

The Relevance of Romans 1 and Acts 17 in the Hindu-Christian Debate during the Nineteenth Century Bengal Renaissance

Choong Chee Pang

I. The Historical Background

By the middle of the eighteenth century the position of the British in Bengal was virtually supreme with the failure of the Dutch in their attempt to back their claims to trade and the French dropping from the race. In the eyes of the historians, however, the cultural state of the province could only be described in terms of stagnation and decadence:

[W]e have a traditional culture and society at very low ebb, in fact in a state of decadence not witnessed before, a decadence condemned by most modern Indians from Rammohan Roy onwards.¹

Spear has a fuller account:

The social and cultural state of the country declined along with its political fortunes.... Intellectual and cultural activities inevitably came to a standstill, for there was neither the security to encourage it nor the means to support it.... The tradition was maintained in the Sanskrit tols and the Muslim madrasahs but originality was lost and its influence on the community at large declined. There was little sign during these years of new thought or of creative religious achievement. Living religion retreated to the

quietist sects, whose devotees haunted temples of Krishna or Kali, or retired to the banks of the Ganges at Benares or the Godavari at Nasik.²

Another modern writer, a Brahmo, describes Bengal in those days as

a soulless religion, reduced to a set of conventions and customs, ceremonials and festivals, it matters little whether one professes Vaisnavism or Saktivism, or even indifferentism or atheism. So it was in the days of Rammohan.³

Stephen Neill thinks that Hinduism then was "less prepared than any other of the great religions to stand the shock" when the tide of western influence came to the East at the end of the eighteenth century.⁴ He also makes a comparison between the westerners' impression of the religious state of Calcutta at this time and that which St Paul experienced in Ephesus in the first century:

When Europeans, missionaries among them, began to concern themselves with the religion of their neighbors, their first encounters were almost invariably with what from the Western point of view was repellent and degrading-- animal sacrifice at the Kalighat in Calcutta, the burning of sometimes unwilling widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and the undoubted presence of the harlots' houses around the temples as in the Ephesus of the days of St Paul.⁵

Comparisons, whether real or superficial, were not uncommonly drawn between the religious and moral states of the Graeco-Roman world in the early centuries of the Christian era and the conditions of the Indian Empire of the nineteenth century.⁶ Alexander Duff, the first missionary of the Church of Scotland who arrived in Calcutta in 1830, for instance, saw in renascent Hinduism nothing but "the struggles of an expiring Paganism... of heathen

Philosophy" which could be likened to what the Graeco-Roman religions and philosophies had gone through when confronted with the Christian gospel during the early Christian centuries.⁷ Nehemiah Goreh, a high-caste Hindu convert, consciously took upon the role of a Christian apologist in the manner of the early Church fathers and apologists.⁸ Together with Krishna Mohan Banerjea, also a high-caste Hindu convert, they were regarded by the Christians of their days as having inaugurated an era of indigenous Christian apologetics.

In early 1772 Warren Hastings became the governor of Bengal, an office he held until 1785. His cultural policy and patronage provided vital incentive and encouragement to orientalists like Charles Wilkins, William Jones and Henry T. Colebrooke who were responsible for the discovery of India's "glorious" past. Most significant of all was perhaps Colebrooke's favorable account of the Vedic religion, for in it one begins to see the crystallization of the nineteenth century image of the "golden age" of ancient India, an image which could justly be said to have provided the spiritual inspiration, national self-respect, confidence, and pride which were the most vital ingredients of the Bengal renaissance.

Together with this "reconstructed" and "romanticized" image of Vedic India⁹ was the gradual but steady process of the westernization of Bengal which was set in motion by its vital contact with the West through the British. In the Bengali context, westernization meant at the same time modernization. Special consideration must be given to the unique role played by English, the language of the rulers, and English education, which was regarded by Rammohan Roy as being "more liberal and enlightened" than the traditional Sanskrit training, a system of education held by the great reformer to have been in the captivity of the priestly order for centuries.¹⁰ It was to English education that the reformer believed that India could really "look forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge."¹¹

There is perhaps hardly a better way of indicating the importance of English education than by simply pointing out the fact that virtually all the main participants in the Hindu-Christian debate during this period were well versed in the English language and literature, including Nehemiah Goreh who began his English training at a relatively late age. Consequently, nearly all their works were either written in English or had been translated into English. The Brahma Samaj, a direct product of renaissance Hinduism, drew their main support from the English-educated to whom the Christian apologists from Duff to Goreh addressed themselves ceaselessly.

Alexander Duff deserves a place in this study for special reasons. First, to a very considerable extent he represented the kind of nineteenth century British evangelicalism which was largely the product of the great evangelical revival that the country had experienced in the previous century. Second, his attitude towards Hinduism was an exceedingly negative one. And it was his magnum opus, *India and India Missions*, appearing in 1839, which aroused organized opposition on the part of the Hindu community in Calcutta, represented by Debendranath Tagore and his party. Third, he was a firm believer in the ultimate conversion of India by means of western education accompanied by Christian teaching. And he arrived in the country just in time to participate in the controversy over the matter of English education. Finally, he was instrumental in the conversion of the first high-caste Bengali intellectuals of the Hindu College, including Krishna Mohan Banerjea.

The Hindu protest against Duff's indictments of Hinduism found its indignant expression in the form of a Brahma tract, "Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated," published in 1845. Although one may not agree with P.K. Sen that the work was "calm and dignified in tone," it was certainly "solid and substantial in its manner."¹² A most significant thing about the tract was that the main issues raised

in it continued to be vital points of debate between the Brahmans and the Christians in the following decades.

However, the infallibility of the Vedas was rejected by the Tattvabodhini Sabha under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore in 1850. It was resolved that henceforth

the Vedas, Upanishads, and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides, that Reason and Conscience were to be the Supreme Authority, and the teachings of the Scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonized with the light within us.¹³

Yet, for the "purposes of self-vindication as well as of conviction" the Brahmans believed that their controversy with the Christians would have to continue.¹⁴ At the same time the Christians were equally convinced that with the appearance of Banerjea's *Dialogues on the Hindu Philosophy* in 1861, and Goreh's *A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems* a year later, an era of Indian Christian apologetics had dawned.

From the sixties onwards the "Adi (or Original) Brahma Samaj" led by Keshub Chunder Sen, began to claim openly that "Brahmoism is both Universal Religion and a form of Hindooism," which sought to "preach the catholic sentiments of Brahma Dharma in a national form."¹⁵

The linking up of the main issues in the Hindu-Christian debate during the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance with Rom. 1 and Acts 17 is a natural one. First, the debate itself shows that some of the major issues raised in it--creation, the divine self-disclosure in nature, knowledge of God, idolatry and immorality--are clearly within the confines of the teaching in these two passages.¹⁶ Second, these passages have generally been regarded as *loci classici* for the discussion on those topics since the time of the early Christian apologists.¹⁷ Third, in spite of the many problems involved in the exegesis of these passages, one thing remains

sufficiently clear: these passages are the products of real "encounter-situations" between the Christian faith and the religions of the Graeco-Roman world at the beginning of the Christian era. The early Christian apologists, such as Justin, Athenagoras, Tertullian and Tatian, who defended the Christian faith a century or so after Paul, found themselves in similar missionary situations, and used those passages quite considerably in their apologetics, although they had produced no substantial exegetical work on the apostle's teaching on those issues. Last but not least is the fact that the debate in nineteenth century Bengal was between renascent Hinduism and Christianity when the latter was beginning to assert itself as a formidable missionary religion in the British Indian Empire.

