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ADDRESS

GIVEN TO THE

PRARTHONA SOMAJ OF POONA,

DECEMBER 8TH, 1875,

ON

“RELIGION AND PROGRESS IN AMERICA!”

BY

C. H. A. DALL, M.A.

All Religion is Life : all Life is growth :
True growth adds new branches to the old stock.

Calcutta:

CALCUTTA CENTRAL PRESS COMPANY, LIMITED,
5, COUNCIL HOUSE STREET.

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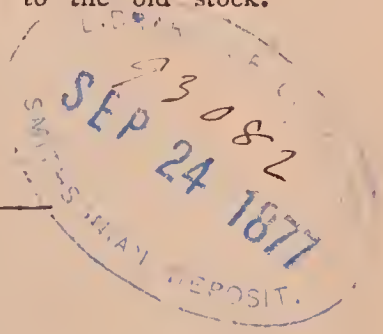
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*Friends, Brothers;—Members of the Poona
Church of Prayer, the Prarthona Somaj:—*

Pray and pump:—You remember the story:—how neither, alone, would save the sinking ship; and how, when the two became one, praying strengthened the men, and pumping lightened the vessel, till the leak was closed, and all were saved. A fair parable of joint salvation for America and India. America believes in prayer, but would prefer work. India believes in work, but prefers prayer. A union of the two for mutual good, is that not possible? A born American, after a residence of twenty years in India, believes that it is. He knows less of this presidency of Bombay than of Bengal; but thinks he finds here, in India West, a little more of the working and practical element than in India East. If the fact be so, he need not despair of sympathy to-night in what he may find time and ability to tell you of Religion and Progress in America.

By way of introduction, let me say that it is no common satisfaction for your speaker to feel that he is here by the urgency of your Secretary, our brother Kunté, now at my side. I was on the way from America, *via* London and Europe, to Calcutta. It was in that metropolis, while attending a lecture by this brother, that I first made his acquaintance. A few

days ago he laid his hand upon my shoulder, in Bombay, as we met at the funeral of the good and learned John Wilson, and said—"We want you in Poona; and I will be there to meet you." Captivated by the heartiness of his greeting—which you know is hard to resist, I replied, "Is it so? Then I must come." And here I am. Some of you heard last night, at the Social Conference, how merrily he laughed at my "Grammar of Absolute Morals," on the ground that Morals were no Morals unless taught practically, and in the contacts of actual life. Not precisely agreeing with him, you may well believe that I welcomed such American independence of thought. I say again, that it is a rare pleasure to stand among you, in this commodious hall, and to remember that there are in the West here, if I am rightly informed, some twenty of these Churches of Progress and Prayer, Prarthona Somajes; of one heart and aim with the hundred or more Brahma Somajes in Eastern, Northern, and Southern India. May God multiply these Churches, as centres and schools of reform, and pioneers in Religion and Progress. Only let them freely join hands, and pray and pump, believe and work, together, and save the ship. You wish to know how America is responding to the call of God which says to all His children Advance! Come on! Grow and Be alive. How the farthest West is moved by that breath of Heaven which begins to sway the tree-tops in India, and set her cornfields a waving, with the annunciation,

almost new to her, that—"All Religion is Life, and all Life is Growth"; so that whatever will not grow must wither. Whatever will not accept the new life that God offers men to-day, must go to the wall, or beneath the wall, and under ground, as dead, and to be buried. To set before you any considerable array of facts indicating the substantial progress of religion and life in America, would demand a good deal besides time; and of that, much more than comes within the limits of this occasion. Let me not attempt the impossible. Let me do no more to-night than try, quite briefly, first to define our terms; and secondly, to name a few of the leaders of liberal religious thought in the United States; men whom I have seen, and so can tell of, the more confidently; and, thirdly, suggest ways, one or more, in which I believe that America and India can be mutual helpers.

Religion,—Progress,—these are our terms. What is Religion? I answer, Religion is Life. What is Life? Life is Heart, Soul, Mind and Will in action. In what action? In normal and healthy action. As the vital action of the eye is seeing and of the ear hearing,—so clearly the vital action of that portion of human nature which we call the Heart, is feeling. The "heart" means the whole circle of our sentient existence; and whatever may truly follow the words "*I feel.*" I feel attachment;—that is, Love, conjugal, filial, social, patriotic, divine. I feel pleasure, that is, joy in what is sweet and good. I feel glad, happy, blissful; reconciled to

man, to God. Such is the first cardinal element of that Religion which is life, eternal Life; eternal love.

