

## THE SAGES OF INDIA AND CHRISTIANITY.\*

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THERE have recently been published in London two books of greatest interest to students of human thought, in that they set forth a comprehensive and harmonious interpretation of two of the Christian Gospels by a representative of the highest religious and philosophical culture of India. These works are "Commentaries," by Sri Paránanda, on St. Matthew and St. John, both being large-paged and closely-printed volumes of about three hundred pages each.†

Two things contribute to make these books conspicuously noteworthy. The first is that a native of India—and one, too, thoroughly imbued with the religious and philosophical ideas of his country—

\*Sri Paránanda's *Commentary on St. Matthew* and *An Eastern Exposition of St. John*, published, respectively, by Kegan Paul and William Hutchinson, London.

†A few years ago there appeared two books, *The Gospel of Jesus According to St. Matthew* and *An Eastern Exposition of St. John*, both written by Sri Paránanda. Neither should be considered as an exegetical work, but both are interesting if considered as interpretations of Christianity by an Oriental mind, and their appearance is a noteworthy fact, as it indicates the growing spirit of appreciation of Christianity among the educated classes of the East.

The author, who writes under the name Sri Paránanda, is the Honorable P. Ramanáthan, C. M. G., K. G., a Tamil gentleman of culture and also of great wealth. He holds a prominent position in his native country, Ceylon. For many years he served as the representative of his people in the legislative council of Ceylon, and is now Solicitor General of the island. He commands the unreserved confidence of his countrymen, and his prominence is recognized by the British government. His religious views, therefore, are not only of theoretical interest, but are apt to exercise a great influence upon the native population of his home. This fact alone gives a significance to his publications which cannot easily be overestimated.

here displays a spirit of the highest reverence for the Christian Bible; and the second, that these gospels, as has come to my knowledge, are now no longer neglected by his cultured countrymen. Indeed, since the interpretation of Sri Paránanda appeared, translations of St. Matthew and St. John, following the lines of thought indicated in these works, have been undertaken by the orthodox pundits of India as books worthy of being read and carefully studied by the people of India.

Circumstances led me some little time ago to a meeting with Sri Paránanda, which has been followed by many conversations in the course of which my interest in these books, already known to me, has been greatly enhanced. He is possessed of a sound knowledge of both the East and the West, is a member of an ancient and wealthy family, and holds a high and honored position in the government of his native country. His insight into spiritual things is reputed, and appears, to be particularly great, and his exposition of them is always brought to the touchstone of the hearer's experience.

The full title of the second of the two volumes referred to above is "An Eastern Exposition of the Gospel According to St. John, Being an Interpretation Thereof by Sri Paránanda, by the Light of *Jnána Yoga*," and in the preface Sri Paránanda's chief disciple and editor makes the following statement: "As regards the expression *Jnána Yoga*, which appears in the title page, it means spiritual communion in the holiest sense of the term. The Sanskrit word *Yoga* is derived from the same root as the Latin word *Jungo*, to join, and English *Yoke* (Matt. xi, 29). The fullest and most perfect union of the sanctified Spirit in man with the illuminating Spirit in the universe is *Jnána Yoga*, and the commentary contained in these pages is based, not upon theory or speculation, but upon the actual experience of *Jnáni Yogis*, of those who, whether working or resting, are in constant fellowship with God."

This passage forcibly arrests the attention. What does it mean?

It cannot be understood without an acquaintance with Hindu beliefs and habits of thought not general in the West. A year's residence in India and sympathetic contact with her people have given me that acquaintance, and, since the claims made for these commentaries cannot otherwise be understood, before proceeding to the task of the reviewer, with which this paper is chiefly concerned, I shall endeavor to place before the reader an accurate outline, in the detail necessary for its due appreciation, of those beliefs of the people of India, as I have actually met them and therefore know

them to be, by which such statements as that of the passage just quoted are, if at all, to be justified.\*

I find that there is widely recognized among the more intelligent of the natives of India, those of them, that is, who have preserved their respect for the traditions and institutions of their own land, and their confidence in them, against the materializing influence of Western ideas and education—a science of spiritual things called *Jnānam*, Wisdom. This science is said to deal with the principles which underlie both the visible and the invisible and spiritual worlds, and to be based upon actual and immediate knowledge of spiritual things and of God. It answers the questions which Western science has either confessed itself unable to answer or has answered unsatisfactorily—as the purpose of human life, the reasons for the performance of duty, the nature and limitations of the mind, the existence or non-existence of a soul in man, of God, of a future life. And in answering these questions it necessarily indicates the true relations of man to the external world, and the attitude toward it and the conduct of life in it which are best for him to observe.