II. Main Issues in the Hindu-Christian Debate

A. Creation

Although Rammohan Roy (1774-1833), "Father" of the Bengal Renaissance, had not systematically worked out a "doctrine" of creation as such, the concept itself nevertheless occupied an important place in his theology, especially in his understanding of the Creator-creature relation. He placed special emphasis on man's creaturely dependence on God as well as his obligation to Him in humble worship and adoration. At times he expressed himself in words and thoughts which were reminiscent of those found in the teaching of Paul:

Should adoration imply only the elevation of the mind to the conviction of the existence of the Omnipresent Deity, as testified by His wise and wonderful works and continual contemplation of His power as so displayed, together with a constant sense of the gratitude which we naturally owe Him, for our existence, sensation, and comfort--I never will hesitate to assert, that his adoration is not only possible, and

practicable, but even incumbent upon every rational creature.¹⁸

He does not seem to have subscribed to the Vedantic belief that Brahma was the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. Neither does he claim the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* for Hinduism, a notion which was regarded as uniquely Christian by Duff, Banerjea and Goreh.¹⁹

Duff held that the belief in *creatio ex nihilo* was explicitly rejected by all schools of Hinduism:

In the case of the Hindus, the common error...in the orthodox and heterodox schools...has been the constant and universal belief in the maxim "*ex nihilo nihil fit*"--of nothing, nothing comes. Of all maxims, this seems the only one that has passed unchallenged and unchallengeable in every school of Indian theology....²⁰

The charge of "pantheism" was refuted by the modern Vedantists in their essay "Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated." Instead, they boldly claimed that *creatio ex nihilo* was also part of their belief.²¹

Now the important questions are: Is the belief in *creatio ex nihilo* scriptural? Is it particularly Pauline? To begin with, it is only fair to say that the idea of a creation out of nothing is nowhere expressly taught in the Old and the New Testaments. The first near approach to it is found, in fact, in the words of the mother of the Maccabees: *ex ouk onton epoiesen auta Theos* ("God made them out of nothing," 2 Mac 7:28, N.E.B. and in the Vulgate: *ex nihilo fecit illa Deus*). The Wisdom of Solomon seems to have reproduced the Platonic idea of a creation "*ex amorphou hules*" ("out of formless matter," 11:17).²²

In the New Testament the divine origin of creation is presupposed in the gospels, Acts and some of the Epistles.²³ But

for the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is ultimately "by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear (*me ek phainomenon* 11:3).

While the exact words representing *creatio ex nihilo* do not occur in Romans 1 and Acts 17 the idea itself may reasonably be assumed to be in harmony with Paul's general teaching. As to the claim of the modern Vedantists, it is only necessary to cite the view of two modern authorities. According to S. Radhakrishnan,

Creation is interpreted in the Vedas as development rather than the bringing into being something not hitherto existent. The first principle is manifested in the whole world. Purusa by his sacrifice becomes the whole world. This view prepares for the development of the doctrine which is emphasized in the Upanisads that the spirit in man is one with the spirit which is the prius of the world. Within this world we have the one positive principle of being and yet have varying degrees of existence marked by varying degrees of penetration or participation of nonentity by divine being.²⁴

In the view of R.C. Zaehner:

There is, however, one fundamental difference between the Brahman, Self and Person of the Upanishads and the Judaeo-Christian God: in Hinduism there is no creation *ex nihilo*. God or Brahman is always the material as well as the efficient cause of creation. He emanates the universe out of his own substance and then re-enters it as its indwelling Spirit. Hence I have, as far as possible, avoided the word 'create' and 'creator' as these might make a false impression.²⁵

The Christian apologists held that only the Christian doctrine of creation could clearly distinguish the Creator from the creature and make real worship possible. According to Duff

[I]n every scheme of Hinduism, the creature is confounded with the creator, the distinction between these is not only lost: it is utterly annihilated. Either "all" is creator, or "all" is creature.²⁶

Duff concluded that such must be the case with all human religions "when unfavored by the light of revelation," and when men were "wholly left to his own unaided efforts."²⁷ Although Duff spoke about the "grand phenomena of nature" he denied to unregenerate men the possibility of rising "through nature, up to nature's God."²⁸

While it was clear to Paul that the real error of idolatry lies in its confounding the Creator with the creature, he had interpreted this as the result of men's deliberate refusal to acknowledge God as God (Rom. 1:21-28) and not, as Duff had suggested, due to men's ignorance or speculation, or the lack of revelation. Duff seems to have missed the whole point of the apostle's argument in Rom. 1. Paul evidently did not think that the nations were "wholly left to his own unaided efforts" or "unfavored by the light of revelation." For there clearly is a revelation, that is, the divine self-disclosure in nature: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them" (v. 19). On the basis of Rom. 1, one may even suggest that there is actually no need for men to try to rise "through nature up to nature's God," for nature's God is already there for men to see, to acknowledge, to honour and to worship ever since the time of creation (*apo ktiseos kosmou*) (v. 20). And contrary to Duff's suggestion that the "grand phenomena of nature" was only for the believers to enjoy,²⁹ it may be said that it is meant for the unbelievers in particular, since it is precisely in this "grand phenomena of nature," that is, "in the things that have been made" (v. 20), that "his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived." As such, they are

"without excuse," if they fail to see Him there. Moreover, the believers clearly have more to guide them in the things of God than the "light of nature," although they are undoubtedly entitled to the same light, since it is meant for all men (*anthropon*).

Banerjea took a consistently positive attitude towards the light of nature and believed that

the pious heart may in like manner derive the unalloyed delight of a communion with his unseen Maker, by recognizing the vestiges of his wisdom and beneficence in the creation around him.³⁰

In both Rom. 1 and Acts 17 there is the clear notion of the divine purpose behind God's manifestation in creation and in providence. In other words, there is every possibility for man, to use the expression of Banerjea, to "derive the unalloyed delight of a communion with his unseen Maker." However, he did not think that the "volume of nature" itself is an all-sufficient basis for a true religion. The Word was needed.

But the matter of the "sufficiency" or "inadequacy" of man's knowledge in creation is something which the apostle Paul does not seem to have directly dealt with in Rom. 1 and Acts 17. However, at least one thing is clear in Rom. 1: men's knowledge of God is sufficient to render them "without excuse," if it is ignored. What would have become of the nations and their religions had this knowledge not been ignored? In what precise way or ways should the nations "honour him as God or give thanks to him," or should "seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him"? Paul has evidently not dealt with questions such as these in those passages, let alone provided answers for them.

Goreh's argument for the uniqueness of the Christian doctrine of creation and his interpretation of the Hindu teaching on the subject were basically the same as those of Duff and Banerjea although Goreh seems to have come very much nearer to Paul's

position in Rom. 1 than Duff when he took the view that the divine self-disclosure in creation was one of those things which the human intellect "can confidently judge."³¹ If the human intellect has not the capability to judge those things of God in creation Paul would not have spoken so positively about knowing and perceiving them in Rom 1:19-21. The two words *nooumena kathoratai* ("clearly perceived" in the R.S.V.) in v. 20 evidently imply both physical seeing and mental perception.³² The apostle clearly shows no contempt for the human reason or intellect as such. It was only when men wickedly refused to pay homage to God their Creator that they "became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened" (v. 21).³³

All three Christian apologists in varying degrees spoke very critically of the "vain speculations" of the Hindus, giving one the impression that speculation per se is necessarily evil. Referring to men's "curiosity" about the origin of the world Goreh wrote:

When men are told that God has made this world, they will not rest there; but their curiosity is aroused, and must solve the problem how the world was made by God.³⁴

It was speculation, Goreh believed, which had corrupted true religion. Such might well be the case with the religious history of men. But it is quite clearly not Paul's teaching. According to his speech in Acts 17 it was basically human ignorance that was responsible for idolatry, and in Rom 1, human rebellion and not speculation per se. In Acts 17 Paul evidently suggested that men were duty-bound to seek God and to feel after him (v. 27). And having known God only in terms of "his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity," who could blame them if they should sincerely desire to know more and if "they will not rest there; but their curiosity is aroused?" Many such sincere "seekers after God" would certainly not be lacking amongst Goreh's own people.

