

GS174

PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE GENERAL MEETING
OF
THE THEISTIC SOCIETY

HELD AT THE
FREEMASONS' HALL, LONDON

ON
WEDNESDAY, JULY 20TH, 1870

AND
STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

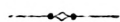
APPOINTED BY THE MEETING

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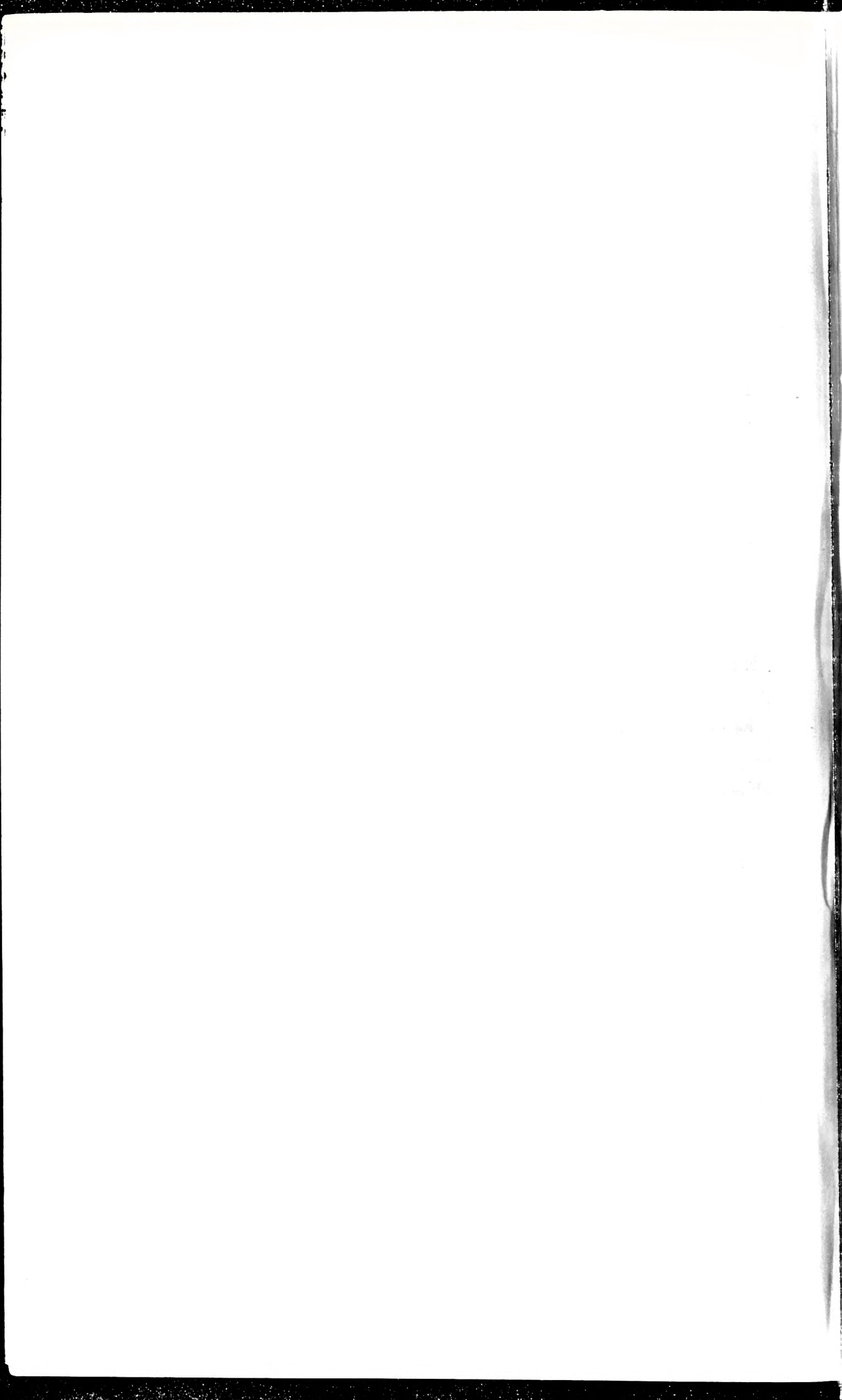
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT

THE FREEMASONS' HALL, LONDON

ON

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 1870.

MR. WILLIAM SHAEN IN THE CHAIR.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I will state, in opening the meeting, the course of business which has been proposed by the Committee. In the first place, our Honorary Secretary, Mr. E. H. Busk, will read a report from the Provisional Committee; that report will conclude with a set of resolutions which have been prepared by the Committee. It will then be my duty, on behalf of the Committee, to move the reception of the report. If it is your pleasure, after hearing the report, to receive it, there are three or four resolutions, which have been prepared, which will be moved and seconded; and upon those any observations can be made and any discussion can be taken.

The Honorary Secretary then read the following report:—

The Provisional Committee appointed at the meeting held on June 6, 1870, have communicated with persons who might be supposed willing to aid in the formation of a Theistic Society, and now submit the following report of their proceedings, and of the information so collected by them.

The Committee met shortly after the meeting, at which they were appointed, and prepared a circular, in which was inserted the provisional statement of the objects and means of the Society, which they were instructed to circulate with their suggestions.

The following is a copy of the circular, which was preceded by a list of the Provisional Committee.

1. The objects of the Society are to unite men, notwithstanding any differences in their religious creeds, in a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of Spiritual Life by (i.) investigating religious truth; (ii.) cultivating devotional feelings; and (iii.) furthering practical morality.

2. The Society seeks to attain these objects by the following means:—

- (1) By holding meetings for the reading of papers, and for conference.
- (2) By holding and encouraging meetings for the united worship of God.
- (3) By helping its members to ascertain and discharge their personal and social duties.
- (4) By the formation of similar Societies with the same objects in various parts of the British Empire and other countries.
- (5) By correspondence with those who may be supposed willing to assist in the objects of this Society.
- (6) By the issue of publications calculated to promote the above purposes.

This Society is offered as a means of uniting all those who believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, in the endeavour to supplement their individual efforts towards goodness and truth by mutual sympathy; to intensify their trust in and love to God by fellowship in worship; and to aid each other in the discovery and propagation of Spiritual Truth, that thus they may attain to the more complete observance of the Divine Laws of Human Nature.

A meeting will be held at the Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, on Wednesday, July 20, 1870, at 7 P.M., for the purpose of definitely constituting the Society. Your attendance at this meeting is requested.

In the meantime you are invited to communicate to the Provisional Committee your opinion, and any information you can give on the following subjects:—

- a. The expediency of forming the proposed Society.
- b. The best name for the proposed Society.
- c. The names and addresses of persons or societies likely to be interested in such a body.

d. The number likely to join in your neighbourhood.

e. Any practical suggestions as to the formation, objects, and modes of action of the proposed Society.

The Committee invited suggestions and information on various subjects, and have received, in answer to about 2,200 copies which have been circulated, upwards of 100 replies.

The suggestions and information that have been received may be arranged under the four following heads :—

I. The expediency or in expediency of forming the proposed Society.

II. The best name for the proposed Society.

III. The number of persons likely to join in different towns and districts.

IV. Practical suggestions as to the formation, objects, and modes of action of the proposed Society.

I. The answers that have been received to the question whether it is or is not expedient to form the proposed Society have comprised every shade of feeling. They may be roughly classified in the following manner :—

Those who think it expedient (including 5, who merely express a desire for its formation) . . .	83
Those who think it inexpedient	17
Those who think the expediency doubtful	7
	107

These numbers do not include the members of the Provisional Committee.

The Provisional Committee are of opinion that these answers afford sufficient encouragement to justify the formation of the proposed Society.

II. The following names have been suggested for the proposed Society :—

‘ The Association for Promoting Practical Religion.’

‘ The Association for Promoting True Religion.’

‘ The Association for the Promotion of Practical Religion.’

‘ The Society for the Discovery and Propagation of Spiritual Truth.’

‘ An Association for Developing true Christian Charity in St. Paul’s Sense.’

‘ The Brotherhood of Faith.’

‘ The Religious Brotherhood.’

‘ The Brotherhood of all Religions.’

‘ The Brethren of Progress.’

‘ The Progressive Brotherhood.’

‘ The Fraternal Union.’

‘ The Society of Human Brotherhood.’ 2.

‘ The Brotherhood of Love.’ 2.

‘ The British Free Church.’

‘ The Church of all Religions.’

‘ The Church Reform Society.’

‘ The Open Church.’

‘ The Church of the True God.’

‘ The Church of Progress.’

‘ The Free Catholic Church.’

‘ The Universal Church.’

‘ The Church of the Future.’

‘ The Church of Religious Progress.’

‘ The Church of the Law.’

‘ The Church of all Faiths.’

‘ The Church Founded on First Principles.’

‘ The Universal Church of the Law.’

‘ The English Branch of the Brahmoo Somaj.’

‘ The Friends.’

‘ The Progressive Friends.’

‘ The Moralists.’

‘ The Free Religious Union.’ 3.

‘ The Free Religious Society.’

‘ The Free Religious Association.’ 2.

‘ The Religious Union.’ 2.

- ‘ A Practical Religious Union.’
- ‘ The Religious Alliance Association.’
- ‘ The Religious Society of all People and of all Nations.’
- ‘ The Religious Liberal Association.’
- ‘ The Society for the Promotion of Religious Liberty.’
- ‘ The Modern Religious Society.’
- ‘ The Rational Religious Society.’
- ‘ The Common Brotherhood Religious Society.’
- ‘ The Theo-Philosophical Society.’
- ‘ The Universalist Society.’
- ‘ The Universal Brotherhood.’ 2.
- ‘ Sons and Daughters of God.’
- ‘ The Universal Family of God.’
- ‘ The Universal Family.’
- ‘ The Christo-Theistic Society.’
- ‘ The Christian Theists.’ 2.
- ‘ The Eisotheistic Society.’
- ‘ The Theistic Brotherhood.’ 2.
- ‘ The Theistic Church.’
- ‘ The Theistic Society.’ 3.
- ‘ The Society of Theists.’
- ‘ The Theistic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.’
- ‘ The Theistic Theological Society.’
- ‘ The Free Theistic Union.’
- ‘ Theistic Christianity.’
- ‘ The Deistic Society.’

Fifteen correspondents, therefore, have proposed names in which the term Theistic occurs. On the other hand, nineteen correspondents have declared themselves opposed to that name, assigning various reasons for their opposition; and many others have proposed the other names above reported, because they prefer them to the epithet Theistic, which appeared in the heading of the circular.

III. The Provisional Committee beg to report that they have received the following information as to the persons likely to join in the movement.

The Committee have received the names of 245 persons in various parts of the United Kingdom, as likely to co-operate, of whom ninety-eight have answered, expressing themselves favourably towards the movement. Of these persons, eighty-nine reside in the metropolis.

The Provisional Committee beg to report further, that in addition to the names of individuals which are included in the foregoing numbers, they have received an intimation, that at Edinburgh a congregation belonging to a chapel, of which Dr. Page is the minister, and comprising about one hundred members, will be likely to co-operate, and that in the same city there are about twenty other persons who cordially desire such a Society.

These latter people formed a Society under the leadership of Mr. Cranbrook, but have become disunited in consequence of the death of that gentleman, about a year ago.

Mr. Walter Rew, of Sandgate, is the president of a society, calling itself the 'Social Progress Association,' and he has informed the Committee, that if the objects of their proposed Society are sufficiently practical, he will be happy to propose the amalgamation with it of his own Association.

The Rev. W. J. Lake, of Leamington, is forming a society in the Midland Counties, called the 'Brotherhood of Religious Reform,' and has forwarded to the Committee a copy of his programme. He has informed the Committee that he will work with them, if their objects are similar. The following is a copy of his programme :—

It is intended to form a Society, to be called 'The Brotherhood of Religious Reform,' whose object shall be to unite in a common religious fellowship, all who believe

in the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man, irrespective of all other beliefs they may hold, and by this union of spirit to put an end to religious sectarianism and to religious strife, and thus to lay a foundation for the eventual building up of the one great church of the living God, which shall be wide as the common need of humanity, and which shall own as its members all who love God, and who strive to lead a righteous and loving life.

The operations of this Society will consist—

1. In the promotion of absolute religious equality; to be effected in this country mainly by the nationalisation of the Established Church.

N.B. By the nationalisation of the Established Church is meant, the abolition of the Act of Uniformity, and of all compulsory belief or teaching. Also the establishment of a parishioner suffrage, by which the residents in each parish shall be at liberty to select, from properly educated and qualified candidates, their own minister, and to determine the form and character of their worship.

2. It will be the business of this Society to investigate the popular and accredited forms of religious belief, so that, through the scholarly and scientific methods which are now able to be employed, the absolute religious truth may as nearly as possible be attained.

3. It will undertake the formation of public opinion in accordance with these ascertained results, by the delivery of lectures, and the promotion of controversy, the issue of publications calculated to spread information on these subjects among the people, and by all other likely and appropriate methods.

4. It will undertake the immediate establishment of a church or churches for the worship of God, in accordance with the fundamental elements of religious belief before stated, and the maintenance of these by voluntary effort, till such time as the national church shall be set

free from the compulsory profession of sectarian dogmas and mediæval creeds, and shall be thrown open, when the majority of parishioners shall desire it, to the teaching and worship which sum up all the essential truth and duty of religion in the simple requirements of love to God as our father, and love to man as our brother.

