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Free Religious Association.

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PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION,

HELD IN BOSTON,

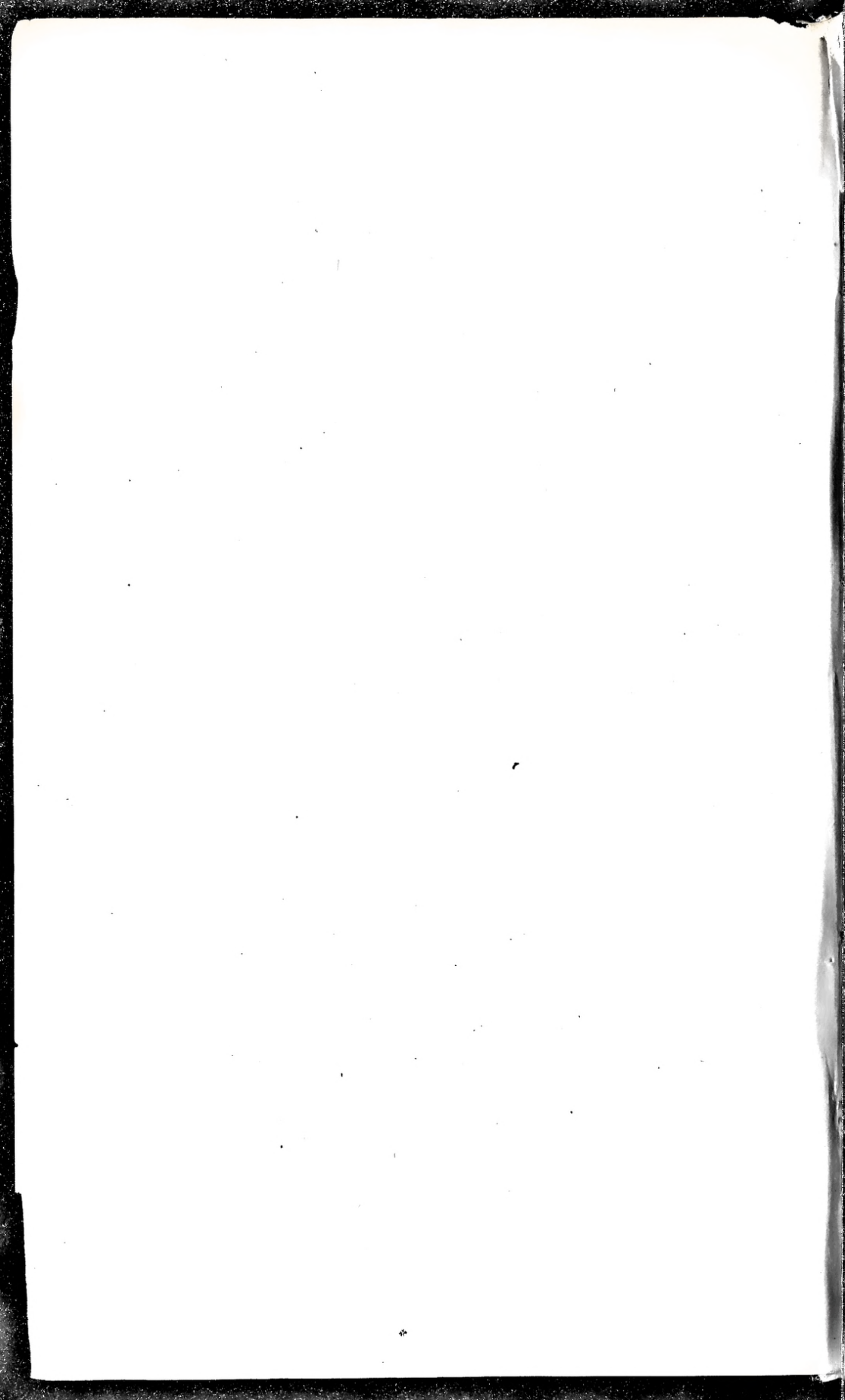
JUNE 1 AND 2, 1871.

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BOSTON:

PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1871.



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## REPORT.

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THE FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION held its Fourth Annual Meeting in Boston, on the 1st and 2d of June, 1871.

The opening session, for the transaction of business and for addresses on the Report of the Executive Committee, was held in the Parker Fraternity Hall, Thursday, June 1st, 7.30 P.M.; the President, OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM, in the chair.

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

The President announced that the first business in order would be the proposition, which had been advertised with the notices of the meeting, to amend the Constitution so as to make five members of the Executive Committee constitute a quorum,—the reason for the change being that, since it now requires a majority of the Committee to make a quorum, and several members reside in distant parts of the country, it is frequently found difficult to secure the attendance of a sufficient number for the transaction of business. The amendment, which appends to the third article of the Constitution the words, "Five members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum," was put to vote and passed unanimously.

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL, Treasurer of the Association, read his Report; by which it appeared that the receipts of the year (by balance from last account, membership-fees and donations, sale of publications, and proceeds from lectures) had been \$2,355.59; expenditures (for last Annual Meeting, Western Conventions, Boston Lectures, publications and correspondence), \$2,694.53;

leaving a deficit, due the Treasurer from the Association, of \$338.94. Mr. Hallowell explained that a considerable portion of this deficit belonged to the lecture account, and was guaranteed by persons specially interested in the Lectures, but not yet paid.

The Report was accepted.

The Committee on the nomination of officers reported that they proposed no change in the present Board, with the exception that in place of Mr. TIFFANY as Director, who wished to be released on account of ill-health, they had put the name of THOMAS W. HIGGINSON, and in place of Mr. HIGGINSON as Vice-President they had inserted the name of JOHN T. SARGENT, — it being quite important that one of the Vice-Presidents should be a resident of Boston. (ROWLAND CONNOR, one of the Vice-Presidents elected a year ago, had already resigned his place on the Committee, having removed to Milwaukie.)

At a later hour in the session the ballot on officers was taken, and the Report of the Committee adopted as follows: —

## OFFICERS.



## President.

OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM . . . . . *New York City.*

## Vice-Presidents.

ROBERT DALE OWEN . . . . . *New Harmony, Ind.*

MARY C. SHANNON . . . . . *Newton, Mass.*

JOHN T. SARGENT . . . . . *Boston, Mass.*

## 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.*

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

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

#### FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

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THE FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION has now been four years in existence, — a period already longer than was allowed for its career by the prophecies of some of its enemies. We do not discover yet any signs of the predicted early decadence. On the contrary, the past year, the operations of which we here report, has been one of increased activity and special encouragement. One of the Boston daily papers, in noticing the printed pamphlet containing the proceedings of our last Annual Meeting, said, "The Report gives evidence of a compact and lasting organization." We are confident that our Report of this year's doings will strengthen this evidence. Our field of work has been materially enlarged; and the receipts of our treasury, increasing regularly each preceding year, have this last year doubled in amount. True, our Treasurer, unfortunately, has to report a deficit. But this is rather because no very vigorous special measures were taken to raise the necessary sum, than because it could not be raised. The Committee were confident that the members of the Association would sustain them in carrying through successfully the proposed plan of operations for the year, and would supply the needed funds as soon as the deficiency should become known. At the same time we wish to say that the Committee would be relieved of much anxiety, and could lay their plans much more confidently and effectively, if their constituents would be more prompt and generous in their contributions. It certainly should require no vigorous begging to secure the small sum of money that this Association has thus far used each year. And the Committee see how they could use a much larger sum to advantage, if it should be intrusted to them.

But even if the Committee had been inactive, the Association might still have reason to congratulate itself on the auspicious signs of the times. So far from being the result of a transient impulse which is soon to spend itself, the Free Religious Association represents ideas and principles that are among the most vital elements of the present age, and that are every year gaining ascendancy among thoughtful and practical people throughout the civilized world. Unrestricted liberty of thought, the



religious recognition of science, the direct application of religion to problems of social and private life; spiritual fellowship on the basis not of creed nor of alleged exclusive Revelation, but of common human aspirations after truth and virtue,—these surely are principles substantial enough to give enduring vitality to any organization that shall be faithful to them. We might indeed specify one single feature of these general ideas and principles, which of itself would furnish a sufficiently solid foundation for an Association like this. We refer to the natural kinship of the religions of the world, which is being historically and scientifically established by the laborious research of such scholars as Max Müller, — an idea which is gaining ground rapidly, and which must in time revolutionize the theology of Christendom. With this idea the Free Religious Association from its origin has been in perfect line. And when to this you add that it respects historic investigation of all kinds, that it is in harmony with the progress of science, that it welcomes the largest and finest culture, that the humane and philanthropic spirit of the age is also one of its inspirers, that commerce and material enterprise are working for it in opening the avenues by which nations and religions are to be brought into a more intimate acquaintance and fellowship, — it is evident not only that the Association has an ample and worthy field, but that many instrumentalities are engaged in doing the work to which it is pledged.

What has been done by the Executive Committee the past year may be summed up as follows:—

#### PUBLICATIONS.

The usual Report of the Addresses and Discussions at our last Annual Meeting has been published, making a pamphlet of one hundred and twenty pages. From the nature of the subjects treated at that meeting, this pamphlet is an excellent representation of the principles and objects of the Association; and our friends, who have occasion to answer inquiries on this point, could hardly do better than to keep a supply of it on hand for the benefit of inquirers. One address in the pamphlet, that of William Henry Channing, on the Religions of China, was considered as having a special interest in view of the present immigration of Chinese to this country; and a separate edition of it was printed. A large portion of this edition has been sent gratuitously to persons in public life who are in a position to influence legislation with regard to the Chinese, — to members of Congress, Editors, &c. More recently the Committee have had printed in pamphlet form the article by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, on "The Sympathy of Religions," first printed in "The Radical." This pamphlet also makes a most excellent statement of one of the fundamental ideas of

our Association. With these pamphlets added to those of preceding years, the Association at present possesses the following publications:—

Four Reports of Annual Meetings.

“Worship of Jesus,” by Samuel Johnson (published by aid of Association).

“Reason and Revelation,” an Essay by W. J. Potter.

“The Religions of China,” by W. H. Channing.

“The Sympathy of Religions,” by T. W. Higginson.

Of the first Report, only a few copies remain; and calls for it can no longer be supplied. The other three are yet on hand, and are still in demand. The matter in them is mostly such that it does not grow old, and many persons who begin their acquaintance with the Association by reading its last Report wish then to read those that have preceded it.

Under the head of *publications* last year, we announced that an arrangement had been made with Mr. F. E. Abbot, the Editor of the Toledo “Index,” by which a certain portion of that paper was devoted to the special interests of the Free Religious Association, and edited by its Secretary. This arrangement was harmoniously continued until the end of the year 1870, and it is believed with advantage to the Association. It was then abandoned, and in place of it what was deemed a better plan by all concerned was substituted. The Association’s department was given up, but officers and friends of the Association agreed to fill the same space each week as editorial contributors. This they do in their individual capacity merely, and not as officers of the Association; and there were no reason to note the fact here except to say that the Association has no longer any official or special department in “The Index.”

#### CONVENTIONS.

At our last Annual Meeting a resolution was passed recommending the Executive Committee to take into consideration the question of holding 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 should deem them practicable. This resolution received early and careful attention, and was finally referred to a Sub-committee with full power to act in the matter. The result was that a series of three conventions was arranged, and held in the West in the early part of last November. For the convenience of speakers, who could not be long absent from their regular posts of duty, the conventions were necessarily put close together in time. But this was decided to be also an advantage from a public point of view, since the meetings from this cause attracted more attention, and the public impression was deepened. The points selected for the conventions were Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Toledo. And at each of these

places most interesting meetings, continuing two evenings and a day, were held. The evening sessions were all attended by audiences large and attentive. And the audiences at the sessions during the busier part of the day were very respectable in numbers and not lacking in enthusiasm. The opening session at each place was devoted to setting forth somewhat specifically the principles and aims of the Free Religious Association. At each of the other sessions some one practical question was considered, bearing on the emancipation of religion from irrational dogma and degrading superstition. The conventions were everywhere welcomed with generous and hearty hospitality by local friends. They were all attended by the President and Secretary of the Association, and by other members of the Executive Committee; and the Committee who had them specially in charge were perfectly satisfied with the success of the experiment. From what they saw and heard, they came to the conclusion that the West is particularly open to the reception of the ideas which the Free Religious Association represents. There are probably a hundred other places where similar conventions could be held, and with the same success. On the intervening Sunday between the conventions, two meetings were held by the Secretary of the Association in Richmond, Ind., where large and intelligent audiences gathered. If some of our lecturers could be spared from other fields of labor for an extended tour through the Western States, we are confident that great interest in our cause would be awakened and great good achieved.

#### LECTURES.

Another enterprise, undertaken by the Executive Committee the past year, was the management of the course of Sunday Afternoon Lectures in Boston, now known as the "Horticultural Hall Lectures." These lectures had already been conducted by individual management for two seasons. They had been widely reported in the newspapers of the country, and had achieved a national reputation. Their agency in the circulation of rational and liberal ideas seemed too good to be abandoned; and, since the individual managers did not wish to continue the responsibility longer, the Committee had little hesitation in accepting the trust, — especially as any funds that might be needed above what would be secured by sale of tickets were guaranteed by private subscription. Ten lectures were given, making a course equal, it is believed, in ability, variety, and interest to those of preceding years. The audiences were large and more uniform than at the previous courses; and, had it not been for the fact of several very inclement Sundays occurring in the series, it seems probable that the course would have fully paid all expenses. There is little doubt that these lectures, if continued, may be made self-supporting. It is a question

however, whether, if the Association keep the management of them, it should not be put into a condition to open them *free*, or nearly so, to the public. There are many persons to whom these lectures would be daily mental and spiritual sustenance, a vital element in their education and life, who cannot afford to pay three or four dollars for the price of a ticket. If some means could be provided to meet the wants of this class, the object of these lectures would certainly be better reached, as well as a better example set of that equal brotherhood which it is one of the objects of the Free Religious Association to promote. And if the plan of these lectures could be enlarged, so as to extend perhaps through eight or nine months of the year, and to admit of series of lectures on some specific topic or for some specific class of people, — as lectures on science for working-men, — their usefulness might be still further increased.

#### RADICAL CLUBS.

One interesting fact of the year has been the formation of local free religious associations, generally under the name of Radical Clubs, in several places through the country. These have no direct official connection with this Association, and are only noted here as one of the signs of the times. They have come, just as this Association from its origin has declared they should come, out of local interest and needs; and they vary in their form and methods somewhat according to local demands. They express, as they should, the free spontaneous sentiment of the communities where they exist, and are not dependent for their sustenance on any missionary subsidizing from abroad. At the same time these local organizations may become very efficient channels through which this Association may communicate with the public, and are valuable aids in forwarding its work.

#### CORRESPONDENCE.

The correspondence of the Association is still one of its most interesting features, and that of this year indicates a growing attention throughout the country to its principles and aims. Letters asking for our publications, or enclosing a dollar for membership, or a larger donation, or making some inquiry with regard to our objects and work, have come from all sections of the Union, — from Alabama, Florida, Arkansas, Minnesota, California, as well as from New England and New York. Our constituency, as shown by our correspondence, already extends through three-quarters of the States. Not a few of the letters come from those who are in connection, at least nominally, with so-called evangelical denominations, but who are believers in liberty, and are earnestly inquiring for the

light of a more rational faith. And sometimes they reveal a strange mixture of the elements in these denominations; as when a minister of a Christian church in West Virginia, having, as he says, just attended a conference of his sect where it was urged and resolved that the members should individually devote themselves more zealously to the spread of gospel truth, sends for a supply of our publications, and for any thoroughly liberal and rationalistic tracts that we can procure, that he may distribute them in his neighborhood, — believing, as he adds, that this is the kind of “gospel truth” needed in this age.

Our correspondence abroad, also, discloses an increasing desire for acquaintance with the Free Religious Association, and an increasing faith in its capacity for usefulness. In England there are movements looking toward the organization of similar societies, and a letter has been received from one who is much interested in these attempts, suggesting co-operation with us in certain forms of work, — as in the publication, in English, of certain portions of Oriental religious books for popular distribution. It may not be practical to do any thing of this kind at present, but this is a hint of what may be.

It was stated at our last Annual Meeting that there was a prospect that Keshub Chunder Sen, the native modern prophet of India, would visit this country, and that your Committee were in correspondence with him, earnestly urging him to carry this purpose into effect, and offering to him the cordial hospitality of the members of this Association. Subsequently he was invited also to give one of the lectures in the course last winter at Horticultural Hall. But he was compelled to forego his hope of coming to America. After his return to India, we received from him the following letter: —

THE BRAHMO SOMAJ OF INDIA; CALCUTTA,  
26th October, 1870.

DEAR BROTHER, — I owe you a hundred apologies for leaving your kind message unanswered so long. In anticipation of your invitation, I had almost made up my mind to visit America after making a short stay in England. But owing to illness, and the urgent necessity of prolonging my stay in England, and cultivating a deeper intercourse with the leading men of the place with a view to insure the success of my mission, I was unfortunately compelled to abandon the idea. Nothing, I can assure you, would have gladdened and encouraged me so much as a visit to your great and glorious country; and I would surely have undertaken a voyage across the Atlantic but for the above reasons. Should it please God, I may do so at some future time. In the mean time accept my warmest thanks for your kind invitation, and my cordial regards for you, the Free Religious Association, and the whole body of liberal thinkers in America. I am sure that, in the fulness of time, all the great nations in the East and the West will unite and form a vast Theistic brotherhood; and I am sure, too, that America will occupy a prominent place in that grand confederation. Let us, then, no longer keep ourselves aloof from each other, but co-

work with unity of heart, that we may supply each other's deficiencies, strengthen each other's hands, and with mutual aid upbuild the House of God. Please take this subject into serious consideration, and let me know if you have any suggestions to make whereby a closer union may be brought about between the Brahmo Somaj and the Free Religious Association, — between India and America, — and a definite system of mutual intercourse and co-operation may be established between our brethren here and those in the New World. Such union is desirable, and daily we feel the need of it more and more. Let us sincerely pray and earnestly labor, in order that it may be realized under God's blessing in due time.

With brotherly love, I am ever yours,

KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

To WM. J. POTTER,  
*Secretary F. R. Assoc'n, America.*

To this cordial and fraternal letter it was replied that, while the Free Religious Association was not a church in the sense of the Brahmo Somaj, and was not organized on any creed, even that of Theism, it was, nevertheless, most heartily in sympathy with all efforts for religious emancipation and reform, and most especially with this native effort in India, which so finely illustrates the truth of one of our principles, that there is substantial vitality in all religions; and that, with this understanding of the difference in our organizations, we could most earnestly reciprocate the desire for a closer fellowship and co-operation. It was further suggested that intercourse by frequent correspondence, and a regular exchange of publications, with, if it were possible, some arrangement for a larger distribution of the publications of each organization in the country of the other, might be the most practicable form of co-operation for the present.

#### RELATION OF THE ASSOCIATION TO SPECIFIC RELIGIONS.

The natural relationship which we of this Association bear to this native reform in India leads us to say a word on the relation of the Association to the specific religions in general; and with this statement this Report may fitly be brought to a close. There is considerable misconception in the community, even among those who are not a little in sympathy with the Association, as to its actual position on this point. Because the Free Religious Association aims to do exact justice to all the religions that exist, or have ever existed; because it invites them, so far as is practicable, to come together upon one common platform, where each may state its faith for itself, and each and all may be treated with fraternal respect and courtesy; because the Association emphasizes the underlying sympathies and agreements which, beneath all differences, are found to exist among the religions; because it asks whether the natural development of these common elements will not gradually wear away the differences and antagonisms, neutralize specific and exclusive claims, and bring mankind

into universal spiritual unity and fellowship on the basis of freedom, — because of all this, some persons seem to think that the Association has seriously set itself to the task of striking out the eighteen centuries of Christian history, and of resuscitating the ancient religions; or that, if it has not attempted this, it has at least proposed to take the things that are true and good in all the religions, and, mechanically combining them, produce a new religion. It may be confidently said, we think, that the Free Religious Association has more wisdom than either of these representations of its objects would imply. It is reported of the quaint English Platonist, Thomas Taylor, that he excited the alarm of his landlady and lost his lodgings, because that good Christian housekeeper discovered that he was making preparations to sacrifice a bull to Jupiter in her back parlor. But, with all the variety of faith and freedom of utterance among the members of the Free Religious Association, we have not heard that old Thomas Taylor has any disciple among us; and we believe that the orderly housekeepers of the established religions, of whatever name, may dismiss all anxiety in this particular. And as to the criticism that we propose to select the truths of all the religions, and mechanically make a new religion of the compound, it is sufficient to say in reply that, if there is one thing which members and officers of this Association have declared more emphatically than another, it is that religions are not *made*, but *grow*, — that there is a natural historic order of religious development, a steady evolution of religious ideas from certain primitive germs, and that the special religions are so many phases and stages of this progress, brought about by the different conditions under which development has taken place. We refer to the old religions, endeavoring to do exact historical justice to each, in order to set forth the proof of their natural relationship to each other, and their descent from substantially the same primitive germs. But this is not to affirm that the order of development is to be reversed, nor that any of the religions, especially the latest, can be spared from the historic line. But neither, on the other hand, do we assume that the order of development has reached its ultimate, — that the religious sentiment has historically exhausted itself, and spoken the final word of absolute religion. On the contrary, we would assert rather that the religious consciousness is as vitally organic to-day as it has ever been; and that, whatever changes are coming in the religious condition of the world, these changes are to be brought about by no mechanical, eclectic combination of the virtues of past religions, but are to be the product of regular organic growth and progress. The Universal Religion, that spiritual unity and fellowship of which we in this Association sometimes speak, is certainly to *grow*, just as much as the special religions have grown. These religions, after having served some

specific purposes in the history of the race, will, as it seems probable, gradually be absorbed by a process of vital assimilation into the religion of universal unity. And we have come to that epoch when there appear very marked signs of progressive movement in several of the world's great religions on converging lines towards a common centre of faith and fellowship. It is this grand movement of the religious consciousness, to which the Free Religious Association (in this feature of its work of which we now speak) would strive in some way to give voice. The Association does not expect to shape the movement: it does not profess to organize it. *It* rather is shaped and organized by the movement. It simply desires in some way to represent it, to give it utterance, to remove artificial barriers, dogmatic and ecclesiastic, in order that it may have a freer opportunity and a more natural progress.

