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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.”

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

BY THE EDITOR

I

The Parliament of Religions, held under the auspices of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee during the first eight days of March last, was a unique event in the history of India, past and present. It was the last and undoubtedly the greatest of all the items that lent a grave significance and added an abiding force to the programme of the yearlong celebrations in connection with the Centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. For the first time in the annals of India, one could witness such an assemblage of the distinguished men and women who met on the same platform, hailing from distant corners of the globe and representing diverse religions, nationalities, and various systems of thought. It was, indeed, a fitting occasion for India, pre-eminently the land

of spirituality, to take delight in the great assembly of men and women who responded to India's invitation and joined the proceedings of the Parliament with their messages of goodwill and felicitations. The Parliament had in its sessions crowded programmes both in the morning and evening, in which leaders of thought, scholars, philosophers, and monks participated. The predominant note of the Parliament was to strengthen the spirit of peace and harmony which is the crying need of the modern world. It gave an opportunity to the exponents of various religions and systems of thought to understand one another and to promote the spirit of fellowship all the world over.

In these days when the general trend of modern civilization is materialistic, alike in outlook and in sympathies, one may possibly ask: Is world fellowship

possible in view of the modern tendencies of the world? Then again: Is world fellowship possible through religion, above all? In this connection, we may refer our readers to the editorial notes of *The Statesman* dated March 3: "We do not know what attention the busy world will give to a Parliament of Religions in Calcutta, but the meetings this week will be noticed by some as a sign that men can be conscious of a common humanity and a common purpose in life, and as a proof of the abiding influence of one or two recent Indian seekers after the ultimate truth. Religion, said Sir Brajendra Nath Seal in his Presidential address on Monday, is in its broader sense a force that organizes life and life's activities, and Sri Ramakrishna's teaching and living were a protest against a narrower conception of religious duty that has done great evil the world over. His teaching lives not only in the organization and activities of the Mission called after him, to which the Secretary of State, who had seen it at work in Bengal, gave deserved appreciation in a message read at the beginning of the meeting. A Parliament of Religions may be concerned only with impossible ideals, as many impatient critics put it, but these ideals are far finer and more useful than those put forward in many international conferences to-day."

The present tension and anxiety which are world-wide in character and extend to every sphere of modern life show undoubtedly the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern civilization. The chaos in the world to-day has been traced by many thinking men to the chaos in the souls of modern men. Because the overwhelming majority of modern men have torn themselves from the spiritual centre, an inward crisis has affected the whole world and divided mankind into hostile groups the like of which has never been witnessed in the events of the world

from antiquity till the modern times. The need for a spiritual renewal seems to be all important in getting out of the present mood of hopelessness. The life of the spirit has, therefore, to be emphasized and given a new interpretation in order to save mankind from ruinous isolation and the utter demoralization through which the modern world is passing. For, the destiny of nations as of individuals depends largely on the direction of their life forces in which the human spirit may find its fullest expression. It was in accord with this fundamental principle that the Parliament of Religions was organized in connection with the Centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna who was the embodiment of spirituality and whose life demonstrated the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are neither contradictory nor antagonistic, but are different phases of one eternal religion. The Chairman of the Reception Committee in his welcome address to the delegates of the Parliament made it clear that the necessity for providing a forum where exponents of all religious faiths of the world would be able to expound their own ideas and ideals without any spirit of intolerance, where they would be able to exchange their views on man's life and its goal and on problems furthering national amity, international fellowship and universal peace, could hardly be over-estimated. He said again: "It was thought a Parliament of Religions was a necessary concomitant of the Celebrations, a *sine qua non*, without which no celebration of the Centenary would be perfect or complete. And there could be no more suitable place for the celebration of the Centenary than this where have assembled the representatives of the different religions of the world. Rightly has Swami Vivekananda said: 'Aye, long before ideas of universal religion and brotherly feeling between differ-

ent sects had been mooted and discussed in any country in the world, here, in sight of this city, was living a man whose whole life was a Parliament of Religions, as it should be.' "

II

The present age is distracted between new knowledge and old beliefs, between naturalism and fundamentalism. The way to escape from either of the extremes is to adopt a rational attitude in the matter of religion. What should be that attitude? This was the problem that the intellectuals and preachers of India were faced with during the nineteenth century when the country had become the hotbed of sects, warring creeds and dogmas and a victim to Western ideas and the influences of Orthodox Christianity. At that critical period of history, Sri Ramakrishna chalked out a rational way for religion. By dint of his extraordinary Sadhana he directly perceived that the real self of a man is the Supreme Being and that Being is one and the same in all. It is the business of every man to discover the truth and to feel it consciously. In a potter's shop there are vessels of different shapes and forms,—pots, jars, dishes, plates, etc., but all are made of the same clay. So the Supreme Being which is the real self of man is one, but is worshipped in different ages and countries under various names and forms. Individuals, races, and nations are specific articulations of the Supreme Being. Different religions are but so many paths to reach the Supreme Being. It is in this respect that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna stand out so prominently to-day and the Parliament of Religions carried so much significance with the distinguished delegates who came from far and near to join the historic gathering at Calcutta, in the vicinity of which Sri Ramakrishna had

lived during the momentous period of his wonderful career. The distinctive merits of Sri Ramakrishna's message of the harmony of religions were pointed out by Sir Brajendra Nath Seal, General President of the Parliament: "What we want is not merely universal religion in its quintessence, as Rammohun sought it in his earlier days, not merely an eclectic religion by compounding the distinctive essences, theoretical as well as practical, of the different religions as Keshabchandra sought it, but experience as a whole as it has unfolded itself in the history of man. And this can be realized by us, as Ramakrishna taught, by the syncretic practice of religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian as preparatory to the ultimate realization of God in Man and Man in God."

It should be noted here that although Sri Ramakrishna stood for both tolerance and universal acceptance, he had also a spiritual outlook on humanity. The former two and also the latter were to him the factors that make for harmony and peace in the world. This spiritual outlook on humanity has been stressed by Romain Rolland in his book on Sri Ramakrishna: "He desired something infinitely greater than the reconciliation of warring creeds—that man as a whole should understand, sympathize with and love the rest of mankind—that he should identify himself with the life of humanity. For, since Divinity is inherent in every man, every life for him was a religion, and should so become for all. And the more we love mankind, however diverse, the nearer we are to God." Thus we see that the organizers of the Parliament had at their heart the idea that these supreme virtues, namely, tolerance, universal acceptance, and love of humanity which Sri Ramakrishna illustrated in his life

might well make for peace and harmony in the present-day world. The ideal that had been set up by Sri Ramakrishna was deeply appreciated by the eminent speakers of the Parliament. While presiding at one of the sessions, Sir Francis Younghusband observed that at this very critical period of the world's history when there was such a terrible amount of disunion, it was important that men of this (Sri Ramakrishna's) spirit and men of religion should come together and see in what way they could bring into the world that spirit of harmony of which Sri Ramakrishna was the apostle. What was very important on an occasion like the present one, he further observed, was that when they met together—each retaining his own faith and each one feeling convinced that for him, at any rate, his own religion was the best—they were forced down to the very fundamentals of their faith and each one of them was led to the very highest ideals of his faith. Next, he added that all mankind was deeply indebted to Sri Ramakrishna for having spread and intensified the doctrine and lived up to it in his own life.

Thus we find that the Parliament of Religions showed the way to a rational attitude to be adopted in the matter of religion. This attitude alone can help modern men to discipline their passions of greed and selfishness.

III

It might be asked how all the religions can be true when we notice their contradictions. What we take to be contradictions are really so many readings or aspects of the same Truth. All religions must be fulfilling some important purposes in God's economy of the universe. There can be no harm in having many religions with their own doctrines, dogmas, and philosophies, provided they live in amity and goodwill. Because any

attempt to bring all mankind into one set of theories is doomed to failure. Unity in diversity is the plan everywhere. Swami Vivekananda said: "You cannot make all conform to the same ideas. That is a fact and I thank God that it is so. I am glad that sects exist. If you and I and all who are present here were to think exactly the same thoughts, there would be no thoughts for us to think. We know that two or more forces must come into collision, in order to produce motion. It is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thought, that awakes thought. Whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water. When religions are dead, there will be no more sects. It will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. But so long as mankind thinks there will be sects, I pray that they may multiply so that at last there will be as many sects as human beings, and each one will have his own method, his method of thought in religion." Thus it is obvious that the increase of religions or sects is not harmful to human society. It is the business of all right-thinking men to discourage and condemn the exclusive and fanatical feeling that has done and will do all kinds of mischief in the world. The world is torn to-day by sectarianism of every description. The Parliament of Religions emphatically protested against the ruthless method of fascism in religious matters prevailing in most parts of the world. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, while presiding at one of the sessions, said: "The attempt to make the one religion which is their own, dominate all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind

lane abruptly stopping at one narrow point of history. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with the universal flood of a bigoted exclusiveness, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from the catastrophe of spiritual desolation."

Sectarianism parades under different names and forms. It has invaded every phase of the modern life. Inter-racial discord, international rivalry, conflict of cultures, social intolerance, and communalism among others are so many evils that sectarianism has brought in its train and they have undermined the solidarity of the human race. The Parliament of Religions throughout all its sessions discussed the aforesaid problems in a spirit of love and sympathy so as to create an atmosphere which might tend towards their solution. The distinguished delegates who delivered lectures or read their papers tried to devise constructive plans and ways to combat the hindrances to world peace and fellowship. The sacrifice of narrower interests for the sake of wider objectives was considered necessary. The principle of harmony was said to be inconsistent with self-aggrandizement, whether made by nations or individuals at the expense of the common good of humanity. The religious basis of life was demanded and it was thought to be such as would commend itself to man's highest aspirations and would embrace the whole of life. The fulfilment of the great objective of universal peace and harmony could be accomplished, according to some, through the spiritual consciousness common to all religions and through the practical application of the virtues embodied in them all.

IV

If sectarianism has to go, religionists must find out the fundamental unity of

all religions. The proof of one religion depends on the proof of all the rest. If one religion is true, all others must be true. Men have to realize that there are differences in non-essentials, but in essentials they are one. In this connection, it may be interesting to note that Mahatma Gandhi sent a question through Acharya Kalelkar to the Parliament of Religions. The full text of the question runs as follows: "You are going to the Dharma Sabha, the Parliament of Religions. It is associated with the holy name of a personality like Ramakrishna Paramahansa. I do hope that the Sabha will do something that will give a lead—will guide the followers of all faiths. What will the Parliament say in respect of all the religions? Are all the religions equal, as we hold or is any particular religion in the sole possession of truth and the rest either untrue or a mixture of truth and errors as many believe? The opinion of the Parliament in such matters must prove a helpful guidance." Sir Francis Younghusband, who had come into a very close contact with the people of diverse faiths, with Moslems in Central Asia, with Buddhists and Confucianites in China and Tibet, and with Hindus in India, observed in answer to the question that he had discovered a fundamental unity among all those religions. That had been their main impression at the World Congress of Faiths and that, he thought, would be the result of the present Congress too. Each would be advocating his own religion but still each at the same time would feel that there was a fundamental unity keeping them together. It was this fundamental unity which Sir Francis desired the Parliament of Religions to realize and make permanent and abiding.

If we analyse all the religions of the world, we find that the truths embodied in them are the results of the experiences of particular persons. These per-

sons are called the founders or teachers of the religions which they preached and which they built upon direct experience. All of them laid stress on the spiritual nature of the human being and showed that religion is a constitutional necessity of the human mind. They all emphasized the point that there is something in man, which does not change like his body. They all admitted that every man must develop his spiritual nature, so that he may know that which does not change or die. They all appealed very strongly to their followers for extending love and charitable feelings to fellow-brethren and all beings in the world. They all pointed out that the goal of human life is far higher than the enjoyment of earthly pleasures and that it consists in realizing the ultimate truth that lies latent in every man. All religions founded by them contain the ways and methods of developing character and imbibing the virtues of purity and charity. No true adherents of any religion can say that their religion consists only in its doctrines, dogmas, and rituals. All religions aim at the finding out of the ultimate truth. There may be a thousand different radii, but there is no doubt that they all converge to the one and the same centre.

Thus we find that the study of comparative religions with a spirit of love and tolerance is the only remedy against the jarring notes of clash in the realm of religion. The Parliament of Religions in all its sessions promoted the cause of such a study and we hope it must have made a deep impression on all those who took part in the proceedings as well as on those who lent their patient hearing to the illuminating addresses and papers of the savants of the East and West. In this sense, the Parliament of Religions

undoubtedly carried a great significance and it certainly wielded a powerful influence in furthering the cause of peace, goodwill, and harmony among different races and nations of the world. What message the Parliament of Religions could give to the modern world, to every nation, and to every individual may be best expressed in the memorable words of Swami Vivekananda, which he uttered at the Universalist Church, Pasadena, California, in the year 1900 : "I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.

"Not only shall I do all these but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation, going on? It is a marvellous book,—these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books, are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future !"

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

Monday, March 1—March 8, 1937

OPENING SONG

VEDIC MANTRA

Set to music by
Srimati Saraladevi Chaudhuri

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं ।

सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ॥

समानो मन्त्रः समिति समानी ।

समानो मन सहचित्तमेषाम् ॥

समानीव आकूतिः समाना हृदयानिव ।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥

Walk in unison, speak in unison, let your minds be of one accord.

Let your words be common, common the place of assembly, common the mind with thoughts united.

May same be your cry, your resolve the same, may your hearts be united bearing happily with one another.

ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN, RECEPTION COMMITTEE

SIR M. N. MUKERJI

Monday, March 1

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

More than two years ago when the scheme for celebrating the Birth Centenary of Paramahansa Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva was first drawn up, it was considered the most essential part of the programme to convene a Parliament of Religions of the World. This,



SIR M. N. MUKERJI

as you all know, is quite in consonance with the spirit of the message of the great saint who was the "consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million people"—a great symphony "composed of the thousand voices and thousand faiths of mankind."

When in 1893 a Parliament of Religions was convened at the World's Fair in Chicago, its objects among other things were : (1) to promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly conference and mutual good understanding, while not seeking to foster the temper of indifferentism, and not striving to achieve any formal and

outward unity, (2) to inquire what light each religion has afforded, or may afford, to the other religions of the world, and (3) to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent international peace.

The purpose of the Parliament of Religions which was intended to be called in connection with the Centenary Celebrations, though much humbler, nevertheless embraced within its scope most of the aforesaid objects. Beneath the seeming diversities of different faiths there is a common plan and purpose,—an underlying unity in search of which the whole of humanity, consciously or unconsciously, has been moving from time immemorial. The necessity for providing a forum where exponents of all religious faiths of the world would be able to expound their own ideas and ideals without any spirit of intolerance, where they would be able to exchange their views on man's life and its goal and on problems furthering national amity, international fellowship and universal peace, can hardly be over-estimated. Though each religion is great in its own way, a comparison among religions with a view to establishing the superiority of one over the others, is unprofitable. There are many important truths that various religions teach in common, many that one has given to another, many again which in different religions have assumed different forms, sometimes apparently incongruous but not really so. Mutual exchange of views broadens the entire religious outlook

and fosters a spirit of tolerance, the need for which is so often keenly felt. What is wanted in a true votary of any particular religion is intensity of belief together with a catholicity of outlook and non-aggressiveness. Sri Ramakrishna has said :

“Religion, however, is one. It has been so from all times, it shall be so for ever.”

“The Lord is one, though He hath many names.”

And—

“Yea, every belief, every religion, every system of faith and worship is but a path that leadeth unto Him.”

It was thought that a Parliament of Religions was a necessary concomitant of the Celebrations, a *sine qua non*, without which no celebration of the Centenary would be perfect or complete. And there could be no more suitable place for the celebration of the Centenary than this where have assembled the representatives of the different religions of the world. Rightly has Swami Vivekananda said : “Aye, long before ideas of universal religion and brotherly feeling between different sects had been mooted and discussed in any country in the world, here, in sight of this city, was living a man whose whole life was a Parliament of Religions, as it should be.”

The great Saint of Dakshineswar made himself conspicuous in the world's history of religious endeavour by actually practising different religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and realizing the grand truths embedded in them all. He was the first spiritual seer in the world who, standing on the bedrock of his own realizations, declared emphatically and unequivocally the great truth that the different religions are like so many paths leading to the same goal of God-realization.

This was what Sri Ramakrishna lived to realize and proclaim to the sect-ridden world. It is, therefore, only meet that, on the occasion of the Birth Centenary of this glorious apostle of ‘Harmony of Religions,’ worthy representatives of various religions should have assembled here with the noble object of establishing a closer relationship of amity and goodwill among the different faiths and churches of the world.

The idea of this Parliament was formed, but we did not know how it would materialize. Our resources were limited and some of the difficulties that we saw seemed at the moment insurmountable. But there is a much higher and mightier power than that of man. We issued invitations to the most eminent persons all over the world—scholars, philosophers, indologists and religious heads. The world responded. From the response that we received, we found that we were to proceed. We did proceed, always anticipating with eager expectation the day when the Parliament of Religions would meet in this great city. And as time rolled on and the day came nearer and nearer, our eagerness was ever on the increase. That much longed-for day, that ‘golden hour’ has arrived : you have come, and on behalf of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee I bid you a most cordial welcome.

While rejoicing in the fact that our labours have ended in success, I must not forget to refer to those who were with us in our endeavours and whom we miss here to-night. The great Leveller has weakened our rank by taking a ruthless toll. Only a few days ago, just on the eve of the concluding part of the celebrations in Calcutta, Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of the Master, who was President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and of

the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations Committee, passed away. The presence of our veteran leader was a source of inspiration to us. The world heard last year about this time his inspiring message of peace and goodwill that was broadcast through the radio to the farthest corners of the globe. Prof. Dr. Winternitz, the celebrated scholar and indologist of Czechoslovakia, who was our co-worker and whose learned paper on "Race and Religion" will shortly be read at this Parliament, is also no more in this land of the living. We also express our deep sense of sorrow at the deaths of Prof. Sylvain Levi (France), Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikari, Kt. (Calcutta), Mr. S. W. Dassenaike, C.I.E. (Ceylon), Mr. A. C. Chatterjee (Geneva), Prince Andrea Boncompagni Ludovici (Italy), Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerjee (U.S.A.), Dr. J. T. Sunderland (U.S.A.), Sir Lalubhai Samaldas (Bombay) and Swami Dhirananda (Calcutta), all of whom were actively associated with this Centenary.

On behalf of the Centenary Committee, I welcome you all who have made immense personal sacrifice to come over here and give us the benefit of your wisdom. I also thank those who have warmly responded to our invitation but could not accept it on account of their preoccupations.

May I take this opportunity to tell you that the Centenary was observed not only in the different provinces of India, in Burma, Ceylon, Federated Malay States, Straits Settlements, Japan and China, but also in many parts of England and the Continent, North and South America, Africa and Australia. Since the inauguration of the Centenary at the Belur Math on the 24th February, 1936, celebrations have been held in the hundreds of cities and villages all over India, Burma and Ceylon. The high and the low, the rich and the poor,

one and all, without any distinction of caste, creed or colour, participated in these celebrations, the most prominent features of which were public meetings, students' gatherings, ladies' conferences, distribution of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literatures, organization of literary and athletic competitions and feeding of the poor. Religious Conventions also formed another important feature of those celebrations in many cities and towns.

Leaders of thought from all parts of the world such as Japan, China, Philippines, Straits Settlements, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Great Britain, Norway, Egypt, South Africa and U.S.A. have sent us greetings and congratulations.

In India we have received messages of good wishes from prominent persons representing all walks of life belonging to Assam, Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Delhi, Punjab, Bombay, C.P., Nizam's Dominions, Madras, Mysore, Ceylon, Orissa, and Burma. We take this opportunity of conveying our grateful thanks to each and all for their cordial felicitations.

We are painfully conscious of our shortcomings in not being able to look adequately to your needs and comforts as we should. But we have every reason to hope that through your kind co-operation this Parliament of Religions will be a complete success. May God bless our endeavour and grant us the necessary strength and vision to realize through this meeting of the world's representatives of religions the lofty ideal of the federation of faiths for which this Parliament has been convened.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I conclude I once more bid you a most hearty welcome on behalf of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES

SIR BRAJENDRA NATH SEAL

(Sometime Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University)

Monday, March 1

DEAR FRIENDS,

The Parliament of Religions, that is commencing to-day, is one of the items, perhaps the last item in the programme of yearlong celebrations in connection with the Centenary of the birth, or as others would have it, the advent into this world of Paramahansa Ramakrishna.



SIR BRAJENDRA NATH SEAL

More than 25 years ago I recall having written at Sister Nivedita's request a paper entitled "An early stage of Vivekananda's mental development." I concluded that paper with an account of a visit I had paid to Vivekananda's Master, Sri Ramakrishna. That was a stormy evening and it was accompanied by thunder and lightning, and this suited well my mental commotion which was created in me by that visit. This afternoon in the calm dispassion of the evening of my life I deem it a privilege to be able to share along with the thousands who are present in this hall

in person or in spirit the Centenary celebration of one who in his sojourn on earth was above time and above space.

This Parliament of Religions has evoked cordial responses from far and near. The participants who are present in person are going to deal with the problems of religion, life, moral welfare, spirituality and social progress from varied points of view. The teachings of Ramakrishna constitute the topic of some of the papers to be presented before this assembly. I shall confine myself to recording just a few reminiscences of mine in regard to the great saint as well as placing in the philosophical and historical perspectives his special contributions to the realm of human thought and action.

In his early boyhood Ramakrishna took part in popular shows and exhibitions, *e.g.*, Krishnalilâ and Gajan songs. He would play the part of Krishna or Siva in these popular shows. On the death of his elder brother, he became priest at the Kali Bari (temple of Kali) of Dakshineswar near Calcutta. He wanted to see Kali, the Divine Mother, and threatened to stab himself to death if Kali would not deign to appear. He was half-mad and at last he had, as he thought, a vision of Kali.

He then began to practise austerities. He took on himself a vow to abjure lust and gold (Kâma and Kâanchana). Taking gold in one hand and mud in the other, he would mutter, 'Gold is mud and mud is gold.' In the same

way he conquered all cravings of the flesh and in the end he revered every woman as mother.

A youthful and beautiful woman initiated him into Tantric practices (Sâdhanâ). Lying on her lap he meditated on Kali. She was a Brahmachârini, using wine and flesh in the rituals of worship. He worshipped her as a naked goddess. All sensual cravings were thus seared and burnt up in him.

He sought to experience each religion in its entirety in Sâdhanâ or spiritual discipline. Now he would be a Moslem Fakir, with appropriate rituals, attitudes and garb, and now a Christian neophyte, stricken with a sense of sin and crying for salvation. There was nothing of mere pose or mere imagination in all this. In the same way Vaishnava Sankirtan and music were added to his religious exercises.

Among early personal influences on Ramakrishna is to be noted that of Saint Dayananda Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj. Dayananda took his stand on the Vedas as teaching the one Universal Religion and fought all idolatry in a militant mood, but his influence on Ramakrishna could not be lasting or deep. Ramakrishna's genuineness led him to revolt against Hindu practices; he would repudiate caste and even serve the "Methar" which could hardly have been pleasing to the orthodox Vedic brotherhood. He felt himself drawn to Totapuri and other saints and these manifold experiences prepared him for his mission in life. It was Totapuri who initiated him into Sannyâsa.

He came under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj also. The New Dispensation as preached by Brahmananda Keshabchandra gave him a keen sense of certain social evils and immoralities which had corrupted latter-day Hindu religion and religious practices.

Ramakrishna was a composite personality. In contemplating Truth from the absolute point of view (Nirupâdhi) he negated all conditions and modes (Upâdhis), but from the relative or conditional point of view (Sopâdhi) he worshipped Kali, the Divine Mother, as well as other modes and embodiments of the deity. He worshipped the one in all and the all in one and he saw no contradiction but only a fuller reality in this. So also he reconciled Sâkâr and Nirâkâr Upâsanâ. For him there was nothing in the material form of the deity but God manifesting Himself. The antagonism between matter and spirit did not exist for him.

What he refused to delude himself with was that he was above all conditions and all infirmities of the flesh. But in his trances (Samâdhi) he developed ecstasia in its purest form, such as has been rarely witnessed in the West in the religious world since the days of Eckhart and Tauler.

Like most Hindu Saints he had an inexhaustible store of homely sayings, adages, metaphors, allegories, parables, which could bring spiritual truths home to the meanest understanding and even to the child.

Rammohun Roy, in a very real sense the father of modern India, sought the Universal Religion, the common basis of the Hindu, Moslem, Christian and other faiths. He found that each of these great religions was based on this common faith with a certain distinctive historical and cultural embodiment. It is fundamental to note that Rammohun played two roles in his own person. First he was a profound universalist and in this capacity he formulated the creed of what has been called Neo-theophilanthropy (a new love of God and man) on positive and constructive lines. He construed the Gâyatri on this basis. And strange to say this Hindu became

one of the three fathers of the Unitarian creed and worship in the West.

In the second place Rammohun was a Nationalist Reformer and functioned in three different ways.

As a Hindu Reformer he gave a Unitarian redaction of the Hindu Shâstras from the Vedânta and as a Moslem defender of faith he wrote the *Tufatul Mowahidin* and *Manazaratum Adiyan* which were polemical works. And finally as a Christian he gave a Unitarian version of the entire body of the scriptures, old and new, in his controversies with the Christian missionaries. Rammohun was thus in himself a universalist and three nationalists all in one.

Maharshi Devendranath organized the creed, rituals and Anushthanas in the Adi-Brahmo-Samaj on a Hindu Upanishadic basis.

The work of formulating a Universal Religion free from Hindu or Christian theology fell to Brahmananda Keshabchandra Sen, who attempted this on an eclectic basis, and thus organized rituals and modes of worship. In his earlier days Keshabchandra made Christianity the central religion but in later life he was drawn more and more to Vaishnavism for emotional and religious exercises. This was selective eclecticism. He thus variegated and fulfilled religious experiences as well as concepts, rituals and worship in a way never attempted before. Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Vaishnavism, not to mention other religions, each contributed its essence and substance to Keshabchandra's Religion of the New Dispensation and what was new was the eclectic cult and culture.

The next step (and it was indeed a fundamental innovation) was taken by Paramahansa Ramakrishna. The Paramahansa would experience each cult

and religion in its totality or as one whole experience.

Keshabchandra would emphasize the central essence of each religion and acknowledge its truth. In this sense Keshabchandra would say, "It is not that every religion contains truths but every religion is true." But as there are different religions, it follows that they convey different aspects of truth. They transcribe not a part but the whole of life, each from one fundamental standpoint. But the religions contend with one another. Each claims that its positive standpoint is the only true standpoint and all other standpoints are erroneous. But Keshabchandra differed. He viewed life from all these different standpoints eclectically. He selected from each religion what he considered its essence, both theoretical as well as practical. He formulated a collation of all these partial aspects in the Brahmo faith and more especially in the New Dispensation creed. Put more briefly, Keshabchandra's view is that every religion as represented by its central essence is true. But it does not contain the whole truth which can be viewed only from an eclectic standpoint.

The New Dispensation would select the "distinctive" central essence from each religion and make a collection, a "bouquet" of followers as it were. Here it was that Ramakrishna differed from Keshabchandra. Indeed he differed from his predecessors in two essential respects. First, he maintained that the practices of each religion with its rituals and disciplines gave its essence more really and vitally than its theoretical dogmas or creeds. Secondly, it was Ramakrishna's conviction that it is not by selective eclecticism but by syncretism and the whole-hearted acceptance of a religion that its full value

and worth could be realized and experienced.

Ramakrishna held that selective extracts would kill the vital element in each religion. He would be a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian in order to experience the whole truth and efficacy of each of these religions. But he would not practise different religious disciplines or hold different creeds at one and the same time. The observances, practices and rituals of each religion are organic to it. He would tentatively accept the whole creed and ritual of the Moslem (or of the Christian Catholic) in order to experience its religious efficacy and truth. In all these there might be temptations and pitfalls but one must be as an innocent child or babe and pass unscathed through fire. It was thus that the Paramahansa passed successively through Christian and Moslem experiences. Such was the Paramahansa's syncretism.

Ramakrishna was thus a cosmic humanist in religion and not a mere nationalist. He gave the impulse initiative to universal human and this must be completed in our age. Humanism has now various new phases and developments. Leaving out Comte's positivistic humanism with its worship of the "grande-*être*" and Bahaism with its later offshoot "Babism," the religion of human brotherhood (*bhai*), we may turn to later phases such as the new concepts of religion without a God (as in Julian Huxley). This is not all. Impersonal ideals of Truth, Beauty or Goodness have sometimes replaced the old faith in a personal God. And it is not merely the religious sentiment which claims its own pabulum in our day. A passion for science, for philosophy or for scientific philosophy, a passion for art or for Rasa (æsthetic sentiment) in

general is the badge of modernism in our culture and seeks to displace much of the old religious sentiment.

Our present quest is for a Parliament of Religions, a quest which we seek to voice in this Assembly. But this is only a stepping stone to a Parliament of Man or a Federation of World Cultures.

Articles of faith, creeds and dogmas divide man from man but we seek in religion a meeting ground of humanity. What we want is not merely universal religion in its quintessence, as Ram-mohun sought it in his earlier days, not merely an eclectic religion by compounding the distinctive essence, theoretical as well as practical, of the different religions as Keshabchandra sought it, but experience as a whole as it has unfolded itself in the history of man. And this can be realized by us, as Ramakrishna taught, by the syncretic practice of religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian as preparatory to the ultimate realization of God in Man and Man in God.

Religion in a broader sense is to be distinguished from the religions in the concrete. As such it is a force that organizes life and life's activities. All cultures and in fact, all concepts are dominated by the idea of religion. Food, sex-relations, the family, tribal life and warfare are all regulated by the religious idea. Empirical science and folk life are grouped round the central idea of religion. And, in the course of progress, the higher religions are evolved. The Parliament of Religions is thus to be conceived as but the apex of this ascending course of religious evolution.

