

The International Institute of Shanghai, an Eastern Parliament of Religions

by
Donald H. Bishop

Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 6, No. 3. (Summer, 1972) © World Wisdom, Inc.

www.studiesincomparativereligion.com

IN the September, 1913, issue of *The Open Court* Paul Carus, the editor, wrote: “There seems to be very little probability of a repetition of the Religious Parliament which took place at Chicago in the memorable year 1893. Nevertheless the idea is not dead. On the contrary the seeds sown there are scattered throughout the world and take root in different countries and in different minds”.¹ One of the places where a seed was sown was Shanghai, China; and one of the minds in which the idea took root was Gilbert H. Reid's, the founder in 1894 of the International Institute of China.

Reid was born in 1857 at Laurel, New York. He graduated from Hamilton College and Union Theological Seminary. On finishing at the latter he went immediately to Chefoo, Shantung province, China as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church. Reid became increasingly restless under the Missionary Board from 1882 to 1893, primarily because missionary activity was carried on almost exclusively among the lower classes. He believed that Christianity would be much more persuasive in China if it were spread among the upper classes, the literati and mandarins, who in turn would influence others, for it was a time honored maxim of Chinese thought that “the influential, whether in wealth or learning, in scientific acquirement or official position, in morals or religion, should use their superior influence not for themselves but for those who are in need or are

¹ Paul Carus, The International Institute of China. *The Open Court* XXVII (Sept. 1913), p. 562.

less favoured”.²

When Reid returned to the United States on furlough in 1893, he requested permission from the Missionary Board in New York City to undertake special work among the literati. “You had better preach among the common people, as the other missionaries do,” was their answer.³ Agreement being impossible, Reid severed his relationships with the Board and in early 1894 returned to China to set up an independent organization. It was first called “The Mission Among the Higher Classes” and later “The International Institute of China”. Its aim was “to advance the cause of international harmony and good will, and the cause of truth and righteousness, with special reference to the welfare of China”,⁴ “to bring together in one body kindred spirits of every nation and every religion...”,⁵ or to bring about “...peace and harmony, friendship and good will, along three lines, between Chinese and those of other nationalities, between Christians and those of other religious Faiths, and between one set of Chinese and another”.⁶

As indicated above, a major aim of the Institute was to bring about conciliation between the followers of the various faiths in China. To achieve it a Religious Committee or Section, as it was called, was formed, consisting of 20 members.⁷ Beginning in 1910 it sponsored monthly meetings, and from 1912 to 1927, except when Reid was away, weekly Sunday meetings at which leaders of each religion talked. Among the better known speakers were the Confucianists Tang Tsu-an, Chen Huan-chang, Wu Ting-fang, Liang T'ien Chu, and the “noted scholar,” Ku Chu-Rau, “who gave an instructive address on Confucianism and prayer”⁸; the Buddhists Tsung Yang from Shanghai and Tasuku Harada from Japan; the Moslem mullahs Mah I-chih, Ha Shou-fu and Wang Sheng-fu;

² *The International Journal*. Gilbert Reid, editor. V (July 2, 1927) p. 8.

³ Annual Report of the International Institute of China. 1914, p. 34.

⁴ Annual Report. 1913. p. 1.

⁵ Annual Report. 1926. p. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ There were three other sections or committees, Educational, Commercial and Women's, each carrying on its own program within the Institute.

⁸ The North China Herald, 17 May 1913.

the Taoists Chao Chui-shui and Chang Tien Shih, and Professor Teje Singh, a Sikh from India.⁹

Speakers on Christianity included the Reverend C. E. Darwent, for a number of years pastor of the Union Church in Shanghai; the head of the Christian Literature Society for China, Dr. Timothy Richard, “that great mind and heart from Wales, who made in many respects the greatest impression on my life from the very time I landed in China”,¹⁰ Reverend W. H. Lacy, D. D. of the Methodist Publishing House in Shanghai; Reverend Dr. W. A. P. Martin, “one of the greatest men who has come from abroad to teach and help China”,¹¹ as well as Dr. Reid himself, and a number of visiting clergymen from the United States such as Professor George W. Knox; Reverend Charles W. Wendte, founder of the Conferences of Free Religious Liberals; Henry C. Mabie, secretary of the American Baptist Union; and Josiah Strong, D. D. of the Bible House in New York City.¹² Often a series of meetings were held around a single theme such as The Concept of Prayer, Truths Common To All Religions, The Hopes of the Different Religions, The Teachings of the Great Religions, Religions and Morality, Religions and Revolution, Religions and Peace, Religions and the Present Crisis, with a representative of each religion speaking in turn each Sunday on the subject.

The stimulus for the meetings which Reid himself referred to as “a permanent parliament of religions”¹³ and “a perpetual Congress of Religions”¹⁴ came from two

⁹ The 24 May 1913 issue of The North China Herald reported that at the meeting at which Professor Singh spoke, “there were upwards of 100 of them, both men and women, and about an equal number of persons from other religions,” p. 534. In his 1913 report Reid wrote of the meeting, “Several of these meetings have been crowded and full of interest. The Sikh preacher drew many of the Sikh men and women in Shanghai. They seemed surprised that they could hold such a meeting under the auspices of the Institute.” p. 17.

¹⁰ Annual Report, 1921. p. 23.

¹¹ Annual Report, 1917. p. 18.

¹² The representative nature of the Institute which was reflected in the Religious Section and meetings is indicated in a statement in The Shanghai Mercury: “A more cosmopolitan gathering than that which attended Wednesday's Semi-Annual Meeting of the International Institute... has not, so far as we are aware, ever before assembled in Shanghai.

¹³ Annual Report, 1913. p. 12.

¹⁴ Reverend Gilbert Reid, D.D. *A Christian's Appreciation of Other Faiths*. Chicago Open Court Publishing Co., 1921. p. 202. Carus described the Institute as being: “devoted to the purpose of continuing in Shanghai

sources, his own religious convictions and his familiarity with the 1893 Congress. Reid was a friend of a like-minded Methodist missionary in neighbouring Tientsen. George T. Candlin. Both were at the meetings in Chicago and remained for eight days to attend the Congress of Missions which followed and at which they spoke. One of Reid's professors at Union Theological Seminary, Phillip Schaff, was a Parliament speaker. Reid was acquainted with Paul Carus who became the secretary of the Continuing Committee of the Parliament. He knew a large number of the more liberal clergymen of the time. Reid was a friend of such Unitarians as J. T. Sunderland who attended the Parliament and spoke at the Institute in 1913.¹⁵ He knew Professor J. Estlin Carpenter of Oxford and Reverend Bonet-Maury of Paris who spoke at the Parliament and staunchly supported the Institute. Reid was acquainted with the Buddhist delegate Dharmapala and invited him to speak at the Institute when he toured China in 1913.¹⁶ One of Reid's closest friends and strongest supporter was Timothy Richard who was very interested in the Parliament even though he did not attend.¹⁷

Several parallels between the meetings at the International Institute and those of the Parliament may be noted. One is the representative nature of each. The diversity of speakers and themes at the Institute has been mentioned already. The cosmopolitan

the work of the Religious Parliament by adapting it to the local needs of Chinese conditions." *op. cit.*, p. 563.

