

ARTICLE VI.

THE BRAHMA SAMAJ.

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No. II.

“THE great object of Ram Mahan Rai’s life,” writes an English friend who knew him well, “was to establish a new sect in his native country, of whose creed the keystone should be the pure doctrine taught alike, he contended, by *Manu* and by *Moses*, by *Jesus Christ* and by *Muhammad*, — the doctrine of the unity of the Deity.”¹ He removed to *Calcutta* in 1814. It was in 1815 or 1816 that the first attempt at organization was made.

This society may be considered as the beginning of the *Brahma Samaj*; yet the line of historic descent is not unbroken. The opposition which the little band encountered from orthodox *Hindus* was so bitter that the society succumbed to it. *Ram Mahan Rai* was obliged to push his views privately, without the help of any organization committed to their support. But he saw with satisfaction that the number of individuals secretly cherishing a monotheistic faith was slowly gaining size and influence. In 1830 he thought that his principles had taken a sufficiently deep hold on the community to justify another effort at organization. In that year, therefore, a society was established, which, under the name of the *Brahma Samaj*,² through various vicissitudes of fortune, has continued to the present day.

¹ *Athenaeum* for 1833, p. 667.

² We cannot indicate the precise date at which the name “*Brahma Samaj*” was assumed; but we shall use it to designate the society irrespective of the exact period of its adoption. The name denotes the monotheistic character of the society. *Brahma* is the Sanskrit name for the supreme and self-existent (though impersonal and unconscious) spirit, whose essence pervades all things, and is the substratum of all. *Samaj* means a meeting, an assembly, a society.

The father of the Samaj delayed his departure for Europe until his society should have survived the perils of infancy. Yet no sooner had he gone than the Samaj began to languish. His influence had been sufficient to commend the tenets of monotheism to many, at least as a matter of private belief. What he could not do was to reform the lives of his followers, or to impart to them his own devotion of heart; for no one who is acquainted with the Indian people needs to be told that private beliefs go for very little in determining the outward actions, or the essential character of the man. As soon, therefore, as he was withdrawn from them, so that the constant stimulus of his presence and devotion was no longer felt, they relapsed at once to the lower level of his and their intellectual belief; and the course of the Brahma Samaj, from 1831 until 1841 was inevitably that of languor and decline. It lacked independent vitality.

The man to whom the guidance of the Samaj was committed when its founder left it, in 1831, for that visit to England from which he never returned, was a rich Hindu of Calcutta, named Dwarkanath Tagore. He not only conducted the religious services every Wednesday evening, but also became responsible for the expenses of the society. Neither the money of the wealthy Babu,¹ however, or the ownership of a place of worship, could infuse real life into the weak and sickly body. It was not until there appeared among them another genuine leader, which Dwarkanath was not,—one whose heart burned with a brighter flame of religious feeling, and whose example and enthusiasm pervaded the entire Samaj,—that any signs of vigor could be detected.

Such a leader was Babu Debendranath Tagore. He was the son of Dwarkanath Tagore; entering the society in

The Brahma Samaj, therefore, would be the "One-God Society." It is quite certain that the early Samajists, in choosing this name, did not mean to imply that the God *they* worshipped was the impersonal divinity of orthodox Hinduism; they had not then arrived at a true understanding of Vedic theology. The idea of the divine unity was what they sought to express by the title; not the mode of the divine existence.

¹ This is the usual title of respect (equivalent to our "Mr.") used with the names of Bengali gentlemen. It can also be used alone, as a noun, as in the text above.

1841, he was for twenty years its leading spirit. He is still living amid the seclusion of the Northwestern mountains. A man of devout and excellent character, he was by no means the equal of Ram Mahan Rai, and his influence upon the Samaj, though marked, was therefore far less than that which had been exercised by his predecessor. Still, had it not been for him the Samaj would unquestionably have ceased to exist. He threw himself with much enthusiasm into its work, and devoted all his energies to propping up the falling cause it represented. He gave special attention to the perfecting of the organization, and to the details of its operations.¹ He founded a school, whose great object was to be the teaching of the philosophy of the Upanishads; but in 1846 the school was abandoned for want of patronage. He started a monthly periodical called the *Tattwa Bodhini Patrika*, which, whatever else it may have done, exerted a very great and excellent influence on the Bengali language. Babu Debendranath's labors soon bore fruit. Attention was once more drawn to the Brahma Samaj; proselyting energy was aroused; the doors were frequently opened to admit new members; and the roll increased from one hundred and five names in 1841 to nearly five hundred in 1851. The principles of the society made rapid progress in many parts of Bengal. Between 1847 and 1858, branches of the Samaj were established in not a few of the cities and larger towns of the province. This was not wholly due to the zeal of the Brahmists themselves; the way was prepared for them by the educating influence of the government schools and Christianity. Many young men who were too intelligent to adhere longer to Hinduism, and who were not sufficiently earnest to embrace Christianity, were yet glad to find in the Brahma Samaj a

¹ "The work of Rajah Ram Mahan Rai, although in some respects perhaps more valuable than that of any of his successors, appears to have been chiefly *destructive* with reference to existing Hindu religious customs and beliefs. He did not form a *sect*; he did not establish a system or mode of worship. This work was accomplished by Babu Debendranath Tagore, and in him we have consequently the immediate founder of the Samaj as an organized body with a peculiar form of public worship."—Dr. Jardine's Paper at the Allahabad Missionary Conference, 1873; Report, p. 136.

respectable abiding place, a form of religion which made no very great demands upon their self-denial, and a creed which they could hold without compromising their position as Hindus, or bringing themselves into difficulty with the caste authorities. Besides, connection with the Samaj came to be a mark of a certain kind of distinction; it stamped one as "progressive," and intimated vaguely that he was an advanced thinker, and a man of profound views. So the Samaj grew and flourished.

A word is now necessary on the doctrinal position occupied during the administration of Babu Debendranath. "The Brahma creed of the first epoch," wrote a Bengali Christian in 1875,¹ "was rather clumsy. They believed in the inspiration of the Vedas, in the existence of one God, in the transmigration of souls, in the final absorption into the Deity, etc." In fact at this time the Samaj was essentially Hindu, though theoretically rejecting idolatry. Ram Mahan Rai had professed to base its creed on the sacred writings of Aryans, Jews, Arabians, and Christians; but practically the members ignored this eclecticism, and clung alone to their Vedas; these they interpreted in accordance with the views of their leader as teaching monotheism. But the practice of the Samajists was on a far lower level than their theory. So far from abandoning idolatry, they countenanced it by allowing idolatrous ceremonies in their own families. The religious services at their place of worship were even conducted, not infrequently, by men who were known to engage in Hindu rites at home. It was not until long after this considered necessary that a man, in order to be a member of the Brahma Samaj in good and regular standing, should be pure from such idolatrous contamination. Neither were the Samajists freed from the thralldom of caste; it is doubtful if they are even yet, save to a partial extent. We have seen the tenacity with which their leader clung to his caste ordinances; and certainly the stream would not rise higher than its fount.

¹ Article by Rev. C. N. Banerjea in the *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 85.

It was at this juncture that the most important event took place of any which occurred while Babu Debendranath was at the head of affairs. This was the sending of four pandits to Benares for the purpose of making a critical study of the Vedas. It was done at the instigation of Debendranath himself. The attention of the Samaj had already been directed to the true interpretation of Vedic literature; Sanskrit scholars had pointed out that the principles of Pantheism undoubtedly pervaded it. Christian missionaries had warned the Samajists that they were leaning on a broken reed. The return of the pandits from Benares settled the question; they "also bore testimony," says the Bengali Christian, quoted once before, "to the pantheistic character of the Vedas." Babu Debendranath Tagore acknowledged the correctness of this view, and honestly declared his own rejection of the ancestral scriptures of Hindustan as the true bases of monotheistic faith. The older members of the Samaj were offended at this decided movement; but the younger men followed Debendranath's example; the Vedas were swept away; and with them went the doctrines of transmigration of souls, of final absorption into the Deity, and many of the fragments of Hinduism which had cumbered the creed of the Samaj. This dethronement of the Vedas occurred, we believe, in 1850. With them were rejected all literary standards of doctrine; it therefore became a very important question what authority should be regarded as the ultimate source of religious truth. The question was answered by the adoption for this purpose of *intuition*; and to the bar of intuition all doubters have since been referred,—until recently the present leader of the Samaj has shown a disposition to set up his own personal authority as supreme, and to force the Samaj into an acknowledgment of his mere *ipse dixit* as the sufficient standard of Brahmist doctrine.

