

A. K. N.

## RELIGIOUS REFORM.

## PART IV.

THE BRAHMA SAMAJ AND OTHER MODERN ECLECTIC SYSTEMS  
OF RELIGION IN INDIA.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own  
soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

*New Testament.*

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The following Paper treats of one of the most interesting movements in India. Most Hindus who have received an English education simply conform to idolatrous customs; some, from false patriotism, try by sophistry to defend irrational beliefs; but happily there are a few who are making more or less earnest efforts to arrive at religious truth.

An attempt is made in the following pages to trace the rise of the modern Theistic movement in India. The compiler is mainly indebted to the following works:

- Bose, Ram Chandra, *Brahmoism*. Funk and Wagnalls.  
 Collet, Miss S., *Brahmo Year Books, Outlines of Brahmie History, &c.*  
 Day, Rev. Lal Behari, *Antidote to Brahmaism*. Calcutta, 1867.  
 Dyson, Rev. S. *Brahmic Intuition, Brahmie Dogmas*. Calcutta Tract Society.  
 Max Müller, Professor. *Biographical Essays*. Longmans.  
 Mozoomdar, P. C. *Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*. Calcutta Baptist Mission Press.  
 Mullens, Rev. J. *Vedantism, Brahmism and Christianity*. Calcutta T. S.  
 Rammohun Roy's *English Works*. 2 vols. Calcutta.  
 Sen, Keshub Chunder. *Lectures in India, &c.*  
 Sivanath Sastri, Pandit, *The New Dispensation and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj*. Madras, 1881.  
 Slater, Rev. T. E. *Keshub Chunder Sen*. Madras, S. P. C. K. 1884.  
 Williams, Sir Monier, *Religious Thought and Life in India*. Murray.

The compiler is especially indebted to Mr. Mozoomdar's *Life of Keshub Chunder Sen*. The sketch of Keshub's history is simply an abridgment of his work.

There are numerous short extracts, for the most part slightly altered, which are not acknowledged.

Persons interested in the movement, besides consulting the above works, should watch its progress as given in its leading journals, *The Liberal and New Dispensation, The Interpreter, The Indian Messenger, The Subodha Patrika, and The Fellow Worker*.

It may seem that the movement has been criticised too severely, but it is highly important to remove false impressions. The most extravagant claims are made by some of the Bramhos. The birth of the Brahma Samaj "(THE BLESSED CHILD)" is held to be "no less momentous an event than that of Jesus or Buddha—yea a grander event." (See page 67.)

Bramhos reject the doctrine of a "book revelation" in the proper sense of the term; every man claims direct revelation. They feel so little the guilt of sin, that they think they can go into God's presence without a Mediator, and work out for themselves their own deliverance. May they be guided to a faith which is more suited to fallen humanity, and which does not contradict some of the strongest religious instincts of our race!

J. MURDOCH.

MADRAS, July, 1888.

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## RELIGIOUS REFORM.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The previous Papers on Religious Reform\* treated of what may be called the indigenous beliefs of Hindus. The present Paper shows the influence of Western knowledge on the Indian mind, and describes the attempts made to frame creeds more in accordance with common sense and with higher views of God's character.

Most people belong to the great religions of the world, as Christianity, Muhammadanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. There are a few who frame for themselves what are called Eclectic systems.

The word *eclectic* means choosing from. It was applied to certain philosophers in ancient times who did not attach themselves to any particular sect, but selected from the opinions and principles of each what they thought true and good. In the West the name was given to certain schools of Greece and Alexandria. The same course has been followed by some in India. The Bhagavat says, "As the bee gathereth honey from flowers great and small, so does the really wise man gather substantial truth from the chaff of all scriptures, great and small."

The adherents of the new eclectic systems in India are far more enlightened than the greatest Hindu philosophers in former times. They have much clearer ideas of God than the authors of the Vedic hymns. "The poets of the Veda," says Max Müller, "indulged freely in theogonic speculations without being frightened by any contradictions. They knew of Indra as the greatest of gods, they knew of Agni as god of gods, they knew of Varuna as the ruler of all, but they were by no means startled at the idea that their Indra had a mother [Aditi], or that their Agni was born like a babe from the friction of two firesticks, or that Varuna and his brother Mitra were nursed in the lap of Aditi." Visvanathapanchanana, the learned author of *Muktavali*, a book on the Nyaya philosophy,

\* Part I. POPULAR HINDUISM. Part II. PHILOSOPHIC HINDUISM. Part III. VEDIC HINDUISM. See last page of wrapper for details and prices.

begins his work as follows: "Salutation to that Krishna, whose appearance is like a new cloud, the stealer of the clothes of the Gopis, who is the seed of the tree of the universe." The great Sankar Acharya believed the stories about the gods in the Puranas just like his ordinary countrymen. The members of the Brahma Samaj are monotheists, and hold a pure system of morality. As protesters against idolatry and advocates of social reform, they are doing excellent service. No doubt many of them are half-hearted and show little zeal; others even maintain caste and take part in heathen rites; but among them there are some earnest "seekers after God," and true friends of their country. Their attempts to find a creed which will satisfy the needs of an enlightened conscience deserve careful examination.

**Monotheism not new in India.**—The remark of Max Müller has been quoted in a previous Paper:—

"There is a monotheism which precedes the polytheism of the Veda, and even in the invocation of their innumerable gods, the remembrance of a God, one and infinite, breaks through the midst of an idolatrous phraseology, like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds."

"The ordinary Hindu," says Sir Monier Williams, "who practises the most corrupt form of polytheism, is never found to deny the doctrine of God's unity. On the contrary, he will always maintain that God is essentially one, though he holds that the one God exhibits himself variously, and that He is to be worshipped through an endless diversity of manifestations, incarnations, and material forms." This, however, is not monotheism, but a mixture of pantheism and polytheism.

From time to time, reformers have appeared who taught the existence of one supreme personal God, distinct from the soul and the material world. Such were Ramanuja and Madhava, in the 12th and 13th centuries. But their influence was limited. Some of the Vaishnava sects of the present day are among the most idolatrous and licentious in India.

There was another monotheistic reaction under Kabir towards the close of the 15th century, due in a great measure to Muhammadanism. Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was largely influenced by Kabir, whom he frequently quotes. He endeavoured to unite Hindus and Muhammadans on the common ground of a belief in the unity of the Godhead. His tenth successor, however, made Sikhs and Muhammadans bitter enemies.

The Dadu-panthis, a small sect in Western India, were founded by Dadu, a cotton-cleaner of Ahmadabad, who flourished about 1600 A.D. They may be styled theistic Vaishnavas. The Satnámis of Central India, are followers of Kabir, who call the one God by a peculiar name of their own—*Satnám*.

It must be confessed, however, that the monotheism of Hindu reformers was never very clear and decided. It was continually sliding into pantheism, and then again into polytheism. Not until Christian influence was brought to bear upon the Hindu mind, was the doctrine accepted by any in its purity.

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## MODERN HINDU THEISM.

The leaders of the movement in this direction and the Societies which they established will be noticed in turn.

### RAMMOHUN ROY.

**Early Life.**—This great religious reformer was born of a Brahman family, not very far from Calcutta, in the year 1774 A.D.\* It was in the same year that Warren Hastings was appointed the first Governor-General of India. Rammohun Roy's father was a small Zemindar, who had served under the Nawabs of Murshidabad. Persian was still the language of the court, and all persons desirous of Government employ for their sons had them educated in Persian and Arabic. In his ninth year Rammohun Roy was sent to Patna, the principal seat of Arabic learning in Bengal. Three years later, he was sent to Benares to study Sanskrit, where he remained till his sixteenth year.

On his return, Rammohun Roy had a rupture with his father on account of his opposition to idolatry. He therefore left the paternal home, and for four years wandered from place to place, spending, if report be true, some time in Tibet. In his twentieth year he was recalled by his father, after which he devoted himself for some time to the acquisition of English, and further studies in Sanskrit.

From 1800 to 1813, Rammohun Roy was employed in Government service, filling various posts till he was made a Sheristadar. He spent ten years of his life in Ramgurh, Bhagulpore, and Rungpore, as *dewan* or head officer of the Collectors and Judges of those districts. Hence he was commonly known as the Dewanji till he was made a Raja by the Emperor of Delhi. During the time he was Dewan, he is said to have accumulated so much money as to enable him to purchase an estate worth Rs. 1,000 a month.

**State of Bengal.**—In 1814 Rammohun Roy came to Calcutta, not to rest, but prepared to fight with the old superstitions and the

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\* Another account makes 1772 the year of his birth.

manifold evils that had darkened the face of his country. The state of things in Bengal, when he began his work, is thus described :

“ In the religious world there was much excitement. The Saktis, or the worshippers of the goddess Sakti, and the Baishnabas, mostly followers of Chaitanya, were both strong, and now contending with each other for supremacy in the land. But however great might be the bigotry of the two sects, their general immorality and corruptions were simply revolting.

“ The social condition of the people of Bengal was also deplorable. The rigid Caste-system of India, with its blighting influence, reigned in its full rigour. The horrible rites of Suttee and Infanticide were the order of the day. There were indeed many instances of true Suttees. . . but it should not therefore be forgotten that in a great many instances the Suttee was the victim of her greedy relatives, and in more, of rash words spoken in the first fit of grief, and of the vanity of her kindred who considered her shrinking from the first resolve an indelible disgrace. Many a horrible murder was thus committed, the cries and shrieks of the poor Suttee being drowned by the sound of tomtoms, and her struggles made powerless by her being pressed down with bamboos.

“ The condition of the Hindu female in those days was truly pitiable. Education among females was unknown. Kulinism, polygamy and every day oppression made the life of the Hindu female unbearable. Hindu society with Caste, Polygamy, Kulinism, Suttee, Infanticide, and other evils was rotten to its core. Morality was at a very low ebb. Men spent their time in vice and idleness, and in social broils and party quarrels.

“ As to education among the people, of what even the Muktubs could impart there was little. What little learning there was, was confined to a few Brahmans, and it was in the main a vain and useless learning. Ignorance and superstition reigned supreme over the length and breadth of the country. There was darkness over the land, and no man knew when it would be dispelled.”\*

Rammohun Roy took a warm interest in every thing connected with the welfare of his countrymen ; he did much for the suppression of Sati ; but religious reform was his great work, and to that remarks will chiefly be confined.

**Publications.**—Soon after his father’s death he wrote a book in Persian, “ Against the Idolatry of all Religions.”

In 1816 he published his first work in English, “ Translation of an Abridgment of the Vedant, or the Resolution of all the Veds, the most celebrated and revered work of Brahminical Theology, establishing the Unity of the Supreme Being ; and that He alone is the object of Propitiation and Worship.” Rammohun Roy did not study the Vedas strictly so called. As mentioned under *Vedic Hinduism*, he looked upon that as a waste of time. It was the Upanishads to which he gave his attention.

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\* Introduction to Rammohun Roy’s English Works, Vol. I. pp. vi, vii.

The *Abridgment of the Vedant* professes to be translated from Vyasa, to whom is attributed the oldest treatise on the Vedantic philosophy, called the *Brahma Sutra*. Rammohun Roy quotes about 30 Sutras out of 518 in the original, with nearly an equal number from the Upanishads. The work expresses his own views rather than those of the books from which he makes extracts. In the Introduction he notices an excuse made by Europeans for idolatry:—

“I have observed that both in their writings and conversation many Europeans feel a wish to palliate and soften the features of Hindoo idolatry; and are inclined to inculcate, that all objects of worship are considered by their votaries as emblematical representations of the Supreme Divinity! If this were indeed the case, I might perhaps be led into some examination of the subject: but the truth is the Hindoos of the present day have no such views of the subject, but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power; and to propitiate them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed.”

The above was followed by translations of four of the Upanishads, according to the commentary of Sankar Acharya. He says in the preface to the Mundaka Upanishad of the Atharva Veda :

“An attentive perusal of this, as well as of the remaining books of the Vedanta, will, I trust, convince every unprejudiced mind, that they, with great consistency, inculcate the unity of God; instructing men, at the same time, in the pure mode of adoring him in spirit. It will also appear evident that the Veds, although they tolerate idolatry as the last provision for those who are totally incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the invisible God of Nature, yet repeatedly urge the relinquishment of the rites of idol worship, and the adoption of a purer system of religion, on the express grounds that the observance of idolatrous rites can never be productive of eternal beatitude. They are left to be practised by such persons only as, notwithstanding the constant teaching of spiritual guides, cannot be brought to see perspicuously the majesty of God through the works of nature.”

The “unity of God” which the books of the Vedanta are said to “inculcate with great consistency” is pantheism—not monotheism. *Ekam Evadvitiam*, One only without a second, does not mean that there is no second God, but that there is no second anything. The Mundaka Upanishad, as translated by Rammohun Roy, says: “In the same way as the cobweb is created and absorbed by the spider *independently of exterior origin*, as vegetables proceed from the earth, and hair and nails from animate creatures, so the Universe is produced by the eternal Supreme Being.”\*

Polytheism is contained in the same Upanishad. It begins as

\* English Works of Rammohun Roy, Vol. I. p. 26.

follows: "Brahma, the greatest of celestial deities, and executive creator and preserver of the world, came into form; he instructed Uthurva, his eldest son, in the knowledge respecting the Supreme Being, in which all sciences rest."

In 1817 he published "A Defence of Hindu Theism in reply to the attack of an advocate for Idolatry, at Madras," and "A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Veds; in reply to an Apology for the present state of Hindu Worship." They contain trenchant exposures of popular Hinduism. The following are some extracts:

"He who pronounces 'Doorga,' though he constantly practise adultery, plunder others of their property, or commit the most heinous crimes, is freed from all sin."\*

"A person pronouncing loudly 'reverence to Hari,' even involuntarily, in the state of falling down, of slipping, of labouring under illness, or of sneezing, purifies himself from the foulest crimes."†

"As to falsehood, their favourite deity Krishna‡ is more conspicuous than the rest. Krishna again persuaded Yoodhisthir, his cousin, to give false evidence—in order to accomplish the murder of Drona, their spiritual father.—See *Dron Purva*, or seventh book of the Mahabharuth."§

In 1817 he directed his thoughts to the Christian religion and never discontinued its study till the end of his life. He learned Hebrew and Greek to form his own independent opinion of the Old and New Testaments. In 1820 he published, in Bengali and English, a book called, "The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness," consisting chiefly of extracts from the Gospels. In the Preface he says:—

"This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate man's ideas to high and liberal notions of the One God, ... and is so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in its present form."

In a letter prefixed to one of his later works (an edition of the *Kena Upanishad*) he makes the following admission:—

"The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge."||

\* Doorga Nam Mahatmya.

† Bhagavat.

‡ The favourite deity also of Bunkin; Chunder Chatterjea, the modern Bengali novelist, who tries to whitewash him, and hold him up as a pattern of excellence!

§ The English Works of Rammohun Roy, Vol. I. pp. 146, 147.

|| Sir Monier Williams, *Religious Thought*, §c., p. 483.

This publication brought upon Rammohun Roy a long controversy with the Serampore Missionaries. *The Precepts of Jesus* occupy only 74 pp. of the collected edition of his English works; his *Appeals to the Christian Public in Defence* extend over 430 pages. The contention of the Missionaries was that Rammohun Roy, after three or four years' study of the Bible, had found out that the Christian Church had misunderstood it, and that it did not contain the doctrines which were considered vital. The "Appeals" were intended to prove that he was correct. He was, however, criticised too severely.

Notwithstanding this controversy, Rammohun Roy assisted missionaries in the translation of the Scriptures, and sometimes joined in Christian worship. He provided Dr. Duff with the house in which the Scottish Missionary Institution was opened in 1830, and got pupils for him. He recommended that its daily work should be commenced with the Lord's Prayer, declaring that he had studied the Brahman's Veds, the Muslim's Koran, and the Buddhist's Tripitaka without finding anywhere any other prayer so brief, comprehensive and suitable to man's wants.

**Brahma Sabha.**—Not long after Rammohun Roy came to Calcutta, he formed an association of a few personal friends, called *Atmiya Sabha*, spiritual society, which met in his house periodically for discussion. The opposition of the Brahmans and pandits caused the members to drop off one by one, till by degrees the society ceased to exist.

In 1828, Mr. W. Adam, a Protestant Missionary, a friend of Rammohun Roy's, was led to adopt unitarianism. Its adherents generally accept most of the doctrines of Christianity, except the Trinity or three-one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and others closely connected with it. Adam sought to disseminate his opinions by holding meetings and giving lectures. Rammohun Roy and a few friends, attended for a time, till at last the thought struck them that they should have a meeting house of their own.

Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosonno Kumar Tagore and others came forward with pecuniary help. Rooms were hired in the Chitpore Road, and prayer meetings held in them every Saturday evening. The service was divided into four parts—recitation of Vedic texts; reading from the Upanishads; delivering of a sermon; and singing hymns.

It was thus that the germ of the first Theistic Church was planted at Calcutta. It inaugurated a new era in the history of Indian religious thought. It ushered in the dawn of the greatest change that has ever passed over the Hindu mind. It was the first introduction of public worship and united prayer—before unknown among the Hindus. A new phase of the Hindu religion then took definite shape, a phase which differed essentially from every

other that had preceded it. For no other reformation has resulted in the same way from the influence of European education and Christian ideas.\*

The increase of contributions enabled Rammohun Roy to purchase a large house in Chitpore Road, and endow it with a maintenance fund. Trustees were appointed, and the first Hindu Theistic Church was opened in Calcutta in 1830. The name given to it was the Brahma Sabha, or Brahmīya Samaj, the Society of believers in Brahma, the one self-existent god of Hinduism.

The trust-deed of the building laid down that it was to be used as a place of meeting for the worship of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe; that no graven image, statue, or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or likeness of any thing shall be admitted within the building, that no sacrifice shall be offered there; that nothing recognised as an object of worship by other men should be spoken of contemptuously there; and that no sermon be delivered but such as would have a tendency to promote piety, morality, and charity.

**Last Years of his Life.**—Rammohun Roy had long wished to visit England with the view of obtaining, as he himself said, “by personal observation a more thorough insight into the manners, customs, religion, and political institutions of Europe.” He had also three special objects:—

(1.) To represent the grievances of the Emperor of Delhi, who conferred upon him the title of Raja, and sent him as his ambassador to England.

(2.) To be present at the approaching discussion in the House of Commons at the renewal of the East India Company’s Charter, upon which the future Government of India, whether for good or evil, so largely depended.

(3.) The orthodox party in Calcutta, indignant at being deprived of the privilege of roasting their mothers alive when they became widows, sought to appeal to the King in Council. Rammohun Roy wished to oppose this in person.

He arrived in England in April 1831, being the first Indian of rank and influence who had ventured to cross the “black water.” His enlightened opinions, courteous manners, and dignified bearing, attracted much attention. He was presented to the King, and a place was assigned to him at the ceremony of the coronation. The three special objects he had in view were all gained.

Unhappily Rammohun Roy was not strong enough to bear the severity of a European climate. After visiting Paris and other parts of France in 1833, his health began to decline. He had been

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\* Sir Monier Williams, *Religious Thought*, §c.

invited to visit Bristol and to take up his residence at the house of Miss Castle,—a ward of Dr. Carpenter—in the neighbourhood of that city. He arrived there early in September, and shortly afterwards was taken with fever. Every attention was lavished upon him, and the best medical skill called in; but all in vain. On the 27th September he breathed his last in the presence of his son Raja Ram Roy, and his two Hindu servants, by whom he had all along been enabled to preserve his caste. A short time before his death his Brahman servant uttered a prayer in his master's ear, in which the frequent use of the word *Om* was alone distinguished. He also placed iron under his pillow. When Rammohun Roy's spirit passed away, his Brahmanical thread was found coiled around his person. His remains were not laid in a Christian burial ground, but in a retired spot in a shrubbery. Ten years afterwards they were removed to a cemetery near Bristol, where a tomb was raised over his grave by Dwarkanath Tagore.

**Religious Opinions.**—The exact nature of these has been disputed. Sir Monier Williams characterises the form of theology which he propounded as “vague, undogmatic, and comprehensive.” Throughout life he shrank from connecting himself with any particular school of thought. He seems to have felt a satisfaction in being claimed as a Vedantist by Hindus, as a Theist by Unitarians, as a Christian by Christians, and as a Muslim by Muhammadans. Shortly before he set out for Europe, he said that he belonged to none of them. Whatever was good in the Vedas, in the Christian Scriptures, in the Kuran, in the Zend Avesta, or in any book of any nation anywhere, was to be accepted and assimilated as coming from the ‘God of truth,’ and to be regarded as a revelation. ‘My view of Christianity,’ he says in a letter to a friend, ‘is, that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed.’

“In truth Rammohun Roy's attitude towards his national religion continued that of a friendly reformer even to the end of his life—a reformer who aimed at retaining all that was good and true in Brahmanism, while sweeping away all that was corrupt and false. He was, in fact, by natural character too intensely patriotic not to be swayed, even to the last, by an ardent love of old national ideas.”\*

Mr. Ram Chandra Bose, in his *Brahmoism*, expresses a somewhat similar opinion. He considers it difficult to settle whether Rammohun Roy was at first a monotheist or a pantheist. He says that the beautiful songs he composed are decidedly pantheistic :

“He professed to have discovered a system of pure Theism in the

\* *Religious Thought*, &c. pp. 484–487.

Upanishads, and he made these venerable documents the main if not the sole stay of the creed, under the banner of which he expected to see the diverse and clashing religions of the world reconciled. But the conclusion upheld by the Upanishads was the very antipodes of what he expressed an anxiety to bolster up by these remains of the ancient literature of the country. Nobody can read the Upanishads, even cursorily, without being driven to the conclusion that pantheism, not theism, is the creed upheld by the spirit and letter of their teaching.

“What was the result of this serious mistake? For years the religion of Raja Rammohun Roy’s association was, not the monotheism he was anxious to see established, but the ancient pantheism of the country. His successors, some of whom were learned Pandits, did not play fast and loose with the Upanishads, as those do who pretend to discover pure theism in them; and they fearlessly set up the creed these documents were fitted to uphold. Nay, they went further. They added the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa and the comments of Shankar Acharya to their sacred literature, and moved heaven and earth to resuscitate the religion of which these two persons were the most redoubtable champions in ancient India.”

Mr. Bose allows that Rammohun Roy’s latest published utterances in England are in favour of the assumption that he was a theist of the Unitarian school.\*

On the other hand, the Rev. K. S. Macdonald, in an interesting paper read at Darjeeling, shows by numerous quotations from the writings of Rammohun Roy, that, on many points, he held the Christian faith. The following are a few extracts :

“The unity and personality of God was the first doctrine in Rammohun Roy’s creed. Intimately connected with this was his belief in the separate immortality of the soul. He was not a pantheist, as many of his countrymen are. Nor did he believe in the transmigration and final absorption of the soul.

“He believed in a great day of judgment, on which the living and the dead would appear before the Judge of all, to have their case decided once for all; and the Judge on that day, he believed, would be the Lord Jesus Christ. His own words stated at page 184, *Precepts of Jesus*, are these: ‘The fifth position is that His Heavenly Father had committed to Jesus the final judgment of all who have lived since the creation. I readily admit this position and consider the fact as confirming the opinion maintained by me and by numerous other followers of Christ,.....I agree also with the Reverend Editor (Dr. Marshman) in esteeming the nature of this office most important, and that nothing but the gift of supernatural wisdom can qualify a being to judge of the conduct of thousands of millions of individuals, living at different times from the beginning of the world to the day of the resurrection.’”

Further as to miracles, Rammohun expressly writes, pp. 133-4. “The wonderful works which Jesus was empowered to perform drew a

\* Brahmaism, pp. 40-42.

great number of Jews to a belief *Lex Logi* the promised Messiah, and confirmed his apostles in their attailed required faith in the Saviour, and the entire union of will and design that subsisted between him and the Father, as appears from the following passages: John vi. 14. "Then those men when they had seen the miracles that Jesus did, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'"

At page 162 Rammohun Roy says that "Jesus was sent into this world as the long-expected Messiah intended to suffer death and difficulties like other prophets who went before him ... Jesus of Nazareth represented as 'The Son of God,' a term synonymous with that of the Messiah, the highest of all the prophets, and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for a temporal one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they." The compiler in his defence of the Precepts of Jesus repeatedly acknowledged Christ as "the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God on behalf of his followers."\*

It is acknowledged, however, that Rammohun Roy denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the Atonement of Christ.

**Defects and Excellencies.**—Like some others, Rammohun Roy had the Utopian idea that he could persuade Hindus, Muhammadans, and Christians to accept a religion which each considered stripped of its most essential features. In trying to "please everybody, he pleased nobody," but a mere handful.

He twisted the sacred books of both Hindus and Christians so as to support his preconceived theories. He found "pure monotheism" in the former, while according to him, the Christian Church, from the very commencement, has misunderstood the nature of its creed.

Mr. Bose says, "That he was moved by a noble and disinterested passion in the beginning of his career, none will deny. But may it not be safely assumed that the exuberance of patronage and praise lavished upon him by not a few distinguished members of the ruling class tended to demoralize him to some extent?" His conduct latterly showed symptoms of a "supple, temporizing policy:"

"He called Jesus 'the founder of truth and of true religion,' 'a being in which dwelt all truth,' 'the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and Gentiles.' He called himself 'a follower of Christ,' 'a believer in him as the Son of God in a sense peculiar to him alone.' And in spite of all these public acknowledgments of fealty to Christ, he set up what might justly be called a Hindu frame-work, and unscrupulously thrust the Master, whose follower he never hesitated among Unitarians and Christians to represent himself to be, into the back-ground. He constituted the Upanishads, not the New Testament, the canonical scriptures of his association, and scrupulously observed the caste system in the forms of worship he established. The sacred scriptures were read by Brahmans in a closed room, apart from the rude gaze of the worshippers of various

\* Abridged from a Paper by the Rev. K. S. Macdonald, M. A.

castes assembled in the consecrated banner, these venerable portions of the service these might consider their own being bannermons delivered and the hymns sung. Nay, from considerations personal, the redoubtable Rajah simulated reverence for the caste system in public, while in private, he never scrupled to trench contemptuously upon its rules; and by death-bed directions went so far as to debar himself from the privilege of religious burial, that his fidelity to its injunctions might be known to his countrymen, and that nothing prejudicial to the interests of his legitimate heirs might occur! All this might be venial in the case of a shrewd man of business; but his conduct, when viewed in connection with his claims as a reformer, cannot but be pronounced both inconsistent and reprehensible."

The explanation given by Mr. Bose is that

"He was not thoroughly an earnest man, and his religion was more a theory of the head than a moving principle of the heart." His "religion was not based on a deep conviction of sin and an equally deep insight into the longings of the human heart. It was at best a superficial affair, and the forms it assumed in different places and under diverse circumstances were in perfect keeping with its want of coherence, depth, and earnestness."\*

Rammohun Roy was not an uncompromising reformer like Luther, nor was he prepared to make sacrifices for his faith like many thousands of the early Christians who would rather suffer death than countenance idolatry in any way. Rammohun Roy denounced caste as a demoralizing institution. He says in the introduction to his translation of the *Isopanishad* :

"The chief part of the theory and practice of Hindooism, I am sorry to say, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet, the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished by exclusion from the society of his family and friends. In a word, he is doomed to undergo what is commonly called loss of caste.

"On the contrary, the rigid observance of this grand article of Hindoo faith is considered in so high a light as to compensate for every moral defect. Even the most atrocious crimes weigh little or nothing in the balance against the supposed guilt of its violation.

"Murder, theft, or perjury, though brought home to the party by a judicial sentence, so far from inducing loss of caste, is visited in their society with no peculiar mark of infamy or disgrace.

"A trifling present to the Brahman, commonly called *Prayaschit*, with the performance of a few idle ceremonies, are held as a sufficient atonement for all these crimes; and the delinquent is at once freed from all temporal inconveniences, as well as all dread of future retribution."

\* *Brahmoism*, pp. 38, 39, 42, 43.

Until the passing of the *Lex Loci* Act by Lord William Bentinck, the loss of caste entailed the loss of all property. Hence Rammohun Roy sought to remain in the eyes of the law a Brahman, and retained his Brahmanical thread to the last. His cousins tried to disinherit him by proving that he had lost caste. He was successful in maintaining his civil rights although at considerable cost. As the Rev. K. S. Macdonald remarks, "it does not look well that during the years the law-suit was on his theistic meetings were discontinued, seemingly because he was afraid their very existence would prejudice his worldly interests.... But considering his character, nationality, and the time and circumstances of his life, he reads a lesson to and sets an example before many of his countrymen, much better circumstanced than he was, to whom caste is nothing and on the keeping of which no earthly inheritance is now depending."

Rammohun Roy, nevertheless, occupies the highest place among modern Indian theistic reformers ... Max Müller says :

"He had been brought up to worship the old Aryan gods, and he lived among a people most of whom had forgotten the original intention of their ancient gods, and had sunk into idolatry of the darkest hue... Nothing is more sacred to a child than the objects which he sees his father worship, nothing dearer than the prayers which he has been taught by his mother to repeat with uplifted hands, long before he could repeat anything else. There is nothing so happy as the creed of childhood, nothing so difficult to part with, and do not suppose that idol-worship is more easily surrendered."