B. Monotheism and Primitive Revelation

Rammohan Roy began his reformation as a zealous campaigner against Hindu idolatry and claimed that all Hindu scriptures consistently inculcated "the enlightened worship of One God." He held the Brahmins of the priestly order responsible for preventing the people from knowing "the true meaning of our sacred books." It did not occur to him that there was any trace or evidence of "corruption" of the ancient Vedic faith in later writings such as the Puranas and the Tantras and he paid no special attention to the historical development of Hinduism.³⁵ The people's ignorance of their own scriptures was to him the only cause of idolatry. Until their formal renunciation of Vedic infallibility Debendranath Tagore and the modern Vedantists maintained the position of their first founder and denied all charges of pantheism and monism. They even quoted Acts 17:28 and Eph 4:5 to show that there was virtually no difference between what they believed and what their Christian opponent affirmed:

The Bible teaches the same tenet when it declares to men that "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts Chap. 17 v. 28) and also when in Ephesians (Chap. 4 v. 5) it speaks of God as "one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all and in you all."³⁶

However, two new ideas appeared in the Hindu apologetics in the mid-forties with regard to Hindu idolatry: 1. Hindu idolatry which the modern Vedantists themselves called "that wicked brutalizing Hinduism," came into being only "since the dark ages of India."³⁷ 2. Those Hindu rites and ceremonies which were often thought to be idolatrous were regarded as "useful" and even "absolutely necessary" as a "preparatory" step towards the spiritual worship of the One True God.³⁸

These two points, especially the latter, were clearly a deviation from the original position of Rammohan Roy who said, "I must confirm with the Ved, that purity of mind is the consequence of

divine worship, and not of any superstitious practices."³⁹ Banerjea also refuted the modern Vedantists' suggestion when he categorically stated that "the worship of the creature has never yet led to the worship of the Creator as its legitimate sequence."⁴⁰ On this particular point both the Hindu reformer and the Christian apologist may be said to be in full accord with the teaching of Paul on idolatry.

After the Brahmos' renunciation of Vedic infallibility the topic of idolatry seems to have become less prominent in the Hindu-Christian debate. The reason was obvious enough: Debendranath Tagore and his followers now had adopted reason or intuition as the new foundation of their religion, Brahmoism. They had no need to defend the integrity of the Hindu scriptures. They ignored not only those which were often regarded as teaching idolatry but even those passages of the venerated Upanishads which were sometimes open to the charge of pantheism or monism.

The first major works of Banerjea and Goreh which were regarded as having inaugurated an era of indigenous Indian apologetics, concentrated mainly on the Hindu philosophical system and not on popular idolatry: *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* by Banerjea and *A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems* by Goreh. It is therefore quite understandable that both writers made no special reference to Rom. 1 and Acts 17 which are mainly concerned with popular idolatry.

Beginning from the sixties the Brahmos took no special interest in "Vedic monotheism" nor did they consider it their particular apologetic task to defend the "original purity" of the Vedic religion.⁴¹ Brahmoism now took on a more and more catholic outlook while continuing to maintain some sort of an affinity with the main stream of Hinduism. There was in fact no need for the Brahmos to argue that their religion, Brahmoism, was monotheistic, for even their Christian critics readily recognized it to be so. It was the basis and sources of Brahmoism, and not its creed, that the Christians called into question.

Closely related to the subject of monotheism during this period was the notion of "primitive revelation," or "primeval tradition." However, it was the Christians who were keen on the subject and not the Brahmos. Even Duff saw in the spiritual pilgrimage of the Hindus "monuments of the soul's original capacity and powers" and took it to be "the wrecks of primordial tradition."⁴² He found the fulfillment of these "monuments" and "wrecks" in Christianity, and thereby ascribed superiority to the Christian religion. John Muir linked primitive revelation directly with Adam and suggested that after the fall "the knowledge of God gradually decreased among his descendants,"⁴³ and it was through "the holy tribe of the Jews" that the tradition of true worship had been preserved.⁴⁴ Banerjea capitalized on the notion of primitive revelation and sought points of contact with the "witness" of the Aryan tradition in its ideas of creation, eternity of the Vedas, and sacrifice. While the Jews had faithfully preserved the primitive revelation, which God originally communicated to mankind, the Aryans had only a "distorted" version of it, thereby making the superiority of the Judeo-Christian tradition immediately apparent.

Goreh, however, was not particularly attracted to the idea of primitive revelation in his dialogues with the Brahmos. To him Brahmoism was just a form of Theism or "natural religion" which was mainly indebted to Christianity for its enlightenment. Instead, he took the view that the Hindu sages might well have "a remnant of that light which Almighty God gave man when he created him, or may have been acquired by them by the guidance of natural reason."⁴⁵ He also shared John Muir's view that "the pure light of the knowledge of God" was lost when Adam sinned against God.⁴⁶

The important question that has to be considered is this: Can this rather common Christian idea of primitive revelation claim the authority of the Bible, and Pauline authority in particular? On the basis of the Genesis narrative it is probably right to assume that Adam had a true knowledge of God, the Creator; and one may call this "primitive revelation," although it is clearly not possible to

know in any precise way what this original revelation or knowledge contained. It is also reasonable to think that after the fall this knowledge had been corrupted. In any case, the subject of primitive revelation is apparently not the concern of Paul in Rom. 1 and Acts 17, although it was not uncommon for Christians in the nineteenth century to think that Rom. 1 was its prime source.⁴⁷

In Rom. 1 Paul ascribed to the nations knowledge of God which could be found "in the things that have been made" ever since the time of creation (v. 20). This knowledge is thus an ever-present reality: "the self-revelation of God here referred to has been continuous ever since the creation."⁴⁸ Paul made no suggestion whatever that such knowledge had ever been lost, as the "primitive revelation" of Adam was usually thought to have been lost amongst the human race.

The Brahmos found the Christian idea of primitive revelation unacceptable and held that it was based "only on the authority of the Bible."⁴⁹ It was opposed to their belief in intuition and their idea of the law of religious progress.

