

The Theological Writings of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya Re-Examined

K. P. ALEAZ*

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya's¹ theological writings are not yet easily accessible to us. Hence most of us depend heavily upon writings on him.² But in writings on him there are two dangers involved,

* Fr. Aleaz is a member of the staff of Bishop's College, Calcutta, at present on study leave.

¹ Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), whose original name was Bhavani Charan Banerji, was a disciple of Keshub Chunder Sen for some time. He was a friend of Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. It was with him that Rabindranath Tagore founded Shantiniketan. Upadhyaya came to know Jesus Christ through Keshub Chunder Sen and through his own uncle the Revd. Kalicharan Banerji. In 1891 he received baptism from an Anglican priest but, in the same year, he became a Roman Catholic. In 1894 he became a Sannyasi and adopted the new name. His literary activities include the editing of *Sophia* (January 1894-March 1899), a monthly Catholic Journal; *Sophia* (June 16, 1900-December 8, 1900), a weekly paper; and *The Twentieth Century* (January 1901-December 1901), a monthly magazine. Due to a total discouragement from church authorities he almost stopped his theological writings in 1901. Upadhyaya then became fully engaged in the nationalist movement in Bengal. In November 1904 he brought out a Bengali Daily called *Sandhya* (1904-1907) and in March 1907 a Bengali Weekly called *Swaraj*. In September 1907 he was imprisoned by the British and in October 1907 he died in prison after a hernia operation.

² For writings on Upadhyaya cf. B. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhav: A story of his life*, Part I, Calcutta, 1908; B. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhav: A study of his religious position*, Part II, Calcutta, 1908; B. Animananda, *The Blade: Life and Work of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay*, Calcutta: Roy and Sons, ca.1947; B. Animananda, "Followers of the Light: Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhav," *The Light of the East*, Vol. 1, No. 2, November, 1922, pp. 2-3; B. Animananda, "Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhav," *The New Review*, Vol. I, May 1935, pp. 468-76; A. Vāth, *In Kampe mit der Zauberwelt des Hinduismus—Upadhyay Brahmabandhav und das Problem der Überwindung des Höheren Hinduismus durch das Christentum*, Berlin/Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag 1928; Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, Madras/Bangalore: CLS/CISRS, 1969, *Confessing the Faith in India series*, No. 4, pp.26-49 and 118-150; R.H.S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Madras: CLS, Revised Edition, 1975, pp. 63-85; Paul de la Croix

namely either misinterpretation or superficial interpretation. This is, therefore, a humble effort to re-examine the original theological writings of Upadhyaya and to bring out his valuable contributions to Indian theology. We do not claim that our study is totally free from the two dangers mentioned. We are completely subject to correction by students of Upadhyaya. First of all we shall have a glance at the assumptions on the basis of which Upadhyaya developed his theology. Then we shall come to the analysis of the theological contributions of Upadhyaya.

What we have discovered is this: that according to Upadhyaya the Vedānta conception of God and that of Christian belief are exactly the same, and that *Māyā* of Advaita Vedānta is the best available concept to explain the doctrine of creation. Though he is honestly actualising his primary assumption that the function of Vedānta is to supply a new garb to an already formulated Christian theology, Upadhyaya does not reinterpret either of the Vedānta concepts *Saccidānanda* and *Māyā* to serve as the explanation of a ready made Christian theology. Rather he shows that *Saccidānanda* is Trinity and that *Māyā* expresses the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root *create*. Or to put it more explicitly, Upadhyaya was of the conviction that the Christian doctrines are there already in Hinduism among its admitted errors and the uniqueness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is that it is the further clarification and affirmation of the main Vedānta doctrines. We believe it was in pointing out this valuable truth as early as 1898 that Upadhyaya made his unique contribution to Indian theology. In our analysis of the theology of Upadhyaya we have tried to point out in footnotes where we believe some previous writings on Upadhyaya have gone astray in presenting his mind. At the end we have provided our own evaluation of the theology of Upadhyaya also.

1. The Basic Assumptions of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya

(i) *Vedānta as the new garb of Christian faith*

Upadhyaya believed that Christianity, which is the religion of revelation, is a fixed and complete religion. Nothing can be added or

Mense, *Hindu Religious Mentality*, Madras, n.d., pp. 210-25; H. le Saux (=Swami Abhishiktananda), *Sagesse hindoue mystique chrétienne—du vedānta à la Trinité*, Paris: du Centurion, 1965, pp. 268-82; G.M. Anathil, *The Theological Formation of the Clergy in India*, Poona: Pontifical Athenaeum, 1966, pp. 150-56; C.C. Martindale, "Do we think about India?" *The Clergy Review*, Vol. X, No. 4, October 1935, pp. 265-71; Peter May, "The Trinity and Saccidananda," *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. VII, No. 3, July-Sept. 1958 pp. 92-98; G. Gispert-Sauch, "The Sanskrit Hymns of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay," *Religion and Society*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, December 1972, pp. 60-79; Joseph Mattam, S. J., "Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School," *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 3-4, July-Dec. 1974, pp. 192-98; M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, London: SCM Press, 1969, pp. 99-110.

subtracted from the deposit of Catholic faith.³ At the same time he would add that "to strengthen revelation by preserving its unity, as much as possible through the process of reason, we invoke the aid of philosophy—be it Indian or Greek or European."⁴ In the Indian context Vedānta philosophy should be used as an aid to strengthen the Christian revelation. Vedānta thought, if represented correctly and brought into line with the discoveries of modern philosophy and social ethics, will, in its broader aspect, "serve as a natural, metaphysical basis for the one unchangeable, supernatural, universal religion"⁵

³ B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 8; B. Upadhyaya, "Christ's claim to attention," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. 1, No. 5, May 1901, p. 115. It was the scholastic exposition of Christian theology which Upadhyaya took as normative. Whenever he compares Vedānta with Christianity, it is with St. Thomas Aquinas' theology that he compares it. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "The true doctrine of Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Feb. 1899, pp. 226-28; B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedanta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, pp. 10-11.

⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 8.

⁵ B. Upadhyaya, "Our personality," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 13, Sept. 8, 1900, p. 5. Here it should be noted that in the beginning of his theological thinking, till about 1898, Upadhyaya had the idea that the Vedas should be the basis for Christian theology in India. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Theism in the Vedas," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1894, pp. 4-5; No. 3, Mar. 1894, pp. 10-11; No. 4, Apr. 1894, pp. 10-11; "The Hymn 'Ka'," *Sophia*, Vol. III, Feb. 1896, pp. 2-4. During this period he had also the misunderstanding that as opposed to theism Advaita Vedānta propagates pantheism. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "The Hindu revival," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 6, June 1894, pp. 1 ff.; "Our attitude to Hindu reformers," *Sophia*, Vol. III, No. 2, Feb. 1896, pp. 6 ff.; *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 8, Aug. 1894, pp. 13 ff.; Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1895, p. 6; Vol. III, No. 1, Jan. 1896, pp. 4 ff.; No. 7, July 1896, pp. 6 ff.; No. 9, Sept. 1896, p. 4 etc. But as he came to understand Advaita Vedānta more he became of the firm belief that by Advaita Vedānta, pantheism would be crushed out of existence and true theism could be made to flourish in India. Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Vedāntism," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 9, Aug. 11, 1900, pp. 6-7. "According to Pantheism, cosmos is the necessary and intrinsic life of God; God is nothing more than the universe and the universe is nothing less than God" *ibid.* "True theism holds that God transcends the cosmos. Creation is not necessary for Him to live, being of the finite is derived, dependent and contingent while that of Infinite is self-existent, independent and necessary" *ibid.* As we shall presently see in his exposition of the Vedānta concepts *Sat-chit-ānanda* and *Māyā* Upadhyaya has made it explicit that Advaita Vedānta stands for true theism. Perhaps he was the first Christian to point out this valuable truth to correct the misunderstanding prevalent among Christians that Advaita Vedānta teaches pantheism. The writings of Fr. P. Johanns, S. J., twenty-five years after Upadhyaya, have further affirmed the fact that the doctrine of the absolute independence of God which Śaṅkara reveals constitutes the foundation of theism. Cf. P. Johanns, "To Christ through the Vedanta," *Light of*

which is Christianity. Vedānta will supply a new garb to the religion of Christ without affecting in the least the essential Christian tenets.⁶ The European clothes of Catholic religion should be removed. It should put on Hindu garments to be acceptable to the Hindus.⁷

