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Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy

While living in India for sixteen years, James Robert Ballantyne (1813–64) taught oriental languages to Indian pupils and became fascinated by Hindu philosophy, seeking to harmonise it with the Western tradition. He produced grammars of Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian, translations of Indian linguistics, and a science primer in English and Sanskrit (also reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection). Intended for the inexperienced missionary and published in 1859, this work offers a summary of Hinduism (covering the Nyaya, Sankhya and Vedanta schools) and argues for the truth of Christianity, while acknowledging certain shared ideas. It contains a facing Sanskrit translation (with redactions of parts considered to be of no importance to 'those whom the missionary has to teach'). A valuable primary source for scholars of orientalism, this work helps to illuminate the religious dimensions of British imperialism.

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CHRISTIANITY

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HINDŪ PHILOSOPHY:

A N E S S A Y ,

IN FIVE BOOKS,

S A N S K R I T A N D E N G L I S H :

WITH PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TENDERED TO

THE MISSIONARY AMONG THE HINDŪS.

BY

JAMES R. BALLANTYNE, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, AND PRINCIPAL OF THE GOVERNMENT COLLEGE AT BENARES.

L O N D O N :

JAMES MADDEN, LEADENHALL STREET.

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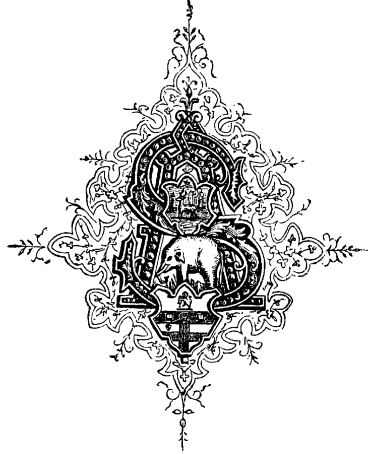
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To the Memory
OF
JOHN RUSSELL COLVIN,
LATE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE NORTH-WEST PROVINCES OF INDIA,
TO WHOSE CORDIAL APPRECIATION OF HIS EDUCATIONAL AIMS
THE WRITER OWED IT
THAT THE DEATH OF THE LAMENTED THOMASON
DID NOT CRIPPLE THE RESOURCES OF THE BENARES COLLEGE,
THIS ESSAY IS INSCRIBED,
WITH SORROWING GRATITUDE,
BY
JAMES ROBERT BALLANTYNE.

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The reader is requested to make the following corrections with his pen.

- Page xxvi., line 8 of note 1, *for* “adverting it to,” *read* “adverting to.”
- „ 26, „ 28, *for* “that they were established,” *read* “that they were so is established.”
- „ 31, „ 8, *dele* the *b*.
- „ 47, „ 31, *add*, as a note, ¹ “Without eyes he sees.”—*Mahābhāṣya*, p. 1.
- „ 127, „ 18, *for* “Colebrook’s,” *read* “Colebrooke’s.”
- „ 145, „ 25, *for* “affirmation or negation,” *read* “assent or dissent.”
- „ 156, „ 14, *for* “the inductive,” *read* “an induction.”
- „ 160, „ 3 and 6, *for* “odor,” *read* “odour.”

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THIS ESSAY, slightly modified subsequently, was submitted in competition for a prize of £300, offered by a member of the Bengal Civil Service. The prize was divided, and a moiety was adjudged to this Essay, the judges being gentlemen appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London and Oxford. In the terms of the prospectus, the prize was offered “for the best statement and refutation, in English, of the fundamental errors (opposed to Christian Theism) of the Vedānta, Nyāya, and Sāṅkhya Philosophies, as set forth in the standard native authorities, in the Sanskrit language, treating of those systems; together with a demonstration (supported by such arguments, and conveyed in such a form and manner as may be most likely to prove convincing to learned Hindūs imbued with those errors), of the following fundamental principles of Christian Theism, viz. :—

“*First.*—Of the real, and not merely apparent or illusory, distinctness of God from all other spirits, and from matter; and of the creation (in the proper sense) of all other spirits, and of matter, by God, in opposition to the Vedānta.