Such, friends, is a statement of our principles so far as, this year, a statement seems called for in our Report, and such the simple record of your Committee's doings. The record seems brief; yet we are confident the work has not been without good and lasting effect. Give your Committee the means, and it can show larger performance. And now, as we come together again in our Annual Meeting, let us renew our vows of zeal, fidelity, and generosity to the cause which is here committed to our hands.

*Voted*, That the Report be accepted, and its subject-matter be open for remarks.

The PRESIDENT spoke of some of the practical difficulties in the way of such an Association as this, so large and free in its scope; but explained how they were gradually being overcome. He also alluded to some of the misinterpretations and criticisms of its objects and principles. Some persons objected that it was not called the "Free *Christian* Association;" but the term "free Christian" would be as much out of place as "free Mohammedan" or "free Buddhist:" *religion* was the larger word. And this Association wished to emphasize the fact that there is common ground under all the religions, and did not propose to set up the special exclusive authority of any; therefore it did not, as an organization, call itself after any of the specific religious names. Neither was the Association, as some seemed to think, a Boston or New England clique. It was American and democratic. Its ideas were adapted to the masses of the people. Its officers were selected from different parts of the country; and he suggested



that it would be well to increase the number of Vice-Presidents so as to give room for a larger number of representative names from different localities.

Mrs. E. D. CHENEY made some remarks on the enlarging, liberalizing influence of one of the ideas of the Association, — that of the “Sympathy of Religions,” — and hoped that the means might before long be provided for putting such ideas into a popular form for the benefit of the class who had not the time or culture for reading the original books. She spoke also of the great importance of educating the so-called working-classes into rational views of religion, as a preventive against violent revolution. The late outrages in Paris, in one of their features, showed a tremendous reaction against the ecclesiastical system, and the latent power of revolt that exists in the human mind against the priestly authority. If this Association could open a free passage for this rebellious feeling, so that it should find utterance in love and joy and a rational reverence for truth, instead of violence and bloodshed, it would accomplish one of its highest objects.

Rabbi GUINZBURG, of the Boston Hebrew Synagogue, spoke of the freedom, both actual and ideal, that belonged to Judaism, maintaining that the Free Religious Association was the natural result of principles which Judaism had taught. God had made man in the image of Himself, — not the *Jew* only, but *man*, — and so the Divine likeness was found in all humanity, the same elements of reason and intelligence in all races and religions. In like manner the moral law, as embodied in the Mosaic commandments, was not for the Jew alone: it was a law for *man*; in other words, conscience was another of the universal elements of human consciousness. And in these common elements of intelligence and conscience he found the grounds of human fellowship and brotherhood; hence he rejoiced in the Free Religious Association, and could join it and work with it.

Mr. OLIVER, of Boston, spoke of the great value of the name, “*Free Religious Association*,” and hoped it would never be changed.

Mr. T. W. HIGGINSON followed in a few remarks on the importance of continuing the kind of work that had been undertaken the past year in holding the Western Conventions, and urged upon the Committee the advantages of having one convention,

before the next Annual Meeting, in New York City. Mr. Higginson's remarks were indorsed by Mr. A. M. POWELL, of New York. Mr. FROTHINGHAM spoke of the difficulties of holding a meeting in New York, but thought they might be successfully overcome the present year.

Mrs. CHENEY hoped that the suggestion made by Mr. FROTHINGHAM as to increasing the number of Vice-Presidents would be adopted; and, on her motion, it was voted that the Executive Committee prepare such an amendment to the Constitution, to be acted upon next year.

*Voted*, That the Chair appoint a Committee on the nomination of officers for next year, and an Auditing Committee. AARON M. POWELL, Mrs. MARIA E. MCKAYE, and ABRAM W. STEVENS were appointed as a Nominating Committee; and CORNELIUS WELLINGTON and HENRY DAMON, as Auditing Committee.

Adjourned to meet in Tremont Temple, Friday, 10 A.M.

## SESSIONS IN TREMONT TEMPLE.

### MORNING SESSION.

The Convention assembled according to adjournment in Tremont Temple, Friday morning, at ten o'clock. The officers were on hand at the hour; but, owing to the noise in the Hall from the people continuing to come in, the meeting was not called to order till 10.25. (At eleven o'clock the large hall was well filled, and even larger audiences were present at the later sessions.)

The exercises were introduced by a brief preliminary address from Mr. FROTHINGHAM, the President. Speaking first of the gradual development of the ideas and work of the Association and of the changes which had been made from year to year in the programme of the Annual Meeting, exhibiting the large breadth and variety of phase covered by the principles of the Association, he proceeded substantially as follows:—

#### ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

The purposes and principles of the Free Religious Association by this time are, or ought to be, well understood by all who care to understand them: that we hold to religion; that we believe in the sympathy of religions; that we are cordial to all forms of religion and hostile to none; that we are opposed to all sectarianism in religion, to all ecclesiasticism, to the very spirit and form of dogmatism; that we aim at getting at the secret of religions, at the kernel and heart of the great faiths that have ruled the world; that we wish to build now into the foundations of human nature; that we wish to reconcile religion with all the other great interests of life, and to show that they are one; that we wish to prove and to make perfectly clear to all men the identity of religion and science, religion and philosophy, religion and literature, religion and art, religion and music,—nay, the perfect compatibility—may I not also say the identity?—of religious life and principle with all the great stirring activities that impel men to build themselves up into grander and nobler forms of civilization. To touch all these questions; to touch them firmly; to touch them

reverently; to speak of them positively; and to use them all, not in any degree or in any sense for the destruction of any thing that is good or of any thing that is true, but for the culture and ripening of all that is true and good,— this, it is perfectly understood by all who care to understand us at all, is our deliberate aim and purpose and resolution.

And so to-day we adopt still another form of address. We are trying to get closer and closer to our central fact. We are seeking to bring our guns to bear more directly upon those great obstacles, which in our view stand in the way of the reconciliation of religion with all these great interests and supreme facts of life. Therefore this morning we propose to throw down this problem,— a problem not of speculative interest mainly or largely, but of public interest, of intellectual interest, of literary interest, of practical interest,—the question of the relation between Religion and Science, which are coming face to face with each other in broad and long lines that cover acres and acres of territory, setting front to front the thinkers and the feelers, the thinkers and the believers; and we wish to make those two great classes shake hands. In the afternoon we throw down this problem,— that religion does not rest on the authority of any single person. We throw down the problem of Jesus, for reverent and frank and generous discussion. In the evening we come face to face with those two great influences of our time, as of all time, Dogmatism and Superstition; and we shall try to get our thought uttered on that matter. The opening essays, you will understand and will allow, are carefully prepared by gentlemen selected for the purpose. They are meant to be thoughtful, intellectual, and as thorough discussions of the questions as the time will admit. The discussions that follow are intended to develop the same subjects under more popular forms of application and address, with a view of interesting a larger number of people. We must have an intellectual principle: we wish it to be understood of all men that we stand upon ideas, that we believe in culture, that we are ready to justify ourselves with thinkers, and have beneath us a rational basis of thought and philosophy. But we do not wish to end there. We are not simply a body of *littérateurs*; we are not simply a company of clergymen in the pulpit or out of the pulpit; we are not a little clique of writers, of speculators, of closet philosophers; we are not a dainty, finespun set of men who amuse ourselves and hope to entertain society with a few lucubrations about the tremendous realities of faith. We mean business. The Free Religious Association means to address itself to the common mind and to the common heart and the common will and the common interest of the world. I believe, our constituency generally believes, that our movement is intended to be, and will eventually become, a great popular movement. We expect to get the sym-

pathies of the working classes of people. If it were not that we felt that the times demand the emancipation of the working mind of this country from all sorts of dogmatism, ecclesiasticism, formalism, ritualism, superstition, we should hardly have undertaken a movement like this, formidable as it is in its burdens, formidable as it is in its toil. No: we wish to put this thing home to the people; and we confidently expect, when our methods are perfected and we can work according to our minds, such a rally from the earnest mind and the resolute purpose of the common people of America as no existing sect commands. And we shall not be set aside from this expectation: we shall say we are disappointed and defeated if we do not in time hear a popular echo to our words. We mean humanity: we are interested in the laboring man, the laboring woman; and we are interested in developing every spark of intellect, of will, of purpose, that exists in the body of our American communities, so that there will begin to blaze before long a great burning fire of popular enthusiasm for a faith that is free, rational, and humane.

I tell you, friends, there is a feeling—I know it living in New York; people in the West, and here in the East, know the same thing—there is a feeling of deep dissatisfaction with the present state of the religious world in America. People are beginning to apply to their religion the same liberty that builds up their politics and their literature. There is a deep-seated discontent. It breaks out in words. It breaks out in resolutions. It shows itself in the desertion of the churches. It shows itself in the abandonment of the sacraments. It shows itself in the neglect of the old sanctities. It shows itself, too, in distant, unintelligent murmurings and mutterings, that threaten something like a revolution. And to anticipate this, to discharge the threatening clouds of their most formidable shocks of lightning, we come forward to bridge over the chasm between the old and the new; to offer a larger sympathy, a grander hope, a more generous basis of faith, to the thinkers, doubters, disbelievers, sceptics, and deniers of our age. This is but a beginning. We are feeling our way gradually. I ask your allowance: judge us not by what we have done in the past, judge us by what we purpose and hope to do in the future. What we have done I could stand here and tell you of, if I had the time and this were the place now. It has been a great deal more than it seems, and the excess of result over the visible means employed convinces me, and convinces us all, that we have struck a keynote, that we have awakened a response; that we are on a trail over which thousands and thousands of men and women are moving, and that the intelligent word alone is needed to crystallize and bring together in vigorous, organic form the chaotic elements that now seem distributed and scattered over society.

The PRESIDENT closed his remarks by introducing JOHN WEISS as the Essayist to open the morning subject. Mr. WEISS pre-  
faced his reading by saying that he had written altogether too  
much for the occasion, but would make selections from his manu-  
script, and ask that the address might not be judged as a whole  
until printed entire in the Report.

ESSAY BY JOHN WEISS.

*Religion and Science.*

I am to speak upon the attitude of Science towards Religion. But  
this subject opens into so many quarters of thought, some of which  
presume a technical knowledge not possessed by me, that I can only  
hope, by selecting my topics, to furnish some suggestions towards any dis-  
cussion that may follow. A thorough treatment of this interesting subject,  
which is beginning to attract the attention of all minds that are more or  
less competent to deal with it, involves more time and more respect for  
details, more personal and experimental observation, than any morning  
platform can furnish. I lately heard of a saying of Professor Agassiz,  
that the amateur reader of scientific discoveries never actually possessed  
the facts that are described: they belong only to the observer, who  
felt them developing and dawning into his knowledge with a rapture of  
possession that seems to share the process of creation. To that just  
remark I add my conviction that the practised observer does not always  
thoroughly apprehend and calculate the drift of the facts which he pro-  
cures. Still, a mere reader of science, however receptive his intellect  
may be, or inclined to scientific methods, is not in a position to speak  
with authority upon various points which emerge from the controversy  
that now prevails between the two parties of Natural Evolution of Forces  
and Natural Development of Divine Ideas; for thus I propose to state  
the matter in hand.

One party may be said to derive all the physical and mental phenomena  
of the world from germs of matter that collect forces, combine to build  
structures and increase their complexity, establish each different order of  
creatures by their own instinctive impulse, and climb at length through  
the animal kingdom into the human brain, where they deposit thought,  
expression, and emotion. At no point of this process of immense duration  
need there be a divine co-operation, because the process is supposed to  
have been originally delegated to a great ocean of germs: they went into  
action furnished for every possible contingency, gifted in advance with  
the whole sequence from the amœba, or the merest speck of germinal  
matter, to a Shakspearian moment of Hamlet, or a Christian moment of

the Golden Rule. Consequently, ideas are only the impacts of accumulating sensations upon developing brains; an intellectual method is only the coherence of natural phenomena, and the moral sense is nothing but a carefully hoarded human experience of actions that are best to be repeated for the comfort of the whole. The imagination itself is but the success of the most sensitive brains in bringing the totality of their ideas into a balanced harmony that corresponds to the Nature that furnished them. The poet's eye glancing from earth to heaven is only the earth and sky condensing themselves into the analogies of all their facts, in native interplay and combination, wearing the terrestrial hues of midnight, morn, and eve. The epithet *divine*, applied to a possible Creator, can bear no other meaning than *unknown*; and the word *spiritual* is equivalent to *cerebral*. *Spirit* is the germinal matter arranged at length, after a deal of trouble, into chains of nerve-cells that conspire to deposit all they have picked up on their long journey from chaos to man. So that when their living matter becomes dead matter, their deposit drops through into non-entity; and the word Immortality remains only to denote facts of terrestrial duration, such as the life of nations and the fame of men with the heaviest and finest brains. If a brain-cell discontinues its function, existence cannot continue.

The other party, which inclines to a theory that creation is a development of divine ideas, is very distinctly divided into those who believe that this development took a gradual method and used natural forces that are everywhere upon the spot, and those who prefer to claim a supernatural incomming of fresh ideas at the beginnings of genera and epochs. The former believe that the Divine Mind accompanies the whole development, and secures its gradualism; or, that the universe is a single, unbroken expression of an ever-present Unity. The latter believe that the expression can be enhanced, broken in upon by special acts that do not flow from previous acts, but are only involved in the ideas which the previous acts contained; so that there is a sequence of idea, but not of actual creative evolution out of one form into another. The former think that they find in the marks of slow gradation from simple to complex forms, both of physical and mental life, the proof that a Creator elaborates all forms out of their predecessors, by using immense duration of time, but never for a moment deserting any one of them, as if it were competent to do it alone; so that the difference of species, men, and historical epochs, is only one of accumulation of ideas, and not of their interpolation. The latter think that the missing links of the geological record, the marked peculiarities of races and periods, the transcendent traits of leading men, are proofs that the Creator does not work by natural evolution, but by deliberate insertion of fresh ideas to start fresh creatures. One party recognizes the supernatural in the whole of Nature, because the whole embodies a

divine ideal. The other party is not reluctant to affirm the same, but thinks it essential to the existence of Nature to import special efforts of the ideal, which are equivalent to special creations: so that the naturalist gets on with nothing but unity and gradation; the supernaturalist cannot take a step without plurality and interference.

What are the opinions entertained by Naturalism upon the origin of ideas, the moral sense, the spiritual nature?

Naturalism itself here splits. One side borrows the method of natural evolution of forces so far as to derive all the contents of the mind from the experiences of mankind as they accumulated and systematized themselves in brains; and when further questions are put as to whether there be an independent origin for a soul, and a permanent continuance for it, — whether there be an original moral sense that appropriates social experiences, and gives a stamp of its own latent method to them, — the answers are deferred, because it is alleged that Science has not yet put enough facts into the case to support a judicial decision.

But another camp is forming upon the field of Naturalism. Its followers incline to believe that all human and social experience started from a latent finite mind, distinct from the structure that surrounded it; and that the movement of evolution was twofold, one side of it being structural and the other mental, both strictly parallel, moving simultaneously in consequence of a divine impulse that resides at the same moment in the physical and mental nature, — an impulse that accumulated into a latent finite mind as soon as a structure appropriate to express it accumulated; that the history of mankind has been a mutual interplay of improving circumstances and developing intelligence, but that the first step was taken by the latent mind, just as the first step in creating any thing must have been taken by a divine mind; and that the last steps of perfected intelligence reproduce the original method and purposes of a Creator who imparted to man this tendency to reproduce them. In this latent tendency all mental phenomena lay packed, or nebulous, if you please; or it was germinal mentality, if you prefer the term; or inchoate soul-substance. The term is of little consequence, provided we notice the possibility of something to begin human life with beside the structure that was elaborated out of previous creatures.

We know that the human brain repeats, during the period of its foetal existence, some of the forms of the vertebrata that preceded it. We also know that when any organ of man's body is diseased, a degeneration takes place that repeats the state of the same organ in the lower animals. The secretion is no longer normal, but recurs to a less perfect kind. So we notice that in degeneration of the brain some idiotic conditions occur that repeat with great exactness the habits and temper of monkeys and other animals. The descending scale of degeneration, no less than the ascend-



ing effort of development, touches at animal stages, and incorporates them in the human structure. It would require a uniformity of degenerating conditions sustained through an immense duration of time to degrade a human structure into any actual animal form, if, indeed, such a retrogradation be not forbidden by the mental and moral superiority which any human structure must have attained. Still, the physical and mental diseases of mankind are significant allusions: they mimic, as it were, some stages of structural development.

When Dr. Howe visited the isolated cottages for the insane at Gheel in Belgium, he noticed that the noisy ones (*les crieurs*, the howlers) could be heard in the dusk crying like animals, but clearly human animals; and he says, "Is it only fancy, or were men once mere animals, shouting and crying aloud to each other; and is this habit of shattered maniacs another proof that all organized beings tend to revert to the original type, like that reversion of neglected fruit towards the wild crab?"

The popular language notices this tendency to deterioration in the tricks of over-sensual men: we say a man is a hog, a goat, a monkey. Some cunning facial traits remind us irresistibly of the fox, others of the rat. These resemblances were the unconscious elements in the Egyptian theory of metempsychosis, or the retrogression of evil men into the animals whose special tricks were like their own.

We cannot help seeing that Nature slowly felt her way towards us, built her clay models, reframed her secret thought, committed it to brains of increasing complexity, till man closed the composing period, and began to blab of his origin.

But how did he begin to do that? Was his social life a physical result of the sympathies of gregarious animals, who defend and feed each other, protect and rear their young, dig burrows, spread lairs, and weave a nest? That, it is replied, was only the structural and physical side of something that had been preparing to step farther. It could not have furnished the germinal conditions of speech, thought, and conscience. Was it because the fox was cunning, that man learned to circumvent his enemies; because the elephant was sagacious, that he undertook to ponder; because the monkey was curious, that he began to pry into cause and effect; because the bee built her compact cell, that he grew geometrical? The answer made is, that these structural felicities lay on the road between a Creator who geometrized, and a creature who learned to see that it was so, and called it Geometry. At the end of that road is a mind that undertakes to interpret whence the road started, and how it was laid out. If you prefer to derive that latent mind from these previous states of animal intelligence, it does not damage the presumption in favor of independent mind. Estimate the animals to be as sagacious as you please, until they

barely escape stepping over into the domain which our reflective words have appropriated, — such as memory, perception, adaptation, causality, also a rudiment of conscience. Even be surprised by traces of self-devotion, like that in the “heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or in the old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs.” Say, if you will, as Rāma said in the Rāmayana, when a vulture died in defending his mistress: “Of a certainty there are amongst the animals many good and generous beings, and even many heroes. For my part, I do not doubt that this compassionate bird, who gave his life for my sake, will be admitted into Paradise.” Believe, if you are a dog-fancier, that in “that equal sky” your faithful dog will bear you company. It would infringe upon my sense of personality no more than to have him trotting by my side in this world. Here he is altogether unconscious how my moral sense sets store by and idealizes his instinctive service, and how I flatter him with imputations of my own self. He licks the hand that extends to him a mood of the Creator’s appreciation of fidelity.

