The last decades of the Nineteenth century saw the acme of men's intellectual and spiritual genius - the eighties heralded the era of incandescent lamps and neon lights, the ninetees brought different religious denominations at one platform in Chicago "not for contention but for loving conference in one room." While the electrical display of Edison, first at Menlo Park and later at Manhattan, bade good-bye to the period of darkness, the Parliament of Religions sought to dispel man's prejudices against varied faiths, promised a larger fellowship among different peoples and presented a spectacle of "unequal moral grandeur". The famous Biblical apothegm - "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" - was echoed in John W. Hutchinson's ballad sung at the ringing of the Columbian Liberty bell in honour of "Manhattan day" and the discovery of America:

We'll raise the song of triumph when we see the hosts advance,
Our banners streaming high, and its mottoes shall entrance,
As the golden words they read, they will quickly join our van
And vote for the cause of freedom, and the brotherhood of man...

1 Mitra Shibani, "A Hundred Years of Light" in The Illustrated Weekly of India, Vol. C1 8 (February 24-March 1, 1980)
How peace on earth, the hosts above proclaim the nation’s free,
And all of our kin enjoy this boon of liberty,
We claim no creed for class or clan, but cherish all the good;
So round the World there soon will be a glorious brotherhood.

...The Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Man;
Proclaim it through the Nations, this glorious Christian plan.
The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man,
Come, join with us this chorus now, and waft it through the land.

The Parliament of Religions was an adjunct of the World’s
Columbian Exposition designed to commemorate the four hundred-
th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher
Columbus. The idea of holding "this grand assemblage" alongside
the greatest of World’s Fairs had been mooted by Charles Caroll
Bonney towards the end of 1889 and taken up by Lyman J. Gaze,
President of the Exposition, in the following year. The formation
of the World’s Congress Auxiliary in October 1890 and the
General Committee on Religious Congresses in the spring of 1891
with Bonney and John Henry Barrows as their respective Chairmen
set the modus operandi of the Parliament of Religions. In its
preliminary address to the World in June 1891, the General
Committee sought to prove the creative and regulative power of
religion as a factor in human development and invited representa-
tives of varied religions at the Exposition in 1893 "to review
the triumphs of religion in all ages... and its influence over
literature, art, commerce, government and the family life, to
indicate its power in promoting temperance and social purity,
and its harmony with true science... and to contribute to those
forces which shall bring about the unity of the race in the
worship of God and the service of man.

The preliminary address was largely welcomed and the General Committee's reports containing the programme of the Parliament evoked encouraging responses. The proposal appeared to Tennyson as "a noble idea", to Whittier as "an inspiration", to H. Dharma-pala as "the noblest and proudest", and to President W.F. Warren of Boston University as "instructive". Some of the letters of appreciation that the Committee received were from those Christian theologians who thought that the Parliament would show forth the superiority of Christianity to other religions. Rev. George E. Candlin of Tientsin wrote that the Parliament would inaugurate a new era of missionary success; Yoshiyas Hiraiwa, a Japanese Methodist, hoped that it would give a "great impetus to the World-wide Christian evangelization movement"; Bishop Graftan of Fond du Lac anticipated that it was preparing the way for "the reunion of all the World's religions in their true centre—Jesus Christ". There were others like the Archbishop of Canterbury who believed that Christianity being "the One religion" could not be regarded as a member of a Parliament of Religions without assuming the equality of the other intended members. Hence they refused to attend the Parliament.

One might ask did the organisers of the Parliament intend to evolve a Cosmic or Universal Faith? Perhaps not, because they believed that "the elements of a such a religion were already

5 Barrows, John Henry (ed.), The World's Parliament of Religions, p. 11.
6 Ibid., p. 11.
7 Ibid., p. 8.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
9 Ibid., pp. 18–61.
10 Ibid., pp. 18–61.
contained in the Christian ideal and Christian Scriptures." Dr Barrows, Chairman of the Committee on Religious Congresses, admitted that there was to be no suggestion on the part of Christian theologians that Christianity was to be thought of as on the same level with other religions. Through his speeches and writings he tried to convince a large section of Christians that the Parliament would bear a Christian imprint. At the Christian Endeavour Convention in New York he stated that Christianity was to supplant all other religions. "Though light has no fellowship with darkness, light does have fellowship with twilight. God has not left himself without witness, and those who have the full light of the Cross should bear brotherly hearts toward all who grope in a dimmer illumination." It was further argued that Christianity had nothing to fear from the contrast. "The best religion," said Dr Alger, "must come to the front and the best religion will ultimately survive, because it will contain all that is good true in all faiths." From a study of Houghton's and Barrow's accounts one gets a clear impression that the Christian spirit pervaded the Parliament from the beginning to the end.

11 Ibid., p. 1573.
13 Ibid., p. 1574. Marie Louise Burke is of the view that there were some connected with the Parliament, who, having no religious axe to grind, conceived of it in broader and more realistic terms. To them it was an unprecedented opportunity for promoting understanding and good-will among all seekers of truth. Nevertheless the Parliament was permeated with Christian prejudice. That Christianity would gloriously and unequivocally prove its superiority, she argues, was a foregone conclusion in the minds of many of its promoters. The question under consideration was not only whether or not Christianity was superior to other religions, but whether or not it was to replace other religions through missionary endeavour, and if so, how Swami Vivekananda in America. New Discoveries, pp. 51-84.
14 For a fuller discussion on the origin of the Parliament see My Master's Dissertation "Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions" (type script), University of London, 1976.
Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago in late July and learnt to his dismay that the Parliament was not to open until after the first week of September. His slender resources were insufficient to provide for such a lengthy stay in America. He got a further shock when the Information Bureau of the Columbian Exposition told him that no one could be accepted as a delegate even without proper credentials and that the time for admittance had expired. He approached the Theosophical Society for a grant which was blatantly refused. Colonel Olcott is said to have written a letter to someone in America: "I hope the winter’s cold will soon kill that devil".

But the "devil" proved to be made of harder stuff than anyone imagined. He "neither died nor gave up. In order to lessen his expenses he left Chicago for Boston and on the train met an old lady, Miss Katherine Abbott Sanborn, who invited him to stay at her farm called "Breezy Meadows" which lied near Framingham - a town in E. Massachusetts. "I have an advantage in living with her, in saving for sometime my expenditure of $1 per day, and she has the advantage of inviting her friends over here and showing them a curiosity from India! And all this must be borne", wrote Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga on August 20, 1893.

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16 Swami Vivekananda stayed in Chicago for about twelve days and visited the World’s Fair almost everyday. "It is a tremendous affair", he wrote to Alasinga from Breezy Meadows on August 20, 1893, "One must take at least ten days to go through it". *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 11. While he was impressed by the material triumphs and material industrial achievements of America, he felt disgusted by racial prejudice, of which he became a victim a few occasions. See, for example, *Maul Stumbling in His Eastern and Western Adviories*, pp. 270-71.
So far as it is known the *Evening Transcript* of Boston was the American first/daily and the *Framingham Tribune*, the first American weekly to report on Swami Vivekananda's activities in their issues of August 23 and 25, 1893, respectively. The former alluded to his visit to the Sherborn Reformatory where he spoke to the inmates on the manners, customs, and mode of living of his countrymen. The latter hailed him as "the Indian Rajah" who accompanied by Miss Sanborn, majestically drove 'behind a pair of horses' through the town of Holliston on route for Hunnewell. The Swami visited Boston on August 24, 1893, in the company of his host's cousin, F. B. Sanborn who was a journalist by profession and a Transcendentalist by taste. The Sanborns introduced him to J. H. Wright, professor of Greek at Harvard University, who invited him to Annisquam towards the end of August. Professor and Mrs. Wright were captivated by the Swami's erudition and eloquence. The latter was particularly struck by his long saffron robe "that caused universal amusement". "He was a most gorgeous vision", she wrote, "and one of the most interesting people I have yet come across... He is wonderfully clever and clear in putting his arguments... You cannot get trip him up, nor get ahead of him". The Swami not only confabulated with the Annisquam villagers on varied subjects ranging from British history to the traits of Anglo-Saxons, from the rise of Christianity to the "Sepoy mutiny" of 1857, but also

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18 Swami Vivekananda was greatly impressed by the Women prison euphemistically described in America as Reformatory. "It is the grandest thing I have seen in America" he wrote to Alasinga on August 20, 1893. "How the inmates are benevolently treated, how they are reformed and sent back as useful members of society; how grand, how beautiful, you must see to believe! And, oh, how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low in India. They know of no chance, no escape, no way to climb up". *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 13-14.

