, the illustration of Fo-ism.

And now, after such an exposition of the Three Great Religions of the Central Empire, it may well be asked, How has it come to pass that a Nation inspired and illumined with such sublime ideals has been seemingly so false to its trusts and has fallen so short of its destiny? The answer to this question must be given in the briefest terms, although it

would be instructive to tell the tragic story at length. To us citizens of this Republic, just redeemed by an awful struggle from the death-in-life of disunion, the terrible significance of the fact will come home, — that from the earliest ages, China has been, century after century, the prey of Civil Wars. The age of Lao-Tsze and K'ung-Foo-Tsze and their compeers was followed by that of an execrable usurper, who crushed the nation down under a centralized despotism, from the transmitted forms of which it never has been able to shake itself free. What would have become of our Ideals, if the imperial Slave Oligarchy had triumphed in our late war? Again, we are strangely ignorant or forgetful of the fact that China is a conquered nation. Twice has the Empire been swept and subdued: first, by that resistless race, which all but overran Europe, the Mongol-Tartars; next, by that almost equally indomitable race, the Mantchou-Tartars; and twice has the immortal principle in the Religion and Ethics of China manifested itself by spiritually conquering the conquerers. For first Kublai-Khan, the great emperor of the Mongols, and afterward the still greater Kang-Hi, the establisher of the existing Mantchou Dynasty, reverently accepted the ancient Creeds, Customs, Laws, and Books transmitted by the School of K'ung-Foo-Tsze. But notwithstanding the efforts of these two grand sovereigns to make the best atonement in their power for the wrongs wrought by foreign invasion, the free spirit of the people and their spontaneous genius were stifled by oppressive formalism, of which their shorn heads and long queues are but the outward type. The chief cause, however, of the apparent immobility of the Chinese Nation for many centuries, — and the one which it is important for us and for all Christendom to study, — is the influence of scientific scepticism over that very Scholar-Class which should have kept clean and full the fountains of Religious Life. It is impossible now to do more than barely to state the fact, that since the time of the Sung Dynasty, — when the learned Choo-He, a greater Positivist than Auguste Comte, indeed almost an Aristotle, first promulgated his vast system of Universal Science, — speculative Atheism has choked and dried up the streams of thought in the Central Empire. Choo-He himself, indeed, was not an Atheist, but on the contrary asserted that Heaven had a mind to perceive and a heart to sympathize with the efforts and struggles, the joys and woes, of humanity. But although the Sage admitted, as he once said, that there was a "Man up above," yet he, on the whole, discouraged the culture of devotional feelings and usages. And it cannot be denied that the tendency of his system has been to substitute Philosophy for Religion. Among the Literati, for centuries, the glowing worship of "Shang-Te" or the "Supreme Sovereign," and of "Tien" or "Heaven," has too often been eclipsed by the cold shadow of "Tai-

Ke," "The Summit," — the principle of Unity, — with its two manifestations, the Active element, "Yang," and the Passive element, "Yin." In ethics, "Le," or Law, — an all-pervading Order, — has usurped the throne of personal character and sovereign will. And as a natural consequence, external regularity and conventional propriety have been inculcated, rather than the spontaneous and intuitive goodness that aspires upwards to saintly perfection. While such has been the influence of scientific scepticism among the Scholar-Class, by a law of reaction, that, under various modes, has operated in all ages and nations, the People, meantime, have been impelled towards idolatrous ritualism, — exhibited in the adoration of the Natural Elements; in the worship of Ancestors and Great Men; in necromancy, demonology, and communion with Spirits; in magic, incantations, and countless superstitious practices, such as in all times and lands have invariably accompanied the decline of spiritual religion. These frivolous and degrading rites may be found described in many modern books, such as Williams's "Middle Kingdom," and the works of l'Abbé Huc, Davis, Meadows, Doolittle, &c. But it would be about as fair to judge of the Christian Religion, by Catholics of Naples crowding to watch the liquefaction of St. Januarius' blood, and circles of American spiritualists seeking ghostly counsel from table-tippings and "planchette," as it is to judge of the Religions of China from the childish antics of a mob in Shanghae and Canton. In estimating the countrymen of Lao-Tsze, K'ung-Foo-Tsze, and their grand compeers, let us practise a little the Golden Rule we boast of, and take as our test the Representative Men and Systems, and above all the Ideals of the Central Empire.