But grant that the Creator derived the latent human mind by gradualism out of all kinds of animal anticipations. The mind thus derived reaches to a distinction from physical structure, and to a subordination of it to ideal purposes, at that point of development where the man can say, *I am*: that phrase is an echo against the walls of creation of the first creative fiat of Him who is I AM. When man finds language to express his sense of personal consciousness, God overhears the secret of his own condition told into all the ears he has created by all the tongues of his own spiritual essence. The mouse cannot squeak it, nor the elephant trumpet it; the sparrow cannot cheep and twitter it, nor can the ape chatter his anticipation that he is about to be liberated into speech and personal identity. All the herds of the animals furnish the physical structure of man with the devices of their strength and instinct, but they have no personal freedom to contribute. A school of whales will yield so many barrels of oil to feed the midnight lamps of thinkers who chase the absent sun with surmises concerning a light that never sets.

Certainly it must be true that the physical and chemical forces which are involved in acts of creation cannot suggest to any parts of creation the previous laws of the Creator. We say these forces reach the felicity of making a man: if this be so, they have made something that is different from their own nature. Man himself betrays this difference as soon as he begins to establish science upon universal laws: it is a proof that he is not only a part of creation, in the natural order, but also the member of a spiritual order, by virtue of which he attains slowly to conceptions

of the laws that made him, including the chemical functions of his various organs. Which of all our secretions could explain themselves? After they have discharged all their duty of nutriment and defecation, they have reached the end of their tether. Could the pancreatic juice, by going into partnership with the liver, kidneys, and stomach, succeed in explaining the manner of its secretion, and how it pours into the duodenum? Can the blood, which is the expression to which these lower functions reach, lift to the brain a report of the way it grew to be red, and of the use of the white corpuscles? Do the countless nerve-cells that weave their telegraphic circuits through the brain — to which every organ sends its message, and receives thence its reply — convert these sensations into something that is not nerve-cell, that is not gray or fibrous matter; do they lose their identity and become deduction, wit, imagination, and synthetic thought? When you can prove that germinal matter made itself, you will be in a condition to show that matter interprets itself. For that is what man does: he interprets not only the matter of his own private structure, but of all organic and inorganic forms. Does matter arm the eyes it makes with the telescope and microscope to overcome its own extension and density? What is it that calculates the weights of the planets, and records the relative ratios of their movements, and announces new planets before they have been seen? Something kindred with the intellect that preconceived the existence of that universe of germs which becomes function, substance, form, and force. "When we see daily how all created things hasten to fall in with the logic of the best thinkers, and to crystallize along the lines which they draw, we know that such lines are drawn parallel with divine ideas, and that science is made in the image of a Creator."

This position of theistic Naturalism entitles it not to be afraid of all the scientific facts that can be produced. If Mr. Darwin could prove tomorrow that we have descended from an anthropoid ape that tenanted the boundless waste of forest branches, we should as cheerfully accept our structure created out of dust in that form as in any other. There is dignity in dust that reaches any form, because it eventually betrays a forming power, and ceases to be dust by sharing it. I am willing to have it shown that I travel with a whole menagerie in my cerebellum: your act of showing it to me shows that neither you nor I are members of that menagerie. We are its feeders, trainers, and interpreters. We act God's part towards it, as he does upon the scale of zones and continents. In us, in fact, he improves upon his natural action by bringing all his dumb creatures under one roof, where he enjoys the benefit of knowing that his motive in creating them is understood and delighted in; so that though saurians are out of date, and he no longer has the joy of

making the mammoth and aurochs, we rehearse the ancient raptures for him, and preserve them in our structures.

“ Thus He dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man, — the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life; whose attributes had here and there  
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,  
Asking to be combined — dim fragments meant  
To be united in some wondrous whole —  
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,  
Suggesting some one creature yet to make —  
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet  
Convergent in the faculties of man.”

“ Man, once descried, imprints for ever  
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds  
Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,  
A querulous mutter, or a quick, gay laugh —  
Never a senseless gust now man is born.”

“ So in man's self arise  
August anticipations, symbols, types  
Of a dim splendor ever on before,  
In that eternal circle run by life.”

I submit to you the doubt whether germinal matter, even if it be called Protoplasm, and then re-baptized as the individual, Robert Browning, could have composed those lines which contain prevision of the whole drift of modern science. Could nerve-cells, nourished by roast meat, revel in those “ august anticipations ” of a state and attainment that depend upon a continuance of our life?

We need be afraid of nothing in heaven or earth, whether dreamt of or not in our philosophy. It is a wonder to me that scholars and clergymen are so skittish about scientific facts. I delight, for instance, in the modern argument which reproduces and systematizes the ancient fire-worship of the Persian, by showing that the sun's atmosphere contains all the stuffs of the solar system, and is its God whose vibrating emanations wake all things to a morning of living. The more possibilities you attribute to the sun, the more exhaustive you allege its creative power to be, to the extent, if you please, of sending the fine ether which courses through the brain-cells, the more correspondent to the solar nature you show that all life-action may be, — the more you help me to my belief in a latent mind as the first term of human existence. You have made that fluent and wallowing sun a solid stepping-stone in the great river of

phenomena, and it takes me across dry-shod, with not the smell of its fire upon my garments, — takes me directly to a Cause for something so glorious, for such a mobile and flaming minister to all things. On the way toward that Cause, if I choose, I can step to suns more distant, each of which is the life-centre of its system and the distributor of germs; but though this pathway may stretch to the crack of doom expected by the theologian, I shall find at the end of it something that sands the floor of heaven thick with suns. Something; not another sun, but suns' Father. I started with an idea of Cause, and now I find the reason why I did, because nothing is uncaused. I get justification for using the term; for it appears to be the language used at length by One who can no longer be content that his heavens should have no sound, and that their voice should not be heard. Latent mind first betrayed its presence on the earth by beginning to grope from effects to causes, to account for things. Thus the mind, like a weak party of soldiers separated from its base by formidable streams, has slowly pontooned its way back to the main Cause by successive discoveries of causes. It is recognized afar off, it is welcomed, and rushes with the hunger of long absence into the arms of comradeship.

It does not disturb me to be told that the mind has no innate ideas; that, in fact, the entity called mind is a result of the impressions which the senses gather from Nature, a body of sifted perceptions; that all our emotions started in the vague sympathy that the first men had for each other when they found themselves in company; that a sense of justice is not native to the mind, but only a consequence of the efforts of men to get along comfortably in crowds, with the least amount of jostling; that the feeling of chastity has no spiritual derivation, but was slowly formed in remote ages by observation of the pernicious effects of promiscuous living; that, in short, all the mental states which we call intuitions should be called digestions from experience. For, supposing this theory to be the one that will eventually account for all mental phenomena, why need one care how he grew into a being who throbs with the instantaneous purpose of salutary ideas, with the devotion of his thought and conscience to the service of mankind, with a ravishing sense of harmony and proportion that breaks into his symphony and song? When a man reaches the point of being all alive, thrilling to his finger-tips with all the nerves a world can contribute, shall he distress himself because, upon examining his genealogy, he discovers no aristocrat, but a plebeian, for his ancestor? If, in fact, he should discover something that had fallen to the conventionality of being an aristocrat, it would, as the world goes, breed a suspicion that something previous had maintained the dignity of being a plebeian. Manhood ennobles all ancestors, and they enjoy princely revenues in its vitality. Must I make myself miserable because I am told that for nine

months of my existence I was successively a fish, a frog, a bird, a rabbit, a monkey, and that my infancy presented strong Mongolian characteristics? This, then, was the path to the human mind, that outswims all fishes in a sea where no fish can live, that leaps with wit and analogy more agile than frogs or kangaroos, that travels by aerial routes to spaces where no bird's wing could winnow. So be it, if it be so. I do not care for the path when I come in sight of the mansion of love and beauty that has been prepared for me. Its windows are all aglow with "an awful rose of dawn." What delicacy of sentiment or imagination can be desecrated because barbarian ancestors felt like brutes or fancied like lunatics? Can the mind's majestic conception of a divine plan of orderly and intelligent development be unsphered and brutalized because the first men felt the cravings of causality more faintly than the pangs of hunger? Causality has reached its coronation-day: its garment of a universe is powdered with galaxies and nebulae, suns glitter on its brow, the earth is its footstool, its sceptre God's right hand. You cannot mortify or attain this king by reminding it of days spent in hovels and squalor, hiding from the treason of circumstances, sheltered and fed precariously by savages. Would you unseat him? Then annihilate a universe.

This latent tendency to discover cause rescues the first beginnings of the human soul from any materialism that would deny its independent existence. It provides the human structure with a tenant, who improves it as his circumstances become more flattering, until both together frame one complete convenience. We do not require a theory of innate ideas to establish this soul upon earth and set it going. All we require is the theory of innate tendency, of latent directions, of inchoate ideas, that pervade this germinal soul-substance just as the divine ideas pervaded primitive matter. I conceive that our mental method and our moral sense were possibilities of soul-germs, but that experience stimulated them into improving action and expression, till at length our idea of sequence and origin, and our sense of right and wrong, have become normal conditions of intelligence. Why not say, then, that they are at last intuitive? But it is chiefly important to accept them as essential elements of a human person, without regard to the method of their derivation. For derivation is not in itself fatal to the independence of the thing derived. It is not among genera and species: why should it be among personal ideas?

People do not like to have their conscience derived from gradual discoveries of acts that turned out to be the most useful or the most sympathetic, nor to feel that they have no inner guide but this inherited succession of selfish experiences. And, indeed, the theory does not account for all the facts. It is unable to give any satisfactory explanation of the moral condition of such men as Woolman and John Brown; of any brakeman or

engineer who coolly puts himself to death to save a train; of Arnold of Winkelried who "gathered in his breast a sheaf of Austrian spears," and felt Swiss liberty trample over him and through the gap.

This theory, that the moral sense was slowly deposited by innumerable successions of selfish experiences, could make nothing of the story lately told of the way a little girl was rescued, who had "wandered on to the track of the Delaware Railroad as a freight train of nineteen cars was approaching. As it turned the sharp top of the grade, opposite St. Georges, the engineer saw the child for the first time, blew 'Down brakes,' and reversed the engine. But it was too late to slacken its speed in time; and the poor baby got up, and, laughing, ran to meet it. 'I told the conductor,' says the engineer, 'if he could jump off the engine, and, running ahead, pick the child up before the engine reached her, he might save her life, though it would risk his own; which he did. The engine was within one foot of the child when he secured it, and they were both saved. I would not run the same risk of saving a child again by way of experiment for all Newcastle County, for nine out of ten might not escape. He took the child to the lane, and she walked to the house, and a little girl was coming after it when we left.' The honest engineer, having finished his day's run, sits down the next morning and writes this homely letter to the father of the child, 'in order that it may be more carefully watched in future,' and thanking God 'that himself and the baby's mother slept tranquilly last night, and were spared the life-long pangs of remorse.' It does not occur to him to even mention the conductor's name, who, he seems to think, did no uncommon thing in risking his own life, unseen and unnoticed on the solitary road, for a child whom he would never probably see again."

The feeling of utility would confine men strictly within the limits of the average utility of any age. Each generation would come to a mutual understanding of the things that would be safe to perform. The instinct of self-preservation would be a continual check to the heroism that dies framing its indictment against tyrannies and wrongs. The great men who fling themselves against the scorn and menace of their age could never be born out of general considerations of utility or sympathy; for each man would say that a wrong, though not salutary to its victim, would not be salutary to one who should try to redress it. Sympathy that was spawned by the physical circumstances of remote ages could never reach the temper of consideration for the few against the custom of the many. You could no more extract heroism from such a beginning of the moral sense than sunbeams from cucumbers. We owe a debt to the scientific man who can show how many moral customs result from local and ethnic experiences, and how the conscience is everywhere capable of inheritance and education.

He cannot bring us too many facts of this description, because we have one fact too much for him; namely, a latent tendency of conscience to repudiate inheritance and every experience of utility, to fly in its face with a forecast of a transcendental utility that supplies the world with its redeemers, and continually drags it out of the snug and accurate adjustment of selfishness to which it arrives. The first act of such devoted self-surrender might have been imitated, no doubt; and a few men in every age, having learned by this means that a higher utility resulted from doing an apparently useless thing, might be developed by a mixture of reason and sympathy into resisting their fellows. But how are you going to account for the first act? How for a sentiment of violated justice, if justice be only the precipitate of average utility? How for a tender love for remote and invisible suffering, for wrongs that are a nuisance at too great a distance to be felt or observed, if sympathy is nothing but an understanding among people who are forced to live together? I should as soon pretend that my nostrils were afflicted by a bad smell that was transpiring in Siam.

This reminds me to ask how any particular odor was first discovered to be nauseous. If the reply be offered, that olfactory discrimination must have resulted from experiences of the effect of odors, gradually acquired, and slowly modifying the organ, I say that the process must have begun in a capacity to perceive, no matter how imperfectly, that a scent is disagreeable. What is that previous capacity? It must have been something that was not created by the scent. It is no objection to this that people differ in sensibility for odors, so that a flower may be disagreeable to one and pleasant to another. If odors create the organ that corresponds to and discriminates them, they ought to appear the same to everybody. But there is a latent perception that varies among individuals, and decides their favorite perfumes; and it is curious to notice how they correspond to mental characters and seem to have a faint analogy with the condition of the moral sense. Discrimination in smelling could not have been originated by the things that were smelt, any more than a man's trail or blood-drip must have preceded and created the blood-hound's tracking. \*

The moral sense to which we have attained by stages must have started from an original tendency to become sensitive to moral acts. We cannot say that the results have established the tendency, any more than we can say that marks of design have originated a designer; that an eye, for instance, developed light, or that light created a light-maker.

The phrases, *I ought*, *I ought not*, are not merely functional, as when a blood-hound tracks, a pointer points, a watch-dog listens through the house. We detect even in the animals a sense of duty in carrying out their instincts, and a deferring to man, as if to a source of the instincts,



or at least to a power that holds them responsible for good behavior. So we instinctively refer our moral attitude to a source of moral law.

It is possible we have reached a moral sense from the anticipatory types of conscience in some animals, by drifting along with them through Mr. Spencer's experiences of utility and Mr. Darwin's social instincts. But a latent mental tendency must have fallen in with that structural drift at some point, else man would never agonize to say, *I ought, I ought not*. Is it any the less divine because it has consorted with animals and savages, and found their company no hinderance to this elaborating of a sense of right and wrong? It is all the more divine, because it betrays conformity with the great order of development, at the same time that it has been forereaching through it to perfect moral actions.

What was the nature of John Woolman's secret satisfaction when he insisted upon non-compliance with the habits and allowances of his time? If conscience be the result of discovering what turns out badly for a person who is living on the scale of other persons, why should he, a tailor, have discouraged the making and wearing of fine clothes; have refused to touch, to his own serious privation, one of the products of slave-labor; have protested, to the loss of sympathy and gain of contempt, against ownership in men? Was he an abnormal variety, a deteriorated specimen, a man whom advantage hurt? Where do Mr. Darwin's social instincts come in? Woolman withstood all these for distant and abstract incentives, and originated, without social and intellectual material, a fresh epoch of moral feeling. The latent tendency attained to liberation from all its previous experiences.

One of the bases of conscience is said to be the intellectual capacity to recall past impressions, to compare them with present temptations, and to decide upon the most advantageous action. Possibly; but it cannot be a *sine qua non*, as we see in the cases of those uncultivated souls who have a new scruple or a sudden heroism. And some of the best intelligences are dull and uncertain in the moral sense. Is it because they are at the same time weak in the social instincts? Some very acute and long-headed pirates of society are fond family-men, love to gather children around their knees, have sympathetic impulses; and, when they are not on a plundering excursion among widows and orphans, as directors of mills and railroads, would be selected to found a society of correct men in consequence of immaculate dicky and domesticity.

The lower senses, by repeated experiment and observation, acquire an unconscious, automatic movement. When the higher senses have passed out of their experimental stages, they acquire a spontaneous movement. In the region of intellectual and moral ideas this becomes intuitive; that is, they attain to a power of looking into themselves, of comparing and

deducing, and also of anticipating other ideas, or at least evolutions from existing ideas, which sometimes lead to the forefeeling of a law of Nature in advance of its confirmation by experiment, — as when Lucretius anticipated moderns with a theory of evolution, of the magnet, and of the constitution of the sun; and Swedenborg divined fresh planets before Leverrier was furnished with the calculus which might have led him experimentally to the fact; or when Kepler saw dimly in his mental firmament the law to which at length the sky responded. This was latent correspondence with the law: it was stimulated by all his scientific knowledge; but when it stepped upon planetary ratios into a new secret of creation, it announced its independence of experience, and betrayed a similarity in essence with the Creator.

Let us now consider if this latent mentality, which reaches thus to independent action, has any chance of surviving the dissolution of the cerebral structure by means of some force, called Vitality, distinct in kind from all the physical and chemical forces that build our frame. Naturalism denies a special vitality, because it is so engrossed with showing how functions develop by the instrumentality of human forces: it affirms that the whole drift of experimental analogy sets against the conception of another force, unless it be one that shall differ only in degree, and not in kind, not in essential independence, not in permanent continuance, from the rest. Observation has lifted these forces to the level of so many functions, till at length it has detected them conspiring in the action of the brain, that scientific men are cautious about predicating the existence of a finer force that comes to use the deposits of the brain-cells, or that is exhaled from them into an independent essence. This modesty is not mistimed, for its singleness of purpose supplies marvellous facts and hints about the human organization which no religion can afford to do without. It is childish to be afraid of their tendency, and weak to declare that they yet decide the question.

What is Vitality? I notice, in the first place, that our common contrast of *animate* and *inanimate* — which means, when we make it, that we believe that the former could not have been developed from the latter — is really only a contrast derived from a general optical impression. We think we see that one object is alive and that another is not, and our sight applies the tests which experience has preconceived as being correspondent to life and to death. But it does not follow that the *origins* of life — which are removed from us by immense duration, and thus far, if they are still going on, by inadequate means of observation — must be distinct acts of germs that exist in a plane apart from the inanimate. They may have been, and may still be, evolutions through forces out of inanimate matter. *Inanimate* may be only latent animate.

But I think we ought to discard this old-fashioned contrast, and substitute the terms *organic* and *inorganic*; for a bit of wood or stone will show, beneath the most powerful microscope, a gathering and shifting of granules, a confused intermingling, that is enough to betray motion at least, and to put us on the track of the suggestion that a primitive ocean of germs was set on its creative way by motion. Nothing then can be called inanimate that contains the first quality or essential towards vitality. But it may be called *inorganic* if its structure admits of passing to no other function. An organism is something that announces vital force or function; that gathers the universal cells, granules, cytods — or whatever you may please to call protoplasmic stuff — into some definite gesture, however faint, and begins to use the inorganic to nourish and sustain its organs.

Mr. Beale, an eminent advocate for a special and indestructible vitality in man, says: "If a particle of living matter, not more than  $\frac{1}{100,000}$ th of an inch in diameter, were made in the laboratory out of non-living matter, — if it lived and moved, and grew and multiplied, — I confess my belief in the spiritual nature of my faculties would be severely shaken."

Why should it be shaken any more than if it should turn out to be true that living matter *originated* the spiritual nature? It is certain that living matter is instrumental in *expressing* our faculties, whatever their origin may have been. Then of what consequence is it whence the living matter is derived? We are not appalled at the possibility that organic matter may be made out of non-living — or, more properly, inorganic — matter. We are nerved for such a result, whether it occur in the laboratory or in Nature, by the conviction that the spiritual functions are no more imperilled by using matter originated in any way, than the Creator hazarded his existence by originating matter in some way to be used by himself and by us. His vitality resides in the whole of matter; so that even if the inorganic be convertible into the organic, or the organic into the inorganic, he has to no extent fallen dead. Then there can be no danger to our mind that may result from either process, or that may receive its material instrument from either.

There is nothing really inanimate in all creation; for the Infinite Life has gone into representation by each of its epochs, from the primordial germinal matter through all its evolutions: no form or result of it can be dead. There is no such thing as death, but an incessant shifting into and out of all forms. The stone arrests for the present the shifting, but it must have a certain kind of life in itself in order to do that, — something that tends to be not long or constantly arrested, that is all the time vaguely tumultuous with its imprisoned particles. If any thing could be really dead, God would, to that thing's extent, cease to be alive.

I have sometimes indulged the speculation that the molecular activity observable in inorganic substances is a degeneration of the germinal activity which is observable in the amœba and other vital stuff. That is, I suppose that the germinal has preceded the molecular activity; and that all stones, minerals and gems, were held positively vital in the original nebulosity, in that ocean of creative germs, which was not inorganic, though it was undetermined. What we call dead matter is the excrement of a germinal universe; but it may still go into fertilizing, and is doing it, perhaps, all the time. It once shared the life of all germs, though it now seems to have become inert and solid merely to build continents for the support of vital forms. The word *inert* cannot represent an absolute fact of death, but only a relative condition of vitality.