19 Burke, pp. 20-21.
congregation at the Episcopal Church by invitation of the Pastor, and Prof Wright. The Swami acknowledged his deep sense of gratitude to the learned professor whom he lovingly addressed as Adhyapak ji. It was he who induced *Swami* to attend the Parliament of Religion, solved his financial dilemmas and gave him a letter of recommendation to the Chairman of the committee on the selection of delegates. "Here is a man," he wrote, "who is more learned than all our learned professors put together." "To ask you Swami for your credentials," he told him, "is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine." The Harvard professor not only bought him a ticket to Chicago but also gave him the address of the Committee which was to provide accommodation for the oriental delegates. Before leaving for Chicago, the Swami visited Salem and Saratoga Springs at the invitations of Mrs Kate Tannatt Woods and Franklin B. Sanborn, and addressed the members of Thought and Work Club and American Social Science Association respectively.

20 See for example Swami Vivekananda’s letter to Alasinga dated November 2, 1893 in which he wrote: "He (Prof Wright) sympathised with me very much and urged upon me the necessity of going to the Parliament of Religions, which, he thought, would give me an introduction to the nation. As I was not acquainted with anybody, the Professor undertook to arrange everything for me, and eventually I came back to Chicago." *The Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 20. In the following year he asked Alasinga to thank Prof Wright for being "the first man who stood as my friend." *Ibid.*, p. 37.

21 His Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 297.

22 Swami Vivekananda left Annisquam for Salem on August 28 and stayed there until September 4. He delivered three talks in the town delineating the precepts of Hinduism, the condition of Indian women and children, the role of Christian missionaries and the customs and manners of his countrymen. At Saratoga Springs he discoursed on "The Mohammedan rule in India" and "The use of silver in India" at the American Social Science Association on September 6 and 7 respectively. Besides that he explained the customs and beliefs of the people of India.
"Armed" with credentials and letters of Introduction Swami Vivekananda returned to Chicago but lost the address of the Committee on the way. The "dazed" Swami stopped passers-by to enquire about the place but was impudently brushed aside or mimicked because of his colour or "bizarre attire". The night was fast descending and he looked round in bewilderment. At last he decided to sleep in a huge empty box which lied in the freight yards of the railroad. The next morning he went from door to door, asking for charity and enquiring about the venue of the Parliament. Because of smudged clothes and "travel-worn" silhouette he was booed at some houses and flippantly dismissed at others. "Housewives seeing the turban, squealed with fright and slammed doors. Servants pushed him down front-steps and swore at him."

The dogged Swami persisted - he still liked America. After being exhausted he decided to sit quietly by the roadside and await God's command. To his delight, a lady named George W. Hale who had seen a wearied Swami through the laced curtains of her fashionable home accosted him in a soft, modulated voice: "Sir, are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions?" Impressed by his modest demeanour and fluency of English she invited him to her house and played the Samaritan. Later she accompanied him to the Parliament of Religions where he was accepted as a delegate and lodged with the other oriental delegates.

Who can say whether it was sheer chance or the inscrutable hand of destiny that helped a penniless, forlorn monk reach the shores of Lake Michigan and represent Hinduism at the Parliament without being sponsored by any recognised body. A series of

23 Menon, Aubrey, p. 143.
fortuitous encounters helped him in getting a berth in the World’s first
religion fair. But for else, he might have dropped the idea of attending
it altogether. What the historian would term as chance, the theist
would regard as destiny. No doubt”, says Aubrey Menon, “Mother had a
hand in this, because to most people he must have looked as though
he was a mahout from Barnoum and Bailey’s circus. One may not
acquiesce to Menon’s description of the Swami but it is evident
that he received help from unknown quarters whenever put on trial
or enmeshed in hardships. Was it because he was a swami who
had surrendered his will to the higher will of God? Was his
entry into the Parliament a predetermined affair? The questions
unsolved invoke the age-old/metaphysical dispute between the fatalist and
the free-willist, the will-o’-the-wispish and relying on change
and the rationalist depending upon his brain and brawn. Without
being baffled or taking sides, the historian can only study the
dialectics of polemists.

* * * * *

The Parliament of Religions began its session on Monday, September 11, 1893 at 10 A.M., in the spacious Hall of Columbus at
the Art Institute at Chicago by ten strokes upon the new
Columbian Liberty Bell on which were inscribed the words: “Peace
on Earth, Goodwill to all Men”. Each stroke symbolised one of the
ten chief religions of mankind enumerated by President Bonney
in his address of Welcome as Theism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism,

24 Ibid., p. 143
Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Catholicism, the Greek Church and Protestantism in many forms. The procession which opened the Parliament was unique—The Jew marched with the Gentile and the Catholic marched with the Protestant. The sight was described as most remarkable. "There were strange robes, turbans and tunics, crosses and crescents, flowing hair and tonsured heads." "Swarthy divines in gorgeous costumes trod the isle to the platform leaning on the arms of Holy fathers in black garb, rendered even more somber by the contrast. By twos they ascended till all were seated." Upon the platform and in the body of the Hall, Christians sat next to Buddhists, Brahmans beside Greeks, followers of Confucius with high priests of theosophy, Deists from Bombay and Calcutta with the primates of the Catholic Church "in the new land." In his long flowing attire of white, Cardinal Gibbons sat on a regal-looking chair "of curiously wrought iron" in the centre of this august assemblage. The oriental delegates formed a cluster to his right and left. Protap Chunder Mosoomdar representing...

25 President Bonney's opening address to the Parliament was soaked in the spirit of liberality and tolerance. He argued like a St. Francis of Assisi that the finite could never comprehend the Infinite nor perfectly express its own view of the divine it followed that individual opinions of the divine nature and attributes would differ. The variety of views on God must not cause discord and strife but give incentives 'to deeper interest and examination.' Each one must see him through 'the colored glass' of his own nature. Each one must receive him according to his own capacity of reception. "The fraternal union of the religions of the World will come", he said, "when each seeks truly to know God has revealed himself in the other, and remembers the inexorable law that with what judgement it judges it shall itself be judged." Houghton (ed.) pp. 34-37-40.

26 Ibid. p. 34

27 New York Herald, September 12, 1893.

28 New York Tribune, September 12, 1893; The Boston Post, September 12, 1893.
the Brahmo Samaj along with B.B. Nagarkar; Mrs Annie Besant and Prof C.N. Chakravarti representing the Theosophical Society; H. Dharmapala representing the Buddhists of Ceylon, Vir Chand Gandhi representing the Jainas and Miss Jeanni Serabji representing the Parsees of India. "Conspicuous among these followers of Brahma and Buddha and Mohammed", remarked an eye witness, "was the eloquent monk Vivekananda of Bombay. He caught the fancy of the American press with his graceful presence in gorgeous red apparel and large yellow turban, with his somewhat portly form and large lustrous eyes like "orbs of fire" whose shape recalled "the classic comparison to a lotus petal". His physiognomy, wrote the Editor of The Daily Chrorical, bore "the most striking resemblance to the classic face of the Buddha" and he moved with a natural masculine grace, "like a great cat", as one lady described it.

