

As to the Parliament of Religions—of which especially this paper treats—there was something thrilling about the conception of gathering into one fraternal assembly the representatives of the various religious faiths of mankind, and hushing all discordancies in one universal harmony. Charity seemed to have come down from heaven to sit upon her throne and sway all hearts; and yet, as to the utility of such a parliament, there were in many minds grave doubts which events have not dissipated. Of course in an open field, with a fair showing, Christianity has nothing to fear from competition with any other so-called “religions;” but such a parliament leaves on the popular mind impressions which are misleading and mischievous. Superficial people naturally infer that, as all the great religious systems of the world claim to have their “sacred books,” and “sacred persons,” and most of them their “incarnations,” it is simply a matter of comparison and competition whether or not Christianity shall, in the race for the prize, come out ahead! There is, in the concession of a common platform—to which Brahmins and Buddhists, Confucianists and Taoists, Parsees and Shintoists, and representatives of every other type of religious doctrine and practice are admitted upon an equality—something which looks very like the virtual abandonment of the position held for centuries by the evangelical disciple, that there is but one divine religion, and that so unique as to defy all comparison or competition.

On the same platform, in the Hall of Columbus, were to be seen Christians of every name—Roman Catholic and Greek Church dignitaries, as well as leading Protestants of all denominations; theosophists and materialists and deists, as well as theists; followers of every creed, however sublime or absurd—a great throng all gathered in one hall and rejoicing in the unity of their diversity, and that all-embracing bond of “charity.” It was pronounced a “wonderful and impressive sight,” even by the unimpressible newspaper reporters! Cardinal Gibbons delivered an invocatory prayer, and addresses followed from a Presbyterian “president,” a Universalist female preacher, and a Roman Catholic archbishop; and everybody was supposed to be happy because the millennium of “peace on earth and good will among men” was at last inaugurated! Here, for seventeen days, those who glory in the “universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man,” and the universal affinity of all religious faiths and cults, sat down together at their banquet of love. According to the conditions of the Parliament, the principles of each faith were to be set forth by special advocates, without reply, rejoinder, controversy, comparison, or any form of counter attack, so that, as every mouth was muzzled, there was no room on that platform even for the exposure of error, sophistry, fallacy, or even falsehood. Such refutation must find its opportunity and facility outside the Parliament, if at all. No wonder if that competent and cultured Arabic scholar, Dr. George E. Post, of Syria, when he heard false statements made as to the teaching of the Koran, could not keep silence, but broke through restraint and started