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“*Second.*—Of the non-eternity of separate souls, and their creation by God, in opposition to the Nyāya and Sāṅkhya.

“*Third.*—Of the creation of matter, in opposition to the tenet of its eternity in the shape of atoms (as maintained in the Nyāya and Vaisesika Schools), or in the shape of Prakriti (as maintained by the Sāṅkhya).

“*Fourth.*—Of the moral character and moral government of God ; and of the reality and perpetuity of the difference between moral good and evil with reference to such dogmas of the above systems as are opposed to these doctrines.”

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P R E F A C E.

THIS Essay, in its present shape, is but an imperfect sketch of what the writer would wish to offer as a help to the missionary among the learned Hindūs. Many topics, which might advantageously receive full treatment, are here scarcely more than indicated. With life and health, the writer will continuously prosecute his task towards its completion.

The five books “On Christianity as contrasted with Hindū Philosophy,” which form the kernel of the following Essay, are given also in Sanskrit, with the omission of such incidental discussions as have reference exclusively to the missionary, and not to those whom the missionary has to teach.

There are some Sanskrit works, yet untranslated, which the writer must study before deciding upon his theological terminology for India. Among these works is the *Aphorisms of Sāṅdilya*. Sāṅdilya rejects the Hindū (gnostic) theory that *knowledge* is the one thing needful, and contends that knowledge is only the hand-

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maid of *faith*. Hence, however defective his views may be in other respects, his work seems to promise *phraseology* of which a Christian missionary may advantageously avail himself. This remark might form the text for an extended dissertation on the Christian's right to the theological language and the theological conceptions of his opponents.

If the present work were completed to the writer's mind, he would next desire to be enabled to devote himself to the translation and commentation of the Bible in Sanskrit; taking book by book, not perhaps in the order of the canon—for the completion of such a work as is here intended is not to be looked for in a lifetime—but in the order in which it might seem most advisable to solicit the attention of inquirers, from whom it would scarcely be advisable to withhold the New Testament till they should have threaded all the historical details of the Old. An occasional watchword of Protestants, and a good one in its proper place, is "The Bible without note or comment." This is right, when the design is to exclude such notes and comments as those of the Douay version, and to make appeal to the unbiassed judgment of Europeans, as to the Romish and the reformed interpretations of Scripture language. But when, as in the case of the Hindū inquirer, the question is not, *which* (of two or

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more) is the meaning, but simply *what* is the meaning,—notes and comments become the helps or the substitutes of a living teacher. *English* clergymen have commentaries to refer to, and if we may ever look forward to an efficient native Christian clergy, these native clergymen also ought to be similarly supplied.

In speaking of a translation of the Bible in Sanskrit as a desideratum, the writer is very far indeed from ignoring the Sanskrit version of the Baptist missionaries; but his own investigations have shown him that this version—valuable as, in many respects, it is—was made at a time when Sanskrit *literature* had not been sufficiently examined to make a correct version possible. The mere mastery of the Grammar and the Dictionary does not give one the command of a language. As well might it be expected that the study of a mineralogical cabinet should make a geologist. Words, as well as rocks, to be rightly comprehended, must be studied *in situ*. A single example of our meaning will suffice, and we need go no further for it than the first verse of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis in the Sanskrit version of the Baptist missionaries. The Hindū is there told that, in the beginning, God created *ākāśa*¹ and *prithivī*.² Now in the dictionary, *ākāśa* will, no doubt, be found oppo-

¹ आकाश ॥

पृथिवी ॥

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site the word “heaven,” and *prithivī* opposite the word “earth;” but if the books of the *Nyāya* philosophy be looked into, it will be found that *ākāśa* is to be regarded as *one* of the five elements (the five hypothetical substrata of the five diverse qualities cognised by the five senses severally), and that *prithivī* is another of the five. Consequently, when the next verse proceeds to speak of the waters—a third one among the five—the learned Hindū reader is staggered by the doubt whether it is to be understood that the waters were *uncreated*, or whether the sacred penman had made an oversight. A Pandit once propounded this dilemma, in great triumph, to myself; and he was much surprised at finding that the perplexity could be cleared up. But it is obvious what powers of mischief we may place in the hands of unscrupulous opponents, by leaving our versions of Scripture thus needlessly open to cavil.