"There was everything to induce Rammohun Roy to retain the religion of his fathers. It was an ancient religion, a national religion, and allowed an independent thinker greater freedom than almost any other religion... Nothing would have been easier for him to do what so many of his countrymen, even the most enlightened, are still content to do,—to remain silent on doctrines which do not concern them; to shrug their shoulders at miracles and legends; and to submit to observances which, though distasteful to themselves, may be looked upon as possibly useful to others. With such an attitude towards religion he might have led a happy, quiet, respectable, useful life, and his conscience need not have smitten him more than it seems to have smitten others. But he would not. He gave up idolatry. He was banished from his father's house once or twice; he was insulted by his friends; his life was threatened, and even in the streets of Calcutta he had to walk about armed."\*

Rammohun Roy was an "all-round" reformer. He did not, like some of his countrymen of the present day, confine himself to the "line of least resistance," agitate for political changes which brought popular applause instead of obloquy. He advocated the civil rights of the Hindus, and sought to improve their temporal

\* Max Müller, *Biographical Essays*, pp. 11, 31, 32.

condition; he took a leading part in securing the abolition of *sati*; but the religious reformation of India had his chief attention.

Rammohun Roy was a diligent student of religion. As already mentioned, he acquired a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek that he might read the Christian Scriptures in their original languages. He was a voluminous writer. His English works include two octavo volumes, containing 1143 pages. Of these, 48 pages are devoted to *sati*; 339 to material progress, English education, &c.; and 756 to religious questions. He felt that religious reform lay at the root of all other beneficial changes.

The great defect in Rammohun Roy's religious studies was his wish to find his preconceived opinions in the different sacred books—monotheism in the Vedas and Unitarianism in the Bible. Max Müller says:

“I have no doubt that when Rammohun muttered his last prayer and drew his last breath at Stapleton Grove, he knew that, happen what may, his work would live, and idolatry would die.”

“I am more doubtful about his belief in the divine origin of the Veda. It seems to me as if he chiefly used his arguments in the support of the revealed character of the Veda as an answer to his opponents, fighting them, so to say, with their own weapons. But however that may be, it is quite clear that this very dogma, this little want of honesty or thoroughness of thought, retarded more than anything else the natural growth of his work.”\*

Rammohun Roy, in his search after truth, seems to have trusted too much to his unaided reason. The late Dr. Kay, formerly Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta, gave the following advice to Hindu religious inquirers:—

“You and all your countrymen who are worth listening to on such a subject, acknowledge that spiritual light and the knowledge of God must come from Himself, the one Supreme. The Mussulmans say the same; and we Christians, above all others, affirm it. Then if you are really in earnest, if you are honest, you see what you must do. You must go and endeavour to pray thus: *O all-wise, all-merciful God and Father, pour the bright beams of Thy light into my soul, and guide me into Thy eternal truth.*”

Although Rammohun Roy had his failings, this notice of him may conclude with the estimate of Max Müller:—

“The German name for prince is *Fürst*, in English *first*, he who is always to the fore, he who courts the place of danger, the first place in fight, the last in flight. Such a *Fürst* was Rammohun Roy, a true prince, a real *Rajah*, if *Rājah* also, like *Rex*, meant originally the steersman, the man at the helm.”\*

\* *Biographical Essays*, p. 30, 36.

DEBENDRANATH TAGORE AND THE ADIpublic opinion,  
on, respect in

After Rammohun Roy went to England, the Society, <sup>supp</sup>rit, which he founded began to languish. It was managed by pandit and became more and more Hinduised. It would have ceased to exist had it not been supported by the Raja's wealthy friend, Dwarkanath Tagore, the same who erected the monument to his memory. Max Müller says, "I knew him well while he was staying in Paris, and living there in good royal style. He was an enlightened, liberal-minded man, but a man of this world rather than of the next. Dwarkanath Tagore, however, became a still greater benefactor of the Brahma Samaj, though indirectly through his son Debendranath Tagore"—the *second* great leader of the Brahmist movement.

**Sketch of Life.**—Debendranath Tagore was born in 1818. "His family, nominally Brahmanical, was practically out of the pale of Hindu communion. Some of his ancestors are said to have lost caste through involuntarily inhaling the smell of certain meat dishes cooked by Muhammadan hands." Such is the intolerance and injustice of the caste system to which the Hindus cling with tenacity.

Debendranath was educated at the Hindu College, where scepticism was openly taught and commended. Brought up in a life of profuse wealth and luxury he did not escape its demoralizing influence. According to his own account, from the sixteenth to the twentieth year of his life, he went on, "intoxicated with the pleasures of the flesh," regardless of his "spiritual interests and dead to conscience and God." He thus describes how he was awakened: "Once on the occasion of a domestic calamity, as I lay drooping and wailing in a retired spot, the God of glory suddenly revealed Himself in my heart and so entirely charmed me and sweetened my heart and soul, that for a time I continued ravished—quite immersed in a flood of light. What was it but the light of truth, the water of baptism, the message of Salvation?" "After a long struggle," he says, "the world lost its attractions, and God became my only comfort and delight in this world of sorrow and sin."

**Samaj Founded.**—In 1839, in his 22nd year, he founded the *Tatwabodhini Sabha*, or Society for the Knowledge of Truth. Its great aim was to "make known the religion of Brahma." It proposed to ascertain what the original *Shastras* were, and trace the changes through the other sacred books down to the present time. Treatises were also to be prepared on astronomy, natural history, physiology, &c., with a view to set forth the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in creation. Lastly, a complete system of morals was to be drawn up. Some influential Hindus joined the Society, and weekly meetings were held for worship and discussion.

Debendranath found the Samaj as Rammohun Roy left it, "a mere platform, where people of different creeds used to assemble

condition; he tried to listen to the discourses and hymns. Men by but the religious pledged nothing, incurred nothing, and lost nothing. Many who attended these services were idolaters at home, and in fact, knew not what the spiritual worship of the One True God meant.\* According to his own statement, Debendranath joined the Brahma Samaj in 1842, and soon put fresh life into it.

**The Covenant.**—In 1843 Debendranath Tagore introduced the “Brahmic Covenant” into the Tattwabodhini Sabha, which is thus given in the “Brahma Dharma:”

### OM.†

To-day being the——day of the month——in the year of Sakabda—— I herewith embrace the Brahmic faith.

*1st Vow.* I will worship, through love of Him and the performance of the works He loveth, God the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, the Giver of salvation, the omniscient, the omnipresent, the blissful, the good, the formless, the One only without a second.

*2nd Vow.* I will worship no created object as the Creator.

*3rd Vow.* Except the day of sickness or of tribulation, every day, the mind being undisturbed, I will engage it with love and veneration in God.

*4th Vow.* I will exert to perform righteous deeds.

*5th Vow.* I will be careful to abstain from vicious deeds.

*6th Vow.* If, through the influence of passion, I commit any vice, then, wishing redemption from it, I will make myself cautious not to do it again.

*7th Vow.* Every year, and on the occasion of every happy domestic event of mine, I will bestow gifts upon the Brahma Samaj.

Grant me, O God! power to observe the duties of this great faith.

### OM

#### ONE ONLY WITHOUT A SECOND.

Debendranath, with twenty of his friends, was the first to sign the “Covenant.” The services were still essentially Hindu, consisting of the exposition of Vedic texts, and passages from the Upanishads, a sermon in Bengali by the president or some leading member, with a number of Bengali hymns sung by a choir. Notwithstanding this, the determination to give up idolatry gave rise to some persecution. Debendranath describes, in one of his lectures, “how he would wander away from his house, in sun and rain, in those days when the great goddess Durga would be worshipped by

\* Pandit Sivanath Sastri, M.A. *The New Dispensations*, &c., p. 5.

† “The repetition of the word ‘Om’ is intended to bring to the mind the idea of God as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the Universe.”

his parents and relations simply 'the next.' Thus public opinion, in any idolatrous ceremony." est, self-gratification, respect in

The same year a monthly periodical, called 'The only praise,' supposing prosperity in the *Patrika*, was commenced, and one of the best Bengali day, Akhai Kumar Datta, was appointed its editor. well-furnished hall was obtained in Calcutta, and in 1833, a shorta- ere established. The membership rose from 1833 to 1847, the most prosperous year. is also

With the accession of new members, the Samaj, the next, agitated by conflicting opinions. Some urged that the Veda there is never been thoroughly examined with a view of arriving at estimate of their value as an authoritative guide to truth. I four young Brahmans were therefore sent to Benares, each gaineth was to copy out and study one of the Vedas. After two ye returned with the copies to Calcutta. The result of a careful gloom, nation of the sacred books was that some members of the maintained their authority; but, after long discussion, it was decided by the majority that neither the Vedas nor Upanishads were to be accepted as infallible guides. Only such precepts and ideas in them were to be admitted as harmonized with pure theistic truth.

**Brahma Dharma.**—In 1850 Debendranath published in Sanskrit and Bengali a treatise called *Brahma Dharma*. An English translation of it was afterwards printed at the Prabakur Press, but without date. In an Appendix the "Fundamental Principles of the Brahma Faith" are given as follows:

1. The One Supreme before this was; nothing else whatever was. He it is that has created all this.
2. He is eternal, intelligent, infinite, good, blissful, formless, one only without a second, all-governing, all-knowing, and of power manifold.
3. The worship of Him alone is the sole cause of temporal and spiritual welfare.
4. Love towards Him and performing the works He loveth constituteth His worship.

The pamphlet is divided into two parts, each containing 16 chapters. The First Part treats chiefly of the attributes of the Supreme; the Second Part consists of moral precepts.

Rammohun Roy considered "The Precepts of Jesus" to be "The Guide to Peace and Happiness." Debendranath sought it in the Upanishads. Mr. Dall says, "On first visiting Debendranath Tagore, in 1855, I asked him whether he ever allowed the name of Jesus to be heard in his church. 'No, never,' he replied. 'And why not?' I said. 'Because some people call him God.'"

The religious system unfolded in the *Brahma Dharma* is that of the Upanishads, with some infusion of modern ideas. Passages,

condition; he seeks to listen to the æ doctrines of popular Hinduism. but the religiously pledged nothing, given to seekers after God:

Many who attended one should go to the spiritual teacher. To him fact, knowledge not pupil of entirely peaceful and well-regulated mind, he meant."\* Accod, should communicate the particulars of divine knowledge. The Brahma Sa is known the Being, undecaying, perfect, and true.

The Covenor knowledge is the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-  
"Brahmic Coarva Veda, Siksha (Intonation), Kalpa (Ritual), Vyaka-  
given in the "D), Nirukta (Glossary), Chandas (Prosody), and Jyotish  
Astrology). The superior knowledge is that by which  
decaying is known." p. 3.

is precisely the teaching of the Upanishads, and, to some  
To-day the books generally received as *Shastras* are recognized.  
I herewith testify of God is not clearly expressed. The "great watch-  
1st Vol the Brahma Dharma," says Mr. Bose, "'One without a  
the world' was the battle cry of ancient pantheism." Some passages,  
however, set forth the distinction between the Creator and his  
works.

Subordinate deities seem to be admitted. Chapter X. is as  
follows, and gives a good idea of Part I:—

"Om is God; all the gods to him bring offerings. Him the all-  
adorable seated in the midst, all the gods around do worship.

Contemplate God through Om, and let welfare attend thee, as thou  
crossest the darkness of ignorance.

By means of Om, the knower of God obtaineth Him who is all-  
tranquil, without decay, without death, without fear, the all-excellent.

We contemplate the adorable power and glory of the Being divine,  
who brought forth the world. He it is who sendeth us thoughts.

Let me not forsake God as God has not forsaken me. Let Him not be  
abandoned by me.

Know Him the perfect who should be known, that death may not  
afflict you.

Repeated reverence be to Him, the Being divine, who is in fire, who is  
in water, who is in plants and trees, and who pervadeth all the world."

The moral teaching is, on the whole, fair, though some of the  
reasons assigned are not of a high order. Mr. Bose has the follow-  
ing remarks on this point:

"The motives to virtue pointed out are, some of them at least, among  
the weakest ever brought forward to sustain a virtuous life. There are  
six: a. 'All actions which are unblamed (by others) you may perform;  
actions which are blamed you must not perform.' b. 'Whatever  
virtue we practise, you may do; but don't practise anything besides.'  
c. 'Apply yourself to that which you consider to advance your own good.'  
d. 'Follow out with the greatest zeal whatever course will give satisfac-  
tion to yourself, and leave everything opposed to it.' e. 'The man who  
performs works of virtue obtains holy praise.' f. 'Such a man obtains

respect in 'old and prosp. in the next.' Thus public opinion, the exa... human teachers, s... interest, self-gratification, respect in the wor... placed in the same category with 'holy praise,' supposing that to be the praise which comes from God, and with prosperity in the next!"\*

Useful dispositions are mentioned and condemned, with exhortations to the readers to deliver themselves from the darkness of ignorance and learn wisdom from a fitting teacher. It is also admitted that sin is punished both in this world and in the next, and has a demoralizing influence on the sinner. But there is nothing like an adequate view of the intense malignity of sin.

Transmigration is implied :

"He, who is wise, is of mind regulated, and is always pure, gaineth that station after attaining which one is not begotten again."

"To worlds devoid of felicity, wrapped up in the blinding gloom, those go after death who are ignorant of God, and are unwise."

As already mentioned, everlasting happiness is to be obtained through a knowledge of Brahma.

The treatise concludes with the following "Morning Address to God:"

"It is through thy commandment, O Thou who art the Governor of the world, the living, the presiding Deity of the universe, all good, and all-pervading! It is solely at thy commandment, and for thy satisfaction, and for the good of mankind, that I go to engage myself in the pursuits of the world."

While the *Brahma Dharma* is a great advance upon popular Hinduism, no enlightened man can accept it as a satisfactory code either of religion or morals.

**Sermons and Religious Opinions.**—The *Adi Samaj* has been sustained largely through the personal influence of Debendranath. Mr. Mozoomdar thus describes his first sight of him: "He was tall, princely, in the full glory of his health and manhood; he came attended by liveried servants, and surrounded by massive stalwart Brahmos, who wore long gold chains and impenetrable countenances." Pandit Sivanath Sastri says, "The house of Babu Debendranath became a general rendezvous for the Brahmos of Calcutta. Their anniversary meetings at his house, their fraternal greetings and warm exchanges of love and friendship on the occasions, and, above all, the rich hospitality of the noble host himself, will long be remembered by those who ever shared them."

But Debendranath had higher claims to respect. Mr. Mozoomdar admits that the Bengali sermons of Keshub Chunder Sen were "not to be compared one moment with the glowing transcendental

respect in this world and prospered in the next.' Thus public opinion, the example of human teachers, self-interest, self-gratification, respect in the world are placed in the same category with 'holy praise,' supposing that to be the praise which comes from God, and with prosperity in the next!\*"

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sentences that flowed from the mouth of Debendra Nath Tagore, with all his inspiration of the Himalayas still ablaze within his heart." Pandit Sivanath Sastri thus gives his own impressions of him :—

"We still vividly recollect the day, when we hung with profound respect and fond filial trust upon every word that fell from his venerable lips, and when a single sparkling glance of his eyes awakened strange emotions in our breasts, and made us feel that God was near. His deeply meditative nature, his warm and overflowing heart, his exquisitely-poetic temperament, and, above all, the saint-like purity of his life, all combined to make his Brahmoism a living reality, and to make him out, even to this day, as the highest type of a truly devout character amongst us."\*

Mr. Mozoomdar thus describes the religion of Debendranath :

"Devendra's prayers were the overflow of great emotional impulses, stirred by intense meditation on the beauties and glories of nature. His utterances were grand, fervid, archaic, profound as the feelings were which gave them rise. But they seldom recognised the existence of sins and miseries in human nature, or the sinner's necessity for salvation. Devendra Nath had never received the advantage of a Christian training. His religious genius was essentially Vedic, Aryan, national, rapturous. The only element of Semitic mysticism which he ever imbibed was from the ecstatic effusions of the Persian Poet Hafiz. But the characteristic of the Hafizian, or Sufi order of poetry, is not ethical, or Christian, but sentimental, and so to say Hindu. Devendra's mind assimilated it most naturally. He believed all sinfulness and carnality to be the private concerns of each individual man, which ought to be conquered by resolute moral determination."†

In illustration of the above, one or two extracts may be given from Debendranath's sermons. In his "Second Spiritual Advice," after describing the effects upon Nature of the commencement of the wet season, he says :

"Just as the rain poured forth in thousand drops cools our body, just so the water of immortality being showered in thousand ways is cooling our souls in this house of worship. Every day displays a fresh attribute of God and His great mercy. Just as the world is awakened by being renewed by every rising of the sun, and advances in the path of progress; just so our souls assume a renewed and improved state simultaneously with the world. In the progressive kingdom of God both are advancing at the same time. His mercy is manifested in all both in the animate and inanimate kingdoms. So with the rising of the sun. He has awakened the closed flowers of our heart, and the air of his glory being wet with the tears of His devotees are shaking those new-blown flowers; so all these are naturally being dropped in heaps at His lotus feet. Now on this day having felt a comforting coolness both within and without we

\* *The New Dispensation, &c.*, p. 10.

† *Life of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 153.

are approaching Him. He is inviting us to receive His ambrosia. Let us all salute Him and become immortal by drinking the ambrosia so freely offered as at present from that motherly hand.

Om, One only without a second.”\*

The following prayer concludes one of his sermons:—

“Thou supreme Soul as Thou hast made us independent, do not leave me—our entire dependence is upon Thee. Thou art our help and strength; Thou art our Father and Friend; we take shelter in Thee; do Thou show in Thy beautiful and complacent face Purify me with Thy love and so strengthen my will that I may be able to perform Thy good works for my whole life.”†

Pandit Sivanath Sastri gives the following account of the present condition of the Adi Samaj:

“The venerable Maharshi Debendranath Tagore has retired since last ten or twelve years from all active work, leaving the affairs of the Samaj to a committee of management, of which his esteemed friend and co-adjutor P. Rajnarain Bose is the president, and one of his own sons, the S. The weekly Divine Service of the Samaj, the establishment connected with the *Tattwabodhini* and similar works, are all kept up by his endowments. The large number of members, who at one time signed the covenant have quietly disappeared amongst the mass of idolatrous Hindus, and many of them do not now take even a faint interest in the cause they once advocated.”‡

The Rev. T. E. Slater says of the Adi Samaj: “Its history shows conclusively that the Brahminist movement is nothing if it is not a radical departure from present-day Hinduism, and an honest and persistent attempt to keep abreast of the times.”§

The sin-burdened soul will go in vain for relief to the Adi Samaj. Its future history will be described in connection with the *third* leader of the Theistic movement.

## KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

### EARLY HISTORY.

Max Müller says of Rammohun Roy:

“There is little to be said about the mere life of Rammohun Roy, and even the little we know from himself and his friends is far from trustworthy. There is no taste for history in India, still less for biography. Home life and family life are shrouded by a veil which no one ventures to lift, while public life in which a man's character shows itself in England, has no existence in the East. On the other hand, loose statements, gossip, rumour, legend, fable, myth—call them what you like—are marvellously busy in the East; and though Rammohun Roy has been

\* *The Fellow Worker*, Vol. I. p. 253.

† *The Fellow Worker*, Vol. I. p. 83.

‡ *The New Dispensation*, &c., p. 13.

§ *Keshub Chandra Sen*, p. 48.

dead for fifty years only, several stories are told by his biographers which have clearly a mythological character.”\*

The *Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, by his friend and fellow-labourer, Pratab Chunder Mozoomdar, may be considered to mark a new epoch in Indian literature. It may be described as the first true biography written by an Indian. Though an ardent admirer of the reformer, the author writes impartially. Living on the most intimate terms with him during his whole life, Mr. Mozoomdar had unequalled opportunities for ascertaining the truth. His work will mainly supply the materials in the following sketch.

**Family.**—Keshub Chunder Sen belonged to the Vaidya or medical caste. His grandfather was Ram Camal Sen, distinguished both for his benevolent disposition and his very complete English and Bengali Dictionary. Peary Mohan Sen, the father of Keshub Chunder Sen, was the second son of Ram Camal Sen. He died when Keshub, his second son, was only ten years of age. His widow was then 25, and she still survives.

**Boyhood.**—Keshub was born in 1838 in Calcutta. As a boy he was fond of fine clothes, fine boxes, fine things of all sorts which he did not like any one to meddle with. He was educated in the Hindu College, where he was admitted in 1845, but he had some preliminary teaching in the Vernaculars at home. At the annual examination every year Keshub carried away a prize, and sometimes two, there being only two prizes in the class, the one for English, and the other for arithmetic, in both of which he did equally well.

Keshub's intelligence showed itself in other ways than his readiness at lessons. When thirteen years of age he so mastered the juggler's art that he gave a performance of his own. These and other things made him to his companions quite a prodigy, and he was perfectly conscious of his own importance. Nobody ventured to approach to anything like his confidence; he never made a favourite or bosom-friend of any one. He seldom, if ever, joined in an old game, or one that was started by any other boy, but watched it from a distance. If ever he consented to play, he would generally devise a new or unfamiliar game, and reserve the chief part for himself. He took great pleasure in making up *jatras*, the popular semi-theatrical performances of Bengal.

Keshub was not religious in his boyhood. He took part in Hindu ceremonies, but this was entirely for amusement, without any purpose of worship. If, however, he was not religious, as a boy he was certainly very moral. Next to his singular intelligence, the chief characteristic of his boyhood was the purity of his moral nature. But he did not seem to be a warm-hearted boy, and there was always a

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\* *Biographical Essays*, pp. 13, 14.

strange reserve about his manners. In after life he sometimes said that he was of a suspicious temperament, and that his rule was to judge every man bad, unless he could prove himself otherwise.

In 1852, Keshub was in the first senior class of the school department of the Hindu College. When the Metropolitan College was opened, he was sent to it, and according to the usual custom to draw pupils, he was admitted to the highest class for which he was quite unfit. This made him give up his mathematical studies. As the new college was a failure, Keshub was sent back to the Hindu College in 1854. But he did not return the same man. Henceforth his educational career was not at all brilliant. In 1856, when the mathematical questions were set for the Senior Scholarship Examination, one of the professors who was appointed to watch the examinees, found Keshub comparing papers with the young man that sat next to him. Keshub was severely handled. He was still allowed to continue as a general student, but he entirely gave up the study of mathematics, and never again went up for further examinations.

**Early Manhood.**—Keshub, when 18 years of age, was married to a girl of nine or ten. The marriage was, of course, not of his own making. The first years of his married life were those of an anchorite. He was moody and cheerless. He seldom laughed or even smiled. He read certain Christian sermons, notably those of Blair and Chalmers. He privately wrote morning and evening prayers which he read by himself on the terrace of the house. He composed short exhortations and words of warning for passers-by, which he caused to be stuck on the house walls in the neighbourhood. In short, he brooded on his own imperfections, and the imperfections of others, and the thoughts made him most restless.

From the first Keshub believed in the supreme necessity of prayer. "I did not know," said he, "what the right religion was, I did not know what the true church was. Why or for what I prayed I did not know, but in the first glimpse of light that came to me I heard the voice, 'Pray, pray, without prayer there is no other way.'" Among the Christian teachers he was intimate with were the Rev. T. H. Burn, Domestic Chaplain to Bishop Cotton, the Rev. J. Long, of the Church Missionary Society, and the Rev. Mr. Dall, the American Unitarian Missionary.

Keshub started a number of classes and societies for the benefit of his companions. The study of Shakespeare was the favourite fashion of the educated about this time. Keshub was not content to read, but desired to act. A stage was improvised, old European clothes were obtained from the bazars, and plays were performed. Keshub retained for a considerable time his theatrical propensities. He had a passion for the musical performances known as *jatras*, half dramatic, half operatic. He would sit up the whole night

with his companions to watch these performances, chewing *pan-supari*, and throwing pieces of small coin to the singers.

In 1857 Keshub established the Goodwill Faternity, which was purely religious. He sometimes read, sometimes spoke extempore in English to the members from a high pulpit-like desk. One of his readings was the discourse by Dr. Chalmers on Enthusiasm, another was Theodore Parker on Inspiration.

#### KESHUB'S CONNECTION WITH THE ADI SAMAJ.

In 1857 Keshub quietly entered the Brahma Samaj by signing the printed covenant sent him for the purpose. Debendranath, on his return from the Hills, was greatly pleased to hear of this accession. "He was much struck by the earnestness and ability of young Keshub, and at once accepted him as a friend and coadjutor. A deep and almost filial attachment sprang up between them: and henceforth they jointly began to plan and adopt several important measures which further developed the reforming tendencies of the Samaj."\*

In those days Keshub was a diligent student. From 11 o'clock in the morning till sunset, he read every day in the Calcutta Public Library. He read some poetry, as Shakespeare, Milton and Young; but the history of philosophy was his delight. He was an intense admirer of Sir William Hamilton, and pored over the works of Victor Cousin. He read J. D. Morell, and M'Cosh; he loved the works of Theodore Parker, Miss Cobbe, Emerson, and F. W. Newman.

Within a year after joining the Brahma Somaj, Keshub made his first great stand against idolatry. The family *guru* was to come to the mansion, and Keshub with some other young men was expected to receive the ceremony of initiation. When Keshub's turn came he was asked if he would receive it. Calmly, but firmly he answered, "No." More than once the question was asked with increasing fierceness, but Keshub's determination gained the day.

In 1859 the Brahma School was established. Keshub was to deliver a series of English lectures, and Debendranath a similar course in the vernacular, the former taking up the philosophy of Theism and the latter dealing with the doctrines of the Brahma Somaj.

The same year Keshub, at the wish of his guardians, became a clerk in the Bank of Bengal, with the salary of Rs. 25 per month. So well did he do his work, that within a twelvemonth his pay was doubled.

**First Publications.**—In 1860, when 22 years of age, Keshub

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\* Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *The New Dispensation*, p. 7.

issued his first tract, "Young Bengal, This is for You." It begins with the result of a godless education :

"Often were you heard to say:—'Let the illiterate and credulous deal with religion and immortality, prayer and atonement, faith and salvation; let them devote their minds to such visionary pursuits—I feel it degrading to my high scholarship and liberal views to countenance them.'"

So far as mere talk is concerned, a change for the better is acknowledged. Numerous societies were formed to discuss important questions of social reform. He says :

"Sometimes you witness whole bodies of young men unanimously pledging themselves with all solemnity to momentous resolutions like these:—we shall enlighten the masses—elevate the condition of females—encourage brotherly feeling. Such are the great topics which our young and intelligent countrymen are ever and anon discussing with all enthusiasm and fervor, and preaching with missionary zeal. But what is the upshot of all this? 'Mere prattle without practice.' An elaborate essay, an eloquent speech, a warm discussion is all in all."

The explanation given is that there is a "want of an active religious principle in our pseudo-patriots." The reader is to seek help from God. "Steadily and prayerfully look up to Him—our Light, and our Strength, our Father and our Friend."

The first tract was followed by about a dozen others. The principal may be noticed.

No. 4 is entitled "Basis of Brahmoism. Brahmoism stands on the Rock of Intuition, and is above the Fluctuations of Sectarian Opinions."

"Brahmoism rests on no written revelation; neither does it hang on the opinions of particular persons or communities. It depends not upon the fugitive phenomena incident to age or country. Its basis is the depths of human nature."

"Brahmoism is founded upon those principles of the mind which are above, anterior to, and independent of reflection—which the variations of opinion cannot alter or affect. It stands upon intuitions.

"Intuitions are self-evident. They are axiomatic truths which do not admit of demonstration."

No. 4 was subsequently supported by Nos. 8, 9, "Testimonies to the Validity of Intuitions," consisting of extracts from Locke, Reid, Coleridge, Cousin, Hamilton, and others.

No. 6. "Sigus of the Times," is intended to show that the mind is getting emancipated "from the yoke of books and churches," "from antiquated symbols and lifeless dogmas." This is sought to be established by quotations from J. D. Morell, Foxton, Greg, Fox, Parker, and F. W. Newman.

“Revelation” is the subject of No. 11. It tries to show that “the dogma of a book revelation falls to the ground.” In No. 10, it is thus summarily disposed of :

“14. Why do the Brahmoe deny the possibility of book revelation ?” Because revelation is subjective, not objective.”

No. 12 treats of “Atonement and Salvation.” “Repentance is Atonement.” God is not a blood-thirsty tyrant; and atonement in the Christian sense is denied. “Salvation denotes simply deliverance from *sin*.”

The foregoing series of tracts was largely the result of Keshub’s reading in the Calcutta Public Library. The late American Unitarian Missionary, the late Mr. Dall, got a collection of Unitarian books presented to the Library, where they were studied by Keshub and many of their opinions adopted by him. His first “Inspiration” was derived from Theodore Parker. For a time, “Intuition” was the watchword of the party. When a Christian Missionary was preaching, a school-boy would sometimes point his finger towards him, and think he had settled him by simply saying, “Intuition”! The trenchant attacks upon it by the Rev. S. Dyson caused it eventually to be largely relegated to the tomb of “lifeless dogmas.”