Upadhyaya points out:

We must fall back upon the Vedantic method in formulating the Catholic religion to our countrymen. In fact, the Vedānta must be made to do the same service to Catholic faith in India as was done by the Greek philosophy in Europe. The assimilation of the Vedantic philosophy by the Church should not be opposed on the ground of its containing certain errors.⁸

Or to quote again:

We have repeatedly said, and we make bold to say again, that the religion of Christ will never be appreciated by the Hindus if it be not divested of its Graeco-European clothing. It should be restated in terms of Vedānta, before it can be properly intelligible to the Hindu mind.⁹

It was the sincere belief of Upadhyaya that Vedānta will make the natural truths of theism and the supernatural dogmas of Christianity more explicit and consonant with reason than was done by the scholastic philosophy.¹⁰ Moreover, he was of the conviction that the idea of restating Christianity in the terms of the Vedānta can only grow in strength by being thoroughly sifted and analysed.¹¹

(ii) *Sāṅkara as guide and authority*

According to Upadhyaya, true Vedānta is the one expounded by Sāṅkara. The following passage clearly points out his position:

What is Vedantism? It is the religion of the Upanishads as taught by *Vyasa* and expounded by *Sāṅkara*. The schools of *Ramanuja* and *Madhava* are called vedantic by suffer nce just as a Unitarian is called a Christian. Statistics show that seventy-five per cent of the Vedantists belong to the school of *Sāṅkara*. Moreover, the other two schools cannot stand the scientific test of analysis.¹²

the East, Vol. I, No. 1, Oct. 1922; Vol. XII, No. 7, Apr. 1934; P. Johannis, *A Synopsis of the Christ through the Vedānta. Part 1: Sāṅkara*, Calcutta: Secretariat of the "Light of the East," 1930. Light of the East series, No. 4.

⁶ B. Upadhyaya, "Our personality," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 13, Sept. 8, 1900, p. 5.

⁷ B. Upadhyaya, "The clothes of Catholic Faith," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 8, Aug. 1898, p. 124.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ B. Upadhyaya, "Notes," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 12, Sept. 4, 1900, p. 6.

¹⁰ B. Upadhyaya, "Vedantism and Christianity," *Sophia*, Vol. I, Nos. 15 and 16, Sept. 29, 1900, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² B. Upadhyaya, "Vedantism," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 9, Aug. 11, 1900, p. 6.

It was Śaṅkara's Advaita which he took as a basis to restate Christian thinking. Whenever he puts forward Vedānta thought it is nothing but Advaita Vedānta that he puts forth. "In representing the vedantic doctrines we shall take the great Śaṅkara as our guide and authority."¹³ At the same time, Upadhyaya strongly believed that Śaṅkara's writings would be totally unintelligible if we were to reject the post-Śaṅkarite traditions. Śaṅkara has to be understood with the help of *Panchadaśī* and *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*. To quote:

Our humble opinion is that religious scriptures cannot be understood without the help of traditions. The Upanishads without the interpretation of Vyasa and Śaṅkara are a mere jumble of mystic statements and Śaṅkara without *Yogavasistha* and *Panchadasi* is almost unintelligible.¹⁴

This dependence of Upadhyaya on post-Śaṅkarite tradition for the interpretation of Śaṅkara has had its consequences and this we have indicated in our evaluation.

Coming to the study of the theological contributions of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, first we shall see his doctrine of Trinity as *Sat-chit-ānanda*, then his doctrine of creation as *Māyā* and finally the theological points in which he maintained the traditional Christian position.

¹³ B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedanta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 10.

¹⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, Nos. 15 and 16, Sept. 29, 1900, p. 11. *Panchadaśī* is a popular handbook of Advaita written by Vidyananda who is also known as Bharatitirtha. Vidyananda, who is associated mainly with the Vivaraṇa school, lived in the 14th century A.D. In *Panchadaśī* Vidyananda presents precise definitions of the most important terms in Advaita. *Panchadaśī* is mainly concerned with cosmological or metaphysical themes rather than with psychological or epistemological analysis. The definitions of Advaita terms given in *Panchadaśī* exhibit this concern. *Panchadaśī's* explanation of *Māyā* as creative power exhibits this concern. *Panchadaśī* also tries to synthesize Vedānta with certain basic Sāṅkya principles (e.g., the doctrine of the *guṇās*) and it clearly shows the way in which Sāṅkya was absorbed or made use of by Vedānta. For English translation of *Panchadaśī*, cf. Hari Prasad Shastri, *Panchadaśī: A Treatise on Advaita Metaphysics*, London: Shanti Sadan, 1956. For the philosophy of Advaita from the point of view of Vidyananda, cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *The Philosophy of Advaita: with special reference to Bharatitirtha Vidyananda*, Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1969. The philosophical poem *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* which contains twenty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty-four verses deals with Vedānta problems of a radically monistic type. According to its teaching it is only ideas that have some sort of existence and there is no physical world having a separate existence. Śaṅkara would most emphatically refute such a doctrine and hence the philosophy of *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* is more like the doctrine of the Buddhist idealists than the position of Śaṅkara. Nevertheless it is true that the post-Śaṅkarite writing *Vedānta-siddhānta-muktāvalī* of Prakāśānanda takes a similar position to that of *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*. *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* seems to be a

2. Trinity as Sat-chit-ānandam

(i) Sat-chit-ānandam in Śaṅkara's writings

It is the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara's writings which Upadhyaya takes as the basis for his explanation of what *Sat-chit-ānanda* is. First let us see what, according to Upadhyaya, is the position of this concept in Śaṅkara's Advaita. In Śaṅkara's Advaita, *Sat-chit-ānanda* points to the Supreme Being, Brahman. Brahman is *Sat* (Positive Being), *Chit* (Intelligence), *Anandam* (Bliss).