Again :—What is Religion? Life in its second cardinal is the normal activity of that in me which says I trust, I believe, I reverence, I worship. As the first cardinal of religion lives in the sensible, the visible, the real, the personal; so the second lives and feeds on the spiritual, the ideal, the limitless, the impersonal. The one seeks God as a Father, a Lover, a Friend; the other as “Light inaccessible and full of glory,”—the nameless, the formless, the abyss of being, the omnipresent, the unspeakable. Here are two phases of religion as Life. Shall we call them Feeling and Faith? Purest Hindooism has come very near to the recognition of these two. Unfortunately it stops here and rests in these as the totality and completion, the be all and end all of Religion. *Bhakti* is the word. And did not your Chaitanya and your Tookaram, and their compeers, bring to India this ‘volume first’ of true religion?

What I am most concerned to declare to you is, the Religion of study and work; its third and fourth cardinals; the second volume. You professed believers in Prayer and in Brotherhood, are bound, for your own sakes, and for India’s sake, to double the religious wealth of your country; to double the inheritance of all whom God shall enable you to teach and vitalize. God forbid that the most favored of India’s sons, among

whom I reckon true Brahmos, should shut their ears to the hearing and their eyes to the seeing of those other sources of religious Life which India has not yet found.

Have you ever thought of it, and how strangely true it is, that the word preached by nearly all Christian teachers in India, is the first and not the second volume of God's truth? precisely the gospel of purest Hindooism, *i.e.*, believe, believe, only believe! A man's learning has nothing to do with his salvation; say these good men, or many of them. 'A man's character has nothing to do with his salvation', are words that I heard declared from the pulpit of the Anglican chapel at Suez. With a change of names and adjuncts as of Christ for Chrishna, and putting Bethlehem for Brindabun, this is Hindooism; this believing without a question, and being saved by faith alone; saved by faith in what is external to me; not by what I do and am, but by what another has done for me; by bowing the head to Jesus as God; by his merits and his righteousness, not my own divinity of love and power to bless. Whether this be old Hindooism or not, it denies Jesus when he says, First be true to thy brother, and then bring thy gift to God; first pay thy debts to man and afterwards to God.

What I am most anxious to make clear to you to-night is this, that, before God, the pumping is as needful as the praying. I do not say that work is *more* important than prayer. I say as important, as religious, as holy; so

that the High Court is as truly a temple of religion as the Cathedral. Mind and Will are co-ordinate with Heart and Soul; and either one of these four Cardinals is as religious as the other:—Such is the commandment of God. Is your Somaj, a church of praying *more* than a church of doing? A church of submission more than a church of assertion? A church of worshippers who do not care to be commanders? A church that dishonors labor and the laborer instead of saying with Jesus, My Father worketh and I work? If so, God forgive you. Or rather, may God, gently, or by penalty if necessary, awaken you to duty. Of all public religious teachers let not Brahmōs teach “Complete Salvation” by Faith alone:—a faith impossible “till God comes to the sinner:” a faith only to be had supernaturally, by God’s action independent of man’s will. Thus leaving the sinner to say—“How could I be saved? God did not come to me; the fault is God’s, not mine.” This, I consider, is blasphemy, even though it be called, by sincere men, orthodox Christianity. It is not the teaching of Jesus. He says, “Whosoever does the work, does the will of my Father, the same is my brother.” Not he that calls me God, “not he that saith to me Lord, Lord,” though in perfect faith, “shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father,” who comes in all holy Love, Faith, Wisdom, and Power; and so is in me, and in you, and in Heaven, dwelling in the harmony of all that is good and right.

Such is my definition of Religion, as the power of an endless Life.

Religion and Progress are the words. How shall we define progress? Does it need definition? Progress is advance in the right way. Growing according to law; nature's law; God's law;—the healthy new out of the old health. Evolution is a popular name for it. Darwin and his school have traced the progress of life through two of its planes—the vegetable and the animal—with rare fidelity and overwhelming proofs. It seems as if India needed for her new birth, little more than a clear vision of God's great law of life and growth. Like the earlier scriptures of other nations,—the Hebrew legend of Adam and Eve not excepted,—the Shasters look farthest back for what is best. They put all good in the past; in the *Satya Yug*, and all evil in the *Kali Yug*, the present age. Let those who see God's truth and law to be the other way, demand the inversion of this arrangement; aye, invert it bravely, and fear not. The ancients sowed what the moderns reap. Theirs was the ploughing for what we are harvesting. Young and crude and half-civilized as the world is now, it is, on the whole, doing better than it ever did before. It has gained something from century to century, on and on, till now. And this is Progress. Religion—Progress;—we see what they are.