**Trip to Ceylon, etc.**—In 1859 Keshub made his first sea voyage : Debendranath and his two sons were about to leave for Ceylon, and Keshub was invited to join the party. He quietly embarked, leaving behind a little note which was discovered after the vessel left. “His little wife, who was not more than twelve or thirteen years old at the time, was dangerously ill, and not a syllable about Keshub’s perilous expedition had reached her, till he had gone far on his way. We all took it to heart, and in our bitter regret accused him of cruelty, undutifulness, and all sorts of things. But Keshub, in the meanwhile, let out like a caged bird, enjoyed his trip most heartily, cracked fun with his companions, kept a lively diary, and felt he had done the most proper and natural thing in the world.”\*

In 1860 Keshub started a small Society, called the *Sangat Sabha*. It was mainly for religious conversation and prayer. When he resigned his post in the Bank of Bengal, several of the members, one after another, began to take leave of secular life, determined to spread the principles of Hindu theism. The following year, in conjunction with some friends, he started the *Indian Mirror*. It was at first fortnightly, then weekly, and lastly daily. In 1862 he commenced the Calcutta College, which, after five or six years, had to be given up for want of support.

For a time Debendranath and Keshub worked cordially together. Until 1862 those who hitherto officiated in services were called

\* Mozoomdar’s Life of Keshub Chunder Sen, p. 127.

*Upacharyas*, or subministers, while Debendranath himself was President of the Brahmo Somaj. In that year, after a grand ceremony, Debendranath presented Keshub with a sort of diploma, framed in gold and signed by himself, installing him as Acharya, or minister of the Brahmo Somaj. He gave him, besides, a casket, containing an ivory seal and a copy of the Brahma Dharma. The title of Brahmananda (Rejoicer in God) was also conferred upon him. From that time Debendranath began to be called Pradhan Acharya, or chief minister.

The same year Keshub induced his young wife to dine at the house of Debendranath, who belonged to an excommunicated race of Brahmans. This act on his part led to his temporary expulsion by his uncle from his home and family.

**Reforms.**—Keshub's programme of reform is thus given in his fervid "Appeal to Young India":

"Look at yourselves, enchained to customs, deprived of freedom, lorded over by an ignorant and crafty priesthood, your better sense and better feelings all smothered under the crushing weight of custom; look at your homes, scenes of indescribable misery, your wives and sisters, your mothers and daughters immured within the dungeon of the zenana, ignorant of the outside world, little better than slaves whose charter of liberty of thought and action has been ignored; look at your social constitution and customs, the mass of enervating, demoralizing and degrading causes there working. Watch your daily life, how almost at every time you meet with some demand for the sacrifice of your conscience, some temptation to hypocrisy, some obstacle to your improvement and true happiness."

The qualifications of reformers are thus given:—

"A firm sense of duty ought to be the basis of all reform movements. It is dangerous to undertake them from any other motive.

"Secondly, those who desire to reform their country must first reform themselves. Good examples are always powerful engines of conversion, while the fervid eloquence of hypocritical teaching obstructs instead.

"Lastly, the paths of reformation are thorny, and therefore they who tread these paths must be prepared for the thorns: there is no royal road to reformation.

"These, I believe, are the three essential requisites of sound and successful reformation."

The chief evils in Hindu society against which exertions should be directed are the following, given in a greatly abridged form:

"There can be no doubt that the root of all the evils which afflict Hindoo society, that which constitutes the chief cause of its degradation is Idolatry. Idolatry is the curse of Hindustan, the deadly canker that has eaten into the vitals of native society. It would be an insult to your superior education to say that you have faith in idolatry, that you still

cherish in your hearts reverence for the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, or that you believe in the thousand and one absurdities of your ancestral creed. But however repugnant to your understanding and repulsive to your good sense the idolatry of your forefathers may be, there is not a thorough appreciation of its deadly character on moral grounds. It will not do to retain in the mind a speculative and passive disbelief in its dogmas, you must practically break with it as a dangerous sin and an abomination: you must give it up altogether as an unclean thing. You must discountenance it, discourage it, oppose it, and hunt it out of your country. For the sake of your souls and for the sake of the souls of the millions of your countrymen, come away from hateful idolatry, and acknowledge the one Supreme and true God, our Maker, Preserver, and Moral Governor, not in belief only, but in the every-day concerns and avocations of your life.

“Next to idolatry and vitally connected with its huge system is caste. Kill the monster, and form a national and religious brotherhood of all your reformed countrymen.

“Thirdly, our Marriage customs involve evils of great magnitude which urgently call for reform, *e. g.*, polygamy, premature marriage, prohibition of widow re-marriage, and countless restrictions.

“Fourthly, the Zenana requires thorough reform.”

At an address delivered in Bombay in 1868 he explained the true order of reformation:

“What is the programme of reforms you think, I intend to lay before you this evening? Not half measures, like the education of this section of the community or the reformation of that particular social evil. These cannot—it is my most firm conviction—these cannot lift India as a nation from the mire of idolatry, of moral and social corruption. If you wish to regenerate this country, make religion the basis of all your reform movements. Were I engaged in the work of reforming this country, I would not be busy in lopping off the branches, but I would strike the axe at the fatal root of the tree of corruption, namely—idolatry. Ninety-nine evils out of every hundred in Hindu society are, in my opinion, attributable to idolatry and superstition.

“All the social reform, I would propose for your consideration, are involved in this grand radical reformation—religious reformation. Questions of social reform will not then appear to you as matters of worldly expediency, but as questions of vital moral importance, and will come upon you with all the weight of moral obligation.”

“**Bramho Somaj Vindicated.**”—In April 1863, the Rev. Lal Behari Day delivered a lecture on “The Rise and Progress of the Calcutta Brahma Samaj.” He traced its changes from Rammohun Roy’s attempt to find monotheism in the Upanishads, to the surrender of the Vedas, to the adoption of the opinions of Theodore Parker, and the scorn of “book revelations.” He showed that the so-called intuitive truths of the Samaj were derived from the Bible,

and dwelt especially on the insufficiency of the Brahminist doctrine concerning sin.

Keshub replied to this lecture in "*The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated*," which, according to the report, was received with "thundering applause." At the commencement he professed to be animated by the religion whose very life is *love*, and whose spirit is a spirit of "charity." After a few more sentences, he illustrated this "spirit" by asserting that "the creed of the Brahmo Somaj, far from being honestly rendered and faithfully portrayed" by the lecturer, "was clothed in foul misrepresentations, miserably caricatured, and set forth crumpled and distorted." "Groundless charges," and "grossest exaggerations," were other epithets employed.

Mr. Day had said that some Brahmos gloried in the liberality of their creed; upon which he remarked that the creed of the atheist was still more liberal. In reply, Keshub made the pathetic appeal, "Rather slay us, rather put the knife to our throats than call us atheists." No such charge was brought.

**Rupture with Debendranath.**—By degrees the relations between Debendranath and Keshub became more strained. Debendranath was impulsive, very sensitive, conservative, autocratic and settled in his views. He wanted to establish a model Hindu Society, and revive the ancient Hinduism of the Upanishads. He had always a partiality for the sacred caste. Though discarding idolatry, he was a strict observer of the sacraments of Hindu marriage. Widow marriage was to him a disagreeable thing, and intermarriage still worse.

Keshub and the younger members of the Samaj were far in advance of Debendranath's views, and were eager to enter upon a career of bolder and more uncompromising reform. Caste and the Brahmanical thread were the first objects of their attack. Elderly members, opposed to Keshub's new measures, and jealous of the influence he had gained, tried to poison the mind of Debendranath against him. Debendranath thought that he should make a stand, and nip these ambitious reforms in the bud. He began by cancelling the arrangement by which Brahman ministers wearing the badge of their caste were no longer admissible to the ministry. This was done by beginning the service earlier than usual, while it was held temporarily in his house. Keshub and his friends protested against this course, and declared that they must decline to join such services in future. They proposed a separate day of public worship in the Samaj building apart from the usual Wednesday service, but Debendranath was inexorable. Keshub and his party, therefore, seceded from the Brahmo Somaj.

## BRAHMO SOMAJ OF INDIA.

Keshub Chunder Sen seems to have retired from Debendranath's Somaj in February 1865, but a considerable time was spent in protests and negotiations which came to nothing. He got possession of the *Indian Mirror*, and issued a vernacular journal, called the *Dharma Tatwa*.

**Lecture on Jesus Christ.**—Keshub was first brought prominently before the European public by an address which he delivered in May, 1866, announced under the sensational title of "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia." He began by extolling Christ as a great man and reformer; he described Him as "sent by Providence to reform and regenerate mankind": he set forth in glowing language the moral greatness of Christ, ending with the words, "was he not above ordinary humanity? Blessed Jesus, immortal child of God!" Then he dwelt on the fact that Jesus was an Asiatic. "When I reflect on this, my love for Jesus becomes a hundredfold intensified."

So high was the admiration expressed of Jesus Christ in the lecture that by some Keshub was regarded as "almost a Christian." Five months later he undeceived them and showed his true position by his lecture in the Town Hall, on "Great Men." He defined them as "men, but above ordinary humanity." All great prophets were regarded as "God-men," "Divine incarnations." Though Jesus Christ was the prince of prophets, effected greater wonders, and did infinitely more good to the world than the others, yet He was only the first among men like Luther, Knox, Mahomet, and Chaitanya. After this, says Mr. Mozoomdar, "he perhaps felt that the time of teaching about Jesus and other prophets had not yet come. So, for thirteen years, he held his peace."

**Establishment of a new Somaj.**—In November 1866, Keshub and his friends sent a parting address to Debendranath, and established a separate Society, called the "Brahmo Somaj of India." The members wished to make Keshub the head of the Society, but he said that "God alone was its head." He undertook to be its Secretary. Selections from the Bible, Koran, Zend Avesta, and the Hindu Shastras were compiled as the scriptures of the Brahmo Somaj. Its motto in Sanskrit, composed by Pandit Gour Roy, was that: "The wide universe is the temple of God; Wisdom is the pure land of pilgrimage; Truth is the everlasting scripture; Faith is the root of all religion; Love is the true spiritual culture, the destruction of selfishness is the true asceticism: So declare the Bramhos."

Debendranath, upon the formation of the new society, called his own the Adi (original) Brahmo Somaj.

Seven or eight of Keshub's adherents were formed into a body of

missionaries. Every one resigned his place and prospects in life and took the vow of poverty. They daily took out a few pieces of copper from the leader's writing desk to buy them necessaries, and that box never contained much; they spent the day in prayer, study, contemplation, religious conversation, and other engagements worthy of their calling. They travelled from place to place, full of zeal. Wherever they went, Samajes were formed and enthusiasm was kindled. The orthodox Hindus were so greatly alarmed that various short-lived organizations were founded to counteract the new movement.

**Vaishnava Element.**—Keshub began religious life with an insufficient quantity of religious feeling. About 1867 he began to hold daily Divine service in his house, and the spirit of the Vaishnava religion entered into Brahma devotions. Vaishnava hymns, called *Sankirtan*, were introduced, with their instruments of music, the drum, cymbals, and harp of one string. The lower orders and wandering mendicants are fond of them. Vaishnava piety has two features. The hymns are sometimes sung with wild enthusiasm, with the deep noise of the drum and the clash of cymbal, and then they melt away in strains of tenderness, accompanied by the delicate notes of the harp. The Society was at this time joined by a poet, whose musical genius became a source of wonderful attraction to the public. This new kind of musical celebration began to be known by the name of Brahma Sankirtan, and culminated in the establishment of the Brahma Utsab, or Festival in God, in November, 1867. The services lasted from early morning till nine at night.

On the 24th January, 1868, the 38th anniversary of the Brahma Somaj, the foundation stone of the Brahma Mandir, Keshub's temple of worship, was laid with great pomp. In the evening Keshub delivered his address in the Town Hall on "Regenerating Faith." Among the audience were some of the highest English officials, from the Viceroy downwards. In March he left for an extensive missionary tour to the North-West Provinces and Bombay, after which he went, not to Calcutta, but to Monghyr.

**Man-worship Agitation.**—At Monghyr Keshub's prayers and sermons were listened to with enthusiasm, and the emotions of the hearers were sometimes uncontrolled. Many were moved to tears, sobs, and ejaculations that were well-nigh hysterical. They prostrated and abased themselves before Keshub, and began to talk of him as "lord," "master," and "saviour." Some professed to have seen supernatural sights concerning him, other sang hymns about him as a Yogi, whose heart is the abode of the perfect God. Two well-known Brahma missionaries remonstrated repeatedly in private with Keshub against this, but without effect. They then wrote to some of the newspapers and formally brought the charge of

worshipping Keshub against his admiring disciples, and they unreservedly accused Keshub himself of conniving at, if not directly encouraging it. He said in reply, "I have never approved of the manner in which some of my friends honour me," but his biographer says, "Their manifestations of popular faith and reverence Keshub accepted as a passing phase of religious feeling." Keshub acted very differently from the Christian missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, who, when the people wished to pay them divine honours, ran in among them, crying out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you."

With a band of followers Keshub left Monghyr in August, 1868, to spend a few months at Simla, to which Lord Lawrence had invited him. The main subject of consideration was a marriage bill for Brahmos, which was introduced the following month into the Governor-General's Council.

**Church of the Future.**—In January, 1869, Keshub gave his anniversary lecture on the "Church of the Future." It was to take truth from every prevailing system of religion. Its creed was to be "the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man." The Future Church of India must be thoroughly an Indian Church. The future religion of the world will be the common religion of all nations, but in each nation it will have an indigenous growth, and assume a peculiar or distinctive character.

The Brahma Mandir was formally opened in August, 1869. The declaration regarding it was mainly borrowed from the trust deed of the original Brahma Somaj. Some of the most prominent members of the Brahma community then accepted the Theistic covenant.

**English Visit.**—Suddenly towards the end of 1869, Keshub made an announcement through the *Indian Mirror* of his intention to visit England. In the January following, he made "England and India" the subject of his anniversary address. He sailed from Calcutta in February, accompanied by his devoted disciple, Prasanna Kumar Sen. His first public appearance was at a meeting to welcome him in London, where Lord Lawrence and representatives of the principal religious denominations expressed their interest in India and sympathy with him in his work. Keshub said, "I come here, my friends, to study Christianity in its living and spiritual forms. I do not come to study the doctrines of Christianity, but truly Christian life as displayed and illustrated in England."

The meeting was arranged for him by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and during the six months he spent in England he was thrown largely among Unitarians. One of his first visits was to Bristol, where Miss Carpenter founded the National Indian Association which is still active. He made a

pilgrimage to the grave of Rammohan Roy, where he knelt down and said,

“I especially offer prayer for the soul of that illustrious man who came from my country and whose remains lie here. Nourish his soul and heart with strength, and purity, and piety, that he may, O Lord, find the blessings of communion with Thee through everlasting ages.”

Keshub visited 14 of the chief towns of England and Scotland, lecturing or conducting religious services. He also addressed meetings on peace, the temperance reformation, zenana education, &c. He was honoured by the Queen with an interview, and before he left England, she sent him copies of her two books, with the inscription in her own handwriting in each volume: “To Keshub Chunder Sen, from Victoria Re., Sept. 1870.”

The influence of Theodore Parker was still strong upon Keshub. On few points did he declaim with greater zest than against “dogmas.” “We must not allow ourselves to be enslaved by dogmas and articles of faith.” “If they in England had their sectarian doctrines and dogmas about Christ, they might reserve them for their own use.” “Spare me and my countrymen the infliction of antiquated and lifeless dogmas.”

The divisions among Christians were another favorite topic. “I cannot but feel perplexed and even amused, amidst countless and quarrelling sects.” Keshub saw comparatively little of genuine English Christianity. He was thrown, almost exclusively, among Unitarians, noted for the brevity of their creed, and their want of religious fervour. Dr. Martineau, their most distinguished English representative, makes the confession: “In devotional literature and religious thought, I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine, Tauler, and Pascal. And in the poetry of the Church, it is the Latin or German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley or of Keble that fasten on my memory and heart, and make all else seem poor and cold.”

Keshub in his farewell English address says:—

“The result of my visit to England is that as I came here an Indian, I go back a confirmed Indian. I came here a Theist, I return a confirmed Theist. I have not accepted a single new doctrine that God had not put into my mind before; I have not accepted new dogmas and doctrines but I have tried as far as possible to imbibe the blessed influence of Christian lives.”

A full account of *Keshub Chunder Sen's English Visit* was edited by Miss Collett. This was reprinted in Calcutta a few years ago, with the omission of her preface and footnotes.

**Indian Reform Association.**—On Keshub's return to India, he immediately began to put in practice some of the hints he had gathered in England. The first thing that he did was to establish

the Indian Reform Association. It had five sections—Cheap Literature, Charity, Female Improvement, Education, and Temperance.

The influence of newspapers in England greatly struck Keshub. He started a weekly pice ( $\frac{3}{4}d.$ ) paper called the *Sulabh Samachar* (Cheap News) which was a great success. The *Indian Mirror* was made a daily paper, and the *Sunday Mirror* was commenced. A Normal School for Native ladies was established, supplemented by a "Society for the Benefit of Women," in connection with which ladies read papers. A department of charity, on enlightened principles, was organized, and an Industrial School was started. Temperance reform received great attention, and a Band of Hope had numerous accessions from the young.

For a time the Association was worked with great energy, but as Keshub's mystic tendencies developed themselves, it came by degrees to have little more than a nominal existence; although now and then there was a kind of spasmodic revival.

**Brahmo Marriage Bill, &c.**—"As the number of inter-marriages and widow-marriages according to pure theistic rites multiplied, doubts as to their validity in the eyes of the law began to trouble many minds." It has been mentioned that in 1863 Keshub was invited to Simla by Lord Lawrence to consider a proposed marriage bill to be introduced into the Governor-General's Council. It was intended to include all religious sects in India who objected to marry according to Hindu rites. This excited great opposition on all sides, on account of which it was altered and called the Brahmo Marriage Act. The Adi Samaj objected to the title, so it was changed to the Native Marriage Act. Keshub strongly condemned early marriage. In 1871 he obtained the opinions of some of the most eminent medical authorities in India with regard to the marriageable age of girls. Sixteen was unanimously declared to be the minimum, but for the present fourteen might be accepted.

The Native Marriage Act became law in 1872. It introduced for the first time civil marriage into Hindu society. It legalised marriages between different castes. It fixed the minimum age for a bridegroom at 18, and of a bride at 14, but required the written consent of parents or guardians when either party was under 21. It prohibited bigamy, and permitted the re-marriage of Indian widows.

In 1872 Keshub established the *Bharat Asram* (Indian Hermitage), a kind of religious boarding-house. About 25 families lived together, having their devotions, studies, and meals together. The unwholesome relations of the Hindu zenana life were laid aside, and the women joined the men in daily devotions and frequent companionship. In the same year the Calcutta School for Boys was affiliated to the Indian Reform Association. It prospered

under Krishna Bihari Sen, Keshub's younger brother, and developed subsequently into the present Albert College.

**The Purdah System in Church.**—An influential section of the Brahmo community in Calcutta strongly objected to the system of compelling the ladies to sit behind screens in the Brahmo *Mandir*, and demanded the privilege of sitting with their wives and daughters outside the screens, and among the rest of the congregation. This right was at the beginning denied by Mr. Sen and his missionaries, and the more advanced section held out in a body from the Church till their demands were met. After much correspondence and discussion, something like a compromise was effected, and seats were provided outside the screen, for the advanced families, in a corner of the *Mandir*.\*

**Asceticism.**—Keshub belonged to a Vaishnava family, and the older he grew the more the Hindu element in his character developed itself. He had a photograph of his wife taken as seated by his side in the Himalayas, he squatting on a tiger skin as a Yogi, with the single-stringed harp in his hand, she helping him in his devotion. In 1875 he began to cook his own meals. Sometimes he would sit on a bare wooden stool for a whole day, talking very little, mending some of his old clothes. He felt, he said, that the time had come for himself and the Brahmo Missionaries to practise asceticism and accept severe discipline for the sake of purity and spiritual life. Strict poverty was enjoined on the missionaries, long hours were to be spent in devotions, every one had to cook his simple meal at least once a day, midnight vigils were begun to be kept. When they were cold and desponding, they had recourse to enthusiasm of the Vaishnava culture of *Bhakti*, or love to God, singing, violently dancing, and making up street processions. Keshub in 1876 initiated the fourfold classification of devotees into the disciples of *Yoga*, *Bhakti*, *Gyan*, and *Sheba*.†

**"Our Faith and Experience."**—This was the subject of Keshub's anniversary address in 1876. He sought to identify the Holy Spirit of the Bible with the Spirit God of ancient India. Parker had borrowed from Kant the three great principles, God, Immortality, and Duty. Keshub said in his lecture, "There are only three essential doctrines in Theism—the doctrine of God, the doctrine of immortality, and the doctrine of conscience." Towards the conclusion he said, "Who would stumble midway in his Godward course with the huge millstone of lifeless dogmas hanging round his neck?...Our scripture is not closed, but fresh chapters are still being

\* Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *The New Dispensation*, &c. p. 22.

† *Yoga* is union with God by intense contemplation; *Bhakti* is union by intense love; *Gyan* union by deep knowledge; and *Sheba* union by service rendered fellow-men.

written and added year after year. What the Lord will reveal to us ten years hence, who knows save He?"

A few months afterwards he bought a small garden, about 12 miles from Calcutta, to which he often retired, followed by most of the Brahma missionaries. With shaven head, he lived amidst rigorous self-discipline.

**Lily Cottage.**—In 1877 a large mansion with a garden and tank, in Upper Circular Road, was offered for sale. Keshub purchased it for Rs. 20,000 and called it "Lily Cottage." Not a few Brahmans disliked the fine residence which their Minister had secured in spite of his profession of asceticism. Several of the Brahma missionaries built cottages in the adjoining grounds. Both the men and women met every day for morning service in the house of the Minister. By the end of 1877, the number of Brahma Samajes scattered over India had increased to 107, some following the Conservative, but the majority the Progressive pattern.

#### THE KUCH BEHAR MARRIAGE AND SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS.

**Complaints.**—Keshub, when associated with Debendranath, complained that he was a kind of pope, from whose decision there was no appeal. Intelligent Brahmans brought the same charge against himself. No freedom of discussion was allowed in the management of the Somaj. Keshub was the sole administrator of the affairs of the Society, and ruled it with the rod of an irresponsible dictator.

**Kuch Behar Marriage.**—In August, 1877, it began to be whispered that Keshub was inclined to accept an offer of marriage for his own daughter, not yet 14, from the Maharaja of Kuch Behar, not yet 16 years of age. In February, 1878, it was formally announced that the marriage had been arranged.

Strong protests immediately poured in from all sides. The objections were as follows: (1) The marriage was not to be celebrated according to the Brahma Marriage Act. (2) The girl was under 14, and the Maharaja was not yet 16. (3) Idolatrous ceremonies were likely to be introduced. (4) The Maharaja was not a Brahma, and should not marry the daughter of the Brahma leader. (5) The Kuch Behar family was polygamous by custom, and the Maharaja might marry other wives.

In reply to these objections it was stated that the ceremony was only a formal betrothal, that the Maharaja had declared himself a theist, and that idolatrous rites would not be allowed. Keshub claimed to be guided in the matter by *adesh*, or commandment from God.

Keshub went with the bride to Kuch Behar; but, as had been foretold, Hindu rites, in spite of his protest, were introduced at the ceremony. He felt that he had been outwitted, and that many of

his dearest friends were most seriously offended. Some expected that he would retire for a time from the head of affairs. "But, no, he at once assumed a defiant attitude, declared the marriage as an effect of Divine command, and sternly rejected three letters of requisition successively sent by a party of influential members calling from a meeting." At last, however, Keshub agreed to summon a public meeting to elect a new minister. The proceedings were very disorderly, and Keshub's opponents went away with the idea that they had carried their point, although his friends thought differently. Next Sunday the protesters, from morning to night, tried to make themselves masters of the premises. Keshub and his friends, forewarned, obtained the assistance of the police, and those who sought to oust them were driven off. A number of the most respected Bramhos then seceded (May 15th, 1878), and formed a new Society, called the *Sadharan*, or Universal, Samaj. It will be described hereafter under a separate heading.

Keshub afterwards spoke of the secession as a great blessing: "The Church cleansed. That winning-fan, the Kuch Behar marriage, has done, and is doing immense good to the Brahmo Somaj by removing the chaff from its membership. Month after month, the sensual and the worldly, the prayerless and the vicious, have been purged off. And because of this purging the church has been greatly improved instead of declining."

In his prayer to the "Mother," in the *Dharmatatwa*, he thus characterizes the secessionists:

"These demons in human shape are attracting thy children unto themselves in the name of religion and prayer; and are cutting their throats afterwards, leading them astray from the paths of faith and devotion, making them worldly, sensual and luxurious, and spreading the poison of scepticism and unbelief throughout the land. Dear Mother, Mahomet, thy devoted child, never forgave the Kafirs. How he resolved to extirpate the enemies of God! O Mother, when these Kafirs offend us personally, we can pardon them, but when their attacks are levelled against thee, how can we bear them?"\*

Relieved from the restraint of sensible men, Keshub was left more free to follow his own vagaries. He had some followers, willing to accept from him anything, however eccentric or ridiculous.

"**Am I an Inspired Prophet?**"—This was the subject of Keshub's anniversary address in January, 1879. It brings out forcibly his egotism and claims. He begins, "Again and again has India asked me, 'Art thou an inspired Prophet?' The question was said to have "gathered force year after year, like rising and swelling surges, from province to province till it assumed the formidable

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\* Quoted by Pandit Sivanath Sastri. *The New Dispensation*, &c., p. 36.

proportions of a natural problem." India denotes a few Bramhos. His answer to the question is, "Far from being a prophet, I am myself in need of prophetic guidance and help. Then what am I, if I am not a prophet? I am a singular man. I am not as ordinary men are, and I say this deliberately." He thus states his claims:

"Men have attempted to prove that I have been guided by my own imagination, reason, and intellect. Under this conviction they have from time to time protested against my proceedings. They should remember that to protest against the cause I uphold is to protest against the dispensations of God Almighty, the God of all Truth and Holiness."

"In doing this work, I am confident I have not done anything that is wrong. I have ever tried to do the Lord's will, not mine. Surely I am not to blame for anything which I may have done under Heaven's injunction. Dare you impeach Heaven's Majesty? Would you have me reject God and Providence, and listen to your dictates in preference to His inspiration? Keshub Chunder Sen cannot do it, will not do it. I must do the Lord's will. Man's creed, man's counsel, I will not follow, but will trust and serve the Lord."

Keshub claimed inspiration for his authority, he had not done anything wrong, and those who protested against his proceedings impeached Heaven's Majesty! He himself has given the true explanation in one of his prayers:

#### "A DELUSION.

"I have strangely got into the habit, O my God, of crediting Thee with all my ideas and plans. I, as Thy servant, ought to follow only Thy commandment, forsaking all that pleases me, and adopting whatsoever is agreeable to Thee. But instead of doing this, I strive to follow my own plans and schemes, and then I ascribe to Thee their authorship. Having come so far in the path of religion, I feel it a humiliation to believe that I am carrying out my own wishes. I would fain believe that in all my doings I only follow Thy leading, and I feel glad when people give me credit for obeying Thy will and sacrificing my own. But self-sacrifice is a hard thing, and I am carried away by my own ideas, feelings and tastes. All that I can do is to make myself and others believe that every thing I do is the Lord's doing, and that all my purposes are Divine purposes. Thus errors and vices in my life become sacred in my estimation, in the course of time, with the imaginary *imprimatur* of Thy seal. Lord, deliver me from this delusion." p. 51.

"Who is Christ?"—Keshub made great efforts to recover lost ground. What first brought him prominently before Europeans was his address in 1866, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia." "For thirteen years in India," says Mr. Mozoomdar, "he held his peace on this subject." In April 1879, he gave an address on, "India asks: Who is Christ?" He began by confessing, "I am not a

Christian," and then he claimed to know more about Jesus Christ than all the Christian nations of Europe and America :

"Gentlemen, go to the rising sun in the East, not to the setting sun in the West, if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of his glory and in the fulness and freshness of his divine life. Why do I speak of Christ in the West as the setting sun? Because there we find apostolical Christianity almost gone; there we find the life of Christ formulated into lifeless dogmas, and antiquated symbols. But if you go to the true Christ in the East and his apostles, you are at once seized with inspiration. You find the truths of Christianity all fresh and resplendent. Recall to your minds, gentlemen, the true Asiatic Christ, divested of all western appendages, carrying on the work of redemption among his own people. . . . The outward Christ is evidently an Asiatic, and as such he comes home to us, and rivets our national sympathies." pp. 283, 284.

His biographer says, "For the first time he startled the whole theistic community by declaring the divinity of Christ:"

"Christ struck the key-note of his doctrine when he announced his divinity before an astonished and amazed world in these words: 'I and my Father are one.' I can answer you, my friends, that I love Christ and honor him more for the sake of these words than for anything else. For these memorable and imperishable words furnish an index to the mystery and glory of his real character. Were it not for this bold assertion of identity with the Godhead, I would not honor Christ so much as I do."