Keshab Chandra Sen's connection with the Samaj has colored the stream of Brahmist development through all its later course. He was born, we believe, in 1832. He was the second son of Pyari Mohan Sen, a Hindu of Calcutta,

of the Vaidya caste. The father died while Keshab was still an infant, leaving his son wholly to the care of his mother, whose influence over him was exceedingly strong. According to Hindu custom, she resided, with her young son, in the family of her late husband's father. This man was a bigoted idolater, of the Vaishnava sect. Thus Keshab's early years were spent in the family of one who opposed all thoughts of reform as earnestly as he himself afterwards advocated them. Here he became familiar with the rites of Hindu worship as practised by the Vaishnavas of Bengal — the adherents of the great prophet Chaitanya; and with the notions of this sect his mind was deeply imbued. He displayed at a very early age a profoundly religious tendency, also much independence of character. During his school-days he was grave and taciturn. He manifested a peculiar fondness for the drama, and once in some school-play took the part of an Englishman with immense applause. It is also recorded of him that in his addresses to his school-fellows he occasionally gave hints of that eloquence for which he has since become somewhat famous. In the course of his English education his attention was drawn to the Bible; whether it was the reading of the Scriptures that first awakened in his mind a distrust of Hinduism we cannot say. At any rate from an early age he cultivated a habit of prayer. He himself describes his early religious experience as follows: "I never embraced Hinduism," says he, "from honest and deliberate conviction; but lived as a Hindu because my parents did so, and my ancestors had done so for many ages. In course of time English education upset my faith, and made me feel that idolatry was a falsehood and an abomination in the sight of God. It did not cost me much effort to renounce the errors and prejudices in which my forefathers indulged, for as I grew in English literature and science, I felt I was intellectually and morally constrained to set my face against idolatry and its concomitant errors. There was nothing, however, to fill the place which had been formerly occupied by Hindu superstition, and for two or

three years I continued in a state of indifference and unconcern about matters of faith. At last it pleased Providence to reveal the light of truth to me in a most mysterious manner, and from that time there commenced a series of struggles, aspirations, and endeavors, which resulted, I am happy to say, in peace and in the conversion of the heart. The first lesson God taught me was that it was his will that I should pray. When no book brought me any comfort, and no man rendered me any assistance whatsoever, God, in the mysterious ways of providence, pointed out to me the indispensable necessity of cultivating a habit of daily prayer; I persevered in that godly habit, and within a few weeks found that there was strength in my heart, and abounding joy, and wisdom, and purity. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, I came into contact with many books which were very profitable and interesting to me, and among these was the Bible. Although there was much there which I did not and could not accept, yet there I found marvellous truths which tallied exactly with the inner convictions of my heart, and these I not only accepted, but turned to account. I began to pray with more earnestness and sincerity. I felt with David in the spirit of his Psalms, and I responded to the exhortations of Christ, and I entered into communion with Paul. Thus I went on for many years, growing in grace, in faith, and in purity. It has always struck me that there must be something remarkable in the fact that I have continued steadfast in my inward attachment to Christ, in spite of my standing aloof from many of the dogmas inculcated and taught by Christian missionaries in India. Why have I cherished respect and reverence for Christ? Why have I every now and then felt drawn towards the pages of the Bible, although I stand outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy? Why is it, that, though I do not take the name 'Christian' I still persevere in offering my heart's love and gratitude to Jesus Christ? There must be something in the life and death of Christ; there must be something in the gospel, which tends to bring comfort and light

and strength to a heart heavy laden with iniquity and wickedness.”¹

Keshab Chandra Sen joined the Samaj in 1857. Previously to this he had “established a society in his own house for religious discussion, where he used to deliver extempore addresses in English.”² The stimulating power of his zeal and eloquence was at once felt by the Samaj. He began to deliver English lectures to its members. Babu Debendranath followed his example in Bengali. The cause of intuition found in the new convert an earnest advocate; he drew largely from Western writers, especially Francis Newman and Theodore Parker, in support of it; and under his leadership these views obtained wide currency among the Brahmists. He infused new life into all the operations of the Samaj. The principles which it held ought logically to result in various internal reforms; these reforms were pushed forward by this young leader. Unwilling himself to profess one thing and practise another, he sought to make his associates live up to their doctrines. In the year 1860 he undertook a crusade against caste in the Samaj; he demanded that the sacred thread be thrown away, and that the members of the society should turn their backs completely and forever on idolatry by excluding it from all social and domestic ceremonies. It was a hard thing to do. It would cost them, what their adherence to the Samaj had never yet cost a man of them, their social status in the community, and all the privileges of Hindu citizens. Few were prepared for this decided step. It was burning the bridge behind them. They were very glad to be known as members of so respectable a body as the Brahma Samaj; but when it came to offering to the Lord that which would cost them something,—especially something so highly cherished and dearly prized as social position and caste standing are by Hindus,—that was quite another matter. Even Babu Debendranath Tagore was not quite ready to go so far as this. But Keshab could not wait. The older men sided with Debendranath; over the younger

¹ English Visit, p. 235 ff.
Vol. XL. No. 160.

² India. Evangelical Review, Vol. iii. p. 88.

Keshab's influence was magnetic. The crisis came in 1865. Keshab Chandra presented to Debendranath Tagore three propositions the acceptance of which he made the condition of continuing in the Samaj; these propositions embodied the advanced ideas of the progressive party. They demanded the rejection of the caste thread — the external symbol of high-caste membership; the limitation of the conduct of public religious services in the Samaj to Brahmists of good moral character, who lived consistently with their professions (i.e. who did not indulge in idolatrous rites surreptitiously at home); and that other religions be treated and spoken of with respect in the public exercises of the Samaj. When the question of accepting these propositions as rules for the Samaj was put, the conservatives mustered in force, and voted them all down. The result was the first decided schism in the Brahma Samaj; there have been others since. Babu Debendranath and his party remained in possession of the property of the society, and became known as the *Adi* (original) Brahma Samaj; while Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers went off, and, under the name of the Brahma Samaj of India, started a new organization, with the headquarters elsewhere.¹ Both societies have been kept up; though the result in the case of the older body might easily have been foretold. The *Adi* Samaj has slowly, but surely, declined into Hinduism. There is now but little left of the

¹ Some say that the real reason for the split was that Keshab Chandra Sen wanted to be the autocrat of the Samaj, and did not secede until he saw clearly that he could not have his own way if he remained. He had previously been appointed secretary to the Samaj, and also made one of its prominent preachers; but he was removed by Babu Debendranath from the former position when the latter saw how determined the young man was to control everything himself. This hastened the crisis. We need not impugn the sincerity of Keshab's purpose to introduce important reforms; yet his motives in the whole transaction, as throughout his entire career, were doubtless mixed, and the personal element was a large one. But he is far from being the only public man of whom this can be said. A history of the Brahma Samaj by G. S. Leonard, published at Calcutta in 1879, we believe, gives a very good account of the whole matter, though Mr. Leonard's evident sympathy with the conservative party, and his ill-concealed dislike of Keshab Chandra Sen, make it necessary to read his book with caution.

original principles of the society founded by Ram Mahan Rai to distinguish its members from orthodox Hindus. They have scarcely any influence in religious matters; they are never heard of outside their immediate circle; they show no signs of life or vigor. The Adi Samaj has simply sunk out of sight.

A few months after Keshab Chandra Sen's secession with his immediate followers from the old Samaj, he delivered an address at Calcutta, entitled "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia."¹ It was in May 1866. In this address he speaks of Jesus as the "greatest and truest benefactor of mankind." Christianity he describes as "that mighty religious movement which has achieved such splendid results in the world, and scattered the blessings of saving truth on untold nations and generations." The purpose of the lecture was "to trace the gradual and steady progress of this grand movement, and its influence on the character and destinies of the European and Asiatic nations." Every page is glowing with the spirit of love to Christ; the lecturer traces the development of all that is good in modern civilization up to the gospel of our Saviour; he speaks highly of the "striking results" achieved in India by Christian missions: and then he says: "Tell me, brethren, whether you regard Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, as an ordinary man? Is there a single soul in this large assembly who would scruple to ascribe extraordinary greatness and supernatural moral heroism to Jesus Christ, and him crucified? Was not he who by his wisdom illuminated, and by his power saved, a dark and wicked world; was not he who has left us such a priceless legacy of divine truth and whose blood has wrought such wonders for eighteen hundred years,—was not he above ordinary humanity? Blessed Jesus, immortal child of God! for the world he lived and died. May the world appreciate him, and follow his precepts!"

The lecture drew the notice of Europeans. The Viceroy of India, the late Lord Lawrence, a devout Christian, showed

¹ See Lectures and Tracts, by Keshab Chandra Sen, pp. 3-46.

the Babu distinguished attention. Missionaries and Christians generally thought that he was rapidly approaching the decisive point of baptism; they looked to see him bring with him into the Christian church a large number of his followers. But his followers felt very differently on the subject; they were mostly destitute of that advanced religious experience which their leader enjoyed; they strenuously objected to being converted so suddenly. Moreover the orthodox Hindus and the Adi Samaj looked with very great disfavor on the Babu's utterances. He was even subjected to various forms of petty persecution. He saw that he had gone too far; his too ardent words in praise of Christ had jeopardized his prospects of a large following among his own countrymen. Accordingly he undertook in September of the same year, to correct the impression of the former address by delivering another, which was entitled "Great Men."¹ "In this lecture," writes a Calcutta missionary,² "he practically retracted all he had said of Jesus, by affirming the same of all other great men, himself not excepted. Thus among many his position and influence were greatly restored."

An examination of this lecture on Great Men does not reveal any explicit attempt at qualification. It begins with bewailing the materialistic tendencies of the age, which it is the object of his address, so far as possible, to counteract. For this purpose he calls the attention of his hearers to the fact that God has manifested himself in divers ways. He reveals himself, first in nature, secondly in history. But how? Through great men, is the reply. Great men are also called "representative men, geniuses, heroes, prophets, reformers and redeemers, according to their various functions and characteristics." That which makes them great is the divine which dwells within them. "Who will deny that they are above ordinary humanity? though human, they are divine. . . . If a prophet is not God, is he a mere man? That can not be. The fact is he is both God and man. He is a 'God-

¹ Lectures and Tracts, pp. 49-93.

² In the Indian Evangelical Review, Vol. vi. p. 410

man.' He is an 'incarnation' of God. . . . When he is honored above others as God's incarnation we are to understand his superiority to be one of degree, not of kind. For, it must be admitted that every man is, in some measure, an incarnation of the Divine Spirit." As historical illustrations he refers at some length to Luther, Knox, Muhammad, and Chaitanya of Bengal. He inveighs severely against the "deification" and worship sometimes paid to great men, as an outburst of "blind zeal" and "sectarian bigotry." This of course has a very transparent reference to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Finally he speaks of Christ himself in the following terms: "And though Jesus Christ, the prince of prophets, effected greater wonders, and did infinitely more good to the world than the others, and deserves therefore our profoundest reverence, we must not neglect that chain, or any single link in that chain, of prophets that preceded him, and prepared the world for him, nor must we refuse honor to those who, coming after him, have carried on the blessed work of human regeneration for which he lived and died." This is the only reference which the lecture contains to Jesus. The omission to say more is significant.