And now, having defined our terms, let us call the names of some of the leaders of liberal thought in the United States of America; such

as shall aid us to see, and perhaps win us to read and even to extract, bring over and translate the honey of their thought, for the nourishment of the growing thought of India. Yes, let me give you facts to illustrate, so far as they may, the growth of religious inquiry in the far Western world.

Partly through preaching, but more through reading, journalism, serials, and the press,—religious inquiry has been quickened in America to a life and progress of which history affords no parallel. Such individualism and independence in thought is a new experience. Of the past history of the world, especially its ecclesiastical record and theological thinking, it is well said that it has been written in the biographies of a few men ; such as Augustine, Athanasius, Calvin on the one side, and Arius, Blandrata, Barneveldt on the other.—These men, and their colleagues in religious thinking, were the giants of the days that antedate the people's birth into freedom and the age of thought. Of the world's iron age of impulse—irreverent, thoughtless, wilful—we have no written account. Of its copper age of blind faith,—selfish, uninquiring, ascetic,—little is recorded, or if recorded worth keeping. Of its silver age of mental quickening and popular education, our age of the pen and the press, the post-office and the newspaper, the good time into which we, who choose to open our eyes, are born to-day,—much is written that we are bound to know. Of its golden age of beneficent power—acting on and

through every man's better feelings, right aspirations, trained intelligence and well-defined and perfect manhood,—we are, God willing, to know in due time. But the realized aristocracy of beneficence is not yet. Ages of feeling, of faith, of thought, of action,—these correspond, do they not, to the world's infancy, childhood, youth and maturity. So we believe. We see also—we more than believe—that, like the natural sun, the sun of intellectual light has moved historically *westward* round the earth. None will deny that the mental and philosophical sunrise, which cheered India some thirty centuries ago, passed gently but surely away from her. India slowly but inevitably lost her intellectual leadership among the nations. Europe appropriated her mental wealth. Athens, Rome, Paris, Oxford, successively took her crown. Greece passed it on to Italy, and Italy to Spain, and Spain to France and Germany; and Germany sends her choicest scholars West again, to shine in England and in America. Where now is Kapila? Where the Sankhya philosophy? As fairly may we ask, where now are Aristotle, Socrates, Plato? We look in vain to-day for Platonians, Socratians, Aristotelians. We call yet louder for the millions that swear by Kapila; but all is silent. None say Here are we. Though India's twilight came and her sun went down, it was not to stay down for ever. Behold her morning cometh. And simple fools are they who tell us she is dead. She is not dead, but sleeping. China, Japan,

India, all the Orient world, greets joyfully, hopefully, another dawn.

Meantime, for some term, in Central and Western Europe it is high noon, intellectually; and early noon reigns in the United States. *Ex oriente lux; ad occidentem lux;* such is the irreversible swing of the world, given it by a hand wiser than ours.

Among American thinkers we find the names of Channing, Emerson, Hedge, Parker, and others. Dr. William Ellery Channing died in 1842. Small in stature and frail as a wind-flower, he seemed, for years, ready, at any moment, to pass the gossamer screen that hung between him and the spirit-world. Still he lived on, and at short intervals stood up in one of the most highly-honored pulpits of Boston—the American Athens—and spoke with a voice, as it had been the voice of an angel. Though in theory a Unitarian, he was too broad for the limits of a sect. He spoke from the soul, to the soul, of the soul and its God-given powers: of its inborn possibilities of love and wisdom and strength and holiness. And thus of the essential dignity and latent glory of human nature. This he did as a pioneer; and in the face of a dominant orthodoxy which affirmed that man's nature was hopelessly and totally depraved; and that, without a miracle of God's working, the human heart was naturally capable of evil and only evil. Than Channing, America has produced no finer artist and delineator of the loveliness,

not of the human face, but of the human soul divine. None can read Channing and not be moved to a new ideal of his own possibilities, and a stronger love of his fellow man, an arch-angel ruined, but an arch-angel still. In Boston, where Channing preached full forty years ago, and thought advances at railway speed, some have outgrown his theories of miracle, of the verbal authority of scripture, and of some other things. But the burden of his message from on high will never be outgrown. Tens of thousands of copies of Channing's works are being freshly distributed, and translations of them are multiplying in French, in German, in Italian, in Hungarian and in other tongues. Who will be first to turn them into Maharatti, Bengali, Tamil?