Religious expression, however, is not the only expression of the ultimate experience. We have also science,

philosophy, or better scientific philosophy, art or the æsthetic sensibility, (Rasa sentiment or Rasânubhuti) or mystical experience, all these being phases of humanism. And the consummation is to be found in cosmic humanism which frees mankind from its limitations of outlook by finding man in the universe and the universe in man. And we must seek it to be free not of this or that state but of the solar system

and stellar systems and beyond, in one word, of the universe.

Our immediate objective to-day is a Parliament of Religions. But in my view this is only a prelude to a larger Parliament, the Parliament of Man, voicing the federation of world cultures, as I have said, and what this will seek to establish is a synthetic view of life conceived not statically but dynamically as a progressive evolution of humanity.

C. L. CHEN

(Consul-General for China, Calcutta)

Tuesday, March 2—Morning Session

Friends,

Before I introduce the speakers of this morning's session of the Parliament of Religions, permit me to say a few words by way of introduction. We are met to-day in this intellectual centre of



C. L. CHEN

problems of life. Swami Vivekananda once said, "Perish India, perish all religion in the World." At this period India to discuss seriously the religious when the nations of the world are

seemingly embarking upon a mad policy of increased armament for war of offence and defence, how fitting it is that India should again come forth to sound and herald the message of religion, the message of brotherhood, love, and peace. The intellectual religious masters of the world are sharing with you Indians to-day the work of enlightenment. You Indians have searched your minds long and patiently, and you possess a synthetic knowledge of God which other peoples do not seem to have. In the intensity of your researches, perhaps, there are points you have overlooked. Maybe some of these points will be suggested and made known to you by the addresses and speeches of the foreign representatives to this Parliament of Religions. A bewildered world to-day is grouping in the dark. Where is the pathway of life? What is the solution to all our doubts and misgivings? May the deliberations of this Parliament of Religions blaze the path to truth, to peace and goodwill among men, yea, to God Himself.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Tuesday, March 2—Afternoon Session

Sisters and brothers,

In this age when material prosperity and commercial supremacy are the ideals and ruling powers of a civilized nation; when each nation distrusting its neighbours is armed to the teeth with infernal weapons of death to protect its self-interest and to massacre its innocent neighbours with unimaginable violence as it is manifested to-day in a civilized country like Spain in Europe; when the



SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

insatiable greed of a civilized nation led by the most powerful Dictator has subdued and conquered by means fair or foul a weaker nation as it has been in the case of Abyssinia; when human beings are regarded as soulless machines fitted to become the food of cannon and machine guns; when in the East similar strife and conflict are rife, and when the abominable communalism is sucking the heart's blood like the mythical vampire in India, it is high time that the message of peace and goodwill and love for one's enemy as was taught two thousand years ago by the meek and gentle Son of man in Galilee should once again be heralded and emphasized with

full spiritual force to suit the conditions of the present time.

To fulfil this great purpose,—to establish righteousness and to destroy evil, the Almighty Lord has manifested Himself in the form of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, at whose Centenary this Parliament of Religions is convened.

The present upheaval of the spiritual tide, the waves of which traversing nearly one half of the world have touched the shores of America, was produced by the Christ-like character and divine personality of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna who is recognized throughout India as the greatest saint of modern India, and revered and honoured to-day by all classes of Hindu as the Ideal Manifestation (Avatara) of the Divine glory. His life was so wonderful and unparalleled that within ten years after his departure from this earth, it attracted the admiration, respect and reverence, not only of all classes of people of India, but of many of the distinguished English and German scholars of the nineteenth century, who happened to know something about him.

A short account of the life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna appeared for the first time in the January number of the "Imperial and Quarterly Review" of 1896 under the title of "A Modern Hindu Saint." It was an able article penned by Prof. C. H. Tawney who was for many years the Professor of Sanskrit in the Calcutta University and the distinguished Librarian of India House in London. This article aroused the interest of great many European scholars, among whom late Prof. Max Müller showed his appreciation by publishing in the August number of the "Nineteenth Century" of 1896 a short sketch of this

Hindu saint's life entitled "A Real Mahatman." In this celebrated article, which was for some time the subject of most severe criticism both in England and India among many of the Christian missionaries and the Theosophists, the noted Professor showed the difference between the imaginary Mahatmas of the Theosophists and the real Mahatman or the great soul of India, who had reached God-consciousness and had manifested Divinity in all the actions of his daily life. He gave a brief account of the extraordinary life of Sri Ramakrishna paying him the highest tribute of honour and respect that a Christian scholar could give to a Divine manifestation in the so-called heathen land. Later, in 1896, he compiled and published "Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings" collecting more facts about the life and sayings of this exemplary character perfumed with Divine personality.

In 1903 A.D. the Vedanta Society of New York, U. S. A., published in a separate volume the sayings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, and the "Gospel of Ramakrishna" with an introduction by Swami Abhedananda in 1907 A.D. The unsectarian and universal teachings of Sri Ramakrishna attracted the attention of the sincere and earnest seekers after Truth among the Christians of America and Europe; and the same Gospel of Ramakrishna (New York edition) was translated into Spanish and was published in Buenos Aires in South America in 1915 A.D. It was also translated into Portuguese and published from Brazil, South America. In Europe it was translated and published in Danish, Scandinavian and Czechoslovakian languages.

The well-renowned artist, late Frank Dvorak of Prague, Austria, after reading this Gospel was so deeply impressed

that he painted the life-size portrait of Sri Ramakrishna.

In 1925 A.D. "The Life of Sri Ramakrishna" with an introduction by M. K. Gandhi, was published by the Advaita Ashrama of Mayavati in India. Later on the celebrated French savant Romain Rolland wrote "The Life of Ramakrishna" in French in 1928 A.D. which was translated into English by E. F. Malcolm Smith and was published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1930 A.D. In this volume Romain Rolland said:—"Allowing for differences of country and time Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ" (p. 13).

The late Prof. Max Müller was deeply impressed by the originality of this great saint and Real Mahatman who was not brought up within the precincts of any university and who drew the waters of his wisdom neither from any book or scripture, nor from any ancient prophet, but directly from the eternal fountain-head of all knowledge and wisdom. He reached the goal of all religions, not by following the path that was laid down by any religious prophet or spiritual teacher of any country, but his path was original, and untrodden by any of the Saviours of the world. Late Prof. Max Müller was also struck by the broad, liberal and absolutely unsectarian spirit which pervades the utterings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Indeed, the life and sayings of the Bhagavan have given a death-blow to the sectarian bigotry and fanaticism of the so-called religious world. Whosoever has read his sayings is impressed with the universality of his spiritual ideals, which embrace the ideals of all mankind.

From his childhood Sri Ramakrishna fought against all sectarian doctrines and dogmas, yet at the same time, he showed that all sects and creeds were but the paths which lead sincere and

earnest souls to the one Universal Goal of all religions. Having realized the highest ideal of every religion, by following the methods and practices of the various sects and creeds of the world, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna gave to humanity whatever spiritual experiences and realizations he had acquired through Sâdhanâ. Every idea which he gave was fresh from above and unadulterated by the product of human intellect, culture or scholastic education. Each step of his life from babyhood to the last moment was extraordinary. Every stage was like the unfoldment of a chapter of a new scripture, especially written out by the unseen Hand to benefit the minds of the East and the West and to fulfil the spiritual needs of the twentieth century.

This great sage showed in his life how to cultivate the search after God and proved, by his example, that wherever there is extreme longing to see God, there is the nearness of the realization of the Absolute Truth. The life of this great "Real Mahatman" has been the grand testimony to the fact that even in this age Divinity can be reached and that Divine perfection can be acquired by those who are pure in heart, chaste, simple and who can devote their whole heart and soul to God for spiritual realization alone, and not for any material gain.

We have neither seen nor heard of a character purer, simpler, more chaste and more godly than that of this ideal Mahatman, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He was the personification of purity and chastity, and embodiment of truthfulness. His life was a life of absolute renunciation and he never cared for the pleasures and comforts of earthly existence. The only comfort, pleasure, or happiness which he felt in his life was at the time when he was in the blissful state of Samâdhi or God-conscious-

ness, and when his soul being liberated from the bondage of physical body soared high in the infinite space of the Absolute and entered into the abode of Everlasting Peace and Blessedness.

He could separate his soul from the cage of the physical organism at his will, and he had perfect control over this great Yoga power (Vibhuti). He never recognized earthly relations, but God was his father, mother, brother, sister and everything.

Ramakrishna taught that every woman, old or young, was the representative of the Divine Mother on earth. He worshipped God as the Mother of the Universe, and the Divine Mother, as he often used to say, showed him that all women represented the Divine Motherhood on earth. For the first time, in the religious history of the world, this idea was preached by a Divine Incarnation and upon it depends the salvation of men and especially of women of all countries from immorality, corruption and all vices which prevail in a civilized community. It was Ramakrishna who by his own example established the Truth of spiritual marriage on the soul plane alone, and not on the physical, even in this age of sensuality. He had a wife whom he always treated with reverence and whom he always looked upon as the representative of his Divine Mother. He never had any sex relation with her, or with any woman, on the physical plane. His wife, the Blessed Virgin, Sarada Devi, lived like an embodiment of Divine Motherhood with innumerable spiritual children around her. She in turn, always regarded the Bhagavan as her Blessed Mother Divine in a human form.

Up to the last moment of his earthly career the Bhagavan was absolutely pure, chaste and a perfect child of his Divine Mother of the universe. Further-

more, he uplifted the ideal of womanhood on the spiritual plane by accepting his Guru in a woman form. No other saviour or spiritual leader has ever given such an honour to womanhood in the annals of religious history.

The mission of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was to show by his living example how a truly spiritual man, being dead to the world of senses, can live on the plane of God-consciousness; it was to prove that each individual soul is immortal and potentially Divine. His mission was to establish harmony between religious sects and creeds. For the first time it was absolutely demonstrated by Ramakrishna that all religions are like so many paths leading to the same Goal, that the realization of the same Almighty Being is the highest Ideal of Christianity, Mahomedanism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, as well as of all other smaller religions of the world. Sri Ramakrishna's mission was to proclaim the eternal Truth that God is one but has many aspects, and that the same one is worshipped by different nations under various names and forms; that He is personal, impersonal and beyond both; that He is with name and form and yet nameless and formless. His mission was to establish the worship of the Divine Mother and thus to elevate the ideal of womanhood into Divine Motherhood. His mission was to show by his own example that true

spirituality can be transmitted and that salvation can be obtained through the grace of a Divine Incarnation. His mission was to declare before the world that psychic powers and the power of healing are obstacles in the path of the attainment of God-consciousness.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna possessed all the Yoga powers but he seldom exercised those powers, especially the power of healing diseases. Moreover, he always prevented his disciples from either seeking or exercising those powers. But one power which we have seen him frequently to exercise was the Divine power to transform the character of a sinner and to lift a worldly soul to the plane of superconsciousness by a single touch. He would take the sins of others upon his own shoulders and would purify them by transmitting his own spirituality and opening the spiritual eyes of his true followers.

The days of prophecy have passed before our eyes. The manifestations of the Divine powers of one who is worshipped to-day by thousands as the latest Incarnation of Divinity, we have witnessed with our eyes. Blessed are they who have seen him and touched his holy feet. May the glory of Sri Ramakrishna be felt by all nations of the earth; may his Divine power be manifested in the earnest and sincere souls of his devotees of all countries in all ages to come, is the prayer of his spiritual child and servant.

KAKA KALELKAR

*(Bharatiya Hindi Sahitya Parishat, Wardha, C. P.)**Wednesday, March 3—Morning Session*

Friends,

We are all meeting at a time when all the religions of the world are on their trial. Religion is the binding force and yet men have been quarelling with each other in the name of religion. We have to-day to vindicate the place of religion as the greatest binding force in human life. I am glad that we are meeting here in the name of the spiritual giant of India—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It was he who proved to us, not by intellectual process but



KAKA KALELKAR

by going through the spiritual experiences, that all the religions are true, that all are equally acceptable and all are equally elevating. That is why the Parliament of Religions ought to meet in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. The first Parliament was held in 1893 at Chicago and the illustrious disciple of Sri Ramakrishna went there to represent India. To-day the Parliament has come to India and it is held in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. Before I proceed, I should like to read here a letter which I received from Mahatma Gandhi by way of blessing. It is

of course in Hindi. Rendered into English, the letter would read :

“You are going to the Dharma Sabhâ—the Parliament of Religions. It is associated with the holy name of a personality like Sri Ramakrishna. I do hope that the Sabhâ will do something that will give a lead and will guide the followers of all faiths. What will the Parliament say in respect of all the religions? Are all the religions equal as we hold or is there any one particular religion which is in the sole possession of truth, the rest being either untrue or a mixture of truth and errors as many believe? The opinion of the Parliament in such matters must prove helpful guidance for us.”

I also trust that we shall meet here, as hearts meeting hearts, not on the intellectual plane, but on the spiritual plane. We must be able to turn out something useful to mankind. Now whatever I have got to say, I shall say at the end.

After the messages and papers were read, Kaka Kalelkar continued :

When religions come together, they always come with evils. Sir Francis Younghusband has cited a beautiful and happy simile, viz. every child thinks that its own mother is the best. But children do not force upon other children to accept their mothers. That is the wisdom children have. If all religions were to show that same wisdom without inviting people to renounce their religion and follow a particular religion as the only true religion, I think we shall have cleared all conflicts. The very idea of the Parliament of Religions is, I suppose, based on this assumption and it is a fact all religions are true.

Friends, by way of illustration I shall say a few words to the religions of the world. My faith lies in religion. If we are to judge by the present practices, they will all prove to be false, for the organization of religion has been at fault. All these things, I suppose, are the technique of the pursuit of power; pursuit of power and pursuit of goodness are too different things, and the pursuit of goodness has its own power. Therefore let us come together on the plane of morals and spirituality and not merely on the intellectual plane. There are many problems crying for solution from the religions of the world; for instance, women are not free, children are not happy, and more than

that the domestic animals are not happy. They also belong to the greater humanity and therefore we must assure them of some comfort and peace. I suppose, especially in India, as Mahatma Gandhi has pointed out, the cow is not safe. The domestic animals that serve us ought to be served and protected. That is, I think, a part of the work of such Parliament of Religions, which it ought to be able to do. What has religion to say on these matters? That is the question which the world is asking of this Parliament to-day. I suppose by coming together like this, and thinking together, we ought to find some solutions for these problems. I have done.

DR. RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

Wednesday, March 3—Afternoon Session

FRIENDS,

When I was asked to address this distinguished gathering I was naturally reluctant, for I do not know if I can be called religious in the current sense of the term, not claiming as my possession any particular idea of God, authorized by some time-honoured institution. If, in spite of all this, I have accepted this honour, it is only out of respect to the memory of the great saint with whose Centenary the present Parliament is associated. I venerate Paramahansa Deb because he, in an arid age of religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by realizing it, because the largeness of his spirit could comprehend seemingly antagonistic modes of Sâdhanâ, and because the simplicity of his soul shames for all time the pomp and pedantry of pontiffs and pundits.

I have nothing new to tell you, no esoteric truth to propound to you. I am a mere poet, a lover of men and of

creation. But since love gives a certain insight, I may perhaps claim to have sometimes caught the hushed voice of humanity and felt its suppressed longing



DR. RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

for the Infinite. I hope I do not belong to those who, born in a prison-house, never have the good luck to know that it is a prison, who are blissfully unaware that the castliness of their furniture and

profuseness of the provisions for their comfort act as invisible walls in a castle of vanity that not only rob them of their freedom but even of the desire for it.

The degree of this freedom is measured according to our realization of the Infinite whether in the outer world, or in the inner life. In a narrow room we may have as much space as is necessary for living and for the exercise of our muscles; the food may be more than sufficient, it may even be sumptuous; yet our inborn craving for what we may call the more, the unattained, if not altogether killed, remains unsatisfied. We are deprived of the Infinite, which is freedom of range, both in the outer world as well as in the ceaseless variety of the world of our experience.

But a more profoundly intimate perception of the Infinite lies in that intensity of our consciousness, which we can only attain when we realize ultimate value in some ideal of perfection, when in the realization of some fact of our life we become aware of an indefinable truth that immensely transcends it. We, in our human nature, have a hunger for Bhuma, for immensity, for something a great deal more than what we need immediately for the purposes of life. Men all through their history have been struggling to realize this truth according to the unfolding of their idea of the boundless, and have been gradually changing their methods and plans of existence, constantly meeting failures, but never owning final defeat.

We find that animals have their evolution along the line of the race. They have their individual life which ends with their death. But even in them there is a touch of the Infinite which urges them to outlive their own life in the life of the race, accepting sufferings and making sacrifices for its sake. The spirit of sacrifice in the parents is this

touch of the Infinite,—the motive power which makes the race life possible, which helps to develop those faculties in them that will enable their descendants to find better opportunity for food and shelter.

But in human beings has been further evolved a sense of the Infinite that goes far beyond the struggle for physical life which merely occupies extended time and extended space. Man has realized that a life of perfection is not merely a life of extension, but one which has its selfless enjoyment of the great and the beautiful.

After we have evolved this sense of the beautiful, of the good, of something that we call truth,—which is deeper and larger than any number of facts,—we have come into an altogether different atmosphere from that wherein the animals and trees have their existence. But we have come into this higher realm only very lately.

Ages and ages have passed, dominated by the life of what we call the self, which is intent upon seeking food and shelter, and upon the perpetuation of the race. But there is a mysterious region waiting for its full recognition, which does not entirely acknowledge loyalty to physical claims. Its mystery constantly troubles us and we are not yet fully at ease in this region. We call it *spiritual*. That word is vague, only because we have not yet been able to realize its meaning completely.

We are groping in the dark, not yet clear in our idea of the ultimate meaning at the centre of this world. Nevertheless through the dim light which reaches us across the barriers of our physical existence, we seem to have a stronger faith in this spiritual life than in the physical. For even those who do not believe in the truth which we cannot define, but call by the name of

spirit—even they are obliged to behave as though they did believe it to be true, or, at any rate, truer than the world which is evident to our senses. And so even they are often willing to accept death,—the termination of this physical life,—for the sake of the true, the good and the beautiful. This fact expresses man's deeper urge for freedom, for liberation of itself in the realm of the limitless where he realizes his relationship with the truth which relates him to the universe in a disinterested spirit of love.

When Buddha preached Maitri—the relationship of harmony—not only with human beings but with all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind that our treatment of the world is wrong when we solely treat it as a fact which can be known and used for our own personal needs? Did he not feel that the true meaning of creation can be understood only through love because it is an eternal expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but itself. The soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it comes at the end of all definitions.

The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries. And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others.

So, because the pride of Power is the pride of Quantity, pride of the mere number of its recruits and victims, the most powerful telescope, when pointed in the direction of Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood.

Such is the tragedy that so often be-sets our history when this love of power, which is really the love of self, dominates over the religious life of man, for then the only means by which man could hope to set his spirit free, itself becomes the worst enemy of that freedom. Of all fetters those that falsely assume spiritual designations are the most difficult to break, and of all dungeons the most terrible are those invisible ones where men's souls are imprisoned in self-delusion bred by vanity. For, the undisguised pursuit of self has safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification, with its consequent thwarting of the best in man, that goes on unashamed when religion deadens into sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness under the mask of religion; it constricts the heart into narrowness much more effectively than the cult of the world based upon material interests can ever do.

Let me try to answer the question as to what this *Spirit* is, for the winning of which all the great religions were brought into being.

The evening sky is revealed to us in its serene aspect of beauty though we know that from the fiery whirlpools which are the stars, chaotic outbursts clash against one another in a conflict of implacable fury. But *Ishavasyam idam sarvam*,—over and through it all there is spread a mysterious spirit of harmony, constantly modulating rebellious elements into creative unity, evolving ineffable peace and beauty out of

the incoherently battling combatants perpetually struggling to elbow out their neighbours into a turmoil of dissolution.

And this great harmony, this everlasting Yea,—this is Truth, that bridges the dark abysses of time and space, reconciles contradictions, imparts perfect balance to the unstable. This all-pervading mystery is what we call spiritual in its essence. It is the human aspect of this truth which all great personalities have made their own in their lives and have offered to their fellow-beings in the name of various religions as means of peace and goodwill,—as vehicles of beauty in behaviour, heroism in character, noble aspiration and achievement in all great civilizations.

But when these very religions travel far from their sacred sources, they lose their original dynamic vigour, and degenerate into the arrogance of piety, into an utter emptiness crammed with irrational habits and mechanical practices; then is their spiritual inspiration befogged in the turbidity of sectarianism, then do they become the most obstinate obstruction that darkens our vision of human unity, piling up out of their accretions and refuse dead-weights of unreason across our path of progress,—till at length civilized life is compelled to free its education from the stifling coils of religious creeds. Such fratricidal aberrations, in the guise of spiritual excellence, have brought upon the name of God whom they profess to glorify, uglier discredit than honest and defiant atheism could ever have done.

The reason is, because sectarianism, like some voracious parasite, feeds upon the religion whose colour it assumes, exhausting it so that it knows not when its spirit is sucked dry. It utilizes the dead skin for its habitation, as a stronghold for its unholy instinct of fight, its pious vaingloriousness,

fiercely contemptuous of its neighbours' articles of faith.

Sectarian votaries of a particular religion, when taken to task for the iniquitous dealings with their brethren which so deeply injure and insult humanity, immediately try to divert attention by glibly quoting noble texts from their own scriptures which preach love, justice, righteousness, and the divinity immanent in Man,—ludicrously unconscious of the fact that those constitute the most damaging incrimination of their usual attitude of mind. In taking up the guardianship of their religion they allow, on the one hand, physical materialism to invade it by falsely giving eternal value to external practices, often of primitive origin; and moral materialism on the other, by invoking sacred sanction for their forms of worship within the rigid enclosure of special privileges founded upon accident of birth, or conformity, irrespective of moral justification. Such debasement does not belong to any particular religion, but more or less to all religions, the records of whose impious activities are written in brothers' blood, and sealed with the indignities heaped upon them.

All through the course of human history it has become tragically evident that religions, whose mission is liberation of soul, have in some form or other ever been instrumental in shackling freedom of mind and even moral rights. The desecration of truth in unworthy hands,—the truth which was meant to raise humanity morally and materially out of the dusky region of animality, is moreover followed by condign punishment, and thus we find that religious perversity is causing more blindness of reason and deadness of moral sensibility than any other deficiency in our education; just as, the truth represented by science, when used for ignoble traffic,

threatens us with annihilation. It has been the saddest experience of man to witness such violation of the highest products of civilization, to find the guardians of religion blessing the mailed fist of temporal power in its campaign of wholesale massacre and consolidation of slavery, and science joining hands with the same relentless power in its murderous career of exploitation.

When we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us a complete sense of comfort to feel that God is no longer needed, except for breaking with the greater unction the skulls of people whose idea of God, fortunately or unfortunately, differs from our own in theoretical details. Having thus made provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space in the world of reality for ourselves,—ridding it of the wonder of the Infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unmitigated vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

The pious man of sect is proud because he is confident of his right of possession of God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession needs must become smaller than ourselves and, without acknowledging it in so many words, the bigoted sectarian nurses the implicit belief that God can be kept secured for himself and his fellows in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities.

Thus every religion that begins as a liberating agency ends as a vast prison-

house. Built on the renunciation of its founder, it becomes a possessive institution in the hands of its priests, and claiming to be universal, becomes an active centre of schism and strife. Like a sluggish stream the spirit of man is choked by rotting weeds and is divided into shallow slimy pools that are active only in releasing deadly mists of stupefaction. This mechanical spirit of tradition is essentially materialistic, it is blindly pious but not spiritual, obsessed by phantoms of unreason that haunt feeble minds with their ghastly mimicry of religion. This happens not only to mediocre individuals who hug the fetters that keep them irresponsible or craving for lurid unrealities, but to generations of insipid races that have lost all emphasis of significance in themselves, having missed their present in their ghostly past!

Great souls, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, have a comprehensive vision of Truth, they have the power to grasp the significance of each different form of the Reality that is one in all,—but the masses of believers are unable to reconcile the conflict of codes and commands. Their timid and shrunken imagination, instead of being liberated by the vision of the Infinite in religion, is held captive in bigotry and is tortured and exploited by priests and fanatics for uses hardly anticipated by those who originally received it.

Unfortunately, great teachers most often are surrounded by persons whose minds, lacking transparency of atmosphere, obscure and distort the ideas originating from the higher source. They feel a smug satisfaction when the picture of their master which they offer, shows features made somewhat in the pattern of their own personality. Consciously and unconsciously they reshape principles and messages of wisdom in

the mould of their own tortuous understanding, carefully modifying them into conventional platitudes in which they themselves find comfort and which satisfy the habit-ridden mentality of their own community. Lacking the sensitiveness of mind which is necessary for the enjoyment of truth in its unadulterated purity they exaggerate it in an attempt at megalomaniac enlargement according to their own insensate standard, which is as absurdly needless for its real appraisal as it is derogatory to the dignity of its original messengers. The history of great men, because of their very greatness, ever runs the risk of being projected on to a wrong background of memory where it gets mixed up with elements that are crudely customary and therefore inertly accepted by the multitude.

I say to you : that if you are really lovers of Truth, then dare to seek it in its fulness, in all the infinite beauty of its majesty, but never be content to treasure up its vain symbols in miserly seclusion within the stony walls of conventions. Let us revere the great souls in the sublime simplicity of their spiritual altitude which is common to them all, where they meet in universal aspiration to set the spirit of man free from the bondage of his own individual ego, and of the ego of his race and of his creed ; but in that lowland of traditions, where religions challenge and refute each other's claims and dogmas, there a wise man must pass them by in doubt and dismay.

I do not mean to advocate a common church for mankind, a universal pattern to which every act of worship and aspiration must conform. The arrogant spirit of sectarianism which so often uses either active or passive, violent or subtle, methods of persecution, on the least provocation or without any, has to be reminded of the fact that

religion, like poetry, is not a mere idea,—it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the variedness of creation ; and our attitude towards the Infinite must in its expression also have a variedness of individuality, ceaseless and unending. When a religion develops the ambition of imposing its doctrine on all mankind, it degrades itself into a tyranny and becomes a form of imperialism. This is why we find a ruthless method of fascism in religious matters prevailing in most parts of the world, trampling flat the expansion of the spirit of man under its insensitive heels.

The attempt to make the one religion which is their own, dominate all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind lane abruptly stopping at one narrow point of history. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with the universal flood of a bigoted exclusiveness, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from the catastrophe of spiritual desolation.

What I plead for is a living recognition of the neglected truth that the reality of religion has its basis in the truth of Man's nature in its most intense and universal need and so must constantly be tested by it. Where it frustrates that need, and outrages its reason, it repudiates its own justification.

Let me conclude with a few lines from the great mystic poet of mediæval India, Kabir, whom I regard as one of the greatest spiritual geniuses of our land :

The jewel is lost in the mud,
and all are seeking for it ;
some look for it in the east, and

some in the west;
 some in the water and some
 amongst stones.
 But the servant Kabir has appraised

it at its true value,
 and has wrapped it with care
 in a corner of the mantle of his
 own heart.

SWAMI PARAMANANDA

(Vedanta Centre, Boston (Mass.), and La Crescenta (Calif.), U. S. A.)

Thursday, March 4—Morning Session

Friends and my spiritual kinsmen,

I have listened with great deal of interest to the illuminating papers offered by the distinguished people not only of this country but of the world at large and naturally they are all thought-provoking. I will touch on only one



SWAMI PARAMANANDA

thing which may be of practical value and utility. In travelling and in sitting together, I have heard it said that the world is a very bad place. Well, if it is a bad place, we also have our share in it. We live in it, we breathe in it and if we find undesirable elements, we must have the feeling to set it right. Sri Ramakrishna did this in practical reality and he is one amongst many such. He was modest and humble. He was not a scholar but he was a practical idealist. He made a model, a model of perfection. That is the reason why

we are all here to-day? There is not a single soul here that does not want to find perfection, and Sri Ramakrishna, with his sincerity of purpose, with his purity of life, with his concentrated devotion to the ideal, brought that into practical realization. We may look at it every morning, every noon and every night and as frequently as possible and see that our lives are moulded in accordance with that. I can say very frankly and honestly, by way of practical example, I have found in my own life that a life is transformed by a mere touch. It was my good fortune to see that. Instead of theorizing, let us do something constructive as did Sri Ramakrishna. We are tired of theories. Who wants to be reminded that the world is a bad place? If you are lovers of humanity, instead of repeating this, come and give your helping hand. Let us hope that the fundamental principles which we touch during these sittings, we shall try to live. Those of us who know anything of the great life of Sri Ramakrishna, know that it is not through politics, not through science, not through any of these ingenious methods that he attained the spiritual vision. Through love, the golden thread that ties humanity, he attained truth. So let us forget the evil condition. I think the less we dwell upon it, the better for us. It will give us more strength. If we can

do good to each other, I think we will achieve that for which Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda gave themselves up without

thinking of themselves. Thereby we shall get their blessings and benediction, and we shall find the joy and peace that we hanker after.

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

(President, Society for Promoting the Study of Religions, London)

Thursday, March 4—Afternoon Session

Ladies and gentlemen and my spiritual kinsmen,

It is now my great privilege to address to you just a very few words at the beginning, thanking you for this opportunity of saying something on the great occasion of this Parliament of Religions.



SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

I have travelled all the way from England to attend the Centenary Celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna because of the very great and deep regard which I had for many years for the great work of Sri Ramakrishna. I was first drawn to him because he more than any other man expounded the great yet simple principle of not merely tolerating other religions but deeply appreciating them and penetratingly entering into them. I speak as a Christian, and what profoundly moved me was the way in

which that great Saint entered into our Christian religion, entered into the very simple life and teachings of Christ. In a way we Christians were able to understand our own religion better by the way in which he had entered into it. I think you must all remember the story of how when Sri Ramakrishna was shown the picture of the Madonna and the Child, he was so deeply impressed—he was very sensitive by nature—that he forthwith went into a trance. He saw that picture and by contemplating it, he realized not only the Fatherhood of God but also the Motherhood of God. And then you know, so the story says, he lived all by himself for six months, devoting all his time and all his concentrated attention, with all the intensity of his feeling, to entering into the spirit of Christ. That deeply moves us, Christians, because we feel that here was a Hindu, and although he was a Hindu of Hindus, yet at that time he did become a Christian of Christians. (Applause.) Not only he has affected the Christians, he has also affected the Musalmans and Buddhists. It is a very great and simple principle—here my view and your view also, I think, must be the same—that we of different religions should be brought together. We know from the long history of mankind that at the present time when there is so terrible an amount of disunion amongst us, it will be exceedingly good for men of spirit and men of religion to

come together and meet together and see in what way they can bring into the life of the world that spirit of which Sri Ramakrishna was the apostle.