This brings us to the point, which now forces itself upon us, as an immediate practical duty: "How shall we do unto others as we would have others do unto us," in our treatment of the "Chinese?" How shall we "love our neighbors as ourselves," in our conduct towards those who are already becoming at least our guests, and who soon are destined to become our fellow-citizens? Shall we try to put in force that policy of Exclusion which Christendom has unanimously condemned for ages in the Central Empire, and against which Great Britain and France have twice made war? Surely it would stultify all our past professions, and brand our Republic with infamous inconsistency, to attempt to rear on the western coast of the Pacific those very walls, which the cannon of Christian States have levelled with the dust upon its eastern shore. Never can this mighty Nation be guilty of a deed so mean. Our doors are open. Where is the ingrate miserly enough to bar them? And if we admit the "Men of the Central Empire" to free residence here, and if our own citizens make homes for themselves in "Chung-Kwoh," — as assuredly

will be done on both sides, in rapidly increasing ratio, — what shall be the quality of our fellowship? There can be but one reply. We must meet one another in cordial and respectful friendliness. This passing flurry on the “labor question” will be forgotten to-morrow. Let our energetic and high-hearted working-men learn, that, centuries before this continent was discovered, a system of “MUTUAL HELP” was taught and practised in the communities of “China,” which anticipated, and in some respects, surpassed our modern plans of “Co-operation.” Our land and labor reformers might well take a page or two out of the famous “Chow-Le,” or Laws of the Chow Dynasty, and the noble chapters on popular policy of “Mencius.” Let our educators study the most ancient system of “Common Schools” ever instituted, and learn to imitate the graduated method of training from Primary Schools to Academies, from Academies to Colleges, from Colleges to Universities, — organized thousands of years ago in the “Central Empire,” whereby the sons of peasants might rise to the highest honors of the Imperial University, and become the peers of princes. Let our moralists sit respectfully at the feet of the most eloquent teachers whom our race has known, of Filial Reverence as the fountain-head of virtue, and of Urbanity, as the flowing stream to keep the garden of social life freshly beautiful. Let our statesmen also comprehend that from the earliest days, recorded in “Chinese” history, it has been asserted that government rests as its only sure foundation on the “hearts of the People;” that again and again men have risen, and continually rise, from the lowest social conditions to highest offices of trust, and even to the Imperial Seat, by competitive examination, and by merit; that the principles of republicanism really pervade the literature, laws, and institutions of “China,” notwithstanding its usages of centralization; and that just what is needed to revive, unfold, and perfect this wonderfully enduring people is the inspiring influence of our freedom and progressive energy. Finally let us, one and all, with blended trust and hope, acknowledge that it was not chance or destiny, but the Providence of the Living God, that clasped in union the hands of the Oldest and the Youngest of the Great Nations of our globe, across the Pacific, as a pledge that in the fulness of time MAN shall be ONE.

ADDRESS OF WILLIAM J. POTTER.

Religion Old and New in India.

The part which has been assigned to me in the development of the topic we are considering this evening is to show how India, with its native

religion or religions, illustrates that natural sympathy which underlies the specific forms of religions, and which, when naturally and organically developed, must bring the specific forms of faith into practical unity and co-operation. I feel myself ill-qualified for the service, yet hesitate the less to undertake it, because, in my office as Secretary of the Free Religious Association, I have been brought into some intercourse and acquaintance with that wonderful revival of native religious life and power which is now taking place in India, and which is organized in the church known as the Bralmo-Somaj. And I wish particularly to speak of that movement.

But before I speak of that reformed religion, I must show something of its native germs in the old Hindu religion out of which it has come. I remember that once in a little company where I had been saying something of the special merits of the ancient faith of India, an intelligent person asked in a tone of surprise, "Did the Hindus believe in the true God?" And that question very well illustrates the way in which the majority of people in Christendom look upon the religious faith of the Hindus, and of other nations called heathen. "Do they believe in the true God?" As if we, the people of Europe and America, had the true God all to ourselves, a monopoly of him, and he were not known at all in a great part of the world which derives its existence from him! And as if it were our office to define him, to be fully acquainted with him, to exhibit him, and to introduce him to these nations and children of his, who have been in utter ignorance of him from the very beginning of the world! Now it happens that every special form of religion makes a claim to believe in the true God, and makes a claim that its own God is the true God; and so in this matter the Christian claim will have to take its chance with the others. And I suspect and believe that a scientific settlement of the respective claims will be, that all nations get some glimpse, and all religions have some revelation, of that Infinite Intelligence and Power which holds them all in its mighty embrace, but that no race and no religion can claim to have a complete revelation of him or to comprehend him in the fulness of his infinity.

