



GIFT OF IRVING LEVY

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OF THE

INFIDEL CONVENTION,

HELD IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA,
SEPTEMBER 7th & 8th, 1857.

WE USE THE TERM "INFIDEL" IN THE SENSE OF OPPOSITION TO THE
POPULAR THEOLOGY.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

1858.

Infidel Association of Philadelphia

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M I N U T E S , &c.

AGREEABLY to the call which appeared in the columns of the Boston Investigator and other papers, the friends of Mental Liberty assembled in Franklin Hall, Philadelphia, on the morning of the 7th September, 1857.

The attendance, at first, was not numerous ; but very soon after the number increased. At half past 10 o'clock, Mr. Robert Hamilton proposed to the meeting, that the chair be taken *pro. tem.*, by Mr. THOS. ILLMAN. This motion being acceded to, Mr. James West then proposed that Mr. ROBERT WALLIN act as Secretary, also *pro. tem.* This motion having prevailed, and the president having called the meeting to order, the assembly took their seats. He then opened the business of the Convention by making the following

REMARKS:—

I thank you, my friends, for the honor you have been pleased to confer upon me in appointing me president *pro. tem.*, of this meeting. And before you enter into a more complete organization, and elect permanent officers, such as may be deemed necessary to conduct the business of this Convention, I will avail myself of the interval to detail some of the circumstances which have induced this call, and the objects contemplated, or which it is hoped may be promoted in thus assembling.

It is now a long time since Liberals have held a general meeting. The last was held in New York nearly ten years ago, and was a very interesting occasion. It is much to be regretted that these meetings have not been continued annually, up to the present time ; at any rate, it has lately been deemed desirable by many persons, that they should be resumed. Mr. Barker, Mrs. Rose and others made some attempts to do so. They proposed to hold a Convention at New

York, although the subjects intended for discussion were to be limited in a great measure, if not altogether, to the Bible. It was considered as most desirable to enlighten the public mind as to its true character; to weaken, if possible, the unreasoning and superstitious reverence with which it is regarded by the multitude, as well as expose the dishonest attempts of the clergy to inculcate the notion of its superhuman origin; or that it is, as they falsely term it, the Word of God. Some obstacles interposed in relation to New York as a place of meeting, until eventually Mr. Barker suggested Philadelphia. He thought it more central, and therefore more suitable, and requested the Society of the Sunday Institute to take the whole matter under their charge and management. They consented to do so, but soon discovered that a mere Bible Convention would be likely to prove a failure, or at any rate, wholly unattractive, as the divine authority and superhuman character of the Book had been so thoroughly disproved in the memorable discussion between Mr. Berg and Mr. Barker; and the minds of all the reflecting and intelligent persons in this city and neighborhood had become so well informed, and as it were, made up, as regarded the merits of the question, as to leave little room for agitation or prospect of exciting any considerable interest or feeling in regard to it. Besides, it would be scarcely possible to induce the clergy to take any part in such a controversy; they would not hazard a second discomfiture, especially one of so fatal a character as regards their interest and pretensions.

It has, indeed, been for a long time sufficiently obvious, that the strong expressions of respect and reverence with which ministers are accustomed to speak, and which they profess to entertain, for the Bible, are utterly repugnant to their private views, whilst the criticisms, commentaries, and expositions of the more able and eminent of theological scholars clearly evince that they are not insensible to its manifold defects; as also the untenable character of the extravagant claims which are promulgated in its behalf from the pulpit.

Under these impressions the Society did not deem it advisable to present the Bible as the primary subject of discussion and consideration at this Convention. They thought they had other, graver, and much more important matters to submit to your attention and deliberation. Among the most important is the peculiar disunited state of those who favor the liberal cause. They are very numerous—so numerous, that

it is veritably believed that if every man was to conscientiously avow the real sentiments and feelings of his heart, it would be discovered that we are greatly in the majority. But, unhappily, we have no bond of union, no concert of action, no organization, no discipline, and are therefore comparatively powerless—powerless to accomplish the great purposes we all so ardently desire to compass. This inefficiency has been the cause of much affliction to many who desire to see our cause prosper; many who believe it to be the cause of truth and righteousness, and that it deserves to prosper.

It is thought that at this meeting we should endeavor, if possible, to devise some plan which shall go to remedy the evil we complain of; that should unite our scattered forces and give direction and concentrate our energies. Let us but accomplish this and we are irresistible.

It needs but little observation in regard to what is passing in the religious world, to discover that it is not their cause, or any respect or confidence which the public may have in the truth or excellence of Christian teaching, which sustains them; on the contrary, distrust—even a positive distaste to all our theological notions, prevail throughout the community; creeds, articles, confessions, and disciplines, are worn out, and have lost their influence; the doctrines which our fathers contended for with so much earnestness and zeal, are all passed away and are almost forgotten. Our religion has ceased to exist as a matter of faith and practice, and a little church-going on a Sunday, a few dull forms, or unmeaning and absurd ceremonies, satisfy the most scrupulous. Our Christianity is evidently passing away, descending to that gulf which has swallowed up so many of the devices of priestcraft. Notwithstanding, however, that it is but an old tree and evidently decaying, it may, nevertheless, last a long time, for it has its roots, deep and wide, extending over our whole social system. The piety of past ages has endowed it with the greater part of every nation's wealth; it taxes the industry of every individual for its support; and in this country alone it has no less than forty thousand persons travelling throughout the length and breadth of the land, endeavoring by all means, fair or foul, to promote and secure its pecuniary interests; whilst it is, moreover, disciplined and organized in a manner that almost every individual member of society, as well as all the respective congregations pertaining to our churches, all contribute to support and maintain its position. It is therefore

not surprising that this vast hierarchy, with such stupendous means and resources, should continue to rule and triumph; it can scarcely do otherwise were its creeds, if possible, more absurd, its modes of worship more irrational, its influence more baneful, or that it could become a greater evil to society than it now is.

Although we should regret to imitate the votaries of Christianity in their multifarious and unscrupulous devices to increase their resources, and extend their influence, it cannot be denied that some plan of union and discipline, resembling theirs, might be of considerable advantage to our better cause, especially when accompanied with purer motives, and having for its object higher and better purposes. These considerations have induced the call for a Convention, which has appeared in the columns of the Investigator and other papers, and which I now read, as explaining more fully the nature and intention of this meeting.

Philadelphia, Pa., March 21, 1857.

MR. EDITOR:—The Sunday Institute, after waiting with much patience for others to move in the matter, have directed their Secretary to publish the following

CALL FOR A LIBERAL CONVENTION.

The Sunday Institute of Philadelphia, established for the acquirement and diffusion of Useful Knowledge, based upon Free Investigation and the fullest expression of Opinion, consistent with decorum, holding nothing too sacred for man's scrutiny and examination, propose to *all* of congenial sentiments, the holding of a Convention in the city of Philadelphia, to commence on the **FIRST MONDAY IN SEPTEMBER NEXT**, and to continue as circumstances direct, for the purpose of devising such a *Union and Concert of Action* as may best conduce towards the spread of *Truth*, the detection of *Falsehood*, and the removal of that ignorance which has been so long the means of subjecting the Reason and preventing the dissemination of *Correct Knowledge*, which is the *Real Providence of Man*.

It is believed that the elevation and advocacy of Demonstrable Truth will prove the greatest safeguard to Liberty and the Rights of Man. Let those therefore come who appreciate those advantages, and so cause the meeting to be numerically large, intellectually great, and morally powerful.

The Institute will provide a suitable place for meeting, trusting to the voluntary aid of such as may be friendly to the project for meeting the necessary outlay. The matter of cost, financially, would not be alluded to, if the means of the Association were adequate to the expense.

Delegates from Liberal Organizations, and also individuals of the like character, are requested to attend, it being desirable that *this* portion of society may on the occasion manifest itself.

As it is possible that at the earliest possible stage of the Convention, a Committee on Credentials will be formed, it would seem desirable that those attending should be prepared to satisfy their inquiries.

Communications relative to the proposed Convention, may be addressed to ROBERT WALLIN, Secretary of the Sunday Institute, No. 142 South Street, Philadelphia, who, in behalf of the Institute, would be glad to receive any suggestions, and will reply to the best of his ability.

In consequence of this call, our Secretary, Mr. Wallin, has received several communications from sundry friends in distant parts of the country, who sympathise with us, and favor this movement. He will, doubtless, submit them to you at the proper season. I have also myself received a letter from Mr. Barker, expressive of his good wishes; and also as containing some valuable suggestions which may, perhaps, supply useful materials for consideration in our future proceedings. I, therefore, make no apology for reading it, as I doubt not it will be received and listened to with much satisfaction and pleasure.

MR. BARKER'S LETTER.

Omaha City, Nebraska Ter'y, Aug. 13, 1857.

DEAR SIR—I am sorry I cannot be at your Convention. If I had been within a moderate distance I should certainly have come; but I am more than a thousand miles away, and as we have not a railway within less than a hundred and eighty miles of us, the journey would be altogether too long and too expensive. I hope, however, you will have a large and successful meeting. It is time some steps were taken to unite the liberal party, and put it in working order. Fifty

times more might be done in behalf of truth and freedom, if all who love them and long for their triumph, could be brought to unite and co-operate.

The circulation of liberal publications might be increased tenfold, and their character greatly improved as well. Twenty lecturers might be employed where we have but one at work at present, and the better part of men throughout the country be brought to renounce prevailing errors, and to aid in diffusing Nature's great truths, and advancing the cause of human happiness. What course it would be best to pursue in order to form a union of liberal souls, I do not know; but some course ought to be adopted. If nothing better be proposed, I would recommend any two or three to unite—adopt some simple, definite plan of operation, and then invite others in every place to do the same, and to unite with them. The work to be done by such a union is threefold—

1st. To expose prevailing errors on religious and moral subjects.

2d. To unfold the great truths of science—especially those which bear most directly on the interests of mankind.

3d. To promote the formation of libraries—the establishment of schools—the publication of books and pamphlets—the employment of lecturers, and such improvement in any laws, customs, institutions and manners as the welfare of mankind requires.