But Jesus Christ meant one thing, while Keshub tried to make Him express his own ideas. Of few things do Christians complain more than the use by their opponents of Christian phraseology, with a totally different meaning.

"Behold Christ cometh to us as an Asiatic in race, as a Hindu in faith, as a kinsman and a brother, and he demands your heart's affection. The devout Christ, like your Yogis and Rishis, lived a life of sweet devotion, and loved to dwell always in the Supreme Spirit. In accepting him you accept the spirit of a devout Yogi and a loving Bhakta,—the fulfilment of your national scriptures and prophets." p. 302.

**The Motherhood of God.**—At the same time Keshub sought more and more to conciliate orthodox Hindus. In 1876 he made a strange new acquaintance. There came to him one morning, in a rickety hack carriage, a disorderly-looking young man, insufficiently clad, and with manners less than insufficient. He was introduced as Ramkrishna, a great Vaishnava devotee. Above all things he cherished the conception of God as Mother. To him the female principle in the Hindu idea of Godhead, *Shakti*, the incarnation of force, popularly called Kali, was the supreme mother. The goddess Kali to whom he prayed made him recognize every woman as her incarnation. He bowed his head to the ground

before women, and even before little girls. Keshub, in his devotional conversations, often addressed the Deity in various forms of the word mother. And now the sympathy, friendship and example of the Paramhansa converted the motherhood of God into a subject of special culture with him. The greater part of the year 1879 witnessed this development. A half-crazed Vaishnava devotee largely acquired the influence over Keshub which Theodore Parker had exerted in his younger days. Keshub probably thought that this dogma of the "Motherhood of God" would render his system more acceptable to the Shakti worshippers who predominate in Bengal.

The doctrine of the "Motherhood of God" was set forth to the followers of Durga and Kali as a grand discovery of the Samaj. It was heralded to the world by flags with the word "Mother" inscribed on them, it was paraded in the streets by processions, chanting newly-composed hymns, in which the word "Mother" had a prominent place. Not satisfied with this, Keshub, as an "inspired prophet," issued proclamations in the name of God. One of them ran thus:—

"Go and proclaim me Mother of India," said the Lord to his disciples gathered around him. "Many are ready to worship me as their father. But they know not that I am their mother too, tender, indulgent, forgiving, always ready to take back the penitent child. Ye shall go forth from city to city and from village to village, singing my mercies, and proclaiming to all men that I am India's Mother."... And may India, so convinced, come to me and say,— "Blessed be thy name, Sweet Goddess! We have heard and seen the Supreme Mother's apostles."

A later "proclamation" was as follows:—

"To all my Soldiers in India.

"My affectionate greetings to all. Accept this proclamation. Believe that I goeth forth from Heaven, in the name and with the love of your Mother, and carry out its behests like loyal soldiers and devoted children:—"

"The British Government is my Government and the Brahma Samaj is my Church. My daughter, Queen Victoria, have I ordained and set over the country to rule its people. Be loyal to her, for the warrant of her appointment bears my signature.

"Tell all the people to come direct to me, without a mediator or intercessor, and accept me as their Mother. The influence of the earthly mother at home and of the Queen Mother at the head of the Government will raise the hearts of my Indian children to the Supreme Mother.

"India's Mother."

Miss Collet calls the above "an undisguised piece of blasphemy." Keshub thought that the Kuch Behar question had winnowed away the chaff and left him the wheat. The reverse would rather seem to have been the case. It seems impossible for any man of ordinary intelligence to have approved of such proceedings.

**God-Vision.**—The subject of his anniversary address in 1880 was "God-Vision in the Nineteenth Century." He begins, "I am here to-day to tell you the marvellous secrets of God-vision," "to unravel this sacred mystery."

After a long introduction, he says :—

"I have said enough concerning the Living God who reveals Himself unto us in all the ruling and active forces in nature. But does this Living God manifest Himself alone? God Almighty, art Thou alone? I have ventured to take the dial off this universe, and the wondrous things that lay concealed therein have been revealed. Now I ask Thee, O Spirit Supreme, is there any one else with Thee or art Thou alone, sitting in solitary glory? Methinks I see another being there. It is my Christ."

Keshub goes on to explain that it is *his* Christ who is there—not the Christ of the New Testament. He adds :—

"Not only is Christ there, but there are also Moses and Elias, and all the Jewish prophets of older times, and Paul and all the apostles. And Chaitanya, too, the blessed prophet of India, and the immortal Sakya Muni, and Confucius and Zoroaster too. All our masters are there assembled. Seated on smaller thrones they surround the throne of the Great Spirit, whose glory is in them and in whose glory they dwell."

This attempt to "take the dial off the universe," is much of a piece with his "proclamation of India's Mother."

**Pilgrimages.**—The idea of these was announced as follows in the *Sunday Mirror* :—

"It is proposed to promote communion with departed saints among the more advanced Bramhos. With a view to achieve this object successfully, ancient prophets and saints will be taken one after another on special occasions and made the subject of close study, meditation and prayer. Particular places will be assigned to which the devotees will resort as pilgrims. Then, for hours together, they will try to draw inspiration from particular saints. We believe a spiritual pilgrimage to Moses will be shortly undertaken. Only earnest devotees ought to join. *Feb. 8, 1880.*

"Those among our brethren who have made up their minds to converse through the Lord with the spirit of Moses are requested to go through the requisite preparation and discipline during the next week. On Sunday next they will be called upon to meet on the spiritual Sinai to hold communion with the prophet of the Jewish dispensation." *Feb. 15, 1880.*

The spiritual Sinai was the room used as an oratory in Keshub's house to which, on the 22nd of February, the pilgrims duly repaired.

"For eight days and nights the pilgrims dwelt with Moses in his heavenly mansion, and the Lord Jehovah continued to inspire them with the fire of the Mosaic dispensation, renewed and rekindled under the New

Dispensation. And then as the last day drew near the holy spirit of Moses thus spoke through the Law unto the assembled pilgrims."

Here follows a column of poetic exhortation, imitated from the Bible. The next pilgrimage was to Socrates. On March 7, the pilgrims "proceeded solemnly to the study, chanting a hymn," after which "the minister began the invocation thus:—This is not Calcutta, but Athens; not India, but Greece. The spirit of Socrates is with us." "On the following Sunday (March 14) there was a pilgrimage to Buddha, and on March 21, the pilgrims visited the abode of the ancient sages and saints of India "on the Himalaya heights," "and solemnly entered the Vedic sanctuary, 40 centuries old." On August 8 there was "a pilgrimage to Jesus," and on Sept. 19, "the Brahma devotees were introduced by the Lord to Arabia's benefactor and prophet," and after the usual Sunday morning service, "they were led by the spirit of God into the heavenly mansions of Mahomet, where they spent some time in acquiring the deeper faith and wisdom of Islam. The Lord interpreted the prophet's true mission and brought it home to the pilgrims."\*

In course of time, says his biographer, the list came down to Faraday, Carlyle, and Emerson.

### THE NEW DISPENSATION.

In theology the word *dispensation* denotes a system of principles and rites enjoined, or God's manner of dealing with man in the work of redemption. As early as 1875, Keshub said, "The light of a New Dispensation is vouchsafed by Providence for India's salvation." He defined a Dispensation to mean "God's saving mercy adapting itself in a special manner to the requirements of special epochs in the world's history." "Keshub of late," says Mr. Mozoomdar, "had not been very fond of the name Brahma Somaj." To distinguish his society, he resolved to characterize it as the "Church of the New Dispensation." It was formally proclaimed under that title in his anniversary address in January, 1881, "We Apostles of the New Dispensation." The following are some extracts:

"Asia, mother of many dispensations, has given birth to another child, and its birth-festival shall be celebrated amid great rejoicing.

Christ's Dispensation is said to be divine. I say that this Dispensation is equally divine. Assuredly it is the Lord of Heaven who has sent this new Gospel unto the world.

Its distinguishing feature is its immediacy, its denial of a mediator. While other dispensations have their special mediatorial agencies between

\* Mies Collet's *Brahmo Year Book* for 1880, pp. 31, 35.

God and a sinful world, here we have no such thing, no intercessor, no mediator.

Besides immediacy there is another characteristic of the present dispensation which distinguishes it from all other religions. It is inclusive, while they are more or less exclusive. They exclude each other. But this includes all religions.

Such is the New Dispensation. It is the harmony of all Scriptures and prophets and dispensations.

Before the flag of the New Dispensation bow ye nations and proclaim the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man.

A Paper headed, "What is the New Dispensation?" contains the following :

"Let us sing the glory of the New Dispensation, the latest Revelation of our heavenly Father unto us, His children and servants in India.

The New Dispensation is the harmony of all Scriptures and all saints and all sects.

It is an explanation of pantheism and polytheism.

It is Christ's Kingdom of heaven.

It is the dawn of the Satya Yug, or the Golden Age of universal peace.

It is Christ's Second Advent.

It is the philosophy of the Trinity.

It is the Third Testament.

It is the Advent of the promised Comforter."

The following illustrations are given of the "inclusiveness" of the New Dispensation :—

"I am all things to all men. To me says—

*A Christian* : Verily thou art a Christian, and not far from the Kingdom of heaven.

*A Hindu* : Thou art a genuine Hindu and the Rishis dwell in Thee.

*A Buddhist* : I look upon thee as one of us, and already Nirvana smiles on thy face.

*A Jew* : Thou art a pure Theist and a strict Jew, and Jehovah is thy God.

*A Mahomedan* : We hail thee as a believer in Islam, and a follower of our Prophet.

&c.                      &c.                      &c.                      &c.

Thus they all claim me, they all honour me.

Blessed be the New Dispensation !"

The influence of the Vaishnava devotee, who gained such an ascendancy over Keshub, is apparent in the Song of the New Dispensation :

"Chanting the name of Hari the saints dance.

Dances my *Souranga* (Chaitanya) in the midst of devotees, drunk with the nectar of emotion, with tears of love in his eyes, Oh ! how charming the sight.

Moses dances, Jesus dances, with hands uplifted, inebriated with love, and the great *rishi* Narad dances playing on the lyre.

The great *Yogi* Mahadeo dances with joy; with whom dances John with his disciples.

Nanak, Prahlad, and Nityanand all dance; and in their midst are Paul and Mahomed.

Behold! Hari, inebriated with his own love, dances in the company of His devotees and utters "Hari, Hari."

With the Lord Hari in the middle, the saints dance in a circle, throwing their arms round each other's necks.

Hearing the glad tidings of the New Dispensation, dance both the heaven and earth, and utter "Hari, Hari."\*

There was a time when Keshub was unfavourable to the introduction of a single flower garland into a place of public worship. But now he entered with great enthusiasm upon an endless succession of symbols and celebrations. Some of the principal will be noticed.

*The Flag Ceremony.*—The Banner of the New Dispensation was unfurled at the anniversary festival in 1883. The following account of the ceremony is taken from *The Sunday Mirror* :

"Every faithful Brahma and member of the New Dispensation was exhorted to vow his allegiance to the banner of regenerated and saving theism. Accordingly, on the evening of the annual festival held on Sunday last, the prominent object noticed by the congregation was a handsome crimson-silk banner, mounted upon a silver pole, fixed on the open space of marble pavement in front of the pulpit. After the *Sankirtan* at sunset, began the ceremony announced before, of unfurling the flag of the New Dispensation. A new form of evening worship called *Arati* was first gone through....The worshippers held each a lighted candle in his hand, creating a brilliant and picturesque effect. Dozens of musical instruments, from the English bugle and gong to the traditional conch shell, were loudly and simultaneously performed upon. The varied and deafening peals issuing from these instruments, combined with the voices of scores of men who stood up and went round in a circle with the burning tapers in their hands, heartily chanting the *Arati* hymn, produced upon the immense crowd present, an effect which must be felt to be understood."†

Keshub thus proclaimed it :

"Behold the flag of the 'New Dispensation!' The silken flag is crimson with the blood of martyrs. It is the flag of the Great King of Heaven and Earth, the One Supreme Lord. At the foot of the holy standard are the Scriptures of the Hindus, Christians, Mahomedans, and Buddhists, the sacred repositories of the wisdom of ages, and the inspiration of saints, our light and our guide. Glory unto God in the highest! Honor to all prophets and saints in heaven, and to all Scriptures on earth! Unto the New Dispensation Victory!"

\* *Sunday Mirror*, March 7, 1880

† Quoted by Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *The New Dispensation*, pp. 54, 55.

*The Hom Ceremony.*—This is essentially a Hindu observance. The Hindus worship fire as God on such occasions, but Keshub worshipped God *in* the fire. A large iron pan was placed in front of the pulpit; an earthen vessel, containing ghee, bundles of sticks and piles of firewood were gathered together in one place, and there was a large metal spoon. A circle of fragrant flowers and evergreens surrounded the whole. Keshub lighted the fuel and poured over it the ghee, producing a brisk fire, which he addressed thus :

“O Thou blazing Agni (fire) great, great art thou, great among the forces of creation. We shall honor thee and magnify thee because of thy greatness and majesty. Thou art not God. We do not adore thee. But in thee dwells the Lord, the Eternal Inextinguishable Flame, the Light of the Universe, the imminent Fire, Fire of fire whom fire doth reveal and glorify. O thou brilliant Agni, in thee we behold our Resplendent Lord.”

Then followed a prayer to God, after which the minister cast the six pieces of fuel into the burning fire, the congregation exclaiming together, ‘Victory to God, Victory to God, Victory to God!’\*

With reference to the above, Sivanath Sastri justly says :

“It is a common remark with intelligent idolaters, that in bowing before the idol they do not worship it, but they worship God who as an Omnipresent Being resides in it. Does not Mr. Sen follow the same argument when he offers his thanksgivings to fire or water and says, ‘Thou art not God, but in thee dwells the Lord?’ Is not such practice half-way to idolatry?”†

*Baptismal Ceremony.*—This was thus celebrated :

“The devotees formed a procession and solemnly moved on, singing a hymn with the accompaniment of the mridanga, the conch shell and cymbals, till they reached the bathing ghat of the tank attached to the house of the minister. The place had been decorated with flowers and evergreens, and the flag of the New Dispensation was waving in the breeze. The devotees took their seats upon the steps of the ghat; the minister sat upon a piece of tiger’s skin stretched upon a wooden pulpit erected for the occasion. The minister said, ‘Verily, verily, here was the Lord Jesus baptised 1800 years ago. Behold the holy waters wherein was the Son of God immersed. See ye here the blessed Jesus and by his side John the Baptist administering the rite of Baptism. Nay, behold in the sky above the descent of the Holy Ghost. All three are here present, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, spiritually united. Pilgrim-brothers, mark their union to-day on this hallowed spot.’”

An imitation of the Lord’s Supper will not be described.

*Ordination of Apostles.*—Some men were set apart as apostles the same year. Their feet were washed and wiped, after which each

\* Quoted by Pandit Sivanath Sastri from *The New Dispensation*.

† *The New Dispensation*, &c., p. 6.

was presented with a silver medal, followed by a stick and a scrip. Dressed as a mendicant, with head shaved, Keshub, the servant of the apostles, humbly received these and asked for alms. Thereupon rice and vegetables were put into the small bag which he held in his hand. For 30 days Keshub was pledged to live exclusively upon alms, in the shape of rice, dal, salt, oil, vegetables, fruit, &c., with which kind friends might favor him.

**Compromise with Idolatry.**—Keshub's fervid denunciation of idolatry at the outset of his career as a reformer has been quoted at page 27. Very different is the tone of the following extract from his organ, the *Sunday Mirror* :

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDOL WORSHIP.

"Hindu idolatry is not to be altogether overlooked or rejected. As we explained some time ago, it represents millions of broken fragments of God. Collect them together, and you get the indivisible Divinity. When the Hindus lost sight of their great God, they contented themselves with retaining particular aspects of Him, and representing them in human shapes or images. Their idolatry is nothing but the worship of a Divine attribute materialized. If the material shape is given up, what remains is a beautiful allegory or picture of Heaven's dispensations. The Theist rejects the image, but he cannot dispense with the spirit of which that image is the form. The revival of the spirit, the destruction of the form, is the work of the New Dispensation. Cheer up, then, O Hindus, for the long lost Father from whom ye have for centuries strayed away, is coming back to you. The road is clear enough; it lies through your numerous Puranas and Epics. Never were we so struck with the divinity of the eclectic method as when we explored the gloomy regions of mythological India. The sermons now delivered in the Brahma Mandir are solely occupied with the precious truths discovered therein, and our own occupation is merely to gather the jewels as we go on. We have found out that every idol worshipped by the Hindu represents an attribute of God, and that each attribute is called by a particular name. The believer in the New Dispensation is required to worship God as the possessor of all those attributes, represented by the Hindu as innumerable or 330 millions. To believe in an undivided deity without reference to those aspects of His nature, is to believe in an abstract God, and it would lead us to practical rationalism and infidelity. Nor can we worship the same God with the same attributes investing Him. That would make our worship dull, lifeless, and insipid. Hence we should contemplate Him with His numerous attributes. We shall name one attribute Saraswati, another Lakshmi, another Mahadeva, another Jagatdhatri, &c., and worship God each day under a new name, that is to say, in a new aspect. We do not worship Him as a *Yogi* for ever, or as Father, or as Mother, or as Lakshmi, or as Saraswati. But now the one and then the other, and so on, beholding our Hari in new garb, and in new loveli-

ness for ever. How bewitching the prospect, how grand the picture !"  
Aug. 1, 1880.\*

The name Hari was ostentatiously used at the anniversary services, leading many Hindus to suppose that Vishnu was meant. From the Vaishnava cult, Keshub probably gathered his great faith in the efficacy of the utterance of the Divine Name. Copying the Hindu rosary, he composed what he called, "The Garland of a hundred and eight Names," which was introduced into the daily form of worship of the members of the New Dispensation.

**New Dance.**—The Vaishnavas have a dance in imitation of Krishna dancing with the milkmaids. Keshub, besides the dancing in song, had it in reality in his Mandir, or church. It is thus described :

"The New Dance on the occasion of our late holy festival was a success. The number of dancers doubled and trebled in no time, and exceeded all calculations, and the enthusiasm was so great that the limited space in front of the Vedi (pulpit) where the dance took place, soon became hot as a furnace. Yet the shout and the gallop, and the joyous whirl round and round went on, and it was quite a blessed sight to see so many boys and youths and men of maturer years all dancing around their invisible Mother in the centre. The three 'circles' wore *chudders* of different colours, yellow, white, and brown, and as they moved, one within another with hand upraised, keeping time according to the deep sweet sound of the sacred mridanga, the sight was both cheering and inspiring. The limited accommodation proved a source of inconvenience, and everybody felt that the New Dance required a much larger area where hundreds might join and dance merrily. There was the flag of the New Dispensation, and the usual accompaniment of native dance, the jingling *nepur* (anklet) was not wanting on the occasion. Bhai Kunja Bihari led the dance."†

**Jugglery.**—Keshub, when young, was fond of acting as a juggler. In the year before his death he thus sought to explain "The Magic of the New Dispensation" :—

"The Juggler who appeared, on Tuesday last, in the last scene of the New Dispensation Drama, explained the deeper principles of the New Faith as they had never been explained before. There was the magician waving his magic wand, using his magical apparatus, and performing wonderful conjuring tricks amid enthusiastic cheers. He knelt before a plantain tree and humbly entreated it to reveal the autograph of its Lord and Master. And then he cut off a large leaf with a knife, and lo ! the name of Hari was found inscribed thereon. The trunk of the tree then yielded, under the Juggler's bidding, the nectar of God's love, through a small pipe he attached to it, first as rose-water and then as *sherbet*. The symbols of the various religions were then exhibited, such as the

\* Quoted by Miss Collet, *Brahmo Year Book* for 1880, pp. 33, 34.

† *The New Dispensation*, Sept. 10, 1882. Quoted by Miss Collet.

Christian's Cross, the Mahometan's Crescent, the Vedic *Om*, the Saiva's Trident, and the Vaishnava's *Khunti*. These stand aloof from each other in decided antagonism and never coalesce. By dexterous shuffling these symbols were in an instant made into one."\*

Max Müller has given the most charitable explanation of these proceedings: "His utterances of late have shown signs, I am sorry to say, of an over-wrought brain and an over-sensitive heart. He sometimes seem to me on the verge of the very madness of faith."†

**Last Annual Addresses.**—"That Marvellous Mystery—the Trinity," was delivered in 1882. The following extracts will give some idea of its contents:

"It is not the dead bones of a dead doctrine, gathered from dead books, nor the antiquated and lifeless Trinity, fossilized in Western theology,—a theological cant, a dark enigma—that I am going to present to you; but the living Trinity, the infant soul has seen in the light of faith."

"While surrounding nations think and surmise, India, blessed India, sees and hears. Let India then speak, and let the world for moment listen. Europe! be silent, while an humble Asiatic discourses upon the doctrine of the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Creator, the Exemplar, and the Sanctifier; *Sat, Chit, Ananda*, 'Truth, Intelligence, and Joy.' You have here three conditions, three manifestations of Divinity."

Keshub's explanation of the "marvellous mystery" is akin to the doctrine of Sabellius, a Unitarian who lived 1,500 years ago, and which has ever since been rejected by the Christian Church.

*Asia's Message to Europe*, delivered in 1883, was Keshub's final public address. The following are a few extracts:

"Europe, I charge thee to be unsectarian. Asia's first message to Western nations is—Put the sword of sectarianism adroitly into the sheath.

"In science there cannot be sects or divisions, schisms or enmities. Is there one astronomy for the East and another for the West? Is there an Asiatic optics as distinguished from European optics? Science is one; it is one yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the same in the East and the West. There can be but one science; it recognises neither caste nor colour nor nationality. It is God's science, the eternal verity of things. If God is one, His Church must be one.

"All India must believe that Christ is the Son of God. Nay, more than this, I will make myself bold to prophesy, all India will one day acknowledge Jesus Christ as the atonement, the universal atonement for all mankind."

"He has given his precious blood for all of us, whether we believe it or not. Whether we be Hindus or Mahometans, disciples or even enemies of Christ, he has shed his atoning blood for each one of us.

\* *The New Dispensation*, 1st April, 1883. Quoted by Miss Collet.

† *Biographical Essays*, p. 92.

We have only to apply it to ourselves. He has done his work, let us do ours. Let us all believe that he has died for you and me and the atonement on our side is completed.

“Fellow countrymen, be ye reconciled through him.

“Christ’s simple Gospel, the simplest indeed of all Gospels, is summed up in two words, *Bathe and Eat*. Baptism and Eucharist represent and symbolise the two grand and essential principles of his creed.”

**New Samhita.**—Keshub had been suffering for some time from diabetes. In April, 1883, he was recommended to go to Simla, but the change did no good. He felt that his life was ebbing away, so he wished to leave behind him a kind of guide for the religious life of the Bramhos. As soon as he rallied from his first attack of illness at Simla, he began the “*New Samhita (Code) or the Sacred Laws of the Aryans of the New Dispensation.*” It appeared by instalments in his *New Dispensation* paper.

It begins with an invocation, concluding as follows :

“6. Speak then unto us, O Thou Holy God of India, Thou God of our ancestors, and declare Thy New Samhita unto the people of the New Church.”

Then follow rules about the House and the Householder. Under the second head one of the directions is as follows :—

“9. Having read the morning papers and transacted such business as is of great urgency, the householder shall take his daily bath and ablutions in a reverent spirit.”

Worship in the sanctuary comes next, followed by regulations about Daily Meals, Business, &c. The different ceremonies are described, from the Birth ceremony to the Shradha ceremony after death. The concluding portion treats of Vows.

The work was dictated to his son in the early morning. For the rest of the day he could not do any head work, but occupied himself chiefly in making little articles of carpentry, very neatly executed.

Before the Code was published, Keshub wrote :—

“The New Samhita will be shortly ready, and a day ought to be appointed for its formal promulgation among our people,—a day that will close the epoch of anarchy, self-will, and lawlessness, and usher in the kingdom of law, and discipline and harmony.”

How far these hopes were realised will appear hereafter.

During the latter part of his stay on the Himalayas, Keshub also wrote a series of essays, under the title of “*Yoga, Subjective and Objective.*” Yoga is defined as “*communion with God.*” It is realized in three ways ; first in nature, secondly in the soul, and thirdly in history.

## LAST DAYS.

**The New Sanctuary.**—In the middle of September, 1883, Keshub left Simla for Calcutta. One of the best rooms in his residence had been given up for domestic worship. He wished to have a separate building for the purpose. One day in November as he was walking feebly in the garden, he ordered some workmen to be called, and directed them to demolish one side of the extensive brick enclosures of Lily Cottage. Having thus obtained a supply of bricks and other materials, he set about the erection of the new Devalaya or Sanctuary.

As the cold weather set in, he grew worse and worse. Many doctors were called in—European, Hindu, and Muhammadan; but all in vain. A few weeks before his end he directed his cousin, Joy Krishna-Sen, M. A., to write a complete report of the Brahma Samaj of India.

In the last week of December, Keshub suffered a severe relapse. The consecration ceremony of the new Sanctuary was to take place on the 1st January, 1884. He insisted on being taken downstairs to preside on the occasion. He was carried and seated on the new marble pulpit and in an almost inaudible voice cried *Namah Sachidananda Haré*, 'Salutation to the God of truth, wisdom, and joy.' He then offered a prayer to the Divine Mother:—

"I have come, O Mother, into thy sanctuary. This day in Thy holy presence, and in the presence of Thy devotees here as well as in heaven, O thou Spirit Mother, this new Devalaya is consecrated. This place where I worship my Mother is my Brindaban, my Kashi, my Mecca, my Jerusalem. I am happy amidst the agonies of my disease in the presence of my Mother and may this happiness be yours also."

**Death.**—The above was Keshub's last recorded prayer, his last appearance before his adherents. The effort aggravated the disease. The pains in his loins became intolerable. At other times he had always remained silent in the torment of physical pain. Now his agonised cries of *Baba* (father) and *Ma* (mother) resounded day and night through the house and neighbourhood. The doctors gave him powerful narcotics which produced prolonged intervals of stupor, but as soon as he awoke the agony returned with increased violence. He became restless, ceaselessly turning from side to side, and piteously groaning. For the last two or three days, excepting the occasional feeble utterances of pain, he was still and outwardly insensible, yet when some of his favourite hymns were sung he seemed to listen with attention. When his end drew near, the frantic mother and wife, daughters and sons filled the house with lamentations which no one had the heart to control. And amidst each

lull of this many-voiced wretchedness, Keshub's faint dying moans were heard. They still shaped inarticulately the words, 'Father!' 'Mother.' On the morning of the 8th January, 1884, he breathed his last. His wife clung to the lifeless feet, bedewed them with tears and cried out, "I got a divine being for my husband." Keshub's mother said, "Child, in thy blessed image I see no man. It is the beauty of Mahadeva!"

**Cremation.**—The disciples carefully washed and robed the departed master. Wreathed with garlands of fragrant flowers, dressed in silks of the purest white, the body was laid out in state in the New Sanctuary. In the afternoon the funeral procession was made up, attended by crowds. When the body was laid on the pyre, the officiating priest chanted the usual Sanskrit verse and Keshub's eldest son applied a torch to the fuel. As the body began to burn the mourners with one voice cried out, "Glory be unto the Redeemer who is Truth, Wisdom and Joy." The ashes were collected and brought in an urn to Lily Cottage. Fifteen days afterwards the *Shradh* ceremony was performed, and the ashes were deposited in the open space in front of the New Sanctuary. The spot is now marked by an obelisk of white marble, with the symbolic device of the New Dispensation, made up of the cross, crescent, trident, and Vedic Omkar.

#### THE SAMAJ AFTER KESHUB'S DEATH.

In imitation of Jesus Christ, Keshub ordained apostles of the New Dispensation who were to manage the affairs of the Church after his decease. For some time before his death, Keshub's life was embittered by the dissensions among his followers. He says in the *New Dispensation* :

"The angry quarrels of those around me have pierced my heart and made it bleed profusely, and the multitudinous instances of revenge which I daily see before me torment my very bones. When will all this strife and contention in Thy household cease? Forgiveness these people will not learn; it is to them an abomination. Nay, they proudly rejoice in oppressing and tormenting and reviling their brothers for the least provocation that cometh from them, in returning evil for evil, and in persecuting their opponents." July 29th, 1882.

P. C. Mozoomdar returned from a tour round the world shortly after Keshub's death. The "Apostolic Durbar," composed of the Apostles and Missionaries, in all 21 members, at their first meeting passed the following resolution :

"We believe that our Minister existed and shall ever exist in the bosom of God as the Minister of the New Dispensation. The relation we bear to him is not transient but everlasting. To preserve, demonstrate,

and declare to the world the permanent relation of the Minister of the New Dispensation, the President's seat in the Durbar and his pulpit in the Sanctuary and Tabernacle shall remain vacant."\*

One of the first points of dispute was the claim of Mr. Mozoomdar, as nominal leader of the New Dispensation, to occupy the pulpit. For four years this controversy has continued. At the whole day festival in 1888, Mr. Mozoomdar was asked to give a short address to the congregation. The *Epiphany* says:

"He ventured to seat himself upon the centre of the Vedi, in the very spot consecrated by the touch of the Minister! A violent attempt was made to drag the sacrilegious intruder from his place, but without effect. With as much dignity as the circumstances permitted, Mr. Mozoomdar sat still and prayed at his enemies until something like order was restored, when he rose from his place and suggestively proceeded to 'Peace Cottage' and there conducted Divine Service." Jan. 28, 1888.