It so happens, too, that this old Hindu religion, as it is found in its original purity in its own ancient Scriptures, made a very special claim to believe in the true God, — a God without form, and of whom no image could be made or conceived, — a God, indeed, who is "spirit," and whose worshippers "must worship him in spirit and in truth." The old Hindu theology, as found in the Vedas, is a very pure theism. The pure spirituality of Deity has never been set forth in stronger language than there. Take these sentences, among others, which scholars have brought to us from these old books: "There is one living and true God; everlasting,

without parts or passion; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things." — "Any place where the mind of man can be undisturbed is suitable for the worship of the Supreme Being." — "That Spirit who is distinct from matter, and from all beings contained in matter, is not various. He is one, and he is beyond description; whose glory is so great there can be no image of him. He is the incomprehensible Spirit who illuminates all, and delights all; from whom all proceed, by whom they live after they are born, and to whom all must return. Nothing but the Supreme Being should be adored by a wise man." These sentences were written, nobody knows by whom, but are found in Hindu books that are so old that history is able to assign them no date.

And if we look to the ethical side of this old religion, we find passages quite as noteworthy to prove the existence of very pure conceptions of morality; though there can be little doubt that the piety of the religion, or its observance of forms and specific artificial works called holy, tended to dominate over its morality. But listen to these sentences from the code of Manu, — a good deal later than the preceding, but a thousand years before the era of Jesus; yet they might be inserted with perfect concord in the Sermon on the Mount. "To a man contaminated by sensuality, neither the Vedas, nor liberality, nor sacrifices, nor strict observances, nor pious austerities, will procure felicity." — "A wise man must faithfully discharge all moral duties, even though he does not constantly perform the ceremonies of religion. He will fall very low, if he performs ceremonial acts only, and fails to discharge his moral duties." — "The soul itself is its own witness and its own refuge. Offend not thy conscious soul, the supreme internal witness of men!" — "There are two roads which conduct to perfect virtue, — to be true, and to do no evil to any creature." — "Men faithless to the truth, however much they may seek supreme happiness, will not obtain it, even though they offer a thousand sacrifices."

Of course, alongside of these sentences we find others very inferior, and that seem to us very false, just as we do — some of us at least — in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. But these sentences that I have given are sufficient to show that this old Hindu religion had some glimpse of the true God, some elements of universal and everlasting truth, to which our hearts to-day respond, because they are made of the same stuff as was the old Hindu heart, that had its throbs of joy and pain in this checkered experience of human life, on the banks of the Ganges and down the Himalayan slopes, four thousand years ago; and, for myself, I believe that in that feature of spiritual pantheism which is the distinguishing characteristic of the old Hindu theology, there is an element which Christianity and most other specific religions need. It gave a conception of Deity that

in some respects is more in accord with the demands of modern science than the conception of Deity furnished by any other religion, — of God as the infinite productive intelligence and energy, continually evolving the universe from himself, instead of standing to it as a mechanical manufacturer stands to something outside of himself which he has made.