If three or four sensible and zealous men unite for these objects, they will soon draw others to them. If they aim at getting such only to join them as agree with them in views and purposes, such as will cement and strengthen their union by sympathy and concord, instead of weakening it by discord and dissension, they will soon find themselves a powerful body. To wait till the discordant elements of a large and promiscuous assembly can agree on principles of union, and plans of operation, or to strive after a large association instead of a compact and harmonious one, would prove fatal. You must have a germ before a tree, and the growth of a germ to a tree must be gradual,—by the slow and steady attraction of congenial elements; or two or three congenial souls must be the germ of the longed-for liberal association. These few congenial souls must draw to themselves such as are truly one with them. The desire for numbers must be sacrificed to the necessity of harmony. Those of different views, and tastes, and feelings, must form other associations corresponding with their

natures. It is not necessary that all liberals should form one society. Why should they not form ten or a hundred, and why should not they all co-operate, though in different spheres and in different ways, to the one great end,—the illumination, the emancipation, and the happiness of mankind?

Some think it especially desirable to provide innocent and healthy amusements for the people; let such unite and provide such amusements. Some have great faith in the elevating tendency of music; let them form musical bands and classes. Some think the Sabbath superstition the great curse of the country; let them form their Sabbath league. Some think the Bible superstition the greatest plague; let such organize and act for the destruction of that superstition. Some think errors ought to be assailed in mass—that all great errors are in league with each other, and that if you would kill one you must kill all; let such unite and fall on errors in the mass. Some hate the idea of assailing error at all. Error will die of itself, say they, if you teach men science. ~~Let~~ such leave error alone, and write and work for the promotion of science.

In the so-called Catholic Church, there are numerous orders, each working for a special object, and all contributing to a general end. So let it be in the truly Catholic Church. In an army there are various regiments, both horse and foot, and each has special adaptations to particular kinds of work. The pioneers cut down the forests and make plain the ground. The horsemen scour the country. The riflemen pick off the hostile leaders. The heavy infantry charge. The artillery batter down the strong holds of the foe, or sweep away their ranks in mass. So let it be in the army of the Reformers.

I have been running over in my mind a number of organizations which have accomplished great things in the world, and all seem to me to have originated with one or a few. It was so with the Methodists, the Jesuits, the Free Trade League in England, and a number more. The league which is to rid the world of superstition and make science everywhere predominant, must have a similar origin. But be that as it may, those who see the need of a liberal organization ought not to defer its formation till Liberals generally can agree entirely as to its objects or principles, or mode of operation. Those few who can agree should form one according to their own ideas,—and let it grow. All I can do at present is to offer suggestions, and act when the association is formed. My work

then will be to assail theological and moral errors, and put in their place principles of science. This I could effect by lectures, public meetings, discussions, and the publication of books and pamphlets. When the Association is ready it may calculate on my co-operation ; till then I remain working as best I can, and am

Yours for Truth and Freedom,

For Virtue and Humanity;

JOSEPH BARKER.

I will trespass upon your attention no longer, but merely to observe, that your first business will be to form a Committee of Credentials, who will have the power of determining who shall be received and acknowledged as members of this Convention ; and these members thus received and acknowledged, will elect a permanent President and other officers, such as may be deemed sufficient to conduct its future business.

At the close of the President's speech, it was proposed by Mr. Wallin, that to facilitate the objects of the meeting, a Committee on Credentials be formed, whose duty it should be to communicate with all those present as delegates, and report the names of all those willing to take part in the business of the Convention. This motion was carried, and the following selected as the Committee—

Messrs. R. WALLIN, T. CURTIS, and J. WEST.

A motion was now made that a recess of fifteen minutes take place to enable the Credential Committee to prepare their Report. Carried.

At the appointed time the Convention was called to order, when the Committee on Credentials reported the following persons as members of the Convention :—

THOMAS CURTIS,
JAMES WEST,
THOMAS EASTMAN,
WM. COOPER,
SAMPSON AUNGER,

THOS. ILLMAN,
ROBT. HAMILTON,
D. TUTTLE,
S. McCASLAND,
F. WIEDRICK,

OLIVER WHITE,
 THOMAS PHILLIPS,
 JOSEPH DEAN,
 C. J. PARKER,
 J. C. MILLER,
 R. WALLIN,
 WM. KING,
 JOHN RIESE JONES,
 JOHN BOYLE,
 F. PEEDY,
 H. B. ODIONE,
 F. SCHUNEMAN POTT,
 Mrs. ANNIE M. WEST,
 W. B. BECHTOLD,
 ENOCH GEORGE,
 W. ANDERSON,
 UTES CLAPP,
 M. FARRELL,
 Mrs. NOETH,
 T. SLEEPER,

W. PRITCHARD,
 EPHRAIM WILSON,
 I. McKEE,
Prof. W. H. B. THOMAS,
 DR. BASCOM,
 A. H. ROSENHEIM,
 J. D. CUSTER,
 G. VAIL,
 MARTIN GUTWALS,
 JOHN BOYLE,
 REUBEN WEBB,
 JOHN GWILLIAMS,
 Mrs. JONES,
 E. DABBS,
 CHAS. WILLIAMS,
 J. BEST,
 THOS. WINKWORTH,
 HENRY RICHESON,
 JOHN FOREMAN.

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At the request of the Committee, the members took their seats in the body of the Hall, the side seats being occupied by their friends and strangers interested in watching the proceedings.

Mr. T. Phillips proposed the appointment of a Committee of five, for the purpose of nominating permanent officers. The Committee was chosen, and after a short consultation reported the following names :—

For *President*—JOSEPH DEAN, Delaware.

Vice Presidents—T. PHILLIPS and T. ILLMAN, of Philadelphia.

Secretaries—THOS. EASTMAN and W. H. COOPER.

Treasurer—JAS. WEST.

The above names meeting the approbation of the Convention, those gentlemen proceeded to occupy their respective places.

A motion was made by T. Curtis, that the Convention, previous to the introduction of the regular business, hold an open session of one hour, in order to hear remarks of delegates from the different States, and any other friends present. This being agreed to, speeches were made by several gentlemen.

Mr. Oliver White, of New York, said—

That in New York there is but little associate action among the Liberals. There is a library which has been in existence some twenty years, containing several hundred volumes of books, many of them rare and valuable. There is also a Liberal Society there called The Independent Order of Liberals, under whose auspices meetings are held for lectures on Sundays, &c. As far back as the year 1826, the Liberals held their meetings in New York, but from want of a good plan of association great numbers do very little for the cause of free thought. My own feelings from 1826 to the present have ever been towards the cause, yet the labor of one is but little; that, however, I cheerfully give. One great fact which we should ever remember is, that progress must be worked out to become successful. Individuals sometimes improve, the mass never; precepts that are not practical are worse than useless; they are pernicious, for they tend to hypocrisy; they have been preached until the world is tired of hearing and become disgusted.

Mankind are reasoning beings, but are also subject to habit, so that frequently we see a contradiction between the acknowledged truth and the lives of men; whenever our appetites, established by habit, are stronger than the dictates of our reason, we live inconsistently. The Liberals in New York have felt this difficulty like other men, and it has frequently proved an obstacle to their success. Whether the same cause exists in other cities I am unable to say, but I firmly believe, that until we are prepared to work out this difficulty, our efforts will not succeed for the spread of liberal opinions.

Addresses were also made by D. Tuttle, of Pennsylvania, and R. Hamilton, of Philadelphia, respecting the necessity of organization among Liberals; the dangers to be avoided and the advantages that would accrue from such union; advocating greater efforts on the part of Liberals; the necessity of stronger opposition to priestcraft, and more open avowal of liberal principles.

During the remarks, considerable interest was manifested, and it was observed that some clergyman present watched the speakers with curious eagerness. At the close of the remarks the Convention adjourned to meet again at three o'clock, P. M.

Three o'clock. The President and other officers were in their places. Convention called to order. Roll called, and the Minutes of the Morning Session read and approved.

On motion, it was

Resolved, That a Business Committee of Five be appointed to prepare resolutions on such matters as might be of importance to the business of the Convention.

The Chair announced the following as the Committee:—Messrs. O. White, of New York; T. Eastman, of Philadelphia; F. Widerick, of Snyder Co., Pa.; O. Clapp, Charlestown, Mass., and R. Hamilton, of Philadelphia.

During the absence of the Committee, Mr. Wallin, of Philadelphia, addressed the Convention at some length.

It will not, perhaps, be improper here to mention, that a large number of clergymen were present during this session, manifesting considerable attention to the proceedings.

At the close of Mr. Wallin's remarks, one of the number (Mr. Torrens) arose, and began to remark on the Convention and its professed liberal character; at the same time calling himself a Liberal, &c. &c. After a short time, the gentleman was called to order by the presiding officer, at the request of the Committee on Credentials, and informed that none but members of the Convention could occupy the floor. Notwithstanding the intimation, the gentleman still persisted in talking, against the manifest wish of the president. After much trouble, the speaker seemed to comprehend, that it was necessary for every one occupying the attention of the meeting, to have first introduced himself to the Credential Committee. Mr. Torrens, at length, placed himself in communication with

that Committee; who, having questioned him respecting his views, and learning that he considered the Bible as the infallible word of God, whose authority was not to be questioned, declared to the meeting that they did not consider the gentleman suitable to take his seat as one of their number. This opinion met the approbation of the Convention, and Mr. Torrens retired to his proper seat among the clerical gentlemen present. At his request, however, Mr. T. Curtis rose and defined to the friends and strangers present, what the Credential Committee thought necessary qualification for membership. He said—

By perusing the call of this Convention, it will be seen that it is a gathering of the friends of Liberalism for the purpose of devising a more active co-operation among them, for the great end they labor for. He thought the word Liberal was applicable to any or all who chose to refer it to their own opinion. But with that Convention the word Liberal had a clear, definite, and substantial meaning; when we call a man Liberal, we mean one who rejects the orthodox notion of the creation of the world in six days; the Bible Stories of Miracles or Deluge; the miraculous birth of Christ, or his capacity to save sinners by his death; in fact, one who uses his common sense and observation in preference to the exercise of faith on every subject, sacred or divine. And that the very fact of the Sunday Institute being mainly instrumental in calling this Convention together, was sufficient evidence that its objects were not akin to those aimed at by the clergy of any denomination.