Even James Gibbons did not have the aura of uniqueness which the Swami's countenance had. "Cardinals with their purple silk, white lace and huge pectoral cross", writes Aubrey Menon, "know how to dress for these occasions. But everybody in Chicago had seen a Cardinal's plumage. Nobody had seen a red robe topped by an enormous turban. In fact, it is probable that nobody had seen an East Indian. The Cardinal was eclipsed".

Although Swami Vivekananda had spoken to small gatherings in America he had never addressed an assembly of distinguished theologians. While all the other delegates had prepared addresses

29 Barrows (ed.), p. 62.
30 Rolland, Romain, p. 5.
31 Facsimile in The Indian Mirror, November 28, 1893.
32 Isherwood, Christopher (John Yale), What Religion is, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, Introduction.
33 Menon, Aubrey, p. 144.
he had none. For a moment he was filled with stage-fright, and as he himself admitted later, his heart fluttered and his tongue "nearly dried up". Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth. And I, who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage? It was not until the afternoon session of the Parliament that Swami Vivekananda surmounted the first touch of hesitation and addressed the audience as "Sisters and Brothers of America". The effect was electrical; the whole audience stood up to a man cheering and waving wildly for minutes. The audience was amazed to see a man who discarded the formalism of the Congress and addressed them fraternally. Both Barrows and Houghton record that when the Swami addressed the audience as "Sisters and Brothers", there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes.

After the applause had ceased, Swami Vivekananda thanked "the youngest of the nations in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the World, the Vedic order of Sannyasins" and introduced Hinduism as the mother of Religions, a religion which had taught

34 Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, November 2, 1893; Letters of Swami Vivekananda (hereafter cited as Letters), p. 53
35 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
36 S.E. Waldo, who was present on the first day of the Parliament became a great admirer of the Swami. In her reminiscences she wrote: His very first words in his melodious voice aroused a perfect storm of applause. It is doubtful if any one of the thousands who listened to those first eloquent utterances had the least idea that never before in his life had he stood before an audience. So ready was his speech, so excellent his mastery of English, so finished his language, so flashing his wit and repartee that every one supposed he was an experienced public speaker." His Eastern and Western Admirers, pp. 122-23.
the World both "tolerance and universal acceptance". He narrated how India had given shelter to the persecuted and the derelict refugees of all religions and lands vis. the Israelites and the Zoroastrians. The word "seclusion" could not be translated into Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindus, who considered all religions to be true. To argue his point home he quoted two passages from the scriptures; the first in which a siddha purusha (realised soul) says: "As the different streams having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, Oh Lord, so the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee"; the second in which Lord Krishna admonishes Arjuna on Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion): "Whosoever comes to me in whatsoever form I reach him, they are all struggling through paths that in the end always lead to Me".

37 See Swami Vivekananda's speech in Houghton (ed.), pp. 64-65
38 Though it has not been been possible to locate the scripture from which the above passage was taken, it appears that the Swami commingled a few sacred verses to suit the occasion. The symbol of the stream and the sea to explain the microcosmic and macrocosmic phenomena on a material plane occurs in most of the Hindu religious works. The Mundaka-nisad, for example, says: "As rivers, flowing, disappear in the ocean, losing name and form, so the wise man, free from name and form, goes unto the highest of the high,— the Supreme Divinity" (111/2.8.). The Bhagavad-gita, too, has a passage in which Arjuna, after beholding Lord Krishna's Virata-rupa (Universal form) "multicoloured like the sea" (XI/5) quips at the battle field of Kurukshetra: "As the rivers flow into the sea, so all these great warriors enter Your blazing mouths and perish" (XI/29).

39 ते तथा सा प्रपंचते तंत्रतुलि रे नाम-वर्धनं।
सभ। वर्त्तनानुः वर्त्तने महुः: प्राप्तै श्रेरिति॥

— The Bhagavad-gita (IV/11)
Alluding to the religious persecutions (though he did not overtly name Christian or Islamic nations, he meant them), Swami Vivekananda remarked that sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, had filled the earth with violence and impeded the growth of human society. He expressed the hope that the bell that tolled in honour of the Parliament may be "the death knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions with the sword or the pen and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal".

The brief speech lasting about three minutes struck the note of universal toleration so peculiar to Hindu thought. The audience gave him a grand ovation; some walked over the benches to gain proximity to him and touch the hem of his garment. The Swami more than lived up to his unique attire; his speech proved "like a tongue of flame" and it virtually "brought the house down." The American press described it as "the hit of the day." A Jewish intellectual who heard the speech told Swami Nikhilananda that he realized for the first time that his own religion, Judaism, was true, and that the Swami had addressed his words on behalf of not only his religion but all religions of the world.

40 Houghton (ed.), pp. 64-65.
41 Rolland, Romain, p. 37
42 Menon, Aubrey, p. 144.
43 Nikhilananda, Swami, p. 119. Swami Vivekananda was not the first speaker at the Parliament to stress the fundamentals of tolerance, as some of his biographers would make us believe (see for example Rolland's work, p. 38, Nikhilananda, pp. 119-20). In his address of welcome to the delegates Dr J.H. Barrows had unequivocally stated: "We are not here as Baptists and Buddhists, Catholics and Confucians, Parsees and Presbyterian Protestants, Methodists and Muslims; we are here as members of a Parliament of Religions, over which flies no sectarian flag, which is to be stampeded by no sectarian war-cries, but where for the first time in a large council is lifted up the banner of love, fellowship, brotherhood." Houghton (ed.), pp. 42-43. Some other speakers were: Archbishop Fearon and H.N. Higginbotham, expressed similar sentiments. Ibid., pp. 47-48.
The unknown Hindu monk who was 'hated and hooted' in Chicago a day before became a celebrity almost overnight. Mrs S.K. Blodget, recalling her impressions of Swami Vivekananda on the first day of the Parliament observed: "I saw scores of women walking over to the benches to get near him, and I said to myself, 'Well my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God' ". The Buddhist representative from Ceylon, Dharmapala, testified to the popularity of the Swami. According to him life-size portraits of the Hindu monk were found hung up in the streets of Chicago with the words "Monk Vivekananda" beneath them, and thousands of passers-by comprising men of all classes, paid obeisance to these pictures in the most reverential way.

The Parliament held its sessions for seventeen days and discussed a plethora of subjects which included among others, immortality, revelation, the incarnation of God, the universal elements in religion, the ethical unity of different religious systems, the defunct religions of Semitic antiquity of "Celtic Heathendom" and "Teutonic Heathendom", of Egypt, Greece and Rome, the role of Christian missionaries in the East, the relation of religion to art and science, philosophy and music, social problems and governments. Swami Vivekananda frequently participated in the deliberations of the Parliament and spoke on about twelve occasions at the plenary as well as scientific sect.

44 See Josephine Macleod's reminiscences in His Eastern and Western Admirers, p.245. Even the Church women of Chicago are reported to have almost fought with each other for the honour of shaking hands with the Swami. The Madras Mail, February 25, 1897.

45 The Indian Mirror, April 12, 1894. From Josephine MacLeod's reminiscences we learn that her ailing brother had a life-size picture of Swami Vivekananda in his bed room. His Eastern and Western Admirers, p.245.
After his first successful discourse on September 11, Swami Vivekananda did not speak for three days. Dr Barrows records that on September 15, just before the close of the afternoon session, the Chairman Dr F.A. Noble invited some remarks from Swami Vivekananda. He was greeted with an outburst of applause as he stepped forward. The Swami narrated the story of a frog who had thought his well to be the whole universe and could never be convinced to the contrary. He thus pointed to the religious acerbities of centuries that divided humanity into diverse factions. In the middle ages, religion far from uniting men "kindled wars which deluged Europe with blood". Long and sanguinary were the persecutions of Protestants by Roman Catholics and vice versa. Preceding that period were the sanguinary wars between the Christian powers of Europe and the Saracen government which held possession of Jerusalem and guarded the most sacred relics of the Christian religion. Like Emerson Swami Vivekananda believed that religion was as effectually destroyed by bigotry as by indifference. The insularity of religious outlook fomented intolerance in man characterised by emotional or subjective attachment to one's own religion and a complete hostility towards others. This partisan attitude begets fanaticism - "that sacred disease when zeal in religious matters outruns judgement".