But what is vitality in a human structure? It may be only a part of the universal vitality, raised to very high conditions, or it may be a special mode of it; but in either case I do not see why it does not share the universal advantage of being indestructible. "Yes," says the scientific man; "but it also must share the universal tendency of forces to shift into force again when the structure that contains them is destroyed. The man's vitality may still exist, but only in some mode of impersonal force, as motion shifts into heat. When all the known forces are discovered constantly at this interplay, we cannot assume that another force yet undiscovered will be differently endowed." What have we got to say to that?

The only attempt which I have noticed, of purely scientific pretension, at an answer is contained in a paper on Vitality, read by the Rev. H. H. Higgins, M. A., before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool. He says: "The most delicate tests for indicating minute changes in electrical, thermal, and other conditions, have been applied at the moment of death, and have shown no sign. Now it is certain of the forces of heat light, motion, &c., that they are absolutely indestructible: they may be converted one into the other, but they cannot cease to exist. If the vital principle was analogous to these agencies, it might escape in any one of them; but of this no well-ascertained trace has been observed in any investigation of the phenomena of death."

But this statement proves too much. If the tests applied at the moment of death discover *no force at all* in the act of escaping, it only shows that no force at all is discoverable under the conditions of a dying moment. But we know that thermal and electrical conditions exist in the functions of a living body: they ought, then, to be intercepted as they pass away. Where, for instance, does the thermal condition go, and why should it not be seen in going? For it certainly existed just before the moment of dying, and for some time after. This, then, is not a decisive test of the undetectable presence of a special vitality.

This is the question. If there be specific vitality, does it escape from death with the mental contents of the person whose body died, to prolong his identity, or is it only another physical force, though a specific one, with character distinct from heat, light, &c., but still a force that joins after death the unconscious equilibrium out of which it first allied itself to a human organization?

To call vitality specific, and to claim that it is prior to organization, does not answer the above question.

All the steps of modern investigation seem to disprove the theory of personal continuance. Functions of the body which were long supposed to depend upon a specific vitality are now referred to known chemical forces, and are repeated in the laboratory. The theory is pushed from post to post, till it seems to have only a base of moral probability to fall back upon.

Far from undervaluing that,—finding, on the contrary, in the manifestations of personal character a hint of immortality that is superior to, at least, the resurrection of any dead body,—I still claim that Science is not so neutral on this question as it thinks to be. I am quite content to wait for some special investigation of the point, while the co-ordination of all phenomena by mental laws that explain creative acts, and refer us back to a pre-existing mind, show me, with the emphasis of a universe, that the minds which can interpret and spiritually reconstruct the plan of creation must share the nature of the Creator. It is his nature to have pre-existed distinct from his germinal material. It must be the nature of corresponding mind to be distinct from its germinal material, to have been allied to human structures in a state of latent mentality.

I own I find it difficult to conceive how this latent mind was gradually developed out of the structures that passed through animal into human conditions. It seems at first as if the mental quality must have been homogeneous through all its gradations. In what manner could it have begun to be different in kind from itself as it was in its previous animal expressions? At first, in trying to meet that question, we appear to be driven to put up with one of two alternatives: either that the animals have shared independent vitality, if we have; or that we started from germinal soul-monads that were outside of, and previous to, physical structure, but were in some way attracted to all the points of human development.

But I suggest whether there can be any germinal soul-substance except the mysterious force which we call Vitality wherever we see it in the human state. It went into creation allied with all the germs which have subsequently taken form. It carried everywhere a latent sensibility for the creative law out of which it came. It swept along with a dim drift of

the Personality that first conceived it and then put it on the way to self-expression. It mounted thus by the ascending scale of animals, and its improvements in structure were preparations to reach and repeat Personality, to report the original sense of the Creator that he was independent of structure. At length it became detached from the walls of the womb of creation, held only for nourishment by the cord of structure, till it could have a birth into individualism. Then the interplay of mind and organism began, with an inherited advantage in favor of Vitality. Now Vitality, thus developed and crystallized into personality, tends constantly back towards its origin. The centrifugal movement through all the animals is rectified by the centripetal movement in man. The whole series of effects recurs to an effecting Cause.

At any rate, it is quite as difficult to conceive that there were pre-existent soul-germs which could be attracted from without to human embryos, to become their vital and characteristic forces, as it is to frame a clear statement of the way in which independent minds became developed out of all the previous animal and semi-human conditions. How or when could a soul-monad become buried in a foetal form? If such an act could take place, it would break up the inherited transmission of characters; for it is not credible that every door of descent is waylaid and watched by just the style of soul-germs that can straightway be at home and carry on the business at the old stand. It is plain that the whole process of evolution of vitality into personal consciousness must take place within the limits of human structure, and that the child is father of the man.

Could the unconscious form of the embryo select its appropriate soul-germ, and detach it from the world-cluster to absorb and incorporate it through the mother? By what nicety of instinct or affinity could the moment of fertilization, or a subsequent moment of the foetal throb, pick out of some great ether of vital monads just the proper soul-germ, so that each human family might propagate its traits and accumulate its ancestors? It is impossible to conceive of any descent or amplification of vitality except in the direct line of fructification, conception, and birth.

It is not absurd, then, to suppose that each human being started from a finite beginning. He pre-existed only in the impulse of vitality. It is objected that, if he was not an actual essence or monad that pre-existed before his finite structure was brought up to the felicity of receiving it, he could not continue after the physical structure had disappeared. Why not? Personal continuance need not be supposed to depend upon any special moment of eternal creativeness from which the person may have started. It might be early or late: in Judæa, Greece, or California. When a person starts, he need not be imagined to stop until the infinite Personality out of which he started declines to project the

vitality that propagates persons. If there be such a fact as personal continuance, it must depend only upon the impulse of vitality.

It does not trouble me that I cannot put my finger on the period of human development when man began to have independent personality. Who can tell when a child begins to have a consciousness of self, and to say *I*, with a distinct feeling of what his speech involves? Yet at length he is found to be saying it, and to be converting the identity of consciousness into personal character. Ages of semi-human conditions may have preceded, as years of characterless infancy precede, the assertion of personal identity. The men of those developing ages may have perished like ants that swarm in the pathway of feet. What of that, if a day comes that speaks an imperishable word?

That word is, I know Unity—I share Unity—I pass into consciousness of Creative Laws—I touch the Mind from whom my mental method started, and I thus become that circle's infrangibility. My law of perceiving is so complete an expression of the law of creating, that I perceive, as the Creator once perceived, that matter alone could not start with it nor end in it. I know the laws which matter did not make. Then matter did not make my knowledge.

Science does me this inestimable benefit of providing a universe to support my personal identity, my moral sense, and my feeling that these two functions of mind cannot be killed. Its denials, no less than its affirmations, set free all the facts I need to make my body an expression of mental independence. Hand in hand with Science I go, by the steps of development, back to the dawn of creation; and, when there, we review all the forces and their combinations which have helped us to arrive, and both of us together break into a confession of a Force of forces.

Science has performed a mighty work against Theology, in freeing us from its superstitions. We have picked ourselves up from Adam's fall, and are busy shaking that dust from our garments; geological cemeteries, full of dead creatures, speak to exonerate us from the unhandsome trick of having brought death and sin into the world; we shake the tree of knowledge, and woman helps us to shake it and devour the invigorating fruit; there's nothing edible which we do not perceive to be a divine invitation to eat, with a conviction that the great Landlord is not plotting murder to pillage our persons. We feel perfectly safe in every part of the house, and are learning how to promote the interests of the Builder, by clearing out corners that grow infectious, and correcting our own carelessness; so that there is not a slur left to cast upon God. Death is discovered to be a process of correlation and recombination of force; and we detect Heaven's wonderful footprint, that can never be mistaken, in the paths of evil. Only let us know enough, re-enforce every gift with the beneficial facts,

irrigate the whole surface of the mind with law, that our structures may more happily repeat the health that mantles on the face of a universe.

Scientific men find themselves in opposition to almost every form of theology, because the world is: they have no personal motive, and indulge in pique no more than the great system whose movements and causes they express. But Theology has so systematically libelled the Creator and misled the creature; so deliberately substituted trains of arbitrary thinking for the law of Evolution; so depraved God by pretending the depravity of man, to make a jailer of one and a felon of the other; so placarded the spotless plan with whimsical schemes of redemption; and so represented the universal Love, as if it were confectionery to stop the whimper of returning sinners, — that Science might well transfix it with the contempt of a gaze that is level with the horizon, and as brimful hot with the noon-day sun.

When the great observers are accused of disrespect towards Religion, it would be well to remember how long, and to a period how late, men have understood Religion to be something that is brought down by modified systems of Theology, and to be dependent upon an act of faith in them. Science takes men at their word; they point to a number of articles that embody mental propositions; they extol emotional and mystic states, and exclaim, Behold, here is something better than good behavior, better than health, superior to scientific interpretation, — behold Religion! Science, armed with all its glasses, curiously investigates this portent that assumes to be divinely accredited, and cannot discover a single germinal dot, not a bit of plasma that might make one honest animalcule of a spiritual man.

In the mean time, real Religion is busy with moral sense, right mental method, true social feeling, ecstatic vision of the divine order, to appropriate every genuine fact and put it to service in its scheme of humanity. However violently Science may pretend to be hostile to Religion, there is nothing in the world so religious as its method and industry. For Religion, instead of being, according to the old definitions, a restoration of rebellious human nature to divine favor — attained by theological beliefs and emotional practices, by prayer and praise, by pietistic exaltations and homiletic absorption — is simply *the recurrence of human nature to the facts of the universe*.

At first, this definition seems to be a dry, pragmatic one, fit only to express the old function of Theology, imperfectly exercised by it in metaphysical notions about the divine plan and nature. Theology always presumed that its statements represented facts. But Religion, recovering of late from mediatorial emotions, enlists intelligence, arms itself with a mental method that is the counterpart of the divine plan, and casts loose



for ever from the speculations of Theology. Then it assumes the function of indicating realities; and every fact it gathers is a proclamation of God's love, or will, or wisdom, and an invitation to man to be on healthy terms with these attributes. In recurring to the facts of a universe, man recurs most sensibly to God. But this gesture can be made only with the help of intelligence. Facts must be taught and known, not metaphysical contrivances or scriptural formulas. The brain must learn to act upon its own facts, in order to present the world with a body in normal condition to perform a normal work. The relation between the finite and infinite must be found upon lines of forces and stepping-stones of laws, not upon phrases and ceremonies. These weave no features of the infinite into our life. As well might a woman expect by knitting to embroider the zodiacal light upon her stocking. If she croons a favorite hymn of Watts or Toplady over her work, the sky is still too cunning to descend, being content to overlook her patient labor and to light the daily steps of the little feet she covers. Her automatic action is superior, for religion, to all her darling sentiment.

I close by noticing that Science benefits Religion with hints at a more practical treatment for the objects of moral and spiritual culture. The technical results of scientific observation now begin to enrich every department of life, as they flow into the kitchen and workshop, and down all the streets; so that a man may draw at his door health and mental nourishment, and find an alarm-box in every ward that will report whatever threatens sanity and comfort. All the kingdoms of Nature contribute their economical facts, which slowly find their way into social science, into the methods of domestic life, into education and amusement. Man was never so sumptuously served before with things to depend upon. He learns what to eat, drink, and wear, how to ventilate his dwellings and to build his fire. The most inventive minds teach him labor-saving processes, which aspire even to regulate and economize religion. This prompt and convenient way of life begets a desire for facts: we want nothing encumbering the house that we cannot use; theories go into the wastebasket, with a good many superfine emotions that were once thought to be essential to a spiritual life. Sometimes, by picking over the basket, we discover that gifts very dear to the household, legacies of eternity, have been hastily thrown there, in the greed for clearing out all the corners and ambushes for rubbish, to have nothing around that is not portable and ready for immediate use.

This tendency to bring the art of living down to its practical minimum has gone so far that some sources of spiritual culture have fallen into discredit. The newspaper, the lecture-room, the scientific cabinet, the technological school, the special platform, is commended: men crave

exactness and the current intelligence. They long to live creditably in the present, because they have discovered it is the master of the future. And American pulpits have certainly earned the distrust, if not contempt, of the more robust portion of the people, by approaching all the critical moments of the private or public life with their pill, their plaster, or buchu, as they sound the trumpet of the quack before them in the marketplace, to call their livelihood together.

There is something which may be called the vestry-sentiment, that acts like choke-damp upon all natural ideas: it will breathe an artificial compound, or prefer to be asphyxiated. A badly ventilated Scripture is responsible for these moods, which cower over their little pile of smouldering texts, and shudder and protest at leaving all the doors ajar. It is nourished upon phrases in books of mediatorial piety, and drops theatre-tears over its futile feeling of dependence, its consciousness of sin, or faded appreciation of good behavior. Its disciples are the victims of fatty degeneration, when it is their boast that they are nothing but heart. To some of the churches of this want of faith, intelligence has penetrated far enough to excite suspicions that the old phraseology has been outgrown; they are almost ready to espouse the new Bibles of human information and enthusiasm, not quite ready to cast off the damaged phraseology of the clerical believers in miracles and grace: so that they remind one of the garret of the eminent but rather penurious lawyer, which was found, after his decease, filled with suits of clothes, each labelled, "Too old to wear, but too good to give away."

Verbal statements of imaginary relations between man and God, set off with appeals to a kind of average religiosity, compose the sanitary method of such churches. It lets more blood than it makes: precious life-drops of the common people, squandered in artificial excitements, in political compromises, and in the awful campaigns that restore natural religion to mankind.

A better method will set in whenever the pulpit prefers confirmed realities, and looks for them in every province that the wit of man visits,—when the only question it asks relative to any subject is, What are the facts? Let us know the conclusion of the best minds and the most devoted hearts, let us preach the salvation that intelligence reveals. Open wide the door of the meeting-house, so that the six days can wheel up to it, and deposit what the earth and sky manufacture, all the certainties of all the arts, and every emotion that bears the stamp of sincerity.

Nothing can come amiss, if it comes from a quarter where honest hand-work or head-work has been engaged. The whole universe is let down to the level of the preacher's desk, creeping things as well as winged. The voice says: "Slay and eat them, for there is nothing common or unclean

that God has made." Nature has sometimes furnished the pulpit with illustrations: she is ready now to provide the texts and substance also, and to occupy the whole discourse.

But the treatment must be ideal. All the facts, after passing through the technical treatment of the platform, the lecture-room, and scientific session, to receive their diplomas of utility, must come into the pulpit bringing mankind with them, as into a place where separate localities can be seen to melt into one broad horizon, stretching so far that eternity is overtaken and included, and the souls of the spectators are greatly ennobled to perceive that all their little functions build the endless view.

What is ideal treatment? A kind that is neither metaphysical nor emotional. It is not the investiture of subjects with a poetical form, nor the speculative infirmity that broods upon an empty nest. There must be a real egg beneath, for warmth and devoted patience to quicken. The ideal treatment is that deference to the natural law of every thing which puts into it the divine breath. To the pulpit is consigned the task of showing that the earth, the air, the water, swarm with vital germs; that no substance is too solid to resist their penetration, none too thin to support them; that man himself is a compendium of them, and in his soul they find a tongue to express how religious they are, how implicated with the life and love of the Creator. Ideal treatment sets forth the ideas that correspond to every fact and circumstance. It is bent upon proving that they arise in the soul, and are not transitory views, or impressions depending upon the position of the spectator, or digested from his food; that they have a continuity in the laws of Nature and in the persons of men and women, and are thus connected with the moral order, are self-sustaining, and derive no authority from any source save Nature herself; and that the only religious certitude we can enjoy is provided by the harmony between things, necessities, organizations, and the laws of things.

After the Essay, the PRESIDENT appealed to the audience to contribute money for the maintenance of the Association, and said the Finance Committee would pass through the hall and collect the contributions. He then introduced Rev. CYRUS A. BARTOL, D.D., as one of the oldest and most honored friends of the Association.

Dr. BARTOL said that the essay was like the kaleidoscope, which as they looked straightway was enlarged and lengthened out; and they saw it was not only the kaleidoscope of beauty, but the telescope of truth. For himself, he was not anxious to run a line of demarcation between the lower

creatures and man. He did not see that it could be drawn clearly. If there were a place to get into any part of God's kingdom of life and nature a distinction of the finest knife, the universe were chaos, and not a universe. His inability to distinguish between animal nature and human nature was the sign and proof to him that they could not cut off, on the other side, between human nature and angelic nature. The old motto, "The whirligig of time brings around strange revenges," came back to him. They were told, during the long anti-slavery discussion, "Why concern yourselves about these negroes? They are not men, they are apes." And lo! Mr. Darwin, the cold scientific man, came in and showed them that the white man was just as much the kin of the monkey. So they were all in the same boat. He did not want therefore to cut himself off from his lower fellow-creatures, his "poor relations." The man who cut himself off from kindness to them, from acknowledging some common nature with them, was the man who ran the most risk of not being admitted to his rich relations by and by. As he was walking about in the fields, he heard a song that filled the sky. He hunted a long time before he could find whence it came; and it was a little brown bird about two inches long, singing, singing, singing, not tired at all, minute after minute, till he was amazed to understand how the bird could keep it up so. What immense vitality, or what draught from an infinite fountain of life it must have had! It continued that song till he felt God was behind the bird just as much as behind him. Indeed, he thought birds were the best prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, inspired as they were, yet mixed some human will and human calculation with their prophecy; but the birds prophesy, saying, "God is;" "All is well;" "There is joy in the universe;" "Somebody is having a good time all through this creation." The bird was a very unsuspecting prophet; and he would believe him sooner than he would Jeremiah, who didn't sing, "God is cheerful." He was willing to trust God for the hereafter. If he was going to let him go among angels, very well; he did not ask of God any note of hand — he believed in him. But meantime let them treat kindly the relations they saw, those they were acquainted with. He really thought the new feeling that would come through science, and through the religious sentiment, that the lower animals — the horse, the oxen, and the rest — were fellow-creatures (as Burns said the mouse was), when it once impregnated the human mind, would do more for humanity to those animals than a thousand of Mr. Bergh's societies. So he was not ashamed of the long animal train — who should say where it began? — that men dragged after them.

He wanted to say a word in regard to what is called Radicalism and Conservatism. People did not like the word *radical*; but could they help it? They did not make it. It was born of the hour. It was a thunder-bolt

that came down out of the cloud, and they could not get rid of it. It was objected by the conservative that the radical was a denier; but it seemed to him that the radical did not say "no" half so often as he said "yes." He said *yes* to Nature. The old conservative theology had not got over saying *no* to Nature. The first shape it took was that God was too high to dirty his hand in making this world. He did it by proxy. Then there was the idea that he left it to run itself; only, being a little ashamed of his work, he stretched out his hand to mend his ways with a miracle; Nature was a sort of hell he made to hide away in. The radical believed that God, like man, was not concealed, but revealed by his works; and, if understood at all, it must be through his works. Nature was not an eclipse of him; it was, if any thing, a crystal transparency, the crystal-palace of God. The world was God's robe, his living garment. The radical believed what it was reported he said, that what he had made "was good."

The radical also said *yes* to human nature. The old conservative, when he found that he could not clean God out of Nature, tried to put him out of human nature. The radical said, "No: human nature was Nature with an addition; and it was blasphemy against God to decry human nature." He had rather not be, than to be what the old Calvinistic theology had said men were. The man who preached the doctrine of evil as an essence or an eternal thing did not believe in God. Even the Commune of Paris, which had just gone down elbow-deep in blood, was not totally depraved.

The radical said *yes* also to progress. People told them they must respect the past. He would say, Certainly respect the obligations to the past; but as in legislation, so in religion, the question was, not what had been done before, but what was next in order. A friend of his had a pair of horses so large that they had to be fed out of doors, because there was no stable in the town large enough to admit them; and so there were men who would have to receive their spiritual food out of doors till the churches were enlarged: he did not mean enlargement of the pews to make room for a human body to sit down, but such an enlargement as would make room for a human soul to stand up. The congregations were too much bound by old phrases, and by continually worked-over forms of words a thousand or two thousand years old, as if they could make religion out of them. In closing, Dr. Bartol gave several interesting illustrations of the law of human sympathy and kindness, which is able to bind all classes and persons together in the bonds of a true church and a natural communion.