Referring to Śaṅkara's *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* 2.3.18 and 1.1.12 Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya points out that Śaṅkara held the conception of Brahman as *Sat-chit-ānandam*. To quote:

In refutation of the *Vaiśeṣik* doctrine that God is potential knowledge, Sankara says: *Parasya hi Brahmanah chaitanya-svarupatyam amnatam* (that Parabrahman is essential knowledge—*chaitanyam*—is spoken of in the Upaniṣads). He quotes many texts from them against the theory that the supreme Being attains consciousness (vide Bhashya-Vedanta Darsanam, 2.3.18). In his explanation of the Vedanta Sutra "*ananda-mayah abhyasat*" (1.1.12) Sankara says: *para eva atma ananda-maya bhavitum arhati* (Parabrahman is anandam).¹⁵

In Śaṅkara's Advaita the Supreme Being is called *Sat-chit-ānandam* as well as *Nirguṇam*. Both these terms point to Brahman in himself, Brahman as unrelated, and there is no contradiction in meaning between them. Upadhyaya warns that a student of Advaita should be very careful not to misunderstand the term *Nirguṇam*. One should not at once conclude from the use of this term that the God of the Vedānta is an impersonal, abstract, unconscious Being. According to Upadhyaya, "*Nirguṇam* means that the attributes which relate the Infinite to the finite are not necessary to His being. For example, Creatorhood is not an intrinsic attribute of the Divine Nature."¹⁶ Brahman is said to be *Nirguṇam* in the sense that He possesses no external attributes, no necessary correlation with any being other than His Infinite Self.¹⁷ The conception of Brahman as *Nirguṇam* is not contradictory to the conception of him as *Sat-chit-ānandam* because

Brahmanic modification of idealistic Buddhism written in 9th century A.D., i.e., around the time of Śaṅkara. For the philosophy of *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* cf. Surendranath Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, Cambridge: University Press, 1932, pp. 228-72. Even though Upadhyaya mentions *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*, in reality it is not *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*, but *Panchadaśī* which has influenced his Advaita thought. This will be clear when we study his writings on *Māyā* as the best concept to explain the doctrine of creation. It is also worth noting in this connection that Upadhyaya even wrote a commentary on *Panchadaśī*: cf. B. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhav. A study of his religious position*, Part II, p. 9.

¹⁵ B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶ B. Upadhyaya, "Notes," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 4, July 7, 1900, p. 6.

¹⁷ B. Upadhyaya, "Notes," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 2, June 23, 1900, p. 7.

the meaning of *Sat-chit-ānandam* is as follows: "He is *Sat*—existing by himself; He is *Chit*—self-knowledge, knowing Himself without any external intervention; He is *Anandam*—supremely happy in His self-colloquy."¹⁸ Moreover, it should be noted here that for Upadhyaya, personality means "self-knowledge."¹⁹ So it is wrong to say that the Vedānta has an impersonal conception of God.²⁰

(ii) *Sat-chit-ānandam in the Upaniṣads*

Referring to various Upaniṣadic verses, Upadhyaya points out that in the doctrine of the nature of God the Vedānta conception and Catholic belief are exactly the same.²¹ Vedānta conceives the nature of God as *Sat* (positive being), *Chit* (intelligence) and *Ānandam* (bliss). There are references in the Upaniṣads to the only one Eternal Being who is the cause of all other beings. Upadhyaya cites the Upaniṣadic verse: *ātma va indameka evagra asit: nanyat kinchana mishat* (in the beginning there was only one being; nothing else existed).²² He points out that Parabrahman is *Sat* (being) for nothing cannot be a cause.²³ Further he points out the verse *Om tat sat* (that is being)²⁴ as the mystic *mantra* of the Vedānta. For explaining *Chit* Upadhyaya quotes the verse *Sa ikshta lokan nu srija iti* (He beheld; shall I create the *lokas*?) and narrates Śaṅkara's comment on it: "The great *Sankara* says that He beheld the universe not as yet actualised; He beheld the origin, the preservation and the destruction of the universe. He beheld all these before He had created it."²⁵ What Upadhyaya infers from this is that Vedānta Rishis had a very clear conception of the universe existing ideally in the intelligence of God from eternity.²⁶ The further explanation which he gives on *Chit* on the basis of the Upaniṣads is as follows:

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ B. Upadhyaya, "Christ's claims to attention," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1901, p. 116.

²⁰ Summary of the lecture by Upadhyaya, "Hinduism, Theosophy, and Christianity," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 12, December, 1897, pp. 1-2: Brahma-bandhav Upadhyaya may be perhaps the first Christian who proclaimed that the conception of God in Advaita Vedānta is not impersonal. This is a truth which is often forgotten by Christians and even by Hindus. Further it is worth noting that, according to Upadhyaya, the philosophical meaning of the term "person" in Catholic theology is "a rational *individuum*, a being endowed with reason and free will." Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p. 9. Hence the similarity between the Christian and Vedānta conceptions of God.

²¹ B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedānta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 13. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1a. In this article we reproduce transliterations by Upadhyaya without alteration.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* The reference is to *Bhagavad Gita* 17.23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14. The reference is to *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1b and the Śaṅkara *Bhāṣya* on it.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Parabrahman, the supreme Being, is essentially *Chit*. For Him to be is to know. It is written in the Upanishads that He grows by brooding (*tapas*) and His brooding is knowledge. He reproduces His self as *Sabdabrahman* (Logos) by *Ikshanam* (beholding). The knowing God is mirrored as the known God in the ocean of *Chit*.²⁷

To point out the Vedānta position of Brahman as *Ānandam* Upadhya^a describes the narrative in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* in which through the directions from his father Varuna, Brigu came to the knowledge that Brahman is Bliss,²⁸ and then writes:

Brahman is Bliss. He is blessed, ineffably blessed by His very nature. He knows Himself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude. . . He is in Himself, by Himself . . . He affects all things but is not affected in return. He is self-satisfied. He is *ananda*.²⁹

(iii) *Upadhya's own explanation of Sat-chit-ānandam*

Brahmabandhav Upadhya's own explanation of *Sat-chit-ānandam* can be summarised as follows: we have to admit a self-existent eternal being, otherwise we would be compelled to admit the absurdity of existence proceeding from non-existence.³⁰ Further, intelligence alone can relate to that which does not exist, for it can *think the non-existent*. If something has begun that which began was *known* by that which existed. Apart from intelligence, beginning is absurd.³¹ Moreover, if the Eternal Being finds no repose in the Infinite Image of His own being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge, then it is wanting in perfection. But to say that the Infinite Being is wanting in perfection is a contradiction.³² Thus is proved *Sat-chit-ānandam*.³³ Now, what does it mean to say that Brahman is *Sat-chit-ānandam*? It means that Brahman knows Himself and from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude. Brahman is in Himself, by Himself. He is related of necessity only to the Infinite Image of His own Being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge. This relation of Being (*Sat*) to Itself in self-knowledge (*Chit*) is one of perfect harmony, self-satisfaction, beatitude, bliss (*Ānandam*). So *Sat-chit-ānandam* shows us

²⁷ B. Upadhya, "Chit," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 3, March 1899, p. 238.

²⁸ B. Upadhya, "A Vedantic Parable," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 8, Aug. 1898, p. 119. The reference is to the third *Valli* of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ B. Upadhya, "Sat," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, pp. 150-51.

³¹ B. Upadhya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedānta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, pp. 13-14.

³² B. Upadhya, "Being," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 7.