Max Müller also rejected the theory of primitive revelation, which he himself called "primeval preternatural revelation."⁵⁰ He argued that if there ever was such an "ancient religion" it could only be revealed "in the heart of man."⁵¹ And if the theory of primitive revelation was true, there would have to be three, instead of two, classes of religion, namely, the primitive, the debased, or the idolatrous, and the revealed.⁵² Such a theory probably existed "in the minds of modern philosophers rather than of ancient poets and prophets," and could not be borne out by the testimony of the historical development of human religions:

History never tells us of any race with whom the simple feeling of reverence for higher powers was not hidden under mythological disguises. Nor would it be possible even thus to separate the three classes of religion by sharp and definite lines of demarcation, because both the debased or

idolatrous and the purified or revealed religions would of necessity include within themselves the elements of natural religion. Nor do we diminish these difficulties in the classificatory stage of our science if, in the place of this simple natural religion, we admit with other theologians and philosophers, a universal primeval revelation. This universal primeval revelation is only another name for natural religion, and it rests on no authority but the speculations of philosophers.⁵³

But Müller seems to have confused the controversial issue on primitive, or primeval revelation by taking it to be synonymous with "natural religion." The latter, he thought, was an invention of William Paley and "other theologians and philosophers" of the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ However, this was evidently very different from the kind of primitive revelation or tradition which John Muir, Banerjea and Goreh had in mind. By primitive revelation these Christians usually meant that original revelation which God first communicated to Adam before the fall or to Noah, and the purity of which was thought to have been lost amongst all the human races but was preserved through the Jews:

[T]here does appear sufficient reliable evidences to prove that traces of primitive traditions lie scattered throughout the sacred and mythological writings of the Hindus, as well as of the Chinese, Greeks, and other nations.⁵⁵

This was very much different from the kind of "natural religion" or "Theism" which the Christians as well as the Brahmors, in varying degrees, believed to be obtainable in nature or to be found in man's own natural reason or intuition.

C. Natural Religion and the Science of Religion.

In the background of the Brahmo-Christian debate was evidently Max Müller's "science of religion," or the "comparative study of religions" which was based on the theory of evolution.⁵⁶

Müller, "the father of comparative religion,"⁵⁷ and a renowned Oxford professor of comparative philology, found a "continuity in the growth of religion" which he believed to be "more surprising" than the continuity in the growth of language.⁵⁸ From the religious history of mankind Müller saw certain "radical elements of all religions":

an intuition of God, a sense of human weakness and dependence, a belief in a Divine government of the world, a distinction between good and evil, and a hope of better life.⁵⁹

This was written in 1867, a time when new materials for the study of world religions had already been greatly accumulated, although Müller did not think that he could immediately work out the "definite outlines" for his new science.⁶⁰ Müller thought that he had the support of the Christian Fathers and Apologists, such as Augustine, Basil, Justin and Clement, for the promotion of the new science.⁶¹ It was his belief that the science of religion, when firmly established, would in fact serve the cause of Christianity very well.

It should never be forgotten that while a comparison of ancient religions will certainly show that some of the most vital articles of faith are the common property of the whole of mankind, at least of all who seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, the same comparison alone can possibly teach us what is peculiar to Christianity, and what has secured to it that pre-eminent position which now it holds in spite of all obloquy. The gain will be greater

than the loss, if loss there be, which I, at least, can never admit.⁶²

When put in this perspective, Christianity might even be seen as a kind of "fulfillment" to the "religious aspirations of the whole world."

But in the history of the world, our religion, like our own language, is but one out of many; and in order to understand fully the position of Christianity in the history of the world, and its true place among the religions of mankind, we must compare it, not with Judaism only, but with the religious aspirations of the whole world, with all, in fact, that Christianity either came to destroy or to fulfil. From this point of view Christianity forms part, no doubt, of what people call profane history, but by that very fact, profane history ceases to be profane, and regains throughout that sacred character of which it had been deprived by a false distinction.⁶³

This position was maintained by Müller in his famous lectures on "Introduction to the Science of Religion," delivered at the Royal Institution in 1870. It was Christianity, he argued, that had taught men to discover and recognize "even in the lowest and crudest forms of religious belief, not the work of the devil, but something that indicates a divine guidance."⁶⁴ If Christians truly believed that Jewish religion was a "preparation" for Christianity, they should have little difficulty in recognizing "in the mazes of other religions a hidden purpose; a wandering in the desert, it may be, but a preparation also for the land of promise."⁶⁵

There being such a "continuity" between Christianity and all other religions, Müller rejected the distinction that was currently made between the "natural" and the "revealed" religion. Such principle of classification was "faulty" and "defective" because

there never has been any real religion, consisting exclusively of the pure and simple tenets of Natural Religion, though there have been certain philosophers who brought themselves to believe that their religion was entirely rational, was, in fact, pure and simple Deism.⁶⁶

He was equally critical of the kind of "revealed" religion which was so vigorously defended by theologians such as William Paley against the assault of skepticism, infidelity, and Deism in the previous century.⁶⁷ There was no "revealed" religion that could ever be entirely separated from "natural" religion.

The tenets of natural religion, though they never constituted by themselves a real historical religion, supply the only ground on which even revealed religions can stand, the only soil where they can strike root, and from which they can receive nourishment and life.... Christianity, addressing itself not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, not only to the ignorant, but also to the learned, not only to the believer, but, in the first instance, to the unbeliever, presupposed in all of them the elements of natural religion, and with them the power of choosing between truth and untruth. Thus only could St Paul say: 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good' (I Thess. v. 21).⁶⁸

A significant point to be noted here is that not only did Müller appeal to the Christian Fathers and early apologists as well as to the "realities of history,"⁶⁹ he had also repeatedly called upon the apostle Paul for support on the matter. He made no less than four direct references to Acts 17 but made no mention of Rom. 1 at all.⁷⁰

Not only did Müller seek his biblical basis for the science of religion in Acts 17, even the Brahmos, as has already been noted, also found support for their religion, Brahmoism, in Acts 17. In one particular place Rom. 1:18-21 was quoted verbatim, and was given the following comment:

Now from the expressions 'God hath shown it unto them', 'clearly seen', and especially 'they are without excuse', it is plain that the apostle believed that light of nature was quite sufficient to give man a correct knowledge of God.⁷¹

Müller and the Brahmos' appeal to Paul became the more significant when one takes into consideration the use of those passages by two evangelicals of the time but who were nonetheless keen supporters of the new science of religion. They were Monier-Williams, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford from 1860 to 1899, and John Robson, who for twelve years (1860-72) served as a United Presbyterian missionary in India. Although most of Robson's major works were written some years after his retirement from active missionary service in India, a couple of his earlier writings, e.g. *Hinduism and Its Relations to Christianity* (1874) and *The Science of Religion and Christian Missions* (1876) are relevant to the present study. Moreover, like Monier-Williams, Robson took a keen interest in the Brahmo Samaj, and some of his main criticisms of the movement were basically the same as those of Goreh.⁷²

Monier-Williams followed the tradition of John Muir and F.W. Farrar in their plea for "conciliation" and "points of contact" with other religions. In "The Study of Sanskrit in Relation to Missionary Work in India" his inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on April 19, 1861, he highly recommended to all missionaries Muir's *Essay on Conciliation in Matters of Religion* (Calcutta, 1849), and "On the Prospects of India, Intellectual and Religious" in the *Benares Magazine* (March, 1849).⁷³ And it was in Acts 17 that Muir found the apostle Paul's "conciliatory spirit":

The Speech of St Paul at Athens (Acts 17)...are all distinguished by some particular traits of conciliation.... The oration to the Athenians breathes kindness, and is based upon principles of natural reason.... If we would convert men, like the Apostle Paul, we must, like him, conciliate, persuade, and win.⁷⁴

Muir consequently put forward the idea of "fulfillment":

We ought to acknowledge with thankfulness everything that we find excellent in the Hindu Sastras, as we welcome every spot of verdure in the desert: and when the Hindus have only halted at a stage far short of that which we ourselves have reached, we should rejoice in being able to present to them our superior knowledge not in the shape of a contradiction to anything that is false in their views, but as the legitimate development of what is true.⁷⁵