Ralph Waldo Emerson is getting into years, but manifests to-day, as he did half a century ago, the wizard power of a true thought-leader. If Channing be the accepted prophet of the loveable in man,—to the extent of sacrificing his brilliant reputation to the Negro-question when the Negro was a slave and the least loveable of men,—we may take Emerson as the prophet of that in us which worships. Of all western thinkers he comes nearest to the refined Hindoo. Radhakant was—though not in his highest moods—a physical pantheist. Emerson is a spiritual pantheist. The Rajah Radhakant—a typical and orthodox Hindoo—could see God only as the Spirit of Life, and as the Mind of mind;—but never as a friend and

father; never as a seeing, hearing, feeling sympathiser in his daily trials; never as holding personal relations with men. To him, personality was no attribute of Brahma, the most High, the most Deep,—the Abyss of being. So Emerson does not ascribe personality to deity. We sat with him in his sweet country home at Concord, near Boston, about three months ago. His tall, thin frame had undergone but little change since that day—forty years—when we first felt the fascination of his presence and his word. He has access to the Vedas, the Avesta, and the Bhagavot Gita only through the best translations, still we can never forget how deftly he has mined their gems, and given them permanent settings in the memory of his hearers. We can hardly forgive Emerson for making us go down on our knees to Plato, “great, humane Plato,” as if the whole Bible and all life were in Plato. We trace the world-wide power of Emerson, first to his independence of thought and the self-trust in which he has done his work; and, secondly, to his peculiar mastery of terse, concise, ringing, stinging Saxon-English speech. We once heard him say “No orator can match, in power, with him who can give good nick-names.” We should like to see Emerson’s match in his ability to condense a volume into a figure, or an epithet.

He is now harvesting his sheaves, and giving permanent form, through his publishers, to such of his works as he deems best worth preserva-

tion. Ere many years he must pass within the veil. With mingled love and reverence we longed, in a recent interview with Emerson, to elicit some expression of his anticipations of the world to come. Was he to join hands with Socrates and Plato, and walk personally with Jesus, his highest type of manhood realized on earth? We asked nodirectquestions. We simply uttered what we ourselves felt and believed. But the great American Brahmin made no definite reply. Silent worship of the Infinite, the Holy, the Beneficent, the Undefinable; from whom he came, to whom he must return;—that was enough for him.

Dr. Frederic Hedge is the author of many good things beside his well-known volume on "Reason in Religion." We content ourselves with merely naming him as a living and prominent progressive thinker, and as one who would say "This is life eternal, *to know*: 'Religion is knowledge.'" Such would be his motto: as Channing's would be Religion is love (of God and man);—and Emerson's, Religion is worship; silent, solitary worship of God in the soul. We lately heard Dr. Hedge speak with satisfaction of his protracted residence, years ago, in Germany. It is five or six years since he accepted a professorship at the Divinity School of America's oldest university. Previous to that, he was for a long period the honored preacher of a Unitarian Church at Brookline near Boston. His short, thick, well-set figure, bald head and florid face betoken a continuance

of health and mental power, far down the vale of years.

None can glance at the great company of religious thinkers in America and fail to see Theodore Parker. There he stands, broad-axe in one hand and flail in the other; stout, short, rubicund, and with a head like a cannon-ball. Such is our earliest remembrance of him. And when we picked, the other day, some sprays of a scrub pine, which a friend had planted at the head of his grave in Florence—for he died in Europe—we could hardly think of him as when we saw him last in Boston—a white-bearded, bald-headed, prematurely old man. He has been dead a dozen years. Incessant public speaking laid him in a too early grave, a victim of bronchial disease. “Better rub than rust” was a motto he kept only too well. His criticisms of some portions of New Testament, which no man before him had so sharply handled in an American pulpit, alienated, for the time, many friends who had been near and dear. Now that his conflicts are over, and his truculent conscientiousness is better understood, some, who were ready to shut their ears when he began to speak, are surprised to find how he loved Jesus as his elder brother: and how Theodore Parker not only loved to speak of Jesus as “That divine man whose name is ploughed into the world;” but was ever saying that “The Christianity of Christ can never fail, till man ceases to be man.” “Christianity is absolute Religion—

the only religion everlasting, ever blessed." We feel bound to mention this, after so long and loud a cry against this noble pioneer, as the arch-enemy of Christ. The volume of Parker's Works most read in India—his "Discourse of Religion" rings with this cry. It closes with the words "We want real Christianity, the Absolute Religion, preached with faith and applied to life: Being Good and Doing Good." Channing for Love, Beauty, Joy, Dignity in man; Emerson for Self-trust and Trust in God; Hedge for Knowledge; Parker for Strength; in pure and perfect Theism, with Jesus as the typical theist;—such are some of the abler exponents of spiritual freedom and of the present growth and promise of religious inquiry in the United States of America.