This statement seemed to satisfy our religious visitors, and they remained as quiet spectators during the remainder of the session.

Mr. Wallin remarked—

It appears somewhat singular that a gentleman of such apparent good sense as the Rev. Mr. Torrens, should be so dull of comprehension as to mistake the nature of this Convention, when it is well known that persons of his cloth are not slow to smell Infidelity in every movement they do not personally control. It was amusing to hear the gentleman claim to be recognized as a Liberal, as if he really did not know what the word liberal meant. I fancy myself standing up in the midst

of a sound Presbyterian Convention, and saying that I understood Presbyterianism to mean common honesty in the affairs of life, and therefore claim to be recognized as a brother in their synod. How very innocent of the world's movements they would suppose me to be; but I am inclined to believe there is not quite so much unsophisticated simplicity in the gentleman who has just taken his seat.

About this time the Business Committee returned from their room, when Mr. Oliver White, of New York, reported being ready to present the result of their deliberations. It was then resolved that the Secretary read their Report to the Convention.

The Report was then read, which consisted of a series of Resolutions, Declaration of Principles, and a Plan of Organization. The whole having been read, it was moved and carried, that each Resolution be read separately, in order that the Convention might take action upon them.

The first Resolution was then read, as follows—

Resolved, That in the present day of common schools, newspapers, reviews, and general diffusion of literature and science, the belief in a supernatural religion is much less vivid than in any former age. The circulation of the Bible has not been followed by the implicit and uniform faith so confidently predicted by its distributors; and instead of the mystery which shrouded it, and the respect felt for it, as in former times, too much familiarity has weakened, rather than strengthened its authority.

Mr. Thomas Curtis remarked on this Resolution—

That it was certainly gratifying to know, the general diffusion of literature was favorable to mental freedom, and a more liberal interpretation of theological dogmas. Many eminent modern writers were well known as heterodox; the spirit of their writings was consequently more congenial to freedom, more humanizing;—tales of revenge, &c., were not held in esteem now as formerly. Yet must we remember the Church and Clergy are ever active in propagating their dogmas; all we want is, that the Bible be read carefully; it will then be discovered to be full of contradictions and impossible stories.

The first Resolution was unanimously adopted.

The Secretary then read the second Resolution.

Resolved, That the priests and teachers of the several forms of superstition of the present age, are as enlightened, learned, and moral, as they ever were; but the public are better informed than heretofore, more critical in their judgments on

their priests' teachings, more exacting in requiring virtuous lives on the part of their spiritual guides, and less tolerant of the gross immoralities occasionally found out among them.

On this Resolution Mr. Wallin remarked—

It scarcely seems possible when we observe the vast and mischievous influence now possessed by the clerical order, when we observe and regret the wonderful debasement of men and women before them; when we are affronted every where by their presumptuous arrogance, or affected humility, which is always sure to be of that kind the devil is said "to like to see;" that such a pernicious state of things could ever have been more of an offensive nature, but yet we are compelled so to conclude by perusing well accredited history, which shows that our ancestors were even more oppressed and injured in the matter than ourselves. That although we are very low, still their "depth was lower still." Formerly the priest could do no wrong—formerly his authority sanctified every crime, no matter how audacious or outrageous; indeed, nearly the only test of right and wrong was his sanction or objection; and I need scarcely tell you that both his interest and principle induced him to exercise this power for his own aggrandisement or the benefit of his order, and consequent injury to the too trusty and stupid people. Now, at last, there seems to be a little dawn of day; the sanctified priest is *sometimes* ascertained to be wrong, his crimes *sometimes* detected and hesitatingly exposed, and he even does not always go "unwhipped of justice." And we now, at the same time that we regret the necessity, rejoice that on various occasions lately, even the priestly gown has been torn off, and the clerical scoundrel had meted out to him that execration which so many of his pious brethren cunningly escape. That devout and holy Sutherland, of Burlington, N. J., demonstrated that the conduct of a priest, although warranted by the doings of him that was after "God's own heart," and approved by the example of the wisest of mankind, who indulged in the wildest licentiousness, could by his obscene conduct, to an extent at least, dissipate the sanctity with which a barbarous superstition had endowed him. With ease I could draw your attention to many like disgusting developments of holiness, and stern rebukes from the injured; but let it suffice for us at present to reflect, that the exposure of the imposition and the impostor, the amelioration of mankind from the injurious effects of superstition, and of those that profit and live by it, is only to be

accomplished by untiring perseverance which will carry as its reward a full conviction of advantage to ourselves and benefit to our common race, and hope the resolution will be adopted.

After which Mr. T. Curtis remarked—

That he felt sorry when the leaders of the people were ministers of evil by their example, yet in the case of the clergy he rejoiced whenever a scoundrel was exposed and shown to the world as such; it was the best way of convincing those who thought but little, that believing in a religion or preaching it, was no criterion of just conduct; and the time, he hoped was not far distant when congregations would demand something more interesting than sleepy doctrinal sermons, and a higher sense of justice than orthodox religions could give.

The second Resolution was carried.

The third Resolution was then read.

Resolved, That blind faith in a supernatural religion is now rather the exception than the rule. If we listen to speeches in Congress and State Legislatures, read messages, reports and documents, peruse the current literature of the day, or mark the bold declarations of scientific authorities, we can come to no other conclusion than that these discourses come only from men who have given up old superstitions; and if any man will take the trouble to poll his own acquaintances, he will be astonished to find scarcely (except, indeed, among negroes and a few white fanatics) a single believer of the old fashioned stamp.

Mr. Tuttle, on this Resolution, rose and objected to that part which read, "except, indeed, among negroes." He said,

It is very easy to sneer at our colored brethren, but we ought not to use any occasion to make them appear disadvantageously; in a better position to learn, they will perceive the truth and follow it. I move to amend, by striking out the above offensive words.

This amendment prevailed, and the resolution, as amended, was then adopted.

The fourth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That notwithstanding the number and respectability of the unbelieving portion of society, the Church still maintains her old aggressive attitude towards them; she still regards unbelief as a crime, a positive outrage against her rights, peace, and dignity. She omits no opportunity of decrying their learning, blackening their character, and defaming the memory of her opponents, or occasionally running to the other extreme, she appropriates them after their decease, canonizing them as her brightest saints.

This Resolution was unanimously approved.

The fifth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That the immense sums raised for the distribution of tracts are really dedicated in chief part to a war on unbelief and unbelievers; a war requiring neither intellect, learning, truth, nor fair play, but "a forty parson power" of mendacity in concocting stories of "Infidel Sabbath breakers in the town of A," "Infidel drunkards in the town of B," and "Infidel thieves in the town of C," &c.

Mr. Wallin remarked—

The American Tract Society affords the best and most condemnatory evidence of the ability, learning, and veracity of the various evangelical sectarians that can possibly be desired. Their tracts are prepared carefully, and submitted before publication to the revision and correction of a committee of a very select character, so that they shall contain nothing but what the various orthodox churches warrant; clergymen of undoubted *sound* views, and none but the most pious and evangelical, can in any way cause the emission of any thing but a truly Christian document, so that in them we necessarily have the very essence of the popular superstition; and what do they appear to the thinking reader?—indeed, to any one not utterly blinded by religious prejudice, but the veriest trash; the most contemptible and puerile effusions, the most stupid and barefaced falsehoods as can be imagined—as, for instance, perhaps one of them will tell of a soldier being made a child of grace by means of hearing, accidentally, some one talk of Samson's exploits, and it having such a marvellous effect on him that he never shoots or stabs a fellow-being without praising God, and never assists in sacking a city without praying before hand that God, in his mercy, would cause the plunder to be great, for which and many other like favors he would offer up a loud thanksgiving. Or perhaps a tract is made of some old sinning sailor, damning his eyes, and is suddenly struck stone blind for his wickedness; just as if God cared a straw about him or his vulgar oaths. Then, perhaps, another of these precious documents gives an account of some precocious child of two years old converting his grand-papa of seventy, to be a child of grace. But why go further into a relation of these contemptible priestly effusions? I may as well state, however, that the halcyon days for the excellence of these publications appears to have been some years ago, before the invention of steam presses, at a time when the printing press of the Tract House was propelled by means of the same species of noble quadrupeds that so often play an important part in Bible history, made all but sacred by bearing on their backs

the Prophet Balaam, and the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." I should not wonder if it was a consequence of a mysterious sympathy, certain it is that many of the Premium Tracts were at that time, and under those auspices, produced.

Mr. Illman remarked—

That it was sufficiently evident Mr. Wallin's description of the very contemptible character of these tracts, although severe, was not unjust; they were undoubtedly the very poorest specimens of literature upon which types, ink, and paper were ever expended. At the same time, although the clergy made great use of them, and may be said to endorse them, it would be very uncharitable to suppose they were the authors. The clergy, notwithstanding their absurd creeds and doctrines, were generally better informed and educated, so as to be unable to stoop quite so low as to write any thing so very pitiful, childish, and absurd as these tracts most undoubtedly are. Indeed it had been long a matter of speculation to him in regard to their origin;—who or what could have produced them?—and he had at last come to the conclusion, that the Church had caught some kind of animalculæ, perhaps some diminutive creature like the coral insect, and after converting its imperceptible and insignificant soul, had set it to spin out the stories of pious drunkards, thieves, and infidels, whom the grace of God, by means of these tracts and the agency of some pious minister, had caused to experience on their death-beds a change of heart, and to inspire with the most enchanting hope of a blissful immortality. It is, however, very strange, that ministers and tract distributors should continue to undervalue the public mind so much as to imagine for a moment, that they are able by such means to influence the weakest or the most superstitious individual. At least, we have never known one single instance of their producing the smallest effect. It is well known that one tract distributor, Mr. Lewis, who has been in the constant attendance upon us (of the Sunday Institute) for many years, (fourteen years he says) and who has supplied us at our meetings during that time with such an overwhelming number as would be sufficient to bury us, building and all; it has, nevertheless, as yet, availed nothing, not one single convert has been made, and we believe he has now given it up as altogether hopeless. He remembered being at a meeting, held in Sansom Street Church, in

behalf of the American Tract Society, when the report of the operations of the previous year was read by the Secretary, and which described in general terms, a vast amount of good having been effected. When, however, it came to details, it appeared that although 172,000 tracts had been distributed in this city and county within the past year, yet the only known case of positive conversion was that of one poor negro. And even in regard to him there was much doubt whether the tracts or some groceries and other substantial aid which were given him with the tracts, had not produced the desired effect. For his part, he had no doubt whatever but such was the case, and would seriously recommend in all future attempts of the like nature, that the groceries be tried without the tracts; although 172,000 tracts, if they were good for any thing, or had any sense or reason in them, were enough to convert the world. Voltaire was the first to write and issue tracts; it was from him the pious first borrowed the notion; and there is no doubt but that they are good and efficient agents in impressing the public mind. Voltaire's tracts, however, were something—they had power, wit, and ability, and one little copy of his could accomplish more than all the myriads, the incalculable number, which have been issued from the Evangelical Tract Houses ever since their first establishment. It is to be regretted that we do not attempt something of the kind, it would assist much in sustaining our better cause.