Having thus in the former part of the lecture atoned for the indiscreet ardor of his address on Jesus Christ, he devotes the latter part to an exposition of his doctrine of intuition. This, which he calls the "last and highest mode of revelation," he describes as "internal," in distinction from the "external" revelations of God in nature and history; it is "God in the soul,"—"the almighty power of inspiration,—the direct breathing in of God's Spirit, which infuses an altogether new life into the soul, and exalts it above all that is earthly and impure." It is "God's direct and immediate action" on the human soul. By "inspiration the supreme soul is presented to us in our own finite souls, and his saving light falls directly upon the eye of faith." This revelation "altogether converts and regenerates the soul." It is the "direct action of the Holy Spirit"; it is "true spiritual baptism, not with water but with fire. . . . With the fire of

inspiration and enthusiasm." Such is his description of intuition, to which the Brahma Samaj had previously begun to appeal as the ultimate source of religious knowledge.

These same ideas of intuition are further enlarged upon in a sermon on Regenerating Faith,¹ preached by the Baba on the occasion of the thirty-eighth anniversary of the Samaj, in January 1868. The spirit and tone of this discourse are wholly Christian. It abounds in allusions to Christ, in appeals to the New Testament, and in quotations from the Bible. "Faith is the eye of the soul," he says, "whereby it sees spiritual realities directly and vividly." Faith must be preceded by true penitence; and when thus begun, "the good work of conversion" is carried on by faith and prayer. Its end is the "state of regenerate existence," which means "the death of the carnal nature which we have in common with the lower animals, and the establishment in its place of a complete spiritual life in God. . . . There must be entire annihilation of the sensual, selfish, and worldly cravings and propensities of the heart. . . . The regenerate man is unto the world and its temptations an altogether dead man. . . . The soul is not only dead to the world, but alive unto God and truth. . . . Then are men said to live regenerate in God, when they think his separation to be death, and therefore ever cling to him as their 'meat and drink'; when he becomes unto them the light of their eyes and the joy of their hearts; and when, removed altogether from the world, they live day and night in holy and sweet communion in the kingdom of heaven within."

We have described his views on faith and inspiration at length, for it is these which he has himself in more recent years thrust into the greatest prominence, and made the most distinctive of his teaching.²

¹ Lectures and Tracts, pp. 97-127.

² Dr. W. W. Hunter, in the article on the Brahma Samaj in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, has given a very good statement of Brahmist belief, which we summarize as follows: 1. Brahmists believe that nature and intuition supply the basis of religious faith. 2. Their religion does not depend on books written by man; yet they gratefully accept any religious truth con-

A word must be said as to his views on other points. The idea of the unity of God was at the outset declared by Ram Mahan Rai to be the centre of his new system; to this was afterwards added, as a distinctive doctrine of Brahminism, that of the "Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man." For several years this was the watchword of the Samaj. "Be true to the sweet and eternal gospel of the 'Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man,'" wrote Keshab Chandra in 1870, "and gather all races and tribes, castes and clans, in one fold."¹ In more recent years this war-cry has been abandoned for others; probably Keshab and his followers hold to the idea of it as firmly as ever, but make it less prominent, because they have taken up others which draw attention away from it. Prayer and devout contemplation he regards as necessary acts of worship. The Hindu's style of religion, when not confined (as it popularly is) to a mere routine of ceremonies, has ever been largely contemplative; and in insisting so strenuously as he does upon quiet meditation as a means of spiritual growth, Keshab

tained in any book. 3. They consider the religious condition of man to be progressive, like the other departments of his condition in this world. 4. The fundamental doctrines of their religion are the basis of every true religion. 5. They believe in one supreme God, who has all the attributes of personality, but has never become incarnate. 6. They believe in the immortal and progressive state of the soul; the future state will be one of consciousness, and supplementary to the present as respects the action of moral government. 7. Repentance they hold to be the only way of salvation; other than this, no atonement is needed. 8. They pray for spiritual blessings, and believe in the efficacy of such prayers. 9. They believe also in divine providence. 10. Worship is love towards God, and the performance of the works which he loves. 11. Public worship they regard as necessary, but it need not necessarily be performed in any fixed place, or at any fixed time; the only thing essential is that both place and time be such as to compose the mind, and direct it toward God. 12. They deny the necessity of pilgrimages; holiness is attained only by elevating and purifying the mind. 13. They inculcate no rites, ceremonies, or penances. Their rites and ceremonies are moral righteousness, the gaining of wisdom, divine contemplation, charity, and the cultivation of devout feelings. Govern your feelings, say they, discharge your duties to God and man, and blessedness results; purify your heart, cultivate your devotional feelings, and you will see him who is unseen. 14. Brahminism acknowledges no distinction of castes. All are children of God, and hence all are brothers and sisters.

¹ English Visit, p. 630.

Chandra is only true to his Indian origin and character. He believes in prayer also, as a means of spiritual blessings, but thinks we should not pray for temporal mercies; in regard to these we should simply utter the petition "whatever is good in thy sight dispense unto me." It is needless to say that he does not pray in the name of Christ. With these exceptions his views of prayer are most satisfactory.¹ His theory of sin is practically correct, though speculatively untenable. Of sin as a universal fact of human experience he is profoundly convinced; he takes no superficial view of its hold and power over men. "It is radical;" these are his words, "If you wish to find its root, go and search into the depths of man's constitution."² In accounting for the origin of sin, he rehabilitates the old gnostic idea that sin is inherent in matter, and that the spirit is contaminated with it through contact with the fleshly body. His argument in defence of this theory, given at considerable length in the address just quoted, abounds in logical absurdities and self-contradictions which we need not pause to expose. It is pleasant to notice his practical orthodoxy on this point. He has never, that we know, abated one whit from the emphasis with which, at an early period of his religious history, he declared the necessity of repentance and pardon. Repentance he defines as "a preliminary and preparatory training" for salvation, not a price paid for salvation; "true penitence humbles man to the dust, and makes him put his entire trust in the Lord for the purpose of salvation.... It fosters a longing for deliverance; faith and prayer act as guides, and safely lead the penitent sinner into the kingdom of heaven, where he is regenerated by divine grace."³

¹ See his Sermon on Prayer, English Visit, p. 65. We have the strong impression, though we cannot now quote chapter and verse in support of it, that the impossibility of prayer for physical blessings was at one time formulated as an article of belief by the Samaj (that is, by Keshab Chandra Sen), and defended with considerable asperity in the weekly organ of the society against the criticisms of certain Christian writers.

² We quote from an Address on Sin, delivered in 1877. See the India Evangelical Review, Vol. iv. p. 494.

³ Lectures and Tracts, pp. 115, 116, *passim*.

Divine grace and faith are, in the extracts now quoted, declared to be the means of salvation. Keshab does not acknowledge Christ as a Saviour, except in the sense of a great teacher and exemplar. He insists on the revelation of God to each individual soul as adequate, and denies, somewhat illogically, the possibility of a book-revelation.¹ He believes that God animates the souls of great men, and in a lesser degree of all men, so that, in proportion as they are really great they are divine; yet he denies that God can become incarnate in human form in any such way as to render the same person God *and* man, or to make him a proper object of worship. It is unnecessary to add that he totally rejects all doctrines of vicarious atonement. Ram Mahan Rai had enunciated the principle of eclecticism; under Debendranath Tagore the Vedas alone were the pole-star of Brahmic faith. In fidelity to the principle of eclecticism their successor in the Samaj has gone beyond either of them. "Love all parties," he wrote to the Samaj in 1870, "and gratefully accept all that is good and true in each."² It was on this principle that his lecture on Great Men was written; it is this that has suggested many of the developments of the Samaj in recent years.

In 1870 Keshab Chandra Sen visited England. He remained there several months. He was honored by men of all churches and shades of opinion. At a welcome soiree, held under the auspices of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, peers of England, members of Parliament, secretaries of missionary societies, clergymen and other representatives of at least ten Christian denominations, and persons eminent in many walks of life, assembled to greet him. A vote of welcome was moved by Dean Stanley, and

¹ He is not consistent, however, in his maintenance of this doctrine. We shall afterwards find him virtually admitting that some persons have not that degree of divine illumination themselves which is sufficient for their spiritual needs; such unfortunate souls should "loyally obey" the "accredited individuals." Why the latter could not print in a book the result of their divine communications, and why this would not be a book-revelation, we are not told.

² English Visit, p. 630.

seconded by the late Lord Lawrence, who had just laid down the high office of Viceroy and Governor-general of India. As time passed, Mr. Sen was invited to speak at the anniversary meetings of several of the religious societies of England; he addressed the Congregational Union, the Unitarian Association, the East India Association, the Ragged-school Union, and many other bodies. Receptions were offered him at Bath, at Birmingham, at Edinburgh, at Glasgow, and at other cities. He was "patronized by church dignitaries, by well-known Indian missionaries, by philanthropists." He was finally introduced to the Queen. And to crown all, the addresses, speeches, sermons, lectures, and public letters, which he had delivered and written in England, were gathered into a book and published.

Returning to India late in 1870, he once more took up the work in the Samaj, which his English visit had for a time interrupted. The cordiality of his reception in England, and the distinction with which he had been treated, had lifted him to a higher prominence in his own land than he had ever occupied before. He is not the only man who has discovered that nothing so increases one's reputation at home as a process of lionizing abroad. He now stood before his countrymen blazing with the glamour of foreign notoriety. He came to be spoken of as the "well-known," or the "distinguished" Babu K. C. Sen. His eloquence began to be highly celebrated. All this redounded somewhat to the credit of the Brahma Samaj, whose mouthpiece and representative he was, but more to the individual renown and glory of Keshab Chandra himself.