In the discussion during the morning of September 19, Swami Vivekananda criticised the religious bigotry of the Christian nations and spoke of the patronising way in which he and his

46 Barrows (ed.), p. 118.
47 The Bengalee, November 25, 1893.
Fellow Asians had been treated by some of the speakers at the Parliament. "We have been told to accept Christianity," he said, "because the Christian nations are prosperous. We look at England, the richest Christian nation in the World, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 of Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellowmen. At such a price the Hindu will not have prosperity."

Saturated by emotions, the short speech reflected the Swami's indignation at the denunciation of Hinduism by some Christian speakers at the Parliament as also their claims to superiority over other religions. Even C. C. Bonney who, in his opening address defined religion as 'the love and worship of God and the love and service of man' and declared that the Parliament would mark "a new epoch of brotherhood and peace" expressed at the same time that no attempt was being made "to treat all religions as of equal merit". Dr J. H. Barrows whose Address of Welcome was applauded for its universal spirit implied nevertheless that Christianity could be ubiquitously accepted by all and sundry because it possessed a divine force and contained such elements which suited "the needs of all men". The highest prelate of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Gibbons, spoke in the same vein: "I would be wanting in my duty... if I did not say that it is our desire to present the claims of the Catholic Church to the observation, and if possible, to the acceptance of every right-minded man that will listen to us".

(Did he mean that all those who did not embrace Catholicism after hearing "... claims" were cramped or crankish?)

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48 The Chicago Daily Tribune, September 20, 1893
49 Houghton (ed.), pp. 37-40
50 Ibid., pp. 40-44.
51 Ibid., pp. 43-44.
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48 The Chicago Daily Tribune, September 20, 1893
49 Houghton (ed.), pp. 37-40
50 Ibid., pp. 40-44
51 Ibid., pp. 43-44.
All this was not in harmony with the spirit of the Parliament. Though many Christian speakers unfurled the banner of fraternity, some of them spoke disparagingly of the oriental religions. Professor N. Valentine, a representative of the Lutheran Church, for example, argued that all the "historic faiths" except Christianity had "terribly" "misconceived and distorted" the idea of God. Both Buddhism and Brahmanism presented a philosophy of the world "that pantheistically reduces God into impersonality", did not conceive God as "a being of redeeming love and loving activity" and substituted the idea of redemption for "faith and surrender to a redeeming God". "It is a philosophy", he said, that pessimistically condemns life itself as an evil and misfortune to be escaped from, and to be escaped by self-redemption, because life finds no saving in God, and so these faiths cannot fairly be said to attribute to God redemptive character and administration". Rev. Maurice Philips of Madras struck a blow at the Vedas by contending that the ancient seers did not acquire their knowledge of the Divine by intuition or empiricism but by "a primitive revelation". He not only mimicked the monism of the Upanishadas but also twisted the cosmology and anthropology of the Vedas to the point of distortion. Rabbi K. Kohler of New York appreciated Buddha's role in "softening the temper of millions" but censured him for impeding the progress of man by "loathing life as misery without comfort, as a burden of woe without hope of relief, dissolving it into a purposeless dream, an illusion evanescent into nothing". But the most
virulent attack on Hinduism was made by Rev. T. E. Slater on the third day of the Parliament. In his paper entitled "Concessions to native religious ideas" he described Hinduism as 'a vague eclecticism' which did not stand the test of reason, the Hindu concept of Soul and God was which is far from real, and the earliest of Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, which lacked "an explicit promise of divine forgiveness, an expression of peace and delight in God" and "a divine answer to prayer". "Among the many gods of the Hindu pantheon", he asserted, "none has ever come forward to claim the vacant throne once reverenced by Indian rishis. No other than the Jesus of the Gospels—"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World"—has ever appeared to fulfill this primitive idea of redemption by the efficacy of sacrifice; and when this Christian truth is preached, it ought not to sound strange to Indian ears."

Swami Vivekananda did not take all this lying down. Unlike other delegates from India who were somewhat apologetic in their speeches on September 19 he decided to meet the challenge of such speakers by delineating the precepts of Hinduism in its pristine form sans the accretions which had diminished its glow.


The Indian theist, B. B. Nagarkar, for example, discussed the degeneration of India in his paper "The Work of Social Reform in India" which was read on September 17. Though he was a rationalist by his religious leanings, he presented a fatalistic view of his country's downfall. "In all this", he said, "there was the hand of God". Referring to the evils of Indian society such as priestcraft, low superstition, degrading rites and ceremonies, demoralising customs and ceremonies, he remarked that the Almighty yearned to help them, to raise them to their former glory and greatness; but he saw that in the country itself there was no force or power that He could use as an instrument to work out His divine providence. It was for this purpose that an entirely alien and outside power was brought in. Such a justification of British rule in India by an Indian at a World Congregation was uncalled for. But Nagarkar stuck to his guns. "We had been in darkness", he argued, "and had well-nigh forgotten our bright and glorious past. But a new era dawned upon us". Houghton (ed.) pp. 330-32.
The Hall of Columbus was very full, for as The Chicago Interocean recorded, "it had been announced that Swami Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk, who looks so much like McCullough's Othello, was to speak. Ladies, ladies everywhere filled the great auditorium. When Dr Noble presented Swami Vivekananda before the audience, he was "applauded loudly". He was wearing an orange robe, bound with a scarlet sash and a pale yellow turban. The Chicago Daily Tribune of September 20, 1893 observed: "The customary smile was on his handsome face and his eyes shown with animation".

The Swami praised the assimilative character of Hinduism. The Hindu, he said, regarded all the religions from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism as so many attempts of the human Soul to grasp and realise the Infinite determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marked a stage of progress. He proudly asserted that the attempts of varied sects in India to demolish the edifice of the Vedic religion had boomeranged in the past; they being inchoate, could not survive for long and were ultimately absorbed in the mainstream of Hindu thought. "From the high spiritual flights of philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, from the atheism of the Jainas, to the low ideas of idolatry, and the multifarious mythologies, each and all have a place in the Hindu religion; although Manilal N. D'vivedi had also described Hinduism as embracing all shades of thought from "the atheistic Jainas and Buddhhas to the theistic Sampradayikas and Samajists, and the rational Advaitins" he did...

57 In a letter to Alasinga on November 2, 1893, the Swami wrote: "And the day I read my paper on Hinduism, the Hall was packed as it had never been before. I quote to you from the papers: "Ladies, ladies, ladies packing every place—filling every corner, they patiently waited and waited while the papers that separated them from Swami Vivekananda were read". The Complete Works, Vol. V., p. 21.

not discuss their common basis or bond of union. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that the common centre "to which all these widely diverging radii converge" was the Vedas. He, however, did not mean any particular set of books, but the accumulated treasury of spiritual law discovered by different persons in different times. Swami Vivekananda implied that Vedanta which literally meant "the end of the Vedas", not only included the four Vedic collections called Samhitās: the Rig-, Sama-, Yajur-, and Atharva, but also embraced the ancillary works called Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishadas. Unlike D'Vivedi, he ventured to establish harmony between Vedanta and Science and deflated the arguments of Christians like Maurice Phillips and T. E. Slater about the irrational theology of the Hindu religion.

