

A CONGRESS OF RELIGIONS.

by

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To the bent of human mind perhaps there is nothing more appealing and captivating than for men to lead a truly spiritual life which aims at the realization of Eternal Bliss. From the dawn of humanity the one predominant element discernible in the life and thought of those who would dive deep into the philosophy of life has been to find out ways and means to make oneself follow the track which leads to the highest beatitude, *Moksha*. It is with this end in view that they founded religions which are codes that help men in the attainment of spiritual perfection in human life. The most important factor in the foundations of spiritual life is the desire for the hankering after God. When the mind of a man is possessed entirely by a strong desire of having communion with Him his passions are subdued, his mind is imbued with good intentions and sin becomes his dread. When in the minds of the devotee the desire of hankering after God reigns supreme he gives up all worldliness and becomes a moral man. In his ardent prayer for the sight of Him he is occasionally favored with the vision of God. He passes on to the state of God-consciousness which does not last long, and soon he lapses to his former position. He craves and thirsts for Him and his desire gets strongly planted. On a happy moment the Almighty gives His presence to the devotee who invokes his aid and in his mind is created a desire to live, move and have his being with Him. The mind controls over the senses and he tries to live up to what the Gita says "Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance, Yoga, meditations, gifts self-restraint, sacrifice, study of the Vedas, penance, uprightness, non-doing of injury, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquility, freedom from fault-finding, compassion for all, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of quarrelsomeness, freedom from variety, O Bharata, all these belong to him who is God-like." Indeed the devotee lives a truly spiritual life and tries to have a godly relation between the human soul and the Divine soul.

We have given above a short description of what it is to lead a spiritual life and it is needless to say that the dominance of religious spirit in man is a chief factor in the success of spiritual life. Even in universities the factor of religion ought not to be ignored. As Mr. Haldane rightly puts it, the University is the place of training where the exponents of knowledge of research are to be numbered and receive their spiritual baptism. It is the teaching of religion on cosmopolitan basis that has a sure and successful influence on the endeavor of men to have a healthy spiritual existence. The Jew obeys the laws of Moses; the Christian bows to the law of Christ; the Hindu looks back to Manu for the guidance of his conduct; and the Musalman relies upon the Koran as an authority in all matters and in all these cases the imprimatur has come from a divine or inspired authority. Religion is therefore the foundation of morality that nothing can shake, the rock in which it can be built, and never be removed. We are glad that at present religious element is dormant in man and steps are being taken for the holding of religious Congresses for the betterment of the world. When in 1893 the Congress of Religions was held in Chicago it could be scarcely prophesied that it was not the first and last of its kind. In October

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last the second Congress was held at Copenhagen and men were widely awakened to the religious upheaval. This year the third Congress meets at Calcutta and from the arrangements that are being made there is a great deal of probability that it will be characterized by a remarkable friendliness among scholars of all nationalities. In April, 1911, will be held the fourth Congress at Athens and let us hope that all these harbinger an era of religious revival whose beneficial result cannot be over-estimated. We shall revert to this subject after the Congress at Calcutta takes place. Meanwhile let us here quote what Mr. Norendra Nath Sen the talented Editor of the *Indian Mirror* says on the subject. A new era is dawning upon the spiritual horizon of India. A great religious wave will surge through the heart of the world, and not of India alone, with the beginning of the new cycle. We should watch the coming times, and prepare ourselves beforehand for the change which will be ushered into the spiritual world. Students of the ancient history of India will find that Religious Conventions or Councils were frequently held under the Buddhist kings not only to propagate the faith, but to preserve its principles from any polluting influence. The proceedings of four great Councils are on record – the first held in 543 B. C. after the passing away of Lord Buddha; the second held a century afterwards to settle disputes between the more and less strict followers of Buddhism; the third held in the reign of King Asoka in 244 B. C., which corrected many errors and heresies; and the fourth held under the Scythian King Kanishka who ruled in North-Western India about 40 A. D. These Councils served the most important purpose of keeping the Buddhist doctrines pure. How much more Religious Conventions must be needed today when materialism has laid its hands upon every race of the world.