And yet the Brahma Samaj had evidently entered on another course of decline. The period between 1870 and 1875 was not one of progress. The usual services were indeed held in the Brahmist church, or *mandir*, to use their own Bengali term. The organ of the Samaj, the Indian Mirror,¹ was as pungent as ever in its paragraphs, as bom-

¹ This paper was started in 1861. It was, and is, written wholly in the English language, and appears daily. At about this time (1875) the week-day issues

bastian in its articles, as vague in its definitions, and as determined in its opposition to what it called "Western Christianity." The leader of the Samaj appeared as usual at the services of the society, and at the anniversaries, which have for some years been celebrated with much enthusiasm, at least with much noise and parade, every January. On these occasions the Babu usually delivers a great address in the town hall of Calcutta, to audiences numbering sometimes several thousands, and often containing among them men prominent in literary, official, and religious circles in the Indian metropolis. Yet with all this, the Samaj was not accomplishing anything; its influence over the Hindu community was not growing; its membership increased slowly if at all. Proof of these statements, from unimpeachable witnesses, is at hand. "The Samaj is not advancing either in orthodoxy or in influence," says the Report for 1872 of a missionary organization in Calcutta, "nor is its influence upon orthodox Hindus increasing; these are beginning to regard the whole Brahmist movement with a suspicion strongly tinged with dislike, and instead of being attracted thereto, are inclined to hug the old idolatrous system with seemingly increased devotion." "It is painfully evident," says another Report in 1874, "that religious life is now at the lowest ebb in the Brahma Samaj, and that their influence for good has all but ceased."¹

But lest some should say that the words of missionaries, who are presumably prejudiced against the Samaj, ought not to be quoted to sustain an unfavorable opinion of it, we turn to the Brahmists themselves, and ask what they have to say of their own affairs at this time. In 1873, in a letter to the Free Religious Association of America, Babu Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, the most prominent disciple of Keshab Chandra

began to be devoted wholly to political and other secular subjects, and the Sunday issue was reserved for the discussion of religious topics. This Sunday edition continued to be the official organ of the Samaj until 1881, when its name was changed to the *Liberal*, though the character and appearance of the paper still remain the same.

¹ See the *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. i. p. 126, and Vol. iii. p. 103.

Sen, confessed that the Samaj was making very slow progress, and assigned as reasons for this unsatisfactory state of things, among others, the pernicious influence of John Stuart Mill, and the efforts of Christian missionaries.¹ In 1874, the Indian Mirror, which has seldom been guilty of acknowledging anything unfavorable to the Samaj, even when ordinary eyes could see it plainly enough, contained the following brief sentences :

“ We have heard it said that the attendance in the Brahma mandir is now-a-days somewhat thin. Is it because the sermons are not so attractive as they ought to be? The matter demands investigation.” “ A series of half a dozen public lectures may revive the drooping spirit of the Brahma community in these days. Is it possible to organize a series at once ?

But perhaps the most emphatic and honest of all admissions occurred in a statement of Brahmist affairs which appeared in the columns of the Mirror, in the form of question and answer, during November and December 1875. We quote :

“ Q. Is the Brahma Samaj a creed or a spiritual force? A. A spiritual force. Q. Is it making much progress now-a-days? A. Indirectly, not directly. The Brahma Samaj fails to make converts from the ranks of Hinduism, but it effectively leavens Hindu society with its spirit. Educated India unconsciously imbibes its reforming influences. Q. Is the Brahma Samaj really a gigantic movement, such as some of its staunchest admirers represent it? A. No ; it is a small church, but the power of truth is in it. Q. Does Brahma life show continued progress? A. The Brahmas advance up to a certain point, and then they seem to recede. Q. Is it impossible to attain high spirituality? A. No ; many Brahmas attain it, but few retain it.”

To one who is familiar with the extravagant claims and the loud pretensions in which the Mirror has ever indulged

¹ We regret that we cannot quote at first-hand the letter alluded to. See the Indian Evangelical Review, Vol. ii. p. 122

when speaking of the prospects and prosperity of the Brahma Samaj, the modest air of these quotations will be a complete demonstration of the low estate of the Samaj at the time when they were written. The causes for this decay of power and interest, detected by outsiders and confessed by Brahmists, are not far to seek. To begin with, the doctrines of the Samaj are not such as of themselves to have power over the human heart. It was therefore necessary to fall back on the enthusiasm evoked by a personal leader. There is no fact which the entire history of the movement makes more emphatic than this. But Keshab Chandra Sen, though attaching to himself by very strong bonds of personal friendship and warm admiration, sometimes degenerating into servility, certain individuals in the society, allowed himself, unfortunately for his own cause, to speak and act in a manner which alienated others; among these latter were some strong and intelligent minds. The fact is, the Babu was too ambitious; he wanted to be not merely the leader of the Samaj, but its sole and irresponsible autocrat. There were some among his followers who would no more question his dictum on any subject than a devout Catholic would an *ex cathedra* decision from the Vatican. He wished to establish the same supremacy over all—to control the entire Samaj, to manage all its affairs, and to direct all its operations. And not this alone; he sought to make himself the only source of its dogmatic teaching, and to be recognized as such by the whole membership of the society. This claim, perhaps never explicitly made in so many words, yet underlies many of his addresses, and crops out unmistakably in numerous passages.

Events occurred in 1874 which illustrate what has now been affirmed in a remarkable manner. It was stated, in that year, that, in spite of their piety and zeal in the propagation of their faith, the members of the Samaj were seriously lacking “in some of the most important points of practical duty, such as obedience to their minister (Keshab Babu) and self-denial in contributing money towards the keeping of their church in repair. They not only refused to give any-

thing towards the liquidation of the debt with which their church was still saddled, but they would not even help in defraying current expenses." The attempt was made to "organize a congregation" which should be more faithful. The meeting called for the purpose (in September 1874) consisted of four hundred persons, under the presidency of Babu Keshab Chandra himself. After five hours of hot discussion, it was at last resolved, among other things, "(1) That all religious matters and all responsibility for the spiritual improvement of the worshippers should be intrusted to the hands of the minister; (2) that those among the Brahmists that are not guilty of the most serious and hateful crimes, that believe in the fundamental truths of Brahminism, and regularly join in the service of the Brahma Mandir of India, are eligible as members [i.e. of the proposed congregation], on condition of their promising to pay four annas [about twelve cents] *per mensem*, or three rupees yearly [\$1.50] towards the expenses of said mandir." A congregation was then formed consisting of forty-six bona fide members.¹

That his effort to make himself the source of religious opinion and doctrine for the Samaj, as well as its executive head, disgusted and alienated some of its members from Keshab Chandra Sen is shown by the fact, among others, that a new periodical was started in 1874 to oppose him, called the *Liberal*. It was edited by an influential enemy of the minister's pretensions and claims. The life of this magazine, it is true, was brief and feeble; nor did its management while it lasted display much ability. But the mere fact of its existence was significant, and the object of its promoters has since been taken up and carried on by other and better agencies.

In an early issue the *Liberal* fell upon the Babu's pet

¹ Report for 1874 of the Calcutta Church Missionary Association. The quotations in this extract we presume to be from some Brahmist publication, but unfortunately we cannot verify the reference. See the *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 102.

theory of inspiration.¹ The writer complained that utterances were put forth with "a degree of dogmatism that cannot fail to be offensive to every reasonable being." Some, he said, deemed it their "duty to save a benighted world by the evolutions of our [their] inspired consciousness. . . . Inspiration," continues the writer, "is everything with us now-a-days." He ridicules the manner in which all the little details of management in the Samaj's affairs, as well as the more important matters of religious faith and the interpretation of sacred books, were said to be settled by an appeal to inspiration; and he scoffs at the thought that God, having for so many centuries denied to men the privilege of direct communication, should now "kindly renew it with a few chosen souls of South Bengal." Between the lines we read the name of Sen as the object of these attacks and ridicule. But more unkindly still, the Liberal went on to affirm that "it is not unoften (*sic*) that a man is observed to mistake the workings of his own imagination for the whisperings of the Divine Spirit." The writer saw and struck with unerring aim the weak place in Keshab's theory; but the *Mirror* was on hand with its reply. When any individual is not properly inspired (as doubtless many among the Brahma Samaj were not), then his plain duty was to become loyally subject to the accredited individuals, that is, to Keshab Chandra Sen. These incidents are only straws showing which way the wind was blowing. Afterwards, as we shall see, the opposition to Keshab's extreme and arbitrary claims grew to a magnitude which, with other causes, was sufficient to rend the Samaj in twain.

But this was not all. While the doctrines of the Samaj were not sufficiently vigorous of themselves to attract and hold a large and enthusiastic body of believers, they were yet too radical to gain a wide acceptance among timid and conservative Hindus. In short, Babu Keshab Chandra Sen was not enough of a Christian to work a widespread spiritual reformation; but he was too much of a Christian to please

¹ *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 241

his countrymen. The Brahma Samaj had some of the disadvantages with which the gospel appears in the eyes of Hindus, but none of its power. Thus, while the Babu's arbitrary assumption of authority, both spiritual and temporal, was alienating some of his followers, his doctrines were such as to fail of winning new recruits. In this dilemma what was to be done?

Doubtless the Brahmist leader pondered long and earnestly on this subject. The subsequent history of the Samaj indicates that he considered it wise to launch off on a most astonishing career of sensationalism. Since the year 1875 he has sprung so many novelties upon the religious public of Calcutta, he has started off on so many new tacks,—the development of the Samaj has been so peculiar, sometimes so grotesque,—that the only inference to be drawn is that its leader had determined to spare no pains and leave untried no means to keep himself and his society prominently before the public, to win notoriety, and if possible to gain a following. At the same time, we would not imply that he lost sight of the nobler motives on which he had been acting before, or that he gave up his efforts to benefit his countrymen both religiously, socially, and morally. He did not abandon his principles; he was too honest for that. He was too deeply attached to the character of Jesus Christ to deny his admiration for him simply for the sake of popularity; yet it cannot be questioned that for several years he seemed to be trying to hold fast to his doctrines and to maintain his adhesion to Christ, while also endeavoring to make these things look unobjectionable to the jealous eyes of Hindus, among whom he was bidding for a large and popular following. He undertook—at least, that is what he appears to have done—to Hinduize his principles and his methods. Every doctrine which he valued did he study to put before the people in an Eastern dress, or, better still, to make the public believe that his were but the old familiar dogmas of the Vedic and post-Vedic times, with the overlying growths and excrescences of modern superstition purged away. In

managing the devotional element in the Samaj he has tried to introduce and make prominent such acts and exercises as have long been familiar to Hindus and sanctioned by the venerable usage of Hindu saints. He has sometimes even patted idolatry directly on the back by introducing into his prayers and devout meditations, published from time to time in the *Indian Mirror*, the name of some Hindu deity, or by unfolding and extolling what he would call the real spiritual meaning underlying much of the modern polytheism of Bengal. He would improve the occasion of some great Hindu festival in honor of Kali, the blood-thirsty monster of Indian mythology, to point out the ennobling truths which the festival was intended to illustrate. He has never ceased to extol the ancient worthies of India. He has taken special pains to develop in the Samaj that asceticism which is so prominent a feature of earnest religious life in India. He has delighted to represent Jesus Christ as an ascetic, and has been very careful to point out that he was an Oriental, although modern Christianity has converted him into an Occidental, and has tortured his eastern teaching into a western gospel which would hardly be recognized by its founder.¹ He has declared that to the reception of Christ by India, so large a portion of his native East, the missionaries of Western lands are themselves the greatest obstacle.²

¹ See the *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. vii. p. 1 ff.