¹⁵ In his 1915 report of October 15th Reid wrote, "For a time, as mentioned in our last Report, it seemed as if we were being deserted... Unexpected help has come from Unitarian friends in the United States." p. 11. The aid included an outright appropriation from The American Unitarian Association, the founding of a Billings Lectureship at the Institute similar to the Haskell one at the University of Chicago which Mrs. Haskell endowed, and the appointment of a young lady to the staff of the Institute, "with support guaranteed by the Unitarian Women's Alliance in Canada and the States." Reid added, "This is the first time that Unitarian Christians have been moved to apply their doctrine of universal brotherhood to this great nation of the Orient."

¹⁶ Dharmapala spoke 16 September on the topic, "The Social Gospel of Buddha." *The North China Herald*. 20 September 1913. p. 882.

¹⁷ Through the Christian Literature Society Richard sponsored an essay contest among Chinese students, the first prize essay being translated by him and read at the Parliament. Reverend John Henry Barrows. *The World's Parliament of Religions*. Chicago, 1893. p. 596. Further, Richard was instrumental in having an explanation of Taoism sent to the Parliament of Religions by Chang Yuan Hsu, the head of the Taoists temples in the southern part of the province of Kian Sia. Richard also spoke at the Institute in 1913. *The Open Court*, September, 1913. p. 565.

nature of the 1893 Parliament was manifested by the presence of such Oriental delegates as P. C. Mozoomdar, leader of the Brahma Somaj, “whose thought, faith and eloquence conspire to produce a profound impression”;¹⁸ Swami Vivekananda, also from India, “the orange-robed monk who exercised a wonderful influence over his auditors”;¹⁹ Anagarika Dharmapala, “one of the rare and beautiful spirits attending the Parliament”;²⁰ Virchand Gandhi, a Jain from Bombay; the Chinese scholar Pung Kwany Yu, who “was greeted with such manifestations of welcome, respect, and honor, as were surpassed in the case of no other speaker on the platform”;²¹ Soyen Shaku, a Zen Buddhist from Japan, and Miss Sorabji of Bombay, “that exquisite specimen of redeemed Parsee Womanhood”.²² In addition to the large number from the United States, representatives came from Canada, England, France, Germany, Turkey, Russia, Syria, Greece and other countries. The majority of the world's religions were represented. As one newspaper pointed out, “Upon the platform and in the body of the hall Christians sat next to Buddhists, Brahmins beside Greeks, followers of Confucius with the high priests of Theosophy, and Deists from Bombay and Calcutta with the primates of the Catholic Church in the new land”.²³

A second parallel is the identity of aim. In both cases the object was to promote tolerance and understanding, dispell prejudices and illusions, overcome fears and antagonisms, increase respect for differing views, create a sense of unity and harmony among believers, and marshall the forces of religion against the evils of materialism, nationalism, war and other common enemies.

In his History of the Parliament, the Reverend John Henry Barrows, D.D., chairman of the General Committee on the Religious Conferences, wrote that ten objects had been proposed for the Parliament in Chicago which “were such, it would seem, as to win the

¹⁸ The Hartford Courant, quoted in *The Christian Register*, 25 October 1893.

¹⁹ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 1562.

²⁰ *The Unitarian*, VITI. October 1893. p. 451.

²¹ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1562.

²³ The Boston Daily Globe, 12 September 1893. p. 1.

approval of all broadminded men”. Among them were “To bring together in conference, for the first time in history, the leading representatives of the great Historic Religions of the world... To promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly conference and mutual good understanding... To set forth, by those most competent to speak, what are deemed the important distinctive truths held and taught by each Religion... To indicate the impregnable foundations of Theism, and the reasons for man's faith in immortality, and thus to unite and strengthen the forces which are adverse to a materialistic philosophy of the universe... To discover, from competent men, what light Religion has to throw on the great problems of the present age... To bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent international peace.”²⁴

Charles C. Bonney, the president of The World’s Congress Auxilliary, in the opening address of the Parliament said that “The religious faiths of the world have most seriously misunderstood and misjudged each other... Such errors it is hoped that this congress will do much to correct and to render hereafter impossible,” and, “We seek in this congress to unite all religion against all irreligion; to make the golden rule the basis of this union, and to present to the world the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the religious life... we seek a better knowledge of the religious condition of all mankind, with an earnest desire to be useful to each other and to all others who love truth and righteousness.”²⁵

Eastern delegates echoed the same theme. In his first speech Kinza Hirai, a Japanese Buddhist, said that, “The Parliament of Religions is the realization of a long cherished dream, and its aim is to finally establish religious affinity over all the world.”²⁶ He went

²⁴ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²⁵ Professor Walter R. Houghton, Editor-in-Chief. Neely's History of The Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses. Chicago, 1894, pp. 38, 40. In referring to the themes of the Parliament he added, “This programme also announces for presentation the great subjects of revelation, immortality, the incarnation of God, the universal elements in religion, the ethical unity of different religious systems, the relations of religion to morals, marriage, education, science, philosophy, evolution, music, labor, government, peace and war, and many other themes of absorbing interest.” p. 39.

²⁶ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

on to explain why such rapport between Japanese Buddhists and western Christians had not been realized because of the injustices done to Japan by western, Christian nations. Vivekananda in his opening address in referring to the bell which opened the Parliament said, "I fervently hope that the bell which tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions with sword or pen, and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."²⁷

In regard to its progeny in Shanghai one of the objects of the International Institute listed in its articles of incorporation was to "promote harmony between the adherents of the Christian Religion and those of other Faiths."²⁸ In his 1913 report Reid stated that, "Another object of the Institute, according to its charter, is to make friends between Christians and non-Christians... The desire is to understand better the beliefs and tenets of the world's great religions, to appreciate the good points in others, whatever their creeds or forms, to hold each other in greater respect, and to cooperate with each other in deeds for the public good."²⁹ In an article on the Institute published by Paul Carus in *The Open Court* Reid wrote that "The object of the Institute has been to cultivate the spirit of friendliness between Christian adherents and those of all other faiths. This means that not only Confucianists and Buddhists should be taught to tolerate the Christian propaganda, but that Christians, both missionaries and their converts should look with respect upon those who are devoted to the teachings of the other founders of the great religions."³⁰

That such was the Institute's aim is indicated by the remarks of a Buddhist speaker from Peking in 1912 who, as reported by a Shanghai newspaper, "expressed his pleasure in finding in Shanghai a place like the Religious Department of the Institute where those who hold different religious views can meet each other and discuss questions in concord

²⁷ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 102. Neely wrote that "The assembling of the World's Parliament of Religions in the forenoon of 11 September 1893, was proclaimed in due form by ten strokes on the new Liberty Bell... The ten strokes represented the ten chief religions of the world, each of which had a prominent place in the remarkable gathering of the nations." Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁸ Annual Report, 1922. p. 9.