Mr. Wallin again spoke, and said—

That he would suggest the propriety of the Convention, prior to its adjournment, expressing an opinion on the importance of exertion being made to print and circulate tracts of the character referred to; there were many already written by some of the most eminent individuals that ever lived, among whom it would not be improper to class those from the pen of Frances Wright, and Robert Dale Owen, in their palmy days, before the one was disappointed by the amount of co-operation afforded by the Liberal World, or the other had consented to enlist his fine talents in the field of political action for mere partizan aggrandizement. Let a movement be made in this direction, so that they should at least be but moderately placed before the people, and the consequence must be wonderfully advantageous; in what bold and admirable relief would they appear to the true inquirer and unsophisticated when placed side by side with the orthodox efforts to display the "Beauties of Holiness."

At the close of the remarks on the fifth Resolution, it was adopted in full by the Convention.

A motion was then made to adjourn (which prevailed) to meet again for business purposes at 10 A. M., on Tuesday morning. Previous to adjournment, the President announced that Mr. Vale, of New York, would speak on the subject of Mental Liberty in the evening.

Mr. Vale's lecture on Mental Liberty was appropriate and to the following purpose.

That Free Enquiry should be promoted by this Convention, Sectarianism avoided, and Sectarians conciliated by Liberal feelings and sound principles.

The Lecturer showed that *direct* conversion was not the object of Liberals, nor a uniformity of opinions, these were not necessary for the harmony of the world, which harmony was and ought to be the object of Liberals. What was wanted was *Charity*, in the *scriptural* sense, extended to all men, without sacrificing principle.

For this, the Lecturer thought, the world was prepared, if properly approached. Every sect will tell you the main object of worship, is *God*: and what is God, but the author of the Universe, and how made known but through the Universe? "We look through Nature up to Nature's God;" but some will add, through Nature and the Bible, Koran, Shasters, &c. &c. But *ALL* admit, that should the God of the Bible, &c. be in conflict with the God of Nature, that the evidence of Nature is to be preferred.

Here then is one point, (and that the *basis* of *all* religions) on which *all* persons agree; not even excepting *Atheists*, they admit the appearance or existence of Design in Nature, and the display of intelligent power, beyond human capacity, and it is this forming power, which by others is called Creator, or God.

A Liberal can then take by the hand every Sectarian, Christian, Mohammedan, Heathen, and Atheist, and agree with him on this great fundamental, Unknown, Intelligent Cause.

A Liberal will find, too, most men prepared to admit the importance of TRUTH, and the necessity for research to find

it; or otherwise, both the necessity for, and propriety in, Free Enquiry. Most men will admit also, in the *abstract*, of *equal rights*: the right of you and me, and of *all*, freely to think and speak, and what we claim as rights for ourselves, we necessarily grant to others as their *equal rights*.

We have then bonds of *union*, sufficient for the whole world, based on a few self-evident and generally admitted principles. What then prevents a Universal Church, or Society, not founded on Unity of Belief, but on Equal Rights, Free Enquiry, and Charity, (scriptural charity for all men.)

What then prevents taking by the hand the Catholic, the Protestant of every sect, the Jew, Mohammedan, the Atheist and Heathen. We want only the admission of the above few self-evident Truths, and the free exercise of thought and speech, and the exercise of universal charity; and the Jew may remain a Jew, if he can, or convert us if he can; while we claim him as a *man*, a *brother*, and a *friend*, and so of every other man in every other sect, who will admit what he cannot and does not deny.

The object then, of this Convention, is to promote this "peace on earth and good will to man," based on Universal Charity and Equal Rights. The mass of men are *honest* in their religion, but *some* are not, and these are generally interested in misleading others.

We cannot give the detail, or amusing examples of the above instructive lecture, which lasted an hour, and was attentively listened to. We have room only for the principles involved, which we have given above.

TUESDAY, Sept. 8th, 10 A. M.

Convention met—President in the Chair.

The Secretary read the Minutes of the previous Session, which were approved. After which the sixth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That the attempt of the Church thirty years ago, to bring into the field half a million of voters; in order to get into the Statute Book what cannot be got out of the Scriptures, namely, that the first day of the week is a Sabbath, an attempt then frustrated by Johnson's immortal "Report on the Sunday Mail Question;" and the unceasing but abortive efforts put forth from that time to the present, to unite the principal sects in some harmonious course of action, have in

view only one consistent set of measures; to give the Church political power, to stamp her dogmas on the legislature of the country, and to put down infidels by the strong hand.

Mr. James West said—

The sixth Resolution reminded him of the attempt made some years ago by Mayor Swift of this city, who, desirous of being re-elected, sought to curry the favor of the religious party by a very strict enforcement of Sabbath laws, especially on small candy shops; while the great and well known rogueries were permitted to go unmolested. Mayor Swift had been known to enter a little shanty on his return from church and threaten to send a poor old woman to prison for keeping her window open on Sunday; chains were placed across some of the streets, until some of the firemen repeatedly broke through them: but his endeavors proved abortive; he was not elected.

The sixth Resolution was adopted.

The seventh Resolution was then read.

Resolved, That the claims of the Church to control one-seventh of our time is made in defiance even of the New Testament, Church history, and common sense. The earth being a spheroid, turning on its axis, and presenting successively each meridian to the sun, it follows that a general sabbath is a physical, geographical, and astronomical impossibility; and the attempt to institute one can result in nothing but the making of a dividing meridian somewhere, where a man can stand with one foot in Sunday and the other foot in Monday.

After some appropriate remarks from Mr. Hamilton, this Resolution was unanimously adopted.

The eighth Resolution was then read.

Resolved, That the extraordinary asperity which has distinguished political struggles for the past few years, has been caused by the interference of the clergy. The attempt of three thousand New England parsons to convey to Congress "*the mind and will of God*" was met in a way the arrogant presumption deserved. Yet there is an association of Preachers and Churches now in full action, whose quiet and almost unobserved doings are far more dangerous than the open banding together of "the three thousand." This institution, having its head quarters in New York, is called the "Christian Union," and expends \$75,000 per year on agitation, kept up by employing "renegade priests," and other men of no character, to set people "together by the ears" about questions of religion and politics; the success of this "church militant" would be speedily followed by a crusade against unbelievers.

This Resolution was adopted.

The ninth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That the assumption that the Clergy have answered all the objections of unbelievers, is preposterous; because superstition is stationary while knowledge is progressive. Astronomy has ruined Jewish cosmogony and miracles. Geology has successfully explained the facts adduced in support of a deluge. Archæology has shewn that great and civilized nations existed before Adam. The nascent science of Ethnology, by proving that men are not of one family, will eventually undermine the fable of the "fall of man," and also its complement, the vicarious substitution of a Saviour. In short, the facts of science are everywhere and in everything in opposition to the errors of superstition.

Mr. Eastman remarked—

How important it was to make ourselves acquainted with scientific facts, in order to be able, when opportunity offered, to expose the entire absurdity of orthodox claims. The clergy were exceedingly ignorant as a class, taking the greatest amount upon trust, and really did not read and observe for themselves; they had to preach their creeds, otherwise their party in power would excommunicate them.

This Resolution was approved and adopted.

The tenth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels have been completely overturned by the German theologians, whose vast learning and critical acumen have culminated in Prof. Strauss' Life of Jesus; a work which demonstrates from the discrepant and irreconcilable statements of the four Evangelists, that neither of them could have been an eye witness of the wonders he relates, and that the whole story has been written from a mythical point of view, viz. by reproducing Old Testament marvels in a new dress, and relating fictions as facts, in order "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet" So-and-so, when the prophet never spoke any such matter, or spoke it in a very different sense.

Mr. Vail objected somewhat to the wording of this Resolution, as it seemed to place Strauss in precedence of Paine, whose services could never be too highly estimated.

Mr. Eastman said—

The object of the Resolution was not to place one over the other, or to draw a comparison between them. It was of great importance to us to be able to say, that a minister of the Christian religion, a Professor in the theological chair of a German University, a critic of the highest power and learning, had written a work which proved that not one of the writers of the four Gospels could have been an eye-witness of the wonders he relates; whereas all the writers on the evidences

assume without proof that three out of the four were eye-witnesses. Nevertheless, he was willing to admit that we had somehow forgot Thomas Paine in our Resolutions, as if we had at last yielded to the traducers of his memory, and it would be well to remedy the oversight now.

Mr. Illman said he would offer a resolution in commemoration of Paine.

The tenth Resolution was then adopted.

The eleventh Resolution as offered by Mr. Illman.

Resolved, That this Convention would deem themselves recreant to their duty did they fail to express their sense of the eminent services of Paine in exposing so effectually, so clearly, and decidedly the Christian superstition. To use his own words, "he has cut down every tree in the whole forest, there they lie, let any priest try to stick them in the ground if he pleases, but he can never make them grow again." They have never made a serious attempt to perform so hopeless a task.

This Resolution received the unanimous approbation of the Convention.