The Vedic question was still unsettled in June, 1888. One proposal, which finds favour with *The Liberal*, is to erect "seats for the officiating ministers on each side of the seat which used to be occupied by our Minister." June 10th.

The ownership of the Mandir was another bone of contention. It was said that some of the members of Keshub's family wished to regard it as private property, but though the documents are in the Minister's name, there is no doubt that it was considered to belong to the public. After a long dispute, it was handed over to trustees in November, 1886.

Church government was a third cause of dissension. Mr. Mozoomdar contended for the rights of the Samaj as a whole in opposition to the rule of the Apostolic Durbar. In his anniversary address in 1888, he says:

"Every sect, every community, every church has its organization. We in the Brahma Somaj have also tried to organize our movement, though, I am sorry to say, with no conspicuous success. The present condition of anarchy in our section of the Brahma Somaj at all events, proves that my remark is well founded. The disgraceful party spirit, ill-feeling, the quarrels, and scandals, the utter absence of authority in all affairs of importance, show unmistakably that we stand in sad necessity of some regular constitution to guide ourselves. What is it to be? is it to be unbridled democracy, the reckless despotism of one individual, or the irresponsible power of a prelacy? All these principles have at different times clamoured for mastery in the Brahma Somaj."†

On the 7th April, Mr. Mozoomdar, in an address at the Adi Brahma Somaj, proposed a Brahma Union, mainly on the ground of a common belief in the unity of God.

\* *Liberal and New Dispensation*, March 2, 1884.

† *The Interpreter*, April 1, 1888.

The scheme is not favourably regarded by the Apostolic Durbar. It virtually amounts to the formation of a new society, although this is disclaimed by Mr. Mozoomdar.

“**Return to Vedanta.**”—The *Liberal and New Dispensation* has an article with the above heading. It begins and ends as follow :

“We need not say much upon our return to Vedanta. This is a known fact. The foundation of Brahmoism was laid upon Upanishads. Although we have advanced, the foundation remains as it was. The Vedas ended with the knowledge of Brahma. How did they end we need not mention here. In us and around us, we must see One Pervading Spirit with our mental eye; this is what Vedanta inculcates, and this is what the Vedas tend to ... It was left for the present Dispensation to bring out all the elements that worked in Vedantic period, to give a connective link to the whole. Our return to Vedanta has effected this, and we are so much the more grateful to our Lord.” June 7th, 1885.

**English Publications.**—The Brahma Tract Society, Office, 78 Upper Circular Road, Calcutta, publishes the “Lectures, Sermons, Essays and Miscellaneous Writings of Keshub Chunder Sen, both in English and Bengali.”

The leading English newspapers are the following :

*The Liberal and New Dispensation.* This may be regarded as the organ of the Society. The first part contains general articles and news; the second refers specially to the New Dispensation, and generally gives some extracts from “the Minister’s Prayers,” &c. Post-free, Rs. 10 a year.

*The Interpreter*, edited by Mr. Mozoomdar, was commenced as a monthly in 1885. It now appears weekly. Post-free, Rs. 3 a year.

Both the foregoing are issued in Calcutta. There are also one or two mofussil papers.

### KESHUB CHUNDER SEN’S CHARACTER AND WORK.

If this were not the latter half of the nineteenth century, according to the ordinary course of things in India, Keshub would in time be deified. His followers, as it is, talk of his death as his “ascension,” in imitation of that of the Lord Jesus Christ; they have striven to prevent his pulpit from being ever occupied by another. The full, and apparently faithful, biography by his relative and chief fellow-labourer, P. C. Mozoomdar, will probably arrest any such movement. With some excellent traits of character, it is very evident that Keshub had his share of human frailties. The religious opinions generally held by the Bramhos will hereafter be examined in detail: at present Keshub’s personal disposition, peculiarities, and work will alone be noticed.

**Fair Intellectual Powers.**—Though Keshub does not rank with the master-minds of the world, the great original thinkers by whom it has been influenced, he stands high among his contemporary countrymen.

**Oratorical Ability.**—Mr. Bose says, "As an orator he was certainly without a rival in his own country." He spoke in English with such accuracy and easy flow of language, that the Bengalis were naturally proud of him; he excited admiration even in England. But though his addresses contain some striking thoughts and eloquent passages, they are largely characterised by mere verbiage and vague declamation. This especially applies to his later efforts. As Mr. Bose remarks, "They were, moreover, marred by an egotism which, in spite of his oft-repeated confessions of sin and unworthiness, could not but be extremely repulsive."

**A Strong Will.**—When he made up his mind, he began at once to carry out his intentions, and no opposition would divert him.

**Enthusiasm.**—He possessed in a large degree this quality so essential in a reformer.

**High Moral Character.**—For this he was distinguished from his early years, and it marked him to the close of his career.

**Religiousness.**—While this is characteristic of orthodox Hindus, the very opposite is the case with the so-called educated classes. They may be said, as a rule, to be "of the earth, earthy." To enjoy the world is their sole aim in life. Keshub, on the contrary, was noted from his deep spirituality of mind.

**WEAK POINTS.**—There is a Latin proverb, "Let nothing but what is good be said of the dead." Though this rule holds in ordinary cases, when a man claims to be guided by *adesh*, or divine command, and to be the founder of a New Dispensation of religion which is to embrace the whole world, duty requires that his character and conduct should be carefully scanned: have Keshub's been such as to justify his pretensions? While his good qualities are cheerfully acknowledged, the interests at stake demand that any of an opposite description should be fully stated. The question is, can he be taken as a safe spiritual guide?

**Love of Pre-eminence.**—This was one of the most conspicuous elements of his character. It was manifested in childhood with regard to games; it was retained all through life.

**Self-Confidence.**—This was another prominent feature. If he and the world differed, the world was wrong. A man may be entitled to hold an opinion strongly after careful investigation, but Keshub trusted chiefly to his own judgment and impulses. In his address, "Am I an Inspired Prophet?" he says, "How can he who scarcely reads two books in 365 days be reckoned a wise or a learned man?" He said in the same address: "You speak of history, I hate dead history. I abhor those dark places where dead men's bones are

gathered." If he had read history, he would probably not have ventured to proclaim as a great discovery his explanation of the Trinity which had been condemned by the Christian Church 15 centuries before he was born.

Pandit Sivanath Sastri remarks with reference to the above: "It is a moral rule, fit to be written in gold, that whoever wilfully cuts himself off from the thought of mankind, him God dooms to darkness and confusion."

**A Chameleon-like Disposition.**—The chameleon is said to change its hue according to the colour of the objects by which it is surrounded. Keshub claimed that all his knowledge was derived from "My Divinity, the Theist's Divinity, and not from books." His writings plainly show that at the outset of his career his creed was largely borrowed from Theodore Parker. Latterly he gave up reading; the most sensible members of the Society, who had hitherto restrained his vagaries, had seceded; he fell greatly under Vaishnava influence, and became more and more a Hindu.

**Extravagant Claims.**—Keshub made his own self his little world. He supposed the whole of India to be absorbed by the inquiry, "Art thou an inspired prophet?"

Keshub claimed to be commissioned by God to preach certain doctrines, to be guided in every duty of life by *adesh*. He claimed exemption in his own case from the outward authority of his own laws. "To protest," he said, "against the cause I uphold, is to protest against the dispensation of God Almighty, the God of all Truth and Holiness." Mr. Mozoomdar says, "In every quarrel he had with anybody, he absolutely believed God was on his side, his enemies were absolutely wrong."

In a professed dialogue between God and the New Dispensationists, he says in the name of God; "Leaders of congregations are ordained by Me. Therefore treat your minister as one who hath commission from Heaven. His words ye must hear with faith and cherish with reverence."

Keshub issued proclamations in the name of God. "The New Dispensation I say stands on the same level with the Jewish Dispensation, the Christian Dispensation, and the Vaishnava Dispensation through Chaitanya." Nay, he claims for it a higher place. The *Statesman* says:

"Whereas each religion of the world is a precious jewel, Brahmoism we learn is a string of jewels. The meaning of all this is tolerably clear. All prophets hitherto have had but a single idea. Christ, Mahomed, Buddha, are all one-idead men. They and their ideas, are all summed up in Babu Keshub Chunder Sen and Brahmoism."\*

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\* Quoted by Pandit Sivanath Sastri. *The New Dispensation*, p. 49.

**Acceptance of Self-Contradictions.**—Sir Monier Williams says that “Hinduism bristles on all sides with contradictions.” Inability to recognise them is said to be one feature of the Indian mind. Keshub was not exempt from this failing. His creed was a sort of phantasmagoria of incoherent opinions.

The *Sunday Mirror* contains the following:—

“Our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but that all the established religions of the world are true. There is a great deal of difference between the two assertions.

“The glorious Mission of the New Dispensation is to harmonise religions and revelations, to establish the truth of every particular dispensation and upon the basis of their particulars to establish the largest and broadest induction of a general and glorious proposition.” Oct. 23, 1881.

Mr. Bose remarks on the above :

“Mr. Sen not merely believed in the existence of sporadic elements of truth in one and all the religions of the world, and in the possibility of their being brought into one focus, and thus made to constitute one comprehensive scheme of faith and practice ; but he maintained that they were *all* true, and that all that was needed to effect their unification was the discovery of what he was pleased to call a string of union. Every religion, from fetichism up to pure monotheism, represents, according to his belief, a dispensation of God ; and consequently a union of all the conflicting systems of belief is not merely a possibility, but sure to be a realized certainty under the banner of the New Dispensation. An idea more wild could scarcely be entertained by a human mind, and the bare fact that he allowed it to be the master-passion of his soul is a proof of an ill-regulated and ill-balanced intellect.”\*

The New Dispensation professes to be the harmony of all Scriptures, and all saints, and all sects. “It is the harmony of the Veda and the Purana, of the Old Testament and the New Testament.”

Mr. Bose says, Keshub’s “one Church represents not only a heterogeneous nondescript composed of conflicting beliefs, but an agglomeration of the varied symbols of worship and sacraments of religion associated with the varied symbols of faith prevalent in the world.”

Keshub attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable. “Immediacy” is the distinguishing feature of the New Dispensation, while mediation is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity. Union between the two is impossible.

**Misuse of Christian Terms.**—Mr. Bose says :

“Brahmoism has its Unity in Trinity, its Incarnation, its Atonement, its Redemption, its Regeneration, its Gospel, its Revelation, its Law and the Prophets, its Church and Sacraments. But each of these important terms expresses in Brahmo Theology a sense very different from, if not contradictory to, what is attached to it in the creed of the Christian. Its

\* *Brahmoism*, pp. 146, 147.

Trinity, for instance, is not the Triune Jehovah of the Christians, but one God appearing in a Trinity of manifestations, in nature, history, and the human soul. Its Incarnation is not Emmanuel God with us, but the typical Great Man with a great deal more of divinity in him than falls to the lot of ordinary mortals."

Mr. Bose justly adds that the Brahmos, "have been imitators from beginning to end, have copied the terms and the meanings attached to them by infidel writers, without study, thought, or discrimination."

Henry Rogers condemned the practice in the *Eclipse of Faith* before Keshub was heard of. He says :

"You tell me one moment that you do not believe in historical Christianity at all, either its miracles or its dogmas,—these are fables; but in the next—why no old puritan could garnish his discourse with a more edifying use of the language of Scripture.

"Do not, unless you would have the world think you a hypocrite, willing to cajole it with the idea that you are a believer in the New Testament, while you in fact reject it—do not affect this very unctuous way of talking. Do not, I beseech you, adopt the phraseology of men who, according to your view, must have been either the most miserable fanatics or the most abominable impostors; for if they believed all that system of miracle and doctrine they professed and this were not true, they were certainly the first; and if they did not believe it, they were as certainly the second," pp. 36, 37.

Pandit Sivanath Sastri expresses the following view:—

"It is our strong and mature conviction, that the first thing necessary for the successful propagation of a new faith is a position of honest and manly independence. There is such a thing as honesty of expression which religious teachers should never forget. To make rather free use of the forms and phraseology of others, in a novel and arbitrary sense of our own, is to inflict upon them a grievous injustice, and to envelope our real ideas and doctrines in a cloud of doubt and suspicion, which cannot but be injurious to the cause of propagation."\*

**Mock Asceticism.**—As Mr. Bose remarks, Keshub did not live as an ascetic. He had a large and well-furnished house, with a wife and children, numerous relations and friends and servants. He appeared neatly and respectably dressed, travelled first class, attended viceregal receptions, introduced his daughters by marriage into the wealthiest families, and led, on the whole, the life of a metropolitan magnate rather than that of a religious recluse. At times, however, as has been described, he burlesqued a few of the least painful austerities practised by Yogis.

\* *The New Dispensation*, §c., p. 28.

Pandit Sivanath Sastri has the following remarks on this subject:

“Where is true piety to be sought? Certainly not in shaving the head in a particular fashion; in besmearing the body with ashes, in wearing the mendicant's garments, in bearing a stick or scrip, in making a mockery of poverty by begging alms in one's own house, and of his family and friends, or in cooking one's own food, but in strict and unflinching fidelity to truth, in warm and active love of mankind, in burning and enthusiastic love of justice, in natural and instinctive dread of wrong, in humble and unostentatious practice of virtue, in modest forgetfulness of self, in earnest and soul-pervading love of God, and above all in faithful obedience to His will. Briefly stated, true piety consists in loving God and doing His will, everything else besides being regarded as a matter of perfect indifference to it. Neither *sensualism* nor *asceticism* can be its aim or object. Yet when called upon by duty and the will of the Father, the truly pious man cheerfully submits to greater privations and sufferings than the best of ascetics or self-tormentors ever did.

“Besides, external asceticism, when practised as a part of spiritual exercise, just fails to attain the object it has in view. Instead of humiliating the soul, it fills with a false self-satisfaction and spiritual pride, diverts the eyes of the spirit from the internal to the external, and sets up false standards of spiritual and moral excellence;—thereby leading its votaries to neglect the principles of real morality.”\*

**Keshub's Earlier and Later Years.**—The first time the compiler heard Keshub speak was when he gave a clear, fervid address on “Religious and Social Reformation” in the Bombay Town Hall in 1868. The last address he heard was, “Am I an Inspired Prophet?” delivered in the Calcutta Town Hall in 1879. The second was in striking contrast to the former—hazy and leaving the impression that the answer was, “No, Yes.”

Pandit Sivanath Sastri has the following remarks on the two great errors into which Hindus are apt to fall:—

“History will tell the intelligent reader that all the Hindu religious sects, without exception, have always tended to two great errors: First to *mysticism*, as far as the subjective side of religion was concerned; secondly, to *formalism*, as regards the objective side of it. Their mistaken conceptions of piety have produced the most baneful results. In the first place they have taught the people to regard religion as something apart from life, thereby causing a fatal separation between religion and individual moral conduct; secondly, they have diverted the attention of all real aspirants after piety, from the fields of reform and active philanthropy, to the observance of lifeless forms; thirdly, they have left the relations of life without the sanctifying influence of religious faith.”

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\* *The New Dispensation*, &c. pp. 65, 66.

At first Keshub sought to correct these tendencies : latterly he gave way to them :

“ As a matter of fact, the Brahma Samaj is almost entirely recruited from the ranks of Hindus, the devoutly disposed amongst whom, as a general rule, are deeply imbued with these mystic and ritualistic notions of piety. Consequently, no sooner did Mr. Sen assume the position of a leader, than he found himself daily surrounded by a class of men whose opinions and sentiments were deeply saturated with these conceptions of piety. Mr. Sen not having a very definite and clear conviction of his own on the subject, could not but be silently influenced by their opinions. He was naturally and unconsciously led to conform to their ideas and answer their expectations. The consequence was, that he rose in the estimation of this class as a saint and devotee, but he departed further and further every year from his original lines. The effect of this relapse into the national errors, on the Church as a whole, has been quite chilling and deadening, as regards every form of good work or reform. Read the internal history of the more than 140 Churches scattered all over India, and you observe an almost total blank with respect to acts of public usefulness or philanthropy. The few institutions of that nature we meet with in the Mofussil Samajes are, as a general rule, feebly kept up and receive but secondary attention. While near at home, the course of Mr. Sen's movement has been characterised by comparative paralysis of every form of social or philanthropic work, but by singularly marked and exuberant growth of every mystic conception or ritualistic practice. Witness the fate the ‘ Indian Reform Association,’ which laid its hands on much really useful work, has met with ; but mark the unusual development, during later years, of such things as prolonging a prayer meeting over five hours, singing and dancing with ringing anklets at the feet, making use of colored garments like mendicants, shaving in the fashion of Hindu anchorites, making imaginary pilgrimages to the spirits of prophets, and practising outward asceticism as great acts of virtue.”\*

The above were not the only features of declension. For some years Keshub was the determined enemy of idolatry. In the latter part of his life, he took up in his Bengali sermons Hindu gods and goddesses by name, and “ explained the conceptions that underlay each.” “ This,” says his biographer, “ made him exceedingly popular with large sections of the Hindu community, but it led also to the accusation that the leader of the Brahma Samaj was dallying with popular superstition, and showing signs that he would soon merge into the gulf of the great idolatry around.” “ These reformed expositions have been utilised by orthodox champions to bring about a reaction on behalf of popular idolatry.”†

**Beneficial Results of Keshub's Labours.**—Only a few can be briefly noticed :

\* *The New Dispensation*, &c. pp. 60-62.

† *Life of Keshub Chunder Sen*, pp. 376, 378.

*Marriage Reform.*—Keshub collected valuable information regarding the evils of early marriage. The Marriage Bill, passed through his efforts, is a great step in the right direction.

*Promotion of Education.*—The Albert and Victoria Colleges, for male and female students, are memorials of his zeal in this respect.

*Impulse to Literature.*—One thing that struck him in England was the large circulation of penny and halfpenny papers. As already mentioned, on his return to India, he started a weekly pice ( $\frac{2}{3}d.$ ) paper. *The Indian Mirror*, still the only daily native paper in India, originated with him. His numerous publications, both in English and Bengali, are other contributions to the same cause.

*Moral Reforms.*—Writing in 1863, Bishop Cotton says in his charge: “In the early part of this year a Government school-master electrified the Bethune Society by a lecture, giving a moral sketch of ‘Young Bengal,’ which recalled the picture of Young Athens drawn by Aristophanes in the *Clouds*, and complaining that while old-fashioned restraints are utterly set at naught, none of a more binding character are substituted for them, so that the boasted liberty of Bengali civilization is in danger of sinking into unprincipled license.”

A pamphlet by Wooma Charn Dass was published under the title, “Drunkenness as a Phase of our Progress.” What is it that young Hindus pride themselves in copying from the English? “Brandy and Buggy.”

Keshub tried to stem this torrent of evil.

*Increased Attention to Religion.*—In the early period of English education in Bengal, there were some men, thorough sceptics, who exercised a most pernicious influence over youth. Mr. Mozoomdar says, “Infidelity, indifference to religion, and point-blank atheism were unblushingly professed.” Keshub sought to remedy this state of things among all with whom he came in contact. He was deeply religious himself, and some caught his spirit.

*Pandit Sivanath Sastri's Testimony.*—Though compelled to sever connection with Keshub, Pandit Sivanath Sastri says of him, “Whose many sterling qualities of character we admire,—whose preachings and example have given an impetus to so many minds,—many of whose utterances have now and then actually communicated many a precious moral and spiritual truth,—to whom the present writer personally owes a debt of love and gratitude.”\*

## THE SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ.

The origin of this Society will best be described in the words of Pandit Sivanath Sastri, M. A., its leading Missionary.

\* *The New Dispensation*, §c. p. 68.

During the period intervening between the passing of the Marriage Act in 1872 and the year 1878, the year of the second schism, internal dissensions of a serious character began to manifest themselves within Mr. Sen's church. Apart from the doctrine of 'Great Men,' two other doctrines of ominous import, viz., the doctrine of *Adesh* or Divine Command, and the doctrine of *Bidhan* or Dispensation, began to be preached with some degree of energy and consistency, at this time by Mr. Sen and his missionaries. A party of earnest and long-standing members of the Samaj, took serious objections to these doctrines and considered them fraught with evil tendencies. They also felt another very great want. They found the Church without constitution; the whole thing resting on the shoulders of one man, and left without all those legitimate checks on abuse or misdirection of power, which a constitutional mode of government alone can supply. They at once set themselves to counteract these tendencies, and to remove these wants. They first held many private discussions with Mr. Sen and his missionaries, tried to expose the evil tendencies of the new-doctrines, and to represent the necessity of giving the Church a regular constitution. The earnest pleadings and protests of these men were treated with marked neglect,—and in many cases with positive contempt; till at last the protesting and progressive party were compelled to adopt more formal and public measures. All these efforts only exposed this party of members to the displeasure of Mr. Sen and his missionaries. They were run down in the pages of the *Sunday Mirror*, with the most abusive epithets, and treated as a class of spiritually and morally degenerated people.

The Kuch-Behar marriage, already described, brought matters to a crisis. On the 15th May, 1878, in the Calcutta Town Hall, the chief Bramhos of the metropolis—supported by the concurrence of 29 provincial Samajes, and the written declaration of 425 Brahmos and Brahmicas, inaugurated the Sadharan (or Universal) Brahmo Samaj.

**Members.**—These are of two classes. The following are the conditions of ordinary membership:

1. The applicant must be above 18 years of age.
2. He must agree to sign the covenant of the Samaj containing the four principles of the Brahmo faith.
  - (1.) Its *immediacy*—freedom from all doctrines of mediation or intercession.
  - (2.) Its *independence*—or freedom from the fetters of infallible books or men.
  - (3.) Its *catholicity*—or its broad sympathy for all truth wherever found, and its warm appreciation of the great and good of every land.
  - (4.) Its *spirituality*—or freedom from all external forms and ceremonies.

3. His private character must be pure and moral, for breach of morality in private life makes a member liable to forfeiture of membership.

4. He must agree to pay at least 8 Annas in the year towards carrying on the work of the Samaj.

The foregoing conditions are a formal renunciation of one or two vital Christian doctrines, but they might be accepted by a worshipper of Vishnu or Kali and by an observer of caste.

Miss Collet says :

“It would appear at first sight that the renunciation of idolatry and polytheism must, as a matter of course, entail the cessation of all ceremonies in which idols or false gods are invoked. But such invocations are interwoven in all domestic rites, or *Anusthans* of Hindu life, from birth to death. A consistent Brahma, therefore, must not only absent himself from Hindu temple-worship, or grand idolatrous festivals, but must also renounce the Hindu rites performed on occasions of birth, marriage, death, &c., and must have Brahmie Anusthans performed in their place, and one who does this is called an *Anusthanic Brahma*.

“The Anusthanics are scattered very irregularly over the country,—some Brahma villages containing many, while some far more cultivated Samajes contain but few. The organization which contains most is undoubtedly the Sadharan Samaj, whose rules require that all its preachers, office-bearers, Executive Committee, and at least 15 members of its General Committee, should be Anusthanic.”\*

**Church Government.**—This is described as follows by Miss Collet :—

“Determined to avoid the dangers of the ‘one-man rule,’ and anxious to rally as large a number for common work as possible, their first efforts were given to the establishment of a republican constitution; and this has happily proved to be of a workable kind. The office-bearers (annually elected) are four in number—a president, secretary, assistant-secretary, and treasurer. These act in conjunction with a General Committee composed of 40 persons elected at the annual general meeting of members, and of such representatives from the Provincial Samajes as the latter have previously elected or confirmed. This General Committee, in its turn, appoints 12 of its members as an Executive Committee for the year, who meet every week, and by whom all the actual work is performed, subject to revision at quarterly meetings by the General Committee, who are themselves ultimately responsible to the general body of members. By this arrangement the chief rule practically resides with the Executive Committee, who are chosen from the most active and experienced members of the Samaj, and who, while fully responsible to the general body, are yet free to act efficiently as its accredited members.”

**Essential Principles.**—For purposes of comparison, these are

\* Outlines of Brahmie History, p. 33.

quoted in the concluding chapter, after those of the Brahmo Samaj of India.

**Duties of Missionaries.**—*The Indian Messenger*, the organ of the Sadharan Samaj, gives these as follows :—

(1.) The missionaries should go on preaching according to the above-mentioned principles, and should neither adopt nor preach any doctrine or system of religious culture opposed to them.

(2.) The Executive Committee should arrange matters regarding their field of work and method of preaching after consultation with them. If on any account any of them is unable to act according to the prearranged method or thinks it necessary to change it, he should inform the Committee of it by a letter as soon as possible.

(3.) They should try by all means in their power, by persuading words as well as example, to keep in view that their object is to establish the sacred worship of the one true God all over the country; to introduce in individual families and in communities unidolatrous rites and ceremonies conformable to pure religion; to see that God's will be done by all with cheerful submission, that all men and women look upon faith, justice, love, and purity in their properly reverential manner; that being bound together by the sacred tie of love, all mankind be enabled to spread the loving kingdom of Heaven and secure the blessings of this life as well as of the other to come;—to see that the days of untruth, sin, superstition and tyranny, of malice and jealousy, narrowness and contention, be ended in all societies of men.

(4.) They should not in any way encourage caste distinction or priestcraft in their prayers or ceremonies, and should not accept any thing like divine honor if paid to them through blind reverence.

(5.) In preaching the truth they should not ridicule or talk lightly of any other religious sect or scripture; but still should calmly point out any error or untruth that there may be in them, remembering that they should, in all their words, try to conquer untruth by truth, malice by love, and evil by good.

(6.) They should join freely with all classes and sects of men in all good works provided their faith is not compromised by their so doing, taking care also, not to mix in such social ceremonies as tend to lower conscience or morality.

(7.) Never should they lose sight of the dignity of their position and make their sacred vocation countenance priestcraft or become the source of worldly gain or pleasure. Any present of money given to a missionary, as such, should belong to the mission-fund, and he should make it clear to the giver.

(8.) To propagate Brahmoism should be the principal work of a missionary, but he may also freely help other men by his co-operation in any work, political, social or scientific, calculated to do good to the country, provided it does not interfere with his duties as a missionary.

If necessary he may, even while engaged in his mission work, take to some honest means of earning money with the sanction of the Executive Committee.

(9.) The Executive Committee is empowered to appoint a person,

according to the rules laid down by the General Committee as a missionary or a helper in the mission work, and remove such a one from his office and also to grant pecuniary aid in cases where it would be thought necessary. But the General Committee may alter the arrangements made by the Executive Committee if necessary. The missionaries primarily follow their own conscience and as much as possible the instructions of the Executive Committee in their Mission work.

(10.) They are to forward regular reports of their work to the Committee.\*

**Work of the Samaj.**—The first requisite was a building for public worship. This was opened at the anniversary service in January, 1881. The following have also been established :

(1.) The *Sangat Sabha*, or United Society. This is a weekly conversational meeting for spiritual progress and mutual help. It was originally started by Keshub Chunder Sen.

(2.) The Students' Weekly Service. One result has been that a number of young members have publicly discarded caste and idolatry.

(3.) The Students' Prayer Meeting. This is for younger students who meet every Wednesday evening for prayer and spiritual advancement. As a general rule, the members conduct the services themselves.

(4.) The Theological Institution for lectures followed by discussion. Its main object is "to ground its members in theology and practical piety."

(5.) Ladies' Societies. The Brahmica Somaj is exclusively for Brahma ladies; the Banga Mahila Somaj, or Bengal Ladies' Association, in which the same ladies are joined by non-Brahmo members. The ladies meet every week, the first and third Saturdays in each month being allotted to prayer meetings, and the intermediate Saturday to the reading of original papers, followed by discussion; while on the fourth Saturday popular lectures are delivered on scientific, historical, or biographical subjects, and a selection of interesting news on current events is read aloud. These lectures are given by gentlemen, and the social gathering of the Society, which is held once in three months, is also open to guests of both sexes. But except on these occasions the Society's meetings are nearly always restricted to ladies, who usually conduct their own religious services, and always write the essays which are read and discussed.

(6.) The City College. The City School was opened in 1879 under Mr. Ananda M. Bose, B. A., Cantab, then President of the Samaj. In 1881 it was converted into a College.

(7.) Sunday Schools. In 1879 some of the young Brahmans started a little Sunday School for boys at the City School premises;

\* *Indian Messenger*, Oct. 31, 1886.

and in addition to this a Theological Class was opened in 1882 for the benefit of more advanced students.

(8.) Periodicals. The *Tattva Kaumudi* (Moonlight of Knowledge) is the Bengali organ of the Society; the English organ is the *Indian Messenger*, issued every Sunday morning. The *Bamabodhini Patrika* (Teacher of Women) is a monthly Magazine for ladies.

The foregoing account is taken from an article by Miss Collet in *The Modern Review* for January, 1884. No later report, to show how far the different institutions have been maintained, is available.