²⁹ Annual Report, 1913. p. 12.

³⁰ *The Open Court*. June, 1923. p. 354.

and amity.”³¹ And in 1926 Reid, in looking back over his work, wrote that “For fifteen years the International Institute has held over five hundred meetings in Shanghai, Peking and provincial centres. There has been only one main principle, that of bringing about harmony, cooperation and friendliness between different religious groups in China and foreign countries, and one main regulation, no harsh criticism. In this way harmony has been effected and friends are made among the adherents of every religion.”³²

A third parallel between the 1893 Parliament and its Chinese offspring is the atmosphere or spirit in which the meetings were carried out in each case. In commenting further on the “one main regulation, no harsh criticism,” Reid wrote, “From this one main principle and regulation a few subsidiary or complementary ideas have been deduced as governing these religious gatherings. One is that the adherents of one religious Faith shall recognize the good points and the truths in other Faiths and overlook or at least be patient with the faults and errors of others. A second idea is that through these conferences the aim should be to better understand one another and study one another's religions. In this way there will be increase of knowledge and of mutual appreciation. A third idea is that of uniting in all good works and public service, rather than that of separate action.”³³

From the very beginning of the meetings Reid had insisted on a policy of free speech. In a talk called “The Conditions of Free Discussion” he said, “The Institute in these discussions gave this freedom of discussion. There was only one condition, and that was that harmony should be maintained. To effect this there must be mutual courtesy and respect.”³⁴ In his book “A Christian Appreciation of Other Religions”, which was the Billings lectures for 1915, Reid wrote, “In all these years of religious conferences at the International Institute by adherents of different Religious Faiths, we have had only one rule, and that, whilst one is free to expound fully his own Faith, he must refrain from ridicule or denunciation of the Faith of others... Our method of approach to the religious

³¹ The North-China Herald. 21 December 1912. p. 797.

³² Annual Report, 1926. p. 42.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴ The North-China Herald. 18 October 1913. p. 182.

views of others has been that of appreciation rather than of depreciation, of commendation rather than condemnation.”³⁵

It was the basic orientation of the Institute which made such a milieu possible. In a description of the Institute the North China Herald stated that, “it is neither a church nor proselytizing agency, and nothing has been more remarked during the religious conferences than the absence from them of all ‘odium theologicum’.”³⁶ Reid himself called attention to how the Institute differed from other missions founded by westerners; “The Institute, not being a church or a proselytizing agency, is a place where all may freely come, and express religious views, with one proviso, no one maligns the views of another.”³⁷

The organizers of the Parliament likewise were insistent that the same spirit should prevail in the 1893 meetings. Looking back at them Paul Carus wrote, “Mr. Bonney was careful to proclaim that there was no intention to judge between the different faiths, to pronounce the superiority of one over another... The Religious Parliament was to be strictly impartial; controversies were to be rigorously excluded; every one was to expound his own belief and abstain from discussing or criticizing others...”³⁸

The statements Carus referred to are in Bonney's opening speech: “We come together in mutual confidence and respect, without the least surrender or compromise of anything which we respectively believe to be truth or duty, with the hope that mutual acquaintance and a free and sincere interchange of views on the great questions of eternal life and human conduct will be mutually beneficial... We meet on the mountain height of absolute respect for the religious convictions of each other; and an earnest desire for a better knowledge of the consolations which other forms of faith than our own offer to

³⁵ Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-5.

³⁶ Quoted in the Annual Report, 1926. p. 85.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12. It was this openness which made the Institute an anathema to orthodox missionaries whose idea was “that only one form of religion should be presented at the Institute.” Annual Report, 1915. p. 2.

³⁸ *The Open Court*. September, 1913. pp.562-3.

their devotees.”³⁹ Bonney's statements were supported by Barrow's in his opening speech: “We are met in a great conference, men and women of different minds, where the speaker will not be ambitious for short-lived, verbal victories over others, where gentleness, courtesy, wisdom, and moderation will prevail far more than heated argumentation... We are not here to criticize one another, but each to speak out positively and frankly his own convictions regarding his own faith... We are met in a school of comparative theology, which, I hope, will prove more spiritual and ethical than theological; we are met, I believe, in the temper of love, determined to bury, at least for the time, our sharp hostilities...”⁴⁰

The general public was aware of the atmosphere in which the meetings were to be held. The editor of a leading newspaper wrote: “What will go down in history as the most remarkable of the great series of world's congresses that has been held in Chicago this year was inaugurated today in the presence of an audience that filled the hall to overflowing. It was the world's first parliament of religions, a series of union meetings held with the object of uniting all religions against irreligion and of presenting to the world the substantial unity of many religions in the common aim of religious life... There will be no controversy or comparisons. Peace on earth and good will toward men will be the ruling principle. Denominational differences will be forgotten, and every participating body will confine itself to affirming its own faith and achievements.”⁴¹

That such was, with few exceptions, the prevailing mood of the Parliament is indicated by J. T. Sunderland's statements in his speech at the final session of the 1933 Chicago Fellowship of Faiths: “In that great Chicago Parliament, for absolutely the first time in human history, eminent representatives of all the important religious faiths of mankind came together in a great world assemblage, and what was more, came in the spirit of equality and mutual respect; came not to antagonize or criticize but to fellowship... each to present for the consideration of the rest of the world, an affirmative

³⁹ Neely, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴¹ Boston Daily Globe. 12 September 1893.

statement, a constructive interpretation of the central truths, aims and ideals of the faith which he represented, as understood not by its enemies but by its friends, by those who believe in it, love it and worship by its altars.”⁴² And in their concluding statements Bonney and Barrows said, “The laws of the congress, forbidding controversy or attack, have, on the whole, been wonderfully observed. The exceptions are so few that they may well be expunged from the record and from memory” and “Our hopes have been more than realized. The sentiment which has inspired this parliament has held us together. The principles in accord with which this historic convention has proceeded have been put to the test, and even strained at times, but they have not been inadequate.”⁴³

A fourth similarity between the Parliament and the Institute is the world view, the *weltanschauung*, which both reflected. The Parliament mirrored the new attitudes and views which were being projected by religious thinkers in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Reid was a harbinger of them in China. One of these was an acceptance of a pluralistically religious world. At the end of the nineteenth century, when the penetration of the East by the West was reaching its climax, Christians had three alternatives to choose from. They have been discussed elsewhere so that only a brief reference is necessary here.⁴⁴ One was to make Christianity the single world religion. Another was to create a new universal religion by, for example, a synthesis of existing ones. The third was the one mentioned above, to work for a state of peaceful coexistence wherein religions would not try to compete with and outstrip each other, where each religion would not make exclusive and universal claims for itself, and in which adherents of each religion would concentrate on purifying, realizing and perfecting the best in its own tradition.

Reid was an exponent of the third option. In a speech at the June 27, 1913, Sunday afternoon meeting he remarked that, “It is not likely that any one religion would ever be

⁴² Charles F. Weller. *World Fellowship*. New York, 1935. pp. 512-513.