The masters of the science of Wisdom are called *Jnānis*, or knowers of God. They are men who are reputed to have attained to that stage of development where they directly perceive God and spiritual things. It is said by them that the soul (*ātma*), the consciousness (*sākshi*), or the true ego of man, terms which they use convertibly, is a thing apart from both the physical body and the *manas* or mind, these latter being only its instruments. The ordinary man does not distinguish between the consciousness which knows and the mind which thinks, because the two are so involved with one another as to seem inseparable. Thought succeeds thought without cessation except in deep sleep, and he is cheated by the “blear illusion” that the thinker is no other than the knower, otherwise called the soul or the self.

The common view, therefore, is that thinking and sleep embrace the whole range of human experience. But the *Jnāni* affirms that if all thought is forced to run down to a perfect calm and sleep is

\*Edward Carpenter's "From Adam's Peak to Eliphanta" deals intelligently and entertainingly with this interesting and, in the West, little understood subject. Of this book a distinguished native of India has said that it contains "the only Western account of India that shows a knowledge of the great undercurrents of Indian life" (P. Prunachalam—District Judge at Kurunegale, Ceylon—in a paper entitled "Luminous Sleep," Westminster Review, September, 1902). See also Max Muller's admirable life of Rama-krishna, generally reputed in India to have been a *Jnani*.

kept off, a new world of experience opens out. When the soul is in association with the mind and is engaged in witnessing the operations of the mind, the materiality of the mind and its worldly nature are reflected on the soul and intensify its original obscurity, so that in wakeful moments it sees nothing but the world, and in sleep unmitigated darkness. If the energy of the soul is withdrawn, as it may be by proper training, from the planes of sense and thought, the soul attains knowledge unconditioned by time, place or other divided existence, and such knowledge, they say, is knowledge of God, knowledge of the infinite, as distinguished from knowledge of the finite or the world.

The attainment of this knowledge is not, it is said, open to everyone who chooses to apply himself to its acquisition, since instruction and training are not the only requisites for reaching it. A certain ripeness of nature, full development of neighborly love and other high virtues, must be present as a foundation. Without these instruction and training would be ineffective, nor would they indeed be given by those competent to impart them.

The distinguishing characteristics of *Jnánis* are said to be kindness, compassion, love for all that lives, patience, forbearance, resignation and contentment under all circumstances whatsoever, non-resentment of injury, unwillingness to exact retribution from those who have harmed them. It is said that they are incapable of hatred or other evil passion, that they are unwilling to judge others, that they are utterly indifferent to worldly power of every kind, whether it be wealth, office, rank or social position; that they have no concern about providing for their future, having perfect confidence in the infinite power and mercy of the Lord, but spend their lives in laboring for others as ministers of God. In brief, the character commonly assigned to them is the same as that associated in the West with the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is said that *Jnánis* live in all parts of India, and that there has never been a time when they were not to be found there. They are not, however, numerous, probably, I am told, not more than one to ten millions of the population. They live for the most part in secluded places; sometimes they spend their lives in traveling from place to place. They are usually without property and are cared for by their disciples, or by the people with whom they happen to come in contact. The people of India, as a whole, are most anxious to serve holy men, and no one who is thought to be devoted to the service of religion will be allowed to want. There are also some *Jnánis* who live in towns and cities engaged in the usual occu-

pations of life, generally looked upon as ordinary men, their spiritual status being known only to the few persons who have been drawn to them as disciples. These men are esteemed to be the most exemplary of citizens, the best and kindest of husbands, fathers, brothers—to most perfectly fulfil, in short, all the duties of life. Yet while in the world they never forget that they are not of the world, and all their actions are performed, not with the object of profiting by their fruits, but as service to the Lord. The following lines by one of them, who long occupied a high post in one of the states of southern India, indicates the attitude which they observe toward worldly enjoyments:

“While I live in shady groves, fragrant with fresh-blown flowers;  
 While I drink cool and limpid water, and disport myself therein;  
 While I find enjoyment in sandal-scented breezes, which move through the court like gentle maids;  
 While I revel in the day-like light of the glorious full moon;  
 While I feast on dishes of various flavors, seeming tempered with ambrosia;  
 While I am passing off into sleep, after much merriment, bedecked with garlands and perfumed with scent;  
 Grant to me, O Siva, who art true, spiritual and blessed, all-filling, impartite and substrate of all—grant to me the boon of never forgetting thy grace (so as to avoid the perils of the pleasures of the world).”—*Táyumánavar: Saccidananda Sivam*, 11.

The *Jnánis* stand for the highest and most sacred ideas of the Indian civilization—for all that is finest, noblest and purest in it. They are the efflorescence of the life of the nation, and the life of the nation as a whole—not of any sect, creed or division of it. To them all external religious forms are alike. The Brahmin, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Mohammedan or the Agnostic are to them the same. Development of character and aptitude for receiving spiritual instruction are the only credentials which they regard. The most enlightened men of India have always gone and still go to the *Jnánis* when seeking spiritual light; for, it is said, they can always be found by earnest seekers for truth. Still, as of old, their prayer is:

“O Saint, teach us, for thou art the way, and there is no other for us.  
 O Saint, thou art the way, thou art the way.”—*Maitrayana Upanishad*.