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INTRODUCTION.

I CANNOT better prepare the reader to apprehend the design of this work than by submitting for his consideration the following remarks of the Rev. John Penrose, in his Bampton Lecture of the year 1808 :—¹

“There is nothing which demands not only so much delicacy and address, but also so just and liberal a knowledge of human nature, as interference in matters of religion. It is manifest, however, from past history, and I know not that the experience of present times tends in any degree to invalidate the observation, that those persons who devote themselves to the missionary office, though often men of the most heroic disinterestedness, and sometimes of an acute and active genius, yet are rarely possessed of an enlarged and comprehensive intellect. In the immediate object which they are desirous of attaining—an object, indeed, of the highest worth and greatness—they appear somewhat too exclusively to concentrate all the faculties of their minds ; and, from want of an extended contemplation of human nature, to mistake the means by which that very object may be best

Interference in matters of religion requires delicacy and address.

The importance of the end derogates not from the importance of the means.

¹ Entitled,—“An attempt to prove the truth of Christianity from the wisdom displayed in its original establishment, and from the history of false and corrupted systems of religion.”

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attained. Eager to multiply conversions, they seem naturally to fall into those imprudences which attend an unenlightened spirit of proselytism. In some cases [*e.g.*, that of the Jesuits], as we have seen, they accommodate Christianity to the idolatries of those to whom they preach. In others, they forget that the same causes which make religion necessary to mankind, attach men to the religion in which they have been bred, and that every rude attack serves only to bind them to it more closely. These errors seem not to imply any particular imputation of blame to individual missionaries, but naturally to result from the constitutional imperfection of mankind. Throughout India, and other unconverted countries, they probably will extend to all teachers of Christianity, whether of native or European extraction. We rarely can find accuracy of judgment united with that warmth of character which is necessary to induce men to undertake the difficult and dangerous office of promulgating Christianity to idolaters; however useful they may esteem that office to be, however sublime. Those varied studies which discipline and correct the mind lessen the intensity of its application to any one pursuit. To improve reason has a tendency to diminish zeal. I speak only of what usually is the tendency of such improvement, without examining whether it is capable of being, or ought to be, counteracted.

“Should these observations be admitted, they probably may lead us to infer that it is not so much to the exertions of missionaries that we must look for the future propagation of Christianity, as to the general dissemination of know-

Rude attacks on false religions, why unadvisable.

The propagation of Christianity,—how to be hoped from the dissemination of knowledge.

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ledge. The indiscretions which it can scarcely, perhaps, be hoped that missionaries will be able to avoid, impede the end which they propose; but when those persons to whom our religion is offered shall be enabled to determine for themselves, concerning its records and evidences, they will learn to admit its truth on rational principles. When they shall add to the possession of our Scriptures, the sagacity to understand their meaning, and the judgment to appreciate their value, they will believe the doctrines which are taught in them. This belief, we may expect, will naturally descend from the more intelligent to the comparatively ignorant. Sound learning and just argument will triumph over fanaticism or error; will first convince the reason of the wise, and, by this means, will, in due time, overcome the prejudices of the vulgar; and thus Christianity will eventually be established by a progress contrary, indeed, to that which it experienced at its origin, but probably not less aptly suited to the altered circumstances of mankind.

“If this, in truth, be likely to be the case, so extraordinary a revolution in the manner of propagating our religion deserves serious consideration. It is an historical fact, entirely independent of the miraculous means by which it is said to have been effected, that Christianity was introduced into the world by low and uneducated men, and that men of rank and learning were afterwards, by degrees, converted to it. This fact appears, manifestly, to be an inversion in the ordinary progress of opinions, which are usually communicated from the wise to the ignorant,

Desirableness
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instead of being adopted from the ignorant by the wise. It accordingly has been considered by Christians as an important argument for the belief of a Divine interference in the original establishment of the Church. And if it appears that things have now reverted to their natural order, even in the advancement of that very religion, in the foundation of which this order was interrupted; if it is to abilities and learning that we must now look for the extension and support of a religion which was first propagated by a few unlettered fishermen of Galilee; we have the stronger reason to admire the peculiarity of its origin, and to conclude that none but God could ever have enabled 'the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.' "

Evidence of the truth of the Christian religion furnished by the contrary between the first and the subsequent order of its propagation.