Rev. HENRY IERSON, of England, was then introduced. He said that in his experience he had found that whenever men set themselves off under particular names and sects, and divided themselves from other people, they did mischief both to themselves and others. After a man was ticketed as belonging to a denomination, if he said any thing not in accordance with

the usual language of that denomination, he was looked upon with suspicion. When there was no ticket, men could meet each other as simply fellow-creatures of God; and he presumed that was the spirit of the meeting that day. There were certain old notions that stood in the way, and the question was, What to do with them? It was idle to say that men must live past them; for it was impossible to disregard what had had a history in human thought for centuries, and also had a present living power. It was idle to bow in respect before them, simply because they were old; but what had been at any time a vital power in the world had a title to his respect which he was prepared to acknowledge. He would not quarrel with his childhood nor the methods of his early life; neither would he quarrel with the childish beliefs of the early world. But he could not help trying to find out about their origin, for he had such an interest in humanity that he felt obliged to apologize to civilization for the stupid things people had believed in past ages. In regard to the scientific men of England, he said that their position with reference to these old questions was not perfectly understood there. Huxley and Tyndall, and the other leaders of science, were a long, long way from being atheists, and they would be greatly grieved if any thing they had said had justly and properly brought on them this reproach. But they did not believe in the first chapters of Genesis, and could not help saying so. But they did not generally trouble themselves to give their creeds, because such matters were between the human soul and God. Mr. Ierson was sure that scientific observation was not the root of religion, and therefore it could never teach religion as popularly understood. And the men of science, he said, distinguished between the basis of religion and the basis of scientific fact and law. He counselled those who heard him not to be too anxious and over-eager to define their position, if they were asked to do so. They must make the world feel that they were really impressing some principle upon it, and then the question would be answered for them. They must show the world that they doubted in the first place in order to believe afterwards, and in the second place from the ground of a temperate belief that compelled them to doubt.

REV. WILLIAM H. SPENCER was the next speaker. He took a general survey of the relation between Religion and Science as it had been in the past, as it was at present, and as he thought it ought to be. They all knew how Religion looked upon Science first as a bastard boy, entitled to none of the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness which she enjoyed. Religion hated Science because she feared it. While yet in its infancy, Science came to the conclusion that the earth was not flat, but round like a marble; and then, when a little older, that the sun did not revolve around the earth, but the earth around the sun; and then it grew bold to say that the world was not made in six days. At each of these

declarations, Religion was greatly alarmed for her safety, and declared that Science would slay her, if he was not stopped in his career. She tried to stop him herself by the old appliances of persecution, — the rack, the fire, the dungeon; but each time Science managed to escape and live. The attitude of Religion to Science had been not that of a brother, but that of a cruel master to a slave. The attitude of Science for a long time was that of a cringing slave begging its life of its master. But Science to-day was free. It had emancipated itself from thralldom to Religion. Sometimes, perhaps, it was a little boisterous and arrogant; and some persons seemed to fear that Science would now have its revenge on Religion for her past persecutions. But there was no cause for alarm. Science regarded Religion with cool indifference and was peaceably disposed; but Religion had not yet buried the tomahawk. But since the Church in the past had always been found fighting against truth when fighting against hypothetical science, it would behoove her to keep hands off now. We must be ready to accept every thing that Science can positively prove. Mr. Spencer said that he wanted truth, and he wanted immortality: truth with immortality, if he could have it; but without it, if he must. He believed that Religion needed in this age nothing so much as the scientific spirit that looks facts right in the face; and Science needed something that Religion might give, — a spirit of filial trust in the truth. Science was the knowledge of law, and Religion was trust in the law. They should live peaceably together. He believed that in the future they would be reconciled and harmonized; that each would discover that the other was not its enemy, but friend, and would help each other to nobler development. Disciplined by the experiences of life, they would be joined at last in a true marriage, to the great gain of both.

The PRESIDENT then asked Colonel T. W. HIGGINSON to add his word: —

He said: — Mr. Chairman, I should hardly venture to say even a closing word at this late hour of the morning only that, much as has been said to-day, there are one or two things that ought, it seems to me, still to be said. I think we all felt, during those two noble statements that came from Mr. Weiss and Mr. Bartol, that we had attained what Mr. Emerson pointed out in his first speech here as his desideratum for this society, — “the luxury of a religion that does not degrade men.” And, in the possession of that luxury, I only wish to dwell on one special point which may not have been enough emphasized even yet, — how large a part of that luxury consists in the absence of fear. I know of no religious platform in Christendom except this where men can consistently stand and

say that in their secret souls, whatever happens as the result of investigation, they are not afraid, but ready to trust the truth. Go where you please, you find a creed or a basis of thought which implies the possibility of an alternative, which has an "if" somewhere; and that "if" a terrific one. No matter how sure the theologian may be of his position, it always seems based upon a certain line of historic probabilities; and a discovered variation in the testimony of one human being, the change of a single text, the error of one version, however unwelcome he may think it, however he may shrink from accepting, if he is once compelled to accept it, may overturn his faith. There is always some alternative he cannot bear to contemplate, some fact he cannot look in the face. No man is strong, so long as there is an "if." While the case is open and pending for any man still unsettled, so that some future Darwin or Tyndall may yet disturb it, that man is not strong and he is not free. But when a man comes on this platform, he usually accepts the universe as it is, fearless of results. Let the path of science be followed to its ultimates and bring back any answer, still he is ready to face it. That man, and that type of religion, is strong.

I remember in college days they put before us a book to be studied, called "The Evidences of Religion." It startled me as I have hardly been startled since. What! the *evidences* of religion? the case is still open then; the matter is in court, is it? I, too, am on the jury to decide; I thought that was settled long ago. My mother never told me when she first sung her cradle songs over me in childhood, — she never told me that her religion was founded on "evidences," implying the possibility of an "if" at the other side of them. I never dreamed in childhood that religion was among the doubtful things in the universe. But in college they didn't give us "evidences" of mathematics; they didn't offer us a book treating of the evidences of chemistry. Those were treated as exact sciences, based on axioms or on recognized facts. It was when we came to the "evidences" of religion that the college professors hinted doubts to us of which our mothers never had given the prediction.

I was not quite satisfied with the tone of some of the statements made this morning in regard to some of those great scientific men of Europe. It seemed to be thought essential to show that, whatever their doubts may be, they never doubted God. That is not what I wanted to know. Our friend Ierson thought Darwin and Huxley would feel themselves affronted at being called atheists. Why should they feel affronted if science leads them out so? There is a second question with me, — suppose they are atheists, what then? If atheism is true, who would not be an atheist? If immortality is a dream, who would not know it is a dream? I have no share in such doubts of God or immortality myself. What of that? I



am not starving to-day; but I want to know that there is manhood enough in me, if put in a dungeon to starve to death, to bear it as my brothers bore it in Andersonville. It is not because I am starving now, but if starvation is my sentence, I want to meet it as becomes a man. If I were to be starved of my God by the conclusions of science, I should wish to stand that also as a man; and I believe it can be done. Personally, I do not believe that result is coming; I have no fear of it. But it is not so important to know what is or is not coming from science as to know that, whatever comes, truth is truth and man is man. I would say to the atheist, if the worst come to the worst, — if God be a dream, man is not. If I am never to see the face of Deity, thank Heaven I see all of yours. If I were to have no heaven beyond the grave, it is much to possess to-day; and if man has health and life and love and a June day, is not that enough for infinite hymns of gratitude, even if he knew he was to lie down that night, and sleep to wake no more? O my friends! we deceive ourselves; we wrong our little children, by narrowing in their basis of belief and making them think that unless they can convince themselves thus or so they are hopeless and miserable. Don't shudder if your child reads a scientific book and temporarily doubts God. If you have been to him what you should be, he won't doubt man; or, if he doubts man, he won't doubt woman. Do not frown if he honestly doubts immortality. Teach him to live the life here nobly, if the universe never granted him another day. That is the way to meet science; not by simply asking of it the boon to live, but by so living and so thinking that science is but a part of our basis of supply, and science may come or go and leave us still the same. I have never doubted immortality; but if you have once made up your mind that even if immortality were a dream your life shall not be one, I don't believe that any result of science can be formidable. The only thing that seems to me dangerous in any way in science is that very likely it is going for the time being to substitute a new hierarchy for the old one: a race of conceited professors instead of a race of conceited clergymen; men who teach you to depend too much on magnets and microscopes, as the other side taught you to depend too much on Bibles and prophets. But then this new aristocracy of intellect among our great scientific teachers has the advantage over the old one that the new aristocracy of wealth has over the old aristocracy of power: it may lose good manners, it may lose good taste, but at any rate it has the advantage that it means the man himself, and not the man's grandfather. It is based on something done to-day, and not something done day before yesterday. I say of theology, when it yields place to science, "*Le roi est mort; vive le roi,*" — "The king is dead; long live the new king," — not but I believe that there is a time coming when all the kings shall be no more;

and all the forces of our nature — science and life, heart and intellect — shall come together in a great democracy, with God alone for President. Science will never, can never, take its highest place in this world unless it recognizes its own limitations, unless it owns that the emotions of the heart, and the aspirations of the religious sentiment, the resolves of duty, — nay, even the great pictures of imagination, twin principles with itself, — are yet greater than itself. Science, the best of servants to man, may yet be the worst of masters. But we may be sure that the same development of the race that trained science will train at last all the other faculties; and that the great scientific era of the future, of which we dream, will show also purer sanctities of life and higher reverence for religion than any superstition of the past could conceive.

The meeting was then adjourned until half-past three o'clock.

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#### AFTERNOON SESSION.

On reassembling at 3½ P.M., it was announced by the PRESIDENT, in behalf of the Committee of Arrangements, that, besides the speakers in the programme for the day, a number of persons, scientific men and others, had been invited to take part in the discussions, who for one reason or another were unable to accept the invitations. The Committee had desired that the discussion should be as many-sided as possible, and it was not their fault if it was not so. He then introduced the Secretary of the Association, Mr. W. J. POTTER, who had consented to read an Essay in place of that expected from Rabbi WISE. Mr. Potter first read a brief note from Dr. Wise explaining why he could not meet the appointment, but adding that he was “nevertheless heart and soul with the Association, — with truth, progress, and enlightenment.” Mr. Potter also read short letters, expressive of interest and good-will, from GERRIT SMITH and WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, who had been among those invited, but who were unable to be present. Then saying a few words of the difficulty of filling such a gap in the arrangements as that caused by the regretted absence of Dr. Wise, he proceeded to the subject of his Essay.

ESSAY BY WILLIAM J. POTTER.

*The Natural Genesis of Christianity, and its Relation to Preceding Religions.*

The patriot Kossuth used to strike the key-note of his wonderful political addresses with the phrase, "The Solidarity of Nations." So would I, in humbler fashion, declare as the watch-word for this hour in religious history *the solidarity of religions*. There are certain elementary principles common alike to all religions and native to the human consciousness, which make the soil out of which spring all specific religious systems, all forms of worship, all theologies and faiths. These principles in their rudimentary form are not *ideas*, but the *germs* of ideas. We can give no other account of them than that they are the in-coming of a power that was before humanity into humanity. And just as we find in every phase and condition of humanity certain rudimentary principles of intelligence, which furnish the basis of all subsequent thinking, reasoning, knowing, and impart those universal elements that make science, logic, truth, to be recognized as essentially the same thing among all races of men and all round the globe, so the different religions rest at bottom on a common basis, and may recognize each other by certain universal elements that may be traced back to the natural common outfit with which the human race started on its career.

And these rudimentary religious faculties are subject to the same conditions of development to which the human mind in general is subject; that is, to the natural conditions which attach to all human existence. They do not therefore always develop in the same shape nor to the same degree. As the conditions vary according to locality, climate, period, outward circumstance of every kind, so the phase of development varies. As we find different races and nations standing at different heights of intelligence, of art, of science, of general civilization and enlightenment, so do we find them, and just as naturally, at different stages in religious development. And as we find among every people individuals who stand higher than the mass as statesmen, or poets, or philosophers, or inventors, — the Homers, Newtons, Shakspeares, Washingtons, — so do we find, and just as naturally, those in whom the religious faculties predominate, and who in consequence have a clearer insight into religious truth and can make a better expression of it than the average mind of the people around them; and just in proportion to the force and clearness with which these persons express what the common heart of the people has had hints of, aspired after, struggled after, just in proportion as they realize in word and in life the ideal held in the heart of their nation or

neighborhood, will they be listened to as speaking with authority — very likely with supernatural authority — and be followed as divinely appointed religious guides. For the human mind instinctively believes that Heaven will indorse and commission its best thought and hope.

Hence the belief in supernaturalism, common to all religions, rests upon a perfectly natural basis. The popular mind in an early stage of culture cannot conceive truth abstractly. It catches a glimpse of it and *sights* by that, but cannot bring the truth home to full comprehension until it has put it in some concrete form. From this fact come the vulgar ideas of creation, of inspiration, of God communicating outwardly and mechanically with man, which have prevailed in all religious systems. There must be, according to the popular interpretation, definiteness of locality and persons, visible appearances, real voices, some mysterious kind of mechanical instrumentality between heaven and earth, in order that these wise men and prophets should have such knowledge and power. And so the primary religious sentiment, as it has developed into form and expression through the popular understanding, has everywhere gathered about its career legendary stories, myths, miracles. These are, as it were, the crystallization into which religious ideas have been precipitated in the solution of the common understanding. But go behind these stories, break through the crust of fable and myth, get at the kernel of reported miracle, and, however various, grotesque, and unbelievable the narratives may be, we shall find a thread by which we may trace them back to a common source, and to some germ of vital spiritual truth.

So, too, when we fathom the different religious systems in respect to their higher declarations to their depths, we find, amidst all their variety of creed and ritual, that a unity pervades them all, and that they all express, with greater or less completeness according to the intelligence and culture of the people, the same fundamental religious sentiments which inhere naturally in the consciousness of humanity. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; differences of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." We may say that the stream of religious history, having its source in the primitive religious sentiment common to mankind, and swollen from time to time by an influx from the natural inspiration of great souls, and constantly increased and freshened from every little spring and rill along its path which are fed to-day in the same way as the original spring of all, comes down through the centuries, taking color and conformation, and even more interior qualities, as of purity and salubrity, from the soil of the national mind through which it flows. It takes also in its course different names according to national or local, external or internal, characteristics, — as here Buddhism, there Judaism, and so on; sometimes it is named for persons who have specially

utilized the flowing current, and turned it into new channels for human advantage. But analyze the waters of this stream, and, though there be great difference in volume and power, the constituent elements will be found everywhere nearly the same,—the same vital parts that were combined in the first conscious aspiration after truth and virtue that was ever breathed upward from a human soul. We may apply the modern scientific doctrine of the conservation and correlation of forces to the history of religious evolution. Everywhere is one Primal Force, one spiritual energy, one revealing power, one revelation, coming up from the beginning, now and for ever, through the deep wells of human consciousness, wherein are the springs of Divinity; and these different names, as Hindu, Jewish, Greek, Christian, only mark the altitude to which the revelation has risen or the conformation it has assumed in the Hindu, Hebrew, Greek, and Christian intelligence. Religion is one, and all its revelations natural; religious systems are but higher or lower phases in the natural development of the religious sentiment.

From these general remarks on the unity that pervades all varieties of religion and binds all together by one chain of natural historic sequence, let us proceed to consider the more specific question: How stands Christianity in this order of religious development? How is it related to the religions that preceded it? And, more generally, how is it related to universal or absolute religion?

There has been no more difficult problem in Christian theology for those who make a distinction between "natural" and "revealed" religion than to draw the line between them; that is, to say just how much religious truth the human mind might have been able to discover through its natural faculties, and at what point it was necessary that a supernatural revelation should come to the aid of the natural faculties. The difficulty of the problem is twofold. First, there is a philosophical difficulty. It is evident, and is admitted, that the human mind by its natural faculties must be capable to some extent of forming religious conceptions; otherwise it could not possibly receive a revelation. It must at least have some idea of a Divine Being, and conceive of him also as a being of veracity, before, it can possibly receive and rely upon any communication as coming from him. Again, sufficient dignity and ability must be allowed to the human mind to make it not only worthy of receiving a revelation, but capable of appreciating and using the revelation when received. And so it becomes a very nice problem to draw the line at just the proper point between the natural ability of the human mind which makes a special revelation available, and the natural disability of the human mind which makes a special revelation necessary. Theologians have a good deal of skill in metaphysical tight-rope performances; but in

this case the rope is so very slender that they have never managed to keep their balance on it with much success. The danger is that if the natural *ability* of the human mind be strongly stated, an opponent may retort, "A mind thus endowed is capable of reaching through its natural powers all the truth you claim for a special revelation," — which is the actual objection that has been brought against two of the greatest English writers on this subject — Dr. Cudworth and Bishop Butler — who placed the powers of the human mind so high, in order to show how it was naturally adapted to and harmonized with Christianity, that they were charged with endangering the argument for the necessity of a miraculously revealed religion. On the other hand, if the natural *disability* of the human mind be strongly stated so as to set forth the necessity of a specific revelation, there is peril of undermining the argument on the other side; of which theological crime, a more recent English writer, also of the Evangelical party, has been accused — Mr. Mansel — who has argued that the human mind is utterly incapable of forming any conception of infinite and absolute truth, and so has proved, it is alleged, not so much the necessity of a miraculous revelation as the impossibility of any revelation of the Supreme Being!

Secondly, there is a historical difficulty in the way of those who attempt to draw a line of separation between Christianity and the so-called natural religions, as if there were no natural relationship between them. Historically, whether we regard the contents of the religions or the manner of their origin, there is no such separation, — no gap or chasm across which we cannot trace the lines of natural genealogy and kinship. It would be difficult to find in Christianity any fundamental truth of religion or morality, nay, any theological dogma or opinion, or narrative of wonders, that did not have a parallel expression in some anterior religion. The ideas may be differently illustrated and emphasized in the different religions, and so may make a very different impression; but those that are most fundamental and central cannot be claimed as the exclusive property of any specific faith. The immortality of the soul, the unity and pure spirituality of Deity, the communion of the human soul with the Divine, the superiority of the spirit to the letter, the inner light, — these ideas have found as clear expression in other religions as they have in Judaism and Christianity. The fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man; the obligations of justice, of purity, of probity, of love to the neighbor; the principle of the Golden Rule, the overcoming of evil with good, the intention of the heart rather than the outward act the test of virtue, — these central truths of practical religion found distinct and abundant utterance in various religions before Christianity. (I will not take the room to cite the passages I have collected on this point, but will refer

those who wish for information, and yet cannot go to the original sources, to Mr. Samuel Johnson's essay on the "Natural Sympathy of Religions" read at our last Annual Meeting, and printed in the Report of the proceedings; and to Mr. T. W. Higginson's article on the same subject published in the "Radical" for February, 1871, and since printed by the Free Religious Association in a separate pamphlet; and also to another excellent paper in the "Radical" for March, 1868, by Mr. Samuel Longfellow, on "The Unity and Universality of Religious Ideas.") If we look more particularly at theological beliefs, the resemblance between Christianity and some of the older religions is also very remarkable. Centuries before Jesus we find the ideas of Incarnation, Mediatorship, the Fall of Man, Sacrificial Atonement, Redemption, Pre-existence, Resurrection of the Body, a future Judgment-day, of God as "one substance and three images," — in short, all the paraphernalia of a Calvinistic "Body of Divinity." This resemblance penetrates into parts purporting to be historical narrative. Krishna, in the Hindoo theology, is the Redeemer. He was born, it is believed, to save the world from the oppression of a tyrant. His parents, at the time of his birth, were in a humble prison. In the presence of the heavenly babe the fetters that bound the prisoners were broken asunder, and the cell dazzled with supernatural light; joy and sorrow overwhelmed the unhappy parents. A heavenly voice whispered to the father to flee with the young child across the River Jomuna, in order to save its life. Then the tyrant who had sought to destroy the child, enraged with disappointment, sent messengers and put to death all the infants in the neighborhood. (J. Gangooly's *Life and Religion of the Hindoos*.) I need not repeat the similar story, as found in the New Testament, in the early history of Jesus. There is a striking similarity also between what Christian writers are accustomed to call the legends concerning the birth and *post-mortem* judicial offices of Osiris and Buddha, and what they are accustomed to recite as facts in the corresponding parts of the career of Jesus. Similar miracles, with attesting heavenly voices, are alleged as attending the birth of all three; and after death it is claimed for them all that they descended into hell, and thence ascended to heaven to sit as judge of the dead and dispenser of the rewards of immortal life.

Now, the question comes, how are these wonderful resemblances to be accounted for, on the supposition that Christianity has no historical connection with these various religions that came before it? It may be asserted, to be sure, in spite of these resemblances that Christianity has no *natural* relationship to other religions; that these great declarations of moral and spiritual truth (leaving aside the legendary narratives), though found in previous religions, were yet given by original and special revelation to Christianity. But then the further question would come,

Why was a special and miraculous revelation necessary to reveal these truths in Judæa which were open to all the rest of mankind through their natural faculties? Indeed, the more cautious defenders of a miraculous revelation have yielded this point, and given up all the *fundamental* truths both of morality and practical religion as within the scope of the natural human faculties, retaining only as revealed truth the peculiar Christian scheme of Atonement and Redemption. Bishop Butler, for instance, says that Christianity has two offices. First, *it is a republication of natural religion*. He does not claim that it adds any thing new in regard to our duties towards God. Natural religion, he expressly admits, teaches that God is our Father, and what we owe to him as such. But, secondly, he says, Christianity contains an account of a particular dispensation of God not discoverable by reason; viz., the redemption of mankind (who, as he thinks, are represented in Scripture to be in a state of ruin) through the atoning offices of the Son and the Holy Spirit. And this theological dogma, with the duties of observance growing out of it, is the only thing which Bishop Butler, one of the ablest and most scholarly exponents that Christian faith has ever had, claims as strictly original to Christianity. He would be met, of course, by the whole array of Unitarian and other Liberal Christian writers, with the assertion that this dogma, at least as he understood it, is not to be found in primitive Christianity. But, even if it were, it would be difficult to prove that it is peculiar to Christianity. The substance of the Christian dogma of the Atonement, and something very like the form of it, appear in other religions. Yet it may be true, as Bishop Butler says, that it is "not discoverable by reason," — probably because there is *no reason* in it. There are certainly a good many doctrines in all religions that did not come from reason, and which reason will never indorse.