Now what I gather as the most important thing is that when we do meet together on occasions like this we get mutual help. We met together in the same fashion in London last year at the Congress of Faiths. Each one of us retained his own religion and each one of us was convinced—at any rate I was, that his own religion was the best; yet by meeting each other, by spiritual contact with each other, we got inspiration to be better Hindus, better Musalmans, better Buddhists, better Christians. We, each of us, were forced down to the very fundamentals of our faiths and each of us was made to aspire the very highest ideals of his faith. That is a very, very important point. All mankind is very greatly indebted to Sri Ramakrishna for having spread and intensified this doctrine and lived upto it in his own life. In this doctrine we come across one great principle which is a very simple principle too, by which the whole universe is governed, and that is of the 'Unity in diversity.' The diversity will always exist, and each one of us is different from the other as each particle in the universe is different from the other. We have to maintain our own individuality, but we should also

realize that deep down there is this fundamental unity which unites us all.

Well, now, I would like to say just a few words and that is this. Great men like the Saint Sri Ramakrishna come into this world from time to time and we humbler individuals have to make the most of this great privilege of knowing their worth, knowing their life, and we have to look to them and try to enter their spirit, but we must not stop there. We must not be always looking into the past. As one of the speakers in the first greetings said we are made up by our past, the present and the future. While we look to the past, we should look to the present and to the future also. We must realize that the future will entirely be of our own making and we must determine that the world of the future should be the better for our living in it. While we like Sri Ramakrishna, we look also far into the future and hope that there shall be men greater than even Sri Ramakrishna produced in the future. That is the message that I have to give you.

I would like to thank you most sincerely for giving me an opportunity to speak to you and I should like to express myself that when the second Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna is celebrated, we may look forward to greater men to arise. I thank you very sincerely for your attention this evening.

PROF. MUHAMMAD ALI SHIRAZI OF IRAN

(University, Calcutta)

Friday, March 5—Morning Session

Friends,

I have been honoured by being asked to act as a Chairman of this Parliament convened under the auspices of the great Mission whose aim is to promulgate the teachings of a great Saint of

Bengal, Sri Ramakrishna, a personality held in high esteem and honour all the world over.

I take this opportunity to tender my sincere greetings to the Mission on behalf of my fatherland (Iran) whose

great sons have much thought in common with those of India and even have exchanged ideas as far back as during the reign of Nushirawan.

Before I close to-day's morning session, I desire to give vent to my sincere feeling of joy at the success which this Mission will still further achieve in spreading the broad principles that it has taken upon itself to teach the world.

To me all the religions of the world are the effects of one Great Cause. All the religions of the world along with their branches endeavour to under-



PROF. MUHAMMAD ALI SHIRAZI
stand the mystery of the Omniscient One, the Truth, the Almighty Father, the Absolute Beauty and pursue the different paths to reach Him. So let every religious system of the world remain independent and let its growth remain spontaneous.

Since the very start of our existence, in this world, the objects of nature and the laws that govern them have been continuously forcing before our minds the great truth that there is one lofty and glorious Power that must be responsible for the perfect working

of the whole universe. We are born with the consciousness of the Great Power, we develop the sense of His Existence and when we die, we die in the full knowledge of His Supreme Benevolence.

The poems of Hafiz, Maula Rum, Ommar Khyyam, Jami and many others are full of the idea that the whole universe, nay, the cosmos, clearly indicates that the Spirit of God is omnipresent, He alone is Perfect Benevolence, Perfect Truth, Perfect Beauty, that love for Him is the true love.

Jami, the famous poet of Iran, says :
“Now we call Thee the Wine, and
now the Wine-cup,
Now we call Thee the Bait and now
the Snare,
On the tablet of the universe is no letter
save Thy Name,
By which name, then shall we invoke
Thee?”

Thus before we adopt any religion, we are already armed with the knowledge of His Existence and His Power. But according to circumstances we take up different paths to reach our goal.

I am a seeker after Truth and my path is the path of Islam which means “Submission to the will of God,—the True and One God,” and as such it has clearly indicated tolerance and absence of compulsion in religion.

If we examine the Koran (chapter 2, verse 255), we find it clearly said :

“Let there be no violence or compulsion in religion. Truly the right way is manifestly distinguished from error. Whoever, therefore, shall deny whatever is worshipped besides God and believe in God, he shall surely take hold on a strong handle, which shall not break, and God is he who heareth and seeth.”

DR. D. R. BHANDARKAR OF POONA

(Sometime Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture,
Calcutta University)

Friday, March 5—Afternoon Session

SPIRITUAL KINSMEN,

It is in the fitness of things that a Parliament of Religions of the World should be convened in India and in connection with the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Sri Rama-Krishna Paramahansa. The most



DR. D. R. BHANDARKAR

attractive feature of this teacher is the genuine spirit of research which he evinced throughout his life. He was a Sâkta among the Sâktas, a Vaishnava among the Vaishnavas, a Moslem among the Moslems, and a Christian among the Christians. He allowed himself to come under the influence of even such modern teachers as Brahmananda Keshabchandra and Swami Dayananda Sarasvati. He having realized the goal of all faiths and creeds of the time, the truth dawned upon him: "The Lord is one, though He has many names"; "Religion is one. It has been so from all times, it shall be so for ever"; "Yea, every belief, every religion, every system of faith and worship is but a path that leadeth unto Him." This

reminds us of Sakya Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, who went from one teacher to another, studying all sects and schools of thought, thoroughly and impartially, before the truth dawned upon him, before, in other words, he became Buddha, 'the Enlightened One.' His quest after truth extended over a period of six years, during which he toiled and moiled, unflaggingly and unceasingly,—physically, mentally and spiritually. Carlyle has said in one place, that genius is 'the transcendent capacity of taking trouble.' There has been no genius in the field of science who has not taken infinite pains in getting at the truth. Such is the case with religion also. This is the reason why the excellence of the truths discovered by Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna still bewitches us and dominates our mind.

But Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna were not the only two Indians who introduced the comparative method of study in the field of religion. This study of religion in a judicial frame of mind has in fact been the chief characteristic of the Indian mind, to whatever religion he belonged. Who does not know Akbar, the Mogul Emperor, who flourished in the sixteenth century A.D.? Did he not set a noble example with his sympathetic endeavour to ascertain the truth in every religion? We know what delight he took in listening to and presiding over the debates of the Sufi, the Sunnite, the Shiite, the Brahman, the Jaina, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Jew, the Babain, the Zoroastrian and so forth. And we know with what mentality he approached the study of different religions. "He

is truly a man," he often said, "who makes justice his leader in the path of inquiry, and who culls from every sect whatever reason approves of. Perchance in this way that lock whose key has been lost may be opened." Is this not, I ask you, one of the ideals which the Parliament of Religions has before it? And when Akbar invited the representatives of the various religions to his court and held religious discussions, was he not, in fact, holding a Parliament of Religions, the first of its kind?

But Akbar was not the only Emperor of India who studied religions in a scientific spirit. Long before him lived Asoka, a Buddhist Emperor, who belonged to the Mauryan dynasty. He issued a number of edicts, which, being inscribed on rocks, have still been preserved for us. He perceived the fundamental unity of religions, and summed it up in the two words 'self-restraint' (Samyama) and 'purity of heart' (Bhâva-suddhi). But people, says he, are of various likings and various attachments. They may display lavish liberality and firm devotion to their own sect, but not self-restraint and purity of heart, with the consequence that there is a communal clash. He therefore exhorts his people to cease praising one's own sect and decrying another's unnecessarily, but, on the contrary, to show reverence to other sects in all those respects where they deserve it. His advice therefore to mankind is: "Listen and desire to listen to one another's Dharma." The consequence of this course of action, says Asoka, will be that all sects shall be Bahusruta, that is, they will be possessed of much knowledge and information about Dharma and that they will also be Kayanâgama, that is, will conduce to the welfare of the world. There will thus arise, he further says, Âtma-pâsamda-

vadhi, that is, 'the exaltation of one's own sect,' and Dhammasa Dipana, that is, 'the illumination of Religion.' This is just what the Parliament of Religions is aiming at, namely, first that the followers of all religions should become Bahusruta or 'well-informed' by studying other religions dispassionately and scientifically, and secondly, that religions should promote the good of mankind. The first object is certainly being realized more and more, with every meeting of the Parliament of Religions, or of the World Fellowship of Faiths. How far the second object is being realized is somewhat doubtful. Supposing Asoka and Akbar are come to life again and taken in an aeroplane all over Europe, what will be the condition of their mind? Their mind will doubtless be filled with wonder at the marvellous power over nature which man has obtained through science and has with its help killed both space and time. But what will their feeling be if they see with their own eyes the dreadnoughts, the submarines, the torpedoes, the mines and the long-range guns, the machine guns, the tanks, the asphyxiating gases, the zeppelins and the like? Parliament of Religions has no doubt broadcast the outlooks of the different religions so that we now know much more about them than we did fifty years ago. It is therefore my humble request to all the delegates and the representatives that are attending this Parliament that they should keep in mind the third object enunciated by the first Parliament in 1893, namely, "to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent inter-national peace." On the very first day of our meeting, a message from Mahatma Gandhi was read out which ran as follows: "Wish Parliament success. Wish it could do

some constructive work." Let us see whether we can suggest any line of constructive work. Let us hope that the Rishis and Maharshis that have assembl-

ed here and are making this Parliament a success will do something to realize the third object of the Parliament of Religions.

MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA PROFESSOR PRAMATHANATH TARKABHUSHAN

(Hindu University, Benares)

Saturday, March 6—Morning Session

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions is an unprecedented and wonderful event in the annals of India. We read of conventions of the sages held in the forests—the seat and centre of Indian culture in Vedic, Smartic or Pauranic times,—but no detailed historical accounts of



PROF. PRAMATHANATH TARKABHUSHAN

them are available. History bears witness to at least three such big congregations held in Buddhistic India for discussing and determining the essential features of Religion.

The three Buddhistic synods differ from the present one. The Buddhist *shramanas* assembled together to discuss among themselves the tenets of their own religion, to collect ancient proverbs, sayings, poems and other writings, to compile in systematic book form the materials so obtained and chalk out the

future course for Buddhists. At that time communication between different parts of India was by no means free from dangers, and exchange of spiritual knowledge and experience was beset with difficulties that we hardly realize at present. The conditions have changed completely now. The distant parts of India, nay, of the world itself have been brought so close together that a message can be transmitted from one extremity of the earth to another in the twinkling of an eye. Distance and natural barriers are no longer insurmountable obstacles. Fast, efficient and comfortable means of transport plying regularly by land, water and air have completely overcome the old obstacles. Add to these the facilities for exchange of thought among the civilized nations that English, French or German affords.

This Parliament, therefore, of the delegates of the different religions of the world under the auspices of the Centenary of the greatest sage of modern times, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, is remarkably fitted to illuminate the basic principles of all religions and to bind humanity in a common bond of spirituality, and of universal brotherhood.

A careful scrutiny of the course that the human mind at present follows under the influence of the wonderful discoveries and inventions of material science leaves us in doubt as to whether

it is leading the human race to the desired goal—peace, happiness and loving fellowship. We see plainly that the alluring fruits of science in their immediate effect are intensifying distrust and division, strife and destructive zeal among the peoples of the world.

At this juncture this great meeting of the thoughtful friends of humanity is most opportune, and is pregnant with potentialities for good, not only to India, but to the world at large, and it is certainly not too much to hope that this historic gathering of the wise and learned of all lands will be able to forge bonds of cordial fraternity, peace and love and make all the peoples feel that they form one Human Family.

In this unique atmosphere of hope the message of India is brief as it is ancient, and I trust that the good it will do will be as great as in the ages gone by.

This message was clearly uttered in the Mantras of the Rigveda, the oldest Scripture in the library of mankind :

“The One alone exists though the sages call It variously”. (1. 164. 46).

“What we see in and out of ourselves, all that has gone before and all that will be hereafter—all these are the Purusha, the Supreme Being. There is nothing except the Purusha” (Purusha Sukta).

The contemplation of this Purusha, or Atman or the Reality existing behind endless diversity of experiences, is the vital thought of India. This meditation of the Purusha is the foundation, not only of the civilization, religion and spirituality of India, but it is also the very fundamental constituent of her temporal arts and sciences. From time immemorial hearing about the Atman (श्रवण), thought (मनन) and constant meditation (निदिध्यासन) on Him have been regarded as the most effective means of attainment of the final goal and highest good of life.

Nachiketas, the representative of India's youthful soul, in the ardent search for this ultimate reality permeating through all apparent diversity, declined all boons offered to him by the God of Death, and humbly prayed :

“Let me be instructed in that knowledge which can remove the doubts that arise when a person is seen to die ; for some say that with death the whole existence of the person comes to nothing, while others say that he still exists. This is the third of the boons I crave” (Kathopanishad, 1. 20).

This knowledge of the Self or Atman was the main subject of long-continued discussion among the Brahmanas invited to the court of the Emperor Janaka of Videha in connection with a Râjasuya Yajna (the sacrifice at assumption of regality). Here also we find Chakrâyana Ushasta asking the great sage Yâjnavalkya :

“Explain to me clearly what you mean by saying that whatever is directly perceived is Brahman—the Soul of all, that which exists in everything” (Brihadâraṇyaka Up., 3. 4. 1).

Yâjnavalkya said in reply :

“He who by the upper vital force carries on respiration in your system, is your Âtman and is the Âtman of all beings. He it is, who, by the Apâna (the lower vital force) drives out the excreta. It is He, who, by the Vyâna (the pervasive vital force) works the functions of circulation and nerve-vibration, that is your Âtman and the Âtman of all. And at the time of death, He it is, who, by Udâna (the disjunctive vital force) sends the life out, that is your Âtman and the Âtman of all” (Ibid.).

This answer of Yâjnavalkya did not satisfy Chakrâyana Ushasta, who asked again :

“Knowledge is really imparted when the concrete object is shown to the

pupil, for example, when a cow or a horse in front is shown and it is said—‘Look here this is a cow, this is a horse.’ Please instruct me similarly about what you call the directly-perceived Brahman and also the all-pervading Âtman. This is my humble prayer” (*Ibid.* 3. 4. 2).

The sage replied :

“You cannot see the seer of the ocular perception, you cannot perceive by the ear the hearer of the auricular perception, you cannot understand the director of the mental faculties with the help of these faculties, you cannot know the knower of all knowledge by means of your knowledge” (*Ibid.*).

This seer of the seeing, this hearer of the hearing, this director of the mental activities and this knower of the knowing, this self-evident, eternal and ultimate Reality is your Âtman and the Âtman which pervades all; all other things besides this which you perceive with your senses are the sources of misery,—they are transient and unsubstantial.

To undersand the real nature of this Âtman, this Brahman or the all-pervading Soul, and thereby overcome all the miseries of the world the divine sage Nârada humbly approached Sanatkumâra who was well-versed in Âtmic knowledge and prayed :

“Sire, instruct me.”

Sanatkumâra said :

“Let me know what you have already learnt, so that I may instruct you accordingly.”

Nârada replied :

“Sire, I have studied Rigveda, Yayurveda, Sâmaveda and also the fourth, namely, Atharvan and the fifth Itihâsa (history) and Purâna (antique lore); I have studied the Veda of the Vedas (i.e. Grammar); I have studied treatises on obsequies; I know the Science of prognostications of terres-

trial, supernatural and heavenly disturbances. I have studied Mineralogy, Logic, Statecraft, Philology and Lexicography, Physics, Archery, Astronomy and Astrology, Snake-lore, Dancing, Music and other fine arts. All these have brought me knowledge but I have not yet been able to know the Self. I have heard from sages like you, that it is only the knower of the Self—who is emancipated from the bonds of worldly miseries. Take pity on me and lead me to the other side of this ocean of misery” (Chhândogyopanishad, 7. 1. 2).

Sanatkumâra said :

“All that you have learnt is very little—in fact a string of names only!” (*Ibid.* 7. 1. 3).

This hankering after that knowledge which culminates in enduring bliss and in the highest self-realization runs through all Indian works on Science, Arts and Literature, in some markedly and obviously and in others in a subdued and sub-merged flow like that of the river Saraswati, but all directed, without deviation, to the same great ocean. The Vedas, the Vedangas, the Purânas, the Itihâsas, in fact the whole of Indian Literature has been singing the same song in the same tune and the same measure from time immemorial; and it is sure to prove a fruitless attempt on the part of anybody who wants to study and understand the inner life of India but whose ear cannot catch this tune and whose heart does not beat in unison therewith.

India earnestly prays in this great Parliament of Religions that every man may hear this message of her Soul, may understand it and try to live up to it. For human salvation lies this way, namely, in the realization of the all-pervading Atrman and not in the recog-

nition of the gross perishable body as the Self of man.

Mistaking the body for the Self—lies at the root of all wrongs from which humanity has so far suffered and shall suffer in future. This is responsible for creating insatiable sensuous desires in man, which again breed dissensions, distrust, enmity and all the ills and troubles that man is heir to both in his individual and corporate capacities. As fire cannot be put out by adding fuel but burns all the more fiercely, the insatiable sensuous desire of the heart only increases with fulfilment. This is not the path of happiness; it leads to world-wide pain and misery. Happiness, bliss and peace are attainable through introspection and renunciation, and by the annihilation of that ignorance which presents the gross body as the Self.

All the ways and means which lead to this bliss have been included in India in the term Dharma or religion. India tried her best to bring home this fact to man and she has been doing so ever since.

To understand the achievement of India in the spiritual field, this aspect should be clearly understood. He who misses this, misses the true Indian spirit.

Neither by progeny nor by wealth can anyone escape from the clutches of death. It is only through the renunciation of the desire for fleeting pleasures of the senses that a man can attain immortality. This is the sum and substance of the teachings of the Hindu religion. It matters little if the inevitable differences due to clime, history and environment continue to exist among different groups of mankind regarding the ways and means for moulding life according to this light, so long as the central idea or the basic principle is not lost sight of. Rites and ceremonies are the out-

ward form of religion. These may differ in different religions, but the eternal spirit of Dharma in all ages and all climes has been this search after the Âtman or the Universal Spirit under different names and different conceptions. What is real and eternal will abide through eternity.

This Ultimate Truth was realized by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as a result of unostentatious, simple, religious life and was the theme of his lifelong meditation. This conclusion is not new; it is as old as the Hindu religion itself and yet is ever fresh, ever new for those who are inquisitive about the Self, those who would like to be shown the path of bliss.

In the Bhagavad-Gita Sri Krishna explained to Arjuna the same thing :

“As rivers from different directions flowing into the ocean which is ever full lose their entities and merge into it, so all desires vanish when they enter the mind of the man of steady intellect. Such men only attain peace. Peace is not attainable to him who is full of desires for wealth, for love of woman and the other objects of sensuous pleasure” (II. 70).

He, who can merge his conditioned and limited self into the all-pervading Universal Soul or Brahman is happy in this world, he is always contented and he can enjoy the bliss of the Self. Such a man only can be the friend of all, the servant of all.

This spiritual truth practically lived by Parmahansa Ramakrishna was proclaimed by the Upanishads which are the highest peaks of Indian thought and speculation. They declare with a clarion voice :

“What is unlimited is Bliss absolute, for there is no happiness in what is limited” (Chhând. Up., 7. 23. 1).

This is the ancient message that India

gave to the world. This is the message which Ramakrishna has given to the world in a form intelligible and attractive to mankind.

And I offer my humble salutations

and boundless reverence to this sage and saint of modern times who was the spiritual guide of Swami Vivekananda and the greatest teacher of Universal Religion.

MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU

OF HYDERABAD AND BOMBAY

Saturday, March 6—Afternoon Session

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not propose to make any speech at this moment. You must be very tired of speeches; but at the end of the meeting I shall perhaps have a word or two to say. I am going only to give you greetings and to thank you and the organizers of this Parliament for thinking that I am worthy to conduct the proceedings of one entire session. As I



MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU

said the other day, I am neither a priest, philosopher, nor a person of learning but only a humble wandering poet and if that constitutes a link to the one who sits in the high-place of the mighty who are learned and are experts in the ways of doctrine, dogmas and philosophy, I am deeply honoured to be in that

mighty place. Now I will call upon those who are really in the printed programme and not an after-thought like myself, to carry on the printed proceedings. First of all Professor Sarkar is going to make an announcement and after that there will be messages and speeches and papers.

After the programme was gone through, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, in her concluding address, said: I promised to speak for one minute. You have heard so many speeches on so many religions and amendments to religions, original religions and now and then challenges to religions. That is the work of those who are experts in the analysis of their own faiths or in the synthesis of their own creeds and their dogmas. A person like me who has no dogma, who follows no doctrine, and who dare not progress except in the step of the entire humanity, has nothing to say to you that has not already been said. The last speaker who claims to be like me a citizen of Bombay, has struck the last final note most splendidly. This Parliament of Religions is assembled not to find differences between faith and faith, but to find the co-ordinating deep unity. From the source, from the root, from the depths of the earth the water springs, but it goes into many channels, many rivers and many tributaries. From the womb of the earth the seed that has to

give birth to other seeds makes a little tree and the tree grows and the branches spread and some bend downward, some go heavenward, some are twisted and some are straight. The branches that grow downward and offer shelter to the tired and the branches that grow heavenward, all are fed from the same root that springs from the heart of the earth, and shall any branch say, 'I am different?' The blossom is the same and the sap is the same in the spring-time and the spring-time makes no discrimination saying to the straight branch, 'Look, my beauty is given to you and not to the other branches,' and so we say that all faiths, all creeds, spring from the same source and that source is the need of humanity. I do not say it comes from God. I say it comes from our need of God. I do not say that God created man; I say man in his urgent and imperative necessity creates God every day and recreates God every day. After all what is God excepting our own individual consciousness of the Highest? What is God excepting the embodiment of our own needs of Beauty, of Truth, of Love, of Wisdom, of Courage?

In the garden of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, there stands an empty temple made of stone and one day, when I was giving the Kamala Lectures to the University, the last day it was, I walked with him in his garden. He said to me, 'Have you found the text of to-day's address?' I said, 'No.' Then he said, 'You will find the text of your address here.' I walked with him and I looked at the birds, trees, statues and at last I stood before that empty temple, when he said, 'Poet, have you found your message?' I said, 'I have.' Here is an empty temple in which there is no image because every worshipper must find in the empty temple knowledge that he creates God in the image of his own soul.

That is the message to the world of all great saints and prophets of the world and that was the message of Sri Ramakrishna. For him the temple was always empty, because it was always ready. It was always ready for him to place his deity, no matter whether for a moment he projected himself into the soul of the Musalman or the Christian or the Confucian or the Zoroastrian or the Sikh or any other faith. He said, 'Here is a temple of humanity and humanity must have a God. Where shall I find him? Shall I produce him in my limited individual consciousness? Or God shall be so infinite and so diverse that I shall seek him in the image of the Infinite as he appears to his children in the deserts of Arabia, on the mountain-tops, in the caves and in the forests of many lands.' And Sri Ramakrishna taught us that the temple remains empty because love alone can create an image of God and with that love, you are not limited, you become a part of the great humanity that worship God by many names, and whether you say Alla-Ho-Akbar or whether you bow before the Fire Temples of the Zoroastrians, or you kneel before the Cross of the Christians or whether you go to the Granth-Sahib in Gurudwara you realize the oneness with them all and you realize that no one can set a limit to your humanity excepting the limitation of your own sympathies and understanding and readiness to receive. This is the only message that I can give you. Because it is the only message that has been taught to me as religion by my father. It is the only religion that I have found for myself affirming the teachings of my childhood, and thinking one day upon this unity amongst so many diversities, I was standing on the roof of my house in the Muslim city of Hyderabad and suddenly behind, from my house, I heard a voice

of call to prayers, and almost immediately I heard from nearby, the chiming of the bells of a Hindu temple and not very far from me, there was a temple of Zoroaster where the Fire burns eternally, the Fire that has never been quenched for a moment since the Zoroastrians came in the ships to India with the burning log and installed it in the Fire Temples which has never been allowed to die,—and it came upon me

suddenly, how marvellously privileged I was that I lived in a city where the temple and the mosque and the fire temples, all were together, so close together and so united in their worship, and I made a little song of the evening prayer, a call to the evening prayer and I will end with that prayer as my method and my benediction.

Alla-Ho-Akbar

. Narayana.

MADAME GUIRALDES*

OF BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA (SOUTH AMERICA)

Sunday, March 7—Morning Session

Friends,

I feel it a great honour that you should have asked me to preside over this great and important assembly. I feel that I have no sufficient qualification to justify your choice, and that the tribute you are paying to me



MADAME GUIRALDES

really goes to my distant country of which I am only a very humble representative.

It seems somewhat absurd that we

* The address was delivered in Spanish.

should come to speak of religion to India which is the country of religion *par excellence*. We can tell you nothing which you have not known for centuries. But I may tell you of the small experience which your knowledge has given to a group of people of goodwill in one of the youngest nations of the world.

I should say here pretty much the same thing which I said on the 16th September last in Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentine Republic, on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna, when Mrs. Sophia Wadia and Dr. Kalidas Nag were in the chair. They came to represent India at the session of the P. E. N. Club which was then meeting in our country. I was speaking after our beloved Swami Vidyānanda of the Ramakrishna Mission, who at our request came over there to bring us the marvellous gift of Vedānta embodying the truth of all times, which has been actually seen by the great Rishis who taught it, and which with its perfect logic satisfies the mind and the heart of those who have the good fortune to become acquainted with it.

All the races on the face of the earth have their own sacred scriptures which teach the revelation received direct from the Godhead by their most spiritual men, by those who made the effort of getting beyond and above their own selves to become worthy of that sacred intercourse. Those scriptures contain the truth which in its essence is always one, and always shows man the way to perfection.

All those scriptures relate the life and the teachings of some men in whom the Godhead has become incarnated in order to show to the race, by a living proof, the possibility of the application of those teachings, by every human being.

The seeker has at his disposal those scriptures which modern methods of distribution have put within the reach of everybody; but that has not reformed mankind, which was always been a prey to the same passions through all times. Those passions have hidden and distorted the Divine teachings which God's infinite mercy repeated over and over again, in the various forms, adapted to the needs of the hour.

In the Bhagavat Gita, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that although he has neither beginning nor end, he is born through his supernatural power every-time justice suffers and impurity obtains, that he incarnates himself from age to age to protect the just, strike the unjust and establish the true law.

Many centuries later, in the beginning of the 19th century, in the same land of India, in a poor hut in Bengal Sri Ramakrishna was born—the man-God whose mission it was to prove to the world the truth of that statement and to live that reality full of wonderful logic.

In whatever way men come to Him, He receives them,—whatever may be

the form in which they worship Him. I say it is a grand logic because since God is our Father and Creator, the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient Lord, He has created all men equally, and has not imposed upon us any special form of worship, and the only important thing is that we should serve Him with sincerity and dedication.

But in order that mankind could realize that truth, He again took birth and lived in a human body, devoting himself to all the forms of adoration, and reaching through each one of them the supreme bliss melting eventually into the ocean of his own essence.

The story of his earthly life is most moving. He spent the greater part of his life in the strict practice of all the great religions of the world and its numerous sects, submitting to the most severe disciplines which they prescribe. And every one of them without exception brought him to the same result, to the same ecstasy, to the highest Samadhi. For that reason, with a full realization of the facts, he was able to give his universal message to the whole of mankind, "All religions are true; they are various paths each of which will lead to God if the aspirant is sincere and pure, and these qualities are indispensable if we are to reach Him."

Such is the essential meaning of his message as we read it in his life and in his words.

As he knew of the terrible ordeal through which the world would have to pass in a near future, the All-merciful came to teach him that God is one, because His essence is one, although His names and forms are many. And he fulfilled the divine teaching of his great predecessor, Jesus Christ, who had brought to men his divine message of universal love in the most beautiful of his maxims: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." With those

words he made brothers of all men of all races, classes or creeds, giving to each and every one of them the same importance recognizing in him the same quality.

If those who so proudly call themselves Christians were to follow that simple teaching of our Divine Master, we should not find in ourselves all the strifes, the wars and the fights, and peace would reign in our hearts.

The modern man of the West, forgetting the essential precept of love tirelessly repeated by the Master to his disciples, takes the most futile pretexts to evade that teaching, and little by little we came to the desperate situation, to this terrible chaos of hate, madness and death.

Every pretext was taken advantage of, which could separate and divide, although the great developments of the present situation have always shown us the way to unity.

Science has come to recognize that when we lose ourselves in its deep study of matter, we reach the spirit of matter, the One, and that in the same way when we lose ourselves in the deep study of the spirit, we reach the substance—matter of the spirit, the One.

The gradual disappearance of distances is nothing but an indication of the unity between men, so that knowing each other better, they may learn to love and understand each other better.

Such is the will of God, of the One God whom men call by many names. But we forget the teaching of love, we

ignore the why and wherefore of those gifts, and we use them only for our own destruction.

Religions were for many centuries a cause of strife and war between men. That is why the recent coming of Sri Ramakrishna with his message of universal understanding has so much importance at this time of unnecessary and unjustified quarrels.

Our America, the land of freedom and hospitality, could not remain unresponsive to that message, the object of which is to unite all men in the pure spirit which admits of no frontiers, barriers or divisions, which no creed can change or adulterate, which only asks each individual to practise, the ideal of which message is that each religion should be respected by those who follow other creeds, and that each devotee should strive to be the best exponent of his own religion, to be sincere, pure and true.