The twelfth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That there never was a time when the Christian religion was a homogeneous system, understood in one sense by all its Apostles and propagandists. For many years after the Pentecost, the Apostles knew not that the Gentiles had any interest in salvation, thus evincing that they had never heard the command, "Go forth into all the World." The earliest writings (the Epistles) exhibit the extraordinary spectacle of rivals striving for the pre-eminence; rank heresies usurping the place of Divine Truth; gainsayers undermining the influence of inspired teachers; apostle accusing apostle of dissembling; the general prevalence of superstitious fears and immoral practices, and the utterance of threats and anathemas; in short, all the vices, corruptions, disorders and strifes of an old and effete superstition, tumbling to decay for want of vitality, where we should expect to see unity, harmony, and submission to the inspired founders.

This Resolution was adopted without debate.

The thirteenth Resolution was read.

Resolved, That the long history of the Church, from its foundation to the present time, is a history of heresies, persecutions, massacres, national and civil religious wars, crusades, inquisitions, wholesale banishments, reformations that reformed nothing, and new sects each more objectionable than the old. The last spawn of Protestantism—*Mormonism*—growing up in this land of Bibles and Constitutions, and in the face of "forty thousand parsons,"—being inconceivably the vilest; and while all these things are falsely attributed to the decay of true religion, they are, on the contrary, only the reproduction, development, and continual

succession of the state of things exhibited in the earliest days of the Church, and related in its earliest writings.

On this Resolution, Mr. Wm. King spoke as follows—

Mr. Chairman—As a member of this Convention, I am desirous that we shall always take truth for our guidance. I cannot, therefore, consistent with this purpose, give my assent to the assumption that Mormonism is the worst form which Christianity has ever taken. To determine the worst shape Christianity has assumed, since the imposture has been promulgated among mankind, would prove a task sufficient to appal the most diligent investigator.

The Son of God, we are told by the laborious, and as his admirers say, the candid Mosheim, “designed to establish a Church Universal, and gathered of all nations.” If this indeed, was his intent, he has most signally failed in the execution of his purpose.

The Church in its infancy was agitated by sharp contentions, among the christian apostles themselves. Paul reproved the prince of these apostles to his face, because he was wrong; and who can doubt Paul when he was judge in his own case.

Alas! the tranquillity of the Church of God continues to be distracted; and the day when a uniform knowledge of God shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea, remains as distant as when the prediction was uttered. To what cause are we to attribute this thwarting of the will of the Omnipotent, and this defeating of the happiness of the human race?

In every age of Christianity it has been divided into sects, who have hated and persecuted each other with relentless pertinacity; and even the historian admitted to be the most impartial and candid of Church chroniclers, draws a shocking picture of the priesthood through the course of centuries.

Allow me to give you a few short examples: “The vices of the clergy were now (the fifth century) carried to the most enormous excesses, and all the writers of the time are unanimous in their accounts of their luxury, arrogance, avarice and voluptuousness.” “In the seventh century, the despotism of the Pope was such, that Emperors, Princes, and nations stood up in resistance to his almost boundless ambition.”

The subordinate rulers and ministers of the Church were in no way behind the example of their superiors. Neither Bishops, Priests nor Deacons, nor even the cloistered Monks, were exempt from the contagion. Everywhere appeared pious frauds, insatiable avarice, and an utter contempt for the

natural rights of the people. There reigned, moreover, the bitterest dissents between each other, as to who should most profit by the spoil extracted from the credulous multitude. All the vices charged upon these men seem transmitted to their successors in our times. The ambassadors of God, in our day, manifest that neither the name nor the power of Jesus can save them from the power and temptations of Satan.

The press of the country, under influences which induce the concealment rather than the publication of their crimes, constantly records instances of their infamy, hypocrisy, and licentiousness. The avarice which once marked the clergy, yet flourishes most luxuriantly. They are incessantly employed in devising means to extract the coin from the faithful, and the readiness with which the dupes submit only stimulates the plunderers to plan new exactions.

It has been said, the Mormons are the worst of the many shapes Christianity has assumed. Permit me to present you with the, almost, twin presentment of this new sect.

"There sprung up in the year 1621, (for Luther's example produced a multitude of imitators,) a sect called Anabaptists. They claimed to be the founders of a new and perfect church. They declared even against all existing governments; alledging Christ was about to take civil and ecclesiastical affairs into his own charge. John Brockhold, a tailor of Leyden, as the chief, made himself master of the city of Munster, and was proclaimed king. He *took eleven wives*, and, if truly spoken of, committed many enormities; for all of which he produced the authority of God's unerring book." If the Mormons incline to a plurality of wives, they are, therefore, not without Christian example.

It may be, however, that the authority of the Anabaptists and John Brockhold, may be despised. If this be so, will the teachings of the mighty Reformer, Martin Luther, be allowed of any force and value. The teaching of Luther himself, I say, sustains the Mormons in their habits of polygamy. This atlas of theology had somewhat of the lusts of the flesh, and if his own word can be taken, indulged in them both when a priest and servant of Rome, and also when he denied his master.

In the memoirs of this bigot and despot, translated by Michelet, he thus speaks: "When I was a monk I often confessed * * * not about women, (he never exposed them,) but that involved the very marrow of the question."

Let me present a further specimen of the candor and purity

of the peerless Martin. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, demanded from this Reformer the privilege of taking an additional wife. To enforce the necessity, he admitted that he lived in adultery and fornication; and gave as an excuse, that his wife was neither amiable nor handsome; and that she drank to excess. That he was naturally of a warm constitution, which impelled him to the commission of acts that jeopardized his soul; that he had found on searching the Old and New Testaments, the remedy lay in enjoying a plurality of wives. What God had permitted to Abraham, Jacob, David, Lamech, and Solomon, in justice he should accord to him.

The pure Reformer, who preferred facing a legion of devils rather than violate his duty and conscience, was perplexed much by this application, for notwithstanding his devotion to Jesus, he was (alas! for the necessity) somewhat of a politician. Like Jesus, on the question of the tribute money, he was placed between the two horns of a dilemma. To gratify the Landgrave might give offence to the mass of the people; yet how could he refuse, after giving utterance on more than one occasion to opinions like these: "From the first he had taught that chastity was impracticable, and that *all* who pretended to it were imposters and hypocrites; that, in fact, it was no virtue at all!!! since it was directly opposed to the Word of God, Go forth and multiply." And also the laws of nature:—"To die in child-bed, if the woman was a believer, infallibly conducted her to heaven." In one of his sermons, in Wittenburg, he said, "that wives who acted in rebellion to God and their husbands, should be punished. How? by means of a female domestic. If Sarah refuses, take Hagar."

The morality of this great one overlooked the consequences to Hagar. In a Pennsylvania Court of Justice, the reasoning of such an expounder of God's word and God's will, would be in danger of the penitentiary, if he practised what he preached. Who shall be the vilest among the vile? Shall Dr. Martin Luther, or Brigham Young, wear the crown of supremacy, or shall they divide it?

The sheet-anchor of Martin was faith in Jesus. Faith alone, without any merit of our own, through the righteousness of Christ, imparts justification, sanctification, and salvation; by it we are saved here and hereafter.

The rancour and falsehood of the entire Christian Church has pursued the names and memories of Voltaire, Gibbon, Paine, and a host of brave and noble men, who maintained

truth and exposed falsehood. Sufferers as we Infidels constantly are, by the misrepresentations of Christians, let us in no case receive their statements to the injury of others. For ourselves, let us be careful not to assail others unprovoked.

I therefore, respectfully, propose, that the word Mormon be expunged, and some more general term adopted.

The words referring to the Mormons were stricken out, and the Resolution, as amended, was adopted.

The fourteenth Resolution was then read.

Resolved, That the time is now come for the Unbelievers, Infidels, or Liberals (or what name soever we may call ourselves by) to stand forth in the dignity of manhood and allow our principles to be known and read of all men. And whereas this might be a step still attended with inconvenience in some places, therefore Resolved, That we will make our circle of association wider and more powerful, and our union more intimate and permanent; seeking in organization the benefits which our adversaries so well know how to secure. To this end, we agree to the following Declaration of Principles,* and Articles of Organization.

The time for adjournment having arrived, the Convention separated to meet again at 3 o'clock, P. M.

TUESDAY, Sept. 8th, 3 o'clock, P. M.

Officers in their places. Convention in order.

The Secretary read the Minutes of the previous Session, which were approved. After which the regular business was commenced by reading the Reasons for Organization, and Declaration of Principles. These were read by paragraphs, and elicited occasional comment, and approval of their clear and excellent exposition of liberal views. Next followed the Articles containing the basis of a union for all liberal associations.

A considerable discussion arose on the selection of a name that should express the ideas and purposes of the Organization.

A motion was made that the title should be The Infidel Association of the United States.

Mr. T. Curtis—

Urged this name as most appropriately expressing the cha-

* The Declaration of Principles will be found in its proper place.

racter of the Society, and not liable to be misunderstood by the Church or the World; and agreeing with Webster's definition of the word, who was authority in this country.

Mr. Illman deemed Mr. Curtis' suggestion in regard to Webster should be attended to, as upon referring to the word *Infidel*, in the large dictionary, it would be discovered to be thus defined:

INFIDEL. Adjective. As unbelieving, disbelieving the inspiration of the Scriptures, or the divine institution of Christianity.

INFIDEL. Noun. One who disbelieves the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the divine origin of Christianity.

This definition, Mr. Illman thought, expressed our views on these subjects—as also the popular notion in regard to our sentiments, so as to be the most suitable title we could devise.

Mr. Schunemann Pott remarked—

That it was good to adopt a name given by our enemies. He cited the instance of the Netherlanders during the war of their independence, taking to themselves the name given by their enemies, and afterwards beating them.

Mr. Wm. King said—

Mr. Chairman.—The authority of Webster has been cited to establish the meaning of the word *Infidel*. In one of his definitions he makes *Infidel* to mean, an unbeliever in Christianity. In another he admits the Mohammedans apply the same term, or its equivalent, to such as reject their Prophet, and that heaven-deemed book, the Koran.

Thus Webster is inconsistent with himself.

If to disbelieve the Christian superstition is to be an *Infidel*, we are *Infidels*, and in that sense I uphold the word, and accept it as our designation. But, critically speaking, we are not *infidels* to Christ or Christianity. Before we can be charged with a want of fidelity, it must be shown we owe it.