How St. Paul dealt with the learned.

In another place Mr. Penrose says:—"Once, at least, in the course of his ministry, St. Paul addressed himself to a learned, to an Athenian tribunal. He wisely adapted to local circumstances the mode in which he declared the existence of the Supreme. He alluded to a received theology: he quoted a philosophical poet."

I borrow these passages from Mr. Penrose instead of attempting to convey the same sentiments in my own words, the more readily, because the testimony thus borne to the importance of certain branches of learning, as subservient to the spread of Christianity, is not so liable as my own testimony, in respect of Hindū philosophy, might perhaps seem, to the suspicion of a bias received from a favourite pursuit. It is not on the

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ground of its intrinsic value (though I may have my own private opinion of its value), that I recommend the Hindū philosophy to the missionary among the Hindūs, as a thing to be mastered, not merely to be dipped into. It is in order that he may be under no temptation splenetically to turn his back upon the learned of the land, and to act as if only the uneducated had souls to be saved. I should wish that when the Missionary has occasion to address the learned of India, he should, like St. Paul, be able “wisely to adapt to local circumstances” the mode in which he declares his message. I should wish that here his “allusions to a received theology” should be such as tend to facilitate apprehension rather than such as are calculated to offend prejudice without altering conviction. I should wish his quotations from the philosophers to be more frequently, like St. Paul’s, the winning advances of conciliation.

If the reader should glance at random over any part of the following work, it may perhaps seem to him that my practice differs from my precepts; for, instead of showing always how to conciliate, I have done my best to expose the errors of Hindūism, and, moreover, I have dealt with these in the dry dispassionate manner of a writer on Pathology. Let us attend first to the latter branch of this remark. The feelingless character appropriate to a pathological treatise is not proposed as a model to the physician in his practice; and just as little is it intended that the soul-slaying errors, here treated barely as if matters of scientific

Hindū philosophy to be mastered not merely for itself—and why.

The subject, notwithstanding the depth of the interests involved, why to be treated here with scientific unimpassionedness.

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James R. Ballantyne

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examination, are to be regarded by the missionary in the calm spirit of speculation when he comes to deal with practical cases. In the fashioning and the tempering of a sword-blade, military ardour is not called for; nor even when we are studying the way to wield the weapon. But as nobody would suppose that we undervalued military ardour in the field of battle, because we employed caution and calmness in the previous tempering and exercising of our weapon, so nobody who reflects will probably fail to see that the consistent exclusion of passionate declamation throughout the following work implies no disparagement of passionate declamation in its proper place. Then, again,

We can most safely venture on conciliation, where we best know the errors which we must avoid seeming to countenance.

as to my having applied myself to the exposing the errors of Hindūism, while at the same time I urge the missionary more particularly to cast about for points of agreement, with a view to conciliation, there is here no real inconsistency; because he that best understands both the errors of his opponent and the means of refuting them, is the man who can most safely venture on making advances in the way of conciliation. I would have the missionary know well the errors of Hindūism, and also the means of their refutation, and yet I would have him reserve this knowledge till it is unmistakeably called for; lest, by provoking a contest on ground where he flatters himself he is certain of a victory, he should only needlessly awaken prejudices which had better, where possible, be left sleeping till they die.

Prejudices not needlessly to be awakened.