That is why we have gathered here to celebrate the Centenary in this city where Ramakrishna lived. And in all the important cities of the East and of the West many sincere seekers in all religions now realize that he preached and honoured them equally.

Through his infinite grace I am amongst you to-day. May he grant me adequate strength to fulfil one of my most ardent desires,—to tread the path of his blessed land, the land of Divine Incarnations, of saints and sages.

Glory be unto Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

MANDALISWAR SWAMI BHAGAVATANANDA GIRI OF BENARES*

Sunday, March 7—Afternoon Session

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The great soul whose Centenary is being celebrated by this Parliament of Religions was foremost amongst Sannyâsins, nay, he was the greatest soul that modern India has produced. His teachings have brought light to the world



SWAMI BHAGAVATANANDA GIRI

destroying the darkness of ignorance in which it was immersed. He was an Incarnation of the Supreme Being according to the Gitâ which says, "Wherever you find greatness" etc. (10.42), and according to the Upanishadic teaching, "All this indeed is Brahman" he was Brahman Itself. There is no doubt about this.

He has taught us to be in the world but to be not of the world. "There is no harm if the boat is in the water but you should not allow the water to enter the boat." So there is no harm if we live in the world but do not allow the world with its object of enjoyments to enter us. We have to live non-attached, for attachment brings in desires which in their turn bring in bondage. There is no end to desires and everyone of us know it for certain that there is no real Bliss in limited things. Real Bliss lies in the Infinite. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna asked everyone to realize God first. This is also the behest of the scriptures which tell us that we have come in this world for attaining perfection and not for enjoying sense objects.

This great soul was a harmonizer of all faiths and creeds, and this synthesis is possible only for one who has attained the Highest, who has seen God in everything. Hence his teaching that to serve man is to serve God, for Jiva is Siva. In fact in his message of synthesis there is enough motive force for an all-round progress for humanity—social, ethical, religious and spiritual. To-day nothing can work more for peace and harmony in this world which is divided by hatred and greed than the teachings of this great soul.

* The address was delivered in Hindi.

DR. F. V. TOUSEK

*(Consul for Czechoslovakia, Calcutta)**Monday, March 8—Morning Session*

In presiding at the last day's session of the Parliament of Religions, I propose to say a few words only. There have been speeches, profound studies of philosophy and religion and messages delivered by great personalities. I, a humble servant of my country, do not feel entitled to join the number of these distinguished thinkers in matters of such great philosophical and moral value. If



DR. F. V. TOUSEK

I take the liberty to trespass on your time and patience, it is only to survey the results of the proceedings of this great Parliament.

Let us hope that the ideas brought forward in the proceedings of this Parliament will help us to deepen the mutual understanding between different religions, different nations and different races. Let us hope that the spirit of understanding will bring universal peace to mankind. Every noble work of peace should be welcome in the struggle for peace. This last struggle shall not change the ways of the world, but shall change the soul of man so as to enable him to understand freely that one man

is equal to another man; that there is place in the world for every man who is honest and peaceful; that everyone can follow his ideas in a peaceful way and that there is no necessity that one community should impose its will upon another community. The highest truth is the truth of freedom; it is the right of everybody to participate in the highest achievements of spirit and science to participate in the fruits of progress. This highest ideal can be achieved only by peaceful and spiritual means, through service to mankind—through self-sacrifice and education.

Every movement which has this noble aim of peace, has in itself the sacred mission and its advent must be hailed by mankind as the dawn of a new life. Such a spiritual movement must be universal. Everybody in his own religion, in his own culture, must contribute to this noble work of peace,—must become a perfect creature so as to be able to carry forward the real truth of freedom and peace, without envy and without hatred.

If the Parliament of Religions would have produced nothing else than this spirit of mutual understanding, it would have accomplished its mission. I mention also the message of Rabindranath Tagore as a great achievement. This message delivered by the venerable prophet, has made the greatest impression on me. I read it over and over again, and propose that his message should be translated into all languages and distributed in millions of leaflets throughout the world. "A mere poet, a lover of men and creation," as he has styled himself, has given us the real truth. Let us hope that it has not been delivered in vain.

The Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee could not celebrate better and in a more dignified way the birth centenary of the great teacher and prophet. His teachings have been praised by more competent speakers. Allow me to-day to mention that my nation and thinkers throughout the world were celebrating yesterday the anniversary of the birth of another great teacher of truth, a philosopher and statesman, our first President, Dr. T. G. Masaryk. His

love of truth led to his enunciation of the philosophy of realism, which became a guiding principle by which our people should seek regeneration.

The Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, its President, its members and its General Secretary, and especially Professor B. K. Sarkar, have accomplished a great work in organizing this Parliament of Religions; I congratulate them upon this great success.

PROF. A. B. DHRUVA

OF AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT

(Hindu University, Benares)

Monday, March 8—Afternoon Session

I am deeply grateful to you and to the organizers of this Parliament of Religions for the honour they have done me in asking me to occupy the



PROF. A. B. DHRUVA

Chair this afternoon. My confinement to bed for nearly two weeks in Benares shortly before now owing to flue has disabled me for discharging the duties of a Chairman on this great occasion and I should have therefore preferred to remain a silent member of the

audience enjoying the pleasure of listening to the ennobling and instructive speeches which have been delivered in this Hall for the last seven days. This pleasure, however, I was destined to forego owing to illness and an unavoidable preoccupation which kept me at Benares during this period. I, therefore, crave your indulgence for reading before you a few scrappy remarks which do not pretend to be a learned discourse, but are intended as an humble tribute to the memory of the great sage of Dakshineswar, the Centenary of whose birth we are celebrating.

There is a singular appropriateness in holding a Parliament of Religions in honour of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Sri Ramakrishna has taught the world both by life and precept that all particular religions are avenues to the Temple of God and it matters nothing which of them you tread, provided you are really and sincerely religious. This means a great deal more than the

exercise of Reason or Will or Emotion in the service of a higher life. Religion is experience, it is a consciousness (साक्षात्कार or अपरोक्षानुभव). Reason can enlighten life, morality can invigorate it, aestheticism can beautify it, but Religion alone can make it holy. Religion is not Theology or application of Reason to the problems relating to God. It embraces the whole of life which it consecrates and realizes as a revelation of God in man.

Moreover, Religion is not a bouquet of select flowers culled from the plants of particular religions and bound together with the string of scholarship. Nor is it an attar of religious rose, jasmin and kevada pressed together and extracted as a single essence of a Universal Religion. As followers or admirers of Ramakrishna we believe in the synthesis of many religions as members of one family, meeting together around a common hearth and carrying on a homely talk—which is the root meaning of the world “parliament.”

In addition to the “holism” of Religion (I use the word in General Smut’s sense) and *concrete unity* of religious thought which abhors abstractions, there are a few more characteristics of Ramakrishna’s teaching which I should not omit to touch upon.

First is the *supremacy* of Religion. To use a metaphor which has been used by a Sanskrit poet in a different context, “देवीभावं गमिता परिचारपदं कथं भजत्येषा” ‘How can a queen who occupies the throne bear herself, degraded to the position of a page or servant girl?’ In modern times, there is a marked tendency towards evaluating everything according to its utility. This utilitarian or pragmatic attitude is inconsistent with the intrinsic worth of life’s highest categories, viz. Truth, Right and Beauty. Religion is not valuable only in

so far as it preserves law and order in our social relations. Nor is it a handmaid of politics—an instrument in the hands of shrewd politicians for managing ignorant masses. It is the form and substance of the highest type of life of which man is capable. Therefore, although I yield to none in my appreciation of the “social services” which the Ramakrishna Mission is rendering in different parts of the country, I wish to stress the fact that Religion is the real power-house of Sri Ramakrishna Mission from which its social services should never be disconnected. The League of Nations, in my humble opinion, would have had a better chance of success, had it grown out of something deeper than economic and political interests of the several nations which compose it. What provided unity among the warring nations of Europe in the middle ages? When the unifying force—the Christian Church—forgot the infinitude of God and became selfish, secular and bigoted, there came the fulfilment of the divine promise :

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ (Gitâ)
What is true of Europe is also true of India, *mutatis mutandis*.

Much of the bigotry, fanaticism and religious persecution in the world has risen from our dogmatizing about what we do not know or only partially know instead of acting upon what we do know and know clearly. While insisting upon a particular belief regarding the nature of God, we forget the ways which lead up to Him, although all the scriptures agree in declaring that the house of God has many mansions—सहस्रद्वारं जगमाग्रहन्ते (Rig-Veda).

There is an interesting discourse on the relative importance of साध्य and साधना (the goal and the paths) in the Buddhist Tripitaka. Gautama Buddha

preached to his disciples : “Monks ! there is this other bank of the river. Suppose you called aloud a hundred times ‘Oh bank ! come to me,’ would it come?” The monks replied, “No, Master.” “In the same way,” said Gautama, “no amount of calling upon the Gods would bring the Gods nearer. It is by building a boat, equipping it with oars and going into it and rowing it skilfully in the right direction that you reach your goal.”

Let us not quarrel about the nature of God. We are all agreed about the right methods of reaching Him. Among

them sectarianism, bigotry and intolerance have no place. To emphasize this truth was the mission of the Parliament of Religions.

Let me conclude this brief epilogue with the Vedic verse :

पराहि मे विमण्यवहा पतन्ति वश्ये इष्टये ।
वयो न वसति रूप ॥

“In the evening of my life, Oh Lord,’ my thoughts fly to Thee in search of the highest good, as birds to their nests,”

or as another great book says,

“as a hart panteth for the water of the spring.”

MESSAGES

Leaders of thought from all parts of the world such as Japan, China, the Philippines, the Straits Settlements, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Great Britain, Norway, Egypt, South Africa, and the United States of America sent their greetings. In India messages of good wishes were received from persons representing all walks of life and belonging to Assam, Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, Delhi, Punjab, Bombay, Central Provinces, Nizam’s Dominions, Madras, Mysore, Ceylon, Orissa and Burma. The texts of some of these messages are given below in the order in which they were read out at the various sessions of the Parliament.

Monday, March 1

LORD ZETLAND

Secretary of State for India

I desire to convey to you my cordial good wishes for a very successful gathering of the representatives of

the various religious faiths which is to be held under your Chairmanship. I still carry with me vivid and happy memories of my contacts with office-bearers and members of the Ramakrishna Mission during the period of my sojourn in Bengal, and I feel sure that the fact that the gathering is being held under the auspices of the Mission is in itself a guarantee of its success. It would give me great pleasure to be present if that were possible so that I might meet once again my many friends who will be there. But since this is not possible, I shall at least be with you in spirit.

SIR JOHN ANDERSON

Governor of Bengal

It is with much interest that I have learnt of the calling of the Parliament of Religions in Calcutta in honour of the Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna, and I trust that the discussions of the delegates may further the causes which Sri Ramakrishna had at heart—religious harmony, social toleration and inter-racial concord.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Wish Parliament success. Wish it could do some constructive work.

Tuesday, March 2—Morning Session

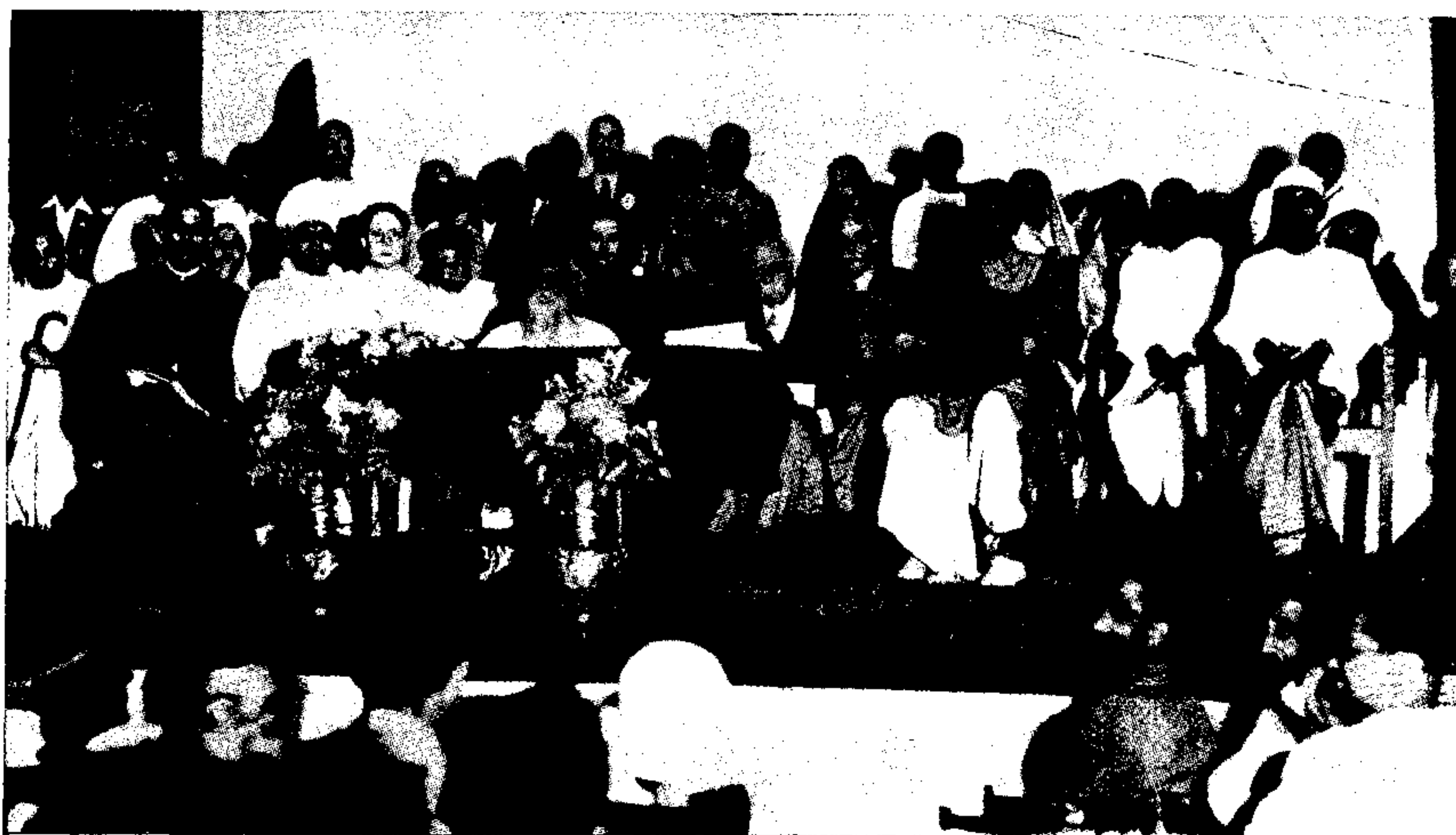
**HIS EXALTED HIGHNESS THE NIZAM
OF HYDERABAD**

On the occasion of the Centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna I send you a message of encouragement and of sympathy with the liberal and enlightened views of which he was so able an exponent. A wide toleration of all

religious feeling in the best form and with the most important ideas a thinker may point out. So, we must admire your work and praise your very valuable intentions. Though India is the dream of my own youth, and the Indians the love of my fancy, I cannot follow your suggestions and make use of so delicious an invitation as yours.

PROF. VISCOUNT SANTA CLARA OF SPAIN

The subject to which I have devoted my best thoughts during the best part



DR. RABINDRANATH TAGORE PRESIDING OVER THE AFTERNOON SESSION HELD AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3.

religions and sects is the spirit which your Parliament of Religions is endeavouring to spread and there could be no greater contribution to peace and goodwill among men.

**KUMAMOTO BUDDHIST FEDERATION
BUKKYORENGOKAI KUMAMOTOSHIBU**
Japanese Buddhists offer greetings;
wish Parliament of Religions success.

BARON PROF. CAY VON BROCKDORF
*University, Kiel (Germany), President
of the Societas Hobbesiana in Germany*

You are doing great things for mankind and you help all men of any

of my worldly life is friendly advice to a small number of persons actually following a spiritual path, such as earnest Yogis, Sufis, Parsis, Christians, etc. That work is entirely independent of my task of university teacher, and has always been private. Therefore papers, articles and other publications do not normally come within its scope. However, I can offer to public investigation two recurring facts chosen out of my experience, and related to the conciliatory sentence, confirmed by the existence of the Parliament of Religions, "Every faith is a path to God."

The first fact is that the devout human worshipper resides habitually in the standpoint of plurality and mankind, and necessarily collates the Deity or the Absolute with the relative, as if one were many, and as if the Absolute, becoming relative, constituted the content of one faith out of many faiths; but, in this collation, the Deity only remains vitally such for the worshipper inasmuch as It is the content of his one faith, core of his own faithfulness.

The second fact is that the devout human worshippers, when they are conversing privately with a spiritual guide or engaged in a fairly deep meditation, or when they find themselves in critical circumstances such as the approach of death, recede from the standpoint of relativity, in which one public faith exists together with other faiths, and try to rise to the proximity of the absolute or transcendent object of their minds, where all comparison with the relative is eluded. In such moments of inwardness, the worshipper's eventual tolerance remains more or less foreign to his conscience, as do the attitudes which he occasionally adopts for social purposes.

The two aforesaid facts recur with regard to human worshippers, but in the mind of sages there is undoubtedly a living principle of harmony between the two principles of identity and contradiction which are responsible for both the standpoints above described that manifest the exclusiveness which ascends towards the unity, the Absolute or the Deity, and the tolerance which descends towards relativity, and I believe that it is this harmony which originally inspires the present meeting of "Men of goodwill."

Drawing a practical conclusion from what I have said, I can assert that a man should first of all try to become a sage, if he is well prepared for that

by vocation and study, and afterwards he may realize the lovable sense in which "Every faith is a path to God."

Tuesday, March 2—Afternoon Session

MONS. ROMAIN ROLLAND

Villeneuve, Switzerland

(Original in French)

You do not doubt that my thought is present in your midst: I request you to be kind enough to communicate to the Parliament my fraternal greetings of sympathy and respect. Nobody has aspired more than myself during the entire lifetime to reconcile and unite among themselves all the great forces of the human spirit, the energies of faith in the universal life and of love working for all mankind. I am happy that such an assembly of world-unity has been placed under the invocation of the Master of love for all living beings, our dear Sri Ramakrishna.

Allow me simply to request all the participants at the Parliament to always direct their efforts towards social service, towards the aid of the masses of the world. We find ourselves at a point in the history of the world when the peoples, oppressed and sacrificed as they have been, for a number of centuries, are organizing themselves for their defence against an exploitation which is becoming more and more humiliating and cruel. May we help forward the coming of social justice. Our place ought always to be beside the poor and the humble, those who labour and perish.

PROF. J. J. VON SCHMID

University, Leyden (Holland)

The reading of the principles of the Congress and the religious and philosophical trend exposed in the invitation gave me once more a very high idea of Indian thought. This thought is, I

think, in its universal ideas of fraternity, morality and ethics and general wisdom, the best and the deepest of the whole world, and therefore an example for all countries and parts of the world. I am sure if this spirit governed the world, it would be much better through it. Therefore, all my good wishes are for the Congress and its

to submerge all that human culture has produced.

MR. A. VAN STALK

Scheveningen, Hague (Holland)

Sri Ramakrishna is for me one of the Prophets of the new age, whose books I have read and whom I greatly admire



SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND PRESIDING OVER THE AFTERNOON SESSION HELD AT THE CALCUTTA TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY, MARCH 4.

members. May a high spirit and noble thoughts guide it and may it be a fountain for better social ideas and relations everywhere !

Wednesday, March 3—Morning Session

PROF. LOUIS RENOU

Paris

(Original in French)

No initiative is more praiseworthy than yours at a moment specially when materialism and barbarity are menacing

and respect. The harmony of faiths, religious toleration and inter-racial amity are also amongst the objects of the Sufi Movement in the West, so that the work you are doing to promote these interests has my fullest sympathy.

May I express the wish that the Parliament of Religions will be most successful in every way and that it may help to bring about the universal brotherhood of men in the fatherhood of God !

Wednesday, March 3—Evening Session

PROF. GIORGIO DEL VECCHIO

*Faculty of Jurisprudence, University
of Rome (Italy)*

(Original in Italian)

It is a very reassuring fact that through the grave dissensions which divide the peoples to-day is manifest a moral solidarity based on the universal validity of the supreme principles of duty and law.

For this reason I have learnt with pleasure the announcement of the forthcoming conference to which you have kindly invited me and I am sending you herewith my best wishes.

I am sure that on account of the nobility of the sentiments which inspire this conference, will be avoided all that might accentuate the dissensions, such, for example, as have bearings on the diverse forms of Government and political regime. I am equally certain that absolute autonomy of the conscience in matters of religion will be respected in the most complete manner. Fortunately, there exists above the variety of dogmas a common fount of moral verities in which all the peoples and all human beings might and ought to agree. This agreement signifies exactly the bond which is expressed by the term religion in its oldest and most general meaning. Should the forthcoming conference serve, as I hope, to reinforce this bond, it will win a great merit for the history of mankind.

PROF. JEAN PRZYLUSKI

College de France, Paris

(Original in French)

For a time I thought I should be able to attend in person the Parliament. I see now that it will not be possible and I must apologize for it. I shall only participate with my faith and good

hopes in that solemn and pious convention.

Thursday, March 4—Morning Session

PROF. G. VLADESCO-RACOASSA

University, Bucharest (Rumania)

(Original in French)

Permit me to avail myself of this opportunity to present you my sincere congratulations for the admirable work of fraternity which you are pursuing specially in this epoch of the recrudescence of human primitivity and bestiality and wish you warmly the best success for your enterprise.

At a moment when the world has need more than ever of peace for the development of international co-operation, your activity would appear to be a happy augury for a better future and I beg of you to receive my entire admiration and consider me among you in this struggle for the socialization not only of the means of production but also of culture and human civilization. It is particularly in this sense that I see all real amelioration and all real social progress of the world, social justice, prosperity and peace.

LADY RACHEL EZRA

Calcutta

It gives me great pleasure to send a message of greeting to the members of the Parliament of Religions. Ever since the days when Swami Vivekananda made his epoch-making impression upon the Parliament of Religions in Chicago we have looked forward to this Parliament being held here in India and now this is an accomplished fact. I am glad of this. There never was a better time when followers of various faiths should respect and honour one another in their varying beliefs and this Parliament ought to create this attitude of

mind in a unique way. I offer my sincerest good wishes for the success of this gathering here in Calcutta.

Thursday, March 4—Afternoon Session

PROF. G. L. DUPRAT

University of Geneva, General Secretary, Federation International des Societes et Instituts de Sociologie, Paris and Geneva

(Original in French)

On behalf of the International Federation of the Sociological Societies and Institutes of the entire world I have pleasure in addressing you this message designed specially to maintain peace among men by reciprocal respect for all the moral, religious, political and juristic convictions.

Our Thirteenth International Congress of Sociology which is to be held at Paris on the occasion of the World Exhibition in September, 1937, will have as its principal object the study of "Social equilibria." In our eyes social equilibrium implies the co-operation of all the functions of collective life, of all the organs, namely, the peoples and the groups, each constituted according to its own "spirit," in harmony with all the other "spirits" dominated by goodwill.

In getting ourselves represented at the Parliament of Religions by our excellent colleague, Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, we desire above all that our collaboration should be the manifestation of our profound humanitarian sentiments and of our desire for world equilibrium in the intellectual and moral co-operation of all the human values.

SENATOR ACHILLE LORIA

Turin, Italy

If nobody is certain of an after-life, everybody is certain of an after-mind, of a frontier, beyond which the human intellect is impotent and the most

august thought is able only to create some words (infinite, eternal, etc.) absolutely void of any content untranslatable in a concrete concept. In this ultra-intelligible sphere religious sentiment can display its wings, and science, although furnished with the most powerful instrument of research, is unable to arrest its flight. The progress of science can certainly induce man to make continuous efforts to break the barriers of the intelligible, but the fatal defeat of these efforts pushes man again to the Elysium of faith. Therefore, it is not a paradox that with the increase of the scientific efforts for the enlargement of the sphere of the intelligible, the sentiment of the after-world will become ever more intense.

Friday, March 5—Morning Session

PROF. CORRADO GINI,

Demographer and Statistician, University of Rome (Italy)

(Original in Italian)

If by religion is to be understood all moving causes outside the rational which regulate human actions I can well assert that without religion there is no hope for mankind to elevate itself above the satisfaction of the senses. Reason constitutes, indeed, a perfect mechanism for directing the conduct of man. But it has the need for a force which sets it in motion. And this force cannot but be either hedonism which directs man towards the attainment of individual satisfactions or a religion which subordinates such satisfactions to the realization of more elevated objective. Consequently in morals as in politics, in science as in arts and philosophy it is the moving causes lying beyond the region of the rational,—i.e. the religious forces,—that produce the manifestations which influence history most markedly. The recognition of this truth to which

the Parliament of Religions is certainly destined to contribute represents the first step towards the harmony of faiths and religious toleration such as inspired the activities of Sri Ramakrishna.

C. M. BEACH

Organizing Secretary and Founder of the World Meditation Group, Surrey

As the organizer of the World Meditation Groups I send our greetings and cordial good wishes to the members and delegates of the Parliament of Religions and for the Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations.

We invite all students of meditation of all Faiths and Religions to unite with us every Thursday in Group meditation for peace and progress.

These Group Meetings now extend right round the world, some large and some small, all meeting on Thursdays in the one universal Brotherhood of the Spirit. It is hoped that by this means they will have a consecutive chain of spiritual meditation linked up round the world each week.

Group meditation is of the greatest value as an aid to spiritual development. The most advanced person present should be the Leader of the Group and should assist the others to acquire mental stillness until complete uniformity is achieved. In these prepared conditions a student will make much more rapid progress than when working alone.

It can become a valuable form of world service also. Each Group becomes a centre, or focussing point, of the spiritual forces which could not be contacted otherwise, by many of the students for this work.

If you cannot meet on Thursdays, any other day is of value, but in unity there is strength and on Thursday you will contact the power which has been

brought into earth conditions by this unity of thought and desire.

Thus each Group will become a power-centre, from which to radiate the Light into the darkness of ignorance in which the world lives.

We realize that we have much to learn from India in spiritual matters and in meditation especially and we would be grateful if you will add your forces to ours to help in the spiritual awakening of mankind and in preserving world peace, and perhaps lessening the days of tribulation on earth.

The reader of this has full particulars of the Movement and took part in two of the Group Meetings, himself, when in England.

Hoping that this Movement may help to build an invisible bridge between the East and the West which will unite us for ever, in love and friendship and co-operation, in the service of the One Father of us all.

Friday, March 5—Afternoon Session

PROF. P. SOROKIN

*Harvard University, Cambridge,
Mass. U. S. A.*

I thank you for the honour of inviting me to the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary. If my academic duties would permit me, I would be glad to come to Calcutta and participate in this Congress. Since I am deeply interested in Hindu culture and, with my limited knowledge, have a profound respect for Ramakrishna, such a desire on my part is comprehensible. Unfortunately my duties at Harvard do not permit me to go away during the time of academic duties.

So far as even a short paper is concerned, I would not be able to put down on it the ideas which I have on this topic. I hope, however, to publish them in my work, *Integral Culture and*

Its Changes. In this work I have attempted to give some of my ideas in the field of religion, ethics, law, art and general culture, and have tried to give an interpretation of Hindu culture and have mentioned Ramakrishna and several other modern spiritual leaders of India as well as the ancient leaders. I would be glad to send a copy of this work to the Committee or to you when it is published.

S. ANDO

General Secretary, The Japan Cultural Federation, Tokio

The idea of convening such a Parliament is itself a beautiful one and the spirit that is to pervade throughout its atmosphere, as I can gather from your communication under reply, does nothing but add to its beauty. Our Federation, therefore, feels honoured to have been invited to attend the Parliament.

Saturday, March 6—Morning Session

DR. E. T. WILLIAMS

Professor (Emeritus) of Oriental Languages and Literature, University of California, Berkeley, U. S. A.

Sharing fully the faith of Sri Ramakrishna that "every religion is a path to God," I rejoice in the spirit that has prompted you and others to bring into one assemblage, as far as possible, men of every race and creed, thereby making a practical demonstration of religious tolerance and promoting inter-racial and international goodwill.

PROF. S. ANGUS

*St. Andrew's Hall, Sydney
(Australia)*

India and the world owe much to such a religious leader and spiritual spokesman as Sri Ramakrishna, and I sincerely wish that the Centenary Celebrations in his honour may prove a

great success and help to bring home to your people and to all who visit India for the occasion that all true life is built upon spiritual foundations.

Saturday, March 6—Afternoon Session

PROF. J. M. PERITCH

*University of Belgrade, Jugoslavia,
Member of the Academy of International Law, Hague, Holland*

(Original in French)

I feel greatly honoured on account of your inviting me to the Parliament of Religions organized to celebrate the centenary of Sri Ramakrishna. I consider him to be an apostle of the liberty of conscience, of the harmony of religions, of religious toleration and of concord between the races. It is my very pleasant duty to express to you my most profound gratitude and at the same time I congratulate you on your convening this Parliament of Religions in honour of the great and noble prophet of the two worlds, old and new, such as Sri Ramakrishna was. Let me conclude with my best wishes for the most complete success of the Parliament in the interest of entire mankind.

PROF. TRAIAN HERSENI

*Institutul Social Roman, Bucharest
(Rumania)*

(Original in French)

A Congress like yours is specially significant for our times and I should have felt greatly honoured by being able to function in its midst. But my scientific and teaching work as well as other difficulties prevent me from participating personally in the Congress. I have to be content with simply being present in spirit among the participants of the Parliament. Please accept my sincere wishes for the success of your transactions.

PROF. G. TUCCI

Member of the Italian Academy, Rome

I have felt much honoured by the kind invitation you have extended to me for participating in the Parliament of Religions to be held at Calcutta in March next, under the auspices of your distinguished society. It would indeed be a great privilege for me to be able to take part in the great congregation of faiths you have been organizing, and it is quite likely that on my way back from Japan, where I shall pass the winter months on a lecture tour, I shall make a pilgrimage to Belur, and say a few words about the debt of humanity to the great Indian Master, Sri Ramakrishna, in my humble way. Even if for some unforeseen reason I should fail to be present personally at the Congress, I shall send my address in time.