IV. Among the suggestions that the Committee have received in reply to their request for suggestions as to the formation, objects, and modes of action of the proposed Society, are the following :—

As to the *formation* of the Society : That there shall be, independently of the Society or Societies established in London, a central Committee, which shall have for its object the formation and encouragement of independent branch Societies elsewhere, and shall serve as a means of communication between such Societies, so as to preserve union without compulsory uniformity of thought or action.

That admission to any of the affiliated Societies shall be as wide as humanity itself, and with this view, that there shall be no compulsory entrance fee or subscription.

The following suggestion has also been received, as many persons cannot attend the meeting on July 20, 1870,—that the resolutions then passed shall be printed, and votes taken from all the country correspondents who have advocated the movement, before such resolutions are finally adopted.

The following suggestions have been received as to the *objects* of the proposed Society :—

Several correspondents approve of the statement of objects contained in the circular.

One has suggested that the first object shall be extended, so as to include the investigation of scientific as well as religious truth.

It has been suggested that the Society ought to have in view the two additional objects of :—

- I. Furthering education ; and,
- II. Helping liberal churchmen.

Several correspondents have approved of the statement contained in the circular of the *modes of action* proposed for the Society.

One correspondent considers them too abstract and indefinite ; on the other hand, another correspondent recommends the adoption of as few rules as possible, and seems to fear that these paragraphs will be found restrictive.

None of the correspondents have objected to means No. 1 (the holding of meetings for the reading of papers and for conference), while several have written in favour of it.

There has been much correspondence and difference of opinion with reference to means No. 2 (the holding and encouragement of meetings for the united worship of God), the numbers for and against its adoption being almost equally balanced.

There is a good deal of opposition to means No. 3 (the helping of its members to ascertain and discharge their personal and social duties), many persons believing that it cannot be adopted as a mode of action without interfering with the individual conscience. It would appear, therefore, that some of this opposition was occasioned by a misapprehension of the aim of this paragraph.

No correspondent has expressed himself as opposed to means No. 4 (the formation of similar Societies, with the same objects, in various parts of the British Empire and other countries) ; several, on the other hand, have advocated its adoption. It has been suggested that the action of the central Committee in London should be supplemented by the action of influential and energetic members, who should visit different provincial towns, and stimulate to action those who feel the want of such a Society as it is proposed to establish.

Much has been written in favour of means No. 6 (the issue of publications calculated to promote the above purposes).

One or two think that the action of the Society in this respect should be restricted to reprinting already existing works or articles in periodicals which expound the principles of the Society.

Several suggest that a periodical or periodicals, monthly or weekly, should be established for the diffusion of the principles of the Society, for correspondence, and for the information of country members.

In addition to the six modes of action proposed by the circular, the three following modes of action have been suggested, viz. :—

7. That lists of the members should be prepared and circulated from time to time.

8. That the Society should assist in the formation of libraries in various towns.

9. That there should be lectures given at fixed times and places, accompanied by classical music, sacred or otherwise.

The Committee have also received a pamphlet, containing very valuable practical suggestions, from Mr. S. Prout Newcombe, of Croydon.

The variety of suggestions contained in the correspondence, of which the foregoing statement is an analysis, as to the organisation of the proposed Society, makes it desirable, in the opinion of the Committee, that this subject should be further considered.

They will, therefore, invite the meeting to appoint a Committee, by whom a scheme for the organisation of the Society may be elaborated, and who shall report the result of their labours to a meeting to be held early in the ensuing year ; and they will request this meeting to confine itself at present to resolutions by which the

Society shall be constituted and its name determined, in accordance with the general character proposed to be given to it by the circular which has led to this meeting.

On the question of *name*, the Committee wish to report that, although a majority has agreed upon a name which will be proposed to the meeting, yet they have not arrived at any unanimous conclusion. This result was one that might be expected, having regard to the number of different names suggested by their correspondents.

The Committee have found in this matter (as will doubtless be found in many other cases) an occasion for exercising that mutual deference of each for the opinion of others which the proposed Society especially seeks to cultivate, and without which it cannot exist.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Ladies and gentlemen, I should have hesitated to accept the responsible post of chairman of this meeting if it had been intended to be anything in the nature of a public manifestation; but we are met here simply to have a friendly conference upon the very important subjects which have been touched upon in the printed circular which all of you have received, and which have also been referred to in the report. I trust, before the end of the meeting, we shall not only have had a profitable and friendly conference, but really shall have performed some practical business. Beyond that I do not think it would be wise for us to attempt anything at present. The facts which have been stated in the report show what we have done to elicit opinions, and what a large amount of sympathy with our views has been expressed from all parts of England, and that there is also, as might have been expected, a very wide diversity of opinion expressed by our correspondents. I think it is clear that, as we may, on the one hand, draw the conclusion that a sufficient number of persons feel there is a good work to be done by a society based on the

principles which we have put forth to justify our proposing to you that such a Society should now be founded, so, on the other hand, it would be very unwise at the present stage of proceedings to put the Society into a fixed and crystallised condition. We must feel our way, gradually establishing that which we feel ought to be established, and leaving, as far as possible, the Society, when formed, in an elastic state, to assume such a shape and adopt such modes of action as it may from time to time find best fitted to attain its objects. Probably many of those who are here present may not be aware of the steps which have led to the present meeting, and it may be well for me, therefore, to refer shortly to them. This movement, then, owes its origin to the arrival in this country of a gentleman whom we already rejoice to call our friend—Mr. Keshub Chunder Sen. Since he came here, all of us, I think I may say, who heard him speak at the meeting held to receive him at the Hanover Square Rooms, or who have from time to time since that meeting heard him preach, have felt that in all its essentials the religion of Mr. Sen was our religion ; and yet, on the other hand, it is a remarkable fact that he did not find existing in this country any religious organisation in which he could simply feel himself to be at home. The feeling on the part of his friends that there was something wrong in this state of things led to a series of extremely interesting private meetings, which were held at his house ; and in the course of those meetings, the whole of which I had the pleasure of attending, we found, as was to be expected, that very similar thoughts had been excited in many different minds, not only by his visit, but also by many other circumstances which have occurred of late years. Everybody seemed to be agreed that, somehow or other, the religious organisations existing in England have for the most part failed in their professed object—that religion is, after all, nothing unless it is a uniting principle ;

and yet, while everybody agrees in that opinion, somehow or other the actual religion professed in England succeeds chiefly in keeping people apart, in marking them off into separate bodies, and, when they are so marked off, keeping them entirely asunder.

Then, looking at the subject from another point of view, we all of us also felt that while, according to the principles of our religion which we all accept, we ought to consider ourselves one large human family, yet that, if we looked into what was passing around us in our great cities, throughout our country, and throughout the world, we seemed to be acting in a very curious way when the matter was considered from a family point of view. The extraordinary contrast between the professed principles of the religious organisations of civilised Europe, and the actual practice of the most highly civilised nations, never, perhaps, has received a more striking and melancholy illustration than that which has taken place, even since this meeting was summoned, in the terrible war which now has actually commenced, and which, if we are a human family, is, as all wars must be, a fratricidal war. In trying to find out what was the cause of the two facts to which I have alluded, we were pretty well agreed so far as principle is concerned. With regard to the question of religious organisations, it seemed to all of us, I believe, that if we want to let religion do its proper work amongst us, we must strip off the weeds and briars of multiplied and complicated dogma which have encumbered and choked the good seed of central religious truth. We must get back, if we can, to that which is the foundation of all religions, and in which we are all agreed. In this attempt we find very little difficulty in accepting, as a statement of that upon which we can all agree, the declaration that universal religion finds its sufficient foundation in the two great truths of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Again, looking at the question

from a practical point of view, it seemed also clear that if we could, instead of wasting our time in barren controversies, apply ourselves to deduce from those two central truths practical laws for the conduct of human life, and make the entire round of human life implicitly obedient to the laws which those central truths teach, we should then not only succeed in giving, within the range of our own people, the proper work to religious organisations so founded, but we should also have established a society in which no friendly stranger, like Mr. Sen, coming among us could ever feel himself to be a stranger. It might be very possible—in fact it would be certain—that among us there would be developed a large amount of honest and earnest difference as to detailed truths and subordinate principles of deep interest and importance. But we thought there would be a very large number who would feel that a common belief in, and a common acknowledgment of, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is sufficient to form the basis of a religious union, and that in that religious union all those who agreed in those two principles might comfortably, cordially, and fraternally find a place.

We determined to see whether we could at once evoke a sufficient amount of sympathy with those views to justify us in attempting to found such a society. We drew up the circular which has been sent about England to the extent, as the report informs you, of about 2,200 copies. To those circulars we have received rather more than 100 replies. If we compare the number of replies with the number of circulars sent out, it certainly seems very small. On the other hand, I myself consider that it is an encouraging, and, on the whole, a satisfactory result. We had no time, and had no very good opportunity, of making a careful selection of the persons who should be sent to. We took two or three lists, which were accessible to us, of persons who had either sub-

scribed to some fund or some society which seemed to us to indicate sentiments somewhat kindred to our own, and we addressed our circulars to every name appearing on those lists. It is very likely that the whole subject may have been quite strange to some of them, and a very large number of persons in England, and probably elsewhere, take a long time to answer circulars, so that it by no means follows that, even of those who have not replied, the majority do not take an interest in the subject. On the other hand, those circulars have elicited, as you have heard, from a large and widely-scattered body, a considerable amount of real sympathy. I was very glad to see that the meeting seemed to receive with a welcome the declaration in the report of the Provisional Committee, that in our opinion the amount of sympathy we had evoked is sufficient to justify us in founding the Society. It will be necessary of course to consider very carefully how far we shall go to-night, and what we shall declare to be the nature and objects and modes of action of the Society. On that point, my own belief is that we ought to proceed carefully and slowly, and that it is much more important that every step we take should be such as will excite as much sympathy as possible among all our friends, than that we should proceed in a hurry to do something which might seem to have a more complete appearance. I am afraid of being in too great a hurry to draw up rules or to do anything more than declare our general principles. It is quite clear that among the friends who have signified their sympathy with us we shall find a very large amount of difference of opinion, and, in point of fact, the foundation of that sympathy comes from two different sides. I shall be extremely sorry if we are not ultimately able to combine the sympathy which has been evoked on both sides. I refer especially to what I may call the speculative side of the question—free thought; and the practical side of the

question—the religious life. A very large number of people who find themselves dissatisfied with the creeds and customs of religious organisations express themselves ready to join any society which, throwing off all shackles of that kind, simply determines to pursue truth, wherever truth may lie; and I heartily sympathise with them, and shall heartily rejoice if we find in our future Society the means of assisting every earnest attempt at the investigation of truth in the freest possible way.

But, on the other hand, I take a still deeper interest in the other side of the question, the practical application of the principles we have accepted to the formation of a religious life. It seems to me that the social evils of the day may all be traced to the fact that there is such a wide divorce between the principles which we profess when we speak religiously, and the every-day practice of our lives. I think, therefore, that while, as I have said, I have the deepest sympathy with and shall always be extremely glad to join in any free investigation of speculative truth, it will come more home to us as real pressing business at the present time to see what we can do in helping each other to ascertain what are the rules to which we ought to render our daily lives subject, in order that we may literally live upon this earth as a family of God's children ought to live.