⁴³ Neely, *op. cit.*, pp. 862 and 861.

⁴⁴ Donald H. Bishop. “Religious Confrontation, A Case Study: The 1893 Parliament of Religions.” *Numen*, April 1969. pp. 63-76.

able to absorb all other religions and become universal.”⁴⁵ and in a later address he said, “The importance of union was recognized the world over during these modern days. The great spirit of union must be as broad as mankind, a union among nations, and a union of all religions. This was an ideal of both Oriental and Occidental peoples.”⁴⁶

Reid believed that such a union was possible on at least three grounds. One was the basic similarities between religions. Reid argued that, if one would get down to the essential elements in each religion, he would see how much they are alike. In his lecture on Taoism Reid said, “Just as to my mind there is no antagonism between Christianity and Confucianism if the essentials be considered, so in the same way Christianity and Taoism are not mutually antagonistic. In very much they are in accord, and in many ways they may be mutually helpful.”⁴⁷ Reid did not believe Christianity and Islam were necessarily antagonistic either for “With both, the same foundation truth of all religions is this: God alone is God, and to him as supreme every man has duties of veneration, trust, obedience, and love.”⁴⁸

In an October, 1912, meeting at the Institute Reid pointed out “eight fundamental principles common to all the great Faiths. These were exhortation to do the right, training of one's own character in righteousness, helping others to do right, recognition of a Supreme Being, belief in retribution, belief in a future life, in some cases immortality, the duty of repentance, and the desire for salvation.”⁴⁹ He continued that, “We should add love, as the greatest thing in the world, as ‘the bond of perfectness.’ In different aspects this quality of love is made known and spoken of in the teachings of the different Faiths. In Confucianism it is fraternity, in Buddhism compassion, in Taoism gentleness, in Islam charity, and in Judaism and Christianity it is brotherly kindness.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ The North China Herald, 28 June 1913. p. 944.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 July 1913. p. 174.

⁴⁷ Gilbert Reid. “Taoism, An Appreciation.” *The Open Court*, October, 1918. p. 613.

⁴⁸ Gilbert Reid. “Islam, An Appreciation.” *The Biblical World*, July, 1916. p. 12.

⁴⁹ Gilbert Reid. *A Christian's Appreciation of Other Faiths*. p. 225.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Reid felt that the emphasis on love was especially eminent in Buddhism. In his lecture on Buddhism he said, “This element, or rather the essence, of Buddhism—this compassion—is specially illustrated in the new Buddhism by the Buddha Amitabha, and by the subordinate divinity Kuan Yin.”⁵¹ And, “Among all the religious teachers of the world, the Christ and the Buddha stand forth as the embodiment of love which feels for others' woes and yearns to provide deliverance.”⁵² Reid pointed out other parallels between Buddhism and Christianity. Both offer a way of salvation from suffering. Both emphasize virtuous living and the development of personal character and integrity. Both emphasize the law of cause and effect or Karma. Reid wrote, “One saying known to every man, woman and child in China is this: 'Goodness has its recompense; badness has its recompense; goodness and badness in the final reckoning must have their recompense.' This law from which no one can escape is the basic principle of Buddhism.”⁵³ Furthermore both distinguish between our higher and lower selves and the necessity of the former overcoming the latter.

The theme of parallels was continued in two other lectures of Reid's. In regard to Taoism he pointed out that Christianity and Taoism both emphasize the close relationship of religion and ethics. Both teach immortality, the way of gentleness, meekness and modesty, returning good for evil, living without fear, the importance of stillness or quietude, and the centrality of the Logos or the Tao. Reid closed his lecture on Taoism with the statement, “Whatever be the defects in the followers of Lao-tze, as in the followers of Christ, our admiration goes forth to both Lao-tze and Christ, and we believe in perfect confidence that their goodness, or grace, or truth, or gentleness, all come from God, ‘to whom be all the glory.’”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Gilbert Reid. “A Christian's Appreciation of Buddhism.” *The Biblical World*, January, 1906. p. 18. Kenneth S. Latourette writing at the same time noted this affinity also: “We have been reminded again of the similarity of the message of esoteric Buddhism to that of Christianity, a similarity which in many points is nearly an identity, so nearly so that some have seen in Mahayana Buddhism Christianity in disguise.” *The Biblical World*, June, 1917. p. 336.

⁵² Reid. “A Christian's Appreciation of Buddhism.” p. 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁴ Reid. “Taoism, An Appreciation.” p. 626.

In discussing Christianity and Islam Reid declared that, “the Christian can join hands with the Moslem in a strong, unwavering belief in the one living and true God,” and, “The fundamental doctrine of the oneness of God ought never be eliminated from our minds nor lowered in our thought. To hold to this evermore is the faith of Islam and also the faith of Christianity.”⁵⁵ There is agreement not only on the existence but also the nature of God. “In both the Bible and the Koran God’s sovereignty is exalted and revered... He alone is eternal. The world is his workmanship. He is the author of all, generally described as Creator. In this the Koran and the Bible agree,” Reid declared.⁵⁶ Furthermore, “They agree on that which is all-essential, namely, to do God's will, to follow the commands of God.”⁵⁷ They are alike in that they are reform religions: “Like the Hebrew prophets, Mohammed warned the people of their great sin in forgetting the law of God, and in running after strange Gods.”⁵⁸ Both attach great importance to prayer: “In Islam, as in Judaism and Christianity, God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.”⁵⁹ And in summing up, Reid said, “There may be difference between the Christian and the Moslem in interpreting these nine points, but by building on the same foundation, however different the superstructure, we are at one.”⁶⁰

A second ground on which Reid asserted religious pluralism and the unity of religions was his belief that there is truth in all religions and that no one religion has all the truth. A forthright statement of his to this effect was, “The Christian may well cherish the thought that Christ is the Truth, but even Christ never taught that all others had no truth. He never limited truth to Himself alone.”⁶¹ This belief in the multiplicity of truth is

⁵⁵ Reid. “Islam, An appreciation.” pp. 9, 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶¹ Reid, *op. cit.* p. 238. One example of this type of statement made at the Chicago Parliament is Barrow's assertion in his closing address, “We have learned that truth is large and that there are more ways than one in God's providence by which men emerge out of darkness into heavenly light.” John W. Hanson, *The World Congress of Religions*, Boston, 1894. p. 949.

found in the closing remarks of Reid's lecture on Taoism, "These nine specifications of Taoist teachings cannot but awaken surprise and admiration in the thought of the Christian and particularly of the Christian missionary. The Christian should give thanks to God for thus imparting so many truths to the people of China, through all these centuries of the past."⁶²

Other speakers at the Institute supported Reid's attempt "to persuade men to accept Truth wherever found, and to do the will of God."⁶³ In his talk on Buddhism Tasuku Hareda of Japan said "For my part... it is inconceivable that any one who has impartially studied the history of Religion can fail to admit the universality of the activity of the Spirit of God, and the consequent embodiment of a degree of truth in all Faiths."⁶⁴ A second Japanese Buddhist said, "Let Christians make an effort to find points of contact with Buddhism and Shinto; to cast aside the non-essentials and to emphasize the points of agreement. The watchword of true religionists should be tolerance and inclusiveness."⁶⁵ The leader of the Bahai movement in Shanghai also declared that, "The Bahais should not denounce nor antagonize those holding views other than their own. They should mingle freely with all people, and show forth their faith through love and service to their fellow men."⁶⁶

Reid disliked and rejected the attitude of exclusiveness he found among orthodox Christians.⁶⁷ In one book he wrote, "There is exclusiveness for truth, or, we may say, for religion, if by this is meant the common religious sentiment, but not for any particular Religion."⁶⁸ If Christians would repudiate the exclusiveness of orthodoxy, missionary

⁶² Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 626.