**Tendency to Degeneration.**—Like so many other religious movements in India, the Sadharan Samaj, which commenced so well, already exhibits some unfavorable symptoms. The *Indian Messenger* makes the following candid confession :

“ There is no denying the fact that the condition of the Brahmo Somaj is very low at present. Both externally and internally it is weak, and its weakness is so great that nothing short of a strong faith in the power and greatness of truth and in the uplifting hand of God, can uphold a man in the arduous struggle for reform. We shall first speak of external indications of its weakness. In the first place, the machinery we have at our disposal for the propagation of our faith is not at all proportionate to our needs. The number of preachers and missionaries is exceedingly small in comparison with the vast field lying before us. The light of true religion has been carried to an insignificant fraction of the vast population who inhabit this land. The masses are yet untouched; so are the women. Of the educated men, amongst whom the preaching of Brahmoism has been up to this time confined, the majority are either indifferent or positively opposed to our principles and practices. Secondly, the influence that the Brahmos once exercised over the literature of the country is gradually diminishing, and they are no longer looked upon as leaders in literature. Thirdly, the position they once occupied in every form of good work in the country, also is being slowly surrendered. Formerly it was noticed even in official reports that almost every form of good work, such as the founding of girls' schools, or the starting of philanthropic or charitable societies had, in many instances, Brahmo workers at its bottom. But that co-operation of the members of the Somaj is no longer sought, and others have come forward to carry on such works without their help. Fourthly, the influence on the morality of the people that the little body of the Brahmos once exerted, has also visibly declined. There was a time when the moulding of the moral and spiritual aspirations of the rising generation of educated young men was entirely in the hands of the Brahmo Somaj, but their eyes have been diverted from Brahmoism by a so-called revival of a form of neo-Hinduism. Fifthly, the forces opposed to the spread of Brahmoism were never so strong as at the present moment.

“ The internal condition of the Somaj is no less deplorable. Even in the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, whose members often boast of their organisation, there is no organisation really so called. We shall point out one

by one some of the weak points in the present organization of our Samaj, so that its members and sympathisers may be roused to a sense of their duty by their church.

“First, one of the great aims of the Sadharan Brahma Somaj, when it was first established, was to establish a closer relationship between the parent Somaj at Calcutta and its branches in the mofussil. The connection between the main body and its branches is daily becoming less.

“There is not perfect harmony within the body itself. The whole body is divided into large number of smaller groups, holding different opinions and carrying on a perpetual conflict on account of those differences. Thus there is no consistency and coherence in the body itself. It is difficult to count upon the active co-operation of all these parties in carrying on the work of the Society. Hence is it that the work of the Samaj is being but imperfectly carried out.

“The few missionaries that we have, have no unity of purpose amongst them. There is no organisation to bring them together constantly and to make them a strong and united body. There is not that friendly interchange of views between them which is absolutely necessary for the successful carrying out of their mission.” October 17, 1886.

Not merely some of the “rank and file” have given up connection with the Sadharan Samaj, but one or two of its most prominent leaders.

*Secession in the Punjab.* For several years B. S. Agnihotri was the chief missionary of the Samaj in the Punjab. He has set up a new Society of his own, called the *Deva Samaj*. “He has circulated an earnest appeal to the public to blot out the very names of Brahma Somaj and Brahma Dharma from the pages of the books or tracts published by him which may be in their possession.”

He has issued a short statement of “The Faith and Characteristics of the Deva Dharma.” Its principles are much the same as those of the Brahma Samaj, but Agnihotra seems to claim for himself the position occupied by Keshub. In answer to the question “What do the Deva Dharmas believe?” No. 6 is as follows:—

“They believe the teachings of *Deva Dharma* and its ideal of human life as a special Divine Dispensation for mankind, and its Teacher and Apostles as the true servants of God and man, and also as a means in the hands of the Supreme Lord (who is the giver of salvation) to bring away souls from their sinful course, and give them the heavenly blessings of *Nava Jivan* (new life), *Mukti* (salvation), and *Deva Jivan* (godly life), and bring them to the kingdom of God.”

*Pandit B. R. Goswami.*—Mr. Mozoomdar says of this Brahma, that he “was our first enlisted missionary, the lineal descendant of one of the greatest leaders of Vaishnavism. Next to Keshub he played the most important element in introducing the Vaishnava element into the Brahma Somaj.” Pandit Sivanath Sastri says of him, “He was one of the first who raised their voices against the

conduct of Mr. Sen in connection with the marriage of his daughter. He has since that time lent his valuable services to the cause of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. This man's name has become a household word in the districts of Eastern Bengal, and acts as a spell to awaken the drooping spirit of many a Brahmo heart.\*

The *Indian Messenger* says that the following facts are now evident of his doings at Dacca:—

“(1) Pandit Goswami celebrated the Advaita or *dhulot* festival in a *Vaishnava* form with *Vaishnava* songs and *Vaishnava* observances; (2) obscene *Vaishnava* songs were sung on this occasion; (3) female *bairagis* danced with the males on this occasion; (4) *Ganja* was distributed to some of the *sanyasis* assembled on the occasion; (5) Pandit Goswami joins in un-Brahmic ceremonies such as the Brahmanical *upanayan*, performed by his disciples; (6) he holds and acts on the principle—let every one continue to believe what he does, he will in time attain truth.”  
April 22, 1888.

“**Great swelling words of Vanity.**”—One of the worst features of Keshub Chunder Sen's character was his great self-conceit. “The meek will God teach His way.” Pride is one of the greatest obstacles in the search for religious truth.

“The following is a translation of a passage from Keshub's Bengali discourse wherein he proclaimed the advent of the New Dispensation. He says, ‘Hear,’ O ye earth, the child (New Dispensation) after lying in the womb of the Brahmo Samaj as its mother, is born to-day after much travail.”†

Keshub's figure is adopted and his vain boasting imitated by the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The following are some extracts from the *Indian Messenger* from an editorial headed, “THE BLESSED CHILD.”

“In God's own good time, a child was born of this marriage—a strong, healthy, and well-developed child, full of great promise for the future. Saints from heaven came with their choicest gifts to bless the Sacred Child. Buddha and Mahammad, Nanak and Chaitanya, Sadi and Hafiz, Parker and Channing, the old Rishis and prophets of India. India as well as godly spirits of more modern times, contributed the most valuable things from their stores.

“Look at the Brahmo Samaj (for the child we have spoken of is no other.)

“It is a Child of God, born of the Divine Spirit, and upheld by the Divine Hand. Its birth is not at all a less momentous event in the spiritual history of the human race than that of Jesus or Buddha.

“We repeat that the birth of the Brahma Samaj is no less momentous an event than that of Jesus or Buddha—yea a grander event in one sense inasmuch as all the previous dispensations of Providence find their consummation in it.... The Brahmo Samaj is the Church of the Living

\* *The New Dispensation*, p. 100.

† *The Liberal*, April 1, 1888.

God, the direct manifestation of the Divine Spirit in modern times, a living witness of the living truth that God speaks and acts and reveals Himself in all ages and that the faithful in all ages hear and see Him." January 22, 1888.

The "New Dispensation" did not prove a "Blessed Child," and the second claimant to the title may similarly disappoint the expectations of its parents.

### MADRAS BRAHMOISM.

The most complete account of this Branch is to be found in the writings of Miss Collet. The following extract is from her "Outlines and Episodes of Brahmic History," reprinted from *The Modern Review*, January, 1884.

It must have been in the course of the year 1863 that a young man, named K. Sridharalu Naidu, who appears to have been a native of Cuddalore in the Madras Presidency, heard of the existence of the (then undivided) Brahma Somaj in Bengal, and was greatly stirred by the news—so much so that he felt it his duty to go to the centre of the Brahma movement and make himself fully acquainted with it. Being very poor, he had to dispose of his small property in order to pay his passage thither. He had no recommendations or friends in Bengal, and could not speak either Bengali or Hindustani, and when he landed in Calcutta his whole vocabulary of what he came to seek consisted in the words "the Brahma Somaj" and "Jorasanko" (the quarter in which the Somaj was then located). But he had sufficient knowledge of English to make himself understood by the English-speaking Brahmans, and "there was about his face and manners an earnestness, simplicity, and intelligence that could not be mistaken." He applied himself with energy and perseverance to the work for which he had come, and having acquired, within about eight months, a full knowledge of Brahmaism "in Bengali, Sanscrit, and English," he resolved to devote his life to its propagation in Southern India. One of the Brahma missionaries wrote as follows (*Sunday Mirror*, Sept. 6th, 1874), in recollection of this time; "Those who have once seen him in Calcutta can, I dare say, never forget him. . . He lived with our missionary friends, slept and dined with them, and indeed was one of them. We well remember the solemn occasion when, in the small room of the late Calcutta College, with tears and supplication and with a solemn lifting of our eyes to God we gave him the heartiest farewell, and like the apostle of old, we saw him in a ship bound for the field of his labour (Madras)."

It must have been somewhat before this farewell scene that Mr. Sen paid his first visit to Madras in February, 1864, and delivered several lectures there which produced considerable effect. In consequence of this a Society was established in the following April under the name of the Veda Somaj, which held weekly prayer-meetings, started a monthly journal, and otherwise displayed much religious activity. The leaders of this movement were Messrs. V. Rájagopal Charlu and P.

Subrayalu Chetty, both well-known members of the Madras bar; and while they lived the movement thrived, and several other Somajes were founded,—in Tanjore, Coimbatore, Salem, Bangalore, and other towns in Southern India. But in the year 1868 these two leaders were both removed by death, and for some time the Somaj suffered greatly in consequence. Then the quiet worker who had hitherto passed unnoticed, came to the front, and after a while Sridharalu Naidu was appointed Secretary to the Madras Somaj. He had not the advantages of position and education which had been possessed by his predecessors, but he appears to have had a much stronger grasp of Theistic principle, and not feeling satisfied with the half-measure of a “Veda Somaj,” he at length succeeded in converting the Society into “The Brahma Somaj of Southern India.” This was finally settled at a meeting of the Somaj held on June 18, 1871. The rules of the Somaj were revised, and the old “Covenants of the Veda Somaj” were replaced by a confession of faith which was doubtless written by Sridharalu Naidu. The two declarations represent so typically the first and the second stages of Madras Brahmoism, and the striking contrast between them, that I give them here in full.

#### COVENANTS OF THE VEDA SOMAJ.

1. I shall worship, through love of Him and the performance of the work He loveth, the Supreme Being, the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer, the Giver of Salvation, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Blissful, the Good, the Formless, the One only without a second; and none of the created objects, subject to the following conditions.

2. I shall labour to compose and gradually bring into practice a Ritual agreeable to the spirit of pure Theism, and free from the superstitions and absurdities which at present characterise Hindu ceremonies.

3. In the mean time I shall observe the ceremonies now in use, but only in cases where ceremonies are indispensable, as in marriages and funerals; or where their omission will do more violence to the feelings of the Hindu community than is consistent with the proper interests of the Veda Somaj, as in *Srāddhas*. And I shall go through such ceremonies, where they are not conformable to pure Theism, as mere matters of routine, destitute of all religious significance—as the lifeless remains of a superstition which has passed away.

4. This sacrifice, and this only, shall I make to existing prejudices. But I shall never endeavour to deceive any one as to my religious opinions, and never stoop to equivocation or hypocrisy, in order to avoid unpopularity.

5. I shall discard all sectarian views and animosities, and never offer any encouragement to them.

6. I shall, as a first step, gradually give up all distinctions, and amalgamate the different branches of the same caste.

7. Rigidly as I shall adhere to all these rules, I shall be perfectly tolerant to the views of strangers, and never intentionally give offence to their feelings.

8. I shall never violate the duties and virtues of humanity, justice, veracity, temperance, and chastity.

9. I shall never hold, or attend, or pay for nautches, or otherwise hold out encouragement for prostitution.

10. I shall encourage and promote to the best of my power the re-marriage of widows, and discourage early marriages.

11. I shall never be guilty of bigamy or polygamy.

12. I shall grant my aid towards the issue, in the vernaculars, of elementary prayer-books and religious tracts; and also of a monthly journal, whose chief object shall be to improve the social and moral condition of the community.

13. I shall advance the cause of general and female education and enlightenment, and particularly in my own family circle.

14. I shall study the Sanscrit language and its literature (especially theological), and promote the cultivation of it by means not calculated to promote superstition.

To-day, being the \_\_\_\_\_ day of the month of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Kalyánda \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby embrace the faith of the Veda Somaj, and in witness whereof set my hand to this.\*

### COVENANTS OF THE SOUTHERN INDIA BRAHMO SOMAJ.

1. I will worship, through love of Him and the performance of the works He loveth, the Supreme Being, the Creator, the Preserver, the Giver of Salvation, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Blissful, the Good, the Formless, the One only without a second, and none of the created objects.

2. I will look for Divine wisdom and instruction to the Book of Nature, and to that Intuition and Inspiration of God which give all men understanding. I do not consider any book or any man as the infallible guide in religion, but I do accept with respect and pleasure any truth contained in any book or uttered by any man without paying exclusive reverence to any.

3. I believe in the immortality and progressive state of the soul, and in a state of conscious existence succeeding life in this world and supplementary to it.

4. I will daily direct my mind in prayer with devotion and love unto the Supreme Being.

5. I will endeavour strictly to adhere to the duties and virtues of humanity, justice, veracity, temperance, and chastity.

6. Believing as I do in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, I will discard all sectarian views and animosities, and never offer any encouragement to them.

7. Should I through folly commit sin, I will endeavour to be atoned unto God by earnest repentance and reformation.

8. Every year, and on the occasion of every happy domestic event of mine, I will bestow gifts upon the Southern India Brahmo Somaj.

This day, being the \_\_\_\_\_ day of the month of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Brahmic Era ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), I, by the grace of God, do hereby declare my faith in *Brahmism*, and in witness whereof, I set my hand to these covenants of my own free will and consent. So help me God. Om.†

Both of these documents are based upon the original Brahmic Covenant of Debendra Náth Tágore; but the Veda-Somaj version reproduces little beyond the first paragraph, and half paralyses that by the added clause

\* *Six Months in India*, by Mary Carpenter. Vol. I., 157-8. Miss Carpenter gives a very interesting account of her visit to the Veda Somaj in November 1866, and of her conversations with the then Secretary, Mr. P. S. Chetty, and his intelligent young wife. It was from him that she obtained the above Covenants.

† *Indian Mirror*, July 22, 1871. Om "is the emblem of the Most High." *Laws of Manu*, II. 83.

—"subject to the following conditions." Sridharalu Naidu's version not only omits this clause and its melancholy amplifications, but simply ignores the surrounding beliefs and customs altogether, and instead of dating by the *Kalyábda*, i.e., the "evil period" (or iron age) of Hindu history, he starts a new "Brahmic Era,"—a system which has latterly come into frequent use among the Bengali Brahmos,—dating, of course, from the original establishment of Rám Mohun Roy's Brahmo Somaj, in January, 1830. There is also a far deeper vein of spiritual faith in this second series of Covenants than in that of the Veda Somaj. Herein Sridharalu wisely went back to the Covenant of D. N. Tagore, from which, and from another well-known Adi Somaj statement of beliefs,\* he has mainly taken his 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 7th paragraphs; but he has frequently altered the original materials, and has, in fact, recast the whole so as to make it a definite and consistent ideal of Progressive Brahmoism.

About the same time he gave a practical proof of the new policy adopted by the Southern India Brahmo Somaj by drawing up on its behalf a memorial to the Viceroy in favour of the Brahmo Marriage Bill then pending before the Indian Legislature; and shortly afterwards he officiated at the first Brahmo marriage which took place in Madras, September 29th, 1871.

Sridharalu also exerted himself to bring the best productions of Brahmo literature within the reach of his own countrymen. He translated Debendra Nath Tagore's standard work, the *Bráhma Dharma*, into Tamil and Telugu, and published a Tamil translation of Mr. Sen's excellent *Model Form of Divine Worship*. Besides writing these (and, I believe, other works), he revived the monthly (Madras) *Thattvabodhini Patrika* (which had collapsed after the death of his predecessors), and conducted it as "the organ of all the Brahmitists in Southern India."

Here, however, it should be noted that there was another active member of the late Veda Somaj, who took a prominent part in Brahmo affairs about this time. This was Cási Visvanátha Mudeliar, a retired judge, "of noble parentage," who conducted the services at one of the Brahmo prayer-rooms, and was the author of many Tamil books and of several popular plays which exposed the superstitions and vices prevalent in Southern India. He owned a little vernacular journal called the *Brahmo Dípika*, which he edited himself, and which appears to have been the organ of his own views. What those views were it is not easy to discover from the enigmatical hints in the newspapers of the time (except that he appears to have been against the Brahmo Marriage Bill), nor is it worth while to revive the ashes of the dead controversies which for a time caused some dissensions in the Madras Somaj. Suffice to say that after having been regarded by his admirers as "the leader of the Madras Brahmos," Cási Visvanátha's Brahmoism came to an end, and he became a Pantheist, apparently not long before his death, which occurred in October, 1871.

Meanwhile Sridharalu Naidu continued to work unremittingly at his

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\* For this statement see *A Brief History of the Calcutta Brahmo Somaj*. Calcutta, 1868.

post. Occasional glimpses of his proceedings appear in the *Indian Mirror* of the time, especially in its issues of Feb. 2 and March 11, 1872, containing two letters of his concerning some projects for the benefit of the South Indian Brahmos. These letters (which are in very good English) bear witness alike to his enthusiastic faith and his practical good sense. We also find that he made divers missionary tours to various parts of the Presidency,—Bangalore, Mangalore, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, &c., “sowing quietly and perseveringly the seeds of Theism in the midst of the thick darkness of ignorance and superstition.” All this time he suffered greatly from poverty. “He had a very old mother to take care of, and a wife, both of whom were against him in all his views and practices, and caused him no little pain. He was often at a loss how to support them, and was at times obliged to put up with hardships which it is not possible to describe. He never complained, he never asked, he never even acquainted his friends in Calcutta with his circumstances. Alone he suffered, depended, prayed and worked, and God alone watched the deep trials and sorrows in the midst of which he lived.”\*

At last the end came. In January 1874, he went to visit some of his relatives at Pondicherry, near which town there was a temple—probably Chillambram—which he wished to see, in order to ascertain whether it would be suitable as a model for the “Brahmic Hall” which he wanted to erect in Madras. On this journey he was thrown out of a carriage, the horse having taken fright,—and terribly injured. He was taken to Pondicherry hospital, but no skill could save him, and after lingering for about twelve days he died, calm and faithful to the last. He left behind him a touching letter in English, headed, “Memo: to friends in the last hour,” and signed “K. Sridharalu, Pondicherry, the 15th Jan. 1874.” In his letter, addressed to twelve friends, he requested them to take care of his family, and gave his advice on the affairs of his Church, which evidently lay very near his heart. It may be noted that while the funerals of the previous Madras Secretaries were conducted in regular Hindu style, with those idolatrous funeral rites which, even in their Veda Somaj Covenant, they had not the courage to renounce, Sridharalu Naidu distinctly wrote with his own hand;—“My funeral should be simple, with only Brahmic prayers. . . . I die a devoted Brahmo.” Thus closed one of the purest lives ever given to the service of God.

The next secretary of the Madras Somaj scarcely survived his predecessor by a year, and it was not until the end of 1878 that the Somaj really began to revive. Under fresh hands, three years of fair prosperity followed; after which, unhappily, a contention arose as to the soundness of the views preached respectively by the missionaries of Mr. Sen and those of the Sádharan Somaj. The result was a split, those who sided with the Sádharan Somaj forming a separate society as a branch of that body,—formally inaugurated as such on June 17, 1882. Its secretary is Mr. M. Butchiah Pantulu, who is a man of energy and resource, and is doing his best to make Brahmism successful in Madras.”†

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\* *Sunday Mirror*, Feb. 8, 1874.

† Miss Collet, *Outlines &c., of Brahmic History*, pp. 23-30.

On application to the Secretary in April, 1888, for a copy of the last Report, that for 1886 was supplied. The following are some of the leading statements :

*Prayer Meetings.*—Every Sunday evening Divine service was held at the ‘Madras Brahma Upasana Mandir.’ Tamil or Telugu was generally the language used. Occasionally there were sermons in English also. The attendance at the meeting averaged about thirty. The Samaj has 64 members, 45 of whom are in town.

*Native Ragged School.*—This institution has made good progress this year. The total number of children on the roll is 100; of whom 9 are girls.

*Theistic Library.*—Certain additions were made to this during the year.

*The Theistic Organ.*—“The Fellow Worker” is the only theistic organ and the mouthpiece for the Brahmans in Southern India.

*Lectures.*—Several lectures and addresses on various Religious, Social and Political topics, were delivered by members of the Samaj and several other gentlemen during the year.

*Sale of Books.*—Theistic books were sold during the year to the extent of Rs. 8-10-6, which is a distinct increase on last year’s proceeds.

The Society is largely supported by Raja G. N. Gajapathi Rao. The “London Theistic Church” sent Rs. 137-2-8 towards the repairs of the Mandir.

*The Fellow Worker*, after appearing irregularly, has been resumed. The receipts in 1886 were Rs. 229-12-6, and the payments Rs. 401-4-7. As is the general rule with Indian subscribers to periodicals, many of them were remiss in payment. Funds are asked for the purchase of a Printing Press.

There are Somajes at Bangalore and some other towns in South India.

### PRARTHANA SAMAJES.

The first Theistic Church in Western India was founded in March, 1867, in the city of Bombay, and was entitled the *Prarthana Samaj*, or Prayer Society, a designation since adopted by most of the Western Samajes. This Samaj owes much to the guidance and help of Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, a respected and benevolent physician of Bombay. It commenced with 17 members. In 1882 there were 102 on the roll; of these 60 were in Bombay, and the rest in the mofussil.

All the members are Hindu by birth, mostly Marathi, except a few who are Gujarati. They meet for worship once a week in their Mandir. Its foundation-stone was laid by P. C. Mozoomdar during his stay in Bombay in 1872. The building was completed in 1874

at a total cost, including the value of the land, of over Rs. 25,000. It has a groundfloor and an upper gallery, the latter being generally set apart for the use of ladies. It can afford accommodation for about 800 persons. The service is conducted by three or four members by turns. These meetings are open to the public, and attended by from 100 to 200 people, among whom a few are Parsis. The service is conducted in Marathi, and occasionally in Gujarati. Besides this public worship, some members meet at times in the Mandir for private worship.

The Bombay Samaj has taken over the management of an Orphanage at Pandharpur in the Deccan, formed of children left destitute during the late famine. With a view to the appointment of a Missionary who might devote himself to the task of propagating the principles of the Samaj, some of the members have agreed to contribute two per cent of their income and thus form a fund for the purpose. It has a weekly Anglo-Marathi paper, the *Subodha Patrika*.

There are several other Prarthana Samajes in Western India. The most efficient of these are at Poona (1870), Ahmedabad (1871) and Surat (1878). The Theistic Church of Western India occupies a position of its own. The learned, sober-minded, and wealthy Marathi and Gujarati theists of the Bombay Presidency are as different from their struggling co-religionists of Madras as these of Bengal are from both the other groups. The high culture and literary ability of some of the western theists bear witness to their position among the intellectual nobility of India. Professor Bhandarkar of Poona occupies perhaps the foremost place among living Indian Oriental scholars; the Hon. G. M. Ranade, and others might be named who are ornaments to the Society.

The Theism of Western India has never detached itself so far from the Hindu elements of Brahmoism as the Progressive Brahmos of Bengal and Madras have done, and both in religious observances and social customs, it clings far more closely to the old models. There is a minority among the Bombay Theists who are anxious to go much farther than the rest in these matters, and some of them have even married with Brahmic rites; but it is a significant fact that during the sixteen years (1867-83) which have elapsed since the establishment of the Bombay Samaj, only four such marriages have been celebrated among its members—there was a fifth marriage at Bombay, but both parties were Bengali visitors—while in the same period there have been seven Brahmo marriages among the small communities of Southern India, and fifty-six in the single city of Calcutta.

The Report of the Ahmedabad Samaj for 1879 says, "We have no *Anusthanic* members yet, but more than thirty members have publicly given up idolatry from their daily worship, and have pledged

themselves to offer their everyday prayers in accordance with the Brahma form. They consider caste as a mere civil institution."

The Theists of Western India resemble in type English Unitarians, respectable and philanthropic, but without any strong sense of sin or depth of piety.

The foregoing account is abridged from the *Year Books, &c.*, of Miss Collet. On the compiler applying to the Secretary of the Bombay Samaj for a copy of the last Report, he received one in Marathi, published in 1883, containing an account of the first sixteen years. A copy of the *Subodha Patrika* for 11th March 1888, with an account of the 21st anniversary, was also furnished. The proceedings are described in full, but the English article does not give any statistics. The Marathi report is said to be more complete.

## EXAMINATION OF BRAHMIST DOCTRINES.

Before noticing these in detail, it is cheerfully acknowledged that, in some respects, Brahminism has rendered valuable service to the cause of true religion in India. Miss Collet thus describes the origin and progress of Samajes :

"They usually contain some of the most intelligent and active residents in their several localities, and often owe to them their main support, if not their origin. The first germ, from which all the rest follows, is usually the idea of United Prayer. 'They met and agreed to offer their prayers together' is the almost unfailing commencement of the history of any Brahma Samaj. The first stage is called a prayer meeting, and where the members are weak or timid, it is often a long time before they have the courage to raise it into a definite 'Brahma Samaj,' which term is evidently understood to imply the adoption of a Theistic standard, more or less at variance with the surrounding Hinduism, and therefore liable to excite opposition. The normal type of the Brahma churches, when fully developed, includes the three departments of Religion, Philanthropy and Education ; but these are developed with great variety of combination in the several Samajes."\*

### GOOD FEATURES OF BRAHMISM.

The following are some of these :—

1. **Its protest against Polytheism and Idolatry.**—The Rev. Lal Behari Day says, "Idolatry is the crying sin of our nation. Now, whatever defects Brahmos may have, it must be acknowledged in fairness that they are not mere speculative monotheists. They have energetically protested against idolatry, and are endeavouring honestly, I believe, to rescue their countrymen from its irrational and degrading practice. I speak not of those inconsistent

\* *Outlines of Brahmic History*, pp. 21, 22.

Brahmos—and there are inconsistent men among votaries of every system of religion—I speak not of those inconsistent Brahmos, who worship one God in the Somaj building and pay Divine homage to idols in their own houses ; but it must be admitted that the Brahmos as a body protest against and discountenance idolatry.”

The above was written before Keshub Chunder Sen became Hinduised. Still, it expresses the feelings of the most enlightened and consistent Brahmos.

2. **Its Regard for Religion.**—While ordinary Hindus are willing to worship *anything* in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, many of the so-called educated classes worship *nothing*. Atheism is avowed only by a few followers of Bradlaugh, but apathy with regard to all religion is very prevalent. The attention to spiritual things shown by some Brahmos, is at once a standing rebuke and an excellent example.

3. **Its promotion of Social Reform.**—It is undermining the huge system of caste, it has introduced a change in the marriage laws of the country, it has promoted female education, it is helping to diffuse more correct ideas about the relief of the poor, &c.

4. **Its high Moral Tone.**—A devout Hindu may be flagrantly vicious. Provided he observes the rules of caste, all else is overlooked. Brahmissm inculcates temperance, purity, truthfulness, justice, and other virtues.

5. **Its Acceptance of some great Truths.**—Brahmissm teaches a pure monotheism in opposition to polytheism and pantheism. It denies the eternity of matter and of souls, and acknowledges creation properly so-called. Two of its principal doctrines are the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of man. Mr. Mozoomdar makes the following admission: “I do not deny there are innumerable passages in Hindu books calling the Divine Being by all manner of names, but such names and the sentiments they embody are very different from the deep personality of spiritual relation typically expressed when Jesus exclaimed ‘Our Father in heaven.’”

With regard to the other doctrine, Mr. Mozoomdar says: “The idea of the brotherhood and equality of all mankind before God, I am sorry to say, is not to be found, because it is never recognised in any of our ancient writings. The idea is decidedly foreign, Western, and I think I might say Christian.”

6. **Its Adoption of the Christian mode of Worship.**—The remarks of Sir Monier Williams on this great innovation have been quoted (see page 7). An English lady, teaching in Calcutta, gives the following account of a Brahmo religious meeting :—

“The service was held in the court-yard under a canopy, two tall flags with Bengali texts on them flying on each side. The preacher, a grave

fatherly old man, was seated in front on a small carpet with a musical instrument with but one string, lying by his side. There were fourteen women present including five from his own family. Our pupil, Sharala, a fine looking girl of seventeen, sat near us, from time to time replenishing the incense cup. The solemn ascetic-looking preacher, the earnest expressive faces of the women, the smoke of the incense, the dismal sound of the *cithar* and *conch* and the monotonous voice of the officiating *padri* made it a strangely impressive scene.

"The service commenced with a hymn, the preacher leading with the *ektara* and his wife accompanying him on the *cithar*. In his prayer he mentioned the sinless life of Christ and asked God to make us like Him, pure and holy. After the conclusion of the prayer, he said, 'Let us withdraw our thoughts from the world and examine ourselves,' and there was silence for five minutes. The drift of the sermon which followed was asceticism: we must strive to live the true *Bairagi* life, care for nothing in this world, give up all our earthly possessions, husbands, wives, children, houses, lands, *gari*, *ghora*, &c.: we must grind all these down to nourish our souls as wheat is ground in a mill to sustain our bodies. After the sermon, which was a very long one with a good deal of repetition, the women were asked to pray.