Farrar made the same appeal to Paul's Athenian speech as well as to Acts 14, in his *Seekers After God*.⁷⁶

Writing in the seventies which saw an unprecedented increase in the production of literature on the religions of the East, Monier-Williams asked all thoughtful Christians to "readjust" themselves and to engage seriously in "a fair and impartial study" of those religions.⁷⁷ He also found "fragments of truths" in the "Indian Wisdom," and held them to be part of "the living rock" on which Christianity itself was based.⁷⁸ For the Boden Professor, all these "fragments of truths" or "root-ideas" in Hinduism as well as in all other religions were not only itself a proof of the divine origin of Christianity,⁷⁹ but could also find "fulfillment" in Christianity:

All the gropings after truth, all the religious instincts, faculties, cravings and aspirations of the human race which struggle to express themselves in the false religions of the world, find their only true expression and fulfillment--their only complete satisfaction--in Christianity.⁸⁰

Like Muir, Monier-Williams found the same prime source for his idea and approach in Acts 17:

Surely, then, we are bound to follow the example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, speaking to the Gentiles, instead of denouncing them as 'heathen', appealed to them



as 'very God-fearing' (*deisidaimonesterous*) and even quoted a passage from one of their own poets in support of a Christian truth (Acts xvii:28)...⁸¹

John Robson, a keen supporter of the "fulfillment" theory, felt that Christians had often failed to follow this Pauline approach.⁸² Christians, he said, had learned to "becoming a Jew, that they might gain the Jews. But when it came to the point when they needed to become a Greek to the Greeks, or a Hindu to the Hindus, in which case the Christians had to hold "in abeyance" the divine authority of the Bible, these Christians often seemed to be utterly lost."⁸³ This was due to the Christians' failure or unwillingness to find common ground with their non-Christian neighbors: "We see no historical basis on which to unite with those of other faiths; no common authority in religion to which we may appeal."⁸⁴ Yet this was the very approach which St Paul, "the first great missionary of the Church" took and must be adopted by modern Christians if they were to win Greeks, that is, Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans.⁸⁵

While warmly welcoming comparative religion as a new science, Robson's belief in the "relics" of the primitive revelation or tradition found in the ancient Hindu religion led him to reject the current evolutionary theory of religion as well as the Brahmos' notion of religious progress which was based on the theory of evolution:

If, as some maintain, his powers gradually developed and his ideas of God gradually rose, we should expect to find the oldest ideas of God in any literature the most degraded and obscure, and subsequent ones more gradually approaching the truth. Instead of this we find in the oldest hymns of India, with all their faults, the highest ideas of God, followed by constant deterioration. And the source of this deterioration is evident. It is the tendency to express God by His works.⁸⁶

However, Robson held that means were still available for men to arrive at a true knowledge of God, and these were nature and the divine providence. Robson believed that this was in fact how Abraham himself came to know God.⁸⁷

The above references to the writings of Muir, Farrar, the Brahmos, Müller, Monier-Williams and Robson have shown how Rom. 1 and Acts 17, especially the latter, could be differently used and for various purposes. But the case was very different with Duff, Banerjea, and Goreh. None of them, for example, seems to have directly referred to Acts 17 more than once, and none of them quoted Paul positively with the desire to establish any point of contact with the Hindus or the Brahmos. Duff quoted Acts 17:28a against Hindu idolatry (*India and India Missions*, p. 224); Banerjea cited v. 26a to oppose the Hindu caste system (*Hindu Caste*, p. 71); and Goreh referred to v. 28a in his criticism of the Vedantic doctrine of creation (*A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems*, p. 201).

One wonders if this lack of positive use of the Pauline passages on the part of these three men was not partly due to the generally negative attitude which all three of them seem to have taken towards Orientalism (Duff in particular), and the new science of religion (not applicable to Duff).

Duff was very critical of the kind of sympathy and enthusiasm which the orientalists had shown towards Hinduism and claimed that his view and exposition of the Hindu religion was guided mainly by his own "familiar and habitual intercourse with the sons of Brahma on the banks of the Ganges."⁸⁸ Although Banerjea occasionally consulted the works of orientalists such as John Muir, he was never attracted to Orientalism and apparently did not think much of Müller's science of religion. His belief in primitive revelation could not accommodate the notion of religious progress or evolution. And he clearly did not consider Rom. 1:20ff as the prime source of primitive revelation. Goreh never tried to conceal the fact that he had little confidence in the Europeans with the

exception perhaps of Monier-Williams, when it came to the matter of understanding the Hindu religion, and showed little regard for the scholarship of Max Müller and his science of religion. He probably thought that Müller and the Brahmos were in alliance, for they evidently shared similar views on the science of religion, natural religion (although Müller was not happy about the term "natural religion" as it was understood in the eighteenth century), and the evolution of religion. And, significantly enough, both the Brahmos and Müller appealed to the apostle Paul.

D. Idolatry and Morality.

In Romans the apostle Paul clearly identified men's refusal to honour God as God as the very root of idolatry which in turn became the source of immorality.⁸⁹ The moral degradation of men was also seen as the sign of the divine wrath: "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity..." (v. 24); "God gave them up to dishonorable passions" (v. 26); and "God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct" (v. 28).

All the Christian apologists, with varying degrees of intensity, denounced the "demoralization" of India and held the Hindu religion responsible for it. Duff described the moral state of Bengal in an expression clearly reminiscent of the sentiment of the apostle Paul in Rom. 1:

The people of India are allowed, on all hands, to be sunk into the depths of a demoralization which has become endemic and universal--manifested in aggravated forms, and perpetuated from age to age, as if engraved with a pen of iron upon their character.⁹⁰

Of all the moral evils that existed in the Hindu society, Banerjea was most indignant about its caste system. For Goreh, Hindu idolatry was not only against God and men's own conscience, but was also "the greatest blot in their morality." The

reason why Christianity had such a "high-toned morality" was simply because it was a "very superior religion." "O be ye persuaded that without a firm belief in a religion there can be no true morality," he told the educated Indian. He thought the Brahmos had no real understanding of sin as essentially a moral evil.

Unlike the early apologists such as Justin who sought to maintain their affinity with the philosophical tradition of the Greeks and rejected the "popular" religion together with all its immoral practices, Banerjea and Goreh maintained no such affinity with the philosophical tradition of Hinduism. Paul quoted the Greek poets in Acts 17; Justin and other early apologists cited the opinions of Socrates, Plato and Seneca; Rammohan Roy often appealed to the great Sankara; but both Banerjea and Goreh seem to have little regard for the pundits of Hinduism. Instead, they, as well as Duff, all found the Hindu philosophical system, especially Vedantism, to be the very root of all religious and moral evils. They, especially Banerjea, appear to have more sympathy with the vulgar and the early Vedic poets than with the Hindu philosophers. Duff claimed that he was not able to find a single moral attribute in the Vedantic concept of the Supreme Being. Banerjea was convinced that the Vedantic notion of creation virtually destroyed "all distinction between right and wrong." Goreh held the Hindu idea of the Absolute Being responsible for the "corrupt moral sense" of his people.