The retirement in which *Jnánis* live may seem extraordinary to the Western mind. Why, we are inclined to ask, do they not proclaim themselves and make their knowledge as widely as possible available to men? The answer is that religion must be adapted to the needs and capacities of the people; that religion or spiritual knowledge must be graduated like worldly knowledge, and that while the exoteric religions of India are well suited for the masses,

the higher aspects of truth cannot be assimilated by them. Were the teachings of the *Juánis* widely disseminated among the people the effect would not be helpful, but rather confusing and disturbing to those minds which delight in ritual and other forms of concrete thought. Further, it is said that it is not necessary that they should publicly proclaim themselves in order that those who are fit to receive their instruction may learn of them, since he who is prepared for such knowledge always finds them. If one inquires how the *Juáni* is discovered, one is told that the Lord of the universe draws the seeker to the teacher. Such is the infinite solicitude with which He watches over men, that whoever *needs* a spiritual teacher is certain to be led to one.

On the other hand, the quest of one who seeks to discover a *Juáni* from mere motives of curiosity will end in naught. A person may, it is said, be in daily association with one for years, even though knowing of the existence of such men and being desirous of meeting them, without suspecting his spiritual status. Several instances of this sort have been related to me, which happened to natives of the country; and it is well understood that *Juánis* will not disclose themselves except to those who seek them for their spiritual guidance and are fitted to profit by it.

We are now better able to understand the meaning of the words, "The commentary contained in these pages is based, not upon theory or speculation, but upon the actual experience of *Juáni Yogis*;" namely, that we are here offered the interpretation of the gospels required by the knowledge of God and spiritual things derived by *Juáni Yogis* from actual experience and perception. Howsoever this claim may be regarded, there is no doubt, I think, but that the typical teaching of the *Juánis*, as held in India, is accurately given by Sri Paránanda, and it is at least certain that he is regarded by some of the most intelligent and spiritually minded of his countrymen as a powerful religious teacher, whose teachings embody the most cherished ideas of India.

As I have already intimated, it should not be inferred, because Sri Paránanda's ideas are considered essentially representative of Indian thought, that they are in any respect narrow. The spirit of the highest Indian culture is exceedingly broad and tolerant—a fact not generally known in the West. He does not give one religion preference over another, but regards them all alike as the means which God in His wisdom and mercy employs to lead men from worldliness to godliness, according to their respective needs and capacities. God, he says, is the great Teacher of men, and He has

by means of human governments and religious organizations evolved well-defined methods of thought for promoting the growth of neighborly love and causing the decline of worldly attachments. Such being the function of law and religion, there should be no disrespect shown by the votaries of one system of law and religion for the votaries of another system. "God exists everywhere, and everywhere He grants His grace to devoted seekers for Him. He may be worshiped by the ignorant savage as a stone or a tree, by the more intelligent as a venerable man, a mighty Spirit, or the All-pervading Essence. Each type of worship represents the aspiration of the soul to Him, and to each worshiper He comes in the very form in which He has been thought."

The Gospel of St. John is regarded by Sri Parānanda as the most valuable part of the New Testament, in that it contains more doctrines stated in clear, concise language than are found elsewhere in like compass in that book. The central theme of this gospel, he says, is worship—worship "in spirit and in truth"—which form of worship alone can lead one to eternal life or knowledge of God. The inquiry which naturally first arises is, therefore, what is his conception of true worship? This he elucidates in commenting upon John iv. 24, as follows:

"With the vast majority of worshipers, worship may be called a *visual act*, because without some *object* outside of themselves to *see* and *gaze upon* with their eyes they cannot put away, even to a small extent, their worldly thoughts so as to arrive at a reverential mood. In many parts of the world wooden figures, molten images, pictures and other forms of representation are placed before the worshipers, who verily believe that those very idols will grant them their prayers.

"With another class of worshipers, who are generally literate, worship may be said to be a *mental act*; because they project *in their minds* a picture of God, as if He were somewhere in the heavens, above the bright blue sky, standing or seated (say) on a throne, surrounded by angels and saints in a place brilliantly lit and otherwise adorned. In the Book of Revelations, for instance, we have varying representations of God, some one of which is more or less in the mind of the devout and intelligent Christian when he worships."

Here follow some passages quoted from the Revelations, after which the author proceeds:

"Thought pictures like these, no less than eye pictures, are idols, for *idols* and *ideas* are alike *forms*. The difference between them—the *mental* and the *visual pictures*—the *idea* and the *idol*—is that an idol is a form objectively made, while an idea is a form subjectively made. . . . The two terms, having a common Greek derivation, mean alike a form; the latter is an image made of thought; the former an image made of grosser material.