Now, the wide differences which appear to exist and the various shades of opinion which are prevalent among our friends have been singularly and rather amusingly illustrated by the long list of proposed names for this Society which has been read to you by our Honorary Secretary. It may be said that it makes very little difference by what name we call ourselves, and that practically the work which we do is the all-important subject. No doubt that is so in the long run. Yet I am quite sure that the feeling of our correspondents, which has led them to lay great stress on the wise selection of a name,

is, on the whole, a true one. Our name will be at once the flag and the motto we display to the world, and it is really of importance that we should adopt a name which, while clearly expressing our principles, shall attract as much and repel as little as possible. There are many names which I could heartily accept, if there were not already attached to them some unfortunate association; and I think it is important for us to avoid any name which has already associated with it thoughts and feelings and actions with which we should not wish in any way to be identified. When we discussed this question among ourselves in committee, even in a meeting of from nine to a dozen, we found that we had the most curiously varied associations with several of the names which have been read to you. Among others I may mention the term 'Theistic.' This term is one which, in the mind of our friend Mr. Chunder Sen, signifies everything which is most delightful and most religious and devout. For my own part I have long looked upon it as a word closely connected with all that I most value in free religious thought—thought which is free, and, at the same time, really religious; but yet I find that that is by no means the case with many of those with whom it is very important that we should be able to work in this movement. We find among our correspondents that the term is distinctly disliked and dreaded by a considerable number. I mention this because it is the term I should myself have by far preferred to any other, and yet it is one as to which I have come to the conclusion that it would be unwise in the Society to adopt it. You have heard that, among the resolutions to be submitted to you presently, is one for a name for the Society, and that that name was not arrived at unanimously by the Committee. In accordance with a common custom in such cases, it was understood that we should not come down as a committee and request you to accept the name proposed,

but that the question should be left entirely free and unshackled, that it should be discussed here and voted upon without any weight being given to the accident that there happened to be in the Committee a majority in favour of a particular name. Accordingly, an amendment to that resolution will be moved. It is an amendment to the effect that it would be wise in us, on the present occasion, to avoid pledging ourselves to any name at all, and that the name, like the further details of the Society, should be postponed to be further considered, first by the Committee, whom we shall ask you to appoint to-night, and afterwards by a meeting of the Society to whom the Committee will report. I shall say no more on that subject now, because it will have to be fully laid before you at a later period of the evening.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is one point referred to in the report, upon which there has been a good deal of misapprehension among our correspondents, and on which, therefore, I would say one word. It is with regard to the third of what we have called the means which the Society proposes to adopt, and which is worded as follows : ' By helping its members to ascertain and discharge their personal and social duties.' For my own part, I consider, as I have already intimated, that that is perhaps the most interesting and the most important subject to which our attention can be directed, and I am, therefore, extremely anxious that it should not in any way be misunderstood. Some of our correspondents have objected to that proposal, on the ground that it would be impossible to adopt any practical measures for giving it effect without infringing the rights of individual conscience. It would be suicidal for a Society like ours, which intends, as far as it can, to be an embodiment of freedom with order, to do anything which could be open to the accusation of infringing the rights of individual conscience ; and the idea must have arisen, I think, from

the supposition, that, under that head, it was intended to adopt personal and social regulations which should be binding upon the members of the Society. Nothing of the kind has ever been contemplated by the Committee, and I am quite sure nothing of the kind would be accepted by the Society. One of the great rocks upon which, as I think, the existing religious organisations of the country have split, and are splitting, is what they call 'church discipline.' I trust that our Society will never attempt to establish anything in the shape of church discipline. While, however, everybody is absolutely free to do that which is in accordance with his own conscience, it seems to me that we should be abdicating what is the great privilege of a religious fraternity, if we were to shrink from discussing the question of personal and social duties with those who may be willing to discuss them with us. I trust we shall find it possible in an earnest and faithful manner to assist each other in the attempt to investigate in what way the principle of the brotherhood of man ought to be applied to our daily life, in order to produce the effects which we feel ought to follow from it, but which we see around us at the present time do not follow from it. I hope, therefore, the Society will accept that as one of the most important branches of its operations, at the same time being extremely careful that nothing whatever shall be done, which can, in any way, be said to be even an attempt to infringe individual liberty.

There is only one other point to which I need advert. I think it would be wise to agree not only that a considerable part of the details of the working regulations of this Society should be left in a provisional state, but that we should express, in the constitution of the Society, the idea that we can never expect to arrive at perfection, and that the Society itself, therefore, is one of indefinite progress. I, with some of those who are now present, took a part in the attempt, which has come to an untimely

end, to found what was called the 'Free Christian Union.' From the first it seemed to me there were fatal errors in the constitution of that Society, and I think the most fatal of all was the declaration that any attempt to change the programme, or the statement of the principles upon which the Society was founded, should be considered *ipso facto* a dissolution of the Society. In my view, no Society is worthy of permanent existence which does not embody in itself the idea of progressive development. I do not, of course, mean that we are always to be seeking change, but that we should always feel that what we hold is good only until we see something better. I should very much prefer to see in the constitution of our Society a distinct declaration, that once in five years or once in a certain term of years, the whole constitution should be submitted to the members of the Society for the purpose of seeing whether suggestions could not be made for improvement, rather than to see there anything like a declaration, that, when we have once come to a conclusion, we are to bind ourselves for all future time to that conclusion, and that not only we ourselves for the rest of our lives, but also those who may come after us, are to agree with our present opinions.

I will not detain you, ladies and gentlemen, any longer. I must express my great thanks for the kindness with which you have listened to what I have said, and I will now in conclusion move that the report which has been read be received.

The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

The Rev. J. E. ODGERS.—Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I feel that the motion, which I have to recommend to the meeting, follows with peculiar fitness after the speech which has been just delivered, and is, in point of fact, but the natural consequence which will

suggest itself to every person who has heard you, Sir, with sympathetic feeling. The resolution which I have to propose is this—‘That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable to form a Society to unite men, notwithstanding any differences in their religious creeds, in a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of spiritual life, by, first, investigating religious truth; secondly, cultivating devotional feelings; and, thirdly, furthering practical morality.’ I trust, Sir, that thus far the feeling of the meeting will support both you and myself, and that the applause which followed the statement in the report, that the Committee felt justified in the formation of this Society, is but the token of a wide and large sympathy both in this room and outside it. For myself, I am only a country minister, and I feel at present the strongest hope, from this meeting, from the words you have uttered, from the collection of opinion which has passed through the hands of the Committee, that we may have a Society which shall furnish those who labour for the principles of attaining and diffusing spiritual life with a strong motive for action; and by those means we shall bind those who spiritually labour into one common bond of sympathy, and give them at once that breadth of view and that assurance of brotherly spirit of which they oftentimes feel sorely in need. At the same time I rejoice to find that this sympathy is a sympathy of spirit, and does not necessarily involve an agreement in dogmatic propositions—that this Society proposes to take in all those who cordially have those three objects in view, notwithstanding any difference in their religious creed. While we are labouring, perhaps each in our several spheres, to support the thought which is trusted to us, to cultivate and encourage the life which we most deeply approve, and are perhaps joined with some dogmatic body for the spread of the theological views which commend themselves to us, putting our hands to the plough as far as we can, and

striving by association to make the truth, dear to us, perfectly common to all mankind,—I feel that there is a need, not only beyond that, but rendered necessary by those associations, that we should go somewhere where a larger and wider field would be open to us, where we should escape at once from the doctrines which do attend sincere individual labour in the search after, and propagation of truth, and also which, in a double measure, attend the religious associations of those who dogmatically agree. Therefore, I look forward with the greatest pleasure to joining and supporting, as far as in me lies, an association where those, who theologically and religiously differ, may come, and, taking their stand upon the first article of any religious creed, however dogmatic, namely, ‘I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,’ may there get glimpses of sides of religious life which have hitherto been closed to them ; may find further views of religious truth shining in on their minds as to those who are, generally speaking, in time and place separated from them, and return to their individual work of ascertaining and maintaining the truth, and spreading, by teaching and example, practical morality, with their minds refreshed by heartfelt communion with others, who bid them God speed across the barriers of divergent theological theory, and, at the same time, gaining that outlook into ultimate truth which the naturally prophetic tendency of the mind does gain for itself after having every opportunity of hearing the sincere enunciation of opinion, which is at the present time broken and varied as the truth reflects itself through the souls of individuals.

I therefore submit most heartily, and with the strongest individual feeling, this resolution to the meeting, and I trust that what I have said will not be thought unpractical in itself, or as warring against the practical aims and objects of the Society. If I, looking at it from my own point of view, put the speculative side—the subjective

side—first, I do not wish in the least to depreciate any enumeration of practical ends, however various they may be. The letters which I have received from my own correspondents when I have sent them the circulars of this Society mention very many practical aims, all of which are in themselves most desirable, and may well call for religious co-operation; but, at the same time, I feel that these are early days to speak of the practical aim of the Society. The great thing is to feel that we are individually working only for those particular aims which are dear to us who have communion, in the highest and deepest sense, with others who are far off, who are working for the same objects that we all pledge ourselves to work for, and I feel at the same time that ends will present themselves—they must follow out of such communion of thought as I trust will be characteristic of this Society, and that we shall gain from this Society ardour and heartiness of spirit, that we shall return not pledged to any kind of mechanism or organisation which is to hide the fact, that whatever good we do must come from the determination and aspiration of the soul, and will, therefore, be strengthened both for thought and for work by the Association, the formation of which I most heartily commend to this meeting. Therefore I beg to propose to the meeting the resolution which I have already read.

The CHAIRMAN.—Ladies and gentlemen, I have the greatest possible pleasure in saying that this resolution will be seconded by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell. I must be allowed to say that, not only because Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell is a valued personal friend of my own, but because her taking part in this meeting I look upon as a practical illustration of a great principle.

Dr. ELIZABETH BLACKWELL.—Ladies and gentlemen, I second this resolution. Its object is union—the union of all those who heartily love God. It is union for a

practical purpose, viz., the attainment and diffusion of pure spiritual life; a life which will express itself by earnestly striving to carry out God's Will in every action. There is great necessity for such union. God has given us enough glorious truth—moral, religious, and scientific—to regenerate the world, if we would but put that truth into practice; but we do not know how to shape into deeds the teaching we get from pulpit, lecture-room, and book; this is not taught us. We allow ourselves to float down the current of evil customs, shutting our eyes to some, growing indifferent to others, because alone we do not know how to avoid doing what everybody else does. We thus become partakers in all the evils that exist around us, and drunkenness, immorality, destitution, dishonesty, crime, all have their roots in our own daily life. There is no escaping from this terrible but grand brotherhood which binds us all together. Single-handed we cannot resist the overwhelming force of social evils, but united we may. With the strength of union we may insist upon a truer education for our children; we may teach practically habits of simplicity and industry to youth; we may carry out business honesty; we may create a purer social atmosphere around us. Such effort to regenerate practical daily life, it appears to me, is the common meeting-ground of all religious persons. We, with an earnest Christian faith, can here joyfully meet all those who love God and seek to obey his laws; and in this united effort to realise God's laws we shall found the Universal Church. I have great pleasure, therefore, in seconding this resolution.

The CHAIRMAN.—I would now invite any lady or gentleman to express any opinion on this matter. I hope it will not be considered necessary, in order that an opinion may be expressed, that it should be different from those which we have already heard, for we should be just as glad to hear additional reasons on our side of the ques-

tion, as we should be ready to hear any opinion not agreeing with ours. We should be very glad if those friends from a distance, especially, would say what they think on the matter.

Mr. F. WILSON.—Sir, I should just like to ask a question of the gentleman who proposed this resolution, and it is this—how can people who differ in theological matters agree to assemble under the proposition he suggested? We must have an individual and responsible idea common to all the members of the Society, or else the thing cannot work. We must have a centre, and then you may widen the circumference to any extent you please, but this centre must be universally recognised as a substantial starting-point.

The CHAIRMAN.—I don't know whether Mr. Odgers would wish to answer that question himself, but I must say I myself consider that it is impossible for men to unite for any good purpose, unless they also unite in some common definite belief. On the other hand, I am certain, from practical experience, that it is very possible to unite people who combine with that common belief quite an indefinite amount of theological difference. I think, therefore, there is no reason at all why we should despair of uniting in our Society people who, agreeing in the two principles which we have adopted, namely, the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, yet add to those principles a very indefinite amount, and possibly a wide amount, of divergent belief on other points. Certainly we should wish that the question whether they could or could not unite with us should be determined by each individual for himself or herself.

Mr. WADE.—Sir, you were good enough to send to me a circular stating to me the objects of the proposed Society. I must say I was much puzzled to give an answer to the questions which were asked, and I came here to-night to hear some further elucidation from you.

But I am puzzled now to know in which direction any superfluous energies one might have can be thrown, which might not be given to any existing free Christian Church. I had hoped, sincerely hoped, since I gathered from the Chairman that the old Free Christian Union is dead, or must die, that we might probably strike out some new course which, in consequence of the desire for union among the various churches, and among those outside the churches, might have drawn together numbers of persons who, religiously speaking, have no homes. The Chairman said we need not be agreed as to a name to-night, but that is to be left open, and then the following speaker who proposed the first resolution ignores practicalities altogether. So far as I could follow him, we might just as well be a corporation to propagate moonshine as to ignore practicalities. Will you give me, if you please, something upon which to act? You ask me to join you. Will you give me some definite notion of what this Society is doing, or proposes to do, over and above what any other Christian church is doing and may do, such a church as that of Mr. James Martineau or such as that of Mr. Conway? We are asked to join with some other rational beings in doing some work which those churches are not doing. Show me, if you please, in what way I can put my hand to the plough. My friend, who spoke to the resolution, invited us to lay hold of, not a real plough, but some speculative plough which he had in his mind. Will you show me a real plough, which I can lay hold of and work some great furrows, but do not let us drive off into mere generalities, for that is the rock on which many associations have split. I am a member of the Free Christian Union, and I have asked what am I to do in it. I have got no answer beyond paying my subscription to the Society from year to year, and receiving a pamphlet, which of course, I am delighted to have. If there is no work to be done, what on earth is a union re-

quired for? Ought it not to do something to put into practice that which stands as the second article of your creed, that is, love towards man? Surely that is not a very difficult thing to do. Either you have got something to do beyond what the other churches are endeavouring to do or you have not. If you have, let us know it. If you have not, what good will this Society do? If you will be so good as to enlighten my ignorance on that point I shall be glad. I believe I do not stand alone in that matter by a good many. We should be glad to hear, since the mover of the resolution said he ignored practicalities, some one who would tell us in what way we can unite to do a work which is not being done by any other Christian church in the country.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think I may make one very short reply to the kindly criticism, with which we have been favoured by the gentleman who has just sat down. In the first place, I did not understand Mr. Odgers to ignore practicalities. In the printed statement which is before the meeting, there are three objects stated. The first is, investigating religious truth. The second, cultivating devotional feelings. The third, furthering practical morality; and in the last paragraph those same general objects are slightly modified and altered in their order. They are there stated as follows: that the ‘Society is offered as a means of uniting all those who believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, in the endeavour to supplement their individual efforts towards goodness and truth by mutual sympathy;’—that corresponds with that which is put third in the paragraph above, namely, ‘furthering practical morality.’ Then, ‘to intensify their trust in and love to God by fellowship in worship;’ that is, in other words, the second object stated in the first paragraph, namely, ‘cultivating devotional feelings.’ Then, ‘to aid each other in the discovery and propagation of spiritual truth, that thus they may attain

to the more complete observance of the Divine laws of human nature.' That which is there put last corresponds, I take it, to that which is put first in the first paragraph, namely, 'investigating religious truth.' I think the only difference between the mover and seconder of the resolution was, that Mr. Odgers distinctly stated that he was more drawn by his sympathy for what is stated first in the first enumeration of the objects of the Society and last in the second enumeration of those objects, namely, 'investigating religious truth,' and less to the practical part; whereas Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell stated that her great interest was in furthering practical morality, which is put last in the first and first in the second enumeration of the objects of the Society, namely to supplement individual efforts towards goodness and truth, by mutual sympathy.