"P——, one of our former pupils, was the first one; she prayed very earnestly in a low tone, with tears pouring down her cheeks, a sweetly-worded prayer. She is a most self-forgetful, loving woman, and her prayer was like herself, full of thoughtfulness for others. She asked for a clean heart, for guidance, and that God's presence might abide with her, for the young maidens present that they may be happy in their future married life, for widows, for the sick and the poor. Another woman asked God to show her the way of salvation, to teach her, she was very ignorant, blind and sinful, and to forgive her her sins. The preacher's wife prayed next, pleading for help and guidance, and there were a few others who prayed after her. At the close they said, 'We offer these petitions bowing at Thy feet,' and they all touched their foreheads to the ground. The preacher prayed for the two Christian sisters who, for the love of Christ, go about from house to house seeking to do good, and asked for a blessing on their work. The service concluded with the benediction, very much like the form used in our Churches. When the women rose, they bowed at each other's feet and kissed one another."\*

But while Brahminism is a vast improvement upon Hinduism, and contains much that is good, the question is, Does it meet the needs of sinful humanity? does it satisfy the deepest religious instincts of the heart? These points will now be considered.

#### STATEMENT OF BRAHMIST PRINCIPLES.

Declamation against "dogmas," "dead" and "antiquated," marked Keshub Chunder Sen's earlier addresses. The word "dogma" simply means an opinion received as true. The exis-

\* *The Indian Baptist.*

tence of God is a dogma. There can be no religion without dogmas or articles of belief.

As Mr. Dyson shows, *true* dogmas may be practically *dead* dogmas. The dogma "there is one God" is universally acknowledged as true by Hindus; but, as a rule, it is "*dead* dogma," yielding no results.

The creed of Keshub Chunder Sen's party will first be given, as contained in the *Essential Principles of the Brahma Dharma*, published by the Brahma Tract Society.

### God.

God is the first cause of the universe. There was nothing before. By His will and creative power He created all objects and beings, and He upholds them as their primary power and life. He is spirit, not matter. He is perfect, infinite and eternal. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, all-merciful, all-blissful, and holy. He is our Father, Preserver, Master, King, and Saviour. He is One without a second.

### IMMORTALITY.

The soul is immortal. Death is only the dissolution of the body; the soul lives everlastingly in God. There is no new birth after death; the life hereafter is only the continuation and development of the present life. Each soul departs from this world with its virtues and sins; and gradually advances in the path of eternal progress while realizing their effects.

### SCRIPTURE.

The true scriptures written by the hand of God are—the volume of nature and the natural ideas implanted in the mind. The wisdom, power and mercy of the Creator are written in golden letters on the universe. We know Him by studying His works. Secondly all the fundamental truths about God, immortality and morality are established in the constitution of men as primitive and self-evident convictions. Intuitive faith is the root of Brahmoism.

### WORSHIP.

True worship is spiritual, there is no external ostentation in it. Love, faith, humility and self-control are the only materials necessary to worship. Worship comprises four elements—the adoration of the great and holy God, the contemplation of the Supreme Spirit in the recesses of the soul, gratitude towards the merciful Father, and prayer to the Saviour for deliverance from sin. By daily worship we enter into communion with God.

## PROPHETS.

God himself never becomes man by putting on human body. His divinity dwells in every man, and is displayed more vividly in some. Moses, Jesus, Mahomed, Nanak, Chaitanya, and others appeared at special times, and conferred great benefits on the religious world. They are, therefore, entitled to universal gratitude and love. They should not be esteemed faultless or infallible, but were only gifted men.

## THE WAY TO SALVATION.

Worship is the principal means of attaining Salvation. Other means also should be employed, such as good company, good books, the study of nature, solitary contemplation of God; the subjugation of passions, and repentance for sin. Man's labours according to the above means and God's grace acting together lead to Salvation.

## RELATION TO OTHER CREEDS.

Brahmoism is distinct from all other systems of religion; yet it is the essence of all. It is not altogether hostile to other creeds; what is true in them it accepts, only the errors in each it rejects. It is based on the constitution of man, and is, therefore, ancient, eternal, and universal. It is not sectarian, not confined to age or country. Men of all countries and races who believe in this natural religion are Brahmos.

## CASTE.

All mankind are of one caste, and all are equally entitled to embrace the Brahmo religion. It recognises no distinction between Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Yavanas; whoso has faith in this religion can be admitted into the Brahmo Somaj. God does not accept or reject men of particular castes; those who have faith and righteousness are accepted by Him. It is the aim of the Brahmo religion to extinguish caste-hatred and animosity and bind all mankind into one family.

## DUTIES.

The duties of a Brahmo are of four kinds. 1, Duties to God—To believe in, love, worship and serve the one true God; 2, Duties to self—To preserve bodily health, acquire knowledge and sanctify the soul; 3, Duties to others—Veracity, fulfilment of promises, justice, gratitude, love of parents, brothers, sisters, children and kinsmen, and the promotion of the welfare of all mankind; 4, Duties to animals—Kindness to birds, beasts, and all inferior creatures.

## ATONEMENT.

Every sinner must suffer the consequences of his own sins, sooner or later, in this world or in the next; for the moral law is unchangeable

and God's justice irreversible. His mercy also must have its way. As the just King he visits the soul with adequate agonies, and when the sinner after being thus chastised mournfully prays, He as the merciful Father delivers and accepts him and becomes reconciled to him. Such reconciliation is the only true atonement.

#### SALVATION.

True salvation is the deliverance of the soul from all sinful desires and deeds and its growth in purity. Such growth continues through all eternity, and the soul becomes more and more godly and happy in Him who is the fountain of infinite holiness and joy. The companionship of God is the Brahmo's heaven.

**Principles of the Sadharan Samaj.**—*The Indian Messenger*, the organ of the Society, gives these as follows:—

(1) God is one, without a second, the creator, sustainer and saviour of the world. He is omnipotent; He is wisdom, love and joy; He is all-ruling, all-pervading, eternal and all good; He is formless and has neither beginning nor end; He is infinite, perfect and holy.

(2) The soul of man is immortal, and susceptible of infinite progress and responsible for its actions to God.

(3) It is the duty of man to worship God, and it is the only means of his salvation.

(4) Love to God and the doing of His will in all actions of life is true worship.

(5) The voice of conscience is the will of God. On no condition should a man act against his conscience. God's will cannot be contrary to the dictates of conscience.

(6) No created object should be revered as God or as equal to God, or as an incarnation of God, or as a mediator between God and man. No man or sacred scripture should be taken as infallible and the only means of salvation. Truth alone is the only scripture to a Brahmo. Truth should be accepted with reverence from the words of all scriptures and all men, irrespective of creed or caste.

(7) The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and tenderness to all living beings form the fundamental religion. Society is the field of work assigned by God to man. Justice and truth, therefore, ought to be followed in all the duties of our social life.

(8) God rewards virtue and punishes sin; but that punishment is for our good and cannot last to eternity.

(9) To cease from wrong-doing with sincere repentance is the real expiation, and to be united to God in mind, love and will is real salvation.

(10) Faith is the root of religion, a pure heart is the best pilgrimage, and self-sacrifice is true asceticism. The true worship of God is necessarily spiritual.

**Peculiar Doctrines of Brahminism.**—“The *positive* doctrines of Brahminism,” says Mr. Dyson, “are very few in number, and generally

are not distinctive *in themselves*. Brahmissm is distinctly marked out by asserting what '*the primitive self-evident convictions*' of the human mind declare to be *falsehood* and *impossibilities* more than by asserting what those convictions declare to be facts and realities."

The following may be called the peculiar doctrines of Brahmissm, said to be based on "*primitive self-evident convictions*:"

1. The supernatural altogether is an *impossibility*. This sweeps away at one stroke both the facts and evidence of Christianity.

2. Prayer for spiritual blessings *is* efficacious; but prayer for physical blessings *is not*.

3. Forgiveness of man's sin by God is an impossibility.

4. Every sin is adequately and exactly punished by Divine Regal Justice, and all punishment is converted into chastisement by Divine Fatherly Mercy.

5. Repentance is the punishment of sin and no other is possible.

6. No sinner can be punished till he is conscious of his sin, and this consciousness depends upon his own free will.

7. Fatherly mercy consists in *delivering*, accepting and being reconciled to sinners *after* they have been adequately and exactly punished.

8. Repentance which brings us back to God is the only atonement.

9. Reconciliation, effected by the penal penitential process described above, is the only true atonement, and the word atonement means reconciliation.

10. Hence, as every sinner must be adequately *punished*, *i. e.*, every sinner must adequately repent, therefore every sinner must be saved. Punishment, Repentance, and Salvation are all the same process regarded from different points of view.

11. No man is born with a bias toward sin, and every man as born corresponds to God's mind and design in creating him.

12. All men are sinners.

13. Sin is not a positive act, a real and direct transgression of an obligation of which we are conscious. It is merely negative and privative.

14. Sin is merely an imperfection of the creature as such, and a necessary condition of progress. God alone is altogether sinless.

The foregoing list was drawn up in 1873. A few of the opinions may since have been modified; but on the whole they are retained.

Some of the principal points in the "Statement of Brahmissm Principles" will now be considered.

**Sources of Religious Truth.**—In 1845, the organ of the Samaj said, "The Vedas are the sole foundation of all our belief, and the truths of all other Sastras must be judged of according to their agreement with them." Debendranath, writing to a Calcutta newspaper in 1846, said, "We consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone as the standard of our faith and principles." It has been mentioned that four Brahmans were sent to Benares to copy the Vedas. An examination of them required their infallibility to be given up. About this time the writings of Parker and F. W. Newman began to

be read by the more advanced Bramhos. The very idea of "paper revelations" and "book-made religions" was scouted. It was then declared that the true Scriptures, written by the hand of God, are two—the volume of Nature and the fundamental truths about God, immortality and morality established in the constitution of men as primitive and self-evident convictions. "Intuitive faith is the root of Brahmoism."

Dr. Jardine says :

"The bringing forward of individual intuition as the grand source of religious knowledge and life has the same effect and the same tendency in India as elsewhere. Religious intuition is unquestionably an important principle in human nature, but when not corrected by something more stable, it is simply identical with the uncontrolled religious imagination of the individual. Hence mystics have nearly always been wild unreasonable enthusiasts, under the control of whatever freak of religious fancy happened to predominate."

Latterly, Keshub professed to be guided by inspiration. The change is thus described by *The Liberal*, the organ of the New Dispensation :

"The religion of the Brahma Samaj at one time was of the same type with the Theism of the West. We well remember that the works of Theodore Parker, Professor Newman, and other Western Theists were very much liked and attentively studied by the Brahmohs as representing the highest truths of Brahmoism. The natural light of God, as it was reflected in man's conscience and outer nature, was considered as the only revelation of God. Idolatry and caste and all other superstitions of the land were vigorously protested against. The religion of the Brahma Samaj was then more negative than positive; it was a kind of Hindu protestantism. This simple Theism, however consistent it might have been within its narrow sphere, was rationalistic, cold, dry, and impotent. It was sectarian and narrow; it was insufficient for man's salvation. It carried with it the seeds of decay and death. Since the advent of the New Dispensation a wonderful transformation has come upon the Brahma Samaj. Our religion is no more earthly; it is a divine dispensation. It has been classed with the faith of Jesus, Moses, Chaitanya and other Prophets of the world. Direct inspiration or the word of God, has become our guide, and like the prophets of old our apostles declare their messages with the authority of God, and proclaim them as 'Thus saith the Lord.' . . . It can have no religious union with those that ridicule the inspiration of Keshub Chunder Sen, and stand as enemies of the New Dispensation." 1888.

It should be mentioned, however, that Keshub's idea of inspiration differed from that accepted by Christians. The latter understand it as the supernatural communication of Divine truth, and, as such, it must be free from error. Keshub's "inspiration" was no

infallible guide any more than that possessed by Shakespeare, and other "great men."

*Conscience.*—The Sadharan Samaj statement of principles contains the following :

(5) "The voice of conscience is the will of God. On no condition should a man act against his conscience. God's will cannot be contrary to the dictates of conscience."

This statement is very unguarded. As it stands, it countenances some of the greatest crimes.

Conscience is the knowledge of our actions as right or wrong; the power within us which approves or condemns own conduct.

To act against our conscience,—to do what we consider wrong—is always blameworthy. If a man considers an action to be wrong and yet does it, *to him* it is wrong, although in itself it may be innocent. To act according to our conscience—to do what we think right—is not always right. The Apostle Paul was at one time a bitter persecutor of Christianity, dragging men and women to prison on account of their belief; a thug murdered his victim in the name of the goddess Kali. Both thought that they were doing right; but in reality their conduct was strongly to be condemned.

Men are very prone to mistake what conscience says, or to confound it with their own inclination. Conscience can be called the Voice of God only when duly enlightened and cultivated. Through a course of sin, conscience becomes "seared with a hot iron;" and the greatest crimes may cause no uneasiness. Or another lying voice may be mistaken for conscience that whispers "Peace; and there was no peace."

*Denial of a Revelation.*—It is the almost universal belief that God has given man a revelation of His will. Christians have the Bible, Muhammadans the Koran, Hindus the Vedas, Buddhists the Pitakas. In opposition to this, it is held by Brahmists that "no sacred scripture should be held as infallible."

To deny the *possibility* of a revelation is an outrage to common sense. If we can make known our will to others, is it to be supposed that our Creator is "helplessly imprisoned in everlasting silence?"

The *probability* of a Revelation is thus admitted by J. S. Mill:

"On the supposition of a God who made the world and in making it had regard, however that regard may have been limited by other considerations, to the happiness of His sentient creatures, there is no antecedent improbability of the supposition that His concern for their good would continue, and that He might once or oftener give proof of it by communicating to them some knowledge of Himself beyond what they were able to make out by their own unassisted faculties and some know-

ledge and precepts useful for guiding them through the difficulties of life."

The felt *need* of a Revelation is shown by the existing professed Revelations. The very claim proves the deep-seated need in the soul for such a direct communication from God to man. The ancient Greeks and Romans had no sacred books. They numbered among them some men of the acutest intellects that ever lived, who made earnest and persevering attempts to solve the "enigmas of life." What are their confessions? "Ah! if one only might have a guide to truth," sighs Seneca. "We will wait," says Plato, 'for One, be it a god or a god-inspired man, to teach us our religious duties, and to take away the darkness from our eyes.' In another place he says, "We must lay hold of the best human opinion in order that borne by it as on a raft we may sail over the dangerous sea of life, unless we can find a stronger boat, or some words of God, which will more surely and safely carry us." Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks, said, "You may resign yourself to sleep, and give yourself up to despair, unless God, in His goodness, shall vouchsafe to send you instruction."

Illustrations will be given hereafter showing our uncertainty about some of the most important doctrines of religion, apart from Revelation. Keshub Chunder Sen sneered at a "book revelation." It is evident that a *book* revelation is much superior to a "*lip* revelation." To listen with reverence to the oral teaching of a prophet and to deny authority to the same truths when written would be absurd. It is only through a *written* record that great spiritual truths can be handed down correctly to future generations. The most earnest oral tradition will, in a little while, lose its distinctness. Rival schools of disciples will begin to contend not merely how their master's words should be accepted, but about the actual words which he uttered.

**Uncertainty.**—Although the first Brahma Samaj was established only in 1830, its bases have been shifted several times. As already stated, in 1845 the eternal Vedas were the standard of its faith. In 1855 the infallibility of their documents was abandoned, and the "volume of nature" took their place. In 1860 it was declared that Brahmaism was founded on the "rock of intuition." In Keshub's lecture on "Great Men," delivered in 1866, three external sources of knowledge were pointed out—viz., nature, the writings of great men, and inspiration.

The changes, no doubt, were made conscientiously. "The question" says the Rev. Lal Behari Day, "is not *how* the changes were made, but *were* the changes made?"

"I can understand a private individual changing his opinions in the course of his enquiries, but it does certainly appear strange that men who

set themselves up as the religious instructors of the illiterate multitude and the reformers of their country should not have made up their minds as to the foundations of their faith."

Even at present there are great diversities of opinion in the two leading branches of the Samaj. *The Indian Messenger* says :

"A most delightful feature of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj is its broad catholicity. Its present members represent various shades of opinion. There are men who are Christian in their sympathies, others who are decidedly Vaisnavic in their ways of thought, and others again who have a decided leaning towards pantheism." Nov. 14, 1886.

Mr. Mozoomdar, in an address delivered 7th April, 1888, says :

"Our doctrines are many, our views are dissimilar, our forms of worship different, some have more faith in great men and prophets, others have less faith, some pay greater respect to the Hindu Scriptures, some to the Christian Scriptures, some give greater importance to the subject of Divine Dispensation, others give less importance."

Mr. Mozoomdar says that Keshub Chunder Sen "claimed on behalf of every member of his Church the essential privilege of individual inspiration." Dr. Jardine has the following remarks :

"The principle of eclecticism implies that no single scripture is authoritative, but that the individual who is in search of truth must choose from all sources what is true and good. To do this implies a power in the individual to discriminate between the true and the false, the good and the bad. But if an individual is possessed of this power, it seems a very natural and easy inference for him to make, that he may himself have an intuitive knowledge of truth and goodness. In fact the claim to this intuitive knowledge is a necessary condition of eclecticism. Hence there is a probability that a system of eclecticism will very soon transform itself into one in which individual intuition is considered the great source of religious knowledge."

As individual intuitions will differ, Brahmissm may be expected to exhibit ever changing phases.

**God.**—The creeds of ancient India are either polytheistic, atheistic, or pantheistic. The Vedas repeatedly mention the number of the gods as thrice-eleven; in the Puranas they are multiplied into 33 crores. The Sankhya philosophy is atheistic. The Vedantic Doctrine, on the other hand, is that God is the only existence, *Ekam evadvitiam*. This well-known pantheistic formula, from the Chhandogya Upanishad, has been adopted by the Bramhos, who generally use it in a totally different sense from its original meaning.

According to Hinduism, there is no creation properly so called. All is either *maya*, illusion, or matter is regarded as eternal. In the latter view, creation is simply the arrangement of existing materials, as a carpenter makes a table out of wood.

Vyasa, Kapila, and Sankar Acharya were intellectual giants and highly educated. Why were the "primitive and self-evident convictions" regarding God and creation hidden from them, and known to the Bramhos of the present day, in many respects so inferior to them? The monotheism of the Bramhos and the doctrine of creation were derived from Christianity.

**The Soul.**—According to Hinduism, every living creature is *svyambhu*, self-existent, eternally transmigrating. We are thus, as it were, all little gods. This doctrine is now rejected by every enlightened man.

The immortality of the soul is the grand question. "Without a belief in personal immortality," says Max Müller, "religion surely is like an arch resting on one pillar, like a bridge ending in an abyss."

The wisest philosophers of ancient Europe were undecided on the question.

Socrates, when dying, said to his friends; "I am going out of the world, and you are to continue in it; but which of us has the better part is a secret to every one but God." Cicero devoted much attention to the arguments for the immortality of the soul. He summed up the whole in the following words: "Of these opinions—the immortality, or eternal death, of the soul—which is the true one the gods may know; which is probable is still a great question."

Cæsar, in the Roman Senate, publicly denied a future life. Pliny, Lucretius, Horace and many others, represent the disbelief, sad or scornful, which practically pervaded the ancient world.

In modern times it has been held by some that there is no hereafter, no retribution, but that death is an eternal sleep. Regarding a future life, F. W. Newman says, "I never knew any one who professed to have attained (by spiritual insight) certain or confident expectations in this matter."\* "Confidence there is none, hopeful aspiration is her highest state."†

A Bramho is asked, "How have you come to the certain conclusion that there is a future state of being for man? What is your authority for believing in that dogma?" The reply may be imagined to be: "My authority is not any book or paper revelation. It is the higher and interior revelation of intuition. The doctrine of a future state is written in the depths of the soul in imperishable characters." To this the inquirer may say, "I have sounded, as far as I could, the depths of my soul, and have not found any such primitive self-evident conviction. And not only I, but the philosophers of ancient Europe, were in the same predicament."‡

**Prayer.**—Bramhos urge eloquently the duty of prayer for spiritual blessings. An objector may say, "How do you know that it is

\* *The Soul*, p. 143.

† *Ibid*, p. 145.

‡ Rev. Lal Behari Day.

either our duty to pray or that God will hearken to our prayer? If you had an express revelation from God on the subject, that would be different. But ignoring revelation, how have you come to the conclusion that prayer is useful, and that God will answer it? My reason tells me, that what will happen will happen, and no prayer of mine will induce God to swerve from His settled purpose; it is therefore absurd to pray. And my conscience tells me, that it is not likely that God will ever hearken to the prayer of such a sinful being as I am, who have repeatedly broken His law and set His authority at defiance. Besides, if prayer be useful, and if it be my duty to pray, I don't know how to pray. Have you not read the dialogue of Plato on Prayer? Alcibiades is going to the temple to pray; Socrates meets him and endeavours to dissuade him from it on the ground that he does not know how to pray. Socrates concludes his argument saying, 'You see that it is not at all safe for you to go and pray in the temple; I am therefore of opinion that it is much better for you to be silent. And it is necessary you should wait for some person to teach you how you ought to behave both towards the gods and men.' To which Alcibiades says, 'And when will that time come, Socrates? and who is he that will instruct me? With what pleasure should I look to him?' To which Socrates replies, 'He will do it who takes care of you. But, methinks, as we read in Homer, that Minerva dissipated the mist that covered Diomed and hindered him from distinguishing God from man; so it is necessary that he should, in the first place, scatter the darkness that covers your soul, and afterwards give you the remedies that are necessary to put you in a condition of discerning good and evil; for at present you know not how to make the distinction.' Alcibiades says, 'I think, I must defer my sacrifice to that time.' Socrates approves, 'You have reason;' says he, 'it is more safe so to do than run so great a risk.'"

When so great a teacher as Socrates, pronounced the wisest of men, speaks on the subject of prayer with such diffidence, professing his ignorance as to how he should pray, and dwelling on the necessity of illumination from above, how is it that Bramhos speak so confidently?

The Bramho may reply, "Our religion lies in our intuitive consciousness, its doctrines we directly perceive, we require no argumentation; they approach us as self-evident realities."

The answer to this is that Bramhos seem to have an intuitive and perfect knowledge of subjects of which Socrates knew very little.\*

Brahmists may urge that prayer is a universal instinct. Granting this, why do they not accept it in its *totality*? They say that we may pray for *spiritual* blessings, but not for *temporal* blessings.

\* Abridged from the Rev. Lal Behari Day, pp. 142-144.

Why do they make this distinction? If the instinct is true in the one case, why not in the other? In fact it is sadly true that men have been apt to pray for temporal blessings only. Not to pray for such must be opposed to a "self-evident conviction of the human mind." Keshub Chunder Sen says that "men cannot pray for physical blessings, because physical phenomena happen according to immutable law." To this it is replied that, "Laws in the moral world are as fixed and immutable as laws in the physical world."

**Denial of Miracles.**—The impossibility of a miracle is a self-evident conviction of the human mind, says the Brahmo Somaj. The contrary rather expresses the facts of the case. From the earliest times to the present, among nations of the highest culture, the belief in the reality of miracles has been almost universal. The question at present is not whether the alleged miracles were real, but whether their impossibility is a "self-evident conviction?" Granting that they are unworthy of credit, the *fact* remains that men *have* accepted them. The evidence is therefore overwhelming that this dogma of the Brahmo Somaj is baseless.

But apart from this, how do the Brahmors know that miracles are impossible? Are they so thoroughly acquainted with the past history of the universe as to feel warranted in affirming that no miracle was ever wrought by God during the eternity that is past? Is their knowledge of the future so complete as to justify the assertion on their part that no miracle will ever be wrought in the eternity that is to come?

Even J. S. Mill says that if the existence of God were admitted, a miracle could not reasonably be represented as impossible.

Brahmos generally believe in the creation of the universe, and that was a stupendous miracle.

It is allowed that alleged miracles should be substantiated by sufficient evidence; but that is very different from a denial of their possibility.

**Denial of Incarnation.**—By "incarnation" Christians understand the assumption by a divine being of a human body and soul. It is applied to the Son of God becoming man as the Lord Jesus Christ. Hinduism also has its incarnations. Krishna says in the Bhagavat Gitâ, "I am born age after age, for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, and establishment of piety."

"No thoughtful student of the past records of man," says Archbishop Trench, "can refuse to acknowledge that through all its history there has run the hope of a redemption from the evil which oppresses it; and as little can deny that this hope has continually attached itself to some single man. The help that is coming to the world, it has seen incorporated in a person. The generations of men, weak and helpless in themselves, have evermore been looking

after ONE in whom they may find all they seek for vainly in themselves and in those around them."

The Hindu ideas, though defective in many respects, recognise, says Hardwick, the idea of God descending to the level of the fallen creature, and becoming man to lighten the burden of pain and misery under which the universe is groaning, they show a struggling to become conscious of the personality of God, and a panting for communion with Him.

This belief, says Mr. Bose, "cannot be traced to human philosophy, which has always enlarged upon the impossibility of the great God taking any interest in human affairs, and which has laughed at the idea of His taking so much interest therein as to be induced to forsake His heavenly glory and come into the world in human form. Man is naturally prone to have such an overwhelming sense of God's greatness as to look upon such condescension on His part as impossible. This universal conviction, therefore, cannot be traced to Him."

In denying an incarnation, the Bramhos have included among their "self-evident truths," one opposed to the deepest longings of the human heart.

**Sense of Sin.**—Miss Collet justly remarks, "On the sense of sin depends the whole development of practical religion."

Hindus, as a rule, have a very faint idea of the evil of sin. Their gods are sometimes said to commit sin *in sport*. According to Vedantism, the root of sin is *ahamkara*, self-consciousness, regarding one's self as distinct from God. When a man can say *Aham Brahman*, I am Brahma, then virtue and vice are alike to him. It is supposed that the foulest sins can be washed away by bathing in the Ganges or even by the repetition of the word Hari.

As already mentioned, Debendranath Tagore "seldom recognised the existence of sins and miseries in human nature." Mr. Mozoomdar likewise admits that "all modern Theistic sects treat of the important subject of sin in a light superficial way, holding the sinfulness of man to be a mere fiction, and atonement a mere act of supererogation."\* In his address in the Calcutta Town-hall in 1888, he said:

"In former years the Brahma Somaj was distinguished for truthfulness and strictness of conduct; but at the present moment, whatever may be the reason, although there has been a rapid development in social reform, yet some how or other laxity of morals has entered into the movement. In Christian countries what has been the safeguard against indulgence? There is one strong protection, and that is the sense of sin. The sense of sin which in all Christian countries is so deep, has been the source of that moral purity for which Christian countries are noted. Happily this sense of sin has impressed itself upon

\* *Life of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 388.

the Brahmo Somaj. There was a time when the Brahmo Somaj lived in happy oblivion of its own sinfulness, when we used to hold with Theodore Parker that every fall was a fall upwards. Now we know that every fall is downwards, and that there is a corruption in the very core of our nature. When the heart is impure is it possible by forms and respectability to build up that holiness without which humanity cannot be perfected?"

While it is allowed that there is an increasing sense of the evil of sin among Brahmos, the following remarks of Mr. Slater still hold good :—

"True, there is much said of sin, especially in later Brahmist writings, and considerable prominence is given to repentance and holiness of life; the only defect is that the writers and speakers do not say enough. The *guilt* of sin—and not simply its weakening power as a disease—when viewed in the light of a Holy and Loving God, whose laws we have broken, and the painful sense of separation from Him, which a true consciousness of sin produces, do not appear to be realised as distressing facts burdening the conscience."\*

The proof of this will be seen more clearly from what follows.

"**Immediacy.**"—This is considered one of the "distinguishing features of Brahmoism." The need of any mediator between God and man is denied; the sinner may go at once unto God's presence alone, without any mediator. All this arises from inadequate views of the evil of sin.

What is *sin*? God claims to be supreme over the world which He has himself created; it is essential to the welfare of the universe that He should be supreme. Every sin is a defiance of His authority, a declaration on the part of the sinner, that he will not have God to reign over him. "All the guilt that lies in foul rebellion against the mildest and most merciful of earthly monarchs—in disobeying the kindest, and grieving the best of fathers—in ingratitude to a generous benefactor—... all that evil, multiplied a thousand and a thousand times, there is in sin."

Suppose a man committed theft, the value of the article stolen has not simply to be considered. The evil is that if theft did not involve a penalty, no man's property would be safe. It is the same with sin. A single violation of God's law with impunity would tend to spread rebellion through the universe.

After trampling under foot for years the commands of the great Lawgiver, Brahmos think that they may go alone unto His presence. Christians, sensible of their vileness, consider that they can approach them only through a Mediator. This need is wonderfully provided by the Incarnation of the Son of God—another doctrine rejected by the Brahmos.

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\* Keshub Chunder Sen, p. 166.