"Those who cannot worship without making images of thought or of some

grosser material, such as earth, wood, metal or stone, are alike *Idolaters* (John v., 21). Inability to keep steadily before the mind for some time the mental images enjoined for worship compels the vast majority of mankind to resort to material images.

"A third class of worshipers, standing high above these idol-worshippers, finds it truly an offense and a stumbling block to form any idea at all for the purposes of worship. They do not require the illusive aid of an image, whether within or without the mind, to help them to realize the presence of the Lord. They know how to '*cast down imaginations*'—how to abate thought (2 Cor. x., 5), to put away the impressions or memories which relate to their worldly surroundings—how to pacify themselves or make peace (Matt. v., 9)—and then they feel that they have come into a holy religion. This elimination of the perceptions of the senses and thought from Consciousness for the purpose of being in fellowship with God (1 John i., 3) is *spiritual worship*, as distinct from *visual* or *mental* worship.

"Though spiritual worship is the truest form of worship, because, apart from the limitations of thought and sense perceptions, you as pure spirit hold communication with the Lord as the Eternal and Infinite Spirit that underlies all things, yet it cannot be said that visual and mental worship are needless. In the visual and mental forms of worship the Lord is taken to be a person with limbs, only because the worshiper cannot comprehend the Lord as boundless and formless Spirit.

"Christ Jesus, when appealed to by the Samaritan woman as to how the worship of different nations, as of the Jews and the Samaritans, was to be reconciled, replied in effect (ver. 22-24): 'Neither the Jews nor the Samaritans know the *true* nature of God, and therefore their worship of Him, in Jerusalem or Gerizim, as either an object of thought or sight, is being *ignorantly* carried on. The *highest* and *best* form of worship is neither a visual act nor a mental act, but a purely *spiritual* act. For, though God pervades every form in the universe, none of those forms is God; He is Infinite Spirit, being *in* all and *above* all; and as such He should be *spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. ii., 7-15), that is, by the spirit only, when isolated from the thought and the senses. Now that I have been sent into Palestine, I see that the time has arrived when those who are dissatisfied with the worship of the Lord as an object of sight or thought may learn of me to worship Him as all-pervading, all-knowing, all-loving Spirit—to worship Him as Spirit pure in His own spirit. The one only way of worshipping Him in this manner is by isolating yourself from the limitations of thought and sense perception. By this isolation you become *at one with* God—you, a cleansed spirit, are allowed to be *in union with* God. Then indeed are you said to *know* God spiritually as Eternal Being.'

"Thus worship, in the *highest* sense of the term, resolves itself into the first and greatest of all commandments—love God with all thy soul (Matt. xxii., 37). Loving with all one's soul involves *continuous* love, which, however, is not possible unless the lover and the loved one are precisely of the same nature. Man's spirit must be as pure as the Divine Spirit before it can be at one with It continuously. True worship therefore means attainment of unity between the seeker and the God that is sought spiritually."

The Lord's prayer Sri Parámananda regards as a great aid to worship in spirit and in truth, since it embodies the doctrine of the



Psalms—which is, indeed, the central doctrine of all true religion—The Lord reigneth and all power belongeth to Him.

“‘Thy Kingdom come,’ said Jesus, should be our daily prayer in life so that we may be delivered from the evil or sin of *estrangement from God* (Matt. vi., 10-13)—from the evil of not being one with God. ‘*Thy Kingdom come*’ means mayest thou cause *Thyself* to reign within me, in the place of *myself*.’ And ‘*Thy will be done*’ means, ‘Do thou make my spirit lowly enough to eschew the foolishness that “I” am powerful for any purpose; and grant to me the knowledge that all forms of power, whether in the wordly or spiritual plane, are *Thine*, and *Thine alone*!’ Then indeed does sin vanish, because, being one with the Lord, no thoughts or acts of yours can be said to be tainted with worldliness. They are steeped in godliness” (page 167).

And again, page 190:

“The one prayer that Jesus taught should be in the mind of every spiritual person is: ‘May Thy Kingdom come! *Thine* the Power, *Thine* the Glory for ever!’ (Matt. vi., 10-13). When the Kingdom *has* come—when one *has* awakened to the fact that God, and not man, ‘works in all places of his dominions’ (Ps. ciii., 22)—when one sees that what is called *human endeavor* is nothing more than the power of *God* lent for the attainment of certain objects, and that, whether one desired it or not, the Lord would of His Own accord (because He is the omnipresent Ruler of the Universe) distribute pain and pleasure suitably to the needs of each soul—then indeed will thoughts of every description run down to a calm and leave the spirit within beautifully restful, and yet keenly responsive to the inflow of God’s energy for *His Own* purposes. Then indeed will one recognize the full meaning of the words: ‘Be still and know that I am the Lord.’” (Ps. xli., 10).