Our allegiance to Jesus is built upon an assumption as false and rotten as that the book called the Bible is the Word of God, and that God is its author. Verily, if it be so, the Divinity has postponed the perfect instrumentalities of a God, to employ the weak and fallible agencies of man to impart a revelation designed for the use and happiness of the whole human family. The result is, that men are confounded and mislead, when they should be enlightened and instructed.

It has been proposed we should call ourselves Liberalists, and the comprehensiveness of this word would admit persons of religious opinions, but of liberal sentiments. If such should be the effect of this title, I am still the more fixed in my preference for that of Infidel.

Where there is religion, by which I mean supernaturalism, there can be no liberality. The condition of every religion is, believe and be saved ; disbelieve and be damned. Every religionist is confined within the limits of a given circle from which he cannot pass ; he cannot, therefore, be liberal.

Let our course be open, clear, and unmistakeable. Since the word Infidel is admitted to imply a disbeliever in Christianity, let us wear it, and wear it honorably and proudly.

Let the name be a distinction ; and let every Infidel strive that he in no way sully it.

A gentleman, not named, mentioned Yankee Doodle, as the tune derisively played by the British soldiers, out of contempt for the Americans in the War of Independence, and their march of victory.

Mrs. Jones—

Hoped the name of Infidel would be used, because it was the one by which all liberals were known among the religious world ; urging that it would be no use to deny the name ; that we should rather accept it and make it an honorable one.

Mr. Wallin remarked—

Although to some it may appear strange that one so well known for my blunt speech, should object to the name of Infidel ; nevertheless, so it is. Do not, I beg of you, suppose by this a disposition on my part to exhibit the white feather ; far from it, I assure you ; but at the same time, I do not like the policy of adopting a name that is meant as one of reproach, and by many unthinking persons so received. I have no doubt that many are startled away from examining Truth, from fear of receiving this epithet. While I object to the word Infidel, I confess myself somewhat at a loss what to offer in its stead ; but I am now speaking against a proposition and not suggesting any thing ; there are many here, perhaps, that can propose other titles than the one proposed. In this matter it may have an influence to state the conduct of the Boston Investigator's Proprietor. You will recollect that some years since, the heading of that paper ran thus, "An Infidel

Paper," and you perhaps know also the commendable tenacity in what he conceives Right of that individual. Well, Sir, he was requested over and over again, to remove the obnoxious term, and at last conceded, giving us reason to think that mature consideration induced him to omit it; because more good could be produced without than with it; let us advantage by the example.

Messrs. Hamilton, Eastman, Cooper, Tuttle, Otis Clapp and others also took part in the discussion.

The question was finally put and carried, that the name be "The Infidel Association of the United States."

About this time a motion was made that a Finance Committee be appointed to make arrangements for meeting the expenses incurred, and also to provide for publishing the proceedings.

The Chair named Messrs. Wallin, West and Curtis as the Committee, and a recess of fifteen minutes from the regular business was appointed to enable the Committee to make collections and receive names.

Mr. T. Curtis—

Urged a liberal amount being given, as the importance of publishing their proceedings was very great. He hoped all would subscribe as much as possible, and that the clergy present would not be refused on the subscription list, if urgent to help. He stated that the Methodist Missionary Society had computed that every quarter dollar subscribed to their Society's fund saved a soul from hell, and he hoped, in our case, every quarter subscribed would save some enquirer from the clutches of priests and the terrors of superstition.

The second, third, and fourth Articles were read and adopted without debate.

ARTICLE 5. The sphere of our study will be the "Order of Nature," with a view to a knowledge of her laws for our governance, leaving to the lovers of unprofitable studies the impossible task of finding out her origin or essence.

Mr. T. Curtis said—

The language of the fifth Article is very important, viz. that we, as liberals, have to do with the *Order of Nature*, and not *its Origin*; that mankind are blessed by using the knowledge they have of the relations and powers of steam, and not by

knowing who created water at first; and so in all the material universe, comfort, health, and wealth are to be obtained by men using their senses in observation of the phenomena of the world; while all the discussions as to its creation only serve to preserve ignorance and its ally superstition, and take away our attention from more important matter pertaining to this life.

ARTICLE 6. The practical result of such studies will be the discovery that "Science is the Providence of man;" in the words of Comte, "a knowledge of phenomena leads to prevision, and prevision to action," or in our own familiar language, "if we know what is going to happen under given circumstances, we can guard against it." We reject all attempts to change the order of nature by prayers and invocations. The earth will roll on in its orbit; the elements will, in relation to our feelings, exhibit their endless strife *but real harmony*, and man will suffer from his neglect or ignorance, whether he pray or be silent.

Mr. Tuttle spoke on this article and said—

It is a great and important truth which men should be taught, that Science is their best friend and helper; by the aid of Science vast continents have been civilized, wealth increased and distributed, nations made happy in the enjoyment of the comforts of life, and the world raised infinitely in knowledge and good manners; even religious sects are deeply indebted to Science for aiding them in propagating their dogmas; but while Science has been progressing, religion has been holding back, and has ever been the obstacle to the progress of common sense.

Mr. T. Curtis also said—

That Science took the place of Religion whenever the mind was capable of understanding its teachings. Before Science had calculated the orbits of comets, or the return of eclipses, mankind resorted to prayer to avoid some imagined danger; but directly those calculations were understood, the folly of prayer was at once perceived.

The Science of Meteorology was yet imperfect, consequently prayers for rain and dry weather still were made; also, with regard to diseases of an epidemic character, prayer was still thought effectual; but the moment the law was understood, men would cease to pray, and instead, seek to avoid certain evil consequences by previously altering or avoiding their causes. Thus Science was the true providence of man.

Mr. Wallin remarked—

Why, Sir, nothing but the most absurd superstition could

place any reliance on prayer; nothing but the most perverted imagination and fanatical blindness could ever discover that the loudest, meekest, self-sufficient, self-debasing addresses to a supposed Deity, were ever in the most distant manner attended to or produced any other effect than disappointment to the pitiably deluded and prayerful borer. Why, now, just suppose the tiresomeness and annoyance to a Deity—all the various and contradictory applications at his throne of Grace made by his dissatisfied and humble lickspittle; and I think that you must be hard-hearted indeed if you did not feel deep sorrow for him, and congratulate yourself that you were not a God to be so plagued. A memorable instance of the utility of prayer was evidenced a few years back in this priest-ridden country. At the time when the cholera last prevailed, Gen. Taylor, who is said to have loaded cannon with Bibles for want of better ammunition, and with whom war was a trade, but who, at the same time, was such a God-fearing man, that, in his capacity of President he was led by his piety to violate the Constitution and his oath of office, by which all interference with religion is denied, as to recommend a universally to be observed Day of Prayer, penitence and supplication to God, for Him to stay the Pestilence. Well, Sir, instead of such being the case, after the National Humiliation, the cholera increased in violence so as to make it rather appear that if the supplications had had any effect at all, it was to excite God's indignation and anger at having his personal arrangement interfered with. No, Sir, prayer is only useful to the priest as a powerful means for his deluding the superstitious, who are fools enough to suppose that if their own application for heaven's favor is denied, that the Holy Man can take it by storm, and which he is always ready to do for a consideration.

Mr. Eastman said—

He would add his mite of information to show how little prayer was revered in Congress. A friend of his who represented a neighboring county, about the year 1830, told him, that few members attended in the House while the Chaplain was praying, and of these few scarcely any joined in the rite. He himself had voted, with about forty more, to have no Chaplain. The clergyman who officiated in the House was Dr. Staughton, of Philadelphia. One of the Representatives invited Mr. Clay to come to the services of Dr. Staughton, in order to hear his very eloquent prayers. "Stop,"

said Clay, "till you hear Mr. Bascom, who is chosen by the Senate, and will be on in a few days: he will pray the Doctor to hell in ten minutes!"

Mr. Illman—

Related a remarkable instance of the effect of prayer in the case of the Rev. Mr. Cookman, on the occasion of his journey to Europe many years ago. He stated that a time was set apart by the Methodists, for the purpose of holding a special prayer meeting throughout the district to which he belonged, for his preservation from danger in crossing the ocean, and that the general shouting on that occasion so displeased the majesty of Heaven, that he determined to drown Mr. Cookman. Consequently he took passage in the steamship President, which was never afterwards seen or heard of, all hands being drowned while the ship sank to the bottom.

At the conclusion of Mr. Illman's remarks, a clergyman present said, there was no proof that the ship really sunk; it might, on the contrary, have been taken wholly up to heaven instead; the Convention, however, appeared to think the balance of probabilities was against that supposition.

The sixth Article was adopted.

After the seventh Article had been commented on and approved, the Convention adjourned to meet at half past seven o'clock, P. M.

TUESDAY, Sept. 8th, 7½ o'clock, P. M.

Pursuant to adjournment, the Convention again assembled in the large Hall. President and other officers in their places.

After the reading of the Minutes the Secretary proceeded to read the eighth Article.

ARTICLE 8. Our great object in life is the improvement of our own minds by true knowledge, in order that we may bring our own being and those beings who surround us, into harmony with Nature and her laws. In vain shall we seek for happiness while violating any law of our being. Man is eminently social; it is only in communion with others that any virtue can become possible. It is in union then with others that his mind will expand, his affections be vivified, his usefulness promoted, and his gratifications increased.

This Article was unanimously adopted.

ARTICLE 9. On account of the oft-repeated calumny, that Infidels wish to give loose to their passions, we declare that we hold our principles and practice superior to the Bible standard of morals concerning the relation of the sexes. We find the law of birth in all countries where records are kept to be about 105 males to 100 females; and that in twenty years, owing to unequal deaths in the sexes, there are 95 males to 100 females. Therefore, we accept the teaching of Nature, that one man should be the husband of one woman, and that the union should be voluntary, permanent, and founded on mutual esteem.

After a short discussion, this Article was adopted.

Next followed a Plan of Association, which consisted of the Five Articles appended to the end of the Declaration of Principles, &c.*

On the reading of the Outlines of Association, &c., considerable discussion arose as to the best locality for the Central Committee. The foreign Delegates were especially invited to express their opinions on the matter,

Mr. Otis Clapp, from Massachusetts, said, he thought Philadelphia would be the best place; the liberal friends seemed to be strong and active here; it was rather more central here than New York, and he had confidence in the purposes of the organization being carried into effect in Philadelphia.