But it will be said that this religion, though originally it was so pure in its spiritual and ethical expression, did not remain so, — that it fell into gross idolatries and immoralities. True; and the same thing is true to a greater or less extent of every religion. Shall we judge Christianity by the creeds and moral condition of the people who accept it as their faith? It is to be admitted, too, that Brahmanism from the great emphasis it placed on God, and the little account it made of man, was very liable to fall into moral inactivity and depravity. But when this happened, as it did happen, the old religion had power to produce a new religion out of itself; and this is another important point to be noted. Just as Christianity came off from Judaism, and in Christianity Protestantism came off from Catholicism, so Buddhism came off from Brahmanism. It was a protest, a reaction, against that very excess of the spiritual side of religion into which Brahmanism had fallen, — when men were more bent on being absorbed into Deity hereafter than in doing their duty here upon the earth. Buddhism has well been called the Protestantism of the East; though, perhaps, still better it might be called the Positivism of the East. For Buddhism, like Positivism, says that we can know nothing of Absolute Being, — that we only know the human soul and the eternal laws of nature; and that man attains the highest good by obeying the laws of nature, and following the dictates of his own reason. And on this basis, which appears to be such a “mere morality,” that it is a question whether Buddhism had any belief in God or immortality, — certainly faith in these was not appealed to for motives, — came a grand missionary movement, which changed the religion of all Asia, east of Hindustan, and produced a form of faith which now counts more adherents than any other, except perhaps Christianity. It would be illustrative to follow this protest against Brahmanism, and see the parallelism of Buddhism in many points to the career of Christianity. Sakya-Mouni himself, its devoted founder — of whom, however, we know very little except the bare facts of his perfect consecration to the great mission to which he believed himself called, and the gentleness, charity, purity, common sense, and broad toleration of his teachings — must stand side by side with Jesus as one of the great prophets and benefactors of the human race. But Buddhism passed out of India, and now belongs rather to China, of which our friend, Mr. Channing, has spoken.

We must hasten on to India of to-day. And in India to-day there are

several distinct religions. There is the old Hindu religion, Brahmanism, which is still in the ascendant; there is Mohammedanism, which has come from Arabia; there is Christianity, which has come from Great Britain with the civil and mercantile power, but which has made no very great number of conversions from the natives; there is a small body of Parsees, the remnants of the old Persian religion of Zoroaster; and then there is the Brahmo-Somaj, the native reformed church of pure theism. Of the Parsees, I wish to speak a word; for there is a renewal of religious life and a great social reform going on among them. They have a religion whose ethics as originally written are as pure as any thing the world has seen; and they, too, declare their belief in "the one true God, beside whom there is no other," and they trust in him alone and their virtues to save from the consequences of sin. A little modern book in the form of a catechism, which is used in the education of the children (written some thirty years ago, and designed apparently in part to counteract the efforts of Christian missionaries), contains these sentences: "Your Saviour is your deeds and God himself;" and thus the blessed life is described: "To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak sweet words, to wish good to others, to have a clean heart, to acquire learning, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers, — all these are the friends of the good men, and the enemies of the bad men." And the answer to the question, "What are those things by which man is lost and degraded," is the counterpart of this: "To tell untruths, to steal, to gamble, to look with wicked eye upon a woman, to commit treachery, to abuse, to be angry, to wish ill to another, to be proud, to be idle, to slander, to be avaricious, to be disrespectful, to be shameless, to be hot-tempered, to take what is another's property, to be revengeful, unclean, obstinate, envious, to do harm to any man, to be superstitious, and to do any other wicked and iniquitous action, — these are all the friends of the wicked and the enemies of the virtuous." Let a people with a creed like that be held to their own faith, and I don't see much sense or use in converting them to the Christian theology. Nay, I think it is a wicked and abominable act to attempt to convert them from reliance upon such a pure law of life as that, to refuge in the demoralizing scheme of salvation contained in the Calvinistic doctrine of the vicarious atonement. Of course, they do not all live up to this pure faith; and, unfortunately, Christian civilization in India hasn't helped them to do it, but has brought in vices which Parseeism and Brahmanism never knew. The Parsees are now reforming their social as well as many of their religious customs. They are attending especially to education, and to the enlightenment and eleva-

in some respects is more in accord with the demands of modern science than the conception of Deity furnished by any other religion, — of God as the infinite productive intelligence and energy, continually evolving the universe from himself, instead of standing to it as a mechanical manufacturer stands to something outside of himself which he has made.