Then, with regard to the question, whether our friend should join us or not; of course we invite everybody to join us who wishes to do so. But for my own part I do not imagine that we shall be joined by a great many of those who are in the happy position of belonging to a society which entirely satisfies them. If any member of the Portland Street congregation, or the South Place congregation feels that either of those particular churches completely satisfies all his desires for religious fellowship, let him remain and be satisfied. We do not seek to render him dissatisfied, but it is a fact which we find existing, that there is a large number who do feel dissatisfied, and who want something more. We offer our organisation as an attempt to find out among ourselves the causes and nature of our own dissatisfaction, and the best practical mode of getting satisfied. Whether any particular individuals, ladies or gentlemen, should join us or not is, as I said before, a question which must be left entirely for themselves to settle. For my part, I think the enumeration of means under the second head of our

printed circular holds out a prospect, if we can succeed in getting the Society formed, of a good deal of practical work which is not much done by any existing church that I know of. The very first is this, 'Holding meetings for the reading of papers and for conference.' I am not aware of any church that attempts anything of that kind—certainly, neither of the two which have been referred to does so. Then, secondly, 'Holding and encouraging meetings for the united worship of God.' That of course is done by every church. But, taken in connection with our avowed intention to endeavour to unite those who belong to the various great branches of monotheistic theology—Christians, Brahmos, Jews, Parsees, Mohammedans, it offers a work that has not yet been attempted, as far as I know, by any existing church, whether orthodox or free. Then, thirdly, 'Helping its members to ascertain and discharge their personal and social duties.' No doubt the minister does something towards helping the members of his congregation to ascertain and discharge their duties; but there is very little mutual fraternal help arising out of the fellowship of the scattered congregations with which I am acquainted in London. Those three objects, to say nothing of correspondence and the issuing of publications, seem to me to point out a very large field of practical work. I am glad that all these questions should be asked, because the more carefully the matter is considered the better it will be for us. But we can only lay before you, as I said before, that which is in our own minds and hearts; and if you find that you are perfectly satisfied without anything we have to offer, we cannot ask you to join us. If, however, what we do place before you does seem to you to be attractive, and to hold out some hope of useful action on your part, then we ask you to join us.

Mr. EDWARD WEBSTER.—Sir, I wish to make a few observations with reference to what fell from the gentleman

at the other end of the room (Mr. Wade). I would, in the first place, ask those who are present, whether an Association of this description is, or is not, a necessity of the age, or rather of the intellectual religion which is so rapidly spreading throughout the country? If it be not a necessity, then this Association will exist but a very short time, notwithstanding the ability with which I am quite sure its concerns will be conducted, from what I have already heard from the Chairman to-night. But if it be, as I for one undoubtedly think it is, a necessity of the age, then you will go on, and you will establish practically the most important religious principles that have ever yet been communicated to the world. It is impossible for any person who is at all connected with the current literature of the age—with what is going on in general society—I may say, in all ranks of society, from the highest to the lowest—not to be aware that doctrines and rules, in connection with religion, which only twenty-five years ago were received as inviolable, are now openly questioned—openly questioned, not for the purpose of depreciating Christianity or religion, but for the noble and exalted purpose of arriving at truth, and that truth the most important of any. What are we, and whither are we going? what is to become of the undying soul which every one in this room possesses? Hitherto science has not been applied to religion. Look at all the religions of the world, and you will find that science has had nothing whatever to do with them. But that wondrous intellect of man, which has given us the electric telegraph, which has enabled us as it were to fly more speedily than the dove—that intellect is now being applied to religion, and the consequence is, that there will be new revelations of the dispensations of Almighty God to man, and what hitherto have been considered penalties and punishments will be found to be constructed upon laws, spiritual, physical, and moral, absolutely perfect in

their conception, and which have never required, and never will require change, or amendment, or supersession, but by certain operations, slow to us but sure, are effecting the ultimate social and religious civilisation of the world. Gentlemen, union is strength; and to tell me that we are to stop because we cannot this evening fix upon a name, is absurd. We shall have a name soon enough, and such a name, I hope, as will unite very many in supporting this Society. I do not hesitate to say, and I am not a very young man, that the institution of this Society has caused me more satisfaction than the institution of any Society I ever heard of. Its importance cannot be exaggerated. There is as yet no religion introduced into the world, which answers the conceptions of a highly intelligent, highly cultivated, and highly benevolent man. Therefore, Sir, I give you all the support I can, and I most heartily hope that this Society is the commencement of a thorough religious civilisation, and that it will end in establishing universally, not only the worship of God, but the brotherhood of man. Then, Sir, we shall not hear of men armed to the teeth, and applying that noble mind which God has given us, not for the purpose of insuring human happiness, but for the purpose of destroying each others' lives. Christianity, as developed, has totally failed to regenerate mankind. Religion founded on man's intellect only will regenerate it, and that religion I trust you are going to inaugurate this evening.

Mr. JAMES BURNS.—Mr. Chairman, and friends, I do not rise to criticise the objects stated in the programme of this Society, but rather to suggest something of a practical character. I am already connected with a body of people in this kingdom, numbering perhaps 20,000, who are already endeavouring to do what this Society contemplates. I see a number of those persons in this room, and from them we can have practical suggestions and sympathy. Now, Sir, there are several things con-

nected with religion. In the first place, there is sentiment. We hear a great deal too much of that. In the second place, there is faith; there is a great deal too little of that. Then we have corresponding belief. Religion is full of belief, but we put action out of view. Then again, we have got dogmas or principles, but we have not got objects. We cannot get all people to believe alike, because every man will believe in accordance with his culture and organisation. But there is one thing we can get all people to do, and that is, to move with one beneficial object, namely, human happiness—an object of all minds above idiocy. But we can never get two minds to entertain the same conception of the same thing. Even as to colours, if the organisation of vision is defective, many persons entirely differ. I have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that this Society is the expression of that which has been going on among some people for many years past, and all the things considered in your programme are already at work in this kingdom. We have Sunday meetings, where papers are read, and where there is free conference. We have churches, where there is no toll at the door, and no card for admission on the platform. Again, we have religion in this country which may be called scientific religion. What is meant by that? Simply, that there is no belief in a religion which is not founded on facts. A scientific religion requires to be based upon man, and not upon God. What do we know about God? We know nothing about God further than what He has revealed of Himself, through human consciousness. Let us realise the great fact of human consciousness, and then I say all that we know about God or anything else we can know only by careful and intelligent investigation, and there are many things which we can never tell with any degree of certainty. To try to do so is unphilosophical, and can lead to nothing but dogmatism. Why should we have dogmatism at all,

where there is intelligence? Intelligence supersedes dogma. Let us never name the word again, because it is the sunken rock on which every ship has foundered which has professed to take mankind to a religious haven. What do we require to know? We want to know what constitutes human happiness. We want to know what are the objects of human existence. Suppose it is immortality. The great object of scientific religion is to discover the fact of immortality—what becomes of men after they leave off their mortality? In what condition do they exist, and what is the relation of the present life to the future life? If you can answer those questions, you know how to found a scientific religion, because you cannot have a religion made up of mere morality; morality is not religion—morality is only the performance of the various duties of life—

The CHAIRMAN.—Allow me, Mr. Burns, to suggest to you that we are rather wandering to subjects which will occupy a great deal of time, and I should like to confine the discussion to the resolution, which has been moved and seconded, and to know whether or not we should adopt it.

Mr. A. C. SWINTON.—Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, among the objects of the proposed Theistic Society, as stated in the prospectus issued by the Provisional Committee, is, ‘To unite men, notwithstanding any differences in their religious creeds, in a common effort to obtain and diffuse purity of spiritual life.’ The question I now feel it my duty to put, in the presence of this assembly, is, Does this proposed Association mean to live according to the divine laws of human nature, as that great example among men, Jesus Christ, lived? If so, of course it must thoroughly renounce the present unbrotherly system of life, and all that pertains to it. And each Theist, as a true child of God, and in His name, shall proclaim by every deed of his daily life the falseness

and criminality of the present system—a system based on animalism, by which the millions of our actually deserving fellow-creatures are forced by those who are more powerful and cunning than themselves to be life-long slaves, and are thereby persecuted in the cruellest manner, body and soul, to the present injury, and far greater sin, of both oppressor and oppressed. If, therefore, this proposed Theistic Society, despite its name and provisions to the contrary, does not mean to supplant this brutalising wrongdoing by the pure spiritual life its Committee proposes to practise, then I say that far more than is at present done by all the anti-Christian Churches, and people falsely called Christians, is its dishonour of God and its mockery of humanity. A few freed souls have been striving to plant on earth that spiritual life which the gentle and all-loving Nazarene, amid the greatest opposition, many centuries since, heroically proved to the world all might live, if they determined to cast aside sensual selfishness, which blinds them, and trust to the guidance of the divine soul within each one of us for happiness, ever increasing and eternal. More of these efforts may be heard of from me at the close of this meeting, if it is desired, or of the Editor of the ‘Alpha,’ 15 Southampton Row, Holborn.

Mr. J. BAXTER LANGLEY.—Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, I rise with very great hesitation, because I feel the question which I raise is one upon which there is a great difference of opinion among those who desire earnestly to co-operate in a religious movement of the kind to be inaugurated here. The word ‘devotional’ occurs in the resolution, and I am sure it will convey to many minds, as it did to mine, the idea of prayer in public worship and prayer in the sense of petitioning to the Deity. I believe that there are a very large number of persons who are animated by religious sentiment, who nevertheless believe that prayer in that sense is not

part of our religious duty, and that it places both man and God in a wrong position. Therefore I know that, supposing the resolution were carried with the word 'devotional' included in it, it would drive away from you many of those whom I should like to see united with you—namely, those who philosophically object to the word 'devotional' as relating to a form of prayer. I simply wish to raise the question, whether that word must be regarded as an essential part of the resolution. If so, it will exclude myself and those with whom I am accustomed to co-operate among the advanced Unitarians.

The CHAIRMAN.—We have been desirous so to prepare our resolutions as to cause as little difference as possible; but I have no doubt it would be quite impossible to draw up any resolution, and it would be useless if we could succeed in doing it, which would exclude nobody. There must be a certain amount of community of feeling, as I have said already in answering a previous question. I can only say that the phrase which has been objected to expresses one of the main objects of the Society. The cultivation of devotional feeling was a subject which was well considered and very deliberately and unanimously adopted by the Provisional Committee; and on the part of that Committee, I have no hesitation in saying that they intend to adhere to that phrase. With regard to what it applies to, or what it means, I have no authority to enter into that question at all; each person must judge for himself as to the phrase itself. The Committee who have called this meeting, and who have hitherto acted in this movement, heartily adhere to it.

Mr. R. D. DARBISHIRE.—Sir, I feel very much interest in the programme which I hold in my hand, but I have very great doubts as to the object of the proposed Society, much as we have heard of it. I have taken

much pains to form my own opinion upon those subjects mentioned in the circular. I am in doubt at this moment whether the object of the Society is to unite men or to make a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of spiritual life. If the object of the Society is to unite men, I am afraid the Committee, in their efforts to unite, will lose that precision of thought, and that resoluteness of principle, which always disappear from attempts at compromise. The object of the Society, so far as I have heard from the speakers to-night, is a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of life ; not to unite men. We do not care for the mere fact of uniting men. The mere fact of uniting men is of no use. If they are heartily unanimous in their object—if they are prepared to pledge themselves to join together—if they hail with the sincerest thankfulness the authority of the moral law, recognising similar devotion on the part of their members, whom they did not know before, as they themselves feel—they will gather strength from knowing that others have the same aspiration and the same longing with themselves, and they will earnestly unite for such a purpose. That is all our resolution proposes, as it seems to me—that the Society shall be formed for a common effort to attain purity of life, and not to unite men.

The CHAIRMAN.—Mr. Darbshire is undoubtedly quite correct in what he has said. The object of the Society is a common effort, and it is to unite men only so far as is necessary to carry out that common effort. Of course there can be no common effort without union. The object of the union, no doubt, is not as an end, but simply as a means—the end being the common effort.

The resolution was then put to the meeting, and carried, with four dissentients.

