

The Congress of Religions.

A great many of us are doubtless looking forward to our visit to the World's Fair as one of the great events of our lives. There will probably not be another such chance to see and hear what will be crowded into the small amount of space and time, at least for us, in our lifetimes.

We read of its magnitude and can form only a very faint conception of it. The sight will be wonderful. The effect upon the individual is one, that, to the studious mind, will be well worth a year's schooling. In the short time we take a look at all peoples, make a brief visit to all lands, and in short may hope to see nearly all things.

The good effects produced by the exchange of ideas and opinions by the different peoples can hardly be estimated. It is for America a mighty

advertisement of her resources and wealth, a testimony of her pluck, energies, and enterprise. To a great degree these benefits are for us only. But there is one that is to be derived by all, one that has its source in the very nature of the gathering. We in America, removed as we are from the hostile countries across the ocean, can hardly form any idea from the meager newspaper reports, of the actual animosity with which the various nations regard each other. Constantly prepared for war, keeping standing armies that are so expensive that we can only wonder at their prosperity. So such a bringing together of their peoples and representatives will do a great deal toward bringing about the desired and much needed peace.

One of the leading features of the Fair will be the numerous of various kinds, all tending to make men

feel a common and mutual dependence, that good may be alike given and received.

It has been proposed that there be held a parliament of Republics. It is surely a grand idea. This will include those countries of the Old and New Worlds that have this common form of government.

But a plan that is grander in its intent and farther reaching in its scope, is the proposed "Congress of Religions." The congress of Republics would reach but a few. This would include all mankind. That asks attendance of those only who agree. This holds the door open for any who will come that they may agree.

Here it is proposed shall be gathered the different faiths and creeds of the World, and, represented by their most learned men with due respect and consideration for each other, calmly weigh the arguments and

talk over the points of difference. The spirit of rivalry and controversy is to be eliminated as far as possible. With this object in view, could they agree on but one or very few points, the results in the common exchange of ideas and the seeing of the true beliefs of each other, and with it the necessary respect which such contact would necessarily elicit would necessarily be very great. We are told that when the crusaders went into the East to conquer their enemies, even though but doubtfully successful, they returned with a profound respect for the Turk. Not simply in a military point of view, but in the contact of man with man they found in those barbarians qualities which they might emulate with profit to themselves. This was one of the benefits of this great movement of the middle ages. If such could come about through such sources

what may we not expect from this held in time of peace and with such objects in view.

We may also look for clearer, better and more universal views in regard to Divine Truth. We must not think of religion in the same sense as we do of governments or similar institutions. It is not something which men by their mutual wishes and consent create. As there must in all the different creeds be a vein of the human mixed in with the Divine, in such a course of inquiry this part will be exposed and probably made to fall, and the part that should stand, because of the ability to bear this inspection will shine forth all the brighter.

It seems to me that whether we believe in evolution or not we must accept the theory that there is a ruler who works according to certain fixed laws, and religion is the study of these laws as such. The nearer we ap-

proach its standard or author, the stranger and meaner do we become.

During the time of the Caesars, the Apostles were brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin, accused of preaching a false doctrine. Gamaliel the greatest philanthropist the Jews probably ever had defended with the plea that if their religion was false it did not need their efforts to cause its downfall. If true it would stand despite their attacks. If in this session any be represented that cannot stand the test it is best that it fall.

I think that some of the greatest hindrances to the advancement of the Church today are the dissensions and jealousies which are constantly arising between the different denominations. So long have they wrangled over small points of difference that all seem to have forgotten that there are common and very important

interests on which they may agree. It may be expected that when called upon to defend a common cause they will unite leaving out the petty differences thereby accomplishing a great good.

Who can estimate the good that will follow from this calling together of the master-minds of the present age. There will be inculcated a spirit of respect for each other that will react to a great degree upon the people represented. So leaving out the question of religion and thinking simply of its general effects we may look for great results.

I believe that this is only the first of a series of such meetings each year finding them coming together, drawing more and more closely those bonds that will do so much to make men feel an interest in the advancement of their fellows which is necessary for true advancement. Bro. S. Melton 93