Sri Paránanda regards Jesus as a master of Wisdom in the Indian sense, that is, as a *Jñāni* (knower of God). Jesus no doubt, he says, spent the period which elapsed between his early youth and the age of thirty, of which no mention is made in the New Testament, in receiving spiritual instruction and training from masters, probably in the wilderness in or near Palestine. When he had attained the state of Mastership, Christhood, or the overcoming of the worldly spirit, he returned to Judea and began his ministry.

This overcoming of worldliness, this Christhood, is the third stage of human development, that in which man is *in fellowship* with God. The two stages which precede it are those in which the relation of man to God is felt to be that of son to father, and master to servant. In the Pentateuch God is described as an angry ruler who jealously watched over the affairs of the Jews, and who was to be conciliated through the high priest by offerings of various kinds. This is the relation of master to servant. In later times offerings of cakes and sacrifices of oxen were declared to be unnecessary. A loving heart and conduct worthy of acceptance by

God were considered essential. This is the relation of father and son. During these two stages man is under the dominion of the law and subject to sin and punishment for sin. In these stages the predominating motive of human action is selfish love, the nature of which is to ignore and disregard the claims of others.

The third stage, that of fellowship or companionship, can only exist between those whose natures are alike. Therefore if man desires to be at one with God his nature must be so purified as to be essentially like that of God. It is by means of law that God, the great Teacher of men, brings about in them the suppression of selfish love and worldly attachments, by the development of the sense of justice, which expresses itself as neighborly love. This is begun by law and perfected by religion. When neighborly love is developed in man law is no longer an aid for his improvement. It has accomplished its purpose.

“God the Teacher taught the Jews the right way of living in worldly life by the laws of Moses; and many centuries afterward the Lord taught the Jews through Jesus that law was not intended to rule the thoughts of men perpetually, as if it were a guide for all times and conditions of men, but that it was intended only as a provisional instrument for raising men from love of self to love of others—from Self-love to Neighborly Love (page 39). By providing different methods of punishment the law is able to develop in a man a willing disposition to give to each man his due—to cause to rise in him a desire to be just. When selfishness is thus changed to a sense of *justice* when Self-love has transformed itself into spontaneous Neighborly Love,” the time for the development of the third condition of man, Christhood, is at hand (page 169). “Hence, St. Paul says, ‘Love is the fulfilling of the Law’ (Rom., xiii., 10); that is, the Law fulfills its object when it begets Neighborly Love in men. ‘All the Law is fulfilled in one word—Love—love thy neighbor as thyself’ (Gal. v., 14); ‘Christ is the end of the Law’ (Rom. x., 4); ‘I am the end of the Law’” (Matt. v., 17)—pages 49 and 39.

Coincidentally with the development of man's nature in the respect just considered, the experience of life has been bringing about another change in him equally necessary to the intended result.

Men in this world are for the most part wholly engrossed in their attachment to the things of the world. The pleasures of the senses, the pleasures of the intellect, the gratification of ambition—these are the objects for which most men live. Deprive them of these and nothing is left for them in life. This entanglement in worldly desires is the “darkness” which prevents the soul from seeing and knowing God. In other words, that which obscures the soul is the influence of material things, understanding by that expression not only physical matter, but also that subtle form of matter in which the mind functions. This influence is frequently

referred to in the gospels; frequently as darkness (John i, 5); as corruption, since it is material influence which spoils or corrupts the soul (Gal. vi, 8; see also Psalms xvi, 10); as carnal-mindedness (Rom. viii, 5-7); flesh (*ib.*); the ways of the *old* man or of the son of perdition (2 Thess. ii, 3); the spirit of the world or worldliness (1 John v, 19); the spirit of error (1 John iv, 6), and generally as ignorance, evil or falsity. The possession of the soul by material influences or darkness is what is meant by the captivity or bondage of the soul (Ps. lxxviii, 18; Eph. iv, 8; Rom. viii, 21).

God in His providence has provided means for rescuing man from this entanglement. The experience of life tends to destroy the illusion that any real happiness is yielded by it. All material joys are found to be fleeting and to leave behind them dissatisfaction, bitterness or unrest; so that the despairing inquiry "is life worth living?" is one quite familiar to our ears. This state of mind borders upon a profound truth in human nature, for it is necessary that man should arrive at the conviction that nothing material is of any real value to him before he can possibly free himself from it and rise above it; and the world is so ordered that this conviction must in time be reached inevitably. When material attachments have dropped away, so that a man, although perhaps living in the thick of the world, surrounded by and using all the comforts and conveniences of the world, holds himself free from them, does not live *for* them, but makes them *subservient to his use*, "rejoices not when they come and grieves not when they go," and if, besides this, there has been developed in him a sense of the reality of other souls and a willingness and desire to adjust his life to a recognition of them, he has attained to the state where he stands upon the threshold of that revelation in his life known as conversion, rebirth, resurrection, or the arising of Christ within him.