Swami Vivekananda argued that the Vedic theory of creation was in perfect consonance with the laws of Science which affirmed that the sum total of Cosmic energy was the same throughout all. The question arose, if there was a time when nothing existed where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form in God."But then," he said," God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make him mutable, and everything mutable is a compound and everything compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. Therefore God would die. Therefore there never was a time when there was no creation. The idea of creation without a creator is irreconcilable with the Christian theory which holds that creation necessarily implies a beginning.

Delineating the immortality of the human soul he observed that man was not a combination of matter and material substances, but a spirit

59 D'Vivedi, who was a member of the Theosophical Society of Bombay, was not present in person but he furnished several papers which were read and discussed. His paper on Hinduism was read on the second day of the Parliament.

60 See Swami Vivekananda's Paper on Hinduism
living in a body. The Infinite was contained in the apparently finite; the eternal resided in the outwardly evanescent. The Soul was a homunculus—a man within a man. "Him the sword cannot pierce, him the fire cannot burn, him the water cannot melt, him the air cannot dry."

The Swami explained how the Soul determined its own destiny. No one can deny, he said that human beings inherited certain tendencies, but those tendencies only meant "the physical configuration through which a peculiar mind alone can act in a peculiar way." By the laws of affinity a Soul with a certain tendency took birth in a body which could be the fittest instrument for its expression. "This is in perfect accord with science," he remarked, "for science wants to explain everything by habit and habit is got through repetitions. So these repetitions are also necessary to explain the natural habits of a new-born soul. They were not got in this present life; therefore, they must have come down from past lives." The Swami contended that one could recall the experiences of previous births by following the precepts of rishis (seers). Consciousness was the name given to the surface of the mental ocean and within its depths were stored up all our experiences. "Try and struggle and they will come up and you will be conscious," he said in the vein of a St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Swami Vivekananda expounded the traditional view of Karma and transmigration that one's present was determined by one's past actions and the future by the present. He described the Soul as a circle whose

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61 "The Bhagavad Gita (II/13)"


63 Ibid.


Swami Vivekananda's Paper on Hinduism.

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For the Christian concept of sin, see The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV, pp. 361-76; Sadie John, A Biblical Cyclopaedia, pp. 605-10. It would be interesting to observe that most of the Christian speakers at the Parliament delineated this concept. See, for example, Rev. William Byrne's paper "Man from a Catholic Point of view" read on the third day and Rev. Joseph Cook's paper "Certainties of Religion" read on the fourth day of the Parliament of Religions. While explained the raison d'être of man's sin in a polite way, Joseph Cook used harsh words to stress his viewpoint. "I turn to every faith on earth except Christianity and I find every such faith a torme", he said. "It is a certainty... that except Christianity, there is no religion known under heaven, or among men, that effectively provides for the soul this joyful deliverance from the love of sin and the guilt of it," Haughton (ed.), pp. 320-21.
Religions was particularly struck by Swami Vivekananda's moving phrase, "Sinners, it is a sin to call men sinners". A stanza of a poem which appeared in the Open Court of October 12, 1893 - a contemporary organ of public opinion revealed how the audience "roared with approving roar" after listening to Swami Vivekananda's words that all were heirs to immortal bliss and not sinners.

Swami Vivekananda said that in order to realise divinity one must become free from the thralldom of ego - the "I" and "Mine" must vanish. Only the mercy of the Almighty could break this delusion about man's sinful nature, "and this mercy comes to the pure". Science had proved, and that he said, that physical individuality was a delusion, my body is one little, continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter. Therefore, to gain "this Infinite, Universal individuality, this miserable, little individuality must go". The overwhelming spirit of the Swami's Paper was the sense of oneness. The scientific laws of causation, of action and reaction, of conservation of energy and indestructibility of matter amidst perpetual transformations of form, all arose out of the same fact, viz., that the Self is ever complete and contains all; all actions, vibrations, movements, arise within It, and end within It; issue from It and return to It. A famous Biblical text of Taoism beautifully elaborates the oneness of Existence:

One Cosmic Brotherhood,
One Universal Good,
One Source, One Sway,
One Law be-holding Us,
One Purpose moulding Us,
One Life enfolding Us,
In Love always...
Race, Color, Creed, and Caste,
Fade with the Nightmare Past,
Man wakes to learn at last,
All Life is One.

—Ibid., p.815

67 Riepe, p.93.
68 Cited in Burke, p.79.
69 Das, Bhagwan, Essential Unity of all Religions, pp.255-56. A well known text of Taoism beautifully elaborates the one-ness of Existence:

One Cosmic Brotherhood,
One Universal Good,
One Source, One Sway,
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One Purpose moulding Us,
One Life enfolding Us,
In Love always....
Race, Color, Creed, and Caste,
Fade with the Nightmare Past,
Man wakes to learn at last,
All Life is One.
which aphorism reads: "There is nothing new under the sun; That which is, is that which was" is similar to "That art thou (tat tvam as) of the Upanishadas - an idea which found an able exegete in the Roman philosopher, Plotinus in the third century A.D. "See all things, not in the process of becoming, but in Being, and see themselves in the other. Each being contains in itself the whole intelligible world. Therefore All is everywhere. Each is there All, and All is Each. Man as he now is, has ceased to be the All. But when he ceases to be an individual, he raises himself again and penetrates the whole world."

Swami Vivekananda went a step further from Plotinus and Shankara. Instead of indulging in jargon or theological intricacies he tried to discuss this principle in the light of scientific truths. According to him, the goal of all science had been to find unity and it would stop from further progress the day it was achieved. Thus Chemistry could not develop after discovering one element out of which all others could be made; Physics would cease to grow after finding out one energy, of which all others were "but manifestations". Similarly, the science of religion would reach the acme of its progress when it discovered Him who was "the one life in the universe of death", "the constant basis of an ever-changing world" and "the only soul of which all souls are but manifestations".

70 The Holy Bible, Ecclesiastes, 1/9.
71 Huxley, Aldous, The Perennial Philosophy, p. 11.
72 Swami Vivekananda’s Paper on Hinduism.
Religion is said to be a three-storeyed structure—the first storey being polydaemonism or belief in nameless spirits, the second, polytheism or belief in various gods, and the last, monotheism or belief in one God. The first two are regarded as lower forms of worship and the third as the highest form. It was widely believed that the Hindus were polytheists and worshipped a multiplicity of deities. Some Christian theologians like Professor N. Valentine argued at the Parliament that Christianity and Islam alone were monotheistic in character—the former having an edge over the latter because of its "unique characteristics ("Its witness is original and independent—not derived as that of Islam, which adopted it from Judaic and Christian teaching"). This view was supported to some extent by the Indian theologian P. C. Mossomdar and Ramakrishna, who referred to "the great jarring noise of a heterogeneous polytheism" which rent "the stillness of the sky" before the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj. Swami Vivekananda refuted these views "At the very outset, I may tell you", he asserted, "that there is no polytheism in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, he will find the worshippers apply all the tributes of God-including omnipresence—to these images. It is not polytheism." The rose called by any other name would smell as sweet. Names are not explanations.

74 See for example Benham's The Dictionary of Religion published in 1891, pp. 835-36.
75 Houghton (ed.), p. 93.
76 Ibid., pp. 134-35
77 Ibid., p. 443. Some historians may disagree with the Swami on this point. It may, however, be said that the Vedas were presenting only the brighter side of Hinduism. The Vedic religion is purely monotheistic in character. The Rigveda (X/114.5) says: "The learned and wise describe the One existing God in many forms of expression. Another hymn from the Rigveda (X/164.64) refers to the different deities as different aspects of that One God: "Him they call Indra (the glorious), Mitra (the friendly), Varuna (the greatest and best) and Agni (the adorable)."
Swami Vivekananda explained the psychological necessity of prayers and ceremonies as aids to the purification of mind and image-worship as "a help to concentration." Idolatry was not confined to the Hindus; it was rather a universal phenomena. "We can no more think about anything without a material image than we can live without breathing. And by the law of association the material image calls the mental idea up and vice versa." And to argue his point home, he asked: Why is the Cross holy? Why is the face turned toward the sky in prayer? Why are there so many images in the Catholic Church? Why are there so many images in the minds of Protestants when they prey? the Swami was indeed at his best.