⁶³ Annual Report, 1913. p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ In an article in *The Christian Register* on his visit to the Institute Dr. Sanderland wrote, "One regrets to discover that Dr. Reid's work receives only little sympathy from other missionaries in China. A few of the broader minds see its value... but the great majority frown on and oppose it as unchristian, because of its breadth, its freedom, and its sympathetic attitude toward non-Christian faiths." Annual Report, 1914. p. 44.

⁶⁸ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

work would be more effective, Reid believed. “The old method of prosecuting missions is either to represent Christianity as the only true religion, or, through a comparison, to represent its superiority. Such an attitude antagonizes and creates jealousy. It intensifies rather than weakens opposition.”⁶⁹, he wrote.

Reid also rejected the condescending attitude found among many missionaries. He wrote that, “A truer and larger faith in God as the everlasting Father and Teacher and Savior of Mankind has made it no longer possible for intelligent and believing men to regard all religions outside the Jewish and Christian pale as superstition and falsehood, or to keep up the old pitying and condescending attitude towards them. Their immaturities and corruptions we no longer allow to cheat us of the right to say, ‘God is good to all: whither shall we go from his spirit?’ He has never left Himself without a witness, never left multitudes of His creatures without His help, without light and guidance, without comfort and salvation.”⁷⁰

Reid's religious pluralism was based on a distinction between the external forms and the inner essence of religion, a dichotomy which he did not hesitate to point out. Regarding students of Comparative Religions he wrote that they “will be quick to see that these agreements in religious belief and aspiration, in life and duty concern the very essence of religion, and not the phenomena, still less the excrescences, of religion. They are the inner light, which shines forth in human activities. They are the soul of truth in the outward frame of mixed good and evil. They are God’s life-giving and spiritual energy which differentiates itself into the vast variety of finite existences.”⁷¹ This recognition of the difference between the external and the internal aspects of religion made it possible for Reid to assert that “... no one Religion is as great as Truth.”⁷², and “...every Religion is seen to possess the truth, and truth, moreover, as it came forth from the heart of Infinite

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

love.”⁷³

The third basis for religious pluralism and the unity of religions which Reid pointed to was his belief that there is but one universal Religion or Truth of which each religion is a particular manifestation. In his book he referred to “the religious substratum of all religions” and to the various religions as “forms of infinite truth.”⁷⁴

Reid pointed out several instances of religions originating in a common root. In the case of China he wrote, “In ancient times there was only one religion in China which had been handed down from the earliest days. Confucianism and Taoism were only two branches of the one ancient faith, two schools of thought interpreting a revelation from God.”⁷⁵ Concerning Islam and Christianity he said that, “With both, the same foundation truth of all religions is this: God alone is God, and to him as supreme every man has duties of veneration, trust, obedience, and love.”⁷⁶ In relating Christianity and Hinduism Reid quoted Charles C. Hall's statement, “In its fundamental proposition (i.e. of Christianity, that the Eternal One differentiates His own self-subsisting energy into the infinite variety of finite existences) it is not far removed from the fundamental proposition of the highest Indian thinking, that the self-subsisting Brahman, the Absolute, by his multiplying power, projects the infinite variety of finite existences and distinctions described by the mystic word Maya.”⁷⁷ Reid also pointed out that the scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism assert a religious pluralism-- “The Mahayanist recognition of this thought appears in the great classic The Lotus, where it is said: There is but One Great Cause, Enlightening every Sage and Prophet manifested in the world... All Law comes from Source, Always from the Eternal. This source of all which is manifested in sages and prophets, Buddhas and Pusas, is in modern Buddhism spoken of as the Antetype or

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁷⁵ Reid, *op. cit.* p. 613.

⁷⁶ Reid, *op. cit.* p. 12.

⁷⁷ Reid. *A Christian's Appreciation of Buddhism*, pp. 23-4.

the True Form, and He becomes incarnate in the Buddha.”⁷⁸

As a final example, at one of the Sunday afternoon meetings at the Institute Reid asked, “Have these discussions brought us any new lessons concerning religions?” His reply was, “I at least have learned much. I have seen anew that beneath every religion there is Religion; that beneath these systems and organizations there are principles which are universal; that God by His Spirit brooding over humanity gives light to all and here and there raises up leaders in the realm of truth and righteousness; that God's mercy and goodness, like the sun and the rain, have come to the good and the bad, and that men of every creed should bow the knee in humble thanks to the Giver of all Good. Phrases in the Sacred Books differ; righteous reformers and spiritual teachers speak each a different language, but God's vital life wraps this earth and inhabits immensity. Obedience to this One God is universal religion.”⁷⁹

Reid's belief in one universal religion or truth was based on several grounds. One was his philosophical realism, that is, his belief in the reality of universals and their priority over particulars. This is seen in Paul Carus' characterization of the Institute: “This International Institute however regards the exaltation of truth as greater than the exaltation of a particular faith. It glories more in the spirit of truthfulness than in the spirit of the zealot. It regards the universal as better than the particular. In doing its work it leaves the outcome to providence.”⁸⁰

A second was his belief in God's impartiality. “It must be true”, he wrote, “if God be one and His name one, that men of like passions and needs as ourselves, who came from God and belong to God, and are nourished physically by His air and sunshine and fruits of the earth, must also have provision made in the divine order of things for the sustenance of their spiritual life, and that it is not left entirely to the tender mercies of their fellows whether they shall have God or be without God in the world. It must be true

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁹ Annual Report, 1913. p. 68.

⁸⁰ Carus, *op. cit.*, p. 564.

that God cares equally for the souls of all His children, and that He finds access to them, helps them, teaches them, saves them, by methods and means that are not seen and temporal, and by ways in which no man can tell whence He cometh and whether He goeth, and that He is only limited in the giving of Himself to them by their capacity to respond and receive.” He added that, “People of old used to think that the divine action was confined to here and there, now and then; but the conviction is growing and spreading that the only defensible conception of the moral action of God on humanity is that of a continuous and impartial influence, limited to no age or race.”... Personal intimacy with God is not an experience special to Jews or Christians.”⁸¹

Reid also believed that the variety of religions existing was due to differences in people. He wrote, “All men may have a different understanding and interpretation of the truth, so religious truth as taught by prophets and sages in the great religions will also present aspects and be viewed and interpreted by them in different ways. Different religions, and especially different schools of thought within the same religion, lay emphasis on different phases of one universal truth and therein the world derives a benefit.”⁸² In like vein Reid wrote in comparing China and India, “instead of Nirvana, suited to the philosophic temperament of India, these other peoples of the Far East look forward to a paradise in the West or to the Pure Land, where happiness has overcome all sorrow, where purity and blessedness, charity and peace, reign together.”⁸³ Reid's view was that, since individuals and groups vary in history, background and temperament, a common world religion would be impossible; and pluralism, therefore, is the only reasonable alternative. The concept of universal religion or religious truth would be preserved since each religion is but one of many possible manifestations of that truth.