³³ In a series of articles entitled "Being" in *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 2, June 23, 1900, p. 8; No. 3, June 30, p. 7; No. 4, July 7, p. 7; and in No. 6, July 21, p. 7, Upadhya shows that self-existence is a necessary content of being and that being is eternal, immutable, infinite and one. In the last of the same series, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 7, he also proves that the necessary contents of being are *Sat* (self-existence), *Chit* (intelligence) and *Ānandam* (bliss).

how Brahman is ineffably blessed in Himself; blessed in His very nature.³⁴

(iv) *The Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is exactly the same as the Vedānta conception of Brahman as Sat-chit-ānandam*

Upadhyaya explains the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the following way:

God comprehends Himself by one act of eternal knowledge. The knowing self is the Father, the known self or the self-be-gotten by His knowledge is the Son; and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of reciprocal love proceeding from the Father and the Son.³⁵

Upadhyaya compares *Sat-chit-ānandam*, the nature of Parabrahman, with the Christian doctrine of the nature of God and proclaims:

We can boldly and safely affirm that this Vedantic conception of the nature of the supreme Being marks the terminus of the flight of human reason into the eternal regions. The Catholic belief is exactly the same. God is the only eternal being; He is purely positive for the particle 'not' cannot be predicated of Him. He knows Himself and reposes in Himself with supremest complacency.³⁶

Upadhyaya wrote a Sanskrit hymn *Vandē Saccidānandam*³⁷ in adoration of Parabrahman who in Catholic faith is referred as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As an explanation of the hymn, he writes that the hymn

³⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "A Vedantic Parable," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 8, Aug. 1898 p. 119; "Being," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 7.

³⁵ B. Upadhyaya, "Hinduism and Christianity as compared by Mrs. Besant," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, February, 1897, p. 8; cf. also "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 11, August 25, 1900, p. 7.

³⁶ B. Upadhyaya, "An exposition of Catholic Belief as compared with the Vedānta," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 11. Specially note Upadhyaya's wording 'exactly the same'. But the pity is that when we read writings on Upadhyaya, we notice most of them misinterpret this most important point of Upadhyaya's theological thinking. For example, Robin Boyd says: "Brahmabandhav is not a Hindu drawing an interesting 'parallel between *Saccidānanda* and the Trinity. Rather, having come himself to know God in Christ, his own personal experience of God is triune, and he finds the Vedāntic teaching fulfilled here in a more meaningful way even than in Śaṅkara. And so, for the benefit of his countrymen, he is led to explain the mystery of the Godhead, the real meaning of Brahman, in terms of the Trinitarian *Saccidānanda*": *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, p. 73. See also pp. 71 and 74. Even Kaj Baago is of the opinion that Upadhyaya presents the doctrine of Trinity as "the solution to the problem of how Brahman is to be known": *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, p. 40.

³⁷ B. Upadhyaya, "Our new canticle," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898, pp. 146-47. The hymn is mainly an exposition of the Christian doctrine of Trinity and does not have any theological significance in the context of

is an adoration of that ancient *Parabrahma*, the Supreme Being whose eternal act finds, according to Catholic faith, an adequate resultant within His own Self, who is not obliged to come in contact with finite beings for the sustenance and satisfaction of His nature. His knowledge is fully satisfied by the cognition of the Logos, the infinite Image of his Being, begotten by thought and mirrored in the ocean of His substance. His love finds the fullest satisfaction in the boundless complacency with which he reposes on his Image and breathes forth the Spirit of bliss.³⁸

(v) *Revelation in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God as Sat-chit-ānanda*

An important point to be noted is that even though Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya equates *Sat-chit-ānanda* with Trinity, he also points out the limitation of reason and need for revelation to understand the inner life of God.³⁹ Upadhyaya explains the problem facing the Vedāntins which they could not solve as it was beyond the solution of human reason:

How were His infinite knowledge and bliss satisfied within Himself? For, if He had to go out of Himself to satisfy His knowledge and appease the craving of His love, He would be a wanting, a conditioned being. How was relationship compatible with the Absolute nature of the Godhead? This was the problem before them. It was a problem beyond the solution of human reason. So they failed. . . the result was that they

Upadhyaya's theological thinking. It would be misleading to look for theology in poetry. What is more important than the hymn is the explanation which Upadhyaya gives to the hymn. Still, it is significant to note that all the words used to explain Trinity are put as adjectives to *Saccidānanda* and adoration is to *Saccidānanda*. Moreover in the hymn, *bhavaurkshabijamabijam* (the rootless principle of the tree of existence) denotes *Sat*; *chinnmayarūpa* (one whose form is intelligence) denotes *Chit*; *saccidōmelanasāranam* (one who proceeds from the union of *Sat* and *Chit*) and *ānandaghanam* (intense bliss) denotes *Ānanda*. But it is to be noted that if we isolate this hymn from the rest of Upadhyaya's writings on Trinity as *Saccidānanda* and interpret it, such an interpretation would be totally misleading as has been proved in the case of G. Gispert-Sauch, "The Sanskrit hymns of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya," *Religion and Society* (see note 2). Upadhyaya does not in his theology give "new meaning" (p. 68) to the Vedānta concept *Saccidānanda*, nor are the terms heavy with mythological or historical associations (pp. 68-74) relevant to his theology of Trinity as *Saccidānanda* as Gispert-Sauch thinks. Joseph Mattam, "Interpreting Christ to India Today: The Calcutta School," *The Indian Journal of Theology* (see note 2), is also misleading as reference is given to this hymn alone (p. 195) to explain Upadhyaya's doctrine of Trinity as *Saccidānanda*.

³⁸ B. Upadhyaya, "Our new canticle," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 10, Oct. 1898: p. 146.

³⁹ B. Upadhyaya, "Being," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 7, July 28, 1900, p. 7; "Need of revelation," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 6, July 21, 1900, p. 9.

came to hold that the idea of the infinite was not for all; it was too subtle for the undeveloped intellects of common people. . . ⁴⁰

Through reason we can know that the self-existent Being is necessarily intelligent. But reason cannot tell us how its intelligence is satisfied within the term of its being, what is that which distinguishes the generating self from the eternally generated self. For, in self-cognition, some note or notes are necessary to distinguish the subject from the object. With regard to finite ego this is provided from outside, while in the act of divine self-knowledge foreign intervention is impossible.⁴¹ Upadhyaya shows that here the revelation of God in Jesus Christ points to an answer:

Revelation teaches us. . . that the differentiating note in Divine Knowledge is the response of intelligence. God begets, in thought, His infinite Self-Image and reposes on it with infinite delight while the begotten Self acknowledges responsively His eternal thought-generation.⁴²

Jesus Christ acknowledges responsively His eternal thought-generation from the Father. Between Him and the Father, there is no division in the divine substance; it is a relation of perfect reciprocity. This relation is the revelation of the true relation between *Sat* and *Chit*, as well as the revelation of *Ānandam*, the result of that relation.⁴³ So the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God conceived as *Sat-chit-ānanda*. "Jesus Christ has declared that God is self-related by means of *internal* distinctions that do not cast even a shadow of division upon the unity of His Substance."⁴⁴ Man had wondered whether being is void of any relation and thus unintelligible. Hence he had also wondered whether God is knowable only in his causal aspect as related to His manifestations. Jesus Christ has solved this problem which puzzled the intellect of man.⁴⁵ Through Jesus Christ we are able to behold God as he is in Himself, living in communion of self-relation within Himself. To quote:

Jesus Christ has told us that there is a response of knowledge in the God-head. God knows His own self-begotten in thought and is known in return by that Begotten Self. . . This unique revelation gives us a glimpse of the inner life of the Supreme Being. God reproduces in knowledge a co-responding, acknow-

⁴⁰ Summary of the lecture by Upadhyaya, "Hinduism, Theosophy and Christianity," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 12, Dec. 1897, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, B. Upadhyaya, "The Incarnate Logos," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1901, p. 6.