The purpose of human beings ought to realise their divine nature - with the aid of external objects such as idols, temples or books, or without them. The journey of the Soul was not from error to truth but from lower truth to higher truth. A man who could realise the Almighty being aided by external symbols was at the highest stage of spiritual realisation. But should he deride trying to achieve the same by different methods? The Swami saw unity in variety.

The history of religion demonstrates the insatiable desire of man for rites and symbols. Almost all the Hebrew prophets denounced ritualism. "Rend you hearts and not your garments." "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." "I take no delight in your assemblies." And yet in spite of the fact that what the prophets wrote was regarded as a matter of fact, the Temple at Jerusalem continued to be, for hundreds of years, the centre of a religion of rites, ceremonies and sacrifices. What the Jews did in spite of their prophets, Christians have done in spite of Christ, said Huxley. A study of Buddhist history reveals almost the same facts. "For the Buddha of the Pali scriptures, ritual was one of the fetters holding back the soul from enlightenment and liberation. Nevertheless, the religion he founded has made full use of ceremonies... and sacramental rites."

Huxley, pp. 308-9
in religion and described the diverse religious paths as leading to the same goal. Every other religion, he said, enunciated certain fixed dogmas and tried to force society to adopt them. "They lay down before society one coat which must fit Jack and Job and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body." Such an attitude was deleterious to peace and harmony and encouraged fissiparous tendencies among mankind. Truth could be expressed in a hundred thousand ways and each one of these was true in its own way. From different points in the radii, the centre was seen differently depending on the standpoint. The Hindus never claimed that he alone was right or that he himself "would be saved and not others".

"We find perfect men even beyond the pale of our caste and creed", declared Ved Vyas.

In conclusion, Swami Vivekananda described the future universal religion as one which would be infinite in its scope and hold no local religion as one which would be exclusive for the Brahman or Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, but accord due place to every human being - from the lowest grovelling savage to a highly civilised person - which will keep persecution and intolerance at abeyance in its polity and recognise divinity in everyone, and which will use its power in aiding humanity to realise its own true divine nature.

79 Devdas, Nalini, Svami Vivekananda, pp. 18-19; see also Kirtikar, Studies in Vedanta, p. 7.
80 Cited in the Swami's Paper on Hinduism. A well known Vedic aphorism says: "Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides"—Rigveda 1/89, 1. All the Hindu sacred scriptures regard True knowledge as the knowledge of the Eternal and that of the Aum human soul.
81 Swami Vivekananda's Paper on Hinduism.
The idea of a Universal religion "having no temporal, spatial or sectarian bounds" but including every attitude of the human mind created great interest. Although Swami Vivekananda did not suggest any scheme by which a Universal religion could come into existence, he advocated, in his final address, "a means by which at least a partial unity could be established among religions".

On September 20 Swami Vivekananda was asked by the Chairman, the Rev. Dr. A. N. Memorie, to make some concluding remarks in the evening session of the Parliament. He spoke impromptu and questioned the basis of missionary enterprise in India by pointing out that Indians had "enough" of religion. What they needed was the amelioration of their economic condition. "You Christians, who are so fond of sending out missionaries to save the souls of the heathen, why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation?... You erect Churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is not religion... but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats." He regretted that the Christian missionaries had remained unmoved when the pestilence of famine engulfed thousands of Indians in the near past.

What Swami Vivekananda said was in the true Vedic spirit. The tenth chapter of the Rigveda contains three verses which invoke fraternal feelings among the people. "0, ye mankind, let all your activities lead you to one common goal, let there be a common language for all of you and let your mind be of one accord" (X/191.2). "0, ye mankind let the object of your thought be the same; let the place of your assembly be common; let your mind be of one accord and let your hearts be united together" (X/191.3). "0, ye mankind, let your object of life be one and the same, let your hearts be equal (in feeling), and let your minds be united together so that there may be an excellent common status of life for all" (X/191.4).

Burke, p. 650
The Address, now known as "Religion, not the crying need for India" has not been quoted in full in Barrows' or Houghton's accounts of the Parliament. Burke has made some addition to it on the basis of the speech in The Christian Herald of October 11, 1893.

Religion was not conducive to an empty stomach nor the gastric or pancreatic juices were toned up by the doctrinaire priests. "It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion," he thundered, "it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics." Did not it amount to giving them "stones" when they asked for "bread"? "Is it right," he asked, "send missionaries to teach them how better to earn a piece of bread, and not teach them metaphysical nonsense." He ruefully expressed that the missionaries helped only those who became Christians "abandoning the faith of their forefathers." Was not love, righteousness in action, as Jesus Christ preached? Would not the Christians do better extending by extending the Gospel of Brotherhood beyond the pale of their religion? "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" "The Swami regretted that he came to the West to seek aid for his impoverished people but realized how difficult it was "to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land." The short speech diagnosed India's most pressing problem of the times. It seems to have been inspired by a patriotic seal and a genuine concern for the poor natives of India. The Christian speakers who, before him, had discussed the spread of Christianity in various parts of the globe, as also the moral significance of proselytization, were stunned to hear the Swami who asked them to first save the bodies of the "heathen" before curing the vexations of their so

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 The Christian Herald, October 11, 1893; facsimile in Burke, pp. 85-86.
89 The Holy Bible, Malachi, 2.10
91 Prominent among these papers were "Christian Evangelism" by James Brand, "Christ, the Saviour of the World" by B. Fay Mills, "The Adoration of Jesus Christ" by D. J. Kennedy. See Houghton (ed), pp. 453-56, 464-471, 498-505.
Many Christians, especially Catholics, welcomed the Swami's criticism and regarded it as a pointer to the practical problems of human society. "I endorse the denunciation that was hurled forth last night," said Bishop Keans, "against the system of pretended charity that offered food to the hungry Hindus at the cost of their conscience and faith. It is a shame and a disgrace to those who call themselves Christians!" From Keane's address we learn a bit more about the Swami's speech of September 20 which seems to have been abridged both by Barrows and Houghton in their accounts. It appears he described the life of monks whose only possessions were saffron robes, a girdle for the loins, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and a strainer. They went from house to house chanting devotional songs and survived on charity what they received from the people. "My heart was glad when I listened last night and heard our good friend, the Hindu, confess that for years he did not know where he was going to get his next meal! said one, "That was the way with these poor Franciscan monks. They were reduced to poverty in order that they might better consecrate themselves to the service of God everywhere." So profound was the effect of the Swami's address that many speakers at the Parliament synchronised

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92 Barrows (ed.), p. 228; Houghton (ed.), pp. 525-26. Colonel Wentworth Higginson narrated an incident in the Parliament on September 21 to show that the order of oriental mendicants had more faith in the Almighty than their Christian counterparts. One of his friends in Chicago told him that he asked an oriental visitor whether he had sufficient amount of money to go where he intended to. The calm face of the oriental remained unruffled. "Oh", he said, "I think I can go; I think there will be no trouble; I have $15 in my pocket." The allusion could have been to the Swami, who was running out of money in Chicago before he decided to leave for Boston in August 1893. "Put any of us", said Cal. Higginson after narrating the story, "put the greatest Christian saint among us, 13000 miles away from home with only $15 in his pocket, and do you think that he would be absolutely sure that unassisted Divine Providence would bring him back without a call at his banker's?" Ibid., p. 511.
Religion with social problems on the following day. The famous Cambridge scholar, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson exhorted the asceticists to shed their complacency and take a positive attitude for solving the social dilemmas. "With the seething problems of social reform penetrating all our community," he said, "is it quite time for us to assume the attitude of infallibility before the descendants of Plato and the disciples of Gautama Buddha". He read a few extracts from an old German poem in which St. Anthony admonished different species of fish to behave - the pickerel ought not to eat each other; the trout ought not to steal each other's food and the eel ought not go eeling around. The fishes heard the saint in rapture but did not act upon his advise:

The trout went on stealing,
The eels went on eeling,
Much delighted were they,
But preferred the old way.