Jesus has enumerated the classes of persons who are thus ripe, who are "entitled or qualified to hear and understand the truths of the Kingdom of God," in Matthew v, as follows (page 178):

"(1) The 'poor in Spirit,' that is, those who in spirit are 'poor of this world' (Jas. i, 5), those who feel emptied of worldly cravings.

"(2) Those who are meek-minded—those in whom the conceit called 'I' and 'mine' have greatly subsided.

"(3) Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is, those who crave for a life free from wrong-doing of every kind, and who therefore anxiously consider the claims and needs of others before their own.

"(4) Those who are merciful, that is, those who do not take advantage of their opportunities to the detriment of others, and ever try to smooth down the difficulties of others and make their position more pleasant for them.

"(5) Those who are pure in heart—who have no guile and are not swayed by self-seeking motives in their dealings with others.

"(6) Those who make peace—who always promote purification of thought or calmness of mind in themselves and others; and

"(7) Those who suffer revilement and persecution with cheerful resignation for a good cause, especially for the sake of a Sanctified Teacher.

"The foregoing classes of persons are suitable spirits for receiving the word of God. . . . The waning of the love of self and what belongs to self, and the waxing of the love for others indicate a certain growth, maturity, or ripeness of the spirit. It is only when the spirit has arrived at this degree of maturity or state of self-denial and neighborly love—in a word of Unworldliness—that it can receive and understand the doctrine of Grace and Truth. . . . Till thy spirit is mature enough to be included in one of the classes specified by Jesus it is said to remain in Darkness, because it cannot understand the principles of Light. Therefore, said St. John in impressive words, 'He that is not of God heareth not us; *hercby know we* the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error' (1 John iv., 6). The very fact of anyone being unable to hear or unable to understand a Sanctified Teacher is proof positive that he is not of God."

The next step, says Sri Paránanda, is one that requires the aid and instruction of a sanctified teacher—of one, that is, who has completely overcome the worldly spirit by receiving the unction or grace of God. The duty and chief function of these anointed ones or Christs, while they remain in the world, is to ripen, in those who are prepared and drawn to them as their disciples, by their loving instruction and tender care, neighborly love into infinite love, into the love which knows no depth or height, no length or breadth, into Christly love "which knows no distinction between 'your' hand and 'mine;' which turns the left cheek to the man who smote the right cheek; which gives away the cloak of its body to the man who took away its coat; which loves not only friends and neighbors, but 'enemies' also; which blesses them that curse it, does good to them that hate it, and prays for them that despitefully use it" (p. 169).

"'I am the Resurrection,' said Jesus in John xi, 25, where the Greek word for resurrection is *anastasis*, which means literally 'causing to stand up or rise.' 'I am the Resurrection' thus signifies 'I, Christ, am the resurrecting agent—I can teach you how to rise to, or attain, a realization of God' (see John xi, 26). 'I am the way' (John xiv, 6); 'I am the door,' he once more explained (*ib.* x, 7, and xiv 6). By *me* if any man enter in, he shall be saved (*ib.* x, 9). These verses clearly show that it is through the teaching of Christ only that resurrection can take place" (p. 116).

The experience of the arising or awakening of the soul is the resurrection, raising up of the dead, or rebirth. The meaning of

these words has been the occasion of great controversies. "But," says Sri Parānanda,

"Those who have had godly experience, as distinguished from worldly experience, have never disagreed on the subject to whatever race or country they may have belonged. The exposition of the doctrine of the 'awakening of the sleep' or the 'raising of the dead,' commonly known as the Resurrection, may be differently worded by the saints of each country, but in meaning they are always found to be in agreement, *for the simple reason that they speak of a great spiritual experience.* (Page 115.)

"Worldliness or Darkness is the cause of the natural life of man. It must fall off or 'die' before Godliness or Light can appear. This 'death' of Darkness or Worldliness is a mysterious *fact* or phenomenon in our constitution, and has its analogy in the life of a plant. Lord Jesus said, 'Except the flesh of corn (*kokkos tou pitou*) which fall into the earth, die, it remains there forsaken (*monos*); but if it die, it beareth much fruit' (John xii., 24). And St. Paul asked, 'How are the dead raised?' and he immediately answered, the dead are raised even as the embryo (*sperma*) is raised *after the death of the integument* (*soma*). His words are: 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, *if it does not die*; and that which thou sowest (what is it?)—thou sowest not the integument that shall be born, but the naked kernel (*gunnon kokkon*), it may be of wheat or some other grain' (1 Cor. xv., 35-37).

"How mysterious is the quickening of the kernel or flesh in the vegetable or animal seeds! In vegetable life we see that the seed is composed generally of two coats or integuments over the nucleus or kernel called the embryo, and the embryo sprouts only when the integuments disintegrate and die. So, in animal life, when the spermatozoon in the semen enters the ovum and impregnates it, it is carried to the womb and there undergoes several transformations before the embryo appears. In how occult a manner are these changes carried on, without which the birth of the natural life from the flesh cannot take place; but how much more profound is the mystery of the birth of spiritual life from the natural life—of Godliness from worldliness—of Life Eternal from 'Death' or Life Natural!