One significant point to be noted here is that apart from Duff, who on one occasion quoted Rom. 1:22,⁹¹ Banerjea and Goreh evidently made no direct reference at all to the passage in their indictment of idolatry and the moral state of the country. Such an observation becomes the more interesting in view of the rather common occurrences of the passage in certain missionary writings of the time. In an article entitled "The Urgent Need of Increased Efforts on Behalf of India," a missionary writer described the "pitiable conditions" of India in the following words:

[T]he heart of man, under the malign influence of Brahminical idolatry, becomes a hotbed of evil, and yields a redundancy of vice. Vicious principles, vicious acts are sanctioned and approved of, and thus religiously authorized and recommended...and spread like a pestilence throughout the land.... Nor can we wonder if Paul's description which characterized the heathen of his day, find a modern realization in the millions of our Indian empire....⁹²

Alexander Forbes, a Scottish missionary who served for nearly twenty years in India, expressed the same sentiment in an address delivered to the Missionary Association of the University of Aberdeen:

Idolatry cuts away the foundations of everything that is good or amiable in humanity. What is the result of changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man has been admirably described in the first chapter of the Romans. I have, on more than one occasion challenged, the Calcutta newspaper, the orthodox Hindoos to point out in what way this description, even in its most shameful particulars did not accurately portray the state of society at present existing among them, and no reply was ever made to me. They were too conscious of the terrible truth of the accusation. Read from the 22nd verse of the first chapter of Romans to the end, and say whether your pure minds are not stirred up to do more than you have as yet done... to put an end to such a fearful state of things as is there pictured as the fruit of idolatry.⁹³

However, Forbes was very critical of Duff's missionary approach, which he thought, was directed to "the intellect and not the heart" of the people, and the English-educated natives in particular.⁹⁴ The result was that "the great masses of Dr Duff's scholars go to swell the ranks of Vedantists."⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that Forbes as well as the other writer who applied Paul's picture in Rom 1 directly to the Indian situation were both

missionaries, and were describing about popular religion as they saw it.⁹⁶ This may help to explain why Banerjea and Goreh had not applied Rom 1 in their indictment of the moral state of the Hindu society. First of all it would be fair to say that although the two Indian apologists largely shared the missionaries' concern for the "demoralization" of the country, the picture they gave was, generally speaking, not as dark and horrifying as missionary propagandists tended to describe. Unlike the missionaries who often saw in Rom. 1, or thought they saw there, the Hindu society which they themselves knew,⁹⁷ and then drew comparison between Paul's Graeco-Roman world and contemporary India,⁹⁸ Banerjea and Goreh seem to have avoided, whether consciously or unconsciously, making such a comparison. Perhaps they considered it too simplistic or superficial to be of any real apologetic value. These Indian apologists, especially Goreh, whose main concern at this time was for the western-educated natives, were evidently more conscious of another kind of analogy: modern India which was now undergoing the foundation-shaking process of westernization and Europe of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. Moreover, human sacrifice, infanticide, the immolation of widows, and some of the most inhuman practices and evils which used to horrify Europeans such as William Ward and Claudius Buchanan had virtually disappeared from the Indian scene when Banerjea and Goreh were actively engaged in their apologetic works. One may assume that even Banerjea's India was not quite the same as Duff's. Secondly, as has already been pointed out, the Indian apologists' works were directed, not against popular idolatry and all its "immoral" practices, but against the very root of all these, namely, against the philosophical system or systems of the religion, especially Vedantism. The modern Vedantists (after their renunciation of Vedic infallibility, more popularly known as the Brahmos), were themselves the "moralists" of the day. As such, the general principle of Rom. 1, let alone its particulars, could not be justly applied to these modern Indian "Senecas" whom Banerjea and Goreh often encountered. Goreh and others sometimes thought that it was the lack of moral courage that had prevented

some of the Brahmos from accepting the Christian religion. One also very scarcely finds criticism made by Christians against the moral character of the Brahmos, not even in popular missionary literature.

Having encountered so many modern "Senecas" one may perhaps expect the Christian apologists to have made some good use of Rom. 2:14-15 which is often regarded as the locus classicus for "natural morality." However, such was clearly not the case either. Banerjea referred to v. 15a twice (*Dialogues*, pp. vi-viii; and *The Arian Witness*, p. 8), and in both cases it was used as a common "test of truth and error" or a court of appeal in dialogues, and not to establish any "natural morality." Duff and Goreh do not seem to have cited the passage at all.

III. Conclusion

The historical background of the Bengal Renaissance was the British rule of India which brought with it formidable westernizing influences through the English medium and modern education. Among those who felt its impact most deeply were the great Hindu reformer Rammohan Roy and the Brahmos, as well as the first generation of high-caste converts such as Banerjea and Goreh. The theological orientation of these early converts must be understood in this context.

On this particular point Nicol Macnicol comments:

The Christian experience through which the early converts passed was a living thing that came direct to them from God: it was outside time and place. But this experience was mediated to them through the form of "low Church" or "high Church" teaching, of Calvinism or of Methodism, and translated itself into the formulae and the phrases of an evangelical theology. Their religion transcended these limits, and their lives, in whatever garb they might dress

their experience, were still ineradicably dyed with the colour of Indian devotion; but they used the language of their theological teachers and were often more dogmatic and convinced even than they.⁹⁹

The Hindu converts' indebtedness to the West often became such a stigma to them that Banerjea, for instance, had to look to his "Arian Witness" for the "disproof of an idea often broached against Hindu Christians that they are rebels against the sanatana dharma of the country."¹⁰⁰

To be sure, Banerjea and Goreh's attitude to Hinduism was evidently far more conciliatory than that of Duff. But like the Scottish missionary and most evangelical missionaries of the time, they too looked forward to the ultimate conversion of India with the complete overthrow of the Hindu system and its replacement by the Christian religion. Hinduism as a system was doomed, in the eyes of the Christian apologists. "The institutions of error (of Hinduism)," Banerjea believed, "shall fall like the walls of Jericho to the sound of the evangelical trumpet."¹⁰¹ The effects of the country's westernization seemed so devastating to Goreh that he became quite convinced that before long there would be very few natives left in the whole land to tell the tales of Hinduism. The first apologetic work of these two men, like that of Duff, concentrated on the philosophical system or systems of Hinduism. Goreh made it clear that he gave up "the Hindu religion" for Christianity because it was not a religion given by God.¹⁰² And as religious systems the Christian apologists saw no "continuity" between Hinduism and Christianity, for it was quite impossible for the latter to establish itself on the Indian soil without "destroying" the former.

It was with religious ideas, sentiments, or the "yearnings" of the Hindu soul and spirit that these men became far more appreciative and accommodating, although uncompromising in the end. However, when dealing with ideas, or when comparing certain religious ideas of one religion with another, one is often in danger of dealing with abstractions in the end. For religious ideas

can easily become abstract once they have been detached from the living fabric and experience of the religions which have given rise to them.¹⁰³ And both Hinduism and Christianity are living religions. This may help to explain why the ideas of "primitive revelation" and "fulfillment," much to the regret of certain scholars, remained "undeveloped and unexplored"¹⁰⁴ in the theology of the Indian apologists, more so with Goreh than with Banerjea.

The late sixties saw the appearance of Max Müller's "science of religion" and the increasing popularity of the theory of evolution in some circles, and not least among the Brahmos. Although Banerjea does not appear to have explicitly rejected the new science of religion, his conception of "primitive revelation" obviously left little or no room to accommodate the evolutionary theory. In the sixties and seventies when the Christian apologists had to do battles not only against orthodox Hinduism, but also Brahmoism, Müller's science of religion was able to find ready acceptance even with evangelicals such as Monier-Williams and John Robson.