⁴² "The Incarnate Logos," p. 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; cf. also "Hinduism, Theosophy and Christianity," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 12, Dec. 1897, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "Christ's claim to attention," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1901, p. 116.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

ledging Self-Image, and from this colloquy of Reason proceeds His spirit of Love which sweetens the Divine Bosom with boundless delight.⁴⁶

3. *Māyā* the Best Concept to Explain the Doctrine of Creation

(i) *Śaṅkara's position regarding the reality of the world and the meaning of the word Māyā*

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya points out⁴⁷ that both Vyāsa and Śaṅkara,⁴⁸ against the Buddhist School which held the world to be a passing dream, plainly and unmistakably declare that this world is not a dream. The reasons they put forward are: (a) There is an essential difference between the nature of the dream world and that of this external world of ours. The dream world is utterly wanting in coherence while the external world is characterised by persistent coherence. (b) The unreal character of the dream is realised as soon as we rise from sleep. But in our state of waking consciousness we never think the same of the world around us. Nevertheless, as Upadhyaya admits, the world is repeatedly compared in the Vedānta, both by Śaṅkara and Vyāsa, to a dream. This paradoxical language can be reconciled by understanding the true sense in which Vedānta compares the world to a dream. Upadhyaya explains:

When we have a dream we imagine the objects and events we dream about to be possessed of *independent* existence, whereas they are merely the product of our brain. In like manner, when perceiving this external world through the sense we *imagine it to be an independent reality*, existing by itself and not as the product of the Divine Mind and Will, then verily our perception of the world may be fitly styled a dream. And it is exactly in this sense and only to this extent that the Vedānta likens the world to a dream.⁴⁹

Māyā is the concept put forward by Vedānta to explain the world. The word does not signify that the world is an illusion. What it means is that if we attribute to the world independent and underived existence, then we are creating a perverted and false appearance of the world and it is that creation of our stupid and evil fancy which is an illusion. Upadhyaya in a series of articles entitled *Maya*⁵⁰ gave proof-texts from Śaṅkara to show that the concept of *Māyā* does not signify the world as illusion. *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.28 and 29 hold the doctrine of the objective existence of the world; 1.1.2 says that there can be no question about preservation and dissolution of things unless

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116; cf. also "The Incarnate Logos," p. 7.

⁴⁷ B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answer: Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 23, 1900, pp. 8-9; cf. also "The true doctrine of Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 2, February, 1899, p. 227.

⁴⁸ The reference is to *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.28, 29.

⁴⁹ "Question and answer: Maya," pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 17, Oct. 20, 1900, pp. 6-7; No. 18, Oct. 27, pp. 6-7; No. 19, Nov. 3, pp. 6-7; No. 20, Nov. 10, p. 6.

they have acquired being (*labdhasattaka*); the first chapter of the *Bhāṣya* and 2.1.13 point to the distinction between individual souls and material objects, and the first cause; and between cause and effect respectively. But that distinction is not as Madhava or Ramanuja think. Therefore 2.1.14 lays down the non-separateness of the universe from God. Here Śaṅkara shows that the Vedānta, while boldly inculcating the utter nothingness of the universe looked at from the standpoint of intrinsic ontology (*paramārtha*), strenuously insists at the same time on the contingent (*vyavahārika*) existence of finite beings.

Further, from Śaṅkara's central teachings Upadhyaya derives the notion that the universe cannot be the mere sport of Brahman or be a mere illusion:

The universe cannot be the mere sport of *Brahman*, for as Sankara says: He is all-knowing, intelligent, pure knowledge (Bhashya—adhyaya 1, pada 1, 4); and that which proceeds from Him (adh. 1, pada 1, 2) must have some reason; though, because He is free and absolutely self-sufficient, as the *Acharya* (teacher) rightly asserts in the same place, it is the result of choice and not of necessity. Neither can it be an illusion—mere non-being appearing to be being—for *Brahman* is "free from sin" (Bhashya 1, 1, 20 and Chandogya Upanishad 8, 7, 1) or rather goodness Itself, just as He is knowledge Itself; and illusion, which is error, cannot proceed from knowledge.⁵¹

(ii) *The Upaniṣads and Panchadaśī on creation*

Upadhyaya also refers to the Upaniṣadic view of creation. "*The Upaniṣads* say that creation is an overflow of the bliss (*anandam*) which sweetens the Divine bosom; it is not a product of necessity but of superabundance."⁵² Again, referring to the *Aitareya*, and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* he says that creation is by the free determination or will of the *Ātman*:

In the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* it is written that the *Ātman* alone lives from eternity, before all, with all and after all. He created this world by *sankalpa* (free determination of will). So it is in the *Taittirīya Chandogya*. This *sankalpa* plainly indicates that he is *mukta* (free internally as well as externally) in the creative act. If there had been any necessity, there could be no free determination (*sankalpa*).⁵³

⁵¹ B. Upadhyaya, "The true doctrine of Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Feb. 1899, p. 225.

⁵² B. Upadhyaya, "Two mysteries," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 8, Aug. 4, 1900, p. 7. The possible references are to the verses in the third *Valli* of *Taittirīya Up.* This third *Valli* of *Taittirīya Up.* is called *Ānanda Valli*. *Bṛhadāranyaka Up.* 2.4.5 may be an indirect reference according to which it is because the Self is mirrored in things that they are dear to us.

⁵³ B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 14, Sept. 15, 1900, p. 7. The possible references are *Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1; 1.3.1; *Chāndogya Up.* 6.2.3; 7.4.1-3.

Brahmabariḍhava Upadhyaya also quotes⁵⁴ a number of verses from *Panchadaśī*, to show that *Panchadaśī*, like Śaṅkara, emphasises the doctrine of the objective existence of the world:

In the beginning there was Atman (Supreme Being); He contemplated: should I create?—and created the *lokas* (worlds) by His will (*sankalpa*). So declare many *Rik* hymns.⁵⁵

The creative will of God is the cause of the origination of this world, and the human determination (*sankalpa*) is the cause of the world as related to man and enjoyed by him.⁵⁶

There can be absolutely no subjective world of objects if there be no external existence.⁵⁷

Moreover, *Panchadaśī* teaches that the objects we perceive possess being (*asti*), intelligibility (*bhāti*) and goodness (*prīti*)⁵⁸ and Upadhyaya points out that these three attributes correspond with the Being (*Sat*), Intelligence (*Ātman*) and Bliss (*Ānandam*) of Brahman, the cause of all things.⁵⁹ The finite possesses only a communicated existence. Inanimateness manifests His Being, sentience, His Intelligence and rationality His Bliss.⁶⁰

(iii) *Upadhyaya's conclusions on the Vedānta teaching of Māyā*

Upadhyaya's conclusions regarding the Vedānta teaching of *Māyā* can be summarised as follows: Vedānta holds the reality of the objective world. It also holds the ontological (*pāramārthik*) nothingness of the finite. The origin of this world does not lie in the substantial differentiation or manifoldness of the Brahman or in the modification of the supreme cause. There can be no division or change in Brahman. The world has originated by *vivarta*, a kind of communication which does not modify the communicator. "There are three kinds of causes: (a) *Ārambhaka* (b) *Pariṇāmi* and (c) *Vivarta*. The first implies production of effects by combination, the second by transformation and the third by will-causation (*sankalpa*)."⁶¹ In Vedānta, creation is by *vivarta*, that is by will-causation. This is the meaning of *Māyā*. *Māyā* signifies the will-power (*sankalpa*) of God.⁶² It means that creation is by the power (*śakti*) of the will (*sankalpa*) of God.⁶³ Creation arises from God's freedom. The desire of creation freely proceeds from His *Chit*.⁶⁴ The term *Māyā* involves three truths:

⁵⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 18, Oct. 27, 1900, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ *Panchadaśī*, 4.5.3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.5.18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.5.35.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.5.73.