Other Delegates from Ohio, New York, and Illinois, seemed to concur in the Philadelphia location as the best.

Mr. Wallin stated that Mrs. Rose thought New York the best. Mr. Illman said Mr. Barker, and he believed Mrs. Rose also, were some time ago, in favor of Philadelphia.

The question was finally put to vote, when it was unanimously decided that Philadelphia should be the seat of the Central Organization.

The Publishing Committee believe that the selection of Philadelphia was a wise one for the present at least, so many of the liberal friends there having taken the initiatory steps in calling the Convention together.

The remainder was unanimously approved of.

On motion, the Committee on Business having completed their labors were discharged from further duties.

A discussion now ensued as to the propriety of selecting a

Committee for the purpose of publishing the proceedings of the Convention, and carrying out such other matters as might appear necessary. After various speakers had expressed their views, a motion was made and carried, that a Committee of Thirteen be selected, with power to add to their number, to manage the future business of the Association until the next annual meeting.

The following names were added to form the Committee:—

James West,	Thos. Illman,	Thos. Phillips,
Robt. Wallin, Sr.,	Robt. Hamilton,	Wm. King,
Thos. Eastman,	Sampson Auger,	J. Gwilliams,
Wm. H. Cooper,	F. Schunemann Pott,	Thomas Curtis.

It was moved and carried that the above Committee prepare a faithful Report of the proceedings of the Convention, to be published in pamphlet form as soon as convenient.

On motion, the Convention then adjourned to meet when and where the Central Committee may determine, when it will assemble under the name "The National Infidel Association of the United States."

JOSEPH DEAN, of Del., *President.*

THOS. PHILLIPS, }
THOS. ILLMAN, } *Vice Presidents.*

JAMES WEST, *Treasurer.*

THOS. EASTMAN, }
WM. H. COOPER, } *Secretaries.*

Delegates attending from various contiguous States declare, that the Convention was a fair representation of the liberal sentiment of the country. Being the first meeting of the kind held here, and not in a popular cause, we think our anticipations are more than realized.

To those of our friends who could not personally attend, but sent *material aid*, the thanks of all liberals are due; and

to those who attended from a distance, at some inconvenience and considerable cost, we owe much for good fellowship and counsel; and as we believe in a system of rewards and punishments, more just than the orthodox Christian one, there remains the satisfaction of knowing, that all who help in the Right and for the Truth, cannot fail of reward.

In good fellowship for freedom of conscience, we remain your friends, the

PUBLISHING COMMITTEE.

There have been a considerable number of letters received from different parts of the country, many of them enclosing remittances and sympathizing with our movement. It was at first intended to publish them, but the Committee on Printing discovered this to be impossible, without very much increasing the expense. It was then thought that some few might be selected, but this selection was difficult to make satisfactorily, and might appear invidious; it was therefore eventually determined to omit them altogether.

REASONS FOR ORGANIZATION, AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

WHEN it becomes necessary for a portion of the people to separate themselves from the tutelage of the persons who have constituted themselves guides in religion and morals, and to assume among the sects and systems of the day a separate and equal station, a decent respect for public opinion requires (we are told by high authority,) that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

The Constitution of the United States gives no supremacy to any philosophy or system of opinion; under its benign rule we ought all to be able to live under our own vine and fig tree. The State Constitutions are less perfect, or more partial to dominant opinions. That of the State in which we now meet (Pennsylvania) is not without blemish. An unbeliever is not equal before the Law with the rest of his fellow citizens—indeed, for him there is no law more than for a slave in South Carolina. In the State which Penn founded as a refuge from persecution, a man may see his house robbed, his wife violated, and his children murdered; yet, if he does not believe, or pretend to believe, in that which transcends all belief, his oath will not be taken in a Court of Justice.

But it is not to be disguised that Public Opinion is less charitable than the Institutions of the country. Christianity, (broken up, indeed, into diverse, warring sects,) is in the ascendant, and Christianity always was and always will be a persecuting superstition. It is only when this faith is rationalized, subjected to the "light within," or diluted to a mere system of ethics, that it ever parts with its aggressive character. Protestants tell us it is only Catholics who persecute; Catholics tell us, persecution was an *accident* with them, but *essential* to the Protestant, who began to persecute as soon as he had the power. The *fact* is, persecution in some form has followed the Church like a shadow in every age; Arians, Jews, Waldenses, Lollards, Huguenots, Puritans, Quakers, Baptists, Socinians, Sceptics, and Scientific Men, have in turn suffered from the dominant sect of the day. Each sect preaches "toleration" when weak; and finds warrant and injunction for coercion when strong. Has not Christ himself enjoined his faithful servants to "Go into the highways and *compel* them to come in!" Christ's denunciations of the unbelieving Jews subjected them to persecutions for 1500 years.

But the *inspired* Apostles speak a language that admits of but one meaning. St. Paul (Titus, i. 14,) tells us of "vain babblers and deceivers," whose "*mouths must be stopped*," and this injunction has generally been well obeyed. Again, the same Apostle, who thought persecution a shameful thing when visited on his own head, says (Gal. i. 9,) "*if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*." Again, he seems to have foreseen that the Church would need a warrant for not keeping faith with infidels, so he gives it in 2 Cor. vi. 15, "what *concord* hath Christ with Belial! or, *what part* hath he that believeth with an infidel?" The "gentle John" is sometimes vituperative; thus, (1 John, ii. 22,) "*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*" He points out the way most effectually to put down all new doctrines, (2 John, i. 10,) "*If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed*."

Here are sufficient evidences of a persecuting spirit in the New Testament, without multiplying examples.

The Church in this country has been engaged in one long struggle to force her dogmas on unbelievers, or subject them to public or private vengeance for refusing to entertain them. Her chief plea has been some supposed sanctity for the first day of the week. She chained up the highways on first day, till the public could tolerate it no longer. She moved Heaven, Earth, *and Congress*, to stop the Sunday Mail, merely to get the sanction of Government for her dogmas. She has persecuted men for saving the fruits of the earth on Sunday, until magistrates dismiss such cases. Under pretence of keeping men from becoming drunk on Sunday, she has made war on the children's Sunday stick of candy. She has an *arboriphobia* on Sunday—she hates *trees* and grass—commanding her Sunday School children not to walk through the Public Squares on Sunday. With the same object she tries to prevent the steam engine from conveying passengers by boat and rail into regions of pure air on Sunday. She has effectually succeeded in closing all exhibitions of Art and Nature on Sunday, so preventing the growth of a love for the Beautiful among those who have but one day in the week for leisure. She hates gambling; she might “bob for whales,” if truly disposed to catch great transgressors; but she only catches the minnows—she pounces on little boys playing marbles on Sunday.

There is no fact better known than this: that men of thought, education, wealth, and position, procure immunity from the scandal of unbelief by submission and tribute to the Church, but it is only lately that we have had a public statement of the fact from one authorised, from his station and connexions, to give it. In Stephen Colwell's “New Themes for the Protestant Clergy,” (Philadelphia, 1852,) we have a full account of the machinery by which *men of the world* are made to sustain the Church. He says: “The whole expenditure of Protestant congregations of almost every denomination, for every purpose, religious and philanthropic, is derived, in a large degree, from those who are not acknowledged to be the real disciples of Christ,” (p. 128.)

“The way of peace,” then, is revealed to us; we have but to “stand and deliver!” and we may at any time enter into the Great Congregation. True, we shall all know that we are considered but as Tares growing among the Wheat; and if the Lord of the Harvest does not root us up, it is not out of any regard for us, but for fear of injuring the Wheat in the operation.

We think it time to declare that we will emancipate ourselves entirely from any further submission to the tyranny of Christians and Christianity; and that we will not purchase immunity for unbelief by basely paying tribute, when we have only to will to be free. A resolute stand taken by us at this time will be of vast benefit to our irresolute brethren who are still paying tribute to the Church, and who are threatened with the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, if they do not obey the new impost called “Systematic Beneficence.”

We think it necessary to declare that we have no intention of “Rejecting the Bible,” in the vulgar sense so often attributed to us. Some of us, probably, will still continue to sympathise with the aspirations and meditations of the “contemplative life” scattered through its pages. Some will be interested in its antiquity—some in its poetry—and some will scratch over the *chaff* for a few grains of good *wheat*. But none of us can receive it as a system of Supernatural Religion and Morals—nay, not as a *SYSTEM* of *any thing*, since it is nothing but a collection of books from unknown sources, among which, with few exceptions, there is no coherence of history, philosophy, or superstition. We shall continue to hold it as we hold any other treasure of antiquity, placing it upon the shelf along with Hindoo, Persian, and Greek fables; and, perhaps, when we shall institute a comparison, giving it the first place.

Rejecting the Bible, then, as supernatural authority, we must put something in its place—we must inaugurate the Natural instead of the Supernatural. Mere

negations, we acknowledge, never built up a party or a philosophy. We need something *positive*. In our present state of inexperience, we must be content to live (like the Old Thirteen Colonies, on rejecting the *Divine Right* of Kings,) under mere Articles of Confederation. Another generation may be able to form a better, perhaps a perfect, Constitution for Man.

We offer the following Articles as the *basis* of a *positive* system of union, progress, and morals :—

ARTICLE I. The style of this Organization shall be The Infidel Association of the United States. (By Infidelity we mean the Philosophy which is according to Nature, in contradistinction to the Philosophy which is according to Theology.)

ART. II. Each man and woman joining this Association, retains his and her mental sovereignty, freedom and independence.

ART. III. The said persons hereby, severally, enter into a firm league of friendship with each other for their common defence, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare; binding themselves to assist each other against all injustice offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of their principles, or any unjust pretence whatever.

ART. IV. The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among our members, we accept GOOD WORKS as the moral basis of association, in preference to any speculative notions; requiring each member to keep a conscience undefiled, to preserve health as far as knowledge permits, to fulfil his family, social, and patriotic relations to the best of his ability, and to seek to extend the sphere of morals and happiness.

ART. V. "The sphere of our study will be the *Order of Nature*, with a view to a knowledge of her laws for our governance;" leaving to the lovers of unprofitable studies the impossible task of finding out her origin or essence.