I can assure you that the message of Sri Ramakrishna is widely known and appreciated by the cultural circle in Italy, and our Institute (*Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente*) shall spare no pains to contribute to the success of your Congress.

Sunday, March 7—Morning Session

PROF. W. SZAFER

Rector, University of Cracow, Poland

I have the honour to communicate that I am extending the leave granted to Mme. Prof. H. William-Grabowska so as to enable her to take part in the Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations as the representative of Poland's oldest University.

I feel confident that this active participation of a representative of Cracow University in celebrations of such high moral significance will be helpful in promoting the establishment of closer spiritual bonds between our nations.

PROF. E. A. ROSS

*Chairman of the Department of
Sociology and Anthropology,
Wiscousin University, U. S. A.*

Personally I have no religion, being content with such light as science sheds, but I recognize that religions will live on into the distant future and may yet play a major rôle in socializing Man. In these days of easy communication and multiplying contacts among peoples, consciousness of race differences becomes more dangerous. Spirit may weave the bonds which prevent the most exterminating of all wars, viz., inter-racial wars.

The only way to prevent religion from being a devastating divider and sunderer of men is to present toleration of religious differences as a sacred obligation, transcending any obligation to make the worship of one's God prevail.

Sunday, March 7—Afternoon Session

PROF. RICHARD C. THURNWALD

University, Berlin (Germany)

I think your idea of honouring Sri Ramakrishna by an international gathering of the kind you have arranged is excellent. Such a manifestation may be particularly appropriate at the present juncture of European and world affairs. It will be desirable indeed that its resonance could carry to all places from which representatives appear.

MUHAMAD HASAN KASHANI

Yezd, Iran

(Original in Persian)

When a few friends arrive at a flower garden, they look at the flowers that adorn the garden and see the flowers in their different colours and shapes.

There is every likelihood that one of them will be attracted by the appearance of the flower, the other by the

sweet smell and the third by the freshness and the special attributes.

But all of them combine equally in the praise of the gardener and surely their attention is drawn to the beauty of the creator of the flowers and the flower garden.

Unhesitatingly from their heart of hearts rises up a praise for Him who is the creator of all.

Sadi, the famous poet of Shiraz (Iran), has in like manner sung his praise of Him—"I am enamoured of the world, for the world is the result of His love.

"I am in love with the whole world for the whole world is from Him."

May the blessing be on the soul of the gardener, Sri Ramakrishna. He brought into shape the flowers, imparted scent to them and combined them all into one unity, namely, the Flower, in the garden of the world.

And those who go deep into the secrets of this wise gardener will feel themselves like dew-drops which every morn may settle on the petals of any one of the flowers and at sunrise evaporate.

Monday, March 8—Morning Session

PROF. HERBERT G. WOOD

Birmingham

I am the more sorry that I cannot be present in the Parliament which is to be connected with the celebration of the first centenary of Sri Ramakrishna. I have never forgotten my first introduction to him and his teaching through an article by Max Müller, which I read when I was still a schoolboy. It was almost my first introduction to the religious thought of India and to the comparative study of religions. I have never lost the feelings of interest in and respect for the person and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna which were then implanted in me.

I am a convinced Christian, and my prayer is that all men may come to the knowledge of God through Christ, but as a Christian I hold in honour a religious leader who can be acclaimed as a prophet of freedom of conscience and inter-racial amity.

DR. F. THIERFELDER

Secretary, Deutsche Akademie (German Academy), Munich

(Original in German)

I have pleasure in informing you that in connection with the reception to be given to the Maharaja of Baroda, the President of our Academy (Prof. Karl Haushofer) will also speak about Ramakrishna and about the Centenary Celebrations. We are happy to see how widely the influence of this philosopher is to be traced and that in all the quarters of the world he has been thought of.

Monday, March 8—Afternoon Session

PROF. OTHMAR SPANN

*Institute of Economics and Sociology,
University of Vienna (Austria)*

(Original in German)

It is an error to believe that there can be a purely empirical investigation. Every so-called induction must be based on a concept of the subject even if it be a hypothetical one. That is why the last methodological root of genuine investigation in the sciences of experience as in other sciences points always to the metaphysical. No science is possible without a metaphysical foundation, at any rate, no science of spiritual phenomena.

PROF. TAN YUAN SHAN

Sino-Indian Cultural Society, Nanking

The crisis through which the world is passing to-day and the yet darker days

that are ahead make it all the more necessary at the present moment to reiterate the message of harmony and oneness in the truth of which Sri Ramakrishna lived, moved and had his being, and which was so eloquently proclaimed to the world by his worthy disciple, the great Swami Vivekananda.

To-day as I remember Sri Ramakrishna my mind flits across a distance of more than two thousand years when

Confucius in China and Buddha in India preached a similar message for the well-being of humanity. The destiny of man has passed through so many changes since then; but its renewal into the creation for him of a happier social order based on universal peace and equality is yet to come, and it will come only when the teachings of those truest servants of humanity are understood and followed by every country in the world.

GREETINGS FROM DELEGATES

The delegates who conveyed to the meeting greetings from their respective countries and communities included: Mr. Ngak-Chhen Rinpoche, Prime Minister to the Tashi Lama (Tibet); Professor Tan Yuan Shan (China); Dr. Peter Boike (U. S. A.); Madame Professor Helene de Willman-Grabowska (Poland); Dr. H. Goetz (Holland); Mr. Yusuf Ahmad Bagdadi (Iraq); Miss Helen Mary Boulnois (South Africa); Mr. Maung Aye Maung (Burma); Mr. J. A. Joseph (Bombay); Dr. R. Ahmed (Moslems of Bengal); Professor Tulsidas Kar (Theosophical Society, Calcutta); Sir Francis Younghusband (London); Mr. D. N. Wadia (the Parsi community); Sardar Jamait Singh (Sikhs); Dr. Sonpar (Deva Samaj, Lahore); Swami Nirvedananda (Ramakrishna Math, Belur); Mr. Devapriya Valisinha (Mahabodhi Society, Calcutta); Swami Paramananda (Vedanta Centre, Boston, U. S. A.); Mr. S. Aiman (General Secretary, Calcutta, National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations in India, Burma and Ceylon); and Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar (International Federation of the Societies and Institutes of Sociology, Paris and Geneva).

A few extracts from the greetings are given below in the order in which they were delivered at the Parliament:

THE SIKHS

On behalf of forty lakhs of brave and noble Sikhs, sons of immortal Guru Govinda, said Sirdar Jamait Singh, he would offer his hearty greetings to the distinguished assemblage. India and the rest of the world had been torn by conflicts and if the spirit of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna would have been imbibed to some extent the differences would have disappeared.

MAHABODHI SOCIETY

Representing the Mahabodhi Society Brahmachâri Devapriya Valisinha said that although the number of Buddhists in this country was not large the number of votaries of Buddhism was the largest in the world. The tenets of Sri Ramakrishna had much in common with those of Lord Buddha.

PARSI COMMUNITY

Mr. D. N. Wadia of Bombay offered cordial greetings to the assemblage on behalf of the followers of Zoroaster whose religion, one of the most ancient



DELEGATES MEET AT CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE ON MARCH 3.

in the world, originated thousands of years ago.

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Prof. Tulsidas Kar of the Theosophical Society of Calcutta said that Theosophy peached at least one of the important teachings of Sri Ramakrishna which said that Religion was one and it should be so for ever. Theosophy stood for bringing about amity among followers of different religions.

THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL

Conveying greetings to the Parliament on behalf of the Muslims of Bengal, Dr. R. Ahmed said, "I bring to this Assembly greetings from the followers of Islam in Bengal. Islam has always prided itself on its spirit of toleration and brotherhood. It is fitting that on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration of that prophet of religious harmony, the followers of all different religions should meet together. Teachings of Ramakrishna have distinctly affected the lives of Muslims of Bengal in various ways. The holding of this Parliament of Religions will cement the friendship between the followers of different religions. Devout Muslims realize that the fundamentals of all religions are one though they may be clothed in various garbs. It is in keeping with the spirit of the times that this Parliament is being held when the world is groping for a synthesis of all religions and cultures.

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

Swami Virajananda, Secretary, sent the following message on behalf of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission :

The presence of the representatives of the different religions of the world in this august assembly reminds us of the historic sittings of the Parliament of Religions held more than 40 years back in the World's Fair at Chicago, when

Swami Vivekananda, the great apostle of Hinduism, took the world by storm by proclaiming unto humanity the universal message of the harmony of faiths received as a spiritual legacy from his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The enthusiasm with which the message was hailed was an unmistakable indication of the growing aspiration of mankind for genuine peace as also of the loving homage paid to the mystic wisdom of the saints and sages of India, so splendidly realized in the life of the Saint of Dakshineswar. The message travelled from land to land, from race to race, and our heart throbs with delight to find that within a short period of time the leading savants of the modern world, realizing the need of the hour as also the greatness of the message, have congregated once again to sing the immortal song of spiritual freedom and usher in a new era of peace and goodwill through mutual understanding and religious concord.

It is indeed a happy sign of the times that at this critical juncture when the blind forces of materialism are threatening to undermine the solidarity of human life and culture, this Parliament of Religions is being held to give an opportunity to the exponents of various systems of thought to understand one another and establish a fellowship of faiths on a basis of mutual love and toleration. We wish the Parliament all success and sincerely believe that the spirit of comradeship which has brought under one canopy the leaders of different faiths from the distant parts of the earth will bind us all into a spiritual fraternity. We fervently pray that this spirit of love may grow evermore in strength and volume and silence once for all the jarring notes of clash and conflict in the modern world.

May Sri Ramakrishna, in whose name this Parliament is being held, give us adequate power to realize the significance of his message and carry the wealth of his spiritual wisdom from door to door and thereby help in the establishment of peace in the collective life of humanity. May his blessings be upon you all for ever and ever!

JEWISH COMMUNITY

J. A. Joseph, Bombay, on behalf of Jewish Community said :

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish and pray for the success of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations and the Parliament of Religions.

BUDDHISTS OF BURMA

Young Burma, said Mr. Maung Aye Maung, hoped to contribute to the freedom, peace and progress of mankind. This is why they offered their tribute of respect to the great saint.

PRIME MINISTER TO THE TASHI LAMA

Mr. Ngak-Chhen Rinpoche, Prime Minister to the Tashi Lama, Tibet, speaking in the Tibetan dialect, said that it had given him great pleasure to be present at the Parliament of Religions. He brought good wishes to the Parliament from all the Buddhists of Tibet under the seat of the holy Tashi Lama. "I heartily wish the Parliament all success in its universal cause in bringing peace, goodwill and happiness to mankind. I offer my blessings to the World Congress on this auspicious occasion of the Centenary Celebration of Ramakrishna, one of the greatest spiritual geniuses of India."

CHINA

Prof. Tan Yuan Shan of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society and National Central Society and National Central Research Institute of Nanking, offered

his good wishes and prayed for the success of the deliberations.

SHAIK ABU NASR GILANI

Gilan, Iran

The foundations of all religions are one and the same. The founders of all the religious systems of the world had and still have this point in view and preach to the people this laudable and praiseworthy fundamental principle underlying every religion.

Therefore, the foundations of all religions are one but structures are only differently made.

Sri Ramakrishna had taught this very principle to the world and all his endeavour had been to bring about a unity in all the religious systems of the world. It is, therefore, incumbent on every human being, of whatever creed he may be, to pray for his soul and to endeavour to establish permanently all the good works done by him for humanity.

IRAQ

Mr. Yusuf Ahmed Bagdadi on behalf of the Mussalmans of Iraq conveyed his best wishes to the Ramakrishna Society and celebrations. Ramakrishna was the last prophet in the world to preach a cosmopolitan religion.

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

Sir Francis Younghusband, in conveying hearty greetings to the Parliament on behalf of the Society for Promoting the Study of Religions, League of Nations Union and Pali Text Society, London, presented a volume containing the minutes of proceedings of the session of the World Congress of Faiths held in London last summer. "I can hardly describe," he said, "the delight with which I personally come here once more to the land of my birth and the great interest with which I am

looking forward to the proceedings of your great Congress, for I have for many years past had the profoundest admiration for that great saint the centenary of whose birth you are celebrating now."

U. S. A.

Dr. Peter Boike on behalf of the Americans said :

I thank you on this greatest occasion in my life for this blessed privilege of being here to bring to you the message and love from the people of America, your brothers and sisters there. It is one of the greatest pleasures of my life to come in contact with the brother followers of Sri Ramakrishna whose blessed memory we all revere this evening.

CRACOW UNIVERSITY (POLAND)

Madame Prof. Helene de William-Grabowska on behalf of the Cracow University (Poland) said :

I thank you for your very kind invitation to this Parliament of Religions. The University is the oldest University in Poland and one of the oldest in Europe. We take pride in sharing your joys and sorrows and we believe in helping each other to bring about a closer relation and friendship between nations, and the University sends best wishes and greetings to the Parliament of Religions.

HOLLAND

Dr. H. Goetz of Holland said that Holland was one of the first countries which had established contact with India and the Leyden University had been a centre of Oriental learning.

SWAMI PARAMANANDA

Vedanta Centre, Boston, Mass.

(U. S. A.)

I am bringing a message, first of all, from the United States of America. As I was to come here to take part in this great and august assembly, the

American people begged me to convey their message just in the same way as the great Swami Vivekananda carried the message of India to U. S. A.

I have brought a message of love and unity, and I believe that this message will serve to build a bridge over the hiatus that stands between man and man. Sri Ramakrishna's life was a living Parliament of Religions. It was and it is a symphony of all idealism and spirituality.

Sri Ramakrishna, through his life and example, has demonstrated that universal religion is not a dream and a possibility, but is a practicable reality. To-day we must realize that because of that great Spirit that stands behind us, because of his benediction and blessing upon us, we are gathered here to-day. May that Infinite One who resides in all hearts bring success to this great assembly.

SOUTH AFRICA

Miss Helen Mary Boulnois said :

It is my most proud privilege to-day to speak to you and to bring you the greetings from your fellow-countrymen—Indians in South Africa. It is hard for you to realize here in your own great land the hunger of their hearts, the hope and love they all cherish for the country which so many of them have never seen. They think of you and they think of this country.

The burning question to-day is this : Can we inherit the great tradition of our forefathers, can we fulfil their daily blessings, can we have the daily realization of the presence of the Lord within us in the hurry and bustle of actual life? The answer is, yes. If every day and night, or just a few minutes, we pray, with the intensity of the whole dynamic life within, to one single and Infinite Source we shall be able to

realize the ideal of our forefathers. Gentlemen, this is their message to you. I know that I can take from every one here before me a similar message to them. I thank you.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, welcomed all the delegates from far and abroad in the name of Sri Ramakrishna and in the name of his world-renowned disciple Swami Vivekananda and offered his greetings to them. Ramakrishna was the consummation of all the prophets, seers and incarnations of divinity that came before him. It was a great opportunity for promoting fellowship among the various faiths and he hoped that this Parliament of Religions would deal a death-blow to all communal strife and struggle.

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE
SOCIETIES AND INSTITUTES OF SOCIOLOGY
(PARIS AND GENEVA)

As delegate from this Federation Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar of the Calcutta University observed that it was not a religious association. Its members were scholars engaged in the study of social relations, social processes, social forms and social developments. The Federation was therefore deeply interested in the deliberations of this International Parliament of Religions. Every leading country of the world was represented on this Federation, and its members comprised anthropologists, psychologists, philosophers and sociologists of all races. By appointing him as the delegate the Federation wished to offer cordial co-operation of the world to the culture-leaders of India as well as to all those savants assembled here, Indian and foreign, who were interested in the investigations into religion as a science, as an art and as a profession.

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gîtâ: "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him ; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me." Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come ; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

—Swami Vivekananda at Chicago.

THE INNER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS*

MRS. SOPHIA WADIA

Friends, Salutations to Sri Ramakrishna in whose name we have gathered to-day. I do not feel it will be an indiscretion to take you into my confidence, and state that I was not to speak this evening but was requested to say a few words to you after this afternoon's session had begun. It would have been ungracious and ungrateful not to submit and not to choose immediately some subject to consider for a few moments, and the subject which seemed to us of tremendous importance was the one of 'The Inner Significance of this World Parliament of Religions.' Its outer significance is known to all of us and is clear to us all. What its inner significance will be will depend upon our own efforts and the change of hearts and the change of attitude which will become ours as we learn from each other and listen to each other, not only with the concentration of our minds but with the sympathy and the understanding of our hearts. One of the messages which was read last evening, the message from India's great leader, Gandhiji, gave us already the idea that each one of us will have to do something to make this Parliament of Religions not only an outer success that it is bound to be, but a true inner success. In sending his wishes to all of us Gandhiji added, "May this Parliament achieve something constructive." Perhaps it seemed unnecessary to state that we should do something constructive and perhaps

some may wonder what more constructive work could we achieve than the one which has already made it possible for all of us to come together on a common platform, to forget for a moment the prejudices and try to understand each other in a true spirit of universal brotherhood.

The inner significance has already been explained by the previous speakers, especially by the one who stated that we lived in this world and therefore identified ourselves with the illusions of the objective world, as also by the last speaker who gave us an exhortation to turn within and announced to us the necessity of understanding the inner side of all things, the inner significance of our own being to begin with. We judge of things or events and actions in terms of the externals. What is wrong with ourselves at the present moment? Why is it that we do not know ourselves as divine and immortal souls? Why do we claim that fraternity must be maintained, that peace must prevail while the world goes on? Because we ourselves evaluate our own duties, our own actions, our words, feelings and thoughts merely in terms of their objective values. To take some simple illustrations: Vain people, men or women, will examine the outward appearance of an individual at the sight of the dress he or she wears or the external appearance, and the same is true of themselves. They also think more of what they appear to others than what they are in reality within themselves. But the soul influence can only

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on Tuesday, March 2—Afternoon Session.

be realized, can only be contacted when we throw away the external valuation. What is it that is wrong? Religion to-day is a disintegrating and destructive force whereas from time immemorial, as stated in the ancient Mahabharata, Dharma or Religion is the unifying power which can link up the whole of the universe in sublime and magnificent unity. That which has happened to religion is what has happened to our own lives in our daily struggle. We think of the outward, and we have forgotten the inward. Religions have become a matter of external ritualistic practices, and the essence is forgotten. The great teachers have pointed out the way and what even the most exalted of saints and sages can do is to point out the way. This Parliament, if more than anything else, has the only purpose and the only objective, i.e. to try to awaken within our own consciousness the recognition that each one of us has to go the path of spiritual realization by his own effort, that we must rely upon ourselves, depend upon ourselves and that it is the earnestness, the purity, the sincerity of our motive in every case which will count. The great ones gave sublime teachings and wonderful inspiration in their own example in the embodiment of the living truth, but

each one of us must make that message in precept and in example part of his own being, must similarly show that living current of spiritual union which has existed and which will continue to exist. Let us therefore unite in the sincere wish to bring our own constructive contribution by our attitude, by our inner understanding, by our desire to learn from each other through this Parliament of Religions, so that its true importance may be increased a thousandfold by the inner change that will come into the lives of those who have participated in these deliberations, and in that task, those who will listen through silence, through their attention, can give us much and perhaps more than those of us who are coming to the platform to voice some feelings and express some sentiments. Let us remember that self-reliance is happiness, outward dependence is misery, and let us end by invoking upon all of us the blessings of the sages who have been and who will be, those great ones who are for us our spiritual fathers and mothers, more than our physical mother and physical father, those great Rishis who are more than wealth, more than possessions, and who are our true seers and our true Gods.

A common man through ignorance considers his own religion to be the best and makes much useless clamour; but when his mind is illumined by true knowledge, all sectarian quarrel disappears.

—Sri Ramakrishna.

THE NEED OF THE MODERN WORLD*

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

Yesterday and to-day you have listened to beautiful speeches accentuating the unity that stands behind the multiplicity of the world. From time to time sages have appeared in different parts of the world, particularly in this land of ours, who have again and again brought before our gaze the underlying unity of the universe. But such is our proneness to evil, such is our forgetfulness, that we have not paid the necessary respect to these great teachings. You remember, as early as the days of the Rig-Veda, a great sage in the depths of his heart realized the eternal Truth and proclaimed in unequivocal language: "Truth is one, sages call it by various names." Now that is the Truth, and it could not be expressed more simply and more directly. But though the same Truth has been reiterated again and again in different lands in different languages in different ways, still we see the present state of things in the world. Buddha gave his wonderful life of purity and renunciation for this world, gave his sublime teachings for us all, and still we see that strife has not vanished from the world. Christ did the same thing. He also laid his life on the Cross, but his grave teachings have not been followed as they should have been. In the same way, other great Prophets and saints have expressed the Eternal Truth in beautiful words, but still we see that this world is not a proper place for decent people to live in. Even before our eyes, in Europe,

as you know, blood is being shed between brothers and brothers, and still we want to say, we are all living in a civilized world. It seems to me it is high time that each of us pays proper attention to those great Truths expressed by the different seers of the world in different ages and try to see where the mistake lies; because at no time of the world's history was there need for unity, for peace and for concerted action towards general betterment than it is now, because now, in this twentieth century, our wants have multiplied, our desires have gone up by leaps and bounds and we are trying to exploit science for the satisfaction of our desires. But just as a powerful gun may protect people's lives against robbers, similarly, in the hands of a person not of a good moral character, in the hands of a ruffian, for instance, that same gun may be a veritable engine of destruction. Therefore in proportion as science is giving us new discoveries, giving us better ways of adding to our comforts, we do not exactly know how we can make use of those advantages. Hence there is more need at the present time of looking over those ancient sayings of our Prophets, the Prophets of all countries, and we must try to see where the mistake lies.

In our age, Sri Ramakrishna, whose Centenary we are celebrating here, gave expression to those noble thoughts which were again and again repeated in this ancient land. This is the purpose for which great personages are incarnated in the world. They pick out from the traditional lore of spirituality those gems that are best suited to the require-

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on Tuesday, March 2—Afternoon Session.



THE CROWD AT THE CALCUTTA TOWN HALL ON MARCH 4

ments of modern times, to remove our obstacles and miseries and take us directly and in the most expeditious manner to Peace and Blessedness. Sri Ramakrishna was perfectly aware of the conditions in the midst of which he was born, and he has left for us all his beautiful message of the harmony of all faiths. Not only that, by his own glorious life of God-intoxication he has shown how every individual, be he a man or be she a woman, ought to live a life here in order to attain the maximum benefit from human existence. Creature-comforts can be had in any birth; probably animals can enjoy sense pleasures much more intensely than human beings can. So it is for man to know something higher, something nobler, something that will be really worth the name, and Sri Ramakrishna, like all the great predecessors of his, has pointedly drawn our attention to the fact that it is not by imitating animals, not by pandering to our propensities, that we are to rise in the scale of existence, but it is by self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, by living for others. In other words, it is not a life of the senses that we are to live, but a life of mergence in God for Peace, or at any rate, a life that will be in direct touch with some aspect of divinity. By this he was not saying anything new, because the Vedânta philosophy, which represents the quintessence of the Vedas and which was preached and promulgated in this land thousands of years ago, has laid the foundation, of which all the scriptures and teachings of different religions have been explanations, as it were. You remember the great words of Sri Krishna, "Whenever irreligion prevails, I manifest Myself," and "Through whatsoever path man approaches Me, I reciprocate that devotion in that very way." In these words there has been laid for us a beautiful

procedure by which we can terminate our miseries, and Sri Ramakrishna, instead of being book-bound—in fact he did not care for books at all—by dint of direct realization exhorted us repeatedly not to care for things of the world, but to find out our relationship with God. He did not believe that man can achieve the highest by living a life of the senses; rather it is by fleeing away from the senses and turning his gaze inwards, that he can see the Eternal Life shining.

The Vedânta philosophy, of which Sri Ramakrishna was the latest exponent, preaches the unity of all existence. No matter how clouded our vision is at the present moment, the Vedânta definitely says that there is no multiplicity of souls. There is but one Âtman, the all-pervading principle. Just as the same sun may be reflected in millions of little water-drops, and each of those reflections may appear to us as little suns, so the same infinite God, call Him Âtman, Brahman or what you will, is reflecting Himself through all this multiplicity of souls, but in reality it is the same one God. There are no two Gods in the universe, and whether we are aware of it or not, there is always an essential union between us and God, because otherwise no power on earth could remove that state of things—no power, no amount of knowledge would unite us with God again. Vedânta, as you know, is a very scientific religion, taking its stand upon the bedrock of realization, the realization of different saints and sages. It has proclaimed that in every one of us there is the capacity to realize Godhead. In other words, for material things, you may have to undergo much labour and exertion, and sometimes your labours end in vain, but in the matter of realization of God, in the long run we are bound to succeed, because it is some-

thing that is already in us. Just as in a room that is screened off there may be many things which we cannot see so long as the screen is there, but if there is a small aperture in the screen, we see part of the contents of the room, and if the aperture increases, or if the screen is entirely removed, then we see those things exactly as they are, similarly with God-realization. In other words, all these blessed qualities for which we aspire—infinite life, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss—are in us already. Only we have forgotten all about them, and the remedy lies in bringing back the knowledge—de-hypnotizing ourselves, as it were. Hence I said, it entails much trouble to acquire things of the outside world, in which one may even fail at the end, but as regards internal realization, realizing our own nature, the result is certain to come. Therefore if we are really sensible of our miserable condition, if we are not satisfied with the present state of things in the world, if we really want to improve the existing conditions, it is up to us to reconsider our position thoroughly and see where we are wrong, and Vedânta says that it is by separating things, by raising walls of division between one class and another class, between one race and another race, that we are suffering so much. Take the case of the Great War, for instance. What was it that caused it? The idea of separateness, which is the product of ignorance. Each nation thought that its existence was at stake—thought that without such and such a possession it could not live in the world. So this war came into the world, and the state of things has not changed an iota even now.

Vedânta asks, where are you seeking eternal happiness, eternal peace, eternal knowledge outside of yourself? Even if you go on doing it, do you

think you will get them at any time? Therefore for the attainment of real peace, Vedânta asks us to turn our gaze inwards. Instead of frittering away our energies in trying to acquire riches which last for a few days only, or to get a little book-learning which will hardly add to our real knowledge, Vedânta asks us to go within ourselves and try to see what is there. It says, just like the musk-deer roaming about in search of the beautiful odour, but finding it nowhere because that odour emanates from the animal itself, we are roaming about here and there in search of little pleasures pertaining to this sense or that sense, simply because we do not know the real source of the joy that drives us maddening onwards. Therefore the proper course of attaining peace, happiness, light and knowledge, is to turn our gaze inwards, to be introspective and to see what is already there. Sri Ramakrishna, in this materialistic age, proved by his wonderful life that the claims of the old religions are not false, rather they are literally true. Those of you who have read the wonderful life of Sri Ramakrishna know how through different paths of practice he came to the same truth, the unity of Godhead, and how armed with that knowledge of realization, he proclaimed that Truth is one, though sages call it by various names. Therefore it is possible for us also, at least partly, to scale some of those heights that Sri Ramakrishna scaled completely in the course of two or three days. The first thing that is necessary is a great yearning for Truth, for real Bliss. At the present moment, we are also yearning for happiness, but not knowing the real source of it, we are seeking it in the outside world. Sri Ramakrishna, like the true seer that he was, pointed out that such happiness cannot last long, that death is the ter-

minus where we must part with everything earthly, and unless we acquire here something which will enable us to overlook the claims of the outside world and make us free, real happiness, real peace, real knowledge can never come to us.

Having got that yearning within us, we must have perfect sincerity. That is the chief condition. We may be born very low in the social scale, we may not have any book-learning or material wealth, but if we have this true sincerity in us, if we have the real thirst for peace and happiness, it will come to us through the realization of God. In other words, it is by sincerely treading the path laid down by the great seers of the world that we can attain that Eternal Truth which they realized for themselves in times past. Another thing on which Sri Ramakrishna laid great stress as a means to realization is non-attachment, detachment from lust and possession. One of the Upanishads says, "Whatever there is in the world must be clothed with God." In other words, instead of seeing a diversity of creatures, only physical bodies separated by a thousand divisions, we must see the unity that is behind them all, the unity of Godhead; and if we are really sincere, if we are really hankering and are not led away by our physical bonds and cravings for things of the senses, God-realization will be an achieved fact for us. It may be even in the shortest possible time. One of the scriptures graphically says that it takes only so much time to realize God, as it would take a mustard-seed to drop from the horn of a cow. We may think that since even our ordinary pursuits demand so much of our time and energy, God-realization being the highest achievement must necessarily require a far greater amount of time and exertion; but Sri Ramakrishna in one of

his beautiful similes says, "If a room has been dark for a thousand years, it does not require another thousand years to remove that darkness. All that we have to do is to strike a match and the darkness vanishes." Similarly, the eternal ignorance that has been keeping us in the dark, that has made us think that we are limited or powerless, can be removed in a moment if we can bring the light of true knowledge. By turning our gaze inwards and by praying to the Âtman sincerely, we can make the Almighty, powerful though He is, to reveal Himself in just that form which appeals to us. There is no hard and fast rule as to which way will suit us all. Sri Ramakrishna's advice is, "Choose your own path according to your inclination and capacity." Choose any path that you like and for which you deem yourself fit. If you persevere, if you are not distracted by mundane things, your search is bound to end in success and even in a shorter time than you imagine. Sri Ramakrishna was an object-lesson of this great Truth. Time and again, while giving discourses on Divinity, he would be lost in a trance or Samâdhi, the highest state of concentration, when one forgets the world. As in a dreamless sleep you forget all about the world, so in that state of supreme absorption, he forgot all about the world; and he declares that it is possible for us to realize that state, provided only we are willing. He says, God hears our prayers, no matter how silently they are uttered, and some day or other, He will reveal Himself to us in accordance with our earnestness and sincerity.