Mr. Bose remarks :

“Men who have no adequate ideas or approximately adequate ideas of the intense holiness of God or of their own unutterable corruption, may laugh at the idea of approaching the Deity through a Mediator; but humanity instinctively believes that sin has rendered direct communication between the righteous Ruler of the universe and His rebellious subjects impossible. The religions of the world prove this to a demonstration.”\*

**Denial of the Pardon of Sin.**—The *Essential Principles* contain the following :

“Every sinner must suffer the consequences of his own sins, sooner or later, in this world or in the next; for the moral law is unchangeable and God’s justice is irreversible.” p. 7.

Brahmos virtually adopt the Buddhist doctrine of *Karma*, which “has no idea of mediation, of satisfaction, of propitiation. Neither in heaven nor in earth can man escape from the consequences of his acts; hence forgiveness and atonement are ideas utterly unknown.”

This Brahmist dogma is put in a *quasi*-logical form; but it consists of groundless assertions. Instead of being a “self-evident intuitive truth,” it contradicts the testimony of religious consciousness. Men instinctively believe in the forgiveableness of sin, and instinctively pray for pardon.

Why is an ignorant erring mortal to limit the power of the Almighty? Has he such a thorough knowledge of the Divine administration of the universe to warrant Him in proclaiming the unforgiveableness of sin? To suppose this is to describe God as weaker than man. An earthly king can pardon an offender, why should this prerogative be denied to the King of kings?

Brahmists hold the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. An earthly father can forgive the offences of his children; why may not our loving Father in heaven do the same? The Brahmist dogma is opposed to our deepest and tenderest feelings.

**Denial of an Atonement.**—Reference has been made to Keshub Chunder Sen’s misuse of Christian terms—employing them in a different sense from their recognised meaning. “Atonement,” with Keshub denotes simply “reconciliation.” The Christian meaning expresses the expiation of sin through the sufferings of Christ. In the latter sense Brahmos deny an atonement.

The feeling is universal that man is a sinner, and that sin deserves punishment. Hence sacrifices have existed during all ages and among all nations. The idea that pervades sacrifice is *substitution*. The offerer sometimes laid his hand on the head of the victim saying, “I give thee this life instead of mine.” He

\* *Brahmoism*, p. 22.

acknowledged his guilt, but hoped that God would accept the sacrifice in his stead.

Sacrifices prevailed largely among the old Aryans. "The most prominent feature of the Vedic religion," says the Rev. K. S. Macdonald, "is its sacrifices. Scarcely a hymn is found in which sacrifice is not alluded to. The very first verse of the very first hymn runs: 'I glorify Agni, the *purohit* of the sacrifice.' Another hymn says 'Do thou lead us safe through all sins by the way of sacrifice.' The *Tandya Maha Brahmana* of the *Sama Veda* says of sacrifice, 'Whatever sins we have committed, knowing or unknowing; thou art the annulment thereof. Thou art the annulment of sin—of sin.'"

The same *Brahmana* contains the remarkable statement that "Prajapati, the Lord of creatures, offered himself a sacrifice for the benefit of the *devas*." Max Müller, referring to the continent of Africa, says, "Wherever we now see kraals and cattle pens depend upon it there was to be seen once, as there is to be seen even now, the smoke of sacrifices rising up from earth to heaven."

Sacrifices were appointed by God to show that sorrow for sin is not enough; that, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." But animal sacrifices were only like a shadow of the great sacrifice that was to be offered, and their chief object was to keep it in remembrance. After the death of the Divine Incarnation, they were to cease.

Some reject the doctrine of the atonement of Christ because they think it more consistent with the mercy of God to pardon sin freely without any atonement whatsoever. Others, because from the unchangeable nature of God's laws, it is impossible that sin can be pardoned at all. The former would sacrifice God's justice; the latter, His mercy.

Another objection may be noticed. It is maintained that it is unjust that the innocent should suffer for the sins of the guilty. Newman Hall makes the following reply:

"It would indeed be most unrighteous in any earthly ruler, were he to seize an innocent person, and make him suffer the sentence of the law, while the culprit himself was allowed to escape. Supposing, however, the purposes of law were equally accomplished, by an innocent person *voluntarily* submitting to death on behalf of a large multitude of offenders who must otherwise have died, there would be no departure from justice; neither would any alarm be caused to the innocent, by the expectation of being themselves compelled to suffer for the guilty. But if, by such voluntary transference of suffering, those offenders were also reclaimed and made good citizens,—and if moreover he who became their substitute, were restored to life, and as the result of his mediation, were raised to higher honour than before, not only justice would be satisfied, but bene-

volence would rejoice. So with the sacrifice of Christ. He, the righteous, suffered; that we, the unrighteous, might escape. But the act was voluntary. The suffering of Christ was brief, while his triumph is everlasting."

**Repentance.**—True repentance consists of two parts—sorrow for sin and a return to obedience. Brahmists hold that repentance which brings us back to God is the only atonement.

While it is granted that repentance is absolutely necessary, our instinctive beliefs tell us that something more is required for the pardon of sin. We see many cases in this world in which though the sinner repents the suffering is not removed. Many a drunkard repents at last, mourns over his folly, and gives it up. But health does not return, and he dies in the prime of life from the effects of the vice in which he indulged. A murderer repents and gives himself up to justice; but his remorse does not restore the life of his victim. Government cannot act on the principle that repentance is sufficient. Suppose that a merciful and lenient judge pardoned every prisoner brought before him who was penitent. What would be the consequence? The country would be flooded with crime. If repentance in this world is not followed by an obliteration of the effects, it is highly probable that the principle acted upon here below will be acted upon in the future world.

The light of nature cannot assure us that penitent sinners will be restored to the favour of God. What is needed is a declaration from God Himself. How can God communicate this to us without a Divine revelation? But Brahmists disown a revelation in the strict sense of the word. Hence though God were ever willing to forgive our sins on account of our repentance, the Bramho could not possibly know it.

**Punishment Temporary and Remedial.**—The Brahmist doctrine is as follows:

"As the just King He visits the soul with adequate agonies, and when the sinner, after being thus chastened, mournfully prays, He, as the merciful Father, delivers and accepts him and becomes reconciled to him." *Principles*, p. 7.

It may be said that, besides repentance, men have to endure "adequate agonies" on account of their sins.

What are "adequate agonies?" We are too much interested in the case to give a proper decision. If criminals in a jail were asked what punishment should be inflicted upon themselves, the sentences would be very lenient. Most men have no deep sense of sin. Notorious profligates have been known to comfort themselves in their last moments with the thoughts that they had only been guilty of a few frailties, which God, in His mercy, would overlook. So common is this that the Bible says of the wicked, "There are no

bands in their death,"—they die unconcerned about the future. But the case is very different with men whose conscience has not been seared by a long course of transgression. Instead of regarding their sins as few in number, they will say with a good man of old, "Mine iniquities are more than the hairs of mine head." They are also deeply sensible of the enormity of their guilt.

It may be objected that, according to Brahminism, "The punishment of sin is not, as some suppose, a penalty arbitrarily or artificially connected with sin, but its natural and necessary consequence." "It follows sin just in the same way as an effect follows a cause." "The punishment of sin is sin," or, in other words, remorse of conscience.

While it is granted that remorse of conscience is one of the chief ingredients in that cup of misery which shall be the portion of the impenitent in the coming life, it is not *all* the punishment which will be inflicted. Suppose that an earthly government abolished all punishments and left every criminal to the stings of his own upbraiding conscience, what would be the consequence? Nor can the Divine Government be carried on in this way.

According to Brahminism, punishment is "remedial." Sin consumes itself and works its own cure. What authority is there for this assertion? God has to satisfy His justice when it is violated; He has to vindicate the honour of his laws when they are transgressed. The proper end of chastisement is the reformation of the person chastised; the proper end of punishment is the satisfaction of justice and the vindication of violated law.

The effect of punishment is usually different from that attributed to it by Brahminism. Dr. Norman Macleod says :

"Men attach, perhaps, some omnipotent power to mere suffering, and imagine that if hatred to sin and love to God are all that is needed, then a short experience of the terrific consequences of a godless past must ensure a godly future. Why do they think so? This is not the effect which mere punishment generally produces on human character. Its tendency is not to soften, but to harden the heart,—to fill it not with love, but with enmity."

Brahminists speak only in a general way regarding future punishment, and do not consider to what consequences their own admissions lead. It is a dogma of theirs that pardon of sin is an impossibility; every sin must be followed by "adequate agonies." This must apply to the future world as well as to the present. Every man who truly knows his own heart is conscious that in this life not a day passes in which he does not commit sin. What guarantee is there that he will not commit sin while undergoing chastisement? Continuous sin beyond this life must entail continuous punishment, and an eternity of sin involves an eternity of suffering.

**Salvation by Works.**—"The ordinary Hindu," says Sir. Mowier Williams, "wholly rejects the notion of trusting to anything for salvation but his own self-righteousness." So "with Hindu theists God can only be propitiated by works. He may be called merciful but He only shows mercy to those who deserve it by their actions, and if He accepts faith, it is only because this also is a meritorious deed. Every man's hope of heaven depends on the amount of merit he has been able to accumulate during life."

We are naturally proud. We wish to be saved on account of our own fancied good deeds. The doctrine of Christianity is very different.

It is impossible to tell whether a garment is clean or dirty by examining it in a dark room. To judge it properly, it should be taken out in the sun. Somewhat in like manner, we must view ourselves, as it were, in the dazzling splendour of God's presence. A holy man of old said to God, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Another confessed, "We are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." A third said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

As a beggar in dirty rags could not appear in one of the durbars of the Queen of England, much less can we stand before God, clothed in the garments of our supposed good works. God has provided a robe, spotlessly pure, the righteousness of Christ. Only by putting off their own rags and accepting this glorious robe, do Christians hope to be saved. This doctrine is so repulsive to human pride, that it is not received till it is seen to present the only remedy.

**Want of a Dominant Motive to Holiness.**—People, as a rule, know their duty; the difficulty is to get them to do it. We are prone to do evil and backward from doing that which is good. At last we are, as it were, "tied and bound by the chains of our sins." We have neither the will nor the power to reform. The giving up of this or that evil habit is not enough,—a thorough change of our nature is necessary. We may determine not to commit sin and to become holy, but how are we to keep that determination?

"It may be said that if we were sincerely sorry for our sins and resolved to avoid them in future, God would take pity upon us and send us such help as would enable us to become holy. No doubt, if such Divine help were sent to us, we should become holy. But what guarantee has the Brahma for believing that such help would be sent? How does he know that the infinitely, just and holy God, the righteous Ruler of the universe would send such help to a rebel against His authority? And what is the nature of the help he expects?"\*

\* Rev. Lal Behari Day. *Antidote to Brahmoism*, p. 152.

Men are not prepared to deny themselves the pleasures of sin on the strength of vague theories.

**Want of Authority.**—The religions of the world, whether true or false, profess to have Divine sanction. Even legislators like Manu, who wished their laws to be obeyed, claimed to have obtained their institutes from heaven. The reason of this allegation was that a system founded on mere human authority could not bind the conscience of man. This truth was remarkably exemplified in the case of the philosophers of antiquity. Locke says :

“The truths which they proved by speculative reason, wanted some still more sensible authority to support them and render them of more force and efficacy in practice ; and the precepts, which they delivered, however reasonable and fit to be obeyed, were destitute of weight, and were only the precepts of men. Hence the philosophers never did nor could effect any change in the lives of their contemporaries. Indeed some of the wisest and most sensible of them complained that they found the understandings of men so dark and be clouded, their wills so biassed and inclined to evil, their passions so outrageous and rebellious against reason, that they considered the rules and laws of right reason as very difficult to be practised, and they entertained very little hope of ever being able to persuade the world to submit to them ; so that the great duties of religion were laid down by them as matters of speculation and dispute rather than as rules of action ; and they were not so much urged upon the hearts and consciences of man, as proposed to their admiration.”

“Suppose a collection were made of moral sayings for all the sages of the world, what,” says Locke, “would this amount to, towards being a steady rule, a certain transcript of a law that we are under ? Mankind might hearken to it or reject it, as they pleased, or as it suited their interests, passions, principles or humours ; they were under no obligation ; the opinion of this or that philosopher was of no authority.”\*

Brahmoism labours under the same defect. It has no divine sanction to enforce its teachings.

**Want of Comfort in Death.**—Brahmism might have sufficed if we had never *sinned*. The heart of a thoughtful Brahmo may well “meditate terror” in his last moments when he thinks of the “adequate agonies” he must endure on account of his numberless offences. Like a philosopher of old he may say, “In great alarm I depart.” It has been shown that Bramhists have no assurance from God that punishment is remedial. Nor is there any certainty, rather the contrary, that in a future world the sufferers will cease from sinning, thus leading to an indefinite prolongation of their misery.

Bramhists reject the Christian doctrine of a Saviour, and hence, as they close their eyes on this world, their feeling may well be that of despair.

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\* *Reasonableness of Christianity.*

## PRESENT POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF BRAHMISM.

**Present Position.**—It is difficult to form an estimate with regard to the number of Bramhos in India. The Samajes are no adequate test. They mean that where they are established there are some persons more or less imbued with Brahmic principles, making attempts to extend those principles amongst others. But this gives little indication as to how far the principles of Brahmissm have penetrated or how thoroughly they have been received even by those who profess them. There is reason to fear that the number of those who have entirely given up idolatrous practices in consequence of their acceptance of Brahmissm is comparatively small. As already mentioned, the latter are called Anusthanic Bramhos. Miss Collet, in her Brahmo Year Book for 1882, gives a list of 173 Somajes, of which 114 are in Bengal, 11 in Assam, 3 in Orissa, 11 in the North-West and Central Provinces, 6 in the Panjab, 15 in Western India, 12 in Southern India, and 1 in Burma. Of these 61 have Mandirs of their own.

Babu Kashi Ram, "Statistical Secretary," in February 1884 submitted a report to the "Apostolic Durbar" on the number of Somajes in India sympathising with the New Dispensation. He says:—

"No attempt was made to ascertain the position of all the Brahmo Somajes in India. In the first place, there are certain Somajes which are so insignificant that it is a mere waste of time, money, and labour to correspond with them. Again I have reason to believe that some of the Somajes, though reckoned in the general list, have ceased to exist. Miss Collet gives the total number of Somajes in India in her last Year Book as 173. This number is certainly overstated, but to what extent, I cannot for the present state. From reports received it appears that the Somajes at Kurigram, Brahmanbaria, Rayna, and also the one at Rupar, do not exist, and I am afraid, if further enquiries are made, several other Somajes will be found to have shared the same fate. The bare fact that Miss Collet could give in her Year Book issued in May last the annual reports of not more than 26 Somajes, and in the Year Book for 1881 of not more than 20, creates a suspicion that the number of Somajes that have any life in them cannot be exactly as high as it is stated to be, viz., 173." . . . .

"Since writing this report I find that the protesting brethren have published a list of Brahmo Somajes in 'sympathy' with their Somaj. Their number is reported as 84; of this 15 Somajes are said to have "sympathy" with the 'New Dispensation Church,' also, while there are 5 others which are mere 'family' Prayer Meetings, and two more, viz., Khanurta and Hyderabad, which latter not only sympathise, but are loyal to the New Dispensation Church. But sympathy with the Sadharan Samaj means no antipathy against our movement. It does not at all show that these sympathising theistic bodies have one and all affiliated themselves

with the Sadharan Samaj and thereby supported the unrighteousness of the cause which led that Somaj to secede from the all-inclusive Church of the New Dispensation. By presenting a mere statement of principles before the public, such as the existence of God and the immortality of souls, a society far less advanced than the Sadharan Somaj, can easily draw a nominal confession of sympathy from the whole body of the Unitarian and Theistic churches, both here and elsewhere. Why, the most liberal-minded amongst the Christian, Mahomedan and Hindu communities, sympathise more or less with the Brahma Somaj, but does that show that they are quite at one with it in principle and action?

“In the absence, therefore, of a definite statement from the Somajes said to be in ‘sympathy’ with the Sadharan Somaj, declaring that they are branches of that Somaj, and that far from having the least sympathy with the New Dispensation, they are its open enemies, the classification of the general list of the Brahma Somajes in India would continue to stand as follows:—

New Dispensation Churches including the Central Church at Calcutta	...	...	...	...	50
Somajes which protested against the New Dispensation, <i>vide</i> Miss Collet's Year Book for 1881, but the position of which is not known yet	...	...	...	...	19
Adi Somaj, not more than	...	...	...	...	16
Neutral, dead, or dying	...	...	...	...	88
<hr/>					
Total, (See Miss Collet's Year Book, Page 90)	...	...	...	...	173

The above is the most recent information the compiler has been able to obtain. The valuable *Brahmo Year-Books* of Miss Collet have been discontinued, and only desultory notices seem now available.

**Prospects.**—Brahmism originated in India with a few men who had the advantage of an English education, but none of whom had a thorough knowledge of the religious history of the world. Indeed, Hindus have no history properly so called. As already mentioned, Keshub said in one of his addresses, “You speak of history. I hate history.” Brahmists do not know that they are simply repeating an experiment which has been tried for three thousand years, and as often has failed.

Some acquaintance with Christianity and Muhammadanism led Rammohun Roy to adopt monotheism. His national feeling as a Hindu made him attempt to find this doctrine in the pantheistic Upanishads. From the works of Theodore Parker, Channing, F. W. Newman and others, Keshub Chunder Sen borrowed “the rock of intuition,” and his declamation against “dead dogmas,” and “book-revelations.” Latterly Keshub sought to frame a

mongrel creed, made up of simple Theism, Christianity, Muhammadanism, and Hinduism. He expected that the adherents of each would accept a system stript of their principal doctrines. The Sadharan Samaj returned to simple Theism.

Brahmist ideas of Christianity have been largely taken from Unitarian writers who reject some of its main features, or from men like Voysey by whom it has been openly abandoned. Hence Brahmist representations of Christian doctrines are often mere caricatures.

Although the knowledge of Christianity possessed by Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen was slight, they claimed to know more about it than Christians themselves after its study for eighteen centuries.

The procedure of the Brahmist has thus been described by the Rev. G. Bowen :

“Here am I and before me are the various religions of the world : I take them up one by one ; poise them before mine eye, see them one and all to be failures and falsehoods ; but with my superior judgment and infallible insight, I select from this religion this good thing, and from another something else, and from a third another commendable feature, and having made my selections throw the rest away as rubbish. Then I put together my selections and give the world the true religion for which it has been blindly seeking these 6000 years. These may all be dismissed : *Eureka ! (I have found.)*”\*

Keshub Chunder Sen thought that a new epoch in the religious history of the world had arrived when he proclaimed the birth of the New Dispensation, “equally divine with that of Christ and sent by the Lord of heaven into the world.” Its existence was very brief. Already it may be regarded as consigned to the tomb of “dead dogmas.”

The “great swelling words of vanity” used with regard to the Sadharan Somaj have already been quoted. This “Blessed Child” will probably maintain only a feeble struggling life, like similar bodies in Europe and America.

As already mentioned, the followers of the Brahmo Somaj, or members of the “Theistic Church,” are simply repeating an experiment which has been made by some of the greatest men who have ever lived, and admitted to have been a failure. Though the name Brahmo Somaj may be new, it is simply a repetition of the old attempt to solve the great problems of humanity apart from revelation. The ancient Greeks tried it under the most favourable circumstances. For acuteness, for depth, for enthusiasm, the Greek mind stands pre-eminent. The noblest of the Romans sought to

\* *Bombay Guardian*, July 29, 1872.

answer the same great questions. The results are thus described by Cowper :—

“In vain they pushed enquiry to the birth  
 And spring-time of the world; ask'd whence is man?  
 Why form'd at all? and wherefore as he is?  
 Where must he find his Maker? with what rites  
 Adore him? will he hear, accept, and bless?  
 Or does he sit regardless of his works?  
 Has man within him an immortal seed?  
 Or does the tomb take all? If he survive  
 His ashes where? and in what weal or woe?  
 Knots worthy of solution, which alone,  
 A Deity could solve. Their answers, vague  
 And all at random, fabulous and dark,  
 Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life,  
 Defective and unsanctioned, proved too weak  
 To bind the roving appetite, and lead  
 Blind nature to a God not yet revealed.”

Brahmism is much the same as Unitarianism. The quotations in the *Indian Messenger* are chiefly from Unitarian writers. In England and Wales, when the last religious census was taken, there were only 229 Unitarian Places of Worship out of a total of 34,467.\* In the United States, one of the most enlightened countries of the world, the Unitarians had 362 Churches out of a total of 63,082.†

Although Unitarians have been proclaiming their doctrines for centuries, why are they still a mere handful?

Unitarianism and Brahmism represent only the first stage of religious feeling; they do not satisfy the strongest instincts of humanity. Where there is no deep sense of sin, a mediator is not seen to be necessary; man thinks that he can himself bear the punishment of his misdeeds, and earn the reward of future happiness.

The Brahmist movement had its origin in Christianity. The *Epiphany* thus expresses regret that its adherents, instead of linking themselves with the great historic Theism of the west, should have cast in their lot with an insignificant sect:—

“It is saddening to see the new and struggling Theism of the East stretching out its hand for help from the West, not to the great historic Theism of the west—which has propagated the faith of the One God so widely throughout the world, and by its contact kindled the germs of it in India into this aspiring life,—but to a retrogressive sect, which deserting the higher Monotheism, has sterilised itself, and now maintains a precarious and undefined position, divided within itself as to the ground and nature of its beliefs; unproductive in the highest departments of religious literature, and ever tending more and more speedily to disintegrate and descend into the lower, if more logical levels of Rationalism, Positivism, and Materialism. Sad it is to see

\* Chambers's Encyclopædia, Vol. V. p. 69.

† Ibid. Vol. IX. pp. 642, 657.

the latest birth of the oriental religious mind seeking to link itself on to that long list of historical failures, of departed 'isms whose ruins have marked the path of the progress of Truth—Ebionism, Arianism, Socinianism, Deism, and other now forgotten names,—as though it willed to share their fruitlessness and to fail where they have failed." May 8, 1886.

"No form of natural theism," says Mr. Slater, "has ever been the *religion* of any race or country. Polytheism, pantheism and atheism, have always proved stronger and more influential than mere theism. Only when *allied with revelation* has theism been able to cope with its foes. The few gifted men in Persia, in Greece, in Rome, in India, who have risen above the thought of their time, failed to effect any deep and permanent reform, and failed to speak with authority to others. An eminent writer has observed, 'Theism is the easiest of all religions to get, but the most difficult to keep.' Individuals have kept it, but nations never."

Brahmism will probably exist in India like Unitarianism in Europe. It may be held by those who are too enlightened to accept popular Hinduism, but who have never felt the heavy burden of sin. It is also very elastic in its requirements. Except in the case of anusthanics, Brahmos may take part in idolatrous rites, and thus remain on friendly terms with their heathen countrymen, countenancing them in their superstitions.

Nearly twenty years ago, Dr. Jardine of Calcutta, expressed an opinion of Brahmism which time has only confirmed:

"In the first place there is a danger that it will split upon the rock of individualism, each one asserting his own so-called intuitions to be the whole truth which should be accepted. If this tendency prevail, the whole body all soon fall to pieces, in consequence of the discordance occasioned by the self-assertion of individuals, and gradually sink into the great mass of Hinduism from which it has sprung."

**A Bengali's Experience.**—In conclusion, the reader is earnestly invited to ponder deeply the following record from one who is now a professor in a Government College:

"I myself was once a Bramho, though not in name, yet in reality. I disbelieved in book-revelations, and like you believed that repentance was a sufficient expiation for sin. I conscientiously believed in those doctrines, and endeavoured to act according to the light I then enjoyed. I became sorry for my sins, and prayed to God to forgive them. But I enjoyed no peace of mind. I could not be sure that He would pardon my sins. I had not His word of promise. This led me to think what consolation I should have, if I could have God's word of promise. This again led me to enquire more fully, than I had done before, into the proofs of a positive revelation. I also endeavoured to reform my conduct, to

amend my life. I tried to banish from my mind all evil thoughts, all sinful desires. The more I tried, the more signally I failed. I began to see my moral deformity more than before. I began to see that I was a great sinner, a vile transgressor of God's law. My good works, such as they were, seemed like filthy rags. Formerly I comforted myself with the thought that I was better than many of my neighbours, and thus laid the flattering unction to my soul. But now I appeared before myself in all my naked deformity. I abhorred myself. I was in despair. Then it was that the Lord took mercy upon me. He opened my eyes, and showed to me Christ, in all the lustre of His mediatorial Glory and the charms of His ineffable Love. I then saw that Christianity supplied all my wants. I was a breaker of God's law, but Christ had suffered for my sins—He had vindicated the justice of God—He had upheld the majesty of the Divine Law. I then saw that Christ, not repentance, was the propitiation of my sins, and not of my sins only, but the sins of the whole world. It was then, also, that I perceived how true penitence was created in the heart, not by its own ability, but by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. I found all my wants supplied in Christ; for Christ was made unto me 'Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.'"\*

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NOTE.

A NATIONAL RELIGION.

A desire is expressed by some educated Hindus for a *National Religion*. It is thought degrading to India to have any other religion than her own. There is already, it is true, a national religion, embodied in the Vedas, Upanishads, Itihasas, Puranas, &c., &c., which has been studied for more than two thousand years. This, however, cannot bear modern investigation. As Sir Arthur Lyall says, "It seems possible that the old gods of Hinduism will die in these new elements of intellectual light and air as quickly as a netful of fish lifted up out of the water." To avert this, nationalists are trying to frame a *New Hinduism*. Vyasa, Manu, Sankar Acharya and other Rishis did not understand their own religion, which meant something very different from what they imagined. The real doctrines of Hinduism are to be learnt from men like Bunkim Chunder Chatterjee, the Bengali novelist. Every Hindu is familiar with the story of Krishna and the milkmaids; this is all a delusion; Krishna was a model of virtue. Others find monotheism in the Sastras—not pantheism and polytheism; not caste, but the Brotherhood of man.

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\*Rev. Lul Behari Day. *Antidote to Brahmaism*, pp. 43, 44.

There is no national geography, astronomy, chemistry, geometry, &c. Science is one all the world over. It is the same with religion. If each country had its own God, there might be different religions; but all enlightened men are now agreed that there is only one God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe. The Brotherhood of Man is similarly acknowledged:

“Children, we are all  
Of one great Father, in whatever clime,  
His providence hath cast the seed of life:  
All tongues, all colours.”

Since God is one and all men are alike His children, it is reasonable to suppose that He has given only one religion.

The most enlightened countries in Europe and America have accepted a religion first made known to them by Asiatics, and did not reject it from false patriotism, saying “We must have national religions.”

What is to be the new “National Religion” of India?

The chief characteristic of Hinduism is *caste*. It is the loss of this which excludes a man from Hindu society. Is this to be retained or is the Brotherhood of Man to be acknowledged?

Next to *caste*, pantheism and polytheism are the leading features of Hinduism. The Vedanta is its chief philosophy. Its battle-cry is *Ekam evadvitiam*, One without a second. This does not teach monotheism, that there is only one God—but pantheism, that all is God. Is the National Religion to be *Advaita* or *Dvaita*? No doubt monotheism has been acknowledged by a few Hindus, but polytheism has been the national belief, from the “thrice eleven” deities of the Vedas to the 33 crores of modern times. What is to be the new creed in this respect?

Image worship has a very prominent place in Hinduism. “The land is full of idols.” Is idolatry to be allowed by the National Religion?

Transmigration is an essential doctrine of Hinduism, supposed to explain the inequalities of life. Is this to be an article of belief?

It may be said that the Vedas alone are to form the bases of the Indian National Religion. What is their chief feature? Sacrifice. Nearly every hymn alludes to it in one form or other. Ghee was poured on fire; a whole book is devoted to the praise of the intoxicating soma juice; sheep, goats, horses, bullocks, buffaloes, cows, &c., were sacrificed.\* Are these customs to be restored?

A religion without *caste*, pantheism, polytheism, idolatry, transmigration, or sacrifice, shorn of the most essential features of Hinduism, would have no claim to be called an Indian *National*

\* See VEDIC HINDUISM, containing numerous quotations from the Vedic hymns. 3 As.

*Religion.* It would be simply, like the Brahma Somaj, a form of *Western Theism*—more “foreign” than Christianity which is of Asiatic origin.

The cry now noticed originates in ignorance and pride. It will pass away. An educated Hindu does not contend for the Geography of his fathers, with its seas of sugar-cane juice, milk, and ghee. He has accepted “foreign” science. The Indian would be considered a fool who urged his countrymen to stick to the national conveyances, palanquins and bullock carts, and refuse to travel by the “foreign” invention of railways. A distinguished French Orientalist says that as India has already adopted the science and arts of Christian nations, so she will one day spontaneously embrace their faith.

Of all false patriotism that is the worst which seeks by sophistry to defend erroneous beliefs because they are national. It promotes hypocrisy and disregard of truth among its advocates, while it is a grievous wrong to their ignorant countrymen, tending to perpetuate the reign of superstition.

Further remarks on this subject will be found in the Paper, *FALSE AND TRUE PATRIOTISM, OR NATIONALITY versus RATIONALITY.*