Reid believed also that different religions arose out of the single universal Religion because of man's tendency to formalize and creedalize his religion. He suggested that, if we “would go back to Christ and his apostles for a proper knowledge of the Christian's

⁸¹ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁸³ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

duty”, we would see that “Man's obligation to God and to his fellow-men was taught as greater in importance than rites, ritual and creeds.”⁸⁴ Reid felt that creeds, and dogmas, tend to lead to antagonisms and divisions with the result that the true spirit of universal Religion is lost sight of as sects and new religions arise. Reid used Christianity as a case in point and said that “we do not find in the New Testament one word in denunciation of any Religion or mention that He was to be the founder of a new Religion,” by Christ. Instead, “He declared that He came not to destroy but to fulfill.... He condemned sin not other religions. He commanded repentance, not any change of religion.”⁸⁵

One of the words which Reid used often was “appreciation.” In his 1923 annual report he wrote, “My personal opinion... is that the good in all Religions should be recognized and appreciated as coming from the one Source of all good, that the similarities should be emphasized rather than the differences, and that in respect to differences, even when others are in the wrong, it is better to try the positive method of proclaiming the simple truth and living the proper life, than to use the negative method of attack, destroying and so creating antagonisms.”⁸⁶ He pointed out that “Christ and his disciples taught love to all men, making no distinction between race and race, nation and nation, or one Religion and another, but distinguishing between sin and righteousness, and between obedience and disobedience to God.”⁸⁷ He was fond of the New Testament statement by the Apostle Peter, “of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” He believed that “the great Faiths should not antagonize each other but befriend each other”⁸⁸, for, “We drink at the same fountain, though from different cups.”⁸⁹

Thus far I have indicated that the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago

⁸⁴ Annual Report, 1913. p. 62.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

⁸⁶ Annual Report, 1923. p. 14.

⁸⁷ Annual Report, 1913. p. 64.

⁸⁸ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

⁸⁹ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

and the International Institute, its off-shoot in Shanghai, were alike in four respects—representation, aims, spirit and philosophy. One further comparison may be made, the results or impact of each.

One was their calling the attention of Christians to the need for relating religious principles to or making religion influential in secular affairs. Orthodox Christianity in America in the nineteenth century tended to emphasize the “personal” gospel. As that century draws to a close, a recognition grew of the need for a “social” gospel as well. The Parliament was undoubtedly one factor in bringing this about.

The Chairman of the General Committee, Reverend Barrows, was himself quite conscious of the need for a “social” gospel. In his book he wrote, “the inevitable reaction from the too common religious avoidance of the social question has come. If the Christian church is to have no interest in the social distresses and problems of the time, then those who are most concerned with such problems and distresses will have no interest in the Christian church. The simple fact which we have to face today is this, that the working classes have, as a rule, practically abandoned the churches and left them to be the resorts of the prosperous; and the simple reason for this is the neutrality of the churches towards the social problems of the time.”⁹⁰

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that a number of speeches were made on the need for applied religion and that one of the seventeen days of the Parliament was set aside solely for a discussion of it. Among the topics and speakers were Christianity and the Social Question by F. S. Peabody, The Divine Basis of the Cooperation of Men and Women by Mrs. Lydia Dickenson of the Women's Suffrage Movement, the Influence of Islam on Social Conditions by Alexander Webb, Christianity as a Social Force by Richard T. Ely, Religion and Labor by James Cleary, Religion and Wealth by Washington Gladden, The Churches and City Problems by A. W. Small, The Catholic Church and the Negro Race by J. R. Slattery, Arbitration Instead of War by Shaku Soyen, and Catholic Christianity and Social Problems by Cardinal Gibbons. A number of the

⁹⁰ Barrows, *op cit.*, pp. 224-30.

speakers at the Parliament were leaders of the Social Gospel Movement at the turn of the century; and, when we remember how many people attended or read the speeches reported in the press, it is not too much to claim that the Parliament was instrumental in stirring a Christian social consciousness in America.

What was true of nineteenth century American Christianity was true of its Eastern counterpart also. The majority of missionaries preached the personal Gospel, the salvation of the individual and his soul. Reid acknowledged the appropriateness of such, but he also asserted that the salvation of China and Chinese society merited consideration by missionaries as well. The Christian religion must be made relevant to the problems facing China, he declared, if it is to find acceptance.

It was this which prompted Reid to set up two other conferences or committees in the Institute. One was the Commercial “consisting of Chinese and foreign merchants... who meet to consider questions of trade... also, whenever so requested, to offer their service for friendly mediation in case of dispute between Chinese and foreigners.”⁹¹ The second was the Educational Committee which was responsible for the evening school and other educational programs of the Institute.

Reid himself was very concerned about the conflicts within China and between the western powers and the relevance of religion to them. His view was that religion should be a pacifying and conciliating force. In the years before 1912 he was active in mediating between the various political factions in China. After Sun-Yat-Sen assumed power in 1912 a special reception was held in his honor at the Institute, and Sen planted a palm tree on the Institute grounds as a symbol of peace.

Reid strongly opposed the encroachment of Japan and the western powers on Chinese territory and their demands for special privileges, immunities and extra-territorial rights. He was especially outspoken in his opposition to attempts by western nations to involve China on their side in World War I. He called it an “appalling war” and

⁹¹ Gilbert Reid. “Conciliation in China.” *The Open Court*, 1910. p. 27.

declared that war is “both a folly and a crime, contrary to the teachings of all religions.”⁹² To voice his opinions Reid started a newspaper in 1917 called the *Peking Post*. It was closed down in October by the Chinese government under pressure from foreign governments, and Reid was forced to leave China for three years, again by the Chinese government under pressure.

Reid’s efforts to broaden and make Christianity a practical force in China were recognized and commended by many however. In 1922 the Reverend Wendte, founder of the Conferences of Free Religious Liberals wrote, “For over thirty years he has laboured in China in behalf of spiritual Christianity, for sympathy between religions, for international peace and brotherhood, and the educational, social and political uplift of the people of China. He has sought to give a practical illustration of the right way of approach to national integrity, and international cooperation and good-will, the way of inter-religious sympathy and mutual endeavors for truth, justice, and love.”⁹³

A second result of the Parliament and the institute was in changes in missionary work and attitudes. Just as many nineteenth century clergy limited their message to the “personal” Gospel, so the tendency of many missionaries of the time was to limit or equate Christian Truth with Truth or the Christian religion with religion. An example of this tendency is found in a letter concerning the Parliament written to the Reverend Barrows by E. J. Eitel, a missionary in Hong Kong; “Let me warn you not to deny the sovereignty of your Lord by any further continuance of your agitation in favour of a Parliament not sanctioned by his Word. If misled yourself, at least do not mislead others nor jeopardize, I pray you, the precious life of your soul by playing fast and loose with the truth and coquetting with false religions. I give you credit for the best intentions, but let me warn you that you are unconsciously planning treason against Christ.”⁹⁴ Reid believed a new, more tolerant, sympathetic, appreciative, and open-minded attitude on

⁹² Reid. Annual Report, 1915. p. 5.