Thus he has given us a message of great hope and encouragement. We need not think that we are despicable or low. Banish those words from your dictionary. It is you yourself who attach importance to

sin. You are the children of God. You cannot be sinners. It is a sin to call yourselves sinners. That is the proper attitude according to Vedânta, and if we really aspire after Truth we must take our stand upon the basic unity of God, and armed with that knowledge, we may go boldly into the outside world again, to serve mankind in different ways. That is the explanation of the great lives of personages like Christ and Buddha. Their humanity was entirely gone, only divinity remained. But that faculty of achieving union with God has not ended with them. In fact, our scriptures say that there will be more Incarnations. We can realize for ourselves the eternal oneness with God and translate the same to the service of mankind. This is the secret of the great power of the Christs and Buddhas of the world. How is it that an ordinary man can move even a mountain? This essential union with Godhead is the secret of power. In the ocean there are little waves and each wave is different from the others; but when the wave loses its identity in the ocean, merges itself in the ocean, it becomes the ocean; similarly, we who consider ourselves as little souls, can melt our ego in the great Ocean of Divinity, a substratum that is always behind us, from which we can re-emerge possessed of superhuman power. At that time, even if we were ignorant before, we shall come out transfigured as sages. Then our words will have power enough to move mountains. Therefore, no matter how unpropitious our present circumstances seem to be, let us never lose courage, let us always struggle on and on.

Those periods during which we strive for little things, without knowing the real source of peace, are lost to us, whereas even a little effort for the reali-

zation of our own nature is fraught with the greatest consequences to ourselves and others, for it helps thousands of weary souls to cross this ocean of misery. Therefore my prayer to you is,—have that knowledge which comes of the realization of your own self, and with that inspired vision of a Rishi come out into the world and try to remove the misery that you see everywhere. Through you wonderful things will then be done; but till that blessed moment comes, let us not slacken our energies. Let us think within ourselves that others have finished their part in the world, and we alone are the persons that are yet to do their part in this great task. With that belief and a firm faith in ourselves that we are the children of the Almighty, that we are eternally one with Him, let us proceed for the amelioration of the condition of the world. Let us first realize God in our own selves, and out of that realization will come infinite power—power that will move the world. Then only will our eyes be illumined, and we shall see the greatness of all scriptures of all faiths, and understand that it is we ourselves who misinterpreted them. Therefore, while there is life in us, let us make a determined effort to realize the great God that is always united with us, that has never been away from us, and then coming out into the world, let us share the results, the successes, with everyone that is on the face of the earth. Let us then be prepared like Buddha to lay down our lives for the sake of a little kid, for we shall feel no difference between ourselves and the kid. God will be both inside us and outside us. Even misery will vanish. It will all be a divine play in which we are to join. May God help us to achieve

this in this very life, may He give us the necessary patience and perseverance, purity and determination to carry out this object. Through His grace

may we be helpers in removing misery from the world in the best way possible, so that it will be gone for ever, and not merely temporarily relieved.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND UNIVERSAL RELIGION*

SWAMI NIRVEDANANDA

With my heartiest greetings of love and goodwill and my respectful obeisance to you all who have assembled here on this sacred, solemn and historic occasion, let me address you very briefly on Sri Ramakrishna and Universal Religion.

One needs hardly say anything by way of introducing Sri Ramakrishna to you. You know very well how India, from one end to the other, is being stirred up to revive her ancient cultural ideals by the momentous influence of the inspiring life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. And you also know that this benign influence has travelled far beyond the borders of this land.

In spite of the fact that to the vast mass of humanity residing outside this land India means little more than a tiny outline on the world's atlas, in spite of the fact that to some of the foreigners India still appears to be only a land of dark savages who have yet to be reclaimed, taught to stand and walk like human beings, it is significant to notice that during the last twelve months some of the towering intellectuals of the modern world together with hundreds of seekers of truth and peace have rallied enthusiastically round the birth Centenary of a poor, barely literate Brahmin priest of the 19th century belonging to an out-of-the-way village of India.

Obviously, there must be something in Sri Ramakrishna that has its appeal for all men of all countries. In and through the language of his life must have been expressed some universal, soul-stirring ideas and ideals that pierce through the hard crust of creed and colour obsessions and reach the very core of the heart of humanity. The late lamented French savant, Dr. Sylvain Levi, was perfectly right when he said, "As Ramakrishna's life and mind were for all men and all countries his name too is a common property of mankind."

Of course, opinions may differ with regard to the exact position of Sri Ramakrishna in the hierarchy of the world's saints and seers. Some may regard him as a great mystic, some as a saviour of humanity, some even as an Incarnation of God. Whatever be the merits of each of these different readings, it is clear that Sri Ramakrishna with his brilliant life of spiritual realization is recognized by all as one of the galaxy of perfected souls illuminating the path of spiritual evolution of the human race. There is very little doubt about the fact that breaking through the gathering clouds of scepticism and sectarianism Sri Ramakrishna has burst forth like a fresh and very big luminary on the spiritual firmament of the world. Now instead of trying to determine the exact position and magnitude of this luminary, let us make use of its light in reading the import of the spiritual lessons handed

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on Wednesday, March 8—Afternoon Session.

down to us by the great spiritual masters of old.

Humanity, for sustaining its religious beliefs, requires now, more urgently than at any other time, a fresh, clear and convincing demonstration of the spiritual verities of life and existence. And this is precisely what Sri Ramakrishna's intensely spiritual life has presented to the world at the present critical moment of its religious history.

We all know how human civilization at the present moment is passing through a precarious phase of transition. The old order of things is changing very fast. Ancient ideas and ideals are crumbling into dust. The traditional authority of prophets, scriptures, and churches is being challenged and almost cornered every day by incontrovertible findings of science and heretical verdicts of untrammelled reason. Indeed, religion to-day has to face and pass through the ordeal of critical enquiry, else it will have to hide its existence in the archives of the archæological museum. There is no other alternative. People are now apt to believe that scientific investigations will succeed in unravelling all the mysteries of nature and philosophical speculations will be able to interpret these findings and ascertain the plan, purpose and reality behind creation. Hence, they look upon religion as a useless product of the dark days of human ignorance. In it they find nothing but bundles of irrational dogmas and meaningless rituals that are concerned more with imaginary and hypothetical worlds than the real and throbbing world before us. Naturally, they are not in a mood to accommodate such religion in their society except, of course, as an interesting relic of the barbarous past.

Surely, there is quite a large number of people who still claim to have some sort of faith in religion. But, unfortu-

nately, most of these fundamentalists have very little insight into the fundamentals of religion. We seem to care more for the externals than the essentials of religion. A little routine-work, some study and a good deal of tall talks compose what most of us call religion. And we are divided into numerous groups, each under a specific church with a strictly circumscribed faith. And each group claims to have the monopoly of the right form of religion. Thus losing sight of the deeper, broader, universal basic elements of religion, and becoming narrow, exclusive and sectarian in its outlook, the theistic section of humanity is divided hopelessly into numerous hostile camps.

Thus so far as religion is concerned, human civilization is about to be torn to pieces by the forces of scepticism on the one side and sectarianism on the other. Like religion, every other element of the social structure is being shocked terribly by the tremendous and reckless battering of free-thinking upon tradition. The traditional codes of morality also are in immediate danger of being swept absolutely out of existence. People appear to be seized by a craze for something novel, something daring, —no matter how preposterous or shocking that may be. There is, for instance, an insistent demand from certain quarters that unfettered sexual freedom should be made the rule of human life. There are some, who are trying seriously to see if mankind may go without clothes. In the political and economic fields there is hardly any room for God, morality or philanthropy. Fight, competition, exploitation carried on in the name of divergent conflicting group-interests are reducing the entire world into a permanent war-zone. Thus equating the entire experience of the past to zero, we are making everything about us in

every compartment of our social life shaky, confused and chaotic. Who knows if we are not rushing at a frantic speed by a downward curve of evolution? Who knows if the beast-in-man released from traditional bonds of religion and morality has not suddenly jumped out to enjoy a holiday?

This, in short, is the world in which Sri Ramakrishna has appeared as the exact antithesis of all that we see about us. He gave values to those very things that the modern world is trying to ignore and set aside. And this is precisely why, though he had neither wealth, nor academic distinction, nor power and prestige in the temporal sense, he grew up to a stature that is becoming visible from the farthest corner of the earth.

Religion was the breath of his life, morality his backbone. In his perspective, realization of God appeared to be the worthiest object of human life; purity and devotion, love and humility, selflessness and service appeared to be the real wealth of man far superior in value to anything that the external world could give. And he developed all these to a unique degree of perfection. Through both his body and mind he has left a brilliant record of God-intoxication, spotless purity and surging love for humanity.

With a mind broad as the sky, deep as the ocean and pure as a crystal he plumbed the depths of spiritual truths, and demonstrated one by one by his intuitive experience the truths behind the entire wisdom of the past taught by the world's ancient seers and prophets. He realized God as the nameless, formless, transcendental Absolute. The primary underlying substratum sustaining the universe instead of being merely a construction of philosophical speculation, mathe-

matical abstraction or poetic imagination was with him a hard, tangible, living fact of direct experience. Then he realized that the entire diversity of appearances that we call nature was nothing but a manifestation of the same Impersonal God. Thus before his spiritual vision did unfold the majestic and magnificent oneness of the universe towards which all sciences and all philosophies are surely and steadily converging,—oneness, that alone can furnish the concepts of equality and fraternity with a rationale and provide the world with a firm basis for the much-needed edifice of universal brotherhood. Then again he realized through a multitude of spiritual visions that the same Impersonal God does appear as Personal God with various names and various forms before the immaculate minds of earnest devotees.

Then, standing on the bed-rock of his rich and varied experience, he declared with all the emphasis that he could command that all creeds, Hindu, Islamic, Christian or of any other denomination, based on monism, qualified monism or dualism, are so many distinct paths leading alike to the same goal, namely, the realization of God, the Final Cause of the universe, who is one and the same in spite of innumerable varieties of spiritual visions.

This truth was declared by the Vedic seers in the pre-historic era of human civilization when they chanted **एकं सद्भिप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति** "Truth is one, sages call it by various names." Since then, the spiritual heart of the Hindus has been tuned to religious catholicism. And whenever the mass-mind swayed by blind impulses tended to be narrow and exclusive, mighty spiritual seers have appeared in this land to reiterate the message of universalism in religion. And Sri Ramakrishna, the latest of

this brilliant group, has become conspicuous by preaching the same truth of Universal Religion not only to the different sects of the Hindus but also to all the religious communities of the world.

Undoubtedly time is now ripe for realizing this message of Universal Religion. By the wonderful achievements of science the world has already been compressed into a small and compact mass. Secular knowledge augmented by contributions pouring in from different quarters of the globe has already stepped out of esoteric seclusion. It is high time that spiritual knowledge also should be immediately delivered out of all ruts of communal and sectarian exclusiveness.

Modern knowledge has made it perfectly clear that unity in diversity is the very keynote of nature's music. Sri Ramakrishna -observed the operation of this law even in the realm of religion. In spite of the varieties of skulls and complexions, the same human heart is beating with the same rhythm all over the world. And for the growth, expansion and illumination of the human heart, Sri Ramakrishna observed the same set of essentials in the basic structure of every form of religion. Just as the same group of essential ingredients is assimilated through innumerable varieties of physical food, just as the same thoughts and sentiments are expressed through hundreds of languages and dialects, so the same group of spiritual truths is served to humanity through numerous sets of symbologies. Beneath the superficial crusts of dogmas, mythologies and rituals, Sri Ramakrishna observed the

same kernel of spiritual truth. Surely, devotion and purity, love and humility, selflessness and service, search for God and resignation to the Divine Will are things valued equally by all pious souls, no matter to what particular churches they may happen to belong.

Indeed, Sri Ramakrishna's life inspires us to hush all notes of discord by emphasizing this central unity and making room for all the varieties of creeds that add to the beauty, richness, strength and grandeur of the House of Religion. His life inspires us to remain strictly loyal to our individual churches and yet embrace the followers of all other creeds as fellow-pilgrims on the path of Blessedness. It inspires us to integrate in this way all the religious forces of the world and direct the same to deliver human civilization from the catastrophic consequence of its present confusion of cultural ideals.

Indeed, the more will humanity realize the import of Sri Ramakrishna's contributions, the more clearly will it see that with his life has opened a new chapter of our religious history. His life appears to be a symbolic suggestion of a new era when all sect-bound thoughts will be released, all narrowness and bigotry will disappear, when religion will be comprehended in terms of universal humanity and all the varying notes issuing out of the different creeds of the world will combine to form a magnificent and undreamt-of Harmony of Religions. May God grant us the necessary strength, vision and urge for expediting the advent of the glorious era of Universal Religion, Universal Brotherhood, Universal Love, Harmony and Peace.

UNITY OF RELIGIONS*

BY SWAMI VISWANANDA

The primitive man must have been overawed by the very magnitude of the universe. The civilized man is struck by the reign of law in the different departments of nature. The terrible exactness with which the sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, seasons follow one another, and thousands and one phenomena cannot but convince a rational being that there is supreme intelligence behind the administration of the universe. I am not going to speak to you on the genesis of religious consciousness. I am going to speak to you a few words on unity of religions. The need of the hour is to discover the golden thread running through all the religions where we can exchange the ideals of different faiths just as we exchange commodity in the market.

I shall be a man dissatisfied rather than a pig satisfied; I shall be a Socrates dissatisfied rather than a fool satisfied. Reason and intellect are the two special attributes which can lead a man to certain heights but he cannot be satisfied until and unless he has known the First Cause, the ultimate Reality which is the explanation of all that is going about him, which is the source of the universe. All the great religions of the world are founded on the experience and realization of individuals, or groups of individuals who claim that they have known this First Cause, that they have seen God face to face. This effort to know the Unknowable, to realize the Reality

is the very core of all religions. In this age of Empiricism and Positivism, in this age of Atheism and Agnosticism there was born a man in this country in whose name this Parliament of Religions has been convened—Sri Ramakrishna, who claimed to have seen God, to have conversed with Him, to have established relationship with Him. It was a hard job for Sri Ramakrishna to convince a robust rationalist and full-blooded Spenserian like Vivekananda that he had seen God and conversed with Him. Not content with the realization of Samâdhi, Ramakrishna wanted to know what truth there was in other religions. He was like a glutton who was never satisfied with a few dishes: he wanted to taste more and more. He became a Christian, he became a Mahomedan and by practising those religions he came to the same realization as he had found through Hinduism. It is therefore in the fitness of things that a Parliament of Religions should be convened in his name.

If we study the different religions of the world we would find that every religion has three aspects, philosophical, mythological and ritualistic. In philosophy, in their fundamental, basic principles all the religions are almost the same. But this religion in the hands of narrow-minded bigots and fanatics becomes an engine of oppression. It is religion that has created all that is beautiful, all that is sublime in human civilization; it is religion again that has destroyed them. It is religion that has created love, brotherliness even for the most distant peoples of the earth. And it is religion again that makes a

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on Friday, March 5—Afternoon Session.

man behave like a ferocious brute, even with his neighbour. But those who have tasted the kernel of religion, it was they who, in this destructive world torn by hatred and dissension, show love, sympathy and compassion and assure the world that in their philosophy, all religions are almost the same. So it is that in fundamentals, in basic principles, all religions are almost one. All the prophets and messengers of light

claim to have gone to a height where they held communion with God which Vivekananda described as a state of superconsciousness. It is only when we come to the mythological and ritualistic aspect of religion that we create differences and dissensions.

Let us try to go to the fundamentals and basic principles of all religions and march onward and Godward with charity for all and malice towards none.

DIVERSITY IN UNITY*

BY JEAN HERBERT

For many centuries, the noblest and most far-seeing spiritual leaders of mankind have been urging us to see "Unity in Diversity." And it is largely under their visible or invisible influence that men have been gathering into groups always more numerous, centring round some ideal, whether religious, national, political or other. Without that tendency, man could never have achieved the progress of which we may justly be proud.

But as groups are getting stronger, better organized, more numerous, as efforts are now being made for uniting, cementing, synthesizing, internationalizing *gradually*, we come to a position which is fraught with ever greater dangers. Instead of the small and more or less harmless wars between small local rulers, we saw nations fighting ruthlessly against nations, we saw world-wars in which men were killed or wounded by crores. Instead of the bitter political strifes which were kept inside the boundaries of one small state, of one city, we see internal war now reaching beyond the frontiers of one country,

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on Saturday, March 6—Morning Session.

and the situation in Spain is a grave warning of the dangers of the internationalization of political parties.

The great teaching "Unity in Diversity" is being distorted and often used only as a cover for greed of power, as a euphemism for "L'Union fait la force." It is becoming more and more dangerous, more and more insufficient. More and more we are thinking in terms of groups of units, and not in terms of units or in terms of the whole. Instead of "world," we now use the awful word "international."

Really, substantially, there is for man only one natural group : mankind. And there is only one natural unit: individual man. All the classifications, divisions and sub-divisions, between the unit and the whole, all churches, parties, nations, groups of all sorts, whether newly invented, like nations, or sanctified by time, like religions, are artificial, and correspond to nothing real. A man is a man, and a member of mankind, and nothing else.

Whatever other tag you may put on him it is artificial and arbitrary. The tag may be useful, and often is, but it is only a tag. We should never look upon

it as God-given, we should never worship it more highly than we do man or mankind. When we fall into that mistake, we see our brother-men who happen to wear different racial or national or political or religious tags as competitors, as enemies. Let us keep and use the tags, let us not be deluded by them.

The time has come to go one step further, and no longer to see "Unity progressively installed in Diversity", but to see "Unity" as the first and only

reality and to see "Diversity" as radiating from Unity, as a manifestation of Unity. Then we shall be able to classify and divide as we like without danger. Then we shall get away from the exclusive allegiance to one idea which is at the root of all fanaticism, and we shall merrily owe allegiance simultaneously to many groups: one national, one racial, one religious, one political, &c. And the more the frontiers of each group differ from those of the others, the less the danger of becoming fanatical and homicidal.

THE SCOPE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS*

BY PROF. BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

(*Secretary, Parliament of Religions*)

We have now gone through over fifty per cent of the programme. It is obvious to everybody that the Chairmen of the different sessions have come from the remote corners of the world and that they represent not only diverse regions but diverse races and diverse religions as well. The papers that have been read as well as the lectures delivered up till now exhibit likewise the diversity and multiplicity of the Parliament's interests and the profoundly cosmopolitan or international character of its outlook.

At this stage it may be relevant for the audience as well as the world of culture beyond the four walls of this great Hall to get an idea of the scope that the organizers of this Parliament of Religions have had in view while inviting the different provinces of India as well as the different countries of the two Hemispheres to take part in the

proceedings of this International Congress. The present Parliament does not seek to establish a universal religion such as might be acceptable to all and sundry. Nor does the present Parliament propose to formulate schemes of world-peace through religious and allied programmes. It is not within the objectives of the present Parliament, therefore, to pass any resolutions or suggest any recommendations in regard to religious toleration, social reform, human brotherhood, class-solidarity or international fellowship.

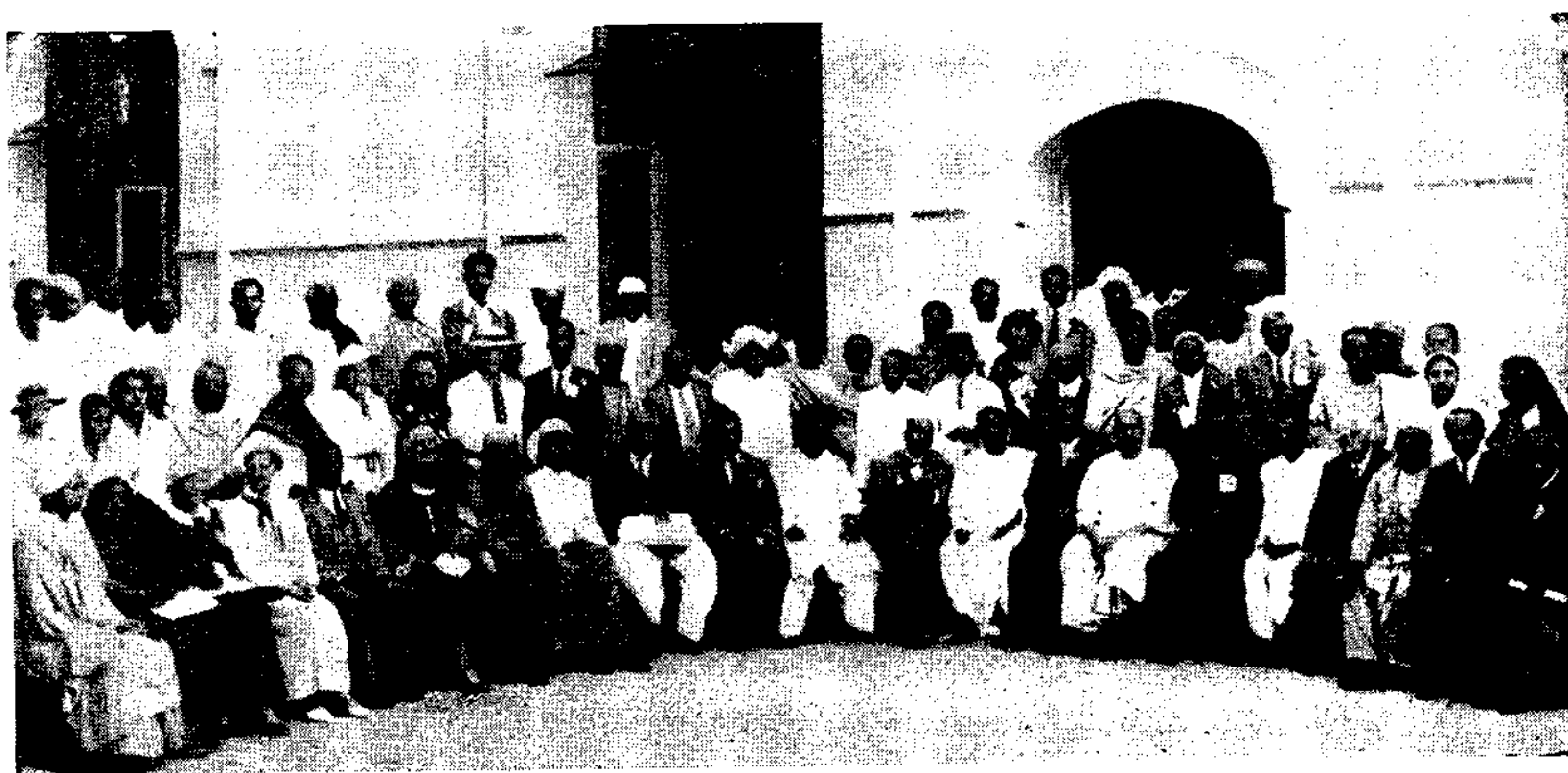
The Parliament of Religions, convened at Calcutta under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, aims to function simply as the exchange or clearing-house of contemporary ideas on religion, morality, social welfare and human progress. Nothing more than being a mere medium for the ventilation of thoughts and opinions on what Ramakrishna would have called *mats* (faiths) and *paths* (ways) has been considered to

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on March 6—Afternoon Session.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE GATHERING AT THE TOWN HALL AT ONE OF THE SESSIONS
OF THE PARLIAMENT

By courtesy of Sachitra Bharat



A GROUP PHOTO OF THE DELEGATES AND OTHER GUESTS ENTERTAINED AT TEA
AT THE GRAND HOTEL BY THE RAMAKRISHNA MEDICAL EDUCATION SOCIETY

By courtesy of Sachitra Bharat

be the function of this Parliament as conceived by the conveners.

The chairmen, the delegates, the paper-writers and the speakers can, then, be classified into several groups. In the first place may be mentioned those to whom religion, morality, spiritual life, and indeed all the highest concerns of man, theoretical or applied, are topics of scientific study. They are generally described as anthropologists, psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, metaphysicians and researchers into ethics or human *mores*. No matter what their *personal* religious views or their faiths by *birth* they are in one word fundamentally the scientists of religion.

The second group comprises those who are the exponents of the established or well-known religions of the world. They may be described as contributing to this Parliament the wealth of the tradition to which the men and the women of all races have been used for centuries. In many instances the faiths and *mores* described happen to be the personal faiths and *mores* of the writers or the speakers.

Then there is another group which is made up of those who wish to see religion take a practical shape. And this practical shape they find as a rule in what is generally known as social work, organized philanthropy, social service and so forth.

The fourth group of writers and speakers at this Parliament has likewise practical aims. They are the religious and social reformers of varied types. In their estimation the establishment of a better world-order, the promotion of amity between the races, the awakening of a new moral and spiritual sense in individual life, the

organization of international brotherhood, the furthering of solidarity between the diverse classes, and the removal of barriers between the castes, the races, etc. in every nation ought to constitute the chief urge in religious activity.

Last but not least, the present Parliament is privileged to have the co-operation of the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order. They have mustered strong, coming as they do from South India and Western India as well as the numerous centres of this Mission in India and abroad, nay, from North and South America. They are all, each and one of them, *karma-yogins* (activists and energists), consecrated to social service of the most varied forms. They are to be described also as *bhakti-yogins*, practising as they do meditation, prayer, and other devotional exercises. But what is of special importance for this Parliament is that all of them are profound *jnana-yogins* (intellectuals) as well. They are students of psychology, ethics, metaphysics, philosophy, sociology and history. And they are liberal and tolerant enough in their religious and philosophical discussions to practise the democratic dictum of their great Master by believing that "every faith is a path to God."

The Parliament of Religions is not identified with any one of the views already adumbrated or likely to be adumbrated in this Hall. But it cordially calls upon the audience, the delegates and other participants to bestow their interest, attention and patience on all the faiths and all the ways, old and new, traditional and futuristic, such as form the subject matter of the papers and speeches.

THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT*

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

When more than fifty years ago I came to Calcutta in the eighties of the last century to study in a college, the saint Sri Ramakrishna was still living and it was still possible to see him and hear his inspiring words from his own lips. But I was never so blessed as to come into contact with him. So I cannot say anything about him from direct personal knowledge. Nor am I qualified to discourse on any theological, philosophical or scriptural subject. But as my name has been included among the speakers this evening, I am constrained to say something. With great diffidence I propose to place before you briefly the result of self-examination caused by Sri Ramakrishna's teaching, "jata mat tata path." This saying of his has been variously translated, the meaning being, "As many faiths, doctrines, opinions or views, so many paths to the goal of Moksha, emancipation, liberation, salvation, God-vision, or Self-realization."

As I never had the privilege to learn the exact interpretation of this teaching from him or from any of his direct disciples, I shall refrain from any exposition of it.

As the Supreme Spirit is infinite, and His truth is infinite, it is obvious that no man can thoroughly know Him and comprehend Him. There are countless aspects of Him and His truth, and, therefore, countless approaches, too, to Him and His truth. These are contained, though not exhaustively, in the scriptures of the various religions of the

world and the sayings of its saints, sages, seers and prophets. The reference in Sri Ramakrishna's teaching, "jata mat tata path," is to these. So the discovery of the paths implies serious study, meditation and spiritual discipline. Of course, if a man is himself an earnest Sâdhaka, he may also himself discover a path to the goal in the light vouchsafed to him in response to his strenuous spiritual quest. Such quest also implies spiritual endeavour and discipline.

But if one takes the Paramahansa's words light-heartedly, as many of us unhappily are apt to do, such light-heartedness must involve great moral and spiritual danger. Many of us appear to think that, as in the opinion of the Paramahansa all religions are true, it is enough for a man's salvation to be merely born a Hindu, a Jaina, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Jew, a Confucian, a Taoist, a Shintoist, a Christian, a Musalman, a Sikh, a Brahmo or an Arya Samajist, or born in some other more recent religious community and simply profess to be one, to reach the goal of Moksha, salvation or liberation. If that were so, why did even Sri Ramakrishna himself, blessed as he was from childhood with such a highly spiritual nature, go through such Sadhana and put himself to such severe self-discipline? It may be said indeed that, as he was born a Hindu but wanted to realize in full the truth of Christianity, Islam and some other faiths, it was necessary for him to undergo the requisite self-imposed discipline. But almost all the austerities he underwent and the very difficult courses of Sadhana which he went

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on March 6—Evening Session.

through were meant for the perfect realization of the ideal of Hinduism itself in which he was born. Pandit Sivanath Sastri, an Âchârya or minister of the Brahmo Samaj who knew and loved and revered him, has related in his work, *Men I have Seen*, some of the Paramahansa's "extraordinary penances and austerities" by which, in the Pandit's opinion, the saint "had attained a state of perfection the like of which was seldom seen." The Pandit has also written of him: "The impression left in my mind, by intercourse with him, was, that I had seldom come across any other man in whom the hunger and thirst for spiritual life was so great and who had gone through so many privations and sufferings for the practice of religion. Secondly, I was convinced that he was no longer a Sâdhaka or a devotee under exercise, but was a Siddha Purusha or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth."

The example of Sri Ramakrishna shows that it is not enough to be born in any religious community and to pay lip homage to it. It is necessary to realize its ideal or ideals by external and internal discipline, and also to realize the ideals of other religions by needful Sâdhanâ—though for the generality of men it is not possible to do what he did. Therefore his saying, "jata mat tata path," "as many faiths or opinions, so many paths to the goal," was not meant to produce in us easy-going and smug self-satisfaction, the mother of intellectual and spiritual indolence and indifferentism. Whether one

is a householder or a Sannyâsi, one must undergo self-discipline.

Every freak of fancy, every aberration of the intellect and every perversion of some sacred doctrine is not entitled to the dignity of the name of "mat" in the sense of faith. Readers of the ennobling life-story of Sri Ramakrishna's helpmate, the Mother Sri Saradamani Devi, know the incident of her undertaking one of her two days' journeys on foot from her home at Kamarpukur to Dakshineswar to meet her husband and, in its course, of her meeting a robber in the midst of an extensive lonesome tract of land where there was a "shrine" where murderous robbers offered human sacrifice and went forth in search of victims to plunder and slay. The robber and his wife came under the influence of the Mother and the Saint, ceased to be what they were before, and were spiritually re-born. We may take it that the erstwhile robber and his wife did not deceive themselves by thinking that the cult of human sacrifice and pillage was also a "faith" showing "a path to the goal," though it was followed in all countries in some period of their history or other and is still practised on a large scale by civilized races in the form of aggressive warfare and prayers for success therein.