Mr. VANSITTART NEALE.—Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, the resolution which I have been asked to propose is, that the name of the Society be ‘The Universal Religious Association.’ Before I address myself to the resolution distinctly before you, I wish to disclaim, in my own name, any notion that I am speaking for anybody except myself. I infer it is one of the characteristics of the Society which I hope to see formed, that in it we should feel that we are not bound by the opinions of other people; that we do not pledge ourselves to accept the opinions of all those with whom we may be associated in this Society, or whom we may ask to join in the Society; nor are we to ask them, or require them, to accept our opinions. But we do ask, and we hope it may be possible to show, that there should be a common basis of union, defined, distinct, and practical, so far as such union can be practical, upon which we may act, preserving to ourselves that individuality of opinion without which I myself am convinced it is perfectly impossible that mankind could ever arrive at a general acceptance of any religious truth as something in which they commonly agree.

Now, Sir, as to the name. I have heard, what I was not aware of before, that it is intended to propose that the question of the name to be given to this proposed Society should be deferred for further consideration. I confess my own opinion is that it would be a great mistake to do so. Unless it should appear to-night that there is an irreconcilable diversity of opinion as to what the name ought to be, I think that the not adopting a name would be as much as to say we do not ourselves clearly understand what we want, we have no distinct idea what the Society is to exist for, and therefore it is impossible for us to give it any title which would enable any other people to tell what it is we ask them to join in. I myself have a very distinct idea of a principle upon which I

think it is possible to form the Society, and perhaps I may be allowed very shortly to fall back upon what has already been said as to the question which has been asked, because I think the conclusive answer has not yet been given—I mean the question as to what such a Society as this can do which any other free Christian Church cannot do. I say the answer to that question is this : it can unite those persons who, having a deep religious feeling, cannot join any Christian Church. That is what it can do. It can unite the gentleman whom I have the honour to see to-night on my left (Mr. Sen) ; it will unite the Mohammedan and the Parsee ; and it will unite gentlemen like the author of ‘The Phases of Faith ;’ it will unite numbers of those who are now balancing between Pantheism and the acceptance of that which we have called Theism. It may unite all those who cannot and will not join any Christian Church, and in doing that you will do much to make all those who are members of Christian Churches understand what it is they ought to aim at. That is the principle on which I would support this Society. That is what I think this name, which I propose, expresses. I think it is apparent, from the list of names read to you from the report to-night, that there are at least three different views or heads of what the name for such a Society as this should be, all of which, I think, are mistaken ones. There are certain persons who think that the Society should come out with a definition of what they call absolute or universal religion, and thus place itself in a species of critical antagonism to all existing forms of faith. I think that would be a very great mistake. The object of the Society, I consider, is to bring men into that state of mind towards each other in which it may be possible for them thoroughly, fairly, and calmly to investigate and to judge of what there is which is true and what there is which is not true in different religious faiths. Until they have brought themselves into that

state of mind they cannot be in a state of mind to define in a satisfactory manner what are the religious truths which they themselves coincide with, and which they seek to inculcate. Again, there are certain persons who would suggest apparently that the Society should put itself under the protection of some existing religious institution, or under some form of Christianity. Here again I consider we should start upon a great mistake if we did that. I myself do accept individually that truth as to which others differ; for I do accept, and hold, and believe in the truth of that which has been considered by many persons to be altogether contrary to reason, that which has been the foundation of what is called the Catholic faith, upon which Christianity has been historically founded. I accept it entirely, although I am not going, of course, to occupy the meeting with any discussion upon that point. But I consider that there is no religion, there is no faith, there is no religious dogma whatever, which is not influenced by the myths and legends or notions with which it has been associated. No society which could hope to bring man generally to the acceptance of a faith that should extend all over the world can exist at all if it does not leave itself open to the true, careful, calm investigation and examination of all those matters that may be contemned, or may be insufficiently founded on facts in the existing creeds. Then again there is another idea which has been prevalent to a certain extent in America—namely, that the Society is to meet and say, ‘We hold a number of very different opinions, and we simply agree to come together and tell each other that we differ.’ I think that would be an extremely unsatisfactory foundation on which to form the Society. I cannot imagine that the Society would attain any valuable action if it were to adopt that as its sole basis. What is it that the Society ought to stand upon? I consider that the Society aims at doing this: it aims, or should aim,

according to my idea, to unite men within their different faiths by leading them to feel that all of them are, to use a Biblical phrase, the sheep of one Master, although they may be separated for the present in many different folds; to lead them to believe that there is a spirit common to, pervading all religions, even those which we most generally condemn as false religions; there is a spirit pervading them all, which is the profound spirit of religion, a part of which each one of the special creeds has more or less ambiguously given utterance to, but to which it is our object to bring them back, saying to men, 'You remember that all your own acts, all your own dogmas, all that you, in your own particular religious creeds, may endeavour to insist upon, they are only helps, and should be regarded only as helps, to the development of a common foundation which may be said to be the manifestation of the really divine and universal religion of man.' I consider that every religion has, more or less, been founded upon trust in God. It is perfectly true that the idea of trust has been embarrassed by a great deal of distrust; it is quite true that men are continually talking as if they were, and imagined themselves to be, in antagonism to God, and God in antagonism to them, and they suppose that it is necessary to put an intervening mediator between themselves and God, in order to relieve that antagonism which they imagine exists. But this mediator and the system of mediation have been introduced because they have got in their minds, in spite of all this intellectual trust, a profound feeling of distrust in the Being who is the Author of their own lives and the Author of this wonderful world, and because they wish to get rid of and relieve any element of distrust, and to give vent to the confidence in the Being on whom their lives depend.

Then I say that every religion has, more or less, sought to affirm fellowship among men. There again we have

the same sort of error. That fellowship has been limited to the fellowship of some particular nation, or the fellowship of those belonging to some particular sect, or holding some particular set of opinions. There has been a failure in establishing a feeling of fellowship among men by having a common relation to the Great Being to whom they owe their existence. The third great element has been this : that religion is a matter of revelation ; it is not an invention of man's imagination only, but that it is something which man, through his imagination, apprehends as the action of God towards him, by means of which man is brought, through the action of God, to the apprehension of those deep and spiritual truths upon which his whole life depends. Here again we have had the same sort of mixture of error with truth which we have found in other cases. Here again it is our object to eliminate that error. Men have generally supposed that the idea of a revelation was something authoritatively declared at some part of the remote past, and which for ever after was to be accepted upon certain grounds with the same evidence. There is another and grander idea of revelation, which has been imputed to the Roman Catholic Church—the revelation of a continuous progress, or something going on from the beginning of the world, and which will never terminate till the world itself is terminated—a continual manifestation of God to man by means of which man is brought into a more thorough appreciation of his relation towards God, and, therefore, his relation towards himself. It is the belief in this system of revelation of continual progress which I say we substitute for the idea of the authoritative revelation, and it is that which completes the scheme. The third great principle which lies at the bottom of all religions, and which it is the object of this Society to call forth and bring out in its purity—— I do not wish to occupy your time much longer, but these considerations

appear to me very essential to bring before the Society (although I have been able to do so only in a very imperfect manner), in order to make you share my conviction that the Society has a distinct object on which it may be formed, and which it may express by its name. I think the name suggested is one which meets all those views as well as any name that can be suggested. 'The Universal Religious Association' expresses, I think, all those convictions. It expresses by the word 'universal' a desire to take in all mankind, that we regard the process of revelation as something carried on among all nations throughout all ages, and that we go to all of them, in order to invite all to join us, and gather from all of them those signs and features of truths which they have adopted. Again, it is to be a religious association. It is to be a union of trust in God; and it affirms the fellowship of men one with another, which is the second great principle upon which true religious faith is founded. I say, therefore, that this name seems to me to express the object of the Society, such as I conceive it to be, as fully as any name could express it; and I have, therefore, no hesitation in recommending to this meeting that that name should be adopted.

Mr. ANDREW LEIGHTON.—Mr. Chairman, I will consult the desire of the meeting by exceeding brevity, and I will simply formally second this resolution, reserving to myself the opportunity of making any remarks at the close of the discussion if it should be necessary, but not otherwise.

The CHAIRMAN.—As I know there is an amendment to be moved to this resolution, perhaps it would be convenient that that should be proposed before any general discussion takes place.

Mr. EDWARD HENRY BUSK.—As you, Sir, have called upon me to move the amendment at once, I certainly will do so. Taking as I do so great an interest in this

Society, I move any amendment upon a resolution which the Provisional Committee has thought fit to bring before the meeting to-night with the greatest regret. It is from no wish to force upon the Committee, or upon the Society which this meeting has declared its desire to found, any name of my own selection. It is, perhaps, not even from any feeling that the name which the majority of the Committee desire to recommend to-night is in itself very objectionable, but it is from a great desire on my part to prevent the Society from being misconstrued unnecessarily by those who have not joined it. The name itself may seem a very unimportant matter; but, in fact, the name is the only thing which comes before persons who are not members of the Society. The name to them represents the Society. It is a very important thing, therefore, that the name should represent the object of the Society, and, as far as possible, be kept free from being misrepresented and misunderstood. At the same time, it is not at all important, in my view, that a name should be speedily fixed upon. We have already passed, almost unanimously, a resolution which states in very distinct terms the objects which it is proposed that this Society shall have in view. It cannot, therefore, be said that, in thus declining to choose a name to-night, this meeting is forming a Society without having any distinct object. It has three very distinct objects; but at the same time the name, the short placard which will set before the external world the objects which we have in our hearts and minds, is a thing, in my judgment, requiring careful consideration. It is not, of course, my place to make known to the meeting everything that has passed in committee, but I think I may inform the meeting that the list of names I have read in the report only came before the Committee last Monday, and they had then and there to select a name. Therefore I do think there was very little time for thought as to the best name to be selected. There

was not unanimity at our committee meeting, as you, Sir, have said ; and I feel that the subject of choosing a name is so important, as compared with the fact of being without a name for four or five months, that I do earnestly entreat the meeting to consider whether the choice of a name ought not to be deferred until we have had a longer time to consider. It is in itself a matter of detail, and, as the chairman has already informed you, it is the intention of the members of the Provisional Committee to bring before this meeting a resolution to the effect that it should be referred to a Committee to complete the organisation of this Society, to form rules as to membership and as to the management of the Society, and various questions of that kind which cannot be gone into at a meeting of this general nature. I therefore move the amendment, ‘ That this meeting do not commit itself to the choice of a name, but that the choice of a name be referred, together with the other details of completing the organisation of the Society, to the Committee,’ which I hope this meeting will soon appoint.

I will not detain the meeting one instant more. I wished merely to put before you, as shortly as possible, the extreme importance of the choice of an appropriate name, and the desirability of not taking any step which we should at any time wish to retract, and which we should regret having taken hastily and without due consideration.

Mr. ARMSTRONG.—I beg leave to second the amendment, not exactly in the same interest in which it has been moved by Mr. Busk, but because a name has been running in my own head which has not been mentioned, and which I cannot help thinking would recommend itself to a large number of persons ; and, in order that that name may have a chance of being considered by the Provisional Committee, I rise to second Mr. Busk’s amendment. I suppose that the line of thought and

feeling which has led the gentlemen forming the Provisional Committee to call us together to-night has been, at any rate, a certain dissatisfaction with the general lines of religious thought existing around us. Thought on serious matters seems at the present day to be running chiefly in two channels: the one is the ancient channel which regards certain dogmatic beliefs, whatever they may be, as essential to salvation, and insists that all men must come to one dogmatic belief in order that they may be saved; the other is the reaction on that old belief, which is beginning to overthrow all distinctively religious thought, and to teach us that man need not look to anything higher than himself for instruction and light, and that all that has been accustomed to go by the name of religion may be entirely abandoned. I apprehend the desire of the Committee would be to take a medium course; and while rejecting the notion that any special dogmatic belief, be it Ritualistic, Evangelical, or otherwise, is necessary to salvation, nevertheless they would contend that some religious belief, or, at any rate, some religious life, is necessary to salvation in its highest sense—that salvation is an assimilation with the Divine Being, whom they believe to govern the universe; and the great religious work before us is to draw man nearer to that Divine Being. Whether these thoughts ran in the mind of the Committee or not I cannot tell. I can only judge from the internal evidence which I find in the prospectus. I have only endeavoured, as I suppose all who received this circular have, to get out of my brain some name to express this object. I entirely agree with Mr. Busk, that our name is an exceedingly important point. By our name we shall stand or fall; by our name we shall be judged by Saturday Reviewers and all that tribe; and if they can find anything to ridicule in our name, we shall find it hard to contend against it. But of the names our secretary read, every one con-

tained either the word 'Religious' or the word 'Theistic.' Objections have been urged to both those names, the objection to 'Theistic' being, I presume, that, however grand and noble the word may be in itself, it may give rise to certain prejudice, and is not generally understood in its proper and primary sense. A Theist is a person who believes in a God. Nevertheless, I have spoken to many Christian persons of various Churches who were quite shocked at my notion that they were Theists. I think, therefore, it would be well if we could find some other name than 'Theistic' by which we could express our objects, and which there would be no objection to our adopting. On the other hand, the objection to the word 'Religious,' to my mind, is that there are things professed as religious which I, for my own part, am not inclined to recognise as religious in the proper sense of the word. The Secularists and the Positivists tell us of Secular religion and Positive religion. I have no objection either to Secularists or Positivists. I believe many of them are good and earnest men, but at the same time I do not think we should find it practicable to work in a religious association with them. I do not think we should find we had a common aim and object, and I doubt whether a society such as that would be found to be practically useful. I would, therefore, suggest that the Committee do consider the word 'Monotheistic.' The word is a very long one, and it may sound too learned. At the same time I think it combines all that one understands by Theism, without having any accretion around it such as gathers around the word 'Theistic.' I suppose you do not contemplate being Polytheists, and therefore I do not think, by adding the word 'Mono' to 'Theistic,' that you will practically narrow your Society at all. Monotheistic may seem to be a word out of place in England; you may say that, by taking the name of *Monotheistic*, it is implied there is a *Polytheistic* Society

against whom we are engaged. But this Society is not an English Society; it is not even a European Society; but it is to be a world-wide Society, if the world will join us. Polytheism is not yet eradicated from the world; it still exists in many countries in the East; and I think by adopting such a name as Monotheistic we should avoid all prejudice such as gathers around the word 'Theistic.' We should be distinct and precise, and not misunderstood by any party; not lay ourselves open to ridicule, but express exactly what are the objects of the majority of the members of the Provisional Committee. I have great pleasure, therefore, in seconding Mr. Busk's amendment.