² His treatment of our Saviour has been even worse than this. Witness the following extraordinary effusion, which appeared in the "devotional" department of the *Indian Mirror* in 1879: "Father, I do not know whether thou wilt scold me or reward me for what I did the other day. But I must tell thee what I did. I have two notable weaknesses. Omniscient Lord, thou knowest them. I am inquisitive, and I am very fond of indulging in high themes. Actuated by these feelings and sentiments, I now and then go secretly to the mansions above to see what thy beloved saints are doing. Not being a saint myself I am not allowed to enter the main gate of the glorious abode. I, therefore, sat upon the wings of meditation, and was thus enabled to soar very far into the regions above. There I found, O Supreme Spirit, that I had gone beyond the limits of the world and of time, and was already in the vast domain of eternity. Suddenly a crowd of saintly devotees appeared before me amid a blaze of light with two towering spirits in their midst, whom I happened to recognize at once. Father, how I rejoiced to see Jesus and the prophet of Nuddea meeting together

These Hinduizing tendencies are now openly confessed. "If the movement of Keshab Chandra Sen," wrote one of his chief assistants in 1879, "is becoming more Hinduized, it is also becoming more Christianized. Christ's life and character are steadily growing to be a ruling power in the Brahma Samaj of India. Keshab Chandra Sen's recent lectures have alarmed some of his friends and followers by their remarkable partiality for Christian teaching and doctrine as to the drift and destiny of the church which he leads."¹ Keshab Chandra himself declares that he has only followed the leading of the Divine Spirit. Let us now notice this process of "Hinduization" in some of its details.

At the Brahmist anniversary held early in 1876 Keshab Chandra delivered an address on *Our Faith and Our Experience*.² In this address he labors hard to show that

to dine in thy house. They had a goodly repast with the rich provisions thy heavenly storehouse supplied. Love, purity, and joy in abundance; and then embracing each other they danced joyfully, drinking at intervals the nectar of thy sweet love, till at last both fell senseless in true ecstasy, and thy arms lifted them and pressed them to thy bosom. The scene gladdened me, O my God, and I was unwilling to come away from so charming and fascinating a sight. Bless those prophets, O Lord, and grant that those blessed and happy spirits may, from their heavenly abode, send chastening influences to me and those who are near and dear to me." The "prophet of Nuddea" is Chaitanya, a Hindu reformer and enthusiast of the sect of Vishnu worshippers, who flourished a few centuries ago.

¹ Quoted by the Indian Evangelical Review, Vol. vii. p. 2, from an article in the Brahma Quarterly Review. This latter periodical was started in 1879. It was edited by Babu Pratap Chandra Mazumdar. Its publication has now, we believe, been suspended.

² The pastor of one of the European churches of Calcutta heard the address and wrote as follows about its author: "Of this I felt sure while listening to Keshab on Saturday, that the devout spirit, the spiritual longing after God and likeness to him, the ascription to God of those attributes which constitute his divine glory and excellence — all this and much more made me feel in the presence of as real a Christian as I ever expected to meet with. I use the term 'Christian,' because there is really no other that can express the special and distinctive character of the religious teachings and feelings expressed by Keshab. If Keshab rejects that name for 'Brahmo,' or anything else, I do not much care; for the religion of the New Testament is not defined exactly by a name, but by a belief and a life. But all that is really distinctive of the religion of Jesus — the fatherly love of God to his human children, his all-pervading presence with them, the power and love of Christ that saves men from sin, and the Divine

his faith and doctrines are essentially Indian ; the practical inference intended, though not stated, being of course this — that no Hindu should hesitate, through the fear so characteristic of his countrymen of new and strange things, to join the Samaj. According to an analysis of the address made by the Calcutta pastor just quoted, the Babu labored to show that the Christian doctrine, or faith, concerning the Holy Spirit, as taught by the New Testament, is “ contained, if anything in a better and purer form, in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Upanishads, and has, therefore, a peculiar claim upon the people of India. And thus he undertakes to prove that ‘ our faith ’ has not developed under Christian influences, and does not owe its origin to Christianity, or to any system which is foreign to India, but being directly traceable to the sacred books of Hindustan, is of peculiarly Indian origin.”¹

We hope that it is needless for us to remind any reader who has followed our narrative thus far, that this claim of the Babu is diametrically opposed to historic fact. But such was his first effort at “ Hinduization.” His second followed hard upon the first. The address was delivered in January 1876. In February he published a new doctrine, and set in operation a new mode of Brahmist discipline. The doctrine was that of the “ classification of devotees ” ; and the proposed discipline consisted in allotting to the several classes of devotees, constituted after a certain spiritualized Hindu model, and called by names familiar to religious persons of that faith, different lines of service and devotion, each of which was supposed to be peculiarly adapted to the spiritual and religious character of the individuals to whom it was assigned, and which they were specially to follow during their lives. Two Brahmists were at once initiated into the

Spirit that sanctifies the soul — all these truths came out in Keshab’s address as emphatically as if it had been delivered by a devout Protestant minister ; and were expressed, too, with that spiritual fervor which clearly showed that the religion of Jesus, above all others, had become the very life and power of his spiritual nature.” — *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 531.

¹ *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 531.

new course of religious life with ceremonies which were meant to be imposing, and possibly were so. One of these devotees was introduced to the life of a *Bhakta* (devout worshipper) and the other to that of a *Yogi* (one who communes with and is spiritually joined to God). In his charge to the neophytes "the minister" bade the former to bear in mind that "inebriation in God is to be the great condition to which you aspire"; and the other was told that his aspiration "ought to be to commune with God always in all places and under all circumstances, with your eyes shut, as well as with your eyes open."¹ A woman was afterwards initiated as a *Sebak* (servant). We were further told that these three classes of Brahmist devotees "represented the soul, the heart, and the will," aiming respectively at "union with God, passionate attachment to God, and obedience to God."²

The new scheme of discipline was quite a complicated one, and a number of articles appeared in the *Indian Mirror* in explanation of it, and of the Hindu terms used in connection with it, which the *Mirror*, for the benefit of more enlightened minds, was careful to explain were not used in their real Hindu sense, but only because no other words were at hand to express what was intended! The plan, if there was one, failed. Hindus were not to be caught with such chaff, or beguiled into thinking that the Samaj was teaching a better form of their own religion just because its leader had begun to talk about Bhakti and Yoga. The scheme was not taken up with any enthusiasm by the Samaj in general; sympathizers without remonstrated against it; it attracted no new converts. No other initiations have ever taken place that we are aware of; certainly none have been made public; and it is not in the nature of Babu Keshab Chandra Sen to do such things secretly. So far as we have seen, the thing has not been alluded to by Brahmist writers

¹ *Indian Evangelical Review*, Vol. iii. p. 533.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. iii. p. 534.

for the past six years, — save occasionally by the Babu himself.

On the other hand, evidences are again seen of declining vigor. A member of the Samaj writes to the *Mirror* complaining of the “lethargy” in the society; not due, in his own choice phraseology, to the “deep spirituality into which the leaders of the Samaj have dived,” but to the “isolation and inactivity” of those leaders. Another Samajist writes to the *Lucknow Witness*, a Christian paper, in much the same strain. The educated young men, he complains, do not look on the Samaj with favor; its work in Calcutta is feebly prosecuted; there is neither “energy, enthusiasm, organization, preaching, or lecturing.” This was in the year 1877. For some reason, Babu Keshab Chandra kept himself in retirement; and when he disappeared, the Samaj disappeared.

His seclusion was at last invaded. Keshab Chandra was thrust suddenly forward into prominent notice, and that too in a manner neither pleasant nor creditable. He was obliged to appear, not as a zealous reformer, but as an apologist, making lame excuses for his own departure from those very principles which he had all along most strenuously upheld and most eloquently defended.