⁹³ Annual Report, 1922. p. 36.

⁹⁴ Barrows, *op. cit.*, p. 26, Vol. I.

the part of missionaries was necessary.⁹⁵

Reid discussed this new view in the last chapter on missions of his book, *A Christian's Appreciation of Other Faiths*. In it he pointed out that, "The prevalent view held hither to has been, that other religions were false and ought to be overthrown," but that, "...the new concept of missions place the emphasis on appreciation of the religious beliefs of others, rather than on the destruction or even criticism of these beliefs."⁹⁶ He declared that, "The newer, and it seems to us, the higher, conception of a religious propaganda is that of sympathy and friendliness for those who hold views other than our own, and of appreciation, if not admiration, for the great religious systems, which have won through many centuries the allegiance of millions of our fellowmen." He pointed out that "The public ministry of Jesus was not one of antagonism, except to the evil doer, especially the religious hypocrite," and that, "to appreciate others and think well of their beliefs and practices is more akin to spirituality of life and to a Gospel of love than is the opposite purpose."⁹⁷ Furthermore a sympathetic attitude will have a beneficial pragmatic effect for, "When appreciation becomes reciprocal, the relations between nations and creeds will not be far from perfection."⁹⁸

A second characteristic of the new missionary attitude should be its comprehensiveness rather than exclusiveness. Reid wrote that, "...the mistake is now acknowledged that the exclusive spirit, even more in religion than in social life, arouses no response but that of resentment." He declared that Christ "placed no restrictions on God's love, on religious truth, or on man's capacity to goodness and everlasting life. Not one word proceeded from His mouth which implied that His teachings, since called

⁹⁵ The editor of *The Biblical World* in introducing Reid's article "A Christian's Appreciation of Buddhism" wrote. "There was a time when men thought that all religions which were not Christian could be called false. The new generation of missionaries, while no less concerned of the superiority of Christianity to the religions of the people to whom they minister, are just as eager to see the truth in these non-Christian religions as they are to see what is untrue. Dr. Reid's article is an illustration of this new state of mind."

⁹⁶ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. M.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Christianity, alone made known the infinite mind of God or exhibited divine grace.⁹⁹ The missionary should have the same comprehensive or inclusive view. Such a missionary would go to another country `not only to teach, but ever to learn more and more.” He would get “out from the narrow environment and circumscribed conceptions of his own town and country to the larger schooling of the world's great religions. The missionary of all men should have broad views.”¹⁰⁰

A missionary with such a comprehensive outlook would be impelled by four concerns. He would be concerned about giving allegiance to the Supreme Being alone rather than any particular religion for, in Reid's words; “No Religion, Christianity or any other, should supercede God.”¹⁰¹ Secondly, he would not be concerned about upholding his own scriptures as the only true revelation of God but would be concerned about knowing and following the will of God no matter in whose Scriptures it might be found, for, “The broader idea is that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, like the Koran and other sacred Books, contain the truth of God, and in some cases a special revelation, but that the chief duty is to know and follow the Word of God and the Will of God, wherever and however they are made known to the mind of man.”¹⁰²

Thirdly, this new type of missionary would be concerned about God in all and not just one of his manifestations, for God is immanent in all things. “He manifests himself in the order of natural processes... in historical revelation... in that personal experience through which we apprehend Jesus as the revelation of God...”, Reid wrote.¹⁰³ He added that, “God as the infinite one `inhabiting eternity’ is ever manifesting Himself, and in a special way manifested Himself `in the flesh’, `in the name of Christ Jesus,’ but no one manifestation is the whole of the Infinite and cannot be,” and, “...we recognize it is God in Christ and in all, whom we are to worship and to serve, and that God is not exclusively

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

in Christ, but in all hearts...”¹⁰⁴

Finally the new missionary will be concerned that “truth is placed ahead of Religion.”¹⁰⁵ Reid wrote, “The new form of Christian missions means, then, zeal for the propagation of the truth, rather than zeal for the propagation of Christianity as a system of Religion, or propagation of the Church or any sect.”, and, “Devotion to Truth, the desire to know more of truth as revealed throughout the world and the kindred desire to impart to others all the truths which one has received, should impel every Christian...”¹⁰⁶ Speaking from his own experience Reid wrote, “I have found that the followers of other Religions often resent our magnifying of the Christian Religion as superior to theirs, but they never resent an appeal to follow the truth,” and, “The new method lays stress on truth, and whilst certain truths may be regarded as more vital or fundamental than others, there is not the same rigid line of demarcation, creating mutual antagonism.”¹⁰⁷ As far as Reid was concerned, then, the new type of missionary would not be so concerned about proselytizing and converting to his own sect or religion as he would about finding universal truth and exposing others to it.

It is interesting to see in the views often expressed at the Parliament the similarity to Reid's attitudes toward non Christian religions and their effect on missionary activity. To illustrate one need only quote from press reports of the Parliament. “The light and the nobility of ideas displayed in the Congress of Religions at Chicago by Brahmans, Mohammedans, and other Oriental philosophers, has been a surprise to the Occidental world and has opened the eyes of many people...” wrote the editor of *The Open Court*.¹⁰⁸ “What these representative men have said proves, so that it cannot but be seen, that there is in all religions, chiefly perhaps in Buddhism, a great deal that is true, that comes out of a good conscience, that is the revelation of the Divine Spirit to the human heart.”, and,

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁸ *The Open Court*, November 2, 1893.

“They have certainly tended to remove some false impressions as to heathen doctrines; and they have shown too, that these various religions touch some points in common with Christianity. The duty of opposing evil passion, of cultivating the good, of avoiding idolatry...” commented *Public Opinion*.¹⁰⁹ And the editor of *The Path* wrote, “The occasion enabled us to present a great object lesson illustrating what we had been saying for years, that the Oriental is no heathen, that he should be treated as such...” and, “It has taught us that there are people in heathen nations who set spiritual possessions above material and who give honor to sanctity and righteousness rather than to political power and material wealth.”¹¹⁰ Such statements indicate that a new attitude toward non-Christian religions was coming to the fore which would eventually change the nature of missionary work. The Parliament stimulated it in the United States just as Gilbert Reid did in China.¹¹¹

Reverend J. T. Sunderland in his address at the second Parliament in Chicago in 1933 said, “The effect of the Parliament appears also in connection with Christian missions. Since the Chicago Parliament it has been impossible for intelligent men to take the narrow and bigoted view of the non-Christian religions and peoples of the world that was almost universal before that illuminating gathering. If the work of Christian missions, particularly in the Orient, is slowly but steadily growing broader, more reasonable and more useful, and if the spirit of missions is becoming more sympathetic toward what is good in other faiths, to the Chicago Parliament must be given much of the credit.”¹¹² He pointed out also that, “Another result of the Parliament... has been the establishment of chairs of Comparative Religion for the study of Oriental and other non-Christian faiths, in great numbers of universities and theological schools in America and

¹⁰⁹ *Public Opinion*, 12 and 19, October 1893..