Mr. OWEN.—Sir, I would support the amendment, and merely observe that the suggestion made by the last speaker is one I approve of, although I should like it better were the title to be 'Monotheistic Brotherhood.' I was heartily pleased and delighted when I read the prospectus, and I thought if a name could be selected in which both points might be embraced, that of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, it would be very desirable. I think this comes nearer to it than any name which I have yet heard. For that reason I support, or rather endorse, what the last speaker has said. I regret to find that there should be any division to-night. I believe that in spirit we all agree. I think Mr. Swinton ought to be satisfied with what this Society intends to do. It is what I have desired to see for a long time—namely, a broad platform where any man might stand upon equal terms with others. I have had much experience with different denominations, those who profess the popular Evangelical views and others, and I do not question the reality of their convictions and enjoyment, although I do not agree with them. I say there is a reality among them, and I respect them, and I want to be able to stand on the platform side by side with them. I give them

credit for their sincerity, and can understand them when they say they can realise acceptance with God. I can appreciate the worthy stranger to whom I have listened with satisfaction and delight, though introducing views so different, when he took for his text, 'God is love,' and when he illustrated that love by referring to the returning prodigal. I thought then it was time we had a movement such as is now being inaugurated, and I hope those of my friends who have not gone cordially with the votes will reconsider it, and will not act in opposition, but in concert. There will be opportunities afforded for conference and for the reading of papers, and the Society will afford them an opportunity of submitting any views which they may desire to bring before us. I have very frequently said, and I wish you to bear it in mind (and I have been labouring outside for many years in attempting such an object), that the things you are now suggesting I have attempted to do. I have referred to the Catholic Church. They have one grand idea, but their mistake is that they want every one to be of one mind. But cannot we have all under one Shepherd? Cannot we have all in one fold, and be looked upon as one Church? As things are now, a premium is paid on hypocrisy. We want each man to be true to himself. In opening associations like this there will be every scope offered for humility, as there is a bare possibility that we may be wrong. When we establish a Society like this, if any member has anything to communicate, he will be in a position to do so more than he is now, when the different sects stand at daggers' points.

Mr. E. WEBSTER.—Sir, I think it would be wise to postpone the final resolution of this Society with regard to the name, because I think the name in itself is very important indeed. Moreover, I should object to the name that has been mentioned, because it is too vague. 'The Universal Religious Society' would not carry to ordinary

minds the true nature of this Association. I presume, of course, when the Society comes to be organised it will have some system of public worship, because, unless it applies to the spiritual sentiment of human nature, it will at last merely become an institution for the circulation of papers on theological subjects. Man is, by nature, a gregarious creature, and more especially in matters connected with religion, and unless you have some system of public worship I venture to predict your Society will ultimately fail. The words 'Religious Association' do not point to religious public worship at all. If you had some such name as this, 'The Church of God for all People of all Nations,' the word 'Church' would in this Christian country carry with it an idea of public worship. I do not mean to say that that is a better name than that which is mentioned in the resolution. I should like to know very much from our Asiatic friends what the meaning of the word 'Theistic' is, as understood in that part of the world, but the word throughout Christendom has a certain definite meaning. I mention that now for the purpose of showing my reasons for voting for the amendment. I think the name has never been sufficiently considered, and I am not content with the name that has been mentioned, because it is much too vague.

Mr. CHARLES PEARCE.—Mr. Chairman, brothers, and sisters, I shall support the amendment, but not for the same reasons for which my friend opposite (Mr. Armstrong) supported it; and, before I make a very few remarks, I should like to clear away one or two difficulties which probably his remarks have made. He suggested a name in his own mind as one which was suitable to this Society—that is, Monotheistic, if I understood him aright, because in the world there were many gods, or rather there was worship of what are supposed to be numerous gods. Without entering into any theological discussion,

I desire simply to carry your minds back some 4,000 years since, and to remind you that all the efforts of Moses were to destroy the worship of gods and to enunciate the worship of the one true God. Therefore I earnestly hope you will dismiss from your minds at once any idea of adopting such a name. We do not want to have this country and the world embroiled, as were the nations around the Children of Israel, for the purpose of putting down the worship of many gods. Our brother's observations would not apply, for he said we have Positivists and Secularists; and I do not think that the name proposed, of 'The Universal Religious Association,' would be a name under which we could unite with Positivists and Secularists. I gathered from his remarks (I do not wish to do him any injustice) that he would not unite with Positivists and Secularists. Now, if he did say so, he at once condemns himself as being unfit to join this Association. For I take it that if we believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, if a man be a Positivist because he has by using his intellect become a Positivist, he is still a child of God and still a brother; and it is just the same if he be a Secularist. I say, all honour to the noble Secularist of Manchester who challenged his lordship the Bishop to meet him on some fair platform. They are men and they are brothers.

Now I will state my reason for not agreeing with the name 'Universal Religious Association.' My reason is simply this, that no one attempts to define religion. Mr. Vansittart Neale says, if we ask what is the meaning of the term 'religious,' we must criticise all religions. Of course we must. There is only one religion, and that is very easily found if you are desirous of finding it—it is the religion of love. It was professed by Jesus Christ 1,800 years ago. It was professed by Confucius nearly 3,000 years since. It was professed by Brahma and Buddha. It was professed by all the Reformers. We

do not want the religion of love hampered up with doctrines or dogmas at all. Then we must say what is the meaning of the word 'religious.' If you can apprehend thoroughly your relationship to God, or to the central source of life, call that central source by any name you please, if you once recognise that from the central source you issue, then you are a child of the central source; and every man, woman, and child, no matter where they are, or in what condition or circumstance, are your brothers and sisters, and that is the religion of love. I only support the amendment upon the name tonight that there may be some time to think of the name. The name proposed is a very fine name, and it is one of the most suitable you could think of, if you could only well define in your own mind what religion is. When I sent in my reply, I thought no name was so suitable as 'Theistic Union,' if Theism were thoroughly exemplified. I only oppose the carrying of the resolution and support the amendment that you may think over it, and come better prepared at the next meeting to vote as to the name to be given to this Association.

Now let me ask you just to consider one statement. You say you are here with the desire to associate together as brothers and sisters in forming this Association, and if you form it under the title of a 'Universal Religious Association,' you accept the definition of religion that it is your duty to God, knowing your relationship to Him, and you accept the duties which devolve upon you when you meet your brothers. This is important; and please to listen to it fairly and in the same spirit in which I offer it to you. Do you think that the Divine Being is a respecter of persons? No, you do not. Do you think the Divine Being gives one man 800,000*l.*, and gives 800,000 men nothing a year? Certainly not, and He never intended it. If we are going to work, and not to talk, one of our efforts will be to carry into daily life that

precept laid down by the Nazarene Carpenter, 'As you would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.'

Mr. BAXTER LANGLEY.—I should like to say a word or two with regard to the name to be given to the Association. I am still in hopes that, as the Society was itself open to discussion and consideration, it may hereafter amend the first resolution and adopt some other principle. I submit for your consideration, and with due respect, that you will find by experience that you cannot do by the resolution what I had hoped you intended to do. I wish to say one or two words as to this Society being called 'The Universal Religious Association.' I want to show you, in one or two brief sentences, that it cannot be universal if you adhere to your first resolution. As I understand, we came here together to-night to bring as large a number as possible into religious association; and the gentleman at the bottom of the room, very early in the meeting, said with great force, as I thought, that the Society must offer something beyond that offered by other Churches. The question is whether, having adopted the platform you have to-night, and having determined to adhere to it, you are not, by calling yourselves 'The Universal Religious Association,' placing the Society in an equally absurd position as if you called yourself the Catholic Church. With all respect to the gentlemen who have spoken, I hold that there are a very large number of Secularists who are tired and worried to death with discussions, disputations, and debates upon dogmatic religion who would gladly have welcomed a meeting of this kind if it had been of such a nature as to present a platform which was unobjectionable to them. I believe it was quite possible to adopt a platform which, while it would have included those connected with Christian Churches, would yet have been so adapted to the wants of the age as to have included all those men who are animated

by deep religious feeling and desire religious co-operation. The orthodox Churches are admitted to have failed, and a great number have admitted that many of the heterodox Churches have failed. It is a fact that I very much regret. Having been identified with the Unitarian Churches, I can say that they are comparatively desolate and deserted. They are only filled when there is some man of remarkable ability and eloquence who calls together a congregation simply by the dramatic character of his eloquence. They have all been rendered desolate by the fact that they have determined to have as a basis of worship that there should be a certain creed; that lies at the root of the whole of this evil. If you could adopt such a platform as would be truly universal then you would bring in a very large number of people—some of those speculative persons who have been alluded to in terms hardly so respectful as ought to have been used—you would bring in a large number of earnest Secularists who desire to join in what is commonly known as Christian work and benevolent enterprise. Now, what are the two ideas which you have embodied in your programme which would prevent, I believe, the possibility of this union? I know that many persons adhere to the idea of a personal God as being essential to true religion. I am not an atheist myself, but I claim that there is a religious spirit existing in the minds of those who differ from me and from you on that essential point. I believe there is an enormous amount of useful effort to be carried on in the world without any dogma of that kind. And it is a dogma with regard to the personal existence of the Deity. The other idea to which I have alluded is that which may be said to have been embodied in George Coombe's 'Constitution of Man'—a work written by a man of the highest ability, of great earnestness, and of deep religious feeling. His chapter on Prayer has been adopted and accepted by a large

number of persons calling themselves Christians. If you are to adopt the two ideas to which I have referred, you cannot get a basis of union which will embrace persons other than those embraced in the existing Churches; the Church in South Place includes a very large number of persons who go the length to which I have referred to-night. There are other persons who go the same length among Unitarian ministers. There are very broad and liberal views preached from their churches, and I would point to Mr. Mark Wilks, of Holloway, where discourses of the most profound character are delivered from the pulpit. It is a matter of grave importance that you should not hastily take a name because it adds one more difficulty which you will throw in the way of adapting yourselves to the wants of the present age. I am convinced myself, from my knowledge of the common people (not such as those we see in this room to-night), many of whom hunger and thirst after some notion of this kind—I am quite sure you will not bring them on your platform unless you are careful to avoid the difficulties attaching to other Churches, one of which I think you have thrown in your way by adopting the resolution you have to-night. I beseech you, therefore, not to throw a further difficulty in the way by adopting an unsuitable name, because if you do it will only add one more to the difficulties already existing.

The CHAIRMAN.—I think it must be quite clear that the meeting is not prepared, at any rate unanimously, to accept a name to-night. On the other hand, we are extremely anxious to get to the next resolution, to which our friend Mr. Sen will speak. Under those circumstances, I have the permission of the mover and the seconder of the resolution to withdraw the resolution in favour of the amendment, and if that is done we may at once dispose of this question, and shall be able to proceed with a more interesting discussion.

Mr. LEIGHTON.—I desire to say one word before you withdraw the resolution. I was myself asked to second this resolution on coming into the room to-night, but have had no time for its consideration. From the general sense of the meeting, I think it would be desirable that further consideration should be given. I am quite willing, and am glad that the mover of the resolution is also, that it should be withdrawn. I want the meeting to give their sanction to the proposition that the name, whatever it be, shall be made as broad as possible—to include all humanity. The question I have been considering in my own mind is whether even the term ‘Theistic,’ broad as that is, would not exclude some who ought to be included. The religious sentiment is a common principle; all people have it, Secularists as well as others; and some Secularists I have found to be more intrinsically religious than many professing Christians. A name, therefore, which would include such persons should surely be the one adopted by such a society as ours.

Mr. Leighton then controverted Mr. Baxter Langley’s objections to the word ‘devotional,’ holding that the question raised was simply one of definition, which each person must settle for himself, just as each had to define for himself what was meant by religion.