This is an extreme example. But I venture to think that many of the opinions by which we, worldly men, often support our conduct in some religious and other matters do not deserve to be called "faiths" indicating paths to the goal of Realization of the Self.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS*

SARAT CHANDRA BOSE, BAR-AT-LAW.

I have been asked to say a few words on the "Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna." It is a subject on which I do not feel competent enough to speak. I shall, however, endeavour to place before you what I consider to be the most significant of all his teachings. His teachings and sayings have been printed in book form. They have also been translated into different languages spoken by the different civilized nations of the world and are more or less available to all of us.

This great teacher was Bengal's contribution to the world in the last century. Everybody knows that a century back he was born among us and half a century back he left us. We and the rest of the world came under the influence of his teachings during his earthly pilgrimage and even more so, after he had completed his journey.

The Swami Vivekananda interpreted the teachings of his Master from various standpoints. The great Max Müller also interpreted him. And only the other day, the greatest scholar of our times, Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, interpreted him in his address as President of this historic gathering.

To all these interpretations it is difficult to add anything new.

To my mind, Sri Ramakrishna's mode of approach to different systems of worship inculcated in the different religions of the world is his special contribution to the history of the progress of religions in the present age.

Raja Rammohan was undoubtedly the first among our scholars to make a comparative study of the different systems of religion. He is rightly called the "father of the Science of Religion." In the study of this particular branch of knowledge Rammohan wanted to find out the common factors of the different religions. In the comparative study of Rammohan, one can find the successive stages of the growth and degeneration of each particular religion. He adopted the process of elimination of the lower stages of each religion. Therefore, it was no wonder to hear from him "Hence falsehood is common to all religions without distinction."

Now let us turn to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He approached the different systems of religion not as a scholar like Rammohan but as a devotee. His objective was to realize God in and through the peculiar methods of worship in different religions. He made strenuous attempts to achieve this end. And he *did realize* God through each and every religion he practised. He practised Hinduism of different types as also Islam and Christianity. He passed through all the stages of each religion. He did not eliminate a single stage and he came to the conclusion: "Every religion is true." His teachings should not be confounded with the teaching that "There is truth in every religion"—which was probably the opinion of Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen.

If Rammohan taught us the *science* of religion, Sri Ramakrishna taught us

* Lecture delivered at the Parliament of Religions, Town Hall, Calcutta, on March 8—Afternoon Session.

the *art* of God-realization in and through the multifarious practices of each religion. This, in my humble opinion, is the distinction between the teachings of the two great teachers of religion that Bengal gave birth to in the first and in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings did not disturb a single religion of the world. Unlike other great teachers of religion he did not create a new religion of his own. He left no new religion as his legacy unto us. He did not ask anybody to change his religion with a view to realize God. He did not consider it necessary for him to do so. His method was entirely different, wonderfully original. His teachings prove that each religion gives ample scope and opportunity to realize God. That was the distinctive peculiarity of his teachings. Towards the end of his sojourn in this world Swami Premananda heard him pray, "Mother, do not let me become famous by leading those who believe in beliefs! Do not expound beliefs through my voice."

If we trace the history of the development of Sri Ramakrishna's mind, we find that, at the very beginning, the influence of that great woman of East Bengal, called Bhairavi Brahmani, acted like a miracle on the young devotee Ramakrishna. About this great woman, the Swami Vivekananda said, "She was not only learned but was the embodiment of learning. She was

learning itself in human form." "And hers was the first help he (Sri Ramakrishna) received." We find that this Bhairavi taught Sri Ramakrishna the practices of no less than 64 different Tantras and along with it the realization of different "Rasas" of Bengal Vaishnavism of the Chaitanya cult. Sâkta and Vaishnava are the two great sectarian religions of Bengal. In theory and practice, in fact, on many points they contradict each other. But Sri Ramakrishna had easy access to his goal even through these two entirely different systems of religion. The Bhairavi Brahmani certainly helped him to perform what seemed to be an impossible task. I am afraid the Sri Ramakrishna literature has not done sufficient justice to this great Bhairavi of East Bengal.

The votaries of different religions have had many battles against one another, not always to their credit, and at times to their shame. We learn from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that the followers of one religion have no reason whatever to fight against the followers of another religion for the sake of realizing God. It is a teaching of tremendous significance in modern Bengal and in modern India. May I hope and pray that the significance of this teaching of one who embraced within him the whole multiplicity of men and the whole multiplicity of Gods will be realized more and more in the days to come?

RELIGION, SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL*

BY PROF. BENOY KUMAR SARKAR, University, Calcutta

While discussing the problems and methods of futuristic reconstruction in the domain of religion it would be quite worth while to orient ourselves to some of the factual and objective realities in the modern religions of the world. The most outstanding fact of the present day is to be found in the remarkable progress of mankind in the religious consciousness. The growth and expansion of liberalism, toleration and wide-awakeness have to be recognized as some of the profoundest ingredients in the actual religious behaviour and sentiments of nations. Mankind is to-day more religious, more tolerant, more spiritual and more appreciative than it ever was.

Even half a century ago, say, about the time that the Parliament of Religions was convened at Chicago (1893) the Christian was exclusively a Christian and hardly anything else. During those days the Moslem was likewise merely Moslem and Moslem only. It was difficult, nay, impossible for him to be at the same time something other than Moslem. The psychological attitudes of the Hindu were similar. The Hindu was nothing but Hindu.

But in the course of the last fifty years the religious ideologies and orientations of men and women in the East and the West have undergone a considerable transformation. To-day the Christian Bible is quoted in season and out of season by the Buddhists, the Zoroastrians, the Moslems and the Hindus. The Chinese "Taote-ching" and the Indian "Gita", on the other

hand, constitute the daily food of hundreds of thousands of Germans, French, Italians, Englishmen and Americans. And the Hindus are likewise inclined to cite verses from the "Koran" in the interest of their day-to-day moral life. The appreciation of other peoples' faiths, sacred books and inspiring messages constitutes the most abiding fact in the psycho-social "milieu" of the last generation or so. The Hindu has grown into the Christian and the Moslem just as the Christian and the Moslem have grown into the Hindu. Without formal conversion or even consciousness as to the fact of the change the silent absorption of other faiths by men and women in the different corners of the globe is a stupendous reality of the modern religions.

The second great reality is to be observed in the methods by which this tremendous transformation,—this mutual conversion on an international scale—has been consummated. The Christian has deliberately and self-consciously chosen to translate and assimilate the non-Christian texts for his own moral and spiritual expansion. The attempts of the Hindu to imbibe life-building forces from the non-Hindu world are no less deliberate and purposive. And so on with the Confucianists, Mussalmans, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and others.

The process seems to be confined formally to the literary, æsthetic, nay, archeological, philological, and anthropological fields. But the impact of these innocent intellectual and scientific interests on the religious and deeply spiritual foundations of the investiga-

* Address on Monday, March 8, 1937, Afternoon Session.

tors, researchers and scientists and on large groups of their countrymen has been revolutionary. The Christian has been trying in a conscious manner to change his tradition, modify his society and transform his past, and add something new to his inheritances. In the Hindu world also the efforts to improve upon the past, the society, and the tradition and to re-create the moral and social surroundings, are equally patent.

During all these years mankind has been functioning both in the East and the West as the re-creator of its heritage. It is the purposive, goalful and self-determined initiative of individual men and women endowed as they are with creative intelligence and will that has been prominent in the psychosocial remakings of recent years. Man has been rising to the full stature of his spiritual being by refusing to allow the society and the tradition, embodying as they do the past, to shape the destiny of the present generation. On the other hand, man has been trying to demolish the tradition, the society and the past and shatter them to pieces or rather enrich them with the new creations of his self-conscious personality. The region, the climate, the race, the historic legacy, the custom and the tradition have therefore been retiring

more and more into the background of religious institutions and conduct and are being replaced by the experiments, assimilations, absorptions, discoveries and inventions of to-day. It is the enormous expansion of man's individuality and creativeness that is responsible for the transformation of the society and the tradition in Christendom as much as in Hindustan, China, and the rest of the world. And in the interest of further progress in matters religious we should have to build on these demonstrable realities of the expansion in liberalism and toleration consummated up till now.

It is very necessary to be reassured of this triumph of the human spirit. The fact that even in the epoch of technocracy and industrialism mankind has known how to assert its creative might and rise above the region, the social bonds and the racial limitations should furnish us with tremendous incentives in regard to the socio-religious planning of the world and the spiritual remaking of humanity for to-day and to-morrow. The new forms that the human *psyche* has assumed in modern times entitle us to the hope that the world is now in for an epoch of rejuvenation.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS BY DIFFERENT PAPERS ON THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA, FEBRUARY 28

For the first time in the history of modern India the Parliament of Religions will be held in Calcutta in the Town Hall on Monday the 1st of March. It is significant that this session of the Parliament is being held in connection with the Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Dev which

is being celebrated all over India and in many countries of the West. We understand that Sri Aurobindo, the Saint of Pondicherry, was invited to preside over the session but he has expressed his inability to do so. Mahatma Gandhi, it is understood, was also invited to open the session but it is unfortunate that he too has not been able to comply with the request of the Centenary

Committee. In the circumstances, Sir Brajendra Nath Seal, the great Indian philosopher and savant, has been chosen to be the General President of the Parliament and we have no doubt that the choice has been happy. For, besides his international reputation as a scholar, Sir Brajendra treasures in his mind many reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna and was also intimate with Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of the Saint of Dakshineswar. The session will last for a week and will be attended not only by eminent Indians like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and others but also by distinguished men from other countries of the East and the West. Among the latter, the name of Sir Francis Younghusband comes readily to mind. Sir Francis presided last year in London over the World Congress of Faiths and is recognized as one of the foremost thinkers of the day. It is interesting to note that Sir Francis was born in India and lived in this country for close upon three decades. He comes to India after 27 years not only, as he says in course of an interview, to attend the Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations but to see for himself what changes have taken place in India during his absence. We extend in advance our hearty welcome to the gentlemen who will attend the Parliament of Religions and hope that they will try to make this great Convention a success.

While on this subject, our mind naturally goes back to the Chicago Parliament of Religions held in 1893. That Parliament was memorable for one thing. Perhaps for the first time the message of an "uneducated" Bengalee ascetic was uttered at that Parliament through the mouth of his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, who had dived deep into Eastern and Western lore. Through that message India spoke to the world at large, particularly to Westerners who, flushed with the pride born of materialism and imperialism, had come to look down upon Hinduism as a religion of idolatry—a religion that lacked the force of spirituality. Vivekananda's remarkable address to the Chicago Parliament of Religions gave a tremendous shock to the prevailing notions of Western men and women. There he told the fascinating story of 'My Master'—the Sage of Dakshineswar—at whose feet he sat for years for Self-realization. He clearly explained to his Western audience that for spiritual communion with God neither encyclopædic knowledge nor a thorough study

of the scriptures was necessary. The most important thing necessary was a burning love for God and an intense spirit of renunciation. And man cannot yearn for God so long as he had an attachment for woman, wealth and other materialistic pleasures. Sri Ramakrishna's another message was that the teachings of all religions were in essence one and the same and these, if sincerely followed, lead a man to Truth and Self-realization. To Westerners, who had been oversatiated with too much material pleasures, the preachings of this Hindu ascetic, delivered through the medium of a powerful exponent, came as a great revelation and a solace. They were fighting needlessly over creeds and dogmas. Christianity and the Church could not clear their doubts and satisfy their spiritual longings. They were like restless souls craving ceaselessly for spiritual peace and solace. At this psychological moment appeared before them the young Vivekananda with India's message of spiritualism. It was a message of peace and solace—a message that satisfied their soul. They were taken aback by the preaching of the oneness of religions, by this wonderful demonstration of universalism. Instantly they came to revise their old notions about India and Indians. They believed that though tied to the foreign yoke India was still the home of spiritualism, of philosophy, of religion, in fact, of an ancient civilization that was in every respect superior to the civilization the West boasts of to-day. Christian prelates who came to India to seek converts were bemused by the Swami's fiery oratory, burning convictions and irresistible logic.

More than four decades have passed since then. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have come to stay. These have given a new orientation to modern thought and have fascinated many thought-leaders of the world. To the Parliament of Religions that will be held on Monday India has the same message to give, the message of service and sacrifice, the message of the brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God, that all religions are one and the same, that the soul is greater than matter, and that God-realization can only be attained not by theological erudition but by true love and devotion. That message India has given to the world in the past through her great seers and prophets and will also give in the days to come.

THE ADVANCE, MARCH 1

It was a happy idea of Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations Committee to bring to a close the great and historic event with the holding of the World's Parliament of Religions in Calcutta. India is pre-eminent-ly the land of spirituality. While with most other civilized peoples, religion is a thing apart from life, it covers the whole existence of Indians. With the loss of India's political freedom, her religion and culture came to be looked down with thinly veiled contempt by the Occidental nations. "An Indian" was to the Occidentals a term synonymous with "heathen" and his religion was despised as a bundle of crude superstitions and a creed of idolatry and bigotry. But slowly and steadily the Occidentals seem to have realized that even in her present state of political bondage, India has retained her greatness in the spiritual world. Who was it that was mainly instrumental in removing the erroneous impression about Indians and their religion and spirituality from the minds of civilized peoples of Europe and America? Why, it was the great sage of Dakshineswar. Swami Vivekananda who unfolded the high spiritual flights of Vedânta philosophy before his admiring audience at the World's Parliament of Religions, held at Chicago in 1893, was only a chosen instrument in the hands of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa for initiating the Occidentals into the mysteries of Indian spirituality and culture. To his audience at Chicago, Swami Vivekananda said: "If there has ever been a word of truth, a word of spirituality, that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my Master; only the mistakes are mine." This was no excess of modesty but only the barest truth. It was the wonderful spiritual realization of the great Master that was communicated to the disciple who was in every way worthy of the Master's great love for him. Men have spoken of the marvellous intellect of Swami Vivekananda. His intellect was, it is true, at once "receptive and creative, reformative and resurrective," but his great intellect without the spirituality, partly communicated to him by Sri Ramakrishna and partly acquired by his own exertions, would have failed to make any abiding impression on civilized humanity. It was from his great Master that Swamiji had learnt that religion was something quite distinct from mere doctrines or

dogmas, or sects, or churches or temples and that it consisted in the realization of God. It was from him that the worthy disciple learnt the true meaning of life and death, and the secret of immortality. When for the first time Vivekananda came in the living presence of the sage of Dakshineswar, he asked Sri Ramakrishna, "Do you believe in God, Sir?" "Yes." "How?" "Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense." "For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world," said Swamiji at Chicago. Sri Ramakrishna not only did himself see God and realize Him but made his disciples see Him. That explains why the small band of Sannyâsis who gathered round the great Master at Dakshineswar startled the world by their spiritual heritage and their spirit of renunciation. The message of Vedânta which Swami Vivekananda carried to the Occidents was not a set of dry dogmas and theory but a living faith derived from realization of God. And when we remember that this realization was made possible through his contact with Sri Ramakrishna it becomes easy for us to appreciate the great part played by the illiterate sage of Dakshineswar in drawing the attention of the civilized world to India's spiritual greatness. Indians are no longer despised by the Occidentals as a race of "heathens." If the representatives from all civilized nations have gathered in Calcutta to-day to participate in the work of the Parliament of Religions, it has been made possible mainly because India had produced Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Three decades ago, the nations of the Occident would have ridiculed the idea of sending their representatives to the Parliament of Religions held in Calcutta. The picture of India drawn by Miss Mayo and others like her would have appealed to them and helped to form their estimate of Indian culture and civilization. Nor is the influence of Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful spirituality manifest only in the changed outlook of the Occidents towards India. His wonderful life and teachings constitute the most precious heritage for our own people. There is hardly a house in India where the sage of Dakshineswar is not venerated as the Incarnation of God. Call him an 'Avatâr' or only a super-man, none can dispute that he was a spiritual giant who realized God and who lived in Him and by

Him. But it was not his own spiritual salvation or immortality that he cared for. Having himself realized God, he was anxious that his spiritual experience should be communicated to all the nations on earth.

It was the sage of Dakshineswar who preached the vital truth that "the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic; they are but various phases of one Eternal Religion." Standing before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, Swami Vivekananda only reiterated this great truth he had learnt from his Master when he said: "One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them as far as we can." The World Parliament of Religions which meets to-day in Calcutta has its basis on the fundamental doctrine that religions of the world are but various phases of one Eternal Religion. The great end of human life is not only to know God but to be one with Him through love. That is the way to immortality and to eternal bliss. Dogmas and theories are only external things and would lead the people nowhere unless they are determined to realize God. And once they realize Him and know the secret of true religion, all intolerance and bigotry will vanish. Bloody wars and international lust and jealousy which destroy millions of men and work so much havoc on earth would not cease unless and until the civilized nations realize that true happiness does not consist in possession of wealth and territories and in lording it over other nations who had neglected to cultivate the art of killing fellowmen but in realizing the fundamental amity of mankind. The World Parliament of Religions can only fulfil its great mission by promoting Harmony and Peace on earth. All the Prophets were only messengers of Peace and Harmony. Religions degenerate into meaningless doctrines and dogmas if they cannot help to evolve a common Humanity bound by ties of brotherly love. Servants of Christ who dare not preach the doctrine of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God among the "subject" nations can never be true to their cloths. Religions must not be allowed to be converted into handmaids of Imperialism. The Parliament of Religions would not ask the Christian to become a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Moslem but it would impress on the civilized world that if there is one

Eternal Religion in the world, mankind is also essentially one and indivisible unit. This great and fundamental truth alone can help to solve many of the political and economic problems which confront the world to-day.

THE ADVANCE, MARCH 2

It is sometimes necessary for man to look inward and the Parliament of Religions that opened its session on Monday provides a unique opportunity for all men to look inward. The Parliament is the last, and undoubtedly the greatest, of the events that have lent so much significance to the year-long celebrations of the Ramakrishna Centenary. The predominant note of modern civilization is materialistic, alike in outlook and in sympathies, and it is on very rare occasions that the civilization of to-day, machine-ridden as it is, demands, and receives, a spiritual expression. Cynics and sceptics may, not without plausibility, affect an unbelieving attitude in regard to the spiritualistic experiences of an age that is to all appearances ruled by the mighty dollar, but since these experiences must be personal in order to be understood, it will be pointless to join issue with those who would deliberately deny their own inner nature to satisfy the requirements of a prevailing pose. The fact that religion has in all ages played the part of a great objective force, whether we refer to the magical practices of the savage or the eclecticism of modern religions, would help a more correct interpretation of the evolution of man's spiritual nature than even the highest manifestations of subjective exultation or ecstasia in the purest form. For such ecstasia comes but rarely to a few individuals and unless its results are made available to the common man and woman in terms that are easily intelligible to them, religion would be reduced to a dead routine of pointless practices instead of being, as it is, a vital social force of the first magnitude. The teachings of Jesus Christ, of Buddha, of Ramakrishna, and of the other great religious figures that the world has seen, have created epochs in the history of civilization.

It is in this sense that the Parliament of Religions carries so much significance to-day, for while the shadow of a great tragedy overhangs the entire field of human relations and the great armament factories of the world are shaping death-dealing weapons

on a scale undreamed of before, it is necessary for philosophers to tell the world that if they could but look inward, the differences in faiths, creeds and dogmas, in castes, communities and nations, in the pigmentation of the skin any more than the differences in the income *per capita* are bound to be converted into the perception of the fundamental unity of the human nature. It is in this respect that the teachings of Ramakrishna and of his disciple Swami Vivekananda stand out so prominently to-day. For understanding what those teachings mean to India and to the world, particularly in the context set by the Parliament of Religions, we would refer the reader to the remarkable address of Sir Brajendrâ Nath Seal, the Doyen of Indian Philosophers, delivered at the Parliament as its President. We can do no better than quote the President's exact words for it would be impossible for us to improve on them:

"What we want is not merely universal religion in its quintessence, as Rammohan sought it in his earlier days, not merely an eclectic religion by compounding the distinctive essences, theoretical as well as practical, of the different religions as Keshabchandra sought it, but experience as a whole as it has unfolded itself in the history of man. And this can be realized by us, as Ramakrishna taught, by the syncretic practice of religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian as preparatory to the ultimate realization of God in Man and Man in God."

And there can be no country in the world so fit to be the scene of the labours of a Parliament of Religions as our own country which has welcomed with open arms the advent of every religious idea. Of that universal spirit, the teachings of Ramakrishna stand as the aptest representative, for, as Dr. Seal pointed out, Ramakrishna was a cosmic humanist in religion and not a mere nationalist. The tribute that we pay to his teachings to-day is something more than a mere formal eulogy; it represents an attempt to realize the Universal Man in ourselves, perhaps a stepping-stone to the still unrealized dream of a Parliament of Man and a Federation of World Cultures: the re-assertion of spiritual values, even against the noise and din and bustle of the drama that is being actively played in Spain

and passively staged in the other capitals of Europe.

THE STATESMAN, MARCH 3

We do not know what attention the busy world will give to a Parliament of Religions in Calcutta, but the meetings this week will be noticed by some as a sign that men can be conscious of a common humanity and a common purpose in life, and as a proof of the abiding influence of one or two recent Indian seekers after the ultimate truth. Religion, said Sir Brajendranath Seal in his Presidential address on Monday, is in its broader sense a force that organizes life and life's activities, and Sri Ramakrishna's teaching and living were a protest against a narrower conception of religious duty that has done great evil the world over. His teaching lives not only in the organization and activities of the Mission called after him, to which the Secretary of State, who had seen it at work in Bengal, gave deserved appreciation in a message read at the beginning of the meeting. A Parliament of Religions may be concerned only with impossible ideals, as many impatient critics put it, but these ideals are far finer and more useful than those put forward in many international conferences to-day.

THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA, MARCH 5

It was the privilege of comparatively a few to listen to the historic speech of Rabindranath Tagore at the Parliament of Religions held at the Calcutta University Institute, Wednesday last. Millions will read his speech in cold print without the advantage of being directly inspired by the fervour of his utterance. But even these millions will whole-heartedly agree with Sir Francis Younghusband's observation made in the Parliament that "for this speech alone they might well consider the holding of this Parliament a success." The speech should be translated in all the languages of the world and distributed broadcast. It is not simply the learned and the cultured who are likely to be benefited by it but what is of far more importance, the masses everywhere cannot but be deeply moved by the ideas which the Poet has propounded in a manner which he alone is capable of.

Religion ennobles but there is no force more potent for mischief and misery than sectarianism masquerading as religion. To-day the world is in the grip of sectarianism in almost every sphere of life. Political,

religious and social sectarianisms are often so blended that it is difficult at times to discover which of these is the real motive power. The root of the trouble of course is the mind. The narrow mind is the fertile soil of sectarianism of every character. Education is supposed to foster breadth of vision and enlargement of the mind. But what do we see in the world to-day? It is the cultured and the educated who in some countries have taken the lead in propagating sectarian doctrines of the most mischievous character. The Poet had something to say in another connection about fascism that has been consolidating its forces for ruthless war against civilization and freedom. In the domain of religion, fascism is equally rampant. Says the Poet: "When a religion develops the ambition of

brought under control. But to-day the open attacks have ceased due partly to political action and partly to the influence of modern ideas. But covert attacks are being constantly made against the religious faith of other peoples in the name not only of religion but of patriotism or love of one's own community. The idea has developed that each religious or racial community has its own special interests to safeguard and these could not be safeguarded without a corresponding deprivation of the members of other communities of their interests. One cannot but discover a family likeness between Hitler's crusade against the Jews whom he has given the bad name of Communists or political undesirables, and the preferential treatment that has been adopted as a settled policy in Indian politics. Religion



DELEGATES ENTERTAINED AT TEA BY THE JAINA COMMUNITY
AT PARESNATH TEMPLE, CALCUTTA (*News and Reports*)

By courtesy of *Sachitra Bharat*

imposing its doctrine on all mankind, it degrades itself into a tyranny and becomes a form of Imperialism. This is why we find a ruthless method of fascism in religious matters prevailing in most parts of the world, trampling flat the expansion of the spirit of man under its insensitive heels." The days of the Inquisition are no doubt past but its place has been taken by a more sinister and a subtler form of bigotry that, for the peace of the world, is no less portentous than the Spanish Inquisition or the bloody deeds of "bloody Mary." Rather the open attacks on freedom provoked the sensitive elements in society to concerted action and the open tyranny was effectively

and politics have got mixed up and one serves the purpose of the other. The cultivation of politics is the exclusive privilege of the so-called enlightened and they have not disdained to exploit the religious beliefs and practices, which they themselves may not entertain or observe, of their less enlightened fellow-countrymen to serve their communal or personal ends.

The fundamental objective of religion is harmony, the realization that we are the children of the same Father. But this idea which is the common heritage of all the leading religions of the world has been subordinated and mankind has segregated into races and religious communities which

must have conflicting interests. The post-war period has seen a definite set-back in rationalism that was making slow but steady progress among the educated throughout the world. Economic nationalism has derived its inspiration partly from religious faith and partly from patriotism. A Parliament of Religions may hope to cure religious aberrations in the human mind but it is faced with a dead wall in having to combat with political motives that wear the look of genuine religious sentiment and belief.

The real work of a Parliament of Religions should be among the masses who are the play-things of politicians and who are in many cases the honest victims of the faiths inherited by them. It is day-to-day work and a Parliament of Religions held at the interval of years with no permanent machinery to work out its ideas cannot be of great assistance in the field that has been left for exploitation by the fanatical or selfish propagandists. The Parliament of Religions should appoint a Standing Committee to devise ways and means to popularize the ideas given expression to on its platform. The authority that a Parliament of Religions carries should not be allowed to be forgotten but made to work through suitable channels. The Parliament has long been the galaxy of theologians of what may be called the universal school but the time has come for it to develop into an organization controlling and directing activities.

THE BOMBAY CHRONICLE, MARCH 5

The Parliament of Religions which opened at Calcutta on Monday is the last of the events in the year-long celebrations of the Ramakrishna Centenary. The idea of concluding the celebrations with such a conference is a happy one, for Ramakrishna was, in the words of his greatest disciple, Vivekananda, himself "a man whose whole life was a Parliament of Religions, as it should be." By that expression Vivekananda meant that his Master lived the life of universal brotherhood transcending all barriers of exclusive creeds. And the value of any Parliament of Religions is to be measured by the degree to which it promotes or tends to promote that feeling of brotherhood. Judged by this test, the present Parliament will, we earnestly hope, be a real success worthy of the great man in whose honour it has been convened.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's Presidential address at the Parliament on Wednesday is

a scathing exposure of the spirit of superstition, bigotry and exclusiveness that is still prevalent among so many people and causes unending strife even though the creeds which they profess came into existence to promote the brotherhood of man. His words on this tragedy are so eloquent and so profoundly true that we make no apology for quoting them in extenso. He said: "Every religion that begins as a liberating agency ends as a vast prison-house. Built on the renunciation of its founder, it becomes a possessive institution in the hands of its priests, and claiming to be universal becomes an active centre of schism and strife. Like a sluggish stream the spirit of man is choked by rotting weeds and is divided into shallow, slimy pools that are active only in releasing deadly mists of stupefaction. This mechanical spirit of tradition is essentially materialistic, it is blindly pious but not spiritual, obsessed by phantoms of unreason that haunt feeble minds with their ghastly mimicry of religion. This happens not only to mediocre individuals hugging fetters that keep them irresponsible or hungering for lurid unrealities, but to generations of insipid races that have lost all emphasis of significance in themselves, having missed their present in their ghostly past?" That is not all. "The arrogant spirit of sectarianism so often uses either active or passive, violent or subtle, methods of persecution on the least provocation or without any" and "a ruthless method of Fascism in religious matters is prevailing in most parts of the world trampling flat the expansion of the spirit of man under its insensitive heels."

What then is the escape from this tragedy of strife in the name of religion? Sir Brajendra Nath Seal, one of the greatest living philosophers of India, who presided over the Parliament on Monday, answers the question thus: "What we want is not merely universal religion in its quintessence, as Rammohan sought it in his earlier days, not merely an eclectic religion by compounding the distinctive essences, theoretical as well as practical, of the different religions as Kesabchandra sought it, but experience as a whole as it has unfolded itself in the history of man. And this can be realized by us, as Ramakrishna taught, by the syncretic practice of religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian as preparatory to the ultimate realization of God in Man

and Man in God." The example of Ramakrishna will no doubt be a great force in promoting the feeling of universal brotherhood. But something more is necessary to end religious strife. In the last analysis such strife is caused by superstition and the most potent means to combat superstition is, to our mind, the spread of Rationalism, which will accept nothing as religiously right which is opposed to the established canons of Reason and Humanity. Reason alone may not solve all our spiritual problems. But nothing else can more effectively combat superstition, the root cause of bigotry and the strife that follows it.

THE ADVANCE, MARCH 5

One of the points to which Dr. Rabindranath Tagore drew attention in his address to the Parliament of Religions on Wednesday last was the dangers of sectarianism in religion. The problem is not one of religious or philosophical speculation only for it has an intimate bearing on our practical life. India to-day is torn by sectarianism of every kind; in fact, it has invaded every phase of our national activity, and has not left untouched even the sacred sphere of education and culture. Communalism is not its only form, for it parades under different names and is inspired by different purposes. But it always pits the narrow selfish interest of the few against the universal interest of all. Even Christianity, which professes to be the most liberal of religions, has not proved itself immune from the invasions of the sectarian spirit. In educational institutions under the control of Christian missions, the profession of the Christian faith is being recognized, under the inspiration of the Lindsay Commission, as a superior claim to appointment than merit. Yet these institutions derive a great part of their income from fees paid by non-Christian students. This is but one of the instances that we can offer at random of the all-pervasive influence of sectarianism in religion, exercising a most baneful influence on a very important sphere of the national life. Of the more aggressive forms of Mahomedan or Hindu communalism we need not speak much, for the tragic results of this insistence on the communalistic interpretation of national needs are writ large on every branch of our associated activities.