No one had spoken more earnestly than he in behalf of down-trodden and degraded woman in his own country. He had worked and written to secure social reform; he had advocated a change — most necessary, though to conservative India most unwelcome — in marriage customs; he had supported a new marriage law for Brahmists, according to the terms of which no girl of a Brahmist family could be married under the age of fourteen. The passage of this measure (in 1866 we believe, or soon after) was very largely due to his unwearied efforts. But in the closing months of 1877 the young native ruler of Kuch Bihar, one of the protected states of India lying north of Calcutta, applied for the hand in marriage of Babu Keshab Chandra Sen's daughter. He was a Hindu, and could be legally married only by Hindu rites, which no good Brahmist could countenance. More-

over the young lady was only thirteen,— one year below the minimum prescribed by the Brahminist marriage act. The Babu's temptation was a great one. Here was a match within his reach of the most attractive kind — a match placing his daughter at once in the very highest ranks of Indian aristocracy. He could not resist; he allowed his daughter to be married. A storm of indignation was the result of this act of weakness. The Samaj was rent by it. Protests poured in from half the branch Samajes of India. Indignation meetings were held. Nothing was too hard or too bitter, for the opposing party to say or do to express their displeasure. In some cases they indulged in language and actions which were simply rowdyish. It was clear that Babu Keshab Chandra Sen was warmly hated by a large party in the Samaj. The tone of the *Mirror* in reply was equally bitter though within the limits of decency. The Babu bore it all with great dignity, but was not moved from his purpose. He declared that it was the will of God that his daughter should be married to the young Rajah. He had had a revelation from heaven to that effect; what more was wanted? Was not he inspired? But this little dodge of inspiration had been tried once too often; and although the *Mirror* afterwards came out with a very temperate and not at all unreasonable defence of the marriage, yet the mischief had been done. It was in vain that the Babu's organ pleaded that the marriage ceremonies were after all only a formal betrothal, and that the young couple were not to live together — as they did not — for many months to come; ¹ it was useless for him to explain, as he did, that all idolatrous ceremonies had been definitely forbidden by a written agreement, and if a few such objectional ceremonies had been secretly performed — as seems to have been the case,— it was in direct contravention of the contract, and therefore a thing for which the Babu himself could not be held at all responsible; nothing could quell the angry passions of his opponents.

¹ The second ceremony occurred in October 1880, two years and seven months after the first. The parties did not cohabit until then.

The result was the second great split in the Brahma Samaj. A large party went off from the Brahma Samaj of India, as that body had years before gone off from the old Brahma Samaj, and started a new society under the name of the *Sadharan* (popular) Brahma Samaj. The significance of the word *Sadharan* in its title is, that the new body is to be governed by the popular voice, and not to be subject to the will of any one man. That is to say, the new Samaj has adopted the principles of Congregationalism, while the old practically maintains a very rigid form of Episcopacy.

This separation was due to deeper causes than the Babu's failure to live up to his principles in the matter of the Kuch Bihar marriage. Not one in a hundred of those who opposed him would have taken a course any different from his under similar circumstances, save that they would probably have made an opposition far less strenuous than his to any attempted violation of their principles. Consistency is not a virtue for which Brahmists are usually famous; but Keshab Chandra has exhibited much more of it than most of his followers. His inconsistency now was a convenient pretext. But the real reason was the opposition, which during all the recent years had been fermenting and gathering power, to the claims made by the Babu to inspiration and authority. We have already seen an earlier ebullition of this opposing spirit in the *Liberal*, which, all through its short and not very creditable career, offered the most bitter opposition to the claims and character of the ambitious Babu. We think that the editor of this periodical was one of the leaders in the new movement. A new weekly paper was at once started in opposition to the *Indian Mirror*; it was called the *Brahmo Public Opinion*, and has borne a high character, though never exhibiting the religious fervor which has marked the conduct of its rival. Nor has the new organization ever taken the religious stand which the influence of the devout Sen has helped the older to maintain; or exerted a tithe of the influence on the community which the Brahma Samaj of India has done, and is still doing.

The necessity now confronting the Babu, however, of doing something to retrieve his falling fortunes was greater than ever. Accordingly, it was but a few weeks after the performance of this marriage that the Babu came before the public with one of his great yearly addresses. The subject and the contents of this address furnish a curious illustration of the man's vanity. "Am I an inspired prophet?" was the modest wording of his theme; and one of his introductory sentences was as follows: "Fellow-countrymen and friends, again and again has India asked me — 'art thou an inspired prophet?'" "This question," he continues, "gathers force year after year, and its interest, like rising and swelling surges, rushes on from province to province, from town to town, and from presidency to presidency, till a purely personal question has assumed the formidable proportions of a national problem."¹ The spirit of these opening words pervades the entire address. The answer which he gave to the question of his inspiration was a doubtful one. Were we left merely to our own inferences from what he said of himself there could be no doubt as to his claims to inspiration. But in the sense in which he chose to use the word "prophet" (and above all men who ever wrote English he has been successful in using ordinary words in some new and unheard-of sense, which perpetually perplexes those who try to understand what he really means), he is not inspired. A prophet, in his use of the term, means a sinless messenger from heaven; and that he is not, and does not profess to be. But in the ordinary sense given to the word, he did unquestionably, in the address before us, claim prophetic inspiration.

This address was greeted throughout India with general ridicule. It added nothing either to the reputation (save for self-conceit) or the following of its author. Most people, indeed, instead of attending to his inquiry whether or no he were inspired, were rather inclined to ask another — Is the man insane, or is he a fool?

¹ Indian Evangelical Review, Vol. vi. p. 412.

The object of the address was partly, we think, to defend himself from the charge of inconsistency in connection with the marriage of his daughter by a virtual claim to inspiration, and partly to prepare the way for something more to come. Another step in the development of Brahminism was approaching.

It was during the latter part of the year 1878 that the Brahminist organ began to hint vaguely at some new and startling development for which in the not distant future India must be prepared. New light was to break forth; new power was to rest on Brahminism; a new day for India, for the world, was to dawn; and the Samaj was to be the herald of it. In short, a "new dispensation" was impending. For some weeks such indefinite premonitions of a coming glory abounded in the columns of the Mirror. No clear statement appeared. The object, however, was to arouse expectation. People were left to imagine what this was a new dispensation of, and what its characteristics were to be. Enough that it was to be something grand and new, and that India must get ready for it. And when at last the public mind had been sufficiently excited it pleased the Babu to declare that the day had dawned. The "new dispensation" was formally promulgated at the Brahminist anniversary in January 1879. And what was it? We will first let the Babu speak for himself. The following creed appeared in the first issue of the New Dispensation: "One God, one Scripture, one Church; Eternal Progress of the Soul; Communion of Prophets and Saints; Fatherhood and Motherhood of God; Brotherhood of Man and Sisterhood of Woman; Harmony of Knowledge and Holiness, Love and Work, Yoga and Asceticism in their Highest Development; Loyalty to Sovereign."

On December 11, 1881, appeared in the Sunday Mirror, as a reprint from the New Dispensation, a statement of the objects of the new movement. We make no apology for giving it entire:

"The 'new dispensation' is Heaven's gift to the world in the fulness of time. And Providence, in giving to a sinful world this heavenly faith, has certain deep and important objects to fulfil. Let us see what these

purposes are. It is the object of the Church of the New Dispensation:

1. To reconcile and harmonize the various systems of religion in the world.
2. To make all churches in the East and the West one undivided and universal church of God.
3. To trace the unity of all dispensations.
4. To trace the line of logical succession among all the prophets in ancient and modern times.
5. To reduce the truths of all scriptures to one eternal and unwritten scripture.
6. To establish universal brotherhood by uprooting caste.
7. To give a rational explanation of the symbolism and the sacramentalism in which the ideas of great minds are fossilized.
8. To construct the science of religion by adopting the comparative method.
9. To found Christ's kingdom of heaven.
10. To kill idolatry by taking its life and spirit out of it.
11. To explain pantheism, polytheism, and monotheism in relation to each other.
12. To explain the mystery of the Trinity, and to show Unity in Trinity.
13. To reconcile ancient faith and modern science.
14. To reconcile philosophy and inspiration.
15. To reconcile asceticism and civilization.
16. To reconcile pure Hinduism and pure Christianity.
17. To harmonize the East and the West, Asia and Europe, antiquity and modern thought.
18. To keep ever open the portals of Heaven's inspiration.
19. To establish the doctrines of atonement, incarnation, communion of saints, scriptural infallibility, apostolical succession, yoga, and inspiration upon a new basis.
20. To turn men's hearts from physical to moral miracles.
21. To make science supersede supernaturalism.
22. To preach Christ as the Son of God, as the Logos in all prophets before and after him.
23. To honor Socrates as the teacher of self-knowledge, Moses as the teacher of Old Testament ethics, Buddha as the teacher of Nirvana, Muhammad as the teacher of the unity of God, Chaitanya as the teacher of loving devotion.
24. To educate man and woman, and give them a sweet and heavenly home.
25. To bring down religion from the clouds to man's daily life on earth.
26. To make the home and the bank as sacred as the church.
27. To put down all manner of sin and promote all manner of purity by the power of prayer.
28. To exalt purity above doctrine, life above profession, spirit above letter."

Again, New Dispensation, March 19, 1882:

"What is the 'new dispensation'? It is sowing pure Theism, or the acknowledgment and worship of the one true God. How does it differ from the ordinary theism of the day? It believes in active and inspiring Providence, who reveals, commands, guides, and adapts events and circumstances to the general as well as special needs of human life. Does the 'new dispensation' believe in scriptures? Yes; it believes in the scriptures of all nations, subject always to the condition that the letter killeth, and the spirit giveth life. It believes that the scriptures contain the suggestion or confirmation of all truth. But does the 'new dispensation' preach the truths contained only in these scriptures? No. It

receives truth from the spirit within the soul of man through prayer, communion, and meditation. God teaches truth at first hand, and then confirms it by the records of revelation and spiritual life in the scriptures. The 'new dispensation' believes in the immediate vision and communication of truth. How does the 'new dispensation' differ from rationalism? Rationalism is that form of Theism which makes intellect the test of all truth. The 'new dispensation' subordinates the intellect to faith in the words that proceed out of the mouth of God. How are these words perceived? They are perceived in conscience, and heard by the ear of faith. Yet faith is always reasonable. It conforms to highest reason, which afterwards bears out its results and sanctions it. Faith is the reception of supreme reason."

One of the most characteristic of the great Brahmist's utterances appeared in the New Dispensation for July 30, 1882: "What is the 'new dispensation'?"