Another claim for a special revelation in Christianity, akin to this of Bishop Butler, but freed, it is thought, from its theological vitiation, is sometimes made, — made especially by theologians of the Liberal Christian school. The one peculiar word of God in Christianity, not found in Nature, not known through the intuitions of reason, is, it is said, his love for the sinner. A recent learned and popular writer expresses it thus: "Christianity is a revelation of pardon to the conscience, of peace to remorse, of hope to despair. No other revelation says any thing plainly of this; none offers forgiveness of sin. The laws of Nature never pardon. Law, as such, cannot forgive: it can only reward obedience and punish disobedience. No intuition of reason, nothing in the absolute religion of the soul, says more. But, in Christ, God makes a special revelation of his forgiving and saving love. As the mother is more *proud* of her strong, manly son, but *loves* more tenderly the sick, deformed, or crippled



child; as the father rejoices in the virtues of his good, faithful, upright children, has them ever with him, and considers all that he has to be theirs, but yet yearns with a peculiar tenderness toward the poor, half-dead prodigal; so God in Christ manifests an infinite tenderness of pity towards the discouraged, the forlorn, the outcasts, and the reprobates." Now that this passage accurately and beautifully represents what was a distinguishing trait in the spirit and teachings of Jesus may be readily admitted; but is it quite just to human nature, is it just to historical facts and to the Supreme Being himself, to say that the idea of divine pity and forgiveness, however much it was elevated and newly illustrated and exemplified by Jesus, came then for the first time into human consciousness? Where is it that it is written, the Lord "forgiveth all thine iniquities; crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; he hath not dealt with us after our sins"? No intimations of divine forgiveness in Nature, nor in the intuitions of the human heart? Whence then this very comparison with which the writer illustrated his argument? "As the mother is more *proud* of her strong, manly son, but *loves* more tenderly the sick, deformed, or crippled child" — ah! here it is, in the natural intuitive tenderness of a true human mother's heart by which she folds more closely to her bosom an unfortunate child, — here it is, in natural human love, that the Infinite Parent has been proclaiming from the beginning of our race his own pardoning, saving, pitying tenderness. No intuition of forgiveness, of love for the outcast and despairing, in human reason? How was it Jesus himself taught this doctrine of divine forgiveness, but by appealing, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, to the natural love and forgiveness of an earthly father? So far from claiming to teach a new doctrine on this point, he hastened to show his hearers that it was the old revelation of their own hearts.

Nor is it quite true to facts even to claim, as is sometimes done, that Christianity is the first and only religion in which charity and philanthropy have been organized into public institutions. It is true that in the limits of modern Christendom there has been a remarkable development of instituted benevolence. And it is easy to show that all this is in harmony with the life and teachings of Jesus; but not so easy to prove that it is all the direct historical result of his career, nor the exclusive fruit of Christian training. Philanthropy is better organized under modern civilization, just as all social forces are better organized; yet that kind of organized benevolence which gives to the word *philanthropy* its modern significance in Christendom hardly dates back a single century. To no small extent, indeed, the distinctive Christian Church has put itself in antagonism to Philanthropy and Social Reform; and, even in the limits of Christendom itself, the practical humanities of the age are quite

as much in the hands of heretics as of Orthodox believers. But a fact more to the present point is that charity was socially organized to a considerable degree before the time of Jesus, and that Christianity for a number of centuries introduced no great change in this respect. Sakia Mouni and Zoroaster both laid great stress on regular and daily acts of benevolence as an essential part of religion. The Chinese have all those public institutions of philanthropy and mercy which are commonly supposed to be specially characteristic of modern Christendom, — such as Orphan Asylums, Institutions for the Relief of Widows, and for the Aged and Infirm of both sexes, Public Hospitals, Free Dispensaries of Medicine; and, what Christendom, I believe, has not yet had, Asylums of Mercy for the dumb animals. All these institutions, together with Free Schools, date back their origin in China to a time long anterior to the contact of the people with Christianity. The Jews instituted benevolence in their laws, — as, for instance, in the commands not to deliver to his master an escaped bondman, and to extend hospitality and justice to strangers; and, in the still more beautiful laws, that the widow's raiment should not be taken in pledge for debt, and that the gleanings of the harvests should be left in the fields and vineyards for the poor. The Essenes were a brotherhood of charity as well as of religion; taking care of the poor, the sick, and the old, with true fraternal interest and love. The remarkable resemblance, indeed, between this Jewish sect, which flourished just before the Christian era and disappeared so soon after, has led some writers to identify it with the early Christians. It does seem quite probable that the sect was absorbed into the Christian brotherhood, and that the striking resemblance between the two fraternities in respect to moral and social habits was more than accidental. This little sect, departing in some important particulars from the Hebrew faith and traditions, and introducing features that belonged more to other religions, may be, indeed, the historical connecting link through which Christianity was directly joined with the great religious systems and faiths anterior to it.

And this brings me to the point which I have had specially in view in making this comparison in respect to theological and ethical features between Christianity and previous religions. The point is not that Christianity is not superior to those previous religions, nor that it has not done greater service than they in the development of humanity, but that it came into the world by a process entirely natural, and has a perfectly natural relationship to those antecedent forms of faith. As coming later in the line of history and combining a larger number of vital historic elements, it should be by natural law a richer and more effective faith. But the point to which I wish to direct attention now is simply this, — that Christianity, instead of being in any sense a supernatural, or

extraordinary interpolation into the course of religious history, had its natural genesis in the previous historic development of the nations and countries where it appeared ; that, instead of originating in a sudden and marvellous interruption of the natural chain of historical sequence, it was the legitimate result of natural social forces which the unbroken chain of that sequence logically involved. Christianity was separated from previous religious systems in no other way than the babe when the hour of birth has arrived is separated from the mother that has borne it.

But it may be asked, Is there any evidence, other than these resemblances in sentiment and doctrine, that Christianity had an actual historical relationship with older forms of faith, — at least with any other but the Hebrew, which it abrogated? And may not these resemblances, after all, be purely accidental? To show that natural causes were sufficient to produce Christianity, it is enough to point out that its fundamental truths and doctrines have been developed in religions called "natural." But, to prove that there actually was historical connection, some other evidence is needed. Let us look, then, at some of the facts that bear on this proposition.

And, first of all, we must consider the very important part which the Roman Empire played in that great era of history. Christianity originated in the age when the Roman Empire was at the height of its power and splendor. The armies of the Cæsars had penetrated to the Atlantic on the West and to the verge of India on the East ; Gaul and mountainous Rhoëtia had submitted to their power in the North, and the whole coast line of Africa, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Isthmus of Suez, in the South. Before the irresistible might of these conquering legions, through all this vast extent of territory, the partition-walls between races and nations had disappeared : Jew and Greek, Asiatic and European, the swarthy princes of Numidia and the rough barbarians of Gaul, all acknowledged the law of Augustus Cæsar and of Rome. Now this vast political transformation could not have taken place without effecting to a greater or less extent an intermixture of various peoples, and bringing into contact and mutual acquaintance various philosophies and faiths. Not only were the boundaries removed that separated these races and nations outwardly, but the barriers that kept them apart in the inward relations of faith and sentiment were also thrown down ; national pride and exclusiveness were broken over ; people of various religious opinions and modes of worship came to be neighbors, learned to know each other better, and found that they had common wants and aspirations : and so the way was laid over which they should pass to a broader faith and a more comprehensive religious fellowship. Jew and Greek, Persian barbarian and Alexandrian philosopher, were brought together, ready to unite in a more

universal spiritual kingdom. As described by the writer of the Book of Acts, who shows the various elements of the primitive Christian Church, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians," — all these, when introduced to each other, discovered that under their various religious "tongues" they were articulating substantially the same faith, and that each, whatever the utterance, could detect his mother tongue. What was more natural than that the different "tongues" should help mould each other into the language of a new religion? This is but a hint of the religious transformation that must have been effected by the aid of the Roman Empire. Through commerce and travel and emigration, and union under one system of government, there thus came into contact with each other the culture and philosophy of the Greeks, the theological and spiritual mysticism of the Oriental nations, the theocratic and ethical ideas of the Jews, and the practical organizing power of the Romans; and it was by the conjunction and interaction of these different ideas, principles, and forces, that the conditions for the origin of Christianity were naturally established.

Let us now, narrowing our survey, pass to two or three facts somewhat more specific. Of these historical forces that were thus brought together, the three that were the most positive in their religious character were the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Persian. And of these three, of course the Hebrew, with reference to Christianity, both geographically and historically, was the central ancestral power. But it is to be noted that before the Christian epoch Judaism had received tributaries of religious thought both from the East and the West. As far back as the Babylonish captivity, five centuries B.C., the Hebrew religion had been carried forcibly into contact with the religion of Persia, and brought away from the union some important modifications of thought and practice that remained even after national independence was again secured. And in the century just preceding the Christian era, through the migrations occasioned by the spread of the Roman power, carrying Romans and Greeks eastward and bringing the Asiatic nations westward, and especially by the gradual exile and settlement of Jews in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria, Judaism was again brought into general contact with the Persian religion on the one hand and with the Greek religion, particularly as represented in the Platonic philosophy, on the other. From the East many religious speculations were imbibed by the Jews from the Cabalistic writings; and on the other hand there were learned Jews, like Aristobulus and Philo, versed in Grecian lore, who were attempting by allegorical interpretations

of the Old Testament to prove that Moses taught the Platonic philosophy before Plato himself. Nor must it be forgotten that even in Jerusalem, after it came under Roman power, this transformation of faith was going on; and at the period just before the advent of Jesus it was aided by no less a character than king Herod the Great. We must not think of Herod as merely the cruel, brutal tyrant that he is represented to have been in the Sunday-school literature of Christendom, founded on a legendary story of the New Testament. Whatever his crimes may have been, he was yet a man of liberal tastes and culture for his time, and had the laudable ambition to make Jerusalem another Alexandria, — a city hospitable to all learning and all faiths. He especially affected Grecian culture, and made the Jewish capital free to Pagan forms of worship. So that, though the story were true of his killing all the infants of Bethlehem in order to destroy Christianity in its cradle, he was nevertheless, in spite of himself, helping prepare the way for the successful advent of the new faith.

We find, therefore, that just before the Christian era, and even in the limits of Judaism itself, three distinct and representative forms of religious faith had been brought into outward neighborhood, and were acting upon and moulding each other in their inner character. And it is not difficult to trace the contributions that came from each of these sources into the early development of Christianity. Judaism contributed its ethical doctrines somewhat enlarged and spiritualized from the law of Moses; also its monotheistic conception of the Divine Being, which, from the severe Mosaic idea of Almighty Sovereignty, had been gradually assuming more of the character of paternal tenderness. We may find almost all the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer in Hillel and other Jewish rabbis before the time of Jesus. Judaism contributed, too, the Messianic idea, — a transformation of its old conception of a theocratic government; and this was a very important contribution, since this idea became the central mental instrumentality through which Christianity was organized. Persia brought the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; of a day of judgment; of future rewards and retributions; of an irrepressible conflict in the universe between two essentially hostile principles, good and evil, light and darkness; of a Satanic power; and of angels as messengers between heaven and earth. It contributed therefore the scenic conditions of that primitive Christian faith, — that the world with its evil was to come to an end by a grand catastrophe, and the Messianic kingdom through the supervision of heavenly powers was to be miraculously established on a regenerated earth. From the spiritual philosophy of Greece came the conception of the Divine Logos, or Eternal Word, emerging from the Infinite to create the finite world and to incarnate itself

in humanity; a conception from which sprang the dogma of the Trinity and kindred metaphysical phases of Christian doctrine. It was a conception too, which played a very important part in the early development of Christianity, inasmuch as it transformed through a process of spiritual idealization the Jewish idea of the Messiah, and so enabled that idea to keep its historic course even after the primitive Christian form of it — the expectation of the outward reappearance of Jesus — had necessarily been disappointed. It seems clear that it was this transformation of the Messianic conception through the influence of Greek philosophy (which even began to show itself in Paul's view of the Messiahship) that commended Christianity to the western Gentile mind, and furnished the medium for its rapid development in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

Not to go into further details, we may say, then, on this point, that we find very important and central doctrines of three of the most prominent faiths that were anterior to the Christian era — the three faiths that had come outwardly into contact — reappearing in Christianity, fused into one religious system.

And when we consider that these previous religions had severally gathered into themselves the thought and culture of other religions, — that even ancient Egypt and India had probably poured their contributions to the religious wealth of humanity into these streams, — the point of their fusion seems a very central point in the past religious history of mankind, and the Christian era by natural causes is invested with immense importance, and marks a most pregnant crisis in the development of the human race. The spiritual blood of Moses, Zoroaster, and Plato, had met by natural genealogy, and Christianity was the natural product.

Now what was the relation in which Jesus stood to this great era? That he made the era can hardly be asserted in face of the historical facts we have here noted. That he had nothing to do with shaping the elements of the era into the new form of faith that took the name of Christianity would seem to be equally violative of the record of history. The elements were there, brought together by natural causes; but a fusing touch was needed for successfully combining them into a symmetrical whole: a representative person was needed who should actually exhibit the combination in his own doctrine and character, and so become its exponent to the popular mind. This need was supplied by Jesus. The requisite fusing touch was found in his spiritual genius, which happily combined in itself the various elements that were seeking combination in society. He came, therefore, as the natural prophet and spokesman of the era, — came just as naturally as the era itself, and through the same causes that produced the era; and was related to it in the same way as

Luther was related to the Protestant Reformation, as Washington to the American Political Revolution, as Charlemagne to the new departure of government, learning, and civilization in Western Europe in the eighth century: not that Jesus did the same kind of organizing work belonging to a new era that was done by these personages. That was impossible in the limit of the few months he was in person on the stage of history. Paul was rather the representative organizer of Christianity; yet Jesus had supplied the personal magnetic touch that set the elements into the attitude of crystallization. His power was the power of a strong personality, which put existing ideas and sentiments into motion, and furnished them a vital centre of organic attraction. And this he did by presenting in his own thought and character so harmonious a union of the various, if not indeed conflicting, religious elements that were floating in chaotic mass around him. We may say, indeed, that he was himself the product of Moses, Zoroaster, and Plato,— that they and the religious faith their names represent were in a sense freshly incarnated in him; not meaning, however, to imply that he came to his religious ideas merely through a study of the records of their systems. Probably he did not know that such persons as Zoroaster and Plato had ever lived. Had he only reached his idea through books, he would have been simply a philosopher or scholar — not a prophet, not the reputed founder of a new religion. The results of these systems of religious thought entered unconsciously as elements into the groundwork of his being. They were in the very air which he breathed, in the very blood which mingled in his veins. Very likely he had himself been educated as an Essene, and had early imbibed the wisdom of that remarkable sect. So far he was a product of the intellectual and religious forces which produced the age in which he lived. But these forces were thoroughly assimilated to his own mental and spiritual life. He did not regard them as something apart from himself to be studied, — they were in him and of him, appearing in as fresh and original inspiration in him as ever in Plato or Zoroaster or Moses; his personality certainly as much as theirs manifesting the continued vitality of a fountain of life that was older and greater than they, and that was still able to shape itself into new forms of consciousness, and to collect itself in new personal organisms, for ever increasing demonstrations of its power. Thus Jesus exhibited, taking his teachings and life together, a character that combined in fine symmetry the varied elements of this new era of faith; and he became its natural representative and interpreter to the popular mind. The shortness of his actual career and its tragic ending, added to his saintliness of character and to a quality of mind and speech that was at the same time theologically radical and spiritually mystical, rendered it all the more easy to idealize him, and left

the elements of the new faith, after they had once found in him a fusing centre of attraction, free to shape themselves according to their own organic law. Christianity accordingly came into the world, not by a merely outward junction of previous religious systems under the pressure of some strong external force, but as a vital organic process of historical growth, being in this respect like all other natural historic processes that have a real vitality and power.

Now this union of so many vital elements of religious development, drawn from such a wide variety of nation, culture, and belief, and left so comparatively free from external pressure to crystallize into a new religious system (the spread of which was indirectly aided from the first by the Roman Empire), amply accounts for the large degree of catholicity and universality which Christianity has possessed, and for its power of adapting itself in its historical career to a great variety of national life and of human condition. An especially important point in its favor was the exceptional fact that it organically united two race-faiths which had long lived apart, the Semitic and the Aryan, deriving from the union of these two independent stocks of religious sentiment a strength greater than either had shown alone. Christianity has had a capacity for self-development and has attained a power beyond that of any other religion, because it absorbed into itself the vital force of the religious thought of two great races as well as of three prominent and powerful faiths of the ancient world.

But, does it therefore follow that Christianity is absolutely universal and catholic? Is it unlike the religions before it in having no limitations? Will it have power to adapt itself to all times, and to all kinds and classes of men, and so finally absorb all other religions, and all nations and civilizations, into itself, and become the universal, perpetual religion of mankind? I would answer these questions with all reverence, yet with all plainness, anxious only to seek and serve the truth. It seems to me, then, clear that Christianity, both in its origin and in its history, has limitations; and these limitations were just as natural to it, and just as necessary in order to meet the conditions of the age, as were its elements of liberality and comprehensiveness. Not to speak of certain sentiments and dogmas which were attached to it in its earliest phases, — such as belief in demonic possession, in the second coming of Jesus, in the speedy end of the world, and in eternal punishment, which reason can hardly accept now, but which it may be claimed were not absolutely essential to the religion then; not to speak of some moral imperfections which it might not be difficult to point out even in the pure and lofty character of Jesus, but which yet might not have made it impossible for him to have taught the principles of absolute religion, — there was at least



one feature of limitation which was actually essential to the very birth of Christianity as a historical religion, and which has always remained as one of the most central principles of its existence. This is the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, and the recognition of him as such. Jesus began his mission from a Jewish stand-point and with Jewish views; and, whatever may have been his own conception of his mission, the Messianic idea certainly furnished the instrumentality, and, it would seem, the only one possible at the time, for his obtaining any foothold in his nation. The Messianic hope presented the immediate motive which concentrated and organized the various religious elements of the time into a church. It was necessary in that age that the new faith should appear in this concrete shape. Yet so far did this Messianic claim limit Jesus' work that it seems extremely probable that Christianity would have been only a reformed Jewish sect, had not Paul come, bringing a larger element from the Hellenistic thought and culture, and opened the door of the Messianic Kingdom to the Gentile world. Paul with his broad mission to the Gentiles, — a "mystery" of the new faith which the more primitive disciples could scarcely comprehend, — and with his vigorous genius for religious propagandism, which well matched and followed the genius of Rome for political propagandism, saved Christianity from one of the narrow effects of the limitation inherent in the Jewish Messianic idea.

Still, the essential feature of that idea remained, — was in some respects even aggravated by this early adaptation of Christianity to the Gentile nations. For the essential feature of that idea was, that Jesus, by right of his office, could claim allegiance as a specially commissioned representative of God. He was King and Lord of the Messianic realm. And the effect of enlarging and spiritualizing the realm was not to remove Jesus from this position, but rather to magnify and elevate his office still more, until he was idealized into a God. Through the influence of the Greek philosophy, the Messianic idea, as we have seen, was very thoroughly transformed, taking the shape of the Divine Incarnation; yet in some shape it remained as the vitalizing principle of the Christian Church; and, upon the confession that Jesus was the Christ, Christianity was organized and has held its career to this day as a specific religion.

Now this is a limitation in its central organizing principle which prevents Christianity from being the universal and absolute religion, and incapacitates it from adapting itself to all times and all men. Science, scholarship, historical investigation, and a rational interpretation of history are all undermining the idea that Jesus, however much he has been elevated and worshipped by the Christian Church, was more than a man, or that he had any other authority than that which belongs to all sincere and impressive utterance of great truths, or any other office than that of the

prophet and reformer. The very conception of Messiahship, as it has been held by both Jew and Christian, modern rational thought condemns. And there are signs that Christianity has now reached, because of the very limitation of this conception, the limit of its *longitudinal* development, so to speak, in human history. It may continue to spread somewhat further *sidewise*, gaining adherents from people who are on a relatively lower level of thought than are its most enlightened devotees; though the prospect is not very encouraging for it even in that direction. But it seems impossible that it should adapt itself any further to human progress, and still remain Christianity. In the most liberal sects already the "Christian confession" has been rationalized to the utmost it will bear, and the authority of Jesus reduced to the minimum quantity that is consistent with any conception of his official or supernatural position. One step further in the same direction, and he is seen to stand in the line of natural humanity, with no other authority than that spiritual wisdom "which in all ages, entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God and prophets." We have come to the age when it is beginning to be seen that there must be *democracy* in religion. Free, rational, thinking men cannot much longer accept any other authority than that which has its seat in their own souls, and cannot give sincere allegiance to any sovereignty less than that which expresses itself in the totality of Nature's laws and the human consciousness.