"And yet this mystery has been made known (Eph. ii., 5) to those who have attained Christhood (ib. 17, 18; ib. iv., 13). It is made known, it is revealed to the *ripe spirit in the twinkling of an eye*, even as a man who, having gone to sleep in the dead of night and *awaking* at dawn, finds, the moment he opens his eyes, that the light is shining. In this example drawn from objective life the shining of the sun is around him, is without him; but in the awakening called the Resurrection, the Light of the Spiritual *day star* (2 Pet. i., 19)—the great Spiritual Light—is seen *within* man, even though his eyes are shut and his body in a dark room! It is not his carnal eyes that see this Spiritual Light, called *Incorruption* or the Kingdom of God; but it is his cleansed soul that knows it, realizes it, experiences it, the very second its last vestige of corruption falls. This realization, this knowledge, this actual experience of Incorruption, is the Resurrection of man.

"Up to the time of this experience man is of the earth; thenceforth he is of heaven" (pages 118, 119).

Christhood is the perfected state of man—the ideal toward which all men must strive. The predominating characteristic of

man in this stage of his development is all-embracing love—love which knows of no self, love without self in it, love unhampered by the limitations of separate existence. In short, it is infinite love in infinite being. True there is a body, but the body bears the relation to Christly love that a glass shade bears to the light burning within it. It burns within, but its rays extend far and wide beyond the shade. Even so, when the spirit in the body has been sanctified (John x, 36) its light and love extend far beyond the body, and know no height or depth, no length or breadth.

This is the nature of God's love. It is selfless, limitless, but it is also penetrating and searching, so irresistible in its power that it holds all things living in its tender embrace, and adjusts every condition of their existence according to their highest needs. Nothing is great and nothing is small in its estimation. It displays the same infinite care for the blade of grass, the microscopic insect, and the highly evolved and intellectual human being. Every atom, every tiny infusoria, rests upon the bosom of the infinite love in that absolute security which only infinite tenderness and infinite power can insure.

This sublime conception of infinite love is the root and essence of Indian wisdom. If it be grasped, if the idea of the universe reposing in the embrace of the infinitely watchful, infinitely solicitous, infinitely tender, all-pervading, all-powerful God, who provides for every existing thing the conditions of its highest good, leading it with entire certainty and safety to the highest fruition of its nature and ultimately to its assured heritage of absolute knowledge and bliss—if this be understood, the teaching as a whole becomes an open book.

We shall now be able to understand the meaning which Sri Paránanda assigns to the incident of the Lord's supper. This is set forth in the Commentary of St. Matthew xxvi, 26-29 (p. 230 et seq.).

"When Jesus and his disciples sat together to keep the passover, he took the unleavened bread into his hands, invoked a prayer to God that he who eats it should taste of bliss (blessed, v., 26), and gave a piece of it to each of his disciples, saying, 'This is my body, eat it.' And after the supper (1 Cor. xi., 25), taking a cup of the juice of the wine he handed it to them, saying, 'This is my blood of the Covenant, drink it.'

"The terms 'eat' and 'drink' are used here in the sense of not consuming but tasting and knowing. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son is simply to know the Son (Matt. xi., 27) thoroughly, as a matter of actual experience. The consequence of *knowing* him is the attainment of eternal life (John. vi., 54; ib., xvii., 3).

"As Christ has neither form nor flesh (Isa. liii., 2), he has neither body nor blood. Eating or drinking him therefore means coming to a *knowledge* of the spirit.

"This knowledge of the spirit is called 'bread,' because, firstly, it satisfies the hunger for righteousness, and secondly, it gives the strength of eternal life to the soul.

"Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life' (John vi., 48). The 'I' he refers to is the spirit or Christ within the fleshly body named Jesus. When his disciples murmured at the difficulty of his saying (John vi., 61), Jesus explained, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit (ib., 63), that is, relate to matters of spiritual experience.' . . . The Gospel of Peace preached by Jesus ordained the worship of God, not in sanctuaries or on mountain tops, but in spirit and in truth (John iv., 21-24). He called this doctrine the New Law, New Covenant or New Testament; and as it invigorated the soul and led it to eternal life, he called it his 'blood,' contrasting it with the blood which the High Priest, who entered the tabernacle once a year, offered in obedience to the law of Moses. His invitation that all should drink of it (Matt. 26. 27) means that it was essential that all should *know* and realize it; that mere hearing of the Gospel would not enable them to *know* Christ or God, and that while Moses enjoined formal worship, his own doctrine needed to be spiritually realized.