But it will be said that this religion, though originally it was so pure in its spiritual and ethical expression, did not remain so, — that it fell into gross idolatries and immoralities. True; and the same thing is true to a greater or less extent of every religion. Shall we judge Christianity by the creeds and moral condition of the people who accept it as their faith? It is to be admitted, too, that Brahmanism from the great emphasis it placed on God, and the little account it made of man, was very liable to fall into moral inactivity and depravity. But when this happened, as it did happen, the old religion had power to produce a new religion out of itself; and this is another important point to be noted. Just as Christianity came off from Judaism, and in Christianity Protestantism came off from Catholicism, so Buddhism came off from Brahmanism. It was a protest, a reaction, against that very excess of the spiritual side of religion into which Brahmanism had fallen, — when men were more bent on being absorbed into Deity hereafter than in doing their duty here upon the earth. Buddhism has well been called the Protestantism of the East; though, perhaps, still better it might be called the Positivism of the East. For Buddhism, like Positivism, says that we can know nothing of Absolute Being, — that we only know the human soul and the eternal laws of nature; and that man attains the highest good by obeying the laws of nature, and following the dictates of his own reason. And on this basis, which appears to be such a “mere morality,” that it is a question whether Buddhism had any belief in God or immortality, — certainly faith in these was not appealed to for motives, — came a grand missionary movement, which changed the religion of all Asia, east of Hindustan, and produced a form of faith which now counts more adherents than any other, except perhaps Christianity. It would be illustrative to follow this protest against Brahmanism, and see the parallelism of Buddhism in many points to the career of Christianity. Sakya-Mouni himself, its devoted founder — of whom, however, we know very little except the bare facts of his perfect consecration to the great mission to which he believed himself called, and the gentleness, charity, purity, common sense, and broad toleration of his teachings — must stand side by side with Jesus as one of the great prophets and benefactors of the human race. But Buddhism passed out of India, and now belongs rather to China, of which our friend, Mr. Channing, has spoken.

We must hasten on to India of to-day. And in India to-day there are

several distinct religions. There is the old Hindu religion, Brahmanism, which is still in the ascendant; there is Mohammedanism, which has come from Arabia; there is Christianity, which has come from Great Britain with the civil and mercantile power, but which has made no very great number of conversions from the natives; there is a small body of Parsees, the remnants of the old Persian religion of Zoroaster; and then there is the Brahmo-Somaj, the native reformed church of pure theism. Of the Parsees, I wish to speak a word; for there is a renewal of religious life and a great social reform going on among them. They have a religion whose ethics as originally written are as pure as any thing the world has seen; and they, too, declare their belief in "the one true God, beside whom there is no other," and they trust in him alone and their virtues to save from the consequences of sin. A little modern book in the form of a catechism, which is used in the education of the children (written some thirty years ago, and designed apparently in part to counteract the efforts of Christian missionaries), contains these sentences: "Your Saviour is your deeds and God himself;" and thus the blessed life is described: "To do virtuous deeds, to give in charity, to be kind, to be humble, to speak sweet words, to wish good to others, to have a clean heart, to acquire learning, to speak the truth, to suppress anger, to be patient and contented, to be friendly, to feel shame, to pay due respect to the old and young, to be pious, to respect our parents and teachers, — all these are the friends of the good men, and the enemies of the bad men." And the answer to the question, "What are those things by which man is lost and degraded," is the counterpart of this: "To tell untruths, to steal, to gamble, to look with wicked eye upon a woman, to commit treachery, to abuse, to be angry, to wish ill to another, to be proud, to be idle, to slander, to be avaricious, to be disrespectful, to be shameless, to be hot-tempered, to take what is another's property, to be revengeful, unclean, obstinate, envious, to do harm to any man, to be superstitious, and to do any other wicked and iniquitous action, — these are all the friends of the wicked and the enemies of the virtuous." Let a people with a creed like that be held to their own faith, and I don't see much sense or use in converting them to the Christian theology. Nay, I think it is a wicked and abominable act to attempt to convert them from reliance upon such a pure law of life as that, to refuge in the demoralizing scheme of salvation contained in the Calvinistic doctrine of the vicarious atonement. Of course, they do not all live up to this pure faith; and, unfortunately, Christian civilization in India hasn't helped them to do it, but has brought in vices which Parseeism and Brahmanism never knew. The Parsees are now reforming their social as well as many of their religious customs. They are attending especially to education, and to the enlightenment and eleva-

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tion of woman. They have always been noted for their charity and kindness; and it is never to be forgotten that this little pagan sect in Bombay has furnished an instance of princely generosity on the part of a private merchant that deserves to stand side by side with the magnificent beneficence of George Peabody. If the munificence of Peabody be greater in amount, it can be claimed for the Parsee that his gift for the relief of the poor of Bombay was the earlier, and that before Peabody it was unrivalled in all the world.