Not a few voices of such men have quickened and are broadening and advancing religious feeling and thought in the United States. But your reading and study, if you yourselves expect to be men of thought and leaders of your people, will extend to many besides Parker, Hedge, Emerson, and Channing. Nor need I add Samuel Johnson.

A closing word now, and not an unimportant one, as to some feasible method of mutual assistance between India and America. There is nothing surer to be mutually helpful than for one half the world to see how the other half lives. Such mutual visitation is endlessly suggestive. When dog-fanciers want to improve the dog, they ransack all countries for all sorts

of dogs. They bring these together and have "a dog show." For the development of the horse and the cow, Arabia and Australia come together. Horses meet in company from England and the Cape; Shetlands with Pegues. The Alderneys and the Durhams meet the Canadians and the Tasmanians, if not the His-sar cattle, and men have a cattle-show. So progress in good breeding, whether animal or human, comes of bringing the ends of the earth together. Let India and America come to know one another, by all practicable modes of contact, and the thing is done. Mutual benefaction is inevitable. America meets India here to-night. Not a very bad beginning, perhaps, of the proposed contact; mental, moral, personal. Only remember that one good turn deserves another. How soon will brother Kunté lecture in Boston or New York? It is your turn next. His word, of India's life, will receive a welcome there, of which I can give him all the assurance he desires. And what will come of this interchange? Why, wealth; wealth in its highest proof and last distillation;—wealth absolute; real estate and abiding capital for after coming generations; all that men really live and labor for: increased affection; sterling good will and godlike power to know and do, better than either India or America knew and did before; and so be true and just. Neither side of the family can do the other justice, while content with its present lamentable ignorance, and don't care condition, as to who you are, and who are you. .

I am free to say that America needs India's devoutness, and her habit of seeing God in all things, as India needs America's favorite thought that God only saves those that save themselves: that God and man inter-act: and all true work is co-labor with God. So that for the laborer, lofty or lowly, there is no hand but God's hand. The call of India, to-day, for the training of her sons in physical science—is a new call. I begin to hear in India an American cry that India should devote her naturally keen intelligence to make the waters, winds, and lightnings her servants, through improved machinery and new inventions. Have you any office for the deposit of patents in this Presidency? or any where in India? I know of none. But our Patent Office, in Washington, is one of the grandest buildings in the United States. Why not go and see it? and make a beginning of such an one in Poona? The Religion of labor—the Religion of work and its Wisdom, has more to do with India's Progress in divine manhood than the soul of praying India has yet conceived. I need say no more, your own wit will supply illustrations of what is meant, by saying that India and America should lose no time in getting acquainted: since all religion is life; and all life is growth. India thinks human life 'a drop of dew upon a lotus leaf'; as transient, as worthless. But God, to-night, says No. Life's least act has eternal consequences. Forget it not: Life is Religion; bound to love and pray; free to know and do:—the seed of life eternal.

JESUS.—The mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the Spirit of God, how it wrought in his bosom! What words of rebuke, of comfort, counsel, admonition, promise, hope, did he pour out; words that stir the soul as summer dews call up the faint and sickly grass! What profound instruction in his proverbs and discourses; what wisdom in his homely sayings, so rich with Jewish life; what deep divinity of soul in his prayers, his action, sympathy, resignation!—*Theodore Parker.*

Others may love Christ for mysterious attributes; I love him for the rectitude of his soul and life. I love him for that benevolence which went through Judea instructing the ignorant, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind. I love him for that universal charity which comprehended the despised publican, the hated Samaritan, the benighted heathen, and sought to bring a world to God and to happiness. I love him for that gentle, mild, forbearing spirit, which no insult, outrage, injury, could overpower, and which desired as earnestly the repentance and happiness of its foes as the happiness of its friends. I love him for the spirit of magnanimity, constancy and fearless rectitude with which, amidst peril and opposition, he devoted himself to the work which God gave him to do. I love him for the wise and enlightened zeal with which he espoused the true, the spiritual interests of mankind, and through which he lived and died to redeem them from every sin, to frame them after his own godlike virtue. I love him, I have said, for his *moral excellence*; I know nothing else to love. I know nothing so glorious in the Creator or his creatures. This is the greatest gift which God bestows; the greatest to be derived from his Son.—*W. E. Channing.*

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