"You must not only 'hear' but 'give heed,' or consider what you have heard (Heb. ii., 1). Then by hearing and considering you will understand (Matt. xiii., 19, and ib. xv., 10). As a consequence of hearing and understanding, 'faith' or love of God (Rom x., 17) comes, and when this love is nourished (1 Tim. iv., 6) by 'exercises unto Godliness' (ib., 7), Infinite Love or Peace known as Christ is experienced (James ii., 22). Therefore Jesus desired his disciples to *experience* Christ and God, and symbolically he handed them a cup of wine and said in effect, 'This is the new dispensation; realize it in actual experience.'"

The view of Christ above set forth is, of course, at variance with the words, "only begotten Son," applied to Jesus in the authorized and revised versions. But Sri Parānanda regards these words as a mistranslation of the Greek. His explanation of the point is, in substance, as follows: When one passes from the state of manhood to Christhood he has to be freed from every vestige and rudiment of worldliness, of attachment to material things. This great spiritual experience is well known to the sages of India, and to it they apply the Sanskrit term *kaivalya*, which means "aloneness," or freedom of the spirit from all that is worldly, earthly, carnal. Jesus having, by virtue of this experience, become a Christ, it is to his *isolation of spirit*, or *aloneness*, that the Greek word *mono-genes*, was applied by St. John. *Monos* means "alone," and *genes*, from *gignomai*, means "become." Primarily, *mono-genes* means "alone-become," but the translators, who had no knowledge of the great spiritual experience called "attainment of Christhood," or "revelation of the

Son of God," have interpreted the term in its secondary sense of "only begotten."

"It is chiefly owing," says Sri Paránanda, "to the wrong translation of this word that Christendom has been led to believe that there can be only one Christ in the universe, though Jesus, Paul and other apostles spoke often of the possibility of other persons also attaining the state of Christhood, also called sonship of God, perfection, peace or rest."

The doctrine of "vicarious atonement," as understood by most orthodox Christians, is also obviously negated. The Commentary on St. John does not mention the doctrine, and Sri Paránanda has said to me that he finds nothing to support it in the New Testament. Yet the primary meaning of the word—at-one-ment (with God)—of course precisely expresses the fundamental conception which he advances.

Neither does this interpretation permit the ascription of saving efficacy to mere *belief* in the divinity and divinely appointed mission of Christ Jesus. This doctrine of orthodox Christianity is also, in the opinion of Sri Paránanda, based upon a mistranslation. His argument (p. 125 et seq.) is too long for reproduction here. His conclusion, derived from the comparison of many passages, is that the Greek word *pistuc*, generally rendered *believe* in the accepted versions of the New Testament, should in many places be given the meaning of *love*. At page 129 of his Exposition of St. John he says:

"Such being the true doctrine of *Pistis*, or Faith in God, or Love of God, it would be a great mistake to suppose that verse 24 in chapter v., or verses 28, 40 and 47 in chapter vi., warrant the popular idea that for attaining Eternal Life one need only believe, or assent to, the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God sent to save man. For attaining Eternal Life or the Kingdom of God, neither belief, nor expression of belief in words, is sufficient. You should have something deeper and higher than belief, which, after all, is only thought. You should have, in the first place, poverty of spirit (Matt. v., 3)—a depletion of enjoyment in the pleasures of worldly life, and a yearning for the things of the Spirit. The next thing you should have is the teaching of one who has been sanctified. The Spirit withdrawn from sense-life is the field on which the word of the Sanctified Teacher will take root; and then comes the sprout called Love of God. That germ of love carefully nourished may be made to absorb all other loves, and to last forever, to be abiding (John xv., 4)—to be *so* abiding and *so* constant that your spirit, freed from all corruption, will be actually one with the Lord. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit' (1 Cor. vi., 17). 'Love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength'" (Matt. xxii., 37).

There would indeed be no end to the discussion of the interesting themes to be found in this fertile and suggestive book, but I



have, I hope, called attention to enough of them to indicate the general features of the decidedly new and rather startling interpretation which it advances. Its expositions are supported, wherever exception is taken to the prevalent understanding of a passage, by scholarly and elaborate analyses of the Greek text, and throughout by an inexhaustible wealth of references to all parts of the Bible, which commend the works to the serious attention of scholars and thinking men. Each must form his own conclusion as to their force, but it may be proper to here observe that the interpretation is throughout rational, logical and straightforward; that in dispensing with the two doctrines of vicarious atonement and efficacy of belief, sheet-anchors though they be of the orthodox modern Church, the chief difficulties experienced by thoughtful men in accepting Christianity are removed; that, in fact, there is nothing in the teachings of Christ, as they are here explained, which runs counter to either reason or science; and that here is advanced a conception of the inestimable value of human existence, of the dignity of human nature and of the soul-stirring potentialities implanted in it, before which the commonplace ideas of the orthodox Church "pale their ineffectual fires." We may lend him a willing ear, and remain grateful if convinced.