

THE  
WORLD'S PARLIAMENT  
OF  
RELIGIONS

*AN ILLUSTRATED AND POPULAR STORY OF THE WORLD'S FIRST  
PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS, HELD IN CHICAGO*

IN CONNECTION WITH

THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION OF 1893.

EDITED BY THE

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## PART THIRD.

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### THE PARLIAMENT PAPERS.

#### *THE SECOND DAY.<sup>1</sup>*

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ADDRESS OF THE REV. DR. S. J. NICCOLLS, OF ST. LOUIS,  
ON TAKING THE CHAIR.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT, SONS OF A COMMON HEAVENLY FATHER, AND BROTHERS IN A COMMON HUMANITY,—It is with special pleasure that I assume the task now assigned to me. Happily for me at least it involves no serious labors, and requires no greater wisdom than to mention the names of the speakers and the subjects placed upon the program for to-day. And yet, when I mention the name of the subject that is to invite our consideration to-day, I place before you the most momentous theme that ever engaged human thought—the sublimest of all facts, the greatest of all thoughts, the most wonderful of all realities; and yet, when I mention the name, it points not to a law, not to a principle, not to the explanation of a phenomenon, but it points us to a living person.

The human mind, taught and trained by human thoughts and human loves, points us to One who is over all, above all and in all, in whom we live, move and have our being, with whom we all have to do, light of our light, life of our life, the grand reality that underlies all realities, the being that pervades all beings, the sum of all joys, of all glory, of all greatness; known yet unknown, revealed yet not revealed, far off from us yet nigh to us; for whom all men feel if haply they might find him; for whom all the wants of this wondrous nature of ours go out in inextinguishable longing; one with whom we all have to do and from whose dominion we can never escape. If such be the subject that we are to consider to-day, surely it becomes us to undertake it in a spirit of reverence and of humility. We cannot bring to its con-

<sup>1</sup>NOTE.—The proceedings of the first day are found in Part First, Chapter III.

In the seventeen days of the Parliament, notwithstanding frequent and protracted sessions, it was simply impossible that all the papers prepared for it should be read without condensation or omission. Some of the most important and interesting papers it was found necessary, in the absence of the writers, to omit entirely from public reading. In this volume some papers are given in full which had thus to be retrenched, and of which consequently no adequate report has reached the public. This has especially been done in the case of papers representing systems remote and little known. In papers representing systems near at hand and familiarly known, when condensation is made it is with scrupulous care to preserve both the full thought and the language of the writer.

temptation the exercise of our reasoning faculties in the same way that we would consider some phenomenon or fact of history. He who is greater than all hides himself from the proud and the self-sufficient; he reveals himself to the meek and lowly and humble in heart. It is rather with the heart that we shall find him than by measuring him merely with our feeble intellects. To-day, as always, the heart will make the theologian.

Perhaps some one may say: "After so long a period in human history why should we come to consider the existence of God? Is the fact so obscure that it must take long centuries to prove it? Has he so hidden himself from the world that we have not yet exactly found out that he is or what he is?"

This is only apparently an objection of wisdom. If God were simply a fact of history, if he were simply a phenomenon in the past, then once found out or once discovered it would remain for all time. But since he is a person, each age must know and find him for itself; each generation must come to know and find out the living God from the standpoint which it occupies. It is not enough for you and for me that long generations ago men found him and bowed reverently before him and adored him. We must find him in our age and in our day, to know how he fills our lives and guides us to our destiny. This is the grand fact that lies before us, the great truth that is to unite us. Here, if anywhere, we must find God and unite in our beliefs. We could not afford to begin the discussions of a religious parliament without placing this great truth in the foreground. A parliament of religious belief without the recognition of the living God—that were impossible. Religion without a God is only the shadow of a shade; only a mockery that rises up in the human soul.

After all, we can form no true conception of ourselves or of man's greatness without God. The greatness of human nature depends upon its conception of the living God. All true religious joy, all greatness of aspiration that has wakened in these natures of ours, comes not from our conception of ourselves, not from our own recognition of the dignity of human nature within us, but from our conception of God and what he is, and our relation to him.

No man can ever find content in his own attainments or find peace and satisfaction in his own achievements. It is as he goes out toward the Infinite and the Eternal and feels that he is linked to him, that he finds satisfaction in his soul, and the peace of God which passeth understanding comes down into his heart. There are many reasons, therefore, why we should begin to-day with the study of Him who holds all knowledge and all wisdom. If there is a God, a Creator, a Lord of all things, Beginning of all things and End of all things, for whom all things are, then in him we are to find the key to history, the explanation of human nature, the light that shall guide us in our pathway in the future. You can all readily see, if you will reflect a moment, how everything would vanish of what we call great and

glorious in our material achievements, in our literature, in all our civil and social institutions, if that one thought of the living God were taken away.

But utter that simple name, and straightway there comes gathering around it the clustering of glorious words shining and leaping out of the darkness until they blaze like a galaxy of glory in the heavens—law, order, justice, love, truth, immortality, righteousness, glory! Blot out that word and leave in its place simply that other word "atheism," and then in the surrounding blackness we may see dim shadows of anarchy, lawlessness, despair, agony, distress; and if such words as law and order remain they are mere echoes of something that has long since passed away.

We need it, then, first of all for ourselves, that we may understand the dignity of human nature, that this great truth of God's existence should be brought close to us; we need it for our civilization.