

The earlier sittings of the Congress were occupied with the profound theoretical questions of religious belief and religious speculation; its later sittings with the hardly less interesting and not less important and necessary questions relating to the bearing of religion on social life and progress. The representatives of Christianity had, as has been said, greatly the preponderance, numerically, and, therefore, of course, intellectually, though the representatives of oriental religions were by no means behind in this latter respect. Judaism was represented by men like Dr. Isaac Wise and Rabbi Hirsch. The Roman Catholic Church by men like Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Ireland. The Greek Church by a Greek Archbishop and a Russian Prince, and the Armenian Church by a letter and messenger from an Armenian Patriarch. Zoroastrism, Confucianism and Mahomedanism had each their zealous advocates; while Brahminism had several of its handsome and haughty-looking turbaned champions, evidently penetrated with all a Brahmin's pride of race. The "Light of Asia" was presented in all its various aspects by Buddhists of every shade, from India, Ceylon, Siam, Tibet, and Japan, one of the papers coming from a Siamese prince. This curious and widespread religion excited a more general and a warmer interest than all the other non-Christian religions put together, one reason of this being that there are already not a few American Buddhists, for the Americans are like the ancient Athenians in their desire perpetually "to tell or to hear some new thing," and "the old, old story is apparently considered less worthy of their careful study than the teaching of Buddha. It is not unlikely that if Christianity is for a time to have a rival as a universal religion, that rival will naturally be Buddhism; for this many-sided religion has aspects which bring it into line at certain points, both with a philosophic idealism and also with the modern agnostic school of science. For it argues with an appearance of close logic that there can be no First Cause, nothing but a perpetual succession of cause and effect. It then argues that, since we can know nothing but these perpetually recurring phenomena, the only way of escape for man out of the miseries of life is to escape the bondage of the material and transitory, which, after all, has no real self-existence, by the "noble path" of a high morality, which is to lead, in the end, to a full redemption from the power of selfish passions and a selfish individuality. And at this point it harmonizes with the teaching of Christianity, as given by Christ himself. "But this purity," says a Buddhist treatise, "is unattainable to skeptics, unbelievers and the proud." Analogies to this in Christ's teaching are too obvious to need quoting. But how is this state of enlightened wisdom and redemption from the bondage of self, to be attained? Not alone by contemplation and effort, but, to quote from a recent authorized publication, "with the help of Buddhas." It is clear then that Buddha—in the singular or plural—is to them a Divine Being and Saviour, who not only has not passed into nothingness, but retains an active power to bless and help his followers. This may or may not be due to some leavening influence of Christian thought. Be this as it may, it shows the necessary dependence which is a part of religion, even in spite of the apparent inconsistency on this point with the intel-

lectual agnosticism of Buddhism. This is noticeable, too, in the belief of some schools of Buddhists, in the forgiveness of sins. With its strange mingling of agnosticism and mysticism, it is not wonderful that there should be conversions to Buddhism from a superficial and conventional Christianity, which is another reason the more for Christians rousing themselves to a greater depth and reality in their own faith; for in the matter of real faith in the Divine, as was well said by a Christian speaker, some of these non-Christian orientals put the average Christian to shame.

The writer had an interesting opportunity of learning something concerning a long-disputed point as to Buddhist teaching from one of its best representatives at the Congress, a man who may be said to belong to the evangelical school of Buddhism, and one who is devoting his life to the re-purchase of the temple which marks the site of Guatama's entrance into "Nirvana," one of the holy places of Buddhism, from the Brahmans, in whose hands it has long been. He very clearly explained that, in his belief, "Nirvana," as taught by Buddha himself, did not mean, as many writers on Buddhism, including Max Muller, in his earlier writings, the extinction of personality and consciousness, but something quite different, the extinction of the tyranny of the lower self, the complete redemption from the reign of selfish passion, which the New Testament calls "the life of the flesh." The writer asked if that did not mean the same thing which Christ taught when He said: "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for My sake, the same shall find it." He admitted that this was a beautiful thought and that there was in some respects a wonderful similarity between the teaching of Christ and of Buddha, admitting, also, that to live the Christ-life was certainly a way to attain Nirvana. He responded warmly to the beautiful lines of Whittier:

"That to be saved is only this,
Salvation from our selfishness,
From more than elemental fire--
The soul's unsanctified desire,
From sin itself, and not the pain
That warns us of its galling chain."