But the Parsees still hold to the specific divine authority of their religion as coming through their prophet Zoroaster, and all the reformers among them attempt to base their reforms on this revelation. The Brahmo-Somaj goes beyond this. That new church and reformation of Hinduism is based on no specifically revealed religion, but on the natural laws of the universe and the natural intuitions of the human soul. The Brahmo-Somaj had its origin, so far as its origin can be traced externally, forty years ago in the life and labors of Rammohun Roy. That great and noble man, convinced that the popular idolatries and superstitions of Hinduism did not belong to the real religion in its original form, established a little church in Calcutta for the simple worship of the Supreme Being, unencumbered by any of the prevalent beliefs and practices. But he based this movement on the authority of the old Vedas, — claiming, doubtless with truth, that their doctrine was pure theism. Yet he invited “all sorts and descriptions of people, without distinction,” to join the movement, and tried to make it so catholic that all persons of monotheistic faith might be at home in it, whether they were Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, or Jews. Practically, however, the church remained a Hindu Unitarian Church. But about twenty years ago this platform of the specific divine authority and infallibility of the Vedas was abandoned, and the Brahmo-Somaj took for a basis of faith, “God’s revelation in nature and the religious instincts of man.” And there is where the Brahmo-Somaj stands to-day. As its present great representative man, Keshub Chunder Sen, says, “It is an organized theistic church, Indian in its origin, but universal in its scope, which aims to destroy idolatry, superstition, and sectarianism, and propagate the saving truths of absolute religion, and the spiritual worship of the one true God, and likewise to promote the intellectual, moral, and social reformation of individuals and nations, and thus make theism the religion of life.”

And since the day that the Brahmo-Somaj took this stand on nature and the soul, it has made great advance. Two years ago it counted more than sixty churches in different parts of India, and the number has increased since that faster than before. Its adherents cannot be accurately reckoned in numbers, because they keep no regular record of membership;

but it counts many thousands of members, and their influence is beginning to be felt in all the civil and social as well as religious life of India. They have a most devout sense of religious consecration to their work, are self-sacrificing, heroic, and — though in a perfectly peaceful way — aggressive. They believe in actively propagating their faith, and the movement has something of the zealous missionary spirit in which Buddhism began. There is a fervor about them which reminds one of Methodism. Yet their faith is eminently practical, too. They are engaged in all good reforms; they are fighting vigorously against caste, and for civil, social, and religious equality; they are laboring for the education of woman; they are especially bent on removing the oppressive laws and traditions which forbid inter-marriage between persons of different castes and the re-marriage of widows; and generally they are alive to all good works of charity, philanthropy, and advancing civilization.

Now it would not be true to say that no part of this religious reformation is due to the influence of Christianity. The Brahmo-Somaj itself confesses its indebtedness to the Christian religion. Its members are well acquainted with the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, and highly appreciate the character and teachings of Jesus. But this influence of Christianity has been indirect, through contact of the native mind of India with British literature and science and practical life, and is not any direct result of the efforts of the Christian Church in India. The dogmas which the Christian missionaries have generally taught as Christianity, the members of the Brahmo-Somaj utterly reject. They deny that Christianity has any specific authority as a divine revelation above that of other religions, and, of course, do not call themselves Christians. They accept what is true in the Bible and in the teachings of Jesus, just as they accept what is true in the Vedas and in the prophets of India, because it commends itself to their reason and intuition, and not because any book or prophet has uttered it. In fact the Brahmo-Somaj, the product of many religious and social forces, is an excellent illustration of the historic method by which it seems altogether probable that the various religions of the earth are to affect and modify each other. As Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, coming into actual contact, have helped to produce the Brahmo-Somaj of India, so the future religion of humanity is to come not from the conversion of all the religions but one into that one, but from the action and interaction of different religions, races, and civilizations upon each other, to bring forth some higher phase of faith, and some better social condition than any one of them alone has produced. Were there time, I should like to read extracts from these tracts and pamphlets which I have here, and which have been published from time to time by the Brahmo-Somaj in Calcutta, to show how lofty and pure is the faith

