

**FOUR GREAT  
RELIGIONS:  
FOUR LECTURES**

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Four Great Religions: Four Lectures by Annie Besant

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**ANNIE BESANT**

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# FOUR GREAT RELIGIONS

## Four Lectures

*Delivered on the Twenty-first Anniversary of the  
Theosophical Society, at Adyar, Madras*

BY

ANNIE BESANT

*Fellow of the Theosophical Society*

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## PREFACE TO AMERICAN EDITION.

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SINCE the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 aroused the American public to a sense of the importance of Eastern thought, the study of Comparative Religion has made great strides in the United States. The present work is designed to present four of the chief religions of the world side by side, each as it appears to its more thoughtful and liberal adherents. The fundamental unity of these religions is thus made apparent, and it is seen that, instead of bending our efforts to convert our neighbors to our own faith, we should do well to search out and bring forth the spiritual treasures it contains, often hidden under a mass of intellectual verbiage that repels the non-intuitional. A true brotherhood of religions can only be secured by members of each recognizing and honoring the truths contained in other faiths, and being willing to live in amity without endeavoring to convert. We have all much to learn and much to teach, and if the missionaries of every faith would become learners and teachers instead of proselytizers, they would become the messengers of peace and good-will instead of the stirrers-up of strife.

ANNIE BESANT.

CHICAGO, 1897.





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## FOUR GREAT RELIGIONS.

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### FOREWORD.

THE following lectures do not pretend to be anything more than popular expositions of four great faiths, and are intended for the ordinary reader rather than for the student. Delivered to audiences composed almost entirely of Hindus, with only a sprinkling of Zoroastrians and Christians, they rather take for granted a knowledge of Sanskrit terms; so notes have been added where obscurity might arise from their use. They are intended to help members of each of the four religions to recognize the value and beauty of the three faiths which are not their own, and to demonstrate their underlying unity. In the lecture on Buddhism I had especially in mind the misconceptions which shut the Lord Buddha out from the hearts of His countrymen, and strove to remove them by quotations from the received Scriptures containing the authoritative records of His own words. For indeed I know of no greater service that could be rendered to religion than to draw together again these sundered faiths,