"It is the return of exiled Buddhism to India. It is Hindustan's pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It is the union of the Vedas and the Puranas. It is a joint festival of Hindu and Muhammadan devotees. It is a meeting-place for *amirs* and *faqirs*. It is the old man's return to childhood. It is the reconciliation of reason and faith after centuries of separation. It is an international exhibition of whatsoever is excellent in different countries and climes. It is the encyclopaedia of universal religion. It is all nations singing in unison under the grand Band Master. It is heaven's return visit to the earth. It is the resurrection of ancient prophets and apostles. It is Christ's second advent. It is Asia's protest against Europe's agnosticism. It is Europe's protest against Asia's mysticism. It is the worship of Harmony. It is the equilibrium of forces in the spirit-world. It is the balance of power among the reigning prophet chiefs of the world. It is the science of religion. It is the reconciliation of apparent contradictions. It is the invisible Westminster Abbey, where the enmities of fifty generations lie buried and forgotten. It is the philosophy of the Trinity. It is the Third Testament. It is the advent of the promised Comforter."

After reading this astonishing production there might still be doubt as to what the "new dispensation" really is, but there could be none as to the immensity of its pretensions. And if there were any, it would be forever dispelled by the perusal of the extract which follows, taken from the same paper, under date of July 9, 1882:

"The 'new dispensation' is a science, the most prodigious, manifold, and essential of all sciences. It is destined to explain material and spiritual philosophy alike. It is destined to be the harmony of all systems, whether

of thought or morals, laws, observations, or faith. Its scope is endless; its ambition is as high as eternity itself. We are but lisping its alphabet; we are but gathering sea-weeds before its illimitable ocean. Its fulness is in the future; its church is in unborn generations; its community is in the best and wisest of every nation."

The principle of eclecticism lies at the basis of the "new dispensation." But not this alone. Every religion, says Sen, not merely contains somewhat of truth, which an intelligent eclecticism will borrow, but is itself true, though not, perhaps, the whole truth. All the different religions of the world have apprehended God truly, though imperfectly. One, for instance, has appreciated the fact that he is a God of power, and in its theology has made that attribute prominent, to the exclusion of others no less really divine. Another, again, has apprehended and worshipped him as a loving God; another, in some other way, under some name peculiar to itself, and by the help gained from the knowledge of some other attribute. Starting from this premise, Keshab Chandra Sen conceives it to be the province of the "new dispensation" to learn from each of the religions or previous dispensations of the world that which it can teach of the divine character; and thus, from these fragmentary revelations to construct a perfect theology, and to put together into an adequate system of worship appropriate to a thoroughly apprehended Deity the various *dissecta membra* of doctrine, of ritual, and of adoration derived from Hinduism, from Buddhism, from the Quran, and from the Bible.

But alongside of this principle of the unity and harmony of all religions, which is to be realized by the "new dispensation," there is another which must not be lost sight of; it is our old friend — the doctrine of Brahmic "inspiration." It is this power of inspiration which enables the Brahmist to distinguish the true from the false among the religions of the world, to discern unerringly the "soul of good," even in ceremonies and rituals and doctrines which are denounced as wrong, and to incorporate the former into his own system, while rejecting the latter. Thus is he able to see how it is that Hinduism and Muhammadanism and Buddhism and

Christianity are all true, and to understand the manner in which each contributes its quota of excellence to the one world-faith which it is to be the high mission of the "new dispensation" to declare. The "little systems"—Brahmanism, Parsiism, Christianity, and the rest, have yielded each its "broken light," which, under the guidance of inspiration, Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers are to show to the world as blending in the larger radiance and perfect light of their eclectic religion. Surely an attractive mission!

A few extracts in illustration of what we have stated :

"The 'new dispensation' has brought us to a distinctively new and hopeful position. It has supplanted reason, and given us the authority of the Divine voice to aid us in the discovery of truths. We are enabled by it to receive the truths of other faiths as scripture truths, infallible as God, and reject errors with the same certainty with which we reject fallacies in logic or blunders in mathematical demonstrations. Reason may err, but the voice of God in the soul can never err. In rejecting the reasoning faculties of man, and in accepting divine voice as our guide in the search after truth, the 'new dispensation' has accepted the only safe position which it is possible for a religion to occupy. It speaks with the voice of authority, and its decrees are unalterable as Heaven."—*Mirror*, June 26, 1881.

"How would you distinguish between the human and the divine in prophets? Just as we distinguish truth from error, virtue from vice. Weakness, impurity, doubt, despair, selfishness, these represent the human side of prophets. Their divine side is represented by inspiration, authority, genius, superhuman energy, faith, love, hope, communion, and joy. Whatever is good is of God; all the rest belongs to man. Is inspiration possible to all men? If so what would be the necessity for prophets? Yes, inspiration is possible to all men, and there are facts in our individual lives which bear testimony to this. Ordinary men's inspiration cannot, however, revolutionize society or create new life in nations. For such purposes prophets are needful."—*Ibid.*, May 22, 1881.

Thus then the adherents of the "new dispensation" are taught to regard themselves as—at least in some measure—"inspired," while from time to time prophets appear on earth in whom the gift more largely dwells. Yet it would seem that even the utterances of these more highly inspired prophets must first be tested in the less inspired consciousness of each individual, before being received by him as true.

To show still further how this notion of inspiration, shading gradually into that of prophetic authority, is built into the very framework of the "new dispensation," we quote (with our own comments) a passage in which the origin of the new movement is reviewed :

"Again the sound of the drum was heard in our church, and we were threatened with another rupture. (This refers to the opposition to Sen in 1878, caused by the marriage of his daughter). The Lord demanded even larger faith and more perfect devotion (this is equivalent to saying that Keshab Chandra was determined to have his own way in everything); these hundreds persistently refused to give (i.e. they declined to acknowledge the papacy of their would-be ruler). They said they would serve God, but according to their own interpretation of his will. In the inner working of the Holy Spirit they had no faith, and they defiantly denied the doctrine of inspiration, or *Adesh* (that is, they declined to acknowledge that the leader of the Samaj spoke ever with divine authority, and had the audacity to believe, in opposition to him, that they could see as well what was right as he could). We instantly declared war against this species of infidelity (in Keshab Chandra), and in close combat we at last achieved signal victory over our antagonists. (This is a euphemistic way of saying that the dissenters were not to be convinced of Sen's inspired authority, and, rather than be any longer subject to his domination, the larger part of the membership of the Samaj seceded, as Sen himself and his followers had done twelve years before, and set up a new society of their own. There being now no one left in the Samaj except Sen's devoted followers and profound admirers, that gentleman found it quite easy to do what he liked.) Having now triumphed over all opposition, we joyfully sounded the conch-shell of peace, and built unto our dear God the new city and new tabernacle of the 'new dispensation.' The protesting Brahmas protest against the Holy Spirit, and regard divine inspiration (especially when claimed by Keshab Chandra Sen) or command as a lie. But, glory be unto God, the 'new dispensation' worships the Father, honors the Son, and lives in the inspiration of the Holy Ghost."—*Mirror*, June 12, 1881.

With the advent of the "new dispensation," however, the promulgation of startling novelties, both of doctrine and of worship, by no means ceased. On the other hand, Keshab Chandra's ingenuity seems rather to have been stimulated to fresh activity than otherwise. We have time only to glance at some of the bits of sensationalism which he has introduced since the proclamation of the "new dispensation."

First, we believe, was the discovery, loudly trumpeted, that one side of the divine character had been surprisingly overlooked in the worship of the world. The devout had dwelt too exclusively upon the fatherhood of God; they had forgotten that God is also our mother. Forthwith the columns of the *Mirror* were crowded with articles on the maternal side of the divine nature, with pious contemplations of the motherhood of God, and with prayers to the heavenly mother. The new doctrine was paraded as one peculiarly adapted to India; in fact, was it not a doctrine on which the religious minds among the Hindus had long pondered, and which was symbolized in the wide-spread worship of Kali, or Durga, or Bhawani—the blood-thirsty wife of the god Siva? This Kali-worship has now, unfortunately, become encrusted with a vast mass of superstition, and is bad, and only bad in its present influence; but in a purer and better age it was representative of this great truth of the divine maternity; and this it is now the privilege of the “new dispensation” to recall. For some weeks the motherhood of God was a leading subject of the Babu’s utterances. The *Mirror* was full of it. Public meetings were held, hymns were composed and sung, in honor of the divine maternity; and in Brahmist processions the banner of the “divine mother” was borne through the streets of Calcutta. For a time the Samaj was given up to a species of religious adoration resembling somewhat a refined Kali-worship, somewhat the Mariolatry of Rome.¹

Next came a system of pilgrimages. The religious Hindu has ever been a pilgrim. He is wont to gird up his loins and start off to some distant shrine, a thousand miles away, perhaps, whence he cannot return for months. Instead of doing this, Keshab Chandra Sen conducted his followers not on earthly journeys, attended with sore weariness and grievous discomfort of the flesh, but on journeys made only in

¹ As long ago as 1870, during his visit to England, he had spoken of God as a mother: “Surely we can love him who is the mother of mothers, and the father of fathers.”—*English Visit*, p. 326. Theodore Parker’s influence is very apparent here.

spirit and imagination to the sages and saints of antiquity. First we have a pilgrimage to Chaitanya — the old Vaishnavite reformer of Bengal ; then one to Muhammad, to Buddha, to Socrates, and at last one to Christ. The pilgrims are ushered into an apartment which they are told is the abiding place of the saint ; extracts from his writings are read to them, embodying his most characteristic teachings ; a lecture is delivered descriptive of his life and character ; and a series of appropriate contemplations are read, by which it is sought to awaken in the minds of the pilgrims sympathy with his spirit and instructions ; prayers are offered that the hearts of the pilgrims may imbibe the peculiar spiritual excellences for which the object of their contemplations was noted, and so the "pilgrimage" ends. It will be noticed that the only thing in all this which is at all new, is the clap-trap with which the act of contemplating the virtues and example of departed worthies is invested.