Surely there is one whom the Master Himself would have called "not very far from the Kingdom"; and when an intelligent Buddhist admits that to live the Christ-life will attain Nirvana, it would seem as if we were almost within sight of "The Coming Kingdom." May not this side of Buddhism indeed have a mission in purifying a Christianity which has failed in many respects to realize its high mission, its message to teach men to "be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect," so that, before the mammon-worshipping, sense-enthralled masses of to-day, she may rise again in her pristine beauty, "clear as the sun fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners!"

"Toleration in religion is the best fruit of the last four centuries," is one of the inscriptions on the beautiful classic peristyle at the World's Fair. Few thoughtful persons now-a-days would dispute this. But we must remember that this toleration in religion, which recognizes the sacred and unalienable right of man to worship God according to his conscience, and which is quite compatible with the most ardent and tenacious grasp of what we ourselves hold for truth, does not merely mean the refusal to impose penalties or disabilities

on those who think differently. It also means much more, respect and justice done to other forms of faith and those who hold them. This sort of toleration has often been conspicuously absent from the judgment of a large part of the Christian world, partly from unavoidable ignorance of what these religions really teach, partly from incorrect information given by those who have to some extent misperceived them, or who have not taken the trouble to ascertain the exact truth, just as Buddhists and Chinese so often misconceive Christianity. There can be no doubt that missionary teaching has often missed its mark from ignorance or crude conceptions of the beliefs of the people addressed, or by exciting their violent antagonism by injudicious attacks on what they hold as sacred. It could hardly dispose of the mind of a Chinese to receive the good seed if the word to be told that his revered Confucius "was in hell," as a missionary, young and callow, let us hope, from his forgetfulness of his Master's injunction to "judge not" is reported to have said. There have been too many cases, it is to be feared, where St. Paul's wise caution and willingness to take such common ground of truth as he could find to begin with, has not been followed. In order to meet wisely the problems which Christian missions have to face, it is necessary to have a clear conception of their character, and such conceptions could scarcely be better formed than from the coming into contact with such orientals as gathered in the Hall of Columbus, and hearing from their own lips their own beliefs as they understand them. Moreover, in the "enthusiasm of humanity," as well as in faith in God, some of these "heathen" orientals might teach many professing Christians a needed lesson. The more evangelical Buddhists hold that the salvation of humanity is to be superseded in the minds of the more enlightened, the more desire of personal salvation, and is itself a part of that attainment. The Buddhist monks who had come all the way from Japan to bring a vigorous presentment of their faith before this Congress were evidently whole-hearted and devoted men, inspired with a true missionary zeal. One could not fail to recognize in the pathetic earnestness written on the face of the leader, especially as, with his shaven head and yellow cloak, he stood beside the reader of his translated paper, sometimes with eyes cast down as if in prayer, sometimes earnestly regarding the faces of the work as if mentally weighing the effect of the words on their minds, the same desire to make known his Buddhist gospel, that beats in the heart of the Christian missionary, with his simpler and more hopeful gospel of life and immortality brought to light by Christ. And in the closing adjuration to "Come to Buddha and find peace and rest," it seemed as if the very words were borrowed from the address of the Christian preacher.

The interesting discussions on social questions which occupied the latter days of the Congress must be left to another paper, along with the stirring demonstration in celebration of Lincoln's proclamation of negro emancipation, which brought out a large assemblage of African descent, and on which occasion, in addition to the usual opening with the Lord's Prayer, the hymn "Coronation" was sung with great spirit, the whole assemblage standing, including some orientals on the platform. It is doubtful whether they were fully aware