There appears to be a growing conviction—in our

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opinion a right one—that the confutation of Hindūism is not the first step, nor even the necessary preliminary, to the Christianization of India. This impression is akin to that under which Lord Bacon wrote the 35th aphorism of his *Novum Organum*, where, through a historical allusion to the expedition of Charles the Eighth into Italy, he explains how he seeks not contention, but a friendly hearing. “Borgia said, regarding the expedition of the French into Italy, that they came with chalk in their hands, that they might mark the inns, not with arms to break through. Such, in like manner, is our plan, that our doctrine may enter into fit and capacious minds; for there is no use of confutations when we differ about principles and notions themselves, and even about the forms of proof.” But some of those who entertain this just impression, are apt to draw a wrong conclusion by coupling it with another premiss, which is by no means equally just. Bacon, as his readers are aware, did not *ignore* the opinions of those who differed from him. He was thoroughly versed in the opinions of those others; and this, while it enabled him, in pursuance of the conciliatory line of operations here adverted to, to avoid contention where contention would have been unprofitable, enabled him also to appropriate to the service of sound philosophy all the recognised truth which was not the less truth for having been embedded among the errors of an imperfect philosophy. The fact of Hindūism’s not calling for confutation, does not imply that it may be safely neglected. Though

The confutation of Hindūism not the primary indispensable.

An example of Lord Bacon’s to be followed.

Bacon’s example not to be misinterpreted.

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not called upon to *volunteer* the confutation of Hindū errors, the missionary will do well to prepare himself to accomplish that task effectively when occasion imposes it upon him. The following work aspires to aid him in this preparation.

As invited by the suggester of this essay, we aim at refuting “the fundamental errors (opposed to Christian theism) of the Vedānta, Nyāya, and Sāṅkhya philosophies, as set forth in the standard native authorities in the Sanskrit language,” etc. Let us commence with a general view of these Hindū systems of philosophy.

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A GENERAL VIEW OF THE HINDŪ SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE Hindūs have six systems of philo- The Hindū systems of philosophy.
sophy, named the *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeshika*, *Sāṅkhya*,
Yoga, *Vedānta*, and *Mīmāṃsā*.¹ The *Vaiśeshika* being
in some sort supplementary to the *Nyāya*, the two
are familiarly spoken of as one collective system, under
the name of the *Nyāya*; and as the case is somewhat
similar with the two other pairs, it is customary to
speak of Hindū philosophy as being divisible into the
Nyāya, the *Sāṅkhya*, and the *Vedānta*.

These three systems, if we follow the com- Fundamental agreement of the three great systems.
mentators, differ more in appearance than in
reality; and hence they are, each in its degree, viewed
with a certain amount of favour by orthodox Hindūs.
The partisans of one system may and do impugn the
dogmas of another; but, although every one in such
a contest nerves his arm to the uttermost, and fights
as if his character were staked upon the issue, yet
the lances are lances of courtesy, and the blows are
loving ones. It is a very different affair when the
denier of the Vedas is dealt with. With the Buddhist,

¹ न्याय । वैशेषिक । साङ्ख्य । योग । वेदान्त । मीमांसा ॥

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for example—though his notion of the chief end of man differs in no respect from that of the others—the battle is *a l'outrance*. The common bond of the others is their implicit acceptance of the Vedas, *which they explain differently*. According to the epigrammatic remark, that theological dislikes are inversely as the amount of disagreement, some might expect that these dissentient accepters of the Veda should be more bitter against one another than against the common enemy. But epigrams are not always to be trusted. As Dominican and Franciscan are brothers in asserting the infallibility of Rome; so are the *Nyāya*, the *Sāṅkhya*, and the *Vedānta*, in asserting the infallibility of the Veda against the Buddhist.

How they differ. Assuming, each of them implicitly, the truth of the Vedas, and proceeding to give, on that foundation, a comprehensive view of the totality of things, the three systems differ in their *point of view*. To illustrate this, suppose that three men in succession take up a cylindrical ruler: the one, viewing it with its end towards his eye, sees a circle; the second, viewing it upright before his eye, sees a parallelogram; the third, viewing it in a direction slanting away in front of his eye, sees a frustum of a cone. These three views are different, but nowise irreconcilable. So far are they from being irreconcilable, that it might be argued that *all* of them must be accepted in succession, before any adequate conception of the form of the ruler can be arrived at. Now, in somewhat such a way the three Hindū systems differ mainly in their severally regarding the universe