⁵⁹ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," (see note 54).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; cf. *Panchadaśī*, 15.20.21.

⁶¹ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 20, Nov. 10, 1900, p. 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Cf. *Panchadaśī*, 4.5.3; 4.5.18.

⁶⁴ B. Upadhyaya, "Chit," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 3, Mar. 1899, p. 239.

(a) God is not necessarily a creator; (b) creatures are non-beings, transformed as it were into being; (c) the transformation is caused by the mysterious power of the will of God.⁶⁵ Hence Upadhyaya would say that *Māyā* is

the fecund Divine power (*śakti*) which gives birth to multiplicity. This fecundity is called *Maya* because its character is inscrutable. It is eternal but its operation is not essential to the being of God. By its non-being (*asat*) is made being (*sat*).⁶⁶

He points out that, according to Vedānta, this creative fiat cannot be *sat* (necessarily existent), because God cannot have any necessity to create; nor can it be non-existent, for it is the power of God; nor can it be a mere accident, because there can be no accident in the Eternal. Hence it is called *Māyā*, something like a mystery, a magical illusion, to the finite intellect of man.⁶⁷ *Māyā* is neither real or necessary, nor unreal, but contingent.⁶⁸ Thus Upadhyaya was honestly trying to present the Vedānta meaning of the concept *Māyā*⁶⁹ and it was to this Vedānta understanding of *Māyā* that he was comparing the Christian doctrine of creation to establish the identity between the two doctrines.

(iv) *The Vedānta doctrine of Māyā which explains creation and the Christian doctrine of creation are identical*

The point Upadhyaya wants to communicate is that the Vedānta doctrine of *Māyā* and the Christian doctrine of creation are exactly identical. He compares⁷⁰ the Christian doctrine of creation as explained by St Thomas Aquinas with the concept *Māyā* and points out the following similarities: (a) *Māyā* signifies that the creation has no being in itself; what it has is derived being. What St Thomas calls *creatio passiva* is exactly the same. It is the habitude of having being from another and resulting from the operation of God.⁷¹ (b) In the Upaniṣads, Brahma Sūtra and its *Bhāṣya* by Śāṅkara (1.1.13

⁶⁵ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 20, Nov. 10, 1900, p. 6.

⁶⁶ B. Upadhyaya, "The true doctrine of Maya," *Sophia*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Feb. 1899, p. 227.

⁶⁷ B. Upadhyaya, "Maya," (see note 65).

⁶⁸ B. Upadhyaya, "The true doctrine of Maya," p. 226.

⁶⁹ Here we would like to point out that most of the writings on [Upadhyaya] are misleading on this point as they hold that Upadhyaya was reinterpreting the Advaita Vedānta concept *Māyā* to suit his ends. For example, Robin Boyd writes: "The greatest problem facing him was that of creation, and he tackled it boldly by giving a new and original interpretation to Śāṅkara's teaching on *māyā*. Vāth and others have felt that this attempt was unsuccessful. . . ." *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, pp. 74-75. Or cf. Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, p. 41, which says: ". . . it was through a reinterpretation of that concept (i.e., the concept *Māyā*) that Brahmabandhav was able to accept Śāṅkara's philosophy."

⁷⁰ B. Upadhyaya, "The true doctrine of Maya," p. 226.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

and 14) there is reference to "abundance" of Bliss with regard to Brahman and creation can be thought of as the overflow of this "abundance" by Brahman to manifest and impart His own perfections. In Christian understanding too, creation is through the overflow of perfections of God.⁷² (c) In Thomist theology creation is the effect of the divine thought and it manifests the perfections of the Infinite and Absolute Being. The supposed root of *Māyā*, whether *mā* (to form, make, create, construct, build, effect, manifest one's self) or *man* (to think) indicates that *Māyā* also originally meant the same.⁷³ (d) According to St Thomas, creatures apart from God are indeed darkness, falsity and nothingness (*tenebrae, falsitas et nihil*). When the Vedāntins affirm all that is not Brahman to be *Māyā*, they are also pointing to the same truth that if we superimpose independent reality and intrinsic permanence upon creatures that is darkness, falsity and nothingness.⁷⁴

It is interesting to note here that Upadhyaya even takes a further step and declares that the term *Māyā* can express the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root *creare*:

...the term "māya" is more expressive of the doctrine of creation than the Latin root "creare". Whenever we speak of creation we should be careful to make explicit three factors implied in the creative act. First: there is no necessity on God's part to create. Second: the coming into being of finite objects with the implication that they did not exist. Third: the finite perfections are contained in the infinite in a pre-eminent way. Now the term "Creation" expressed only the second significance, while "māya" conveys...all the three.⁷⁵

But Upadhyaya has also pointed out a difference between the Vedānta and Christian concepts of creation. He thinks that according to Vedānta, individual beings cease to exist in time. But Christian thinking holds that individual souls, though they have no intrinsic power for everlasting life, by God's grace have been blessed to live for ever.

The Vedānta is satisfied only with the ontological view of things. It holds that individual beings must cease to exist in time, because they have no claim to existence. The Catholic philosophy admits the validity of the Vedāntic contention, namely, that a creature has no intrinsic power to endure for ever, nay, even for a moment. But it goes further. It teaches that individual souls have been blessed by God to live forever.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. also B. Upadhyaya, "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 6, July 21, 1900, p. 8.

⁷⁵ B. Upadhyaya, "Vedantism and Christianity," *Sophia*, Vol. I, Nos. 15 and 16, Sept. 29, 1900, p. 6.

The Infinite power, which has given them life for a day, may give them life for days without end.⁷⁶

4. The Theological Points in which Upadhyaya Maintained the Traditional Christian Position

It should be noted that regarding the doctrines of Man, Sin, Fall, Grace, Atonement and Salvation Upadhyaya maintained the traditional Christian position and did not try to develop Indian Christian thinking on these doctrines.⁷⁷ The essence of sin lies in choosing the creature above the creator, as an object of final and supreme bliss.

By sin we alienate ourselves from God. By choosing the finite (anatma) as our goal we incur spiritual death and darken our understanding (viveka). . . Sin leads to bondage and darkness from which there can be no escape notwithstanding the hardest struggle on our part.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ "The true doctrine of Maya," p. 228. Cf. also p. 227. Here it should be remembered Upadhyaya was of the conviction that the teaching of Vedānta contained certain errors as well, side by side with its mostly correct doctrines. He was completely against the idea of the identification of man with God. He would say that "no sin is blacker than that of identifying creature with the Creator": cf. "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 9, Aug. 11, 1900, p. 7. According to him one among the four blunders the Hindu race has perpetrated to cause the fall of India consists in "upholding the doctrine that man is God"; cf. "Why we are fallen," *Sophia*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1898, p. 15. He points out that it is a horrible blasphemy to say that man is God: cf. "Notes," *Sophia*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1897, p. 4. But it is worth noting here that on this point Upadhyaya's understanding of Advaita Vedānta corresponds to post-Śaṅkarite Vedānta especially in its Neo-Vedānta form. Śaṅkara would never say that man is God. For him, with regard to the *Paramātman*, the *jīvātman* is a *nāmarūpa*, an effect and a mask-like superimposition (*upādhi*) whose finiteness and apparent independence must be transcended so that its Source and Ground, the *Paramātman*, may be seen and known in its unicity. The *jīvātman* is in the form of consciousness (*cid-rūpa*) but is not absolute consciousness itself; rather, it is rooted in the latter which is the supreme *Ātman*—*Brahman*, greater and more interior (*antarātman*, *antaryāmin*) than the *jīvātman* and the one Energiser of every *jīvātman* (*sarvātman*). And *Mokṣa* is when the *jīvātman* discovers its own truth in its own centre, the *Paramātman*. Such a discovery is so fulfilling, that there is no sense in claiming a place in it for a separate self-affirmation.

