

**TWO LECTURES ON THE
RELIGIOUS
PRACTICES AND
OPINIONS OF THE HINDUS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649426973

Two Lectures on the Religious Practices and Opinions of the Hindus by H. H. Wilson

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Cover @ 2017

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H. H. WILSON

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TWO LECTURES
ON THE
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND OPINIONS
OF THE
HINDUS;

DELIVERED BEFORE
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

On the 27th and 28th of February, 1840.

BY
H. H. WILSON, M.A.
(OF EXETER COLLEGE),
BODEN PROFESSOR OF MANUSCRIPT, ETC.

OXFORD,
PRINTED BY T. COMER, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY: SOLD BY
JOHN HENRY PARKER;
AND W. H. ALLEN AND CO. LEADENHALL STREET, LONDON.
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IN a Convocation, holden on Thursday the 13th of February, 1840, the following proposal, made through the Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Calcutta, was submitted to, and accepted by the University.

Bishop's Palace, Calcutta, June 12, 1839.

To the Reverend the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

REV. MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,

1. I am requested by a Gentleman of the Civil Service of the Hon. The East India Company, in this Presidency, to submit the proposal of a Prize for the Members of the University, if you should see fit to accept of the same.

2. The subject on which this Gentleman (who begs me to suppress his name) is desirous of proposing a prize, is thus described in a letter to myself.

“For the best refutation of Hinduism in its main systems, both exoteric, and esoteric; to consist of such arguments, and be conveyed in that form of address, which are most suited to Indian genius, modes of thinking, and state of knowledge, and most likely to carry conviction to the understanding and heart of the Indian Pundit; together with such a statement of the Evidences of Christianity as may be most suitable to the mental and moral character of learned Hindus, and the state of information among them; the whole treatise being so constituted, as, together with the more necessary and essential arguments, to furnish also, judiciously interwoven, those elementary principles of morals, natural theology, metaphysics, historical evidence, &c., &c., and those historical facts, which the perverted condition of the Hindu intellect, and its want of correct historical information, may render indispensable, in order to the clear apprehension of the reasoning which is to form the principal subject of the Treatise.

“Any considerations connected with the subject, which the writer may think interesting, and important to the European reader, but which have not a direct bearing on the primary object of the Treatise, (the conversion of learned and philosophical Hindus to Christianity,) might be thrown into an Appendix.”

3. The gentleman has lodged Two Hundred Pounds sterling in the banking house of Messrs. Robarts, Curtis, and Co., which will be paid to your order, at a moment's

notice, by a check drawn by the Rev. D. Wilson, vicar, Islington, London.

4. The proposer leaves it entirely to the University to determine the classes of Students, or Members, to whom the prize should be proposed. He supposes that justice cannot be done to the subject in less than three or four hundred pages; and he wishes that the successful Candidate should print a certain number of copies of the Essay, at the direction of the University.

5. The gentleman further suggests that Mr. Professor Wilson, and Dr. Mill, late Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, might be advantageously referred to by persons intending to write for the prize, with respect to the best works to be consulted for information on the nature of Hinduism, and the state of sentiment, and morals in India.

6. He states to me, also, that he is anxious to draw the attention of academical youth to the consideration of the welfare of India, and wishes the projected work to be adapted for learned Hindus, i. e. both such as are learned in their own religious and philosophical literature, and those who have received a good English education. The Treatise should, in short, be in such a form, as to be at once, without further preparation or modification, a suitable work to be put into the hands of the English-reading Natives, and also fit for translation into Sanscrit; and,

with the latter view, it would, we think, be advisable to have it written in the form of Dialogue, the different parts of the subject being introduced by questions or objections from a *pupil*, and expounded in his Teacher's reply.

7. But all these intimations are intended to be entirely subordinate to the judgment of yourself, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and the Heads of Houses, and the Proposer of the Prize will be perfectly satisfied in whatever way his main object shall be carried into effect.

8. I cannot close this letter without tendering my grateful acknowledgments to the University for all their consideration to myself since my matriculation the 1st of May, 1798; and to assure them that it is with no slight feelings of gratification I find myself called upon, in this distant country, to be the channel of communication with them on so important and deeply interesting a subject.

I have the honour to be,

Mr. Vice-Chancellor,

Your obedient humble Servant,

D. CALCUTTA.

It was at the same time determined, That "the Candidates shall, at the time of delivering in their Compositions, be Members of the University, having their names upon the Books of some College or

Hall:—that the Compositions be delivered to the Registrar on or before the 14th day of January, 1842:—and that the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors, with such Assessors as they shall think proper to call in, be the Judges.”