And it does not help the matter for Christianity to declare that Jesus is not King and Lord in any such sense as having absolute authority, but that he is only a great moral and religious leader, who by natural ways has come into the position of providential spiritual headship to the human race, — an example and ideal for all future time. For as soon as we place him in the line of humanity, and affirm the natural origin and development of Christianity, we make it irrational and preposterous to suppose that he, a simple man, has the place of headship to the whole human race, or has furnished a religious system to man which is absolutely perfect and unchangeable. No more irrational would it be to say of Beethoven or Homer or Shakspeare, because of their great superiority to others in their respective arts, that they have therefore sounded the ultimate depths of music or poetry or the drama, and given not only specimens, but entire systems of their arts, which must for ever stand as the goal of all human attainment. There is no *a priori* impossibility, nor very great improbability, that a man should at some time have appeared, or should now appear, who, *with reference to his own time*, should rise to such relative perfection in knowledge and character as to manifest no defect, compared with the very highest contemporary standard. But to say that any finite human mind existing in Judæa two thousand years ago,

or existing in the most favorable spot on the earth in this nineteenth century, could come by entirely natural processes to the possession of absolute perfection in spiritual wisdom and character, so as to set a standard for humanity never to be surpassed in all the ages, is certainly a very wild belief. If Jesus had been God, then he might have established the universal and absolute religion. Being man, he takes his place among the workers for God; and his work, however great and enduring in its power, cannot have anticipated and supplied the wants of all mankind for all after time.

Christianity has rendered, and is still rendering, inestimable service to man. So all the specific religions have been useful in their time and place. They all have preserved some truth, and have satisfied some human want. But humanity is now beginning to cry out for the substance of religion, and to care little for the system. The special systems have had their day, and mainly done their work. They have all been useful, but "received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." In other words, in the natural development of religious ideas the specific religions must shed their antagonistic claims to supernatural authority, and put off their mutually excluding special features of dogma and ceremony, in order that Religion itself may mature its finer elements of thought and character, and that men from all countries and faiths may be drawn together in a free, broad fellowship, on the basis of the common allegiance of the human faculties to the law of truth and right.

And the signs are not few that the era for this new order of spiritual fellowship is now opening. And — may I not add? — at the dawn of this era stands the Free Religious Association, ready to voice its spirit, confident with the expectancy of great hopes; its white banner modestly raised, yet high enough to catch the light of the new morning that is breaking over the world, with fresh promise of peace and good-will to men.

After Mr. POTTER had finished his Essay, Mr. FROTHINGHAM said that in the absence of Dr. WISE it might not be out of place to give a brief report of what his lecture would have been if they could have listened to it.

It was his fortune to have heard it when it was delivered by Dr. Wise in New York; and Dr. Wise had said to him that he gave the study of twenty years to this question of the origin of Christianity, a book upon which subject he published two or three years ago. The sources of his information were largely exclusive of the New Testament. His position was in substance this: He did not speak as if he represented the view of the Jewish Church, but his own view as a historical student, and as a Hebrew.

In the first place, he, of course, discarded all the Christian theology in regard to Jesus, or what is commonly called Christianity. He dismissed altogether the account of the Immaculate Conception, and assumed that Jesus was a mere man, and all the stories of miracle as unproven. But he contended for the historical being of Jesus as a person who actually existed, insisting upon it that there was as much reason to believe in his existence as there was to believe in the existence of any other historical person who lived so long ago. In regard to his position, he paid the very highest tribute to the moral grandeur of the character of Jesus. There was a deep and solemn earnestness in Dr. Wise's tone as he spoke upon the life and purposes of Jesus. He believed that Jesus was tried and condemned as an insurrectionist against the Roman power, the Jews who believed in him being too weak to take his side, and the Jews who did not believe in him rather favoring his execution because it secured their position. Dr. Wise went on to say that the story of the resurrection of Jesus had its source in the imagination of the Apostles. He denied that Jesus predicted his own resurrection, or that he ever did rise. His disciples, in their own simple-hearted enthusiasm, gathering about themselves such legend and tradition, proceeded to found their own religion. But the power that founded Christianity, as we call it, was in the soul of St. Paul; and it was St. Paul who was the creator of the Christian Church. With that Jesus had nothing to do. He was a breath; he was an inspired heart; he was as warm, devoted a soul as ever lived; but with the subsequent errors, traditions, and legends that gathered about his name, he had nothing to do, and his noble soul would have been distressed could he have known that such things should have been said about him, and have been built upon his work.

LUCRETIA MOTT then took up the subject in an address of considerable length. She had no doubt that great good was resulting from the free discussion of the character of Jesus, and other religious topics. What was called natural religion was revealed religion, and inspired, as she thought, in the same way as were the great utterances of Christianity. Men were so superstitious, so prone to believe what was presented to them by their church or creed, that they ought to follow Jesus more in his non-conformity. Those who most delighted to honor the name of Jesus had yet to learn the nobleness of his character, which led him to live up to and act out his highest convictions, though so opposed to the traditions of his time. She alluded to the observance of the Sabbath as springing more from a superstitious than a rational motive, and as certainly not resting on the command or example of Jesus. Jesus claimed very little for himself, but was ever ready to bring in the name of the truth, saying that it was the truth that made men free. She held that scepticism was a religious duty,

and that men should question their theology, and doubt more, in order that they might believe more. She would ask those who were so satisfied to rest in the name of Jesus, why they put so much faith in the name without following him in his works, and even in the "greater works" which he predicted? Paul, she admitted, was too much of a theologian for her; but she knew of no warrant that required her to take St. Paul as an authority. She thought, however, there had been of late great advance in liberality even among the strictest sects, and gave some interesting reminiscences of this kind of progress. Her remarks were closed by an earnest appeal for more of practical simplicity and sincerity in the daily conduct of life. She protested especially against the prevailing extravagances in dress and housekeeping, and said that she mourned for the future of the marriage institution and of society, unless plainer and less costly habits of living could be adopted.

Mr. D. A. WASSON wanted to say a few words with reference to the position taken by his esteemed friend Colonel Higginson, who, if he understood him rightly, was ready, if need be, to dispense with a God, saying that if we lost God we still had ourselves. He doubted that. If God be, then he is the life of ourselves, and we ourselves not men unless this universe is divine. If it be bigotry to desire to know that this universe is penetrated with the light of a creative mind, and warmed with the divine blood of a central heart; if it be bigotry to feel a concern for the truth that there is a reality above us which we may climb to, as well as a reality below us on which we may tread, then he wished to be put down as a bigot. No man had the life of a man but in the truth of ideas. As to the subject of the afternoon, he so fully accepted the statement that Christianity was founded on the human soul that he had put the question behind him, and thought they should make haste to arrive at another point. He did not want an extract from all the religions of the world as a sort of universal religion. He tried to get at the root of every religion, and he came to Christianity in the same spirit, because he was no longer jealous of other religions. He thought that Christianity should be judged as a whole, and not simply as it was left by Jesus. It was not the slightest objection to Christianity that it got something from Chrysostom and St. Augustine, and is getting something to this day. He had no doubt that Jesus started a new chemistry; that he launched ideas that crystallized anew, and were built up into fresh organic life, and that Christianity is the result of that building. He had no desire to make dogma, but he wanted the spirit of appreciation that was ready to take up the ideas of the human soul as they have got their expression in that great constructive fact of human history that was called Christianity.

Mr. JOHN L. RUSSELL, of Salem, understood Mr. Higginson's argu-

ment to be, that the life that now is is so magnificent and so replete with every thing that is glorious, every thing that the human intellect and human affections can possibly conceive of, that, if it was proved there was nothing but this life, it ought to suffice. He wanted to insist also upon the point that the nineteenth century is not indebted to Christianity for its improvements. What is called the Christian civilization of this era rested, in his opinion, upon the modern awakening of science; and yet almost every day in pulpit and press it was claimed that we were indebted to the Christian religion for the benefits of modern civilization. It seemed to him rather that Christianity was being moulded and transformed by science.

Mr. WASSON said a few words more in regard to his position, and read a sentence or two, to which his attention had been called, from the Report of the Executive Committee, showing that his criticism with regard to forming a new religion by mechanical combination of extracts of old religions could not fairly apply to any opinions that had been expressed by this Association.

Mr. DEAN CLARKE followed, speaking not so much on the specific topic of the Essay, as on the position and work of the Association in general, in the meetings of which, he said, he felt very much at home. He was in conviction a Spiritualist, and for that reason he liked this broad, free platform, representing religious reform and progress.

Rabbi GUINZBURG spoke a few words in the same strain from his stand-point of the Jewish Church, — said he had been greatly interested in the Essays and discussions of the day, and wanted it understood that he was a member of the Association.

Adjourned till 7.30 P.M.

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#### EVENING SESSION.

The Convention reassembled according to adjournment. The Chair was taken by JOHN T. SARGENT, one of the Vice-Presidents; and the President, Mr. FROTHINGHAM, delivered the following essay.

ESSAY BY O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

*Superstition and Dogmatism.*

The Committee appointed to arrange the topics for discussion at this Convention set apart this evening for talk on the existing power of Dogmatism and Superstition, and requested me to introduce it by an Essay

that should bring the matter fairly before the audience. In performing this duty, I shall aim to be simple and direct. It is, however, impossible to speak of the existing power of superstition without speaking of Superstition itself. It has a long lineage, and is always the same thing. Its power is dynamic: its malignity is in its quality, not in its mass. But its mass is fearful; for it is bounded only by the realm of ignorance, stupidity, and credulity.

Is it proper, some will ask, to speak of an existing power of superstition? Is not superstition a thing that existed once, or exists elsewhere? It is a popular delusion that superstition has disappeared; or, if not, that it has become harmless. This is the superstition of the superstitions. The insane think all insane but themselves. Everybody hates superstition, and everybody hugs it. It is the universal horror and the universal pet, — the confessed foe of religion, and the as cordially clutched guardian of it. It is cursed and caressed by the same devotees. The disease is a mild form of rheumatism in our case, but gout in our neighbors. It is the "fire water" which is ruining the man over the way, but which we take in very small quantities for the stomach's sake, — our meat, his poison. Our superstition should not be called superstition. Would you find the genuine article, you must go to the "little church round the corner." You call at the "little church round the corner," and the well-bred rector refers you to the big cathedral on the square. You hasten thither, and are told with lofty disdain that you have come to the wrong place. The horror you look for is in a synagogue, on the side street. Your search is like the search for the bosom sin. The Romanist enlarges on the superstitions of the Pagans. The Protestant waxes hot, as he describes the superstitions of the Romanists. The Unitarian pours scorn on the superstition of the Protestant. The Theist fastens the charge on the Unitarian. The Positivist declares that the Theist's belief in a personal God holds the very soul of superstition. By general consent, it is admitted that the Positivist has cleared himself from the aspersion; and, by general consent, it is agreed that the Positivist is an unhappy creature, who has got rid of his devils indeed, but at the expense of getting rid of his angels.

The inference would be, then, that Superstition is commensurate with Supernaturalism. Not quite. Supernaturalism thinks of a Being who comprehends, overawes, presides over the natural universe, or a principle that is not exhausted by an organic universe. Superstition describes this Being as directly interfering as ruler and director. The finest minds may point to the Supernatural; only the coarser are infested with Superstition. It is a familiar saying, that Ignorance is the mother of Superstition. It would be hard to say that Ignorance was the mother of Supernaturalism.

No one by searching, perhaps, can find out God. But very little searching suffices to reveal that God is not whimsical or capricious like ourselves. . . . at is the whole history of the intellectual progress of the world but one long struggle of the intellect of man to emancipate itself from the deceptions of Nature? Millions of prayers have been vainly breathed to what we now know were inexorable laws. Only after ages of toil did the mind of man emancipate itself from those deadly errors, the deceptive appearances of Nature, to which the long infancy of Humanity is universally doomed." (Lecky's *Morals*, i. 56.) It used to be thought that Africa was a land of monsters, serpents large enough to stop armies, and men without heads; that golden apples grew in Spain; that giants and enchantresses lived in Sicily; that a cave on the shore of the Black Sea was the mouth of hell. The Roman legions and the travelling merchants made these phantoms vanish. The Australians have an evil demon named Koin, who tries to strangle them in their sleep. He never comes, except when they have been gorging themselves with food. He is the nightmare of an overloaded stomach. If you want to reach the heart of this subject without pains, open the first volume of Mr. Buckle's "History of Civilization" at the 269th page, and you will find matter for profound reflection. There is the whole case in a nutshell. There is the clear statement, fortified by hosts of references and illustrated by facts in every field, that Superstition is simply the child of Ignorance. There you will read that so simple a process as the draining of marshy land cleared the brains of Englishmen of their notions of a special providence in chills and fever, while the same Englishmen pray for wet or dry weather because they have not discovered the laws that control the fall of rain. The discovery of those laws will still further limit the domain of the Supernatural.

A vast area of mind was purged of superstition by the science which discovered the law of the eclipse. An Athenian general, Nikias, fearing to risk a battle at the time of a lunar eclipse, allowed himself and his army of forty thousand men to be either slain or taken prisoners. In the tenth century an entire army suddenly became demoralized, and was dissipated, by an eclipse of the sun. I am acquainted with persons who will on no account see the new moon over the left shoulder; and a very elegant woman calmly told me, the other day, that her misfortunes were due to her having been born under an evil star. She knew some things better than she knew Astronomy.

Religion is the last hiding-place of Superstition, for it is the last region that Science invades. Into the world of imagination, sentiment, feeling, into the world of pure speculation, of awe, wonder, and mystery, knowledge penetrates slowly. There the chemist, the naturalist, the astron-



omer, the meteorologist, the physicist, are at fault. The physiologist is just beginning to probe the secrets of the nervous organization, and to disturb the bats we thought were spirits. How Draper and Maudesley make them fly! What simple and sufficient answers to the questions of the superstitious are elicited by the medical cross-questioning of the brain! How sweetly the Divine Order comes in and occupies the wild territory which fancy had peopled with spirits! How magnificent the avenues of Law, that stretch away into the invisible regions that had once been the dwelling-places and play-grounds of the wilful gods! Special providences become general, and general providences move with shut eyelids. Gods merge in God, and God loses individuality and fades away into spacelessness until conscious Law is King of kings. We must of course discriminate. Supernaturalism implies reliance on supernatural powers, not belief in supernatural things. Believe as you will about heaven and hell, imps and angels, so long as you expect from them neither help nor harm you may be irrational, but you are not superstitious. Religion finds it hard to discard the word *supernatural*, but the rational Theist has no difficulty in clearing his mind of every vestige of superstition. The God he worships rules, but never interferes; presides, but never intrudes; enacts laws, but never breaks them. Theodore Parker was an immense believer in God and immortality; but the charge of superstition could no more be fixed on him than on Humboldt.

To most people, the spiritual world is still the abode of spectres. If you want examples of pure superstition, you must go to Religion. There are people who will not start an enterprise on Friday, but we laugh at them. There are people who will give up a journey if a black cat crosses their path, but they laugh grimly at themselves. Thousands of people rejoice in their fear to travel on Sunday. Thousands think their journey will be more prosperous, if before starting they utter a prayer.

Six hundred years ago, St. Francis d'Assisi, kneeling in his little chapel, had a vision. The Virgin and her Son appeared to him, thanked him for his great services to the church, and begged him to mention any small favor they could render him as a token of their gratitude. Francis, bowed down by the condescension and oppressed with humbleness, merely asked that all who, from that time forward, should confess and partake of the Mass in that particular chapel, might have all their sins forgiven. The request, though too insignificant to be spoken of, was granted. But to make it more worthy of such a petitioner and such a giver, the trifling privilege was extended to the churches of the Franciscan order throughout the world. On a day in last August the Church of St. Francis, in New York, was crowded from morning till night with pious souls who were anxious to get a few centuries of their allotted purgatory wiped off.

Archbishop Manning, who is spoken of as a promising candidate for the papacy, if the present incumbent ever leaves it, gravely justifies the practice of trading in celestial real estate, which so shocked Wycliffe and Huss, and at length outraged Europe into Protestantism.

The rite of Baptism shows a pure case of superstition. The Indian "medicine man" muttered a formula over a gourd filled with water from a neighboring fountain, and sprinkled it on his sick patient. The Peruvian, after confessing his sin, bathed in the nearest running stream, and said: "O thou river! receive the sins I have this day confessed unto the sun; carry them down to the sea, and let them never more appear." The Aztecs began their order of baptism thus: "O child! receive the water of the Lord of the world, which is our life; it is to wash and to purify; may these drops remove the sin which was given to thee before the creation of the world,"—and in conclusion the priest said: "Now he is born anew and liveth anew, now is he purified and cleansed, now our mother the water again bringeth him into the world." When the Romish priests saw the ceremony, they thought the old Enemy had been at work, and crossed themselves with holy water more devoutly than ever.

The Episcopal priest, before applying the water, prays that God will "grant to the child that thing which by nature he cannot have," will "wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost;" and, after applying the water, declares the child to be regenerate. Was ever Pagan suckled in a more fantastical creed than this? When the superstition vanishes from the rite, and it becomes a simple observance of sentiment, nobody cares about it.

The Communion is another instance of unmitigated superstition. See that morsel of bread. It was ripened in the field, harvested, ground, kneaded, baked in an oven,—touch it, taste it, it is bread, and nothing more. Consider this wine in the goblet. It was grown in a vineyard, imported in a vessel, bought at a grocer's shop. It differs from ordinary wine only in not being so good. But, on the utterance of certain words in a religious service, the substance is transformed. What seems bread becomes God's body. What seems wine becomes God's blood. The mouthful and the sip pass the Lord of the world into the soul through the gateway of the lips. The Divine Intervention is pledged to come in at every utterance of the charmed words, and pack the living Godhead into a thin wafer that would not stay the hunger of a child. The natural mind calls this blasphemous nonsense. The supernatural mind calls it divine mystery.

The English Book of Common Prayer affirms that "the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful

in the Lord's Supper." "Grant us," the priest implores,—"grant us so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood." When Zwingli took out the poison by declaring that the Supper was simply a memorial observance, it dropped into disuse. Without the superstition, it was nothing. Take away the miracle, and you take away the meaning. Yet a leading Unitarian divine declares that instituted Christianity cannot survive the neglect of the Communion!

Protestants can boast of superstitions every whit as pure as those of Romanism. "Zion's Herald" stands by the statement that the earth will explode sooner than the truth that earthquakes and other natural convulsions are caused by human sin. The Presbyterians in Philadelphia lately put on record their conviction that the hideous woes that afflict France are a doom passed on the nation by the Protestant God to pay for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Such nonsense is the despair of history and the confusion of reason. The vulgar idea of prayer is saturated with superstition. "Prayer," says an "Orthodox" divine, "is the rope up in the belfry: we pull it, and it rings the bell in heaven." Says another: "Jesus, the high treasurer in heaven, knows every letter of his Father's handwriting, and can never be imposed upon by any forged note. He will always honor his Father's bills." Said another dealer in pious imagery: "When a pump is frequently used, the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high. But if the pump has not been used for a long time, the water gets low, and you must pump a long while to get it. So with prayer." Here is natural superstition for you! Bell-ropes, pump-handles, and promises to pay on demand! The ropes rattle, the pumps suck, the promises to pay wait for indorsement. To the spiritually minded this rusty machinery is disgusting. But finer machinery will still be machinery. Substitute for the bell-rope the sigh or the tear, for the pump-handle meditation, for the promissory note the temper of trust,—the difficulty still remains. Mechanism is mechanism, whether it be the turning of a mill, or the tapping of a telegraph wire. It is as rational to pray for rain as for righteousness; for a favoring gale to speed your ship as for a breath of the Holy Spirit to revive your soul. It is equally superstitious to pray for life, and to pray for a willingness to lay life down. The superstition lasts so long as the notion lasts that we can have any gift for the asking; that we can obtain any single good thing without conforming to the vital conditions; that wishing, however earnest, can dispense with willing; that the rule, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat," may, under any circumstances, be suspended; that any part of creation, any realm of being, is uncontrolled by law. Superstition

disappears when the conviction comes in that we must earn what we would have. · Jeremy Taylor assigns so many *conditions* of acceptable prayer, that the *ceremony* of praying may be omitted. The work is done before the supplication begins. If to be successful, prayer must be intelligent, sincere, earnest, humble; if all good desires must precede it, and all sweet tempers and noble dispositions must accompany it, and the grandest resolutions must fortify it, — in other words, if every thing you pray for must be presupposed before you pray, why pray? The time is coming when men will *not* pray for natural or spiritual gifts; when it will be seen that all such prayers have been breathed in vain to inexorable laws. Read John Weiss's chapter on "False and True Praying," in his new book on "American Religion;" shame yourselves by the reading out of the superstition of praying for things which, if you really desire, you will earn; and, by studying that and other chapters, educate yourselves into the clearest ideas about rational religion that have ever been printed.