⁷⁷ Cf. B. Upadhyaya, "The creation of man," *Sophia*, Vol. II, No. 11, Nov. 1895, pp. 1-4; "The fall of man," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 3, Mar. 1894, pp. 11-14; No. 4, Apr. 1894, pp. 11-14; No. 5, May 1894, pp. 9-12; "The state of salvation," *Sophia*, Vol. II, No. 9, Sept. 1895, pp. 8-9; "A brief outline of Christianity," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 2, Feb. 1901, pp. 32-32a; "Christ's claim to attention," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1901, pp. 115-17 etc.

⁷⁸ "Christ's claim to attention," p. 116; cf. also "Question and answers," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 4, July 7, 1900, p. 9; *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 6, July 21, 1900, p. 8.

The darkened reason of the sinner can only be reilluminated by the grace of God. It is only the compassion of God that can save the sinner. Jesus Christ who is perfectly Divine as well as perfectly human became one with man in compassionate suffering. He suffered for man's sin and thus paved the way to salvation.⁷⁹ Upadhyaya puts forward Atonement as the central doctrine of Christianity:

The mystery of the restoration to grace is taught in the doctrine of the Atonement. It teaches how God did condescend to be united to humanity in suffering that man may be reconciled to him in joy. This act of divine condescension, this *at-one-ment*, of divinity and humanity, this sweet mingling of the joy of holiness with the sorrow of compassion is the central doctrine of the Christian religion, because without this exhibition of mercy, man would be deprived of his glorious end.⁸⁰

In such a scheme of theology Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya naturally has to suggest how God became united to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. He wants to explain how the Logos, the Eternal Image of the Father, became incarnate, i.e., united Himself to a human nature created and so adapted as to be wedded to Divinity. This he explains in a manner which would make it easy for the Vedāntin to grasp the Christian position.⁸¹ The following lines of Upadhyaya gives us the gist of his explanation:

According to the Vedānta human nature is composed of five sheaths or divisions (*kosha*). They are: (1) physical (*annamaya*) which grows by assimilation; (2) vital (*pranamaya*); (3) mental (*manomaya*), through which are perceived relations of things; (4) intellectual (*vijnanamaya*), through which is apprehended the origin of beings; and (5) spiritual (*anandamaya*) through which is felt the delight of the Supreme Reality. These five sheaths are presided over by a personality (*aham-pratyayi*) which knows itself... The time-incarnate Divinity is also composed of five sheaths; but it is presided over by the person of the Logos Himself and not by any created personality (*aham*)... in the God-man the five sheaths are acted upon direct by the Logos-God and not through the medium of any individuality. The Incarnation was thus accomplished by united humanity with Divinity in the person of the Logos. This incarnate God in man we call Jesus Christ.⁸²

We may very well agree that this kind of Christological exposition has fully succeeded in putting the already formulated Christian doctrine in a Vedānta garb. Yet we believe that Upadhyaya's explanation of

⁷⁹ "Christ's claim to attention," pp. 116-17.

⁸⁰ "A brief outline of Christianity," p. 32a.

⁸¹ B. Upadhyaya, "Incarnate Logos," *The Twentieth Century*, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 1901, pp. 6-8; "Notes," *Sophia*, Vol. I, No. 4, July 7, 1900, pp. 6-7.

⁸² "Incarnate Logos," p. 7. For Śāṅkara on the five sheaths which constitute human nature, cf. *Taittirīya Up. Bhāṣya* 2.2.1.

Jesus Christ as *Chit* has a more lasting value in Indian Christology than this exposition: the reason for this has been indicated in the evaluation Upadhyaya wrote a Sanskrit hymn in praise of the Incarnate Logos.⁸³

5. Summary, Evaluation and Conclusion

We say that Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya wanted to fall back upon the Vedānta method in formulating Christian theology; he wanted to restate Christian doctrines in terms of Advaita Vedānta. He believed that Śaṅkara's Advaita could serve as a natural, metaphysical basis and thereby supply a new garb which would make the supernatural dogmas of Christianity more explicit and consonant with reason than was done by the scholastic philosophy. In representing the Vedānta doctrines he took the great Śaṅkara as his guide and authority and he was of the opinion that Śaṅkara should be understood with the help of post-Śaṅkarite traditions, especially *Panchadaśī*. We also noticed that the main contributions of Upadhyaya to Indian theology lie in his explanation of the doctrine of Trinity as *Saccidānanda* and the doctrine of creation as *Māyā*. It is the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara's writings which Upadhyaya takes as basis for his explanation of the Vedānta concept *Sat-chit-ānandam*. In Śaṅkara's Advaita, *Sat-chit-ānandam* indicates the Supreme Being, Brahman. Śaṅkara explains Brahman as *chaitanyam* (Essential Knowledge) (*Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* 2.3.18) and as *ānandamayah* (Bliss) (*ibid.* 1.1.12). In Advaita the Supreme Being is called *Sat-chit-ānandam* as well as *Nirguṇam*. Both these terms point to Brahman in Himself, Brahman as unrelated, and there is no contradiction in meaning between them. The Upaniṣads speak of Brahman as *Sat* (Being) (*Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1a; cf. also *Bhagavad Gita* 17.23), *Chit* (Intelligence) (*Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1b) and *Ānandam* (the third *Valli* of *Taittiriya Up.*). To speak of Brahman as *Sat-chit-ānandam* means that Brahman knows Himself and that from that self-knowledge proceeds His eternal beatitude. Brahman is related of necessity only to the Infinite Image of His own being, mirrored in the ocean of His knowledge. This relation of Being (*Sat*) to Itself in self-knowledge (*Chit*) is one of perfect harmony, bliss (*Ānandam*). Upadhyaya proclaims then that the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity is "exactly the same" as the Vedānta conception of Brahman as *Sat-chit-ānandam*, because in the Trinity the Father's knowledge is fully satisfied by the cognition of the Logos, the Infinite Image of his Being, begotten by thought and mirrored in the ocean of His substance and His love finds the fullest satisfaction in the boundless complacency with which He reposes on his Image and breathes

⁸³ "Incarnate Logos," p. 7. All except the first stanza of the hymn is an exposition of traditional Christian understanding of Jesus Christ. The first stanza describes Jesus Christ, the God-man (*Nara-Hari*) as the transcendent Image of Brahman (*Brahmaparatpararūpa*) and Eternal Knowledge (*Chirachit*). Here Upadhyaya explains Jesus Christ as *Chit*, as in his exposition of *Sat-chit-ānanda* as Trinity.