Mr. CUNNINGTON.—I hope I shall not be considered to intrude if I occupy your attention for a moment, being the individual who had the honour of proposing to the Provisional Committee the name which has been so much controverted. I do not rise for the purpose of justifying the name or recommending it, seeing what the present feeling of the meeting is, but merely for the purpose of preventing what I think may be a practical inconvenience. We must have, as it seems to me, some designation in order that our friend Mr. Busk may be communicated with. If you have no name it might be temporarily the Nameless Society. You must have some name, or you

cannot address our friend Mr. Busk. If you cannot agree upon the name of the Society, let it be 'The Nameless Society,' or something that would prevent the practical inconvenience of having no title.

The CHAIRMAN.—I do not think practical inconvenience would be at all felt. We came here to-night as a proposed Theistic Society, and until something else is adopted you have that name upon the prospectus, which, I think, will answer all practical purposes. The resolution now before the meeting is that the subject of the name be referred to the Committee to be appointed to complete the organisation of the Society.

The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

BABOO KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.—Sir, before I introduce the resolution with which I have been entrusted, I request your permission to say a few words. I have always felt strongly the importance and necessity of establishing spiritual fellowship and union among all classes and races of men. That there should be political and social differences among mankind is not at all surprising; but that men and women should fight with each other in the name of religion and God is really painful and surprising. The true object of religion is to bind mankind together, and to bind them all to God. If we see that in the name of religion, men, instead of promoting peace on earth and goodwill among men, are trying to show their antagonism and animosity towards each other, then certainly we must stand forward with our voice of protest and say religion is defeating its own legitimate object. I have always been distressed to find in my own country how many of the Hindoo sects in India fight with each other, and how they combine to war with Mohammedans and Christians, whom they look upon and hate as their enemies. It is far more painful to see how that spirit of bitterness

and sectarian antipathy has been persistently manifested towards the Hindoos by many professing Christians. None preached so eloquently and so ably the doctrine of the true love of God and the love of man as Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, extremely unpleasant to us all to see those who profess to be his disciples hate the Hindoo as a heathen who has no hope of salvation, and who has not one single spark of truth in his own mind. Narrowness of heart has oftentimes its origin in narrowness of creed. Men hate each other, men contaminate their hearts with sectarian bitterness, because they believe that there is no truth beyond the pales of their own denominations and churches. This is a fatal mistake, and to this may be attributed all those feelings of bitterness and mutual recrimination which have converted the religious world into a painful scene of war and even bloodshed. Religion is essentially universal. If God is our common Father, His truth is our common property. But the religious world may be likened to a vast market ; every religious sect represents only a portion of truth ; religion is many-sided ; each individual, each nation, oftentimes adopts and represents only one side of religion. In different times and in different countries, therefore, we see not the entire religious life, but only partial religious life. The Hindoo represents religion in his peculiar way, the Christian in his. The men of the first century represented religion in their own way according to the circumstances in which they lived ; and so the men who are blessed with modern civilisation represent religious life in their own way. If we desire to adopt religious life in its entirety and fulness, we must not, we cannot, reject or ignore any particular nation or any branch of God's vast family. If we embrace all nations and races from the beginning, from the creation of man down to the present moment ; if we can take in all religious scriptures, all so-called sacred writings ; if we

are prepared to do honour to all prophets and the great men of all nations and races, then certainly, but not till then, can we do justice to universal and absolute religion such as exists in God. To prove true to Him, to prove true to humanity, we must do justice to all the departments of man's religious life as they are manifested in different ages and in different parts of the world. The English Christian has no right to hate the Hindoo heathen, nor has the Hindoo heathen any right to treat the English Christian with sectarian antagonism and hatred. Both must embrace each other in the fulness of truth and in the fulness of brotherly love. I rejoice heartily to see such a thing foreshadowed in the constitution of the Society about to be organised. I feel that modern nations and races are getting their eyes opened to the catholicity of true religion, after centuries of spiritual despotism and sectarian warfare. Men are beginning to feel that, in order to be true to nature and true to God, they must cast away sectarianism and protest against spiritual tyranny and kiss freedom and peace. The object of this resolution is to bring together religious men in India, America, Germany, France, and in other parts of the world, into one Monotheistic brotherhood, so that they may all recognise, love, and worship God as their common Father. The time has come when such a movement ought to be practically organised, when all nations and races should be brought together into one fold. English Christians ought to extend their right hand of fellowship to my countrymen, and my countrymen ought to extend their right hand of fellowship to all those who stand beyond the pales of Hindoo orthodoxy; so that, while they differ from each other on certain dogmatic questions of theology, they still recognise each other as brethren, and show their preparedness to vindicate the unity of the human race in the face of the existing conflicting chorus of theological opinions. It is impossible to establish unanimity of

opinion among mankind, and those who have tried to bring about such unanimity have always failed. I hope, therefore, the friends and promoters of this movement will not commit that great mistake. Let individual liberty be recognised; let every individual right be vindicated and respected; but still at the same time, while we recognise differences of opinion, let us feel, and let us declare, that it is possible to have a common platform of action, where we can exchange our sympathies with each other as brethren. There is another mistake which I hope this Society will not commit, and that is, ever to assume an arrogant and hostile attitude towards existing sects. We should always assume a humble position. We must stand at the feet of our ancestors, all those who have gone before us, and who have left for our enjoyment precious legacies of religious life and religious thought. All honour to such men. Hindoo, Christian, Chinese, Buddhist, Greek, and Roman—men of all nations and races—men of all ages—who have in any way laboured successfully to promote the religious, and moral, and social amelioration of mankind, are entitled to the undying gratitude of all succeeding ages. In forming a Society like that whose formation we contemplate at present, we feel morally constrained to honour those spiritual and moral benefactors to whom we owe “a debt immense of endless gratitude.” At their feet we sit to-day, and to them we desire to offer our hearts’ thanksgivings, and we desire to recognise them individually and unitedly, as those friends and brothers who have directly or indirectly brought us into that position in which we feel enabled to establish and organise a Society like this. It is on account of the light which we have received from them through succeeding generations that we are prepared to come forward to-night and stand before the world as a Theistic brotherhood. We cannot dishonour them; though they belong to different nation-

alities, though they may be of different times and races, we cannot for one moment dishonour them. We cannot with pride and arrogance say we do not owe anything to the Christian Scriptures, we owe nothing to the Hindu Scriptures, we owe nothing to Confucius. We owe much to all these sources of religious revelation and inspiration. To their lives, as the lives of great men, we owe a great deal. Our attitude, therefore, must be an attitude of humility towards those who have gone before, an attitude of thankful recognition; and towards existing Churches also we must assume the same attitude. If there are friends around us who think it their duty to criticise severely our proceedings, to hold us up to public derision and contempt, they are quite welcome to do so; but let us not, as members of this Society, for one moment cherish in our hearts unbrotherly feelings against them. Our mission is a mission of love, and goodwill, and peace. We do not stand forward to fan the flame of religious animosity, but our desire is to extinguish the flame of sectarian antipathy, if it is possible for us to do so. We go forth as ministers of peace; we shall love all sects; Christians and Hindoos we shall look upon as brothers, as children of the same Father; their books we shall read with profound reverence; their priests we shall honour with thanksgivings; and to all those around us who desire to treat us as men who have no hopes of salvation, even to them we must show charity and brotherly love. I hope, therefore, not a single member of this Society will ever think it right or honourable to manifest the bitter spirit of sectarianism towards any religious denomination. There are in England at present, I understand, nearly 300 religious sects into which the Christian Church has been divided. That such a thing should exist in the midst of Christendom is indeed painful, I may say frightful. Let us do all in our power to bring together these various religious denominations. I do not see why we

should not exercise our influence on Christian ministers to exchange pulpits with each other. Why should not the people of one congregation visit the church of another congregation? Why should not the various preachers of the Christian Churches try to harmonise with each other? Christian people sometimes go the length of thinking that the whole religious life is monopolised by themselves. During my short stay in this country I have been struck with the fact that English Christian life, however grand and glorious it may be—and it certainly is in many of its aspects and features—is sadly deficient in devotional fervour in the world; deficient in feelings such as those which a deep and trustful reliance upon a personal and loving God alone can inspire, support, and sustain. Something like that is to be found in India. I do honestly believe that in India there is such a thing as spirituality. In England there is too much materialism. That is my honest conviction. If England and India were to unite and receive from each other the good things they ought to receive from each other, we should be able to form a true Church, where spiritual fervour and the activity of material life would harmonise, in order to form the unity of religious life. Whether, therefore, we come to England, America, Germany, or France, or any other country where similar religious movements are going on, we ask them to co-operate with us; we ask the whole world to treat us as fellow-disciples, to give unto us all the good things they possess and enjoy for our benefit, that we may thus collect materials from all existing churches and religious denominations in order, in the fulness of time, to construct and uprear the future Church of the world.

Friends, these are the words that I intended to say to-night, with a view to invite you all to look upon this Society as an association of love, and peace, and humility, not of hatred, mutual persecution, and sectarianism. If

this Society should live long—and why should it not live if it is God's Church and God's society?—if this Society be spared to continue in a career of honourable usefulness, it will bless our hearts; it will bless your country and my country; it will bless the whole world. I need not soar into regions of imagination and fancy in order to depict in glowing colours the future Church of the world; but this I must say, that from the time the light of religion dawned on my mind, up to the present moment, I have always been an advocate of the glorious principle of religion which is summed up in these two great doctrines, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; and so long as I am enabled to work, whether here or in my own country or elsewhere, it shall be my duty to speak, and feel, and labour in such a way that not only my own countrymen may, under the guidance of God's Spirit, and with God's help, be brought into one fold, but that all nations and races, so far as is possible with my humble resources and powers, may be influenced to feel the necessity of bringing themselves into one vast family. Oh! may that blessed day soon come when the earth, untrod by sect, or creed, or clan, shall own the two great principles—the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man! I beg to propose this resolution to the meeting: 'That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that the Society should correspond without delay with similar societies in India, America, Germany, France, and elsewhere, assuring them of our sympathy and fellowship.'

Mr. CUNNINGTON.—Ladies and gentlemen, I have had the honour of being asked to second this resolution. I shall not be so presumptuous as to attempt to add anything to what Mr. Sen has said, and I shall occupy your time but a few moments. Mr. Sen has dwelt very forcibly, and very properly, on the obligations we are under to those who have preceded us in the discovery and propagation of

religious truth. There is a further idea which strikes me as being also important, seeing that in Him whom I recognise as the Deity there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning ; there is no change in His laws, and the same element, or the same disposition, exists in humanity now as in former times ; and while we appreciate at its proper value the truth which has been handed down to us by past generations, we do not lose sight of the importance of recognising the inspiration of the present day. I am one of those who think there cannot be any difference or clashing between the advocates of physical science or truths that relate to matter, and those who are the advocates of truths which relate to spiritual things, or to the mind. All truth must be in harmony if it is rightly understood. Both matter and mind have, according to my conception, been given to us by the same Being, who is perfect, and in whom there can be no imperfection. It is on account of our not sufficiently comprehending the laws of that Being that we see around us the lamentable and degrading state of society which exists. I take it that if the interests of society had been more practically insisted upon there would have been comparatively less difference of opinion than there is and less importance attached to the name, which there is, as it seems to me, a difficulty in accepting. When we see about us the want of common honesty, the want of truthfulness, the physical degradation which exists amongst so many of our fellow-creatures, whilst we are living in a land groaning, I may say, under its wealth—if the principle was recognised that property has its duties as well as its rights, it would go, I think, far towards remedying the evil which exists in society ; and whatever name we give to our Society, whatever our aims may be, unless they are brought to have a practical bearing on the ills which are patent to all of us, it will be of but little use. Our object must be to give it a practical direction ;

we must make up our minds to act upon the simple principle, as between man and man, of doing unto others as we would be done by. I will not attempt to analyse, or to dilate upon the two grand principles which have been referred to, of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It is because, as I think, those two principles, rightly understood, are sufficient to unite the whole of us, while we have our own individual opinions, and hold them sincerely, earnestly, and ardently, that we may be in a position to join those who may differ from us, and to give them credit for the same sincerity which we claim for ourselves.

But, Sir, I am not speaking to the resolution, which is, that this Society should put itself in communication with similar societies in all parts of the world. I firmly believe, using the language of our great poet, that 'one touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' and I believe that the religious element in some shape or other exists in all conscious humanity. It is believing that, that I cordially sympathise with, and second, the resolution which has been proposed.

The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

Mr. CONWAY.—Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, I rise for the purpose of moving a resolution to the effect 'That a Committee of twelve be appointed, with power to add to their number, to complete the organisation of the Society, and for the present to manage its affairs; of this Committee, five to be a quorum; and that this Committee report to a future general meeting, to be held as early as they can arrange.'