that animates that wonderful movement. Let me just read some of the titles ; as, " True Faith ; " " Social and Religious Reformation ; " " Validity of Intuitions ; " " An Appeal to Young India ; " " The Signs of the Times ; " " The Destiny of Human Life ; " " Man the Son of God ; " " Atonement and Salvation." This is, indeed, a turning of the tables, when tracts come from heathen Calcutta to Christian New England ! Yet to my mind there is infinitely more of the real bread of life in these India tracts than in any issued by the American Tract Society. They have their points of sympathy with some elements of Christianity, but not with that peculiar phase of Christianity which the American Tract Society represents. And as I have read in the newspapers this week the reports of the turbulent discussions in that venerable society, and of the difficulties into which it has fallen, — of the sectarian animosities which are there rife, and of the crimination and recrimination banded between doctors of divinity among its directors, — it occurred to me that here, in these tracts from India, may be the panacea for all their troubles. Let that society take these tracts, read them, mentally and spiritually digest them, reprint them as its own, and send them through the land, and I believe a veritable revival of religion would be produced in the society and among its constituents, in which sectarian jealousy and bitterness would be forgotten and all their difficulties healed.

It is especially easy to trace in the teachings of the Brahma-Somaj the influence of the liberal schools of theology in England, and of our own Theodore Parker. That staunch reformer, who struck such vigorous blows here in Boston, and whose body, burned out with the intensity of the life it carried, sank at its noon to rest in the beautiful soil of Italy, is now having his resurrection all round the globe. We hear of him not only through the United States and in England, but in all parts of Europe from Norway to Austria, in South America, in India, and even in such outlying regions of civilization as Australia and Southern Africa. He, at least, is one of the god-fathers of the Brahma-Somaj.

And the present most distinguished representative of this reformed religion of India, Keshub Chunder Sen, is now in England, and, as a letter from one of his coadjutors in India announces, it is probable that he will visit America before he returns to his native land. We invited him to this meeting, to speak in person for the faith of India. But the obligations of his mission in England would not permit his coming so soon. We hope, however, that he will be here at some time during the present year ; and when he comes, the Free Religious Association must stand ready to give him a cordial and brotherly welcome. He will be received, doubtless, with generous courtesy and respect by other religious bodies. Yet the various religious denominations, however liberal, can only receive

him with some reserve, since, if true to their convictions, they must believe that he needs to be converted to Christianity. Only here, where, whatever may be our special religious opinions, we subordinate these to our faith in the capabilities of our common humanity, and stand together on this ground as an all-sufficient basis for religious fellowship, can he be received as an equal brother. We here, without reserve and with perfect sincerity, can bid him God-speed in his great work of teaching Hindus and Christians alike the higher path above the warring sects and religions, which leads to spiritual co-operation and harmony and brotherhood.

And now let me read, in conclusion, some passages of the letter to which I have referred, and which has already been published entire in our department in "The Index," from Babu Gosto Behary Mullic, Secretary of one of the Brahma churches in Calcutta. He writes thus: "The warm fraternal sympathy, the words of lofty cheer, kindness, good-will, and affection, which you had sent us, have already stirred feelings of gratitude in the hearts of our brethren; and accustomed as they have been to hear nothing but the language of abuse, slander, and contempt from the Orthodox Christians of this city, your two welcome messages have inspired in them confidence and hope. . . . More earnestly than ever do we now cherish our fond belief, that, one day, all distinctions of caste, color, and creed, the bitter feelings of race-antagonism, the deep-rooted rancor of sectarian jealousy, shall give way before the advancing ideas of human brotherhood and universal love. . . . It would give us very great pleasure to hear from you often. We need your words of sympathy and love in the great movement which we have inaugurated. Though separated by thousands of miles of land and water, we are nearer to you in heart than to the great mass of Anglo-Saxons at our very door."

As the hour was late, instead of giving the foregoing address, Mr. Potter simply read some extracts from Mr. Mullic's letter, announced Keshub Chunder Sen's probable visit to America, and referred to the noble moral and spiritual sentiments of the publications which he had received from time to time from the Brahma-Somaj.

The President then said, "With this benediction from the land of the Brahmins, the Convention is now adjourned."

CONSTITUTION
OF THE
FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION.

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

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

III. The officers of the Association shall be a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and Assistant Secretary, a Treasurer, and six Directors, who together shall constitute an Executive Committee, intrusted with all the business and interests of the Association in the interim of its meetings. These officers shall be chosen by ballot, at the Annual Meeting of the Association, and shall hold their offices for one year, or until others be chosen in their place; and they shall have power to fill any vacancies that may occur in their number between the annual meetings.

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

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