"Let us guard against that danger", warned Higginson, and ask "how well any of us have dealt with the actual problems of human life. When it comes to that... have any of us so very much to boast of?"

Not all the Christians spoke in the vein of Higginson. But many among them felt that something was wrong in the state of Denmark. When Charles F. Donnelly whose paper was read by Bishop Keane, advanced the argument that the Church had always been the almoner of the poor and had established innumerable charitable institutions, Prof. F. G. Peabody retorted:

94 Prominent among the papers dealing with the social questions were "Test of Works applied" by Higginson, "Religion and the erring and criminal classes" by Anna G. Spencer, "The relation of the Catholic Church to the poor and destitute" by Charles F. Donnelly, "Christianity and the social question" by F. G. Peabody, and "Christianity as a social force" by Richard T. Ely. Ibid., pp. 516–525, 930–54.
95 Ibid., p. 511.
"Where is beggary most conspicuous and most shiftless but in European countries like Italy or Spain, where the Church of Christ has had for centuries uninterrupted control? And where do spurious poverty and pious mendicancy find their easiest victims to-day, if it is not in the hearts of the Christian congregations." It was further argued that though Christianity as a social force stood for progress, the majority of Christians were individualists rather than universalists and their claims to adhering to the principle of fraternity were born of mere ignorance or pretense—"hypocrisy of the kind condemned by Christ in the strongest language." "It does not avail us to make long prayers while we neglect widows and orphans in need," said Professor Richard T. Ely of the University of Wisconsin. "He who did this in the time of Christ violated the principles of national brotherhood. He who does so now violates the principles of universal brotherhood." The learned professor not only lashed his listeners into a fury by ridiculing false Christianity, but also observed without mincing words that Jesus Christ "could not even for any one time promulgate a social code, and still less could He prescribe legislation for all time." 

97 Ibid, p. 530
98 Prof Richard T. Ely's concluding remarks were a pointer to the increasing hypocrisy among a section of Christian social reformers. "We can imagine Christ among us to-day, pointing as of old, to our great temples and warning us that the time will come when one stone of them shall not rest upon another. We can imagine Christ pointing to our grade crossings, and to our link and pin couplers, covered with the blood of mutilated brakemen and crying out to us: 'Woe unto you, hypocrites, ye do these things, and for pretense make long prayers'. . . . We can also imagine Him in His scathing denunciations and heart-searching sermons opening our eyes to our social iniquities and shortcomings, and calling to mind the judgement to come. . . ." Ibid, p. 554.
The social issues raised by the Swami thus created a frenzied reaction in religious circles. Christianity was being put to test in more ways than one. The climax was reached when the pros and cons of missionary methods were officially brought up for discussion on the afternoon of September 22.

It is unfortunate that some speeches of Swami Vivekananda delivered before the scientific section of the Parliament have not been found. Dr Barrows has recorded the dates, the hours and the subjects of four of them. On September 22 he spoke twice on "Orthodox Hinduism and the Vedanta philosophy" and "The modern religions of India" in the morning and afternoon sessions respectively; on September 23 he reviewed the foregoing addresses at the Parliament and two days later discussed the essence of the Hindu religion. Of these, the lectures on orthodox Hinduism and "On the subject of foregoing addresses" were briefly reported by The Chicago Daily Tribune of September 23 and 24, 1893. Regarding the first, the Daily wrote that Hall 3 was overcrowded and hundreds of questions were asked from the floor and answered by Swami Vivekananda "with wonderful skill and lucidity". At the close of the session he was met by eager questioners "who begged him to give a

100 The scientific section of the Parliament was opened on September 15, 1893 to discuss papers dealing with the science of religion. The sessions were conducted simultaneously with the open session at the Hall of Columbus.
his semi public lecture somewhere on the subject of religion. He said he already had the project under consideration.*

In his lecture on September 23 the Swami observed that there was unanimity among all the speakers at the Parliament about the realization of the cherished ideal of the brotherhood of man. As there were multifarious sects having different forms of beliefs about God, His attributes, His relations to the universe etc. there could be no meeting-point among religions until they shed their predilections, broadened their vision and embraced all mankind. He rejected the view that we should do good to our fellowmen because every good bad and mean deed reacted on the doer: "This appears to me to savor of the shopkeeper ourselves first, our brother afterward." He exhorted the audience to love one another whether they believed in the universal fatherhood of God or not. Every religion proclaimed man as a divine being and he who harmed any one marred the divinity in him. The view seemed quite akin to the fifth book of the Pentateuch (21: 23) which says: "He who sheds the blood of a human being, it is accounted to him as though he diminished (or destroyed) the Divine image." Despite man's failings and frailties he emerges as 'holy' in almost all the religious scriptures - "holier even than the scrolls of the Torah". The divine in him is not by virtue of what he does, but by virtue of what he is. "I went from God to God, until they cried from me in me, '0 thou?' " said the Sufi saint, Bayasid of Bistun. It was this idea that Swami Vivekananda explain while touring the different parts of America in most of his speeches/after the end of the Parliament.

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102 The Chicago Daily Tribune, September 23, 1893.
103 The Chicago Daily Tribune, September 24, 1893.
104 Heschel, Abraham Joshua, "The concept of man in Jewish thought" in Radhakrishnan and Raju (eds.), The Concept of Man, p. 138.
105 Cited in Huxley, The perennial Philosophy, p. 18.
On September 26, Swami Vivekananda delivered before the Parliament a short address described in The Complete Works as "Buddhism, the fulfilment of Hinduism". Unlike B. Tatsubauchi of Japan, who in his paper set forth Buddha "as a typical perfect man" the Swami glorified him as God incarnate on earth. However, he argued that Buddha did not preach any new doctrine, and he like Jesus, "came to fulfil and not to destroy". The relation between Hinduism and Buddhism was almost the same as between Judaism and Christianity. "As the Jews did not understand the fulfilment of the Old Testament, so the Buddhist did not understand the fulfilment of the truths of the Hindu religion". But while the Jews nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross the Hindus created a niche for him in their pantheon.

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that the Hindu religion was divided into two parts: the ceremonial and the spiritual. Buddha belonged to the latter category. He was a monk and he simplified the profound teaching of the Vedas to make the spiritual truths intelligible to the common people. The gospel was preached in Pali, the language of the masses, than in Sanskrit. Buddha was the first religious preceptor to initiate missionary work and conceive the idea of proselyting. The order that he established did magnificent social work, and inculcated the ideas of sympathy, purity and charity among the people and rendered Indian society so great that a Greek historian was led to remark that no Hindu was known to tell an untruth and no Hindu woman was known to be unchaste.

The Swami contended that the disciples of Buddha did not understand...
his philosophy properly and struggled against 'the eternal rocks' of the Vedic religion, only to face decline and later collapse.

Turning to the group of Buddhists on the platform the Swami remarked that the schism between "Brahmanism" and Buddhism had been the sole cause of the present-day degradation of India. The solution lay in combining the intellect of the Brahmins with "the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanising power of the great master".