At this late stage of the meeting I do not feel inclined to occupy the attention of the audience very long. For myself, Sir, I would rather sit silent and see this movement go on, having perfect faith in the soundness of the

seed which we are engaged in planting to-night. I believe it to be seed falling into honest soil, and I have so many opportunities of appealing to the public, and expressing my opinions, and even of monopolising the expression of opinion, that I should be much more pleased to hear some of the rest speak. I will not, however, let a movement, from which I hope great things, pass without stating that it has my entire sympathy, and I heartily approve of it, although, of course, in many details, it does not exactly express my particular ideas. I have my own peculiar views about what constitutes devotion. I do not believe in that which is called private or public prayer. I am not willing, with others, to be called a Christian in the usual acceptance of the word, because I think I love and admire Jesus Christ too much for that. I have my various feelings, of course. Something fell from our chairman which looked as if he believed we were not quite satisfied with our respective local associations, and therefore came hither. I do not agree with that. I think we may be perfectly well satisfied in our local congregational arrangements, and at the same time feel there is room for a larger association with people who disagree with us and people who are far removed from our ideas; and the presence of disagreement, and the presence of misgiving, and the variety of ways of looking at things which have been manifested in this meeting to-night are the most hopeful signs we have; they show that we are beginning to launch out into something wider than the little associations which we have with our own sects, and, instead of heaping up sect upon sect, we shall come in contact with other ways of looking at things throughout the world. I believe, Sir, this Society will stand related to religion exactly as the British Association of Science stands with regard to science. There is a Royal Institution for teaching science, and there is a Jermyn Street School, and there

is the Ethnological Society—all practical institutions for teaching science; and also there is a great movement in this country, and in every country where there are scientific societies, devoted to the union of scientific men for great purposes, and for the prosecution of vaster discoveries than any one society could accomplish by itself; and exactly as the Social Science Association stands related to particular institutions, or the British Association stands related to a particular scientific association, so I understand this Association to stand related to any special religious movement. I should have been glad were it openly called, what I believe it substantially is, a Religious Science Association, and that we should annually have our meetings for the study of such things and furtherance of such ends, just as people meet annually at Social Science or British Scientific Associations. However, Sir, I candidly endorse the idea that this meeting is practically tentative, and the object of this resolution is to further that idea. It is a seed which we are planting, and we propose to appoint a Committee, in order that they may cultivate that seed through the tenderest part of its existence—namely, its gradual first growth, its first tender blade, before it has got the sturdiness and strength to which it can grow of itself. I think it is clear that it would be impossible to decide what shall be the practical mission of an association like this. It is manifestly impossible for us to decide on the emergencies of the future, the exigencies which are to come, the great demands which are to be made on the united religious heart and free thought of this country. We cannot decide till occasions arise, for new occasions teach new duties, and there is not in this world a limb of any animal, or form of any plant, that did not come into being because there was a need which arose for the existence of such animal or plant: every limb, every tree, every leaf, every fin, in this world was created because

it was wanted by the surroundings, the great practical results and emergencies of life. Our movement, then, must be considered as a small egg, and it is to be formed in this world as every other organic form has been constituted in obedience to the requirements which call forth the vital germ and give it shape. As it lives, as it grows, the light which will shine upon it will give it its proper powers; the rain which will fall will clothe it with exactly the duties it needs, and the objects it should have in view. We must trust this seed to the eternal elements of this world; we must trust it to God; we cannot decide at present everything it is to do, for there may arise in distant years some great question upon which it may be desirable, or even necessary, to call a special meeting and take some united action. There may be some other Oriental brother or brothers to welcome, and then this Society will be here to open its arms to such a brother, and not to let him wander about to be tossed hither and thither, and to be preached at at my lord's table by his chaplain. He will not be left to be called a Pagan here and there; and there will be a large welcome and a large hearing wherever there is a Society which regards him as a true, devout, and religious teacher. And, Sir, there may arise great questions of religious freedom—questions arising touching religious movements, national religious establishments, and many other things in this world, where it will be necessary for people united in some great salient points to take some practical action; and that practical action will decide what limbs, what shape, what features, we shall have; for it is clear that, if you try to do too much by giving this Society a distinct shape beforehand, if you try to make a machine answer all your ends before you know what those ends are, if you make your machine without reference to what may happen in the future, if you do that, you will find, I think, that the machine will become very

tiresome, very bungling, and, in the end, useless. I repeat, I would rather begin low down, where all things in nature begin—first of all the mere blade, and let that grow as the Eternal Power shall decide and the course of events shall determine. That is all I have to say, and that is why it seems to me eminently proper that we should have a Committee to watch over us, to avail themselves of every ray of light which shall fall upon our effort, to avail themselves of all suggestions which may be made from whatever quarter, to see that we start well, to see that the first beginnings of this seedling shall be well cultured, well pruned of all that is extraneous, so that we shall see that in the end it is fit for the garner. Those twelve gardeners who will constitute the Committee, those twelve horticulturalists who are to tend this seed and to watch over it, should, I think, be appointed by us, and, therefore, I most cordially move, with the highest hopes as to the progress of this Society in the future, that this Committee be appointed.

Mr. KISTO GOBINDO GUPTA.—Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot speak very much. But I have much pleasure in seconding the resolution which has just been put forward as to the necessity of the proposed Association, and as to the necessity for a Committee to manage its business. Much has been already said upon the subject, and I can only add my voice to say that I have personally felt the necessity of such an association, more perhaps than anybody else in the room. In India we have similar associations, but here some of my friends and myself do not find any distinct association where we can feel ourselves quite at home. So, if the proposed Association should be formed, it will be a welcome place to all of us. I have, therefore, much pleasure in seconding the resolution.

Mr. OWEN.—The last speaker said that he and his associates have not been able to feel themselves at home in any association now existing in this country. There is a class who have not felt themselves at home in any of the Churches, and hence the question was raised, Why do not the working classes go to church? If you are going to form a Committee, take heed to that, have regard to that; do not disregard the working classes; do not get a highly respectable and a thoroughly English Committee. I do not think anyone has attached more importance to the visit of our distinguished Indian friend than I have; but what has been his work in India? He has been endeavouring to deal a death-blow against caste. Have any of those associated with him said one word about the caste which exists in England? And is not that the curse of our country? And so long as that exists all that we have said simply amounts to nothing, and there can be no religious union. I want to test the matter; and if you are in earnest, I will promise you that thousands will back you in your work. I have addressed, I may say, hundreds of thousands of people in this metropolis, and I have scarcely ever opened my lips without advocating the same principles that you have advanced to-night. I hope, therefore, you will be explicit on this one point, and don't let us have a respectable Committee. I am sure you do not misunderstand me. I mean that the working classes have not felt themselves at home, because they are not what is considered the respectable class. I believe that Jack is as good as his master, and in fact a good deal better. The working classes are the industrious bees, and they are better than the drones any day. I have the greatest respect for every gentleman present; but I only ask you to be considerative, and to do something worthy of the name of Chunder Sen. He has the noblest spirit I have seen. I

doubt whether I ever heard a man open his lips in my life for whom I have a greater veneration. I hope, therefore, we shall do something worthy of such a man.

After some further discussion, the resolution was put to the meeting and carried unanimously; and the Committee was subsequently named.

A vote of thanks to the chairman terminated the proceedings.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT A GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT

THE FREEMASONS' HALL, LONDON,

ON

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 1870.

MR. WILLIAM SHAEN IN THE CHAIR.

1. That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is desirable to form a Society to unite men, notwithstanding any differences in their religious creeds, in a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of spiritual life by, (1) investigating religious truth, (2) cultivating devotional feelings, and (3) furthering practical morality.

2. That the subject of the name of the Society be referred to the Committee to be appointed to complete the organisation of the Society.

3. That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is desirable that the Society should correspond without delay with similar societies in India, America, Germany, France, and elsewhere, assuring them of our sympathy and fellowship.

4. That a Committee of twelve be appointed, with power to add to their number, to complete the organisation of the Society, and for the present to manage its affairs; of this Committee, five to form a quorum; and that this Committee report to a future general meeting, to be held as early as they can arrange.

A Committee of twelve ladies and gentlemen was then appointed, of whom the following have consented to act:—Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Ananda M. Bose, Edward Henry Busk, Moncure D. Conway, George Hickson, Andrew Leighton, Miss E. A. Manning, S. Prout Newcombe, William Shaen, and Edward Webster.

STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE.

THE Committee have begun the task committed to them by the general meeting, and have agreed upon the following statement for immediate publication :—

The Committee fully recognise and appreciate the innumerable efforts which have been made by eminently religious and good men for the amelioration of mankind, physically, intellectually, and morally, and acknowledge that a large debt of gratitude is due to these earnest and devoted men; but at the same time they feel that the results of all the efforts which have been made leave abundant room for, and encourage, fresh exertions upon a basis as broad and comprehensive as possible.

It is felt that a belief in the two great principles of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men forms a sufficient basis for religious communion and united action.

This Society is offered as a means of uniting all who share this feeling, in the endeavour to supplement their individual efforts towards goodness and truth by mutual sympathy; to intensify their trust in and love to God by fellowship in worship; and to aid each other in the discovery and propagation of spiritual truth; that thus they may attain to the more complete observance of the divine laws of human nature.

It is intended to seek the attainment of those objects by the following means, namely—

1. The holding of meetings for the reading of papers and for conference.
2. The holding and encouragement of meetings for the united worship of God.

3. The helping its members to ascertain and discharge their personal and social duties.

4. The formation of similar societies, with the same objects, in various parts of the British Empire and other countries.

5. Correspondence with those who may be supposed willing to assist in the objects of this Society.

6. The issue of publications calculated to promote the above purposes.

The Committee now invite all persons who concur in the views thus expressed to join the Society. Any person may become a member by communicating his or her name and address in writing to the honorary secretary, in the form appended to this statement.

It is not proposed to have any compulsory subscription; but all members are invited to contribute to the funds of the Society.

In the resolution, under which the Committee are acting, the objects of the Society are declared to be, the investigation of religious truth, the cultivation of devotional feelings, and the furtherance of practical morality.

With reference to the investigation of religious truth, the Committee feel that it is desirable that meetings for the reading of papers and for conference should be established as soon as possible, and intend to organise such meetings in the autumn of this year.

The Society will also, with a view to the attainment of this object, aid in the study of already existing works, reprinting them when necessary, and will assist in publishing original works.

Under this head will also stand the task of compiling a collection of the purely religious passages from all the different Bibles or Sacred Scriptures to which access can be obtained. The compilation of this work may be begun without delay.

It is hoped that the Society may soon be in a position

to aid in the establishment in many towns and villages of libraries in which those books shall find a place which are calculated to disseminate the principles of the Society, and in the publication of works specially intended for the young.

As to the second of the three objects of the Society, devotional feelings may be indirectly cultivated in a variety of ways, such as by a sincere study of science, by art, or by literature. In fact, all the higher pursuits of the intellect and imagination, and all developments of pure social, and domestic affections materially tend to the increase of the feeling of devotion.

These various means may be encouraged, but can hardly, at least at present, be actually employed by the Society. But the Society can hold meetings for the worship of God, and thereby give such of its members as desire to attend a means of directly aiding each other in the cultivation of feelings of devotion.

These meetings, while strengthening and elevating the spiritual communion between each member and God, will afford opportunities of public worship to those who feel themselves excluded from meetings for worship based on dogmatic theology, and will practically demonstrate the possibility and desirability of the union for public worship of persons holding different creeds.

The Committee intend, therefore, to arrange, in the autumn of the present year, meetings of the Society for united worship.

Another means of furthering this object, which may be at once begun by the Society, is the collection of a book of prayer and praise, to contain passages from already known books and hymns, as well as prayers, meditations, and hymns which may from time to time be contributed by members. This book, subject to continual revision, will be valuable both as an aid in the conduct of meetings for united worship and for private use by individual members.

The third object, namely the furthering of practical morality, naturally branches off in two directions—the personal and social.

Under the first head, the aid to be afforded by the Society will consist principally of the mutual countenance and support which the members will afford each other in the endeavour to carry out into their daily life, whether in the family, society, or in their public or commercial avocations, the principles of high and pure morality. It is, perhaps, needless to remark that nothing in the nature of Church discipline is contemplated or will be established.

Besides this mutual support among the members, the Society may itself aid in the realisation by them of a pure spiritual life by means of its meetings and conferences, where, by reading papers and by friendly discussion, questions relating to the conduct of life may be treated and developed.

In connection with the social branch of this subject, such meetings as are last described will be most useful, and these subjects will be considered in the meetings to be organised by the Committee in the autumn of the present year.

The number of problems to be dealt with under this head is enormous: and whether or no it will be found advisable for the Society, as a society, to take any active part in directly attempting to mitigate the evils which attach to our present civilisation, such as pauperism, war, intemperance, &c., or itself to attempt any philanthropic object; yet there can be no doubt that the Society can and ought at the earliest possible moment to afford ample and frequent opportunities for the reunion of its members, whereby their individual views may be widened and defined, and their individual action may consequently be rendered more intelligent, useful, and energetic.

A list of the members will shortly be printed and circulated among the members of the Society.

The time and place, at which the proposed meetings for united worship and for friendly conference will be held, will be announced to all the members.

Additional copies of the foregoing pamphlet entire, or of the concluding portion alone, containing the resolutions adopted at the general meeting and the statement of the Committee, can be obtained on application to the honorary secretary, EDWARD HENRY BUSK, Highgate, N.



To Edward Henry Busk, Esq.

Dear Sir,

Please to add my name to the List of Members of the Society which was founded at the General Meeting held at the Freemasons' Hall, London, on July 20, 1870, for the purpose of uniting men, notwithstanding any differences in their religious creeds, in a common effort to attain and diffuse purity of spiritual life by (1) investigating religious truth, (2) cultivating devotional feelings, and (3) furthering practical morality.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours truly,

Name in full _____

Address _____