ART. VI. "The practical result of such studies will be the discovery that *Science is the Providence of Man*." In the words of Comte, "A knowledge of phenomena leads to prevision, and prevision to action." Or, in our own familiar language, "If we know what is going to happen, under given circumstances, we can guard against it." We reject all attempts to change the order of nature by prayers and invocations. The earth will roll on in its orbit; the elements will, in relation to our feelings, exhibit their endless strife, but real harmony, and man will suffer from his neglect or ignorance, whether he pray or be silent.

ART. VII. "The theory of our morals is, that there exist guaranties of morality in human nature, utility, and intelligence." We reject the old superstition of waiting till a future life for the punishment of present sin. Experience proves that the awe of the future is inefficacious precisely where it ought to take effect, and takes effect precisely where it is not needed. An ignorant or vicious man is hurried on by his passions, regardless of a future reckoning, hoping to get it paid by a Saviour, or remitted by a partial Deity; while many a pure and lovely spirit submits to penance and maceration, in hope of a refuge from imaginary dangers and artificial terrors of conscience. If interested self-love, the ties of affection, the bonds of charity, and the control of public opinion and law, have no effect in restraining a mischievous egotism, in vain shall we look to the terrors of a future judgment, which may be barred in time by a plea of satisfaction.

ART. VIII. Our great object in life is the improvement of our minds by true knowledge, in order that we may bring our own being, and those beings who surround us, into harmony with Nature and her laws. In vain shall we seek for happiness while violating any law of our being. Man is eminently social; it is only in communion with others that any virtue can become possible. It is in union, then, with others that his mind will expand, his affections be vivified, his usefulness promoted, his gratification increased.

ART. IX. On account of the oft-repeated calumny, that Infidels wish to give loose to their passions, we declare that we hold our principles and practice supe-

rior to the Bible standard. We find the law of birth in all countries where records are kept, to be about 105 males to 100 females; and that in twenty years, owing to unequal deaths in the sexes, there are 95 males to 100 females. Therefore, we accept the teaching of Nature, that one man should be the husband of one woman; and that the union should be voluntary, permanent, and founded in mutual esteem.

These Principles, we humbly conceive, are such as any body of citizens may accept and live by, as fundamental Articles of assent. We do not expect to avoid minor differences; indeed, we provide for them in our second Article, by insuring mental independence.

Our object in Union is immunity from that aggressive spirit which acknowledges no right separate from power. In Union, and in the open and candid—but mild and gentle—expression of our opinions, we expect success, alike from the force of truth, and from the simplicity of our lives, the integrity of our motives, the philanthropy of our actions, and the fulfilment of our social relations. In Union, the active spirits will be sustained by the numbers whose passive participation upholds their hands; and those whose silence gives the enemies of truth no uneasiness while isolated from their party, will be each an eloquent witness while joined to the whole.

Let our watchwords, then, be “Union and Organization.” Separated, we are mere *inorganic elements*. United, we shall be a *living body*, with a circulation of good works from the centre to the circumference, and back again to the heart; and with a brain and nerves insuring harmony of action in the whole living machine.

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION.

1. There shall be a Central Committee in the City of Philadelphia, with an organization and executive officers.
2. That in every township where [5] or more members can be permanently united in a Society, the same shall organize and put themselves in correspondence and affiliation with the Central Committee.
3. It shall be the duty of each affiliated Society to make a Quarterly Report, on the first of January, April, July and October, to the Central Association, on all such matters as shall be hereafter determined on.
4. It shall be the duty of said Central Committee to address a Yearly Epistle (Circular) to each Society in affiliation.
5. A Constitution shall be formed to carry these views into effect.

RESOLUTIONS.

1. *Resolved*, That in the present day of common schools, newspapers, reviews, and general diffusion of literature and science, the belief in a supernatural religion is much less vivid than in any former age. The circulation of the Bible has not been followed by the implicit and uniform faith so confidently predicted by its distributors; and instead of the mystery which shrouded it, and the respect felt for it, as in former times, too much familiarity has weakened, rather than strengthened its authority.

2. *Resolved*, That the priests and teachers of the several forms of superstition of the present age, are as enlightened, learned, and moral, as they ever were; but

the public are better informed than heretofore, more critical in their judgments on their priests' teachings, more exacting in requiring virtuous lives on the part of their spiritual guides, and less tolerant of the gross immoralities occasionally found out among them.

3. *Resolved*, That blind faith in a supernatural religion is now rather the exception than the rule. If we listen to speeches in Congress and State Legislatures, read messages, reports and documents, peruse the current literature of the day, or mark the bold declarations of scientific authorities, we can come to no other conclusion than that these discourses come only from men who have given up old superstitions; and if any man will take the trouble to poll his own acquaintances, he will be astonished to find scarcely (except, indeed, among a few fanatics) a single believer of the old-fashioned all-confiding character.

4. *Resolved*, That notwithstanding the number and respectability of the unbelieving portion of society, the Church still maintains her old aggressive attitude towards them; she still regards unbelief as a crime, a positive outrage against her rights, peace, and dignity; she omits no opportunity of decrying the learning, blackening the character, and defaming the memory of her opponents; or, occasionally running to the other extreme, she appropriates them after their decease, canonizing them as her brightest saints!

5. *Resolved*, That the immense sums raised for the distribution of tracts are really dedicated in chief part to a war on unbelief and unbelievers; a war requiring neither intellect, learning, truth, nor fair play, but "a forty parson power" of mendacity in concocting stories of "Infidel Sabbath breakers in the town of A," "Infidel drunkards in the town of B," and "Infidel thieves in the town of C."

6. *Resolved*, That the attempt of the Church thirty years ago, to bring into the field half a million of voters; in order to get into the Statute Book what cannot be got out of the Scriptures, namely, that the first day of the week is a Sabbath, an attempt then frustrated by Johnson's immortal "Report on the Sunday Mail Question;" and the unceasing but abortive efforts put forth from that time to the present, to unite the principal sects in some harmonious course of action, have in view only one consistent set of measures; to give the Church political power, to stamp her dogmas on the legislature of the country, and to put down infidels by the strong hand.

7. *Resolved*, That the claims of the Church to control one-seventh of our time is made in defiance even of the New Testament, Church history, and common sense. The earth being a spheroid, turning on its axis, and presenting successively each meridian to the sun, it follows that a general sabbath is a physical, geographical, and astronomical impossibility; and the attempt to institute one can result in nothing but the making of a dividing meridian somewhere, where a man can stand with one foot in Sunday and the other foot in Monday!

8. *Resolved*, That the extraordinary asperity which has distinguished political struggles for the past few years, has been caused by the interference of the clergy. The attempt of three thousand New England parsons to convey to Congress "*the mind and will of God*" was met in a way to render a repetition of the act more than doubtful. This attempt to control the government was repeated by Mr. Silliman and others. Yet there is an association of Preachers and Churches now in full action, whose quiet and almost unobserved doings are far more dangerous than the open banding together of "the three thousand." This institution, having its head quarters in New York, is called the "Christian Union," and expends \$75,000 per year on *agitation*, kept up by employing "renegade priests," and other men of no character, to set people "together by the ears" about questions of religion and politics; the success of this "church militant" would be speedily followed by a crusade against unbelievers.

9. *Resolved*, That the assumption that the Clergy have answered all the objections of unbelievers, is preposterous; because superstition is stationary while knowledge is progressive. Astronomy has ruined Jewish cosmogony and mira-

cles; Geology has successfully explained the facts adduced in support of a deluge; Archæology has shewn that great and civilized nations existed before Adam; the nascent science of Ethnology, by proving that men are not of one family, will eventually undermine the fable of the *Fall of Man*, and also its complement, the vicarious substitution of a *Saviour*. In short, the facts of Science are everywhere and in everything in opposition to the errors of Superstition.

10. *Resolved*, That the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels have been completely overturned by the German theologians, whose vast learning and critical acumen have culminated in Prof. Strauss' "*Life of Jesus*;" a work which demonstrates from the discrepant and irreconcilable statements of the four Evangelists, that neither of them could have been an eye witness of the wonders he relates, and that the whole story has been written from a *mythical* point of view, viz. by reproducing Old Testament marvels in a new dress, and relating fictions as facts, in order "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet" So-and-so, when the prophet never spoke any such matter, or spoke it in a very different sense.

11. *Resolved*, That this Convention would deem themselves recreant to their duty did they fail to express their sense of the eminent services of Paine in exposing so effectually, so clearly, and decidedly the Christian superstition. To use his own words, "he has cut down every tree in the whole forest, there they lie, let any priest try to stick them in the ground if he pleases, but he can never make them grow again." They have never made a serious attempt to perform so hopeless a task.

12. *Resolved*, That there never was a time when the Christian religion was a homogeneous system, understood in one sense by all its Apostles and propagandists. For many years after the Pentecost, the Apostles knew not that the Gentiles had any interest in salvation, thus evincing that they had never heard the command, "Go forth into all the World." The earliest writings (the Epistles) exhibit the extraordinary spectacle of *rivals* striving for the pre-eminence; rank heresies usurping the place of Divine Truth; *gainsayers* undermining the influence of inspired teachers; *Apostle* accusing *Apostle* of dissembling; the general prevalence of superstitious fears and immoral practices, and the utterance of threats and anathemas; in short, all the vices, corruptions, disorders and strifes of an old and effete superstition, tumbling to decay for want of vitality, where we should expect to see unity, harmony, and submission to the inspired founders.

13. *Resolved*, That the long history of the Church, from its foundation to the present time, is a history of heresies, persecutions, massacres, national and civil religious wars, crusades, inquisitions, wholesale banishments, reformations that reformed nothing, and new sects each more objectionable than the old. And while all these things are falsely attributed to the decay of true religion, they are, on the contrary, only the reproduction, development, and continual succession of the state of things exhibited in the earliest days of the Church, and related in its earliest writings.

14. *Resolved*, That the time is now come for the Unbelievers, Infidels, or Liberals, (or what name soever we may call ourselves by,) to stand forth in the dignity of manhood, and allow our Principles to be known and read of all men. And whereas this might be a step still attended with inconvenience in some places, therefore

Resolved, That we will endeavor to make our circle of association wider and more powerful, and our union more intimate and permanent, seeking in Organization the benefits which our adversaries so well know how to secure.

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