The reason is not far to seek. In the very apt words of Dr. Tagore, religion has now become, as it were, a possessive institu-

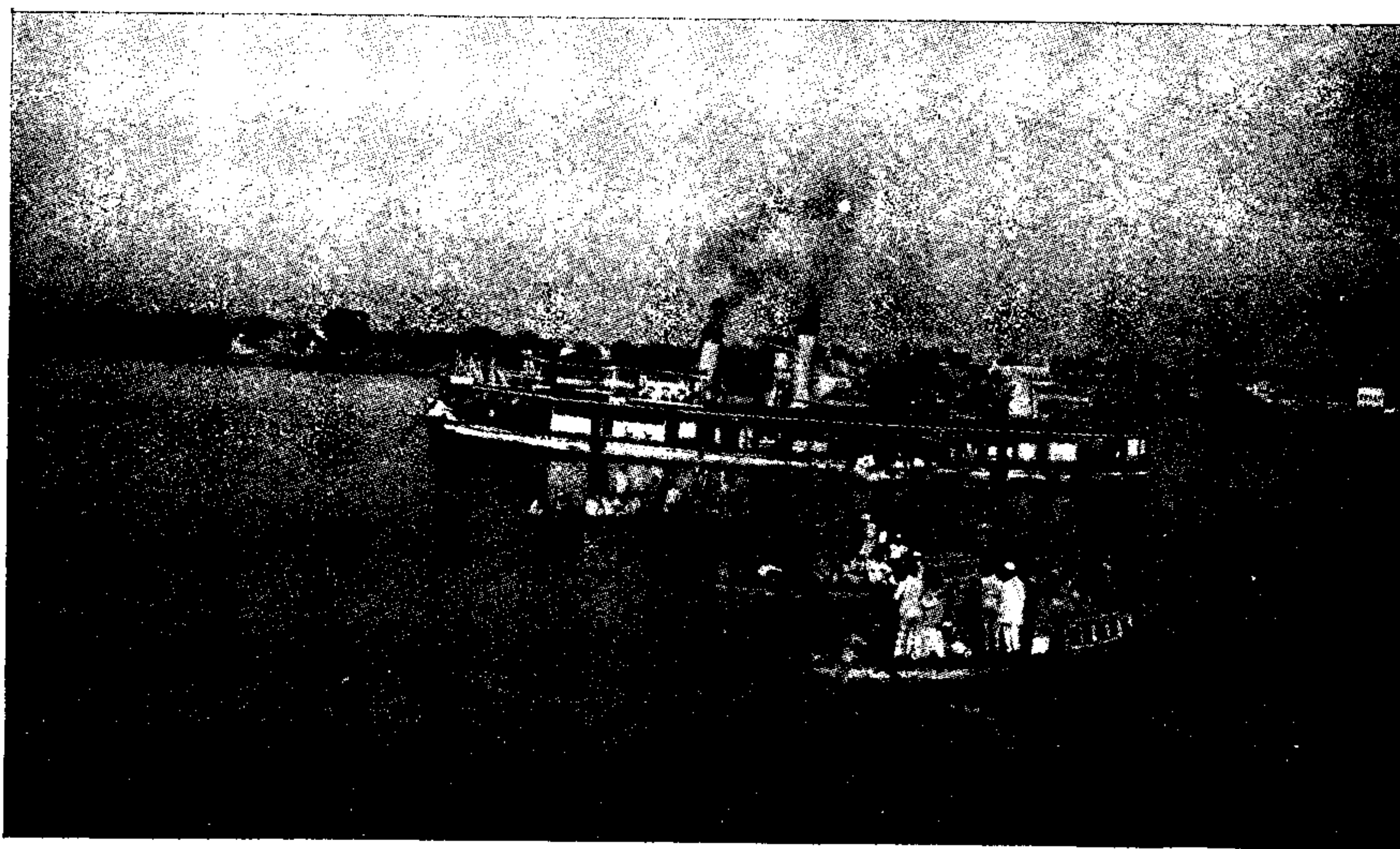
tion. "Like a sluggish stream, the spirit of man is choked by rotting weeds and is divided into shallow slimy pools that are active only in releasing deadly mists of stupefaction." It is "the most obstinate obstruction that darkens our vision of human unity." No truer words were ever spoken and there could be no more appropriate time for uttering these words. Sectarianism hangs over the world like the shadow of an ugly monster. Its appeal has often proved irresistible to the credulous for it is the appeal seemingly of religion. As the Poet has expressed it, like some voracious parasite, it "feeds upon the religion whose colour it assumes, exhausting it so that it knows not when its spirit is sucked dry. It utilizes the dead skin for its habitation, as a stronghold for its unholy instinct of fight, its pious vaingloriousness, fiercely contemptuous of its neighbours' articles of faith." History has, throughout ages, borne testimony to this struggle between sectarianism and true religion. Persecution of one sect by another as much as persecution of one nation by another has disfigured the pages of world history. The spirit of petty acquisition that ends only in releasing "deadly mists of stupefaction" has often been the dominant inspiration. It is manifest as much in proselytizing activities as in the percentage brand of democracy that recent developments in India have taught the world. We have not the optimism to believe that either the Parliament of Religions or Dr. Tagore's address to it will recall this crazy world of ours to a proper devaluation of the tragedy of sectarianism, but it is evident that time will bring its own revenge for history has not awarded the mantle of greatness to any idea born of a sectarian point of view. In the background of this history, the persecution of Jews in Germany or their treatment in Palestine appears as a passing aberration of human civilization. But generations may and will suffer for it till such time as the world learns again to estimate correctly things that are good and great. Dr. Rabindranath has retaught us that religion is no mere idea—it is an expression, that the truth of man's nature in its most intense and universal need is the reality of religion.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, MARCH 8

Forty years have passed since a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna stood before the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago and expressed the hope that the bell that tolled

that morning would be the death-knell of all fanaticism and intolerance. And now, once again, a Parliament of Religions has met in Calcutta, a few miles from where Vivekananda's "Master" held daily communion with the Great Mother at Dakshineswar. But have fanaticism and intolerance decreased in the interval? Nations have indeed ceased to go to war with each other because of religious differences, but political dogmas and economic slogans have taken the place of religious tenets, and nations continue to snarl at each other because they believe in Fascism or Communism. Nearer home, men continue to murder each other for the love of God, and religion instead of becoming a unifying factor, continues to

While the fundamental teachings of all religions emphasize universal truths, according to the varying conditions in which they came into being and the circumstances in which they were established, the followers of each have confined the solace it gives as well as the benefit it confers to those who adhere to the particular forms in which its message is given, utterly regardless of the original intention of the founders as to the applicability of its essentials to humanity as a whole. The brotherhood of man which is Islam's greatest contribution to human thought and evolution is rigidly limited by its adherents to the followers of the Prophet while Hinduism whose catholicity is so wide as to embrace every belief from the monism



DELEGATES LANDING ON THE MATH GROUNDS (*News & Reports*)

divide man from man, making human relations impossible across the frontiers it erects.

And by far the strangest phenomenon connected with religions is that while most religions and sects originally brought to the world a message of unity, every religion and sect has continued to divide humanity. With every attempt at unification, the process of division and dismemberment has proceeded apace. Creeds like Theosophy that began by emphasizing the essential unity of all religions and universal brotherhood, have ended by limiting the practice of the principles it preaches to the strictly limited circle of its immediate followers.

of Sankara to the atheism of some of its philosophers, will not reconcile itself to the monotheism taught by the Arabian Prophet.

What then should be the role of religion in modern life? Has it still a function to fulfil or is it to be cast aside as a worn-out garment with the onward march of science and knowledge? No one who realizes the great place religion occupies in man's life even to-day and the heights of thought and feeling to which it can raise the noblest minds, will believe that religion is likely to disappear before the onslaught of reason or that the ever-widening sweep of knowledge will reduce man's attraction for the Unknown, and possibly the Unknowable.

If religion will remain with us always and continue to be a powerful influence for weal or woe in man's life, gatherings such as those in Calcutta have a great mission to fulfil. It is the breaking down of barriers which prevent followers of one religion from seeing the truth of another religion as practised by other peoples, so that all alike may realize that though all present different facets of Truth, the Truth not only comprehends them all but embraces more than what it would ever be possible for man to realize. In the infinite quest for Truth, possibly, lies the fulfilment of Humanity. Who knows?

THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA, MARCH 11

The Parliament of Religions has ended its session. Men of all religions from distant lands gathered together to pay their

been by various names in different ages and climes: Jehovah or Allah, God or Brahman, Krishna or Kali—it matters not by which name the Central Truth is known and worshipped; what actually matters is how far we ourselves have been able to experience it in our consciousness and shape our lives accordingly. It matters little what this religious teacher or the other religious prophet has said. It is not by faith in or by verbal repetition of other people's experiences that we are going to be saved. The essence of religion does not lie in learning catechisms by rote or in regular attendance at churches, mosques or temples, but in firsthand knowledge of what lies beyond the phenomenal veil. It is from that fountain-head that all spiritual teachers and founders of religion have drawn their inspiration in the past; and though the



DELEGATES AND OTHER GUESTS AT TEA AT BELUR MATH (*News & Reports*)

homage to the memory of Sri Ramakrishna who may be fitly described as the summation of India's spiritual past, and let us hope that these seekers of truth, when they leave India's shores, will carry with them the message of concord and harmony.

Two things stand out prominently in Sri Ramakrishna's life. The first is that religion consists not in faith in a particular creed or dogma, nor even in the scrupulous observance of outer forms and rituals which have more often than not lost their original utility and significance, but in realizing in one's life the living Truth, called as it has

methods and practices of these religious teachers may vary from age to age and from country to country, the Central Truth which they have sought to inculcate is one and the same. The Sâkta and the Vaishnava, the Buddhist and the Jain, the Christian and the Moslem are all consciously or unconsciously, through various forms and rituals, trying to grasp and realize the Truth in their own way. To Sri Ramakrishna, this was no mere intellectual inference. He lived the life of a Sâkta, a Vaishnava, a Vedântist, a Moslem and a Christian by turn, followed faithfully the

practices and disciplines enjoined by each religion and realized by experience that they all led to the same goal. The second truth that he taught, therefore, was that all religions were true. What he taught was not mere religious tolerance as it is understood to-day, but the essential truth and unity of all religions. All the religions of the world were to him but so many sects of the one Universal Religion of which the essence lies in God-realization.

And yet, outward forms and rituals he did not discard as useless so long as they helped one to follow faithfully the particular path he had chosen. The essential oneness of all religions did not mean for him uniformity of practice or belief. Beliefs and practices were to him but means to the attainment of the goal, and were bound to vary according to the temperament or intellectual development of each individual. What was true for one need not necessarily be true for another. He did not prescribe one uniform set of beliefs and practices for all individuals. He wanted all seekers of the truth to stick to the forms and beliefs which suited their physical surroundings and mental make-up and use them as aids to spiritual growth.

"You can go to the top of the roof," he used to say, "with the help of a ladder, a bamboo, or a rope. These have their uses so long as they help you to go up; but once you are on the roof, they are no longer necessary." The various religions of the world were to him, therefore, all true inasmuch as they helped one to realize the ultimate spiritual truth. He condemned none, he discarded none; they were all true because they embodied so many different attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite. To him God was a gem with thousand facets and each religion was a facet through which individuals might have a look at the central gem.

This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna; and the celebration of his centenary will not have been held in vain if it helps the warring sects and creeds to realize the errors of their ways. In their mistaken zeal to bring all mankind to profess a particular creed or practise a particular form of worship, leaders of religion have not hesitated to deluge the world with blood and burn their fellow-beings with green faggots. Though mankind in most places has outgrown this crude form of fanaticism, there

is enough of it still left to create hatred and disunion where there should be perfect amity and concord. Let us hope that as a result of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations it will be recognized hereafter that to force one's particular beliefs and practices on others is a form of pseudo-spiritual imperialism in which human vanity and not the love of truth plays a conspicuous part. Let us recognize once for all that God is nobody's monopoly, and that truth is not the private property of any particular religion or sect.

THE GUARDIAN, MARCH 11

The essential unity of all religions was the main note struck in most of the addresses delivered at the Parliament of Religions held in Calcutta last week in connection with the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations. That is the particular emphasis in the Founder's teachings, and its popularity at present is due to the conditions in which India finds itself to-day. No religion is worth preserving if it has no special message to offer and these differences can and should never be forgotten. Dr. Tagore disclaimed in his opening address any intention to plead for a common church for mankind or a universal pattern to which every act of worship and aspiration must conform. He inveighed rather against the sectarian spirit that grew under cover of separate religions. He blamed the followers of the great religions: "Consciously they reshape profound messages of wisdom in the mould of their own tortuous understanding, carefully modifying them into conventional platitudes in which they themselves find comfort and which satisfy the habit-ridden mentality of their own community."

For a revolt against such corruptions that endanger the truths of religions, the starting point must be to stress the fundamental truths that bind all religions. India finds that a necessary task now, and a Parliament of Religions helps that purpose. Having promoted this rational mood, it will have a greater task in the future to make people face the implications of the differences in the religions.

THE INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER, MARCH 13

Since 1893, the phrase "Parliament of Religions," has been a familiar one. A

Parliament is an assembly where people of different views meet and discuss on equal terms. In the first Chicago Parliament, equality was not conceded but Swami Vivekananda, notwithstanding that he spoke on sufferance, established the claim of the Vedanta to a position of respect in the eyes of other religions. In the World Fellowship of Faiths held in Chicago four years ago, Catholics and a section of the Protestant Churches declined to co-operate on the ground that they cannot accept the equality of other religions with Christianity. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and many Christian men and women, eminent for their religious and humanitarian work, took part in it and helped to make it the great success it eventually became. The Parliament of Religions held last week in connection with the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary in Calcutta, differed from its two predecessors in that it was convened by a non-Christian body in commemoration of a Hindu saint and mystic. Still it was a very relevant question which Gandhiji posed to the Parliament and to which he demanded from it a definite answer—Yes or No. The question was: "Are all the religions equal as we hold or is there any one particular religion which is in the sole possession of truth, the rest being either untrue or a mixture of truth and errors as many believe?". Sir Francis Younghusband replied: "Just as each child thinks that its own mother is the best in the world, exactly in the same way I think each one of us regards his own religion as the best in the world." That, at any rate, he added, was the impression that they gained at the World Fellowship of Faiths they had last year in London. In that Congress, Sir Francis went on to observe, each one did honestly believe that his own religion was the best and that was corroborated by his own experience of many years' living with men of all faiths. "I naturally consider my own religion the best although I endeavour to keep that impression as far as possible to myself." This answer does not take into account the deeper import of Gandhiji's question. The significance and the relevancy of the question lie in the fact that Christian missionaries from Europe and America are trying to persuade Hindus that Christianity is the sole repository of spiritual truth and that Hinduism is no true religion. They start schools and hospitals as means of predisposing Hindus, mostly poor and ignorant, to give ear to the

message which they wish to convey, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son and only Son of God and that He died on the Cross in order that all mankind might believe in Him and be saved.

Gandhiji's question has a practical end in view. Is propaganda of this kind compatible with the idea of Parliament of Religions? Does love of one's own mother require that one should go about depreciating the mothers of other people and trying to induce them to give up their mothers, whether or no, one's mother is willing to adopt them as her children in the same sense as oneself? Hinduism, as Gandhiji says, implicitly regards all religions as equally pathways to the Divine. It follows that the religion in which one is born and bred is the one which offers the most propitious way in which one can realize his higher self and comport himself in accordance with its dictates. That is true generally. In this respect as in so many others, Hinduism stands for Buddhism and all the other sects which sprang from it. Depreciation or even invidious comparison of one's own and other's religions, is opposed to this attitude of mind. Dr. James Pratt in his "Pilgrimage of Buddhism" narrates a conversation with the Prince Patriarch of Siam which well illustrates the Hindu standpoint. "On hearing my question, (on the respective merits of Buddhism and Christianity)," writes Dr. Pratt, "he was silent a moment, with brows knit, and then responded in that quick decisive way of his, that if he should undertake to answer me he would be forced to dwell upon the superiority of his own religion, and this would involve him in self-satisfaction, pride and sin; he must, therefore, refuse absolutely to give an answer to my question." The remarkable fact about this statement is that Buddhism has been emphatically a missionary religion. But its methods were wide apart from those of modern missions. "Its transplanting to new lands," writes Dr. Pratt, "has been accomplished never through conquest or through migration but solely by the spread of ideas. Yet almost everywhere it has gone it has so completely adapted itself to the new people and the new land as to become practically a national religion." Sir Francis Younghusband's answer to Gandhiji's question is good so far as it goes. But the complete answer is unrealizable except when the idea of one's own mother leads one to the abstraction of Motherhood, in

which are comprehended all our separate ideas of our particular mothers. The Parliament of Religions is one of the ways in which the Religion behind all religions will manifest itself in due time. Sri Ramakrishna constantly spoke of the Mother, that is, the Universal Mother. Although he sought to experience God through all religions, living for a time in the discipline and doctrine of each of them, God as the Universal Mother most appealed to him. This was also the case with Sankaracharya, the monistic philosopher.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore presided at the inaugural session and delivered an address of which Sir Francis Younghusband said that

it was worth holding the Parliament of Religions to hear it. Whenever we read a writing of Tagore's we are reminded of an epigram of his which Mrs. Beatrice Webb quotes with intense enjoyment in her "My Apprenticeship." It is: "That words have meanings, is just the difficulty." The Poet cannot be understood, not certainly appreciated, if we interpret his words according to their dictionary meanings. As he himself explains, the Poet has to turn and twist words in metre and verse, "so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check, and the feeling allowed a chance to express itself." His address at the Parliament of Religions is aglow with poetic feeling.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

This number is entirely devoted to the proceedings of the Parliament of Religions held in connection with the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations at the Town Hall,* Calcutta, from March 1 to March 8, 1937. It includes not only the Vedic song sung at the inaugural session of the Parliament, the address of the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the Presidential addresses, but also the messages sent by leaders of thought belong to the different parts of the world and the greetings from the delegates to the Parliament of Reli-

gions. Besides, we have given a *few* of the important speeches delivered at the Parliament as well as the Editorial Comments of many of the leading Indian journals. But the learned and thought-provoking papers of the distinguished savants of the East and West, which were read in the different sessions, as also many of the speeches delivered, could not be accommodated in this number for want of space. The Centenary Committee hopes to bring out the entire proceedings in the form of a book of about 500 pages entitled "The Religions of Man" in the near future. Meanwhile we propose to present to our readers some of the illuminating papers in the subsequent issues of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

* Except the Afternoon Session of March 3 which was held at the University Institute.

NEWS AND REPORTS

DELEGATES TO THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS AT VARIOUS SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

The delegates to the Parliament of Religions attended the following social parties held in their honour:

Thursday, March 4, 1937, at 4 P.M.: Tea at the Grand Hotel, Prince's Re-

Sunday at 1 P.M.: Lunch at Firpo's Branch Restaurant, 11 Government Place, Calcutta. Host: Mrs. and Dr. Peter Boike of Cincinnati, Ohio (U. S. A.), Calcutta.

At 3 P.M.: Reception at the Sikh Temple, Kalighat, Calcutta. Chief host: Sardar Jamait Singh:

More than four thousand Sikhs including one thousand ladies gathered on the occasion



SWAMI SUDDHANANDA, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, COMM. BARON GIURIATI, CONSUL-GENERAL FOR ITALY, AND SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND AT THE TEA PARTY AT BELUR

staurant, Calcutta. Host: Ramakrishna Medical Education Society.

Friday at 4 P.M.: Tea at the University of Calcutta. Host: Arts Faculty Club.

Saturday at 2-30 P.M.: Bratachari Dance Demonstrations at the Town Hall, Calcutta, followed by Tea. Host: Mr. Guru Saday Dutt, I.C.S., President, Bratachari Society, Calcutta.

At 4-30 P.M.: Ramakrishna Centenary Exhibition of Indian Culture, Arts and Industries, Northern Park, Bhowanipur, Calcutta.

and the rush was so great that thousands had to wait outside the hall on the Rashbehary Avenue. Loud speakers were installed on the road leading to the temple. Exactly at 3 P.M. Mrs. Naidu accompanied by other delegates, foreign and Indian, arrived at the temple in a fleet of forty motor cars which the Calcutta Sikh taxi drivers had placed at the disposal of the guests free of charge. More than two hundred delegates and the monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission attended the function. The whole temple was tastefully decorated, and on their arrival

the guests were given a guard of honour by about fifty Akali Dal volunteers clad in saffron and with naked swords in hand. The whole temple was resounding with the cry of Sat Sri Akal from time to time. Sirdar Bhagat Singh, Sirdar Jamait Singh and Prof. Gurumukh Nihal Singh welcomed the guests on behalf of the community and garlanded all the guests. The ladies on the balconies showered flowers on them. Mrs. Naidu thanked the Sikhs for organizing the reception and paid high tributes to the Sikh community and appealed for unity among the different religions of the world. Sir Francis Younghusband, Swami Paramananda, Sm. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani,

(Jaina) Temple, North Calcutta. Hosts: The Jaina Community.

Monday at 4 P. M.: Tea at the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Headquarters, Belur (Howrah):

The delegates and other participants, both Indian and foreign, in the World Parliament of Religions enjoyed a nice steamer trip when they went to attend the tea party that was given in their honour at the Belur Math. They left the Chandpal Ghat at about 2-30 P. M. in two steamers which were lent for the purpose by Raja Janaki Nath Roy of Bhagyakul. The Raja Shahib who accompanied the party with his son, Kumar Narendra Nath Roy, made special arrange-



GROUP PHOTO OF THE DELEGATES AND OTHER GUESTS AT BELUR MATH

Dr. Peter Boike (U. S. A.), Mr. Rustomjee, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Swami Sambuddhananda, Mr. Maung (Rangoon), Mr. Yusuf Ahmad Bagdadi (Bagdad), Mr. Sonpar (Lahore), Madam Grabowska (Poland), Dr. H. Goetz (Holland) and others addressed the gathering. Srimati Amrit Kaur and Sirdar Jamait Singh who were instrumental in organizing the function were all attention to the guests. On the eve of their departure they were presented with a photo of Guru Nanak each, and huge crackers were fired.

At 4-30 P. M.: Tea at the Pareshnath

ment for Indian music on board the steamers for the entertainment of the distinguished guests. The party first went to Dakshineswar, the place of Sri Ramakrishna's Sâdhanâ and then to Belur Math, the nerve-centre of the Mission's world-wide activities.

On landing at Belur they were received by Swami Paramananda, Head of the Boston Vedanta Centre, on behalf of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The Swami thanked them all for the trouble they had taken in coming over to India, some from distant foreign lands, at so many personal sacrifices, to participate in the Centenary

Celebrations. Sir Francis Younghusband, on behalf of the foreign delegates and representatives, gave a suitable reply. After the tea party had been over, they were shown round the shrine and other holy places. They all seemed to take particular interest in the new temple that is under construction. They all returned by the same boats at about 5 P. M.

Tuesday at 1-15 P. M.: Lunch at Firpo's Branch Restaurant, 11, Government Place, Calcutta. Hosts: Sir Manmatha Nath Mukerji, Chairman, Parliament of Religions Reception Committee and Mr. Kumar Krishna Mitter, Attorney-at-Law, Calcutta.

Wednesday at 3 P. M.: Star Theatre, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. 'Sita' staged by Prof. Sisir Bhaduri. Host: Dr. D. P. Ghosh.

At 4 P.M.: Tea at 7, Mohan Bagan Lane, Calcutta. Host: Mr. Birendra Kumar Bose, Advocate.

Thursday, March 11, at 4-30 P.M.: Tea at 21, Ballygunje Circular Road, Calcutta. Hosts: Mrs. and Mr. Bejoy Chandra Chatterjee.

Amongst those present at many of these social functions were: Dr. Chang-lok Chen (Consul General for China), Miss Helen Mary Boulnois (Johannesburg, South Africa), Madame Sophia Wadia (Bombay), Mr. H. V. Simper, Mrs. L. P. Siympur, Mrs. P. O. Allen, Mrs. E. H. Rankin, Mr. J. A. Joseph (Bombay), Mr. M. K. Jacob, U. Maung Aye Maung (Rangoon), Sister Suchitra, Mrs. Kiron Bose (Bengal Provincial Women's Association), Mrs. N. N. Sen Gupta, Prof. and Mrs. D. R. Bhandarkar, Kaka Kalelkar, Mrs. Maya Bose, Mrs. Amrit Kaur, Principal S. N. Das Gupta, Prof. C. Narayan Menon (Benares Hindu University), Dr. Miss S. Pandit, Miss Mukta Bai, Swami Ghanananda, Colonel and Mrs. Lindberg (U. S. A.), Dr. and Mrs. Peter Boike (Cincinnati, Ohio, U. S. A.), Mons. Jean Herbert (Paris), Mr. Yusuf Ahmed Bagdadi (Iraq), Sardar Jamait Singh, Prof. Gurumukh Singh (Hindu University, Benares), Major and Mrs. D. Ahmed, Major General G. M. Lindsay (Commander of Bengal and Assam), Mr. A. R. Lockhart, Miss Hilda Yen (China), Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Swami Dayananda (Ramakrishna Mission Maternity Home, Calcutta), Mr. J. C. Das (Bengal Central Bank), Mrs. and Mr. Suren Ball (Curator, Industrial Section, Indian Museum), Mrs. Ten Broek (U. S. A.), Captain and Mrs. Forsyth (Women's International Peace League),

Mrs. Sarala Devi Chaudhuri, Mr. Guru Saday Dutt (Secretary, Local Self Government Department, Government of Bengal), Sister Saraswati (Ramakrishna Medical Education Society), Rai Bahadur Hrishikesh Mookerji, Br. Devapriya Valisimha (Mahabodhi Society), Bhikkhu Kausalyayana (Saranth, Benares), Prof. Soroj Kumar Das, Principal Mrs. Tatini Das (Bethune College, Calcutta), Prof. Benoy Chandra Sen, Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy (University Librarian, Calcutta), Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Swami Suddhananda (Vice-President, Ramakrishna Mission), Rao Bahadur C. Ramanujachariar (Madras), Mr. K. K. Mitter (Solicitor), Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarker, Advocate N. K. Basu, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose (Bar-at-Law), Mr. A. P. Blair, Sir Bejoy Prasad Singh-Roy (Minister for Local Self-Government), Kumar Hiranya Kumar Mitter, Mr. Jatindra Nath Basu (Solicitor), Mr. Basil Crump (London), Mr. G. G. Gordon Cleather (London), Justice Dwarkanath Mitter, Advocate Santosh Kumar Basu, Dr. D. N. Banerjee, Swami Deshikananda (Mysore), Mr. Makhan Lal Sen (Manager, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*), Miss Ina May Riebe (Los Angeles, Calif., U. S. A.), Mr. and Mrs. B. C. Chatterjee, Dr. F. Tousek (Consul for Czechoslovakia) and Mrs. Tousek, Comm. Baron Giuriati (Consul General for Italy) and Mrs. Giuriati, Frau Ingrid Biermann, Monsieur Dubois (Consul General for France) and Madame Dubois, Professor and Mrs. Benoy Sarkar, Dr. and Mrs. Hermann Goetz (Leyden, Holland), Rao Bahadur Dr. Bhandelwal (Poona), Miss Josephine MacLeod (Stratford on Avon, England), Sir Francis Younghusband (London), Swami Paramananda (Vedanta Centre, Boston and La Crescenta, U. S. A.), Swami Virajananda (Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission), Monsieur Jean Herbert (Paris), Professor and Mrs. Prabhu Dutt Shastri, Madame Adelina del Carril de Guiraldes (Buenos Aires, Argentina, South America), Dr. and Mrs. Rafi Ahmed, Swami Vireswarananda, Principal Benjamin Richard (Victoria College, Mauritius), Dr. and Mrs. Amulya Ukil, Mr. Chandabai Ali Muchhala (Bombay), Swami Pavitrananda, Prof. Tulsi-das Kar, Raja Kshitindra Nath Deb Rai-Mahasaya, Advocate Bejoy Krishna Bose, Maulavi Zillur Rahman (Dacca), Mr. and Mrs. C. H. M. Rustomjee, Swami Sambudhananda, Swami Siddheswarananda (Bangalore), Mr. Gothi (Jani Svetambar Terapanthi), Major Prabhat Kumar Bardhan, Swami Adyananda (South and East Africa),

Swami Sharvananda (Karachi and Delhi), Swami Madhavananda, Dr. G. H. Mees (Holland), Herr E. von Rath (Attache, German Consulate General), Mr. Surendra Chandra Chakravarti, Mr. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Swami Vishwananda (Bombay), Dr. Sonpar (Deva Samaj, Lahore), Captain and Mrs. Watson (Fort William), Swami Srivasananda (Madras), Advocate Birendra Kumar Bose, Madame Professor Helen de Willman-Grabowska (Cracow, Poland), Sister Amala (U. S. A.), Mr. and Mrs. Rossetti (Y. M. C. A.), Swami Vijayananda (Ramakrishna Ashrama, Buenos Aires, Argentina), Kumar Narendra Nath Roy of Bhagyakul (Dacca), Dr. D. P. Ghosh, Mr. Chhogmal Choprah

(Jain Svetambar Terapanthi Sabha), Count Podewils (Consul General for Germany) and Countess Podewils.

Among those who regretted inability to attend some of the functions to which they were invited, on account of unavoidable circumstances, are: Swami Abhedananda, Mr. Amritlal Ojha, Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, Mr. Edward von Selzam (Consul for Germany) and Mrs. von Selzam, Her Highness the Maharani Sucharu Devi of Mayurbhanj (Orissa), Sir David and Lady Ezra, the Maharajadhiraj Bahadur of Burdwan, Sir Asoke Kumar Roy (Advocate General), Dr. Satya Churn Law (Sheriff of Calcutta), and Sir Brajendra Lal Mitter.

We regret that in spite of our best efforts the current number of *Prabuddha Bharata* has come out late. The delay is due to the fact that we have made it a special number of Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions—*Editor P. B.*



SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN ECSTASY