It is rather unfortunate that the first indigenous apologists of the Indian Church, men like Banerjea and Goreh, who were endowed with such outstanding gifts and talents should have adopted so much that was basically western (more so with Goreh than with Banerjea), not only in theological thought, but also in their technique and approach, in their dialogue or debate with their own countrymen, and had thus been prevented from cultivating ideas and thoughts with greater originality on which a more Indian theology of encounter could have been built. Yet, even to look at the matter in this way is at the same time to be in danger of overlooking the harsh reality and complexity of those dynamic historical situations against which the apologetics of these men were produced. For one thing, conversion for these first generation high-caste Brahmins meant infinitely more than simply the forsaking of one religion and the adopting of another as a matter of mere choice. There was the almost unending battle of the mind and the anguish of the soul, as well as the constant feeling and fear of cultural

alienation. And their close affinity with the "mother" West intellectually as well as in other areas meant also the limitation of their outlook and its expression.

Nicol Macnicol seems to have understood the situation well when he says,

That the Christian religion might be truly established in India was necessary...that first it be rooted deep in the individual hearts of those whose experience forms its foundation and who, by their testimony and example, assure the faith of later comers. That being accomplished, it may be possible for the Church of a later time, whose members are now more freely and naturally adjusted to this home of their spirits, to see to it that the Church is striking its roots into the soil of the land and spreading its branches to its air and sunshine.¹⁰⁵

Banerjea and Goreh's affinity with and theological indebtedness to the West had not only limited their general outlook, it had also greatly reduced the scope of their use of the scriptures, including Rom. 1 and Acts 17. While the days of Goreh, like those of Paley, might be the days of the "evidences of Christianity," or of "proof-texts," they were hardly the days of exegesis and hermeneutics, the science and art of interpretation. No serious exegetical work was produced by the Indian apologists during this period of time.

Moreover, just as these Indian apologists generally tended to treat Hinduism as one huge system, the Christian Bible was usually accepted as one corpus of revealed truth, as one complete and harmonious entity. Such being the case, they do not seem to have the theology of Paul, or of Peter separately and neatly worked out at the back of their mind. It was apparently not quite the way Christians used their scriptures in those days.¹⁰⁶ Neither is it any easier to know exactly whether the apostle Paul himself had in mind the Old Testament, or Hellenistic Judaism, or Stoicism, when he wrote Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-15 and when he spoke (or believed to

have spoken) to the gathering at Lystra and on Mars Hill, for the simple fact that he did not, with perhaps the exception of Acts 17:28, quote these sources directly, let alone make exegetical comments on them in any explicit manner. This often poses problems for scholars.¹⁰⁷ This is perhaps quite enough to warn against any attempt to schematize or to dogmatise either Paul's teaching or those doctrinal and exegetical issues in the Hindu-Christian debate which emerged from encounter-situations between the living religions. And what is even more important, from the view-point of this present study, is the observation that as long as there are situations of inter-religious contacts those issues raised in the Hindu-Christian debate during the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance will continue to have their relevance. But one can not reasonably expect these contacts, in whatever forms they will take, to take people very much nearer to the Truth, if the main concern is with systems--religious systems--and not, as it should always be, with the human person, the imago Dei.¹⁰⁸

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him (Acts 17:24-27, R.S.V.).

Notes

- ¹J.T.F Jordens, "Hindu Religious and Social Reform in British India," *A Cultural History of India* ed. by A. L. Basham (Oxford, 1975), p. 365.
- ²*The Oxford History of India*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1958), pp. 575-76.
- ³Prosanto Kumar Sen, *Biography of a New Faith*, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1950), pp. 5 and 7.
- ⁴*Christian Faith and Other Faiths* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), p. 70.
- ⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁶See e.g. Julius Richter, *A History of Missions in India*, Eng. trans. by S.H. Moore (London, 1908), p. 249; M.A. Sherring, *The Sacred City of the Hindus* (London, 1868), p. 358; James Ross, "The Missionary Character of Paul," *Indian Evangelical Review*, No. 1 (July, 1873); Alexander Duff, *India and India Missions* (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 31-34; and J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York, 1915), p. 445.
- ⁷*India and India Missions*, pp. 270-72.
- ⁸*Theism and Christianity*, Part II (Calcutta, 1882), p. 45.
- ⁹David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (University of California, 1969), p. 41.
- ¹⁰A letter on English Education, addressed to Lord Amherst, *The English Works of Raja Mohun Roy*, vol. 1, ed. by J.C. Ghose (Calcutta, 1885), p. 473.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 470.
- ¹²P.K. Sen, *Biography of a New Faith*, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1950), p. 183.
- ¹³*Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore* ed. by Satyendranath Tagore (Calcutta, 1909), pp. iii-iv.

¹⁴Raj Narain Bose, *Hints Showing the Feasibility of Constructing a Science of Religion* (Bengal, 1878), p. 25.

¹⁵*Brahmic Questions of the Day* by An Old Brahma (Calcutta, 1869), pp. 4 and 8.

¹⁶One of the vital issues in the debate is christology. However, the issue has already been given a very full treatment by scholars such as M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London, 1969).

¹⁷See A.F. Walls, "The First Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the Modern Missionary Movement," *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. by W.W. Gasque and R.P. Martin (Grand Rapids, 1970); H.H. Farmer, *Revelation and Religion* (London, 1954), chapter 1; H. Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (London, 1956), chapters 17 and 18; D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Oxford, 1974), p. 58.

¹⁸*The English Works of Raja Ram Mohun Roy*, 2 vols., ed. by J.C. Ghose (Calcutta, 1885), 2: 144.

¹⁹On this particular point they would find themselves in the good company of the early apologists. See Justin, *First Apology*, X; Tertullian, *Apology*, XVII.

²⁰*India and India Missions*, p. 65.

²¹pp. 39 and 45.

²²See also Justine, *First Apology*, X.

²³The following verses speak of the foundation of the world: Matt 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3; I Pet 1:20. Of God as the Maker of heaven and earth: Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21; Acts 17:24. Of God as the Source of all things: Rom 11:36; I Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6. Of Jesus Christ as the Agent of creation: John 1:3; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:2.

²⁴*The Principal Upanisads*, ed. with introduction, text translation and notes by S. Radhakrishnan (London, 1969), p. 39.

²⁵*Hindu Scriptures*, trans. and ed. by R.C. Zaehner (London, 1972), p. x. On the Greek idea of creation, H.P. Owen comments: "Greek philosophy and science rested on the axiom that "Nothing comes into being out of non-existence," with its corollary that the physical universe is eternal. The idea of a God who brought the world into being ex nihilo... was, on its own level, as great a scandal to the Greek mind as the moria

(foolishness) of the Cross" ("The Scope of Natural Revelation in Rom 1 and Acts XVII," *New Testament Studies*, V [Cambridge, 1959], p. 138).

²⁶*India and India Missions*, p. 82.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1840), pp. 87ff.

³⁰*Dialogues*, p. 23.

³¹*A Letter to the Brahmos from a Converted Brahman of Benares*, (Allahabad, 1868), p. 37.

³²See C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, 1975), 1: 115; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London, 1963), p. 84. "Both the verbs...describe how, on contemplating God's works, man can grasp enough of His nature to prevent him from the error of identifying any of the created things with the Creator, enabling him to keep his conception of the Deity free from idolatry" (B. Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* [Copenhagen, 1955], p. 137. Quoted in Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 84).

³³"...those Christians who disparage the intellect and the processes of rational thought have no right at all to claim Paul as supporter" (Cranfield, p. 118).

³⁴*A Letter to the Brahmos from a Converted Brahman of Benares*, p. 37.