There is not enough material in American newspapers to show how the Buddhists reacted to this address. It appears that liberal-minded Buddhists such as Dharmapala, Shaku Soyen and Kinsa Ringe were not anguished by the Swami's criticism. On September 27, in his final address, Swami Vivekananda expressed his gratitude to the organisers of the Parliament 'whose large hearts and love of truth first dreamed this wonderful dream and then realised it'. The whole gamut of discourses were marked by the spirit of harmony as well as by that of discord. But a few jarring notes, by their striking contrast, "made the general harmony the sweeter". He advocated universal brotherhood instead of a universal religion. In his view neither eclecticism nor syncreticism could establish harmony among different religions. Eclecticism might present something "as attractive as a bouquet of flowers". But this could not grow as it had no root in the soil of life, and syncreticism could not last for long only because it stressed the similarities and not the points of difference among the parties involved. Hence the Christian was not to become a

109 Ibid.
110 Dharmapala represented the Buddhists of Ceylon; Shaku Soyen and Kinsa Ringe, those of Japan.
Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. "But each must assimilate
the others and grow according to its own law of growth".

Swami/remarked that the Chicago Parliament had proved to the World
that holiness, purity and charity were not the exclusive possessions
in the World
of any "Church"/and that every system had produced men and women of
the most exalted character. Any one who expected that religious unity
would be achieved by the triumph of his religion over the others was
hoping against hope. In conclusion he hoped that on the banner of every
religion would soon be written: "Help and not fight,"Assimilation and
not destruction","Harmony and peace and not dissension".

Dr Barrows wrote in his account that Swami Vivekananda was always
heard with interest but very little approval was shown for some of
the sentiments he expressed in his closing address. The public reaction
was, however, different. Marie Louise Burke in her New Discoveries quotes
from three American newspapers - The New York World of October 1, 1893,
the Critic of October 7, 1893 and The Chicago Interocian of September 1,
1894 - to prove that the public opinion attested to the Swami's popu-
114
larity on the last day of the Parliament.

Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the Parliament were short but full of
meaning. Unlike Dharmapala he did not quote from Max Muller, Rhys Davids
115
or Paul Deussen to give punch to his talks or argue like a lawyer as
V.C. Gandhi did. He advanced his ideas with as much lucidity as a teacher
of mathematics would explain an algebraic equation. As a Memphis reporter

114 Burke, pp. 91-94.
115 Contemporary Western thinkers on Hindu thought.
Later commented: "He advances his ideas, nor makes assertions that he does not follow up to a logical conclusion." The Swami was an orator par excellence, but he was never led away by his rhetoric on the platform of the Parliament.

Swami Vivekananda spoke with pride of his country and its cultural and religious heritage. He did not pay any tribute to "the moral and civilising influence of English rule in India", as B.B. Nagarkar did; nor did he pronounce like Mosoomdar that Jesus Christ was "an essential factor in the future of India". He was impressed but not dazzled by the splendour of material development of the West, nor did he bow before the muse of glossy culture of the Occident. His criticism of Christianity was not as vehement as the Rev. J. Cook's or George T. Pentacost's denunciation of Hinduism. Some of his speeches came as a response to the 'false' accusations of Christian speakers against the Hindu religion. He was never apologetic in tone like some other oriental religious delegates and justified all types of belief ranging from atheism to idolatry. He was sarcastic at times and spoke harsh words in a soft voice. "The Hindus have their faults", he said in his Paper on Hinduism, "but mark this, they are always toward punishing their own bodies, and never toward cutting the throats of their neighbours. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of inquisition. And even this cannot be laid at the door of religion any more than the burning of witches can be laid at the door of Christianity." Hinduism which had been condemned as "un-godly" by Evangelicals, despised as "inefficient" by utilitarians, pilloried as "wholly and fearfully evil

118 Ibid., p. 1580.
119 Houghton (ed.), p. 444.
by Christian missionaries, began to command respect again. In the foreword to his work, Li Hung Chang's scrap book, Hiram Maxim observed that the American Protestants who imagined that they would have an easy task in the Parliament and participated in its deliberations with the air of 'Just see me wipe you out' realised soon after the Swami's speech that 'they had a Napoleon to deal with'. He spoke English 'like a Webster' and presented religion in an agreeable light for the first time to them! Argument seemed impossible with him. He played with the parsons 'as a cat plays with a mouse'. They were in a state of consternation, and denounced him 'as an agent of the devil'. But the deed was done; he had sown the seed and the Americans commenced to think. They said to themselves: 'Shall we waste our money in sending missionaries who know nothing of religion, as compared with this man, to teach men as he?' No! And the missionary income fell off more than a million dollars a year in consequence.

Swami Vivekananda's exposition of Vedanta was based on the assumption that it contained the essentials of all religions. He implied that Vedanta was not one of the many faiths or religious systems but the common basis of all of them. However, his interpretation was described by Hume, R.A. in Barrows (ed.), pp. 1269-70. The change in the popular attitude towards Hinduism in particular and other Eastern religions in general is reflected in many contemporary American journals and periodicals. The Chicago Daily Tribune, for example, wrote: "We have so long been accustomed to send out missionaries to convert the poor, ignorant Hindu that the idea of reversing the situation and taking the Hindu as our teacher brings a mental shock which is most invigorating". (Facsimile without date) in The Brahmayadin, January 30, 1897. For more details see my Master's Dissertation, pp. 41-43.

121 Cited in Burke, Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West, (hereafter referred as second visit), pp. 685-86.
was not sectarian. His Neo-Vedantism was different from the traditional Vedanta of Shankaracharya. Though both the systems describe Brahman, the ultimate reality, as one without a second, the Neo-Vedanta alone reconciles dvaita (dualism) with advaita (non-dualism), sagun (qualified) and nirgun (qualityless) Brahman/sakar (having form) with nirakar (formless Prabhu (God). It was this universal approach towards religion that endeared him to the Parliament and the American people. His speeches wrote, Francis Albert Doughty in Boston Evening Transcript were "broad as the heavens above us, embracing the best in all religions, as the ultimate universal religion—charity to all mankind, good works for the love of God, not for fear of punishment or hope of reward." The report added that if the Swami merely crossed the platform he was applauded, and this marked approval of thousands he accepts in a child-like spirit of gratification, without a trace of conceit.

The Northampton Daily Herald mentioned in its issue of April 11, 1894 how the Chairman used to keep Swami Vivekananda's address until the end of the session, "the purpose being to make the people stay until the end of the programme." The same fact is found mentioned in an Editorial comment in Boston Evening Transcript of April 5, 1894:

"On a warm day when a prosy speaker talked too long and people began going home by hundreds, the Chairman would announce that Swami Vivekananda would make a short address just before the benediction. Then he would have the peaceful hundreds perfectly in their places. The four thousand fanning people in the Hall of Columbus would sit smiling and expectant, waiting for an hour or two of other men's speeches to listen to Vivekananda for fifteen minutes".

In a letter to Alasinga,

123 Facsimile in The Indian Mirror, November 11, 1893.
Swami Vivekananda himself wrote that the Chairman knew the old rule of keeping the best until the last.

The Review of Reviews described the Swami’s addresses at the Parliament as "noble and sublime"; the Critic wrote that 'no one expressed so well the spirit of the Parliament - its limitations and its finest influence as did the Hindoo monk'; The Chicago Daily Interocean observed that no delegate attracted "more courteous attention" in Chicago than Swami Vivekananda; The Daily Chronicle called "the gorgeously robed" Vivekananda as "subtle"; The New York Herald described him as "undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions"; The Independent praised him for his "eloquence and intellect" and The Churchman after remarking that he added nothing to the study of comparative religion admitted that he was "both eloquent and interesting." "Without him the Parliament would have been a flop", says Aubrey Menon. Sheer exaggeration; might one reverse the quote: Without the Parliament he would have "flopped" America discovered him - an achievement which his motherland could not boast of - and he, in his turn discovered the hidden cankers in its material civilisation. He came as a sannyasin and returned as a "prophet".

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125 His Eastern and Western Disciples, p. 312.
126 Burke, p. 92.
127 Ibid., p. 93.
128 Cited in The Indian Mirror, November 28, 1893
129 Ibid., December 27, 1893.
130 The Independent, September 28, 1893.
131 The Churchman, October 21, 1893.
132 Menon, p. 144.