¹¹⁰ *The Path*, November, 1893. p. 249; December, 1893. p. 411.

¹¹¹ J. T. Sunderland, a Boston Unitarian, wrote of Reid in *The Christian Register*, “However much he may be frowned on today, I think it may be safely affirmed that he is a type of the coming Christian missionary, if Christianity is ever to obtain a large, influential, and permanent place among the more intelligent Chinese people.” Annual Report of the International Institute, 1914. p. 44.

¹¹² Weller, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

other Christian lands. Before the Parliament there were very few such chairs; now they are found in nearly all higher institutions of learning that make any claim to broad scholarship.”¹¹³

It is interesting to note that Reid attempted to set up such a chair at the Institute. He first proposed it at the second, semi-annual meeting in 1913. The *Shanghai Mercury* called it, “an excellent suggestion, viz. the establishment of a school of Comparative Religion and a University Extension Course, where competent men of all religions would be the lecturers.”¹¹⁴ The response from liberals was good. The school never materialized, however, because of the lack of orthodox and financial support, also because of the adverse effect of World War I on the Institute's activities.¹¹⁵ Reid did manage, however, to have a section of the Institute’s library devoted to books in the field of Comparative Religions.

A similar fate befell a Parliament of Religion along the Chicago lines to be held at the Institute in the spring of 1915. It was to be sponsored by the International Congress of Religious Liberals whose representative, Reverend J. T. Sunderland, visited the Orient, including China and the Institute in the spring of 1913 to make preliminary arrangements. Reid had high hopes for such a meeting and was deeply disappointed when he saw that the hostilities and antagonism generated by the war in Europe would make it impossible.

The above quotes from *The Path*, *Public Opinion*, and *The Open Court* indicate a third result of the Parliament, namely that it effected not only missionary work but that it had a liberalizing influence on Christianity as a whole. What has been called a “broad” Christianity was appearing in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was characterized by an accommodation of religion and science, a renewed

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Annual Report, 1913. p. 83.

¹¹⁵ Reid wrote in his 1915 report that, “The idea of having in the Orient a School of Comparative Religions, with experts from each Religion, has received further commendation from men whose opinion we greatly value. We have not abandoned the idea, though the mere suggestion has cost us the loss of financial support.” p. 15. The International community in Shanghai in World War I was split along Allied-Central Powers lines and this effected the Institute's activities as its members were from both sides.

emphasis on such aspects of God's nature as his immanence, a tendency to minimize creedalism, to undertake joint non-denominational and inter-religious efforts, and as has been noted already by the emphasis on practical or applied Christianity. Other features were a recognition of the validity and contributions of non-Christian religions to the religious life of mankind, a spirit of tolerance and an emphasis upon harmony, reconciliation and brotherhood, a self consciousness by Christians of the failure of "Christian" nations to practise Christianity, and an optimistic belief in the dawning of a new religious era in the world.

In the United States the Parliament was a decided stimulus to this broad Christianity. It provided a platform on which it could be heard and lived. "For the first time from the same platform spoke a Jew, a Christian, and a Hindoo, each deeply in earnest, each logical and honest according to his light. For the first time Christ and him crucified, Buddha the mild and gentle, and Moses the lawgiver, were preached from the same pulpit. For the first time a congregation of divided faiths listened with deepest interest to the presentation of views which a hundred years ago might have sent a heretic to the gallows", wrote a correspondent of the *Boston Daily Globe*.¹¹⁶ Professor Pringle wrote in *The Open Court*, "This Congress has opened the eyes of many people to the fact that there are great religions in the world beside their own, some of them much older and with more followers than Christianity, and underlying them ethical principles the highest and the noblest."¹¹⁷ Similarly a writer for *The Unitarian* noted, "Many a Christian has listened in astonishment to our visiting ecclesiastics, and has learned a new respect and reverence for the truth and beauty of religions other than his own."¹¹⁸ "We have studied the beauty, the nobility that lie in other faiths, and realized something of the dignity, of the learning and eloquence of their priests," and, "The aspiration toward a spiritual life, which is common to all races, and the fundamental unity of all religions was never more vividly displayed; and this it was which made the lesson of tolerance and charity most

¹¹⁶ *Boston Daily Globe*, evening edition, 13 September 1893. p. 1.

¹¹⁷ *The Open Court*, 2 November 1893. p. 3855.

¹¹⁸ *The Unitarian*. October, 1893. p. 451.

effective,” wrote the editor of *The Critic*.¹¹⁹ And of Bonney and Barrows he wrote, “They have done a new thing in the world; they have set a light on a dangerous coast where the rocks of bigotry have wrecked many a zealous soul.”¹²⁰

The gap between ideal and practise was noted by two observers. “It has taught us a lesson that while we have truth on our side we have not had all the truth; while we have had theory we have not had all the practise; and the strongest criticism we have received was not as to our doctrines or methods, but as to our practise not being in harmony with our own teachings and our own doctrines” wrote one.¹²¹ The other wrote, “The sessions of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago last week have undoubtedly served as a great object lesson in toleration, and have also brought out, to some extent, the fact that the essential unity of all Christian sects, and of so-called heathen religions as well, is to be found in an ideal of humanity which all praise and all confess they do not realize.”¹²²

Reflecting the religious optimism of the day, the same author wrote, “This day the sun of a new era of religious progress is arising.”¹²³ Another declared that, “A new era of religious peace and progress rises over the world,”¹²⁴ and the editor of *Unity* wrote, “We do look to see the uplift of men, the world over, above the dividing walls of race and creed into a larger and kindlier interpretation of religion, by whatever name they are led to call their faith; and to this consummation, devoutly to be wished by all good and true men, The Parliament of Religions must prove no inconsiderable factor and contribution.”¹²⁵ One need only add that, as the Parliament of Religions helped to bring about a new era in the West, so missionaries such as Gilbert Reid, Timothy Richard, George Candlin, W. A. P. Martin and Thomas Slater helped to usher in a new religious

¹¹⁹ *The Critic*, 7 October 1893. p. 230.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹²¹ Lewis P. Mercer, *Review of the World's Religions Congresses* (Chicago, 1893). p. 320.

¹²² *The Nation*, 21 September 1893. p. 204.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹²⁴ John W. Hanson. *The World's Congress of Religions* (Boston, 1894). p. 19.

¹²⁵ *Unity*, 21 September 1893. p. 38.

epoch in the East.