³⁵H.H. Wilson thought that the Hindus, including Ram Mohan Roy, were generally unaware of the full extent of the many important alterations "in both form and spirit" that occurred in the historical development of Hinduism. He also challenged the current Hindu belief in the "inspired origin and unfathomable antiquity" of their religion. (*Two Lectures on the Religious Practices and Opinions of the Hindus* [Oxford, 1840], pp. 4-5).

³⁶*Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated*, p. 35.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 18, 43 and 44.

- ³⁹*The English Works*, II, p. 81.
- ⁴⁰"The Transition States of the Hindu Mind," *The Calcutta Review*, 3/5 (1845): 139.
- ⁴¹It is very important to note that unlike the orientalist Jones and Colebrooke at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, no major scholars at this time, such as H.H. Wilson, John Muir and Max Müller took the view that the earliest Vedic religion was "pure monotheism," a view vigorously defended by Ram Mohan Roy and his first disciples. See H.H. Wilson, *Two Lectures on the Religious Practices and Opinions of the Hindus* (Oxford, 1840); John Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, V (London, 1870), Introduction and Section I; M. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London, 1873), pp. 141ff.
- ⁴²*India and India Missions*, p. 119.
- ⁴³*Matapariksha* (1840), or *An Examination of Religions*, English tr. (Mirzapore, 1852), p. iii.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, Part II, p. 92.
- ⁴⁵*Four Lectures*, p. 5.
- ⁴⁶*A Lecture to the Educated Native Gentlemen, on the Duty of Accepting the True Religion* (Allahabaa, 1882), p. 9.
- ⁴⁷"As the evolutionist doctrine gained repute, the rival doctrine of a primitive monotheism, from which all non-biblical religions were descended, was more clearly enunciated, and Romans 1:20ff. was its prime source." A.F. Walls, *op. cit.*, p. 353.
- ⁴⁸Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 114.
- ⁴⁹*A Defence of Brahmoism and the Brahma Samaj*, 2nd Ed. (Calcutta, 1870), p. 11.
- ⁵⁰*Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London, 1873), p. 40.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 136.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 137.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 124-27.

- ⁵⁵S. Mateer, "Early Glimmerings of Divine Truth in India," *The Indian Evangelical Review*, I/1, (July 1873), p. 58.
- ⁵⁶See Eric J. Sharpe, *Not to Destroy but to Fulfil* (Uppsala, 1965), pp. 43-56 and *Comparative Religion An Introduction* (London, 1975), pp. 35-46.
- ⁵⁷*Comparative Religion, An Introduction*, p. 35.
- ⁵⁸Introduction (1867) to *Chips from a German Workshop*, I (London, 1894), p. 4.
- ⁵⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁶¹Müller found Justin's idea of the "universal reason" (*logos spermatikos*) very attractive (*ibid.*, p. 20).
- ⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- ⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁶⁴Published in London, 1973, p. 39.
- ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 127.
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 126-26; 132.
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 133.
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 138.
- ⁷⁰Introduction (1867), *Chips From a German Workshop*, pp. 19, 22, 24; *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, p. 138.
- ⁷¹*A Defence of Brahmoism and the Brahma Samaj*, p. 9.
- ⁷²This is, for instance, how he warned modern theistic movement such as the Brahma Samaj: "A fair examination of the religions of the world shows that in none of them have the theistic truths succeeded in maintaining their ground, apart from the revelation

which has come through Christ. This is a lesson which modern theism needs to learn" (*The Bible, Its Revelation, Inspiration, and Evidence* [London, 1883], p. 392).

⁷³London and Edinburgh, 1861, p. 60.

⁷⁴*Essays on Conciliation in matters of Religion*, reprint (Calcutta, 1849), pp. 15, 16, 51, 52.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

⁷⁶(London, 1868), pp. viii, 318, 321, 322, etc.

⁷⁷*Indian Wisdom* (London, 1876), p. viii.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. ix, 3.

⁷⁹*Modern India and the Indians*, 3rd ed. (London, 1879), pp. 233-34.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁸¹*Indian Wisdom* (London, 1875), pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; see also *Modern India and the Indians*, pp. 251-52.

⁸²See e.g. *The Science of Religion and Christian Missions* (Glasgow, 1876), p. 16 and note 1.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Hinduism and Its Relations to Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1874), p. 22.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 34, 35.

⁸⁸*India and India Missions*, p. vii.

⁸⁹"The invention of idols is the root of inmorality; they are a contrivance which has plighted human life" (Wisdom of Solomon 14:12, N.E.B.).

⁹⁰*India and Indian Missions*, pp. 39-40.

⁹¹E.g. *India and Indian Missions*, p. 63

⁹²*The Church Missionary Intelligence*, VI, 1855, pp. 76-78.

⁹³*The Religions of India: A Plea for India Missions*, delivered on Jan 30, 1864 (Edinburgh, 1865), p. 15.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹⁶See A.F. Walls, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁹⁷See A.F. Walls, p. 347.

⁹⁸"Christianity is now a power in India, a felt and acknowledged power.... What is the destiny of idolatry, and what that of Christianity, in the coming ages? The people are thinking, comparing, arguing, not knowing exactly what to do. India is much in the condition of Rome previously to the baptism of Emperor Constantine. Idolatry, here as there, now as then, is falling into disgrace" (M.A. Sherring, *The Sacred City of the Hindus* [London, 1868], p. 358). The Brahma Samaj's attempts to resist the spread of Christianity was thought to be "singularly analogous to the Neo-Platonic efforts to resist and stay the progress of Christianity in the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries" (Sherring, *The History of Protestant Missions in India* [London, 1884], p. 106).

⁹⁹*India in the Dark Wood* (London, 1930), p. 115.

¹⁰⁰*op. cit.*, p. 10. See also N. Macnicol, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19.

¹⁰¹"The Kulin Brahmins of Bengal", *The Calcutta Review*, 2, 3 (1844), p. 29.

¹⁰²*Proofs of the Divinity of Our Lord* (Bombay, 1887), pp. 96-97.

¹⁰³See Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths* (Oxford, 1970), p. 3.

¹⁰⁴A.M. Paradakar, *The Theology of Goreh* (Madras, 1969), p. 22. Kaj Baago who likened Banerjea to Justin Martyr, thought it "a pity that Banerjea changed his views regarding Hinduism so late in his life and was prevented from using his talents and his knowledge for the creation of proper Hindu-Christian theology" (*Pioneers of Indigenous Christian Theology* [Madras, 1969], p. 16). On Goreh, E.J. Sharpe wrote: "He lived in tension: his attitude to Hinduism was at best tentatively expressed, and seems to have

exercised little or no influence on the subsequent course of missionary thought" (*Not to Destroy But to Fulfill*, p. 93). Sharpe regretted that the ideas of Banerjea and Goreh had not been developed by later Hindu converts towards "a creative and appreciative Christian attitude to the Hindu heritage," which might lay the foundations for "a genuine Indian theology of encounter" (*ibid.*, p. 94).

¹⁰⁵*op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁶See Robin Boyd, "The Use of the Bible in Indian Christian Theology," *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Oct-Dec, 1973), p. 145.

¹⁰⁷Thus, for instance, while C.K. Barrett found the main source of Rom 1:18-32 in Hellenistic Judaism; H.P. Owen considered the differences between Wisdom and Rom 1 to be "striking"; and M.D. Hooker very ably demonstrated the "parallelism" between Rom 1 and Gen 1-3, and saw "Adam in Romans 1."

¹⁰⁸See A.F. Walls, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-57.