While present views of Providence last, Christians cannot look down on Pagans. The augurs and soothsayers are their brothers. While the present idolatry of the Bible lasts, Christians cannot look intelligent heathens in the face. "See that Christian missionary," said a Hindu to his companion, — "see that Christian missionary carrying his god under his arm." There is a pure fetich: a book of charms; a miracle-working product of the printing-press. The Bible Society turns it out by the hundred thousand copies, — always in one volume; always broken up in chapters and verses; no spurious parts omitted; no apocryphal part put in; no mistranslating corrected; no dark texts explained; no intelligent classification of books allowed; no vowel points changed. That the volume should be *understood* is not essential. It is not necessary even that it should be read. It must be distributed and possessed. It is scattered among the heathen by shiploads; it is left at the doors of people who cannot read; there is a copy in every room of your hotel; the saloon of every steamboat has one or more; the traveller puts it in his trunk as a talisman; the soldier puts it in his breast-pocket to ward off the bullet, or stay the bayonet thrust (which it sometimes does), the undisturbed presence of the book in the pocket being thought sufficient to insure its virtue. To read a chapter every morning, without asking what it means, will keep off the devils for the day. Devout people open it at random, and find a divine oracle in the text that first meets the eye. If a child flings the book down and kicks it, the resources of parental discipline are inadequate to the emergency, and the minister must be called in to prescribe for the offence. The proposition to translate the volume into plain English is repelled; and the idea of reading the volume as one reads other books is scouted with horror. "Have you any request to make,

Tommy?" said a pastor to a little boy who was sick. "Yes: when I am buried, please put my little Testament in the coffin with me. I am a very little boy, and I am afraid Jesus will forget me. But I will reach up my New Testament to him, and then he will receive me."

Who shall do justice to the superstitions that infest the Sabbatarian mind? Here is one day in seven that is not to be reckoned in the ordinary calendar: it is an intruder in the astronomical universe. It has no place in the schedule of time; history has to jump over it. The solar system has orders to pass it by. It takes no celestial observations. Another sun shines for it; other winds blow for it; other elements work for it; the laws of hydrostatics and pneumatics and gravitation are suspended on that day. They are the ministers of God, and tradition says that on this day God was asleep. On that sacred day the obedient sea, converted from its secular habits, swallows up not the unskilful sailor, but the worldly absentee from church. The orthodox winds upset not the inexpert who know not how to manage their sail, but the irreverent who do not love the Sunday school. If the sportsman is killed on Sunday by his own gun, it is not because he is a careless sportsman, but because he was not reading his Bible. If a carriage breaks down on Sunday, it is not the fault of the roads or of the axle; the laws of mechanics are of no account on Sunday: that the word of Scripture might not be broken, the wheel gave way. The natural forces are all orthodox on one day in the week. The sea becomes "evangelical." The sun dispenses the gospel, and is literally a sun of righteousness. The winds obey the behest of the Holy Ghost. The beasts prophesy. The trees of the field are strict Sabbatarians. Nature studies the Bible, and goes by the letter of it; she guards the slumbers of God. The "New Cyclopaedia of Illustrations," a work introduced to the public by no less a person than Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, of New York, quotes approvingly an Eastern legend to the effect that, while Solomon was on his way to visit the Queen of Sheba, he came to a valley in which dwelt a peculiar tribe of monkeys; on inquiring into their history, he learned that they were the posterity of a colony of Jews, who by habitual profanation of the Sabbath had degenerated into apes.

Dogmatism is superstition of opinion. A dogma is an opinion with a magical attachment. It is a medicated bullet. The dogma is a fetich. The less you understand it, the diviner it is. Its mysteriousness is its merit. The *credo quia absurdum* is the motto of the dogmatist. The formula is a charm, a philactery to be worn about the neck, or on the arm, or upon the forehead. Emblazon it on the church, and Christ will dwell there. Set it over the gates of your college, and God will bless the institution. Let the Lyceum Committee write it upon the wall of their council room,

This great ignorance, illusion of evil, the Free Religious Association primarily aims to dethrone. Its motto is not faith, but knowledge. It seeks to know. It believes in knowing. The definition of truth it does not attempt. The love of truth it would fain promote. It would emancipate the mind from the tyranny of the supernatural, from the bonds of dogmatism, from the despotism of idolatry and superstition. In doing this, it is actuated by the sincerest of aims. It is animated by a pure human regard.

I. In the first place, we charge Superstition with ruinous waste of means. The Egyptians could not eat their onions because they had made gods of them. The Jews could not improve their Sabbath because they had consecrated it. The Christians are unable to make rational use of their Bible because they deem it the "word of God," too holy to read intelligently. It is sacred to stupidity. The antiquarian, the archæologist, the historian, the philosopher, the moralist, look at it with longing eyes, but their touch would profane it. It is a buried treasure which is defended by magical charms. Literature has no claim upon it. It is too hallowed to be the property of the human mind. It is forbidden to the vulgar to know its genuine thoughts. A seventh part of all the time there is having been given to the Lord, men may not avail themselves of it for their human purposes. It must be devoted to doing nothing. To open libraries on that day or lecture-rooms to give instruction in science, history, mechanics, literature, art, to entertain the tired people with music, to facilitate easy journeys into the country, to make galleries and gymnasiums and gardens accessible to the famishing multitude, would be an affront to the majesty of Heaven, would disturb the slumbers of the god. The Communion Supper feeds nobody either with food or sympathy, because it is a "holy ordinance." In order that the sacrament may be observed, the occasion is lost. The human qualities of Jesus cannot be appropriated, — cannot even be appreciated, — the virtue in him being imputed to his mythological character. In Naples, one sees hanging upon the walls of shrine and chapel implements and weapons, fishing lines and nets, through which poor people have been saved from danger, or have met signal good fortune. The grateful owners devoted them to the Virgin, and had to buy new ones. Being once consecrated, they could not be used. This tool-worship is very expensive to poor people, though the tools be nothing but rusty knives, a skein of twine, or an old oar. Who shall compute the cost of it, when the sanctified and wasted tools are *books* that hold the literature of a nation; rare persons, the like of whom are not born more than once in a thousand years; and fifty-two golden days in every twelvemonth, each composed of precious and irrecoverable hours?

II. The second charge we make against Superstition is, that it demoralizes and degrades mankind. Old Burton says; "The part affected by superstition is the brain, heart, will, understanding, soul itself, and all the faculties of it; all is mad and dotes." "Death takes away life," says Pliny, "but not superstition. No torture is like it, none so continuous, so general, so violent, so destructive." "The visionary," says Plutarch, "hath ne'er a world at all; for he can neither use his reason when awake, nor be free from his fears when asleep. His reason is always asleep, and his fears are always awake." "When the atheist falls sick, he reckons up his surfeits and debauches, his excessive labors or unaccustomed changes of airs or climates. But the fanciful superstitionist accounts every little distemper in his body or decay in his estate, the death of his children, crosses, and disappointments, as the immediate strokes of God. If he be sick, he thrusts away the physician; if he be in grief, he shuts out the philosopher." The soul of superstition is fear of the unseen powers, dread of the unknown. It infects with cowardice. Why are men afraid of inquiry? Why do they cower under creeds they disbelieve? Why do they sit dumb in presence of calamity? Why do they submit to strokes of fortune they might parry, and accept situations they might escape from? Why the backwardness to explore Nature? Why the horror of new opinions? Men snuggle under their prejudices as children under their blankets, peopling the dark with phantoms. We are not half the men we ought to be. We will not do our own work, from the superstitious hope that God will do it for us. We will not push our own way, from the superstitious fear that we may cross God's path. Superstition, instead of supplementing man, oppresses him; instead of supplying more strength when his natural strength is exhausted, it drains him of his natural strength.

Superstition in the Roman Empire must have been a bitter thing, when poets loathed it as the destruction of all beauty; when moralists denounced it as the subverter of all goodness; when philosophers deplored its malignant influence on the rational nature; when a man like Plutarch branded it as the worst calumny against the Deity, as more pernicious than atheism, as being, in a word, essential atheism with cowardice super-added; when thinking people hailed with rapture the materialism of Epicurus, which at least gave them promise of quiet and unbroken sleep in their graves. It took away their gods, and that was the greatest boon that could be conferred.

Superstition must have been a frightful curse in Italy, when the monk Savonarola dared to assail it in the person of the Pope of Rome. It must have been a ruinous woe in Bohemia, when John Huss poured out his torrents of eloquent indignation upon it; when his scholar, Jerome Faul-

fish, burned the papal bull under the gallows; when the people rose, insulted the priests, stormed the town-house, and defied the authority of the Church. It must have been a corroding disease in Germany, when Martin Luther bore his witness against the doctrine of indulgences, and at the risk of his life confronted the ancient system under which he was educated with the pure text of the Word.

The flashes of lightning that Theodore Parker drew from the cloudy masses of faith, and that have not ceased to blaze yet, reveal the temper of superstition in America,—a temper as bitter, though not as powerful, as in Greece and Rome. These great souls were struggling to emancipate men from their bondage to the supernatural, to get breathing room for the mind, to secure freeholds for thought and will, to gain the right of eminent domain for the human faculties in every sphere of natural activity, to make them, so far as the light of the generation permitted, kings and priests to themselves. They could not execute their work perfectly, because they could not see it perfectly. We see it better than they did. Our successors will see it better than we do. The time will come when Nature will assert her claim to the whole dominion of the supernatural; and then, when the half-gods go, the gods will arrive.

That Superstition calumniates the Deity need not be argued: that is its grand offence. "For my own part," said the philosopher, "I had much rather people should say of me that there neither is nor ever was such a man as Plutarch, than they should say, Plutarch is an unsteady, fickle, froward, vindictive, and touchy fellow."

Mr. Lecky, in the sentimental mood that sometimes comes over him, writes: "No error can be more grave than to imagine that, when a critical spirit is abroad, the pleasant beliefs will all remain, and the painful ones alone will perish. Superstitions appeal to our hopes as well as to our fears. They often meet and gratify the inmost longings of the heart. They offer certainties when reason can only afford possibilities or probabilities. They sometimes even impart new sanctions to moral truths. Often they become essential elements of happiness, and their consoling efficacy is most felt in the languid and troubled hours when it is most needed. We owe more to our illusions than to our knowledge. 'Why is it,' said Luther's wife, looking sadly back upon the sensuous creed which she had left, 'that in our old faith we prayed so often and so warmly, and that our prayers are now so few and so cold?'"

But the argument conveyed in this mournful passage proves too much. Let comfort be the master, and who would leave the fireside? Was Luther wrong in leaving the Church of Rome? Not in this pensive mood did Mr. Lecky write his "History of Rationalism in Europe." That we owe more to our illusions than to our knowledge, he has taught thousands



to question : that proposition we take leave, in his own name, to deny. We are quite willing that the pleasant superstitions should go with the painful ones ; that the prayers should become fewer and colder till, as ceremonies, they cease ; that the dreams should be dispelled by the dawn ; and that the good angels along with the evil should fade away in the brightening daylight of science. Instead of consoling ourselves in "languid and troubled hours" with illusions, let us make such hours fewer by knowledge.

Heat and light are not the same thing, but they have one cause. Light undergoes no change of manifestation that does not in the same manner and degree affect heat. The same agent that falling on the nerves of seeing produces vision, falling on the nerves of feeling produces heat. So, if knowledge strike the understanding alone, it merely illuminates ; but if it touch the chords of moral enthusiasm, a glow is excited, that, better than any striking of flints or crackling of fagots will take away the chill of the human heart.

The subject of the Essay was then opened for discussion. The following report is an abstract of the addresses that were made : —

Prof. WILLIAM DENTON was the first speaker. He began with the remark that, while listening to Mr. Frothingham's essay, he had come to the conclusion that Free Religion might be correctly defined as the application of science and common sense to matters of religion, just as we have applied them to other matters ; and, when that should be done, the rod of dogmatism and superstition would be broken. Enumerating several instances where the advance of science had abolished superstitious beliefs and fears, he proceeded to the special point to which his remarks were directed, — Bible-worship. The Bible, with the popular beliefs concerning it, seemed to him, in this country, the grand fountain of superstition ; and we should never be free from the terrible curse until the Bible should take its place with other books that belonged to the record of man on religious subjects. People should be left at liberty to take just as much of it for truth as would harmonize with reason and common sense, and reject all the rest. At present the Bible was the great idol of Christendom. People talked about the heathen idolaters in far-away countries. But Boston, said he, is full of idolaters, — full of heathen temples and heathen priests officiating in them. In the chiefest place in the temple is this god, the Bible, gilded like a god in a Chinese Joss-house ; and the priest every Sunday bows down and worships it, and calls upon the assembled people to do the same. They may not offer up their sheep and oxen in

sacrifice ; but, what is worse, they sacrifice their reason and conscience and manliness. If it should be said that no Christian believes the Bible to be very God, he would answer that no heathen believes his image to be his God. But in both cases the God is believed to be imaged in the idol. The Bible is taken as God's infallible representative. He then proceeded to show some of the evils of this view of the Bible. It stood in the way of the advance of science among the people, and it made cowards also of scientific men. There were scientific men in America to-day who did not tell all they think and believe, because it would come into conflict with the popular notion of the Bible. So this Bible-idolatry imprisons thought and delays the wheels of progress. There are thousands of people who are drawn to Darwin's view of creation and would accept it, but fear it because it is going to overturn the Bible and Orthodoxy. Another evil of this Bible-idolatry was that it put over mankind, in Jesus, a "Lord and Master," before whose authority the great mass of people bow down as slaves. The speaker would spurn all such yokes of authority in religion. He was here on this planet for himself, and the only master he could recognize was the God who spoke through his own consciousness ; and he knew of no better way to end superstition than to set men on their two feet, let them look at the matter with their own eyes, and accept nothing that does not commend itself to their own best judgment and conscience. In conclusion, Mr. Denton referred to Mr. Frothingham's remarks on the possibilities of superstition in Spiritualism. He said he did not share in the fear. He did not know of a single man or woman (who had any great influence among Spiritualists) who taught that spirits are to be regarded as authority not to be questioned, or that what comes from them is to have any more authority than would be claimed for a living man or woman. Just as he would put the Bible alongside of other so-called sacred books, and read it and study it with them, claiming the same kind of authority for all, so he would put the revelations of Spiritualists alongside of ideas from any other source, and have men and women read for themselves and judge them all alike, submitting them to the test of their own reason. A spirit is nothing more than a man with his jacket off. As he would not make any living man his master, so he would not make the spirit of a dead man his master. And while Spiritualism should hold to that, he had no fear of its superstition. It had done more, in his opinion, than all other means together to break down the power of superstition and the dogmatism of the sects. In the place of superstitious notions about the future world, Spiritualism had brought the demonstration of facts ; and it invited for the facts the tests of reason and science.

Mr. J. VILA BLAKE, minister of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society, Boston, followed Mr. Denton. He announced that, after hearing such

radical utterances, he should have to appear as a conservative; and he rejoiced that the platform was so broad that he could speak in that character. He then criticised Mr. Frothingham's remarks on the subject of prayer, thinking them too extreme, and inconsistent with Mr. Frothingham's own practice in his pulpit services. He also thought rather more of the Bible and of the kind of authority which, as it seemed to him, Jesus meant to assume, than Mr. Denton appeared to think. By calling himself a conservative, he meant that he had a great regard for the past. His reverence for the past was so great that he wanted all the facts of the past just as they were, and all the past. That seemed to him a shallow radicalism which only went back eighteen hundred years. He would go back for his facts a great deal farther than that. As to miracles, he was too conservative to believe them; for he could not find, after weighing the evidence, that any such things were ever facts. And as to the Bible, that did not cover the whole of human history. He must have all human experience for his basis. He then passed to discuss the special point of the superstitious observance of Sunday, and quoted many sayings from those who are commonly regarded as authorities in the Christian Church, in opposition to the modern Orthodox view of Sunday. The example and teaching of Jesus himself were directly against the Pharisaical use of the Sabbath day in his time; and that Pharisaical use of the Sabbath among the Jews corresponds very nearly to the present "evangelical" doctrine of Sunday. So Paul said it was a piece of Jewish superstition to reckon one day above another. Luther said, "If they tell you to be solemn on the Lord's day, I will bid you sing and dance and play upon it." Calvin and others of the leading reformers said substantially the same thing. It was not till Puritanism came that that kind of Sunday observance which is now contended for by Orthodoxy was known in Christendom. This Orthodox doctrine of Sunday must be pronounced therefore a modern innovation. True conservatism cannot defend it, for it has comparatively a very brief past behind it. The lesson of the real past of Christendom is that Sunday is free, — that we are free to use the day in neighborly kindness for whatever we may think conducive to human welfare. But even if the New Testament enjoined this observance of Sunday, — which, in his opinion, it did not do, — and even if Christians from the Apostolic age were unanimous in enjoining it, he would still say that experience, reason, and common sense teach a better use of the day, and that we are free to change the usage. He would make it a day of rest, of recreation, of refreshment to body and mind, — a day of familiar assembling and enjoyment for all, especially for the young. A simple freedom from selfishness would solve the problem. What we should do is so to order the day that the utmost possible freedom and refreshment

should be gained at the expense of the minimum of labor. He believed in the necessity of the day, but more as a holiday than as a day for formal worship. He would do any thing that only for one more hour in a year would relieve this American people of their terrific industry. And if the day were kept as it might be, and hallowed by natural uses as it ought to be, it would come to us once a week distilling heavenly benedictions.

Mr. FROTHINGHAM, alluding to Mr. Blake's criticism of his statement concerning Prayer, said he had spoken of Prayer in the sense of imploring favors from the Supreme Being which men must earn for themselves. It was this kind of praying that he hoped would cease. It had ceased with him long ago. The expression of aspiration, the mingling of our thoughts with the Highest and Best, — that was something very different; and that in his humble way he tried still to do.

Mr. A. M. POWELL, editor of the "National Standard," New York, was the last speaker. The movement represented by the Free Religious Association, he said, as he understood it, had two functions, — one of interpretation, the other of application. The first had been largely exhibited during the day: he wanted now to bring forward more specially the second. He desired to show the practical side of the Free Religious movement, — to set forth its connection with philanthropy and social reform, — and at the same time to expose the power of dogmatism and superstition, as organized in the Christian churches, in resisting philanthropic and reformatory efforts. But as the hour was late, he would only hint at the topic. He felt a strong interest in the intellectual interpretation of Radicalism, but his interest was stronger in the practical outcome of it. He saw around him the most distressing suffering, the bitterest injustices and wrongs, human energies wasted and corrupted by dissipating vices, and our pretences to civilization mocked on all sides by the actual condition of society. You appeal to the Christian churches to take hold of these practical evils and rectify them, but for the most part they pass by on the other side. They are so devoted to inculcating their dogmas and keeping up their ceremonies that they cannot take up the works of justice and humanity. Therefore he looked with hope to this movement for the emancipation of the human mind from the thralldom of ecclesiastical authority and from the chains of dogmatism and superstition. From mental emancipation, moral emancipation must logically follow. But, said he, when we go from this platform to apply the lessons here learned, immediately, as soon as we reach yonder side-walk, in our very first effort to reform these evils, — to check intemperance, to eradicate the spirit of caste, to establish the equal rights of woman, to remedy "the social evil," to abolish the gallows, — we shall meet the Church as an organized power against us

and the greatest obstacle in our path. Just as the old anti-slavery battle was fought and won in spite of the American Church and clergy, so it seems as if all social and civil reforms had got to be carried against the same opposition. The Church is bent on saving its ordinances and its theology, no matter what becomes of these great problems of humanity. It is afraid of the agitation which they cause, and turns a deaf ear. Clergymen quote St. Paul as infallible authority, and because he said, "Let women keep silence in the churches," think that that settles the woman question. Because of the superstitious observance of the Communion, wine is used even by those who do not believe in its use elsewhere; and so a great obstacle to the cause of Temperance is continued by the authority of the Church. Temperance reformers have yet to learn that they must make war upon the use of wine at the Communion-table as well as at the Parker House. In all these questions of reform the same ecclesiastical opposition will be met. Hence the usefulness of such conventions as this, to help break this bondage of the Church, in order that men and women may stand up in their emancipated manhood and womanhood, ready and free for every good work.

The hour of ten having arrived, the exercises of the day were closed, and the Convention adjourned.

CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION.

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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. Five members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum.

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.