But as the Babu declared that the "new dispensation" was the reconciliation of all religions, it was necessary that some of the ceremonies to be incorporated into its worship should be drawn from other sources than Hinduism. It was not long therefore ere the two sacraments of Christianity were travestied, and baptism and the Lord's supper, with the variations which were needful to adapt them to his purpose, were included among the ceremonies of Brahminism ; how often they are practically observed we cannot say ; we have only seen their performance recorded once in the columns of the New Dispensation. Almost immediately after the first celebration of the Lord's supper, we think it was, he reverted once more to ancient Hinduism, and we see the Brahmists engaging under Keshab Chandra's direction, in the Hom ceremony, — one of the sacrificial rites of olden times, in which the fire is addressed as the visible symbol of Deity. The Babu took care that his performance of the ceremony should not, as that of Hinduism has, degenerate into actual worship of the fire, and that the symbolical import of it should be kept prominent ; yet its true Hindu origin and significance

are allowed to be equally prominent. A later novelty still has been the "dance of the new dispensation," in which Keshab Chandra with his devotees danced lustily before the Lord, after the manner of king David. After that, he prepared and caused to be acted the "drama of the new dispensation." In this his early love of dramatic entertainment found indulgence. We cannot afford space for more than a mere enumeration of these novelties; neither, it must be confessed, have we even mentioned them all. As to them all, we can only say that they do not look to us like the normal and healthy developments of a great system of religious thought destined to revolutionize society. They look still less as if they had been prompted by the inspiration of the Spirit of God,—as Sen declares they all have been. They look much more like the tricks of a shrewd demagogue, or the devices of a crafty ingenuity to get up something new, and create a sensation.

To us one thing at least is clearly evident, — the infallible inspiration enjoyed by Keshab Chandra may perhaps enable *him* to see that all the different faiths of the world are every one true; but it certainly has not yet enabled him to prove it to any one else. He has been very prolific in promises that he is going to show how Hinduism harmonizes with Christianity, and both of them with everything else; he has made the most extravagant claims for the "new dispensation," as being the divinely appointed synthesis of all religions; but we have yet to see the first attempt to explain the process by which it is so, or to reconcile the differences which the crudest scholarship detects between any two of the religions of mankind. Thus far the Babu's essential harmony of all faiths, or mingling of all previous dispensations in the "new dispensation," exists nowhere save in his own somewhat bombastic orations and articles. The only movement in the direction of keeping his promises and making good his pretensions, that we can see, has been the adoption into the worship of that portion of the Samaj which remains under his autocratic rule of certain ceremonies derived mostly from

Hinduism, though sometimes from Christianity, which he takes care to spiritualize in a manner agreeable to his own notions of what they ought to mean; and in his attempt, under the name of "pilgrimages," to copy the excellences and to imbibe the fervor of devout men everywhere.

The fact is, Babu Keshab Chandra Sen is a mystic; he apprehends religion only emotionally. For its intellectual aspect, as it comes before the mind clothed in doctrinal statement, he cares but little. He has been profoundly impressed — as who has not? — with the moral exaltation of Socrates, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, and of Buddha; with the devoutness of Chaitanya; with the intense earnestness of Muhammad in the best days of his religious life; the Hebrew prophets and the Christian apostles receive his admiration for similar reasons. Finding thus in men of widely diverse faiths a certain spirit of religious devotion which everywhere bears the same characteristics, he at once leaps to the conclusion that all the different forms and outward ceremonies in which they expressed that feeling are equally valuable and genuine vehicles of religious emotion, and straightway seeks to incorporate them all into his own church. He does not discriminate between the inner spirit of the worshipper, and the outward means of its expression; and thinks, that because the first is genuine and constant therefore the last also are for all time alike useful. He fails to see that while the inner spirit may remain constant the modes of its manifestation must and will vary, and adapt themselves to the varying conditions of culture and education and society. He appears to think that by inventing a species of religious worship in which shall be represented the quiescence of Buddhism and the rapt contemplation of Chaitanya and the ceremonies of Hinduism and the sacraments of Christianity, he has performed his promise of showing the essential oneness of these different faiths, and of bringing them all together into a "new dispensation." And so perhaps he might, if religion were nothing other than ceremony, or if the ceremonies of one age or of one religion were necessarily universal and

adequate expressions of that religious spirit which is everywhere present in humanity, and were hence adapted for every age and every state of society. The fact is overlooked that men outgrow the forms wherein the life within is clothed, just as their bodies do their clothes. The "new dispensation" is in danger of becoming a collection of the cast-off garments of ancient religions — a cult composed of ceremonies which are of no more value than the outgrown and discarded shells of the crustacean dwellers in our bays and harbors.

It is to be noticed, further, that the devout men whose characters and example exert the most influence over Keshab Chandra Sen are remarkable rather for their opposition to current modes of religious thought and worship than for the development of their own piety according to them. Muhammad, Socrates, Gautama Buddha, and Chaitanya were all reformers. They all protested against the religions which they found in vogue. The religious principle within them as individuals was too strong and too pure to be confined within the limits imposed by the faulty systems under which they were educated. Their fervid piety existed rather in spite of than because of the religions professed around them. This proves much for the permanence and similarity of the religious instinct in mankind, but nothing for the unity of the several religious systems of the world. We most gladly acknowledge this oneness of the religious sentiment; we deny that it proves, as Sen seems to think it does, the essential harmony of the external modes by which it has sought to manifest itself. The unity of all religions is not to be demonstrated by inventing a mongrel system of worship composed of ceremonies borrowed from them all, nor yet by trying to imitate the excellences and to practise the fervor of the devout souls whose lives adorn the histories of all. The Babu has demonstrated nothing. He has only called attention to the fact, which everybody who knows anything is perfectly well aware of already, that in every age and in all religions there have been devout worshippers

of God—holy men whose lives and actions have borne witness to the universality of the religious faculty in men.

Keshab Chandra Sen's religious and intellectual life has been moulded by diverse influences. We have seen that in his early days he was a member of a Hindu family where were practised with great assiduity, after the strictest customs of his people, the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu religion. The family were followers of Chaitanya, the great reformer, whose peculiar mysticism has permeated Bengal. Keshab's entire religious experience has been affected by this mysticism, imbibed in his earliest and most susceptible years. Later he received an intellectual impulse, from contact with Western ideas, which reacted both on his moral and spiritual life. And when he began to read the Bible, and became familiar with the character of Christ, he became subject to the last and in some respects the strongest of all the influences which have moulded his character and been reflected in the history of the society over which he now presides. In addition to all, there is in his mind a sentiment of patriotism which has ever led him to exaggerate the excellence of whatever is peculiarly Hindu, and to affect a certain lofty disparagement of Christianity, which he stigmatizes as "Western." The influences which have formed his character and determined his religious experience have been thus varied in their source and their nature; the motives by which his actions have been guided have been no less so. At one time we cannot help according to him the praise of a pure and exalted philanthropy and the admiration due to an intense and genuine religious devotion; at another time he acts on a plane no higher than that of a demagogue, devises tricks to entrap unthinking followers which would do credit to the manager of a circus, or schemes for personal authority like a modern politician. At one time, again, our attention is attracted and our admiration is excited, no less by the height of his eloquence than by the fervor and depth of his religious emotion, as he utters words which glow with love and faith in Christ; soon we can hardly restrain our laughter

at some description of a "pilgrimage" or other Brahmist ceremony, in which bathos and bombast are curiously mingled. Yet on the whole we cannot withhold, and we do not wish to withhold, from Keshab Chandra Sen our respect and our admiration. In spite of faults and foibles,— which in some cases are mere amiable weaknesses, in others eccentricities, and in a few cases radical defects of character,— he stands before us as a strong, sincere man, of unquestioned ability and influence, pure in heart and upright in conduct, intense and fervid in his religious life, drawing deeply into his own spirit the spiritual influences which come from the character of Jesus Christ, and conscientiously trying to elevate and benefit his countrymen. While regretting what seem to us to be his faults and his follies, we can yet be grateful for the strength of the good that there is in him, and can rejoice in what he is, though wishing he were more.

The history which we have now, in these two articles, reviewed is identical with the history of three men who have been the chief factors in it. Without Ram Mahan Rai the Brahma Samaj would not have existed; without Debendranath Tagore its organization would not have been perfected; and it waited for Keshab Chandra Sen to lead it in the path of its later developments. In the time of the first the Samaj was essentially Vedic, though nominally eclectic; the second gave it shape, directed its earlier activities, and freed it from the incubus of Vedic authority; and the third has infused into it a far stronger religious spirit, he has devised for it a ritual of worship, which in his hands is undoubtedly impressive, however inharmonious with each other its several elements may be, and he has induced it to undertake various forms of philanthropic and missionary work. Under his leadership it has spread out its arms far and wide, so that the little solitary society formed by Ram Mahan Rai at Calcutta in 1830 now has branches all through Northern India, from Dacca in the extreme east, to Lahore in the far northwest; it embraces, at least in nominal membership, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of adherents; while affiliated

Samajes are found at Bombay, at Ahmedabad, at Poona, at Bangalore, at Madras, at Mangalore, and possibly at other cities too in the west and south. These all have felt more or less of the influence of Keshab Chandra Sen, though they are not all, at the present time, directly connected with the Brahma Samaj of India, as his own society is called. Since the formation by secession of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, after the Kuch Bihar marriage in 1878, many of the country branches have united with it, and others are independent of either, though holding in the main similar views.

ARTICLE VII.

CTESIAS OF CNIDUS.

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PERHAPS no period in history is of more real interest to the historian, antiquarian, or biblical student than the few centuries immediately preceding 400 B.C., when the Greeks made their first invasion of Upper Asia. Precious must be all the knowledge of the East which even the fragmentary records of history and monumental inscriptions have left to us. Most of our knowledge of Upper Asia at this period, at least in so far as profane history is concerned, we owe to Herodotus and Ctesias of Cnidus; both Asiatic Greeks by birth and living almost as contemporaries. The works of Xenophon, it is true, have some value here; but chiefly as the observations of a judicious traveller, and not as the laborious researches of the industrious historian. In his *Anabasis* he holds closely to his theme — the march of the Greeks; and in the *Cyropaedia* he portrays a character too unreal to be historical. As a historian, then, of Persia, Xenophon is of little value. Other Greek writers have touched upon Persian history, but their meagre accounts, while throwing a gleam of light occasionally here and there, oft-times perplex rather than aid us in our efforts to penetrate