forth the Spirit of bliss. Upadhyaya also points out that the revelation in Jesus Christ is the further clarification and affirmation of God as *Sat-chit-ānanda*. Coming to the doctrine of creation as *Māyā*, we saw Upadhyaya giving proof-texts from Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads and *Panchadaśī* to show that the concept *Māyā* does not signify the world as illusion. Śaṅkara's *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.28 and 29 hold the doctrine of the objective existence of the world; 1.1.2 says that there can be no question about preservation and dissolution of things unless they have acquired being (*labdhasattaka*); the first chapter of the *Bhāṣya* and 2.1.13 point to the distinction between individual souls and material objects, and the first cause and between cause and effect respectively. But that distinction is not as Madhava or Ramanuja think. Therefore 2.1.14 lays down the non-separateness of the universe from God. Here Śaṅkara shows that the Vedānta, while boldly inculcating the utter nothingness of the universe looked at from the standpoint of intrinsic ontology (*paramārtha*), strenuously insists at the same time on the contingent (*vyavahārika*) existence of finite beings. According to the Upaniṣads creation is an overflow of the bliss (*ānandam*) of Brahman (the third *Valli* of *Taittirīya Up.* which is called *Ānanda Valli*) and the Supreme Being created this world by *saṅkalpa* (free determination or will) (*Aitareya Up.* 1.1.1.; 1.3.1.; *Chāndogya Up.* 6.2.3.; 7.4.1-3 etc.). *Panchadaśī* also explains that the creation of the world is by the *saṅkalpa* of the Supreme Being (4.5.3; 4.5.18 etc.). Upadhyaya points out that according to Advaita Vedānta the world originated by *vivarta*, a kind of communication which does not modify the communicator. *Vivarta* implies creation by will-causation (*saṅkalpa*). This is also the meaning of *Māyā*. *Māyā* signifies the will-power (*saṅkalpa*) of God. It means that creation is by the power (*śakti*) of the will (*saṅkalpa*) of God. The term *Māyā* involves three truths: (a) God is not necessarily a creator; (b) creatures are non-beings, transformed as it were into being; (c) the transformation is caused by the mysterious power of the will of God. Upadhyaya then declares that this Vedānta doctrine of *Māyā* which explains creation and the Christian doctrine of creation are identical because, according to the Christian doctrine of creation also, God does not create out of necessity but through the overflow of his perfections; creation has no being in itself; what it has is derived being and creation is the effect of the divine thought. Upadhyaya even says that the term *Māyā* can express the meaning of the doctrine of creation in a far better way than the Latin root *creare*. We have also noted that regarding the doctrines of Man, Sin, Fall, Grace, Atonement and Salvation, Upadhyaya maintained the traditional Christian position and that he tried to explain the person of Jesus Christ in terms of Vedānta human nature.

When we analyse Upadhyaya's interpretation of *Sat-chit-ānanda*, it should be pointed out that nowhere in Śaṅkara's writings do we find that term as such. The term *Saccidānanda* perhaps first appears in *Tējōbindu Upaniṣad* of the ninth or tenth century A.D. Still, as Upadhyaya rightly shows there are many things in Śaṅkara's writings which indicate Brahman as *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ānandam*. It should also be noted that Śaṅkara interprets *Satyam jñānāmanantam* (not *ānantam*)

Brahma (Tait. Up. 2.1) as one of the Vedānta statements which gives the essential (*svarūpa*) and non-relational (*nirapekṣa*) definition (*lakṣaṇa*) of the Absolute, indicating Its true nature. Upadhyaya was one who believed that Śāṅkara should be understood with guidance from post-Śāṅkarite Advaita traditions. Hence there is nothing unusual in his search for support in Śāṅkara's writings for a post-Śāṅkarite concept. On the whole Upadhyaya's interpretation of *Sat-chit-ānanda* can be accepted as true to the spirit of Advaita Vedānta starting from Śāṅkara to the Neo-Vedāntins.

While we study Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as *Sat-chit-ānanda*, mention has to be made of the three other persons who did similar work, namely Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884), Swami Parama Arubi Anandam (Fr J. Monchanin) (1895-1957) and Swami Abishiktananda (1910-1973). Keshub Chunder Sen is important because sixteen years before Upadhyaya, in 1882, he was the first one to interpret the Trinity as *Saccidānanda*.⁸⁴ Though Monchanin did not make any important contribution,⁸⁵ his successor Swami Abishiktananda's interpretation is significant. While Upadhyaya's *Saccidānanda* represented God in Himself as unrelated alone, Abishiktananda reinterpreted *Saccidānanda*: for him the concept signified the inseparable aspects of the mystery of God in himself as well as the mystery of the divine presence in the innermost sanctuary of man's being.⁸⁶ Here we would like to point out that by combining the thoughts of both Upadhyaya and Abishiktananda on Trinity as *Saccidānanda* and further developing them, there is a possibility for arriving at a more complete formulation of the Indian Christian doctrine of Trinity, a Christology and also an Anthropology. Nevertheless, the uniqueness

⁸⁴ Cf. Keshub Chunder Sen, "That Marvellous Mystery—The Trinity," *Lectures in India*, Vol. II, London: Cassell and Co., 1904, pp. 1-48. It should be noted that for Sen Trinity was only a symbol and the three members of the symbol, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were just pointing to the reality of God in different ways; the three members do not represent three persons sharing the same essence but they are just three functions of the same person. Moreover Sen gives only a very brief account of Trinity as compared with *Sat-chit-ānanda*.

⁸⁵ J. Monchanin called Trinity *Sat-chit-ānanda*, but his *Sat-chit-ānanda* is a mere exposition of the traditional Christian doctrine of Trinity: cf. *Swami Parama Arubi Anandam—A Memorial*, Tiruchirapalli, 1959, p. 200. What he believed was that the Hindu *Sat-chit-ānanda* finds its fulfilment in the already formulated Christian doctrine of Trinity.

⁸⁶ Cf. Swami Abishiktananda, *Saccidānanda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1974; *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the Cave of the Heart*, Bombay/Bangalore: The Institute of Indian Culture/CISRS, 1969. Abishiktananda believed that the Hindu experience of *Saccidānanda* should be remoulded to attain the Christian experience of *Saccidānanda* and once that is actualised then the renewed experience of *Saccidānanda* would be the Trinitarian culmination of advaitic experience.

of Upadhyaya's interpretation of Trinity as *Sacciānanda* lies in showing the fact that they are both exactly the same.

When we study Upadhyaya's interpretation of the doctrine of creation as *Māyā*, it should be remembered that Śaṅkara preferred the term *ajñāna* or *avidyā* to *Māyā* and it was his later disciples who misinterpreted his teaching as a form of *māyā vāda*.⁸⁷ The term *Māyā* is used by Śaṅkara exclusively as a comparative term and not as a technical term of his system. It should also be noted that, while he uses *Māyā*, half of the times he uses it as meaning "creative power (of the Lord)" and, while he uses it with the meaning "magic", he does so without denying the genuine existence of the world. Hence Upadhyaya's interpretation of Śaṅkara's doctrine of creation is correct, though it is true that Śaṅkara won't use *Māyā* as a technical term to explain the doctrine of creation. Nor would Śaṅkara use the term *vivarta* to explain the doctrine of creation because that term at his time belonged to Śabdādvaita. It was Padmapāda who first introduced *vivarta* into Advaita Vedānta, distinguishing it from *pariṇāma* and it was Vimuktātman who fully introduced the term *Māyā* into Advaita. It should be noted that *Māyā* in the post-Śaṅkarite tradition could mean world as "total illusion" as well. It is on *Panchadaśī* that Upadhyaya depends to be saved from this misinterpretation of Śaṅkara's Advaita. But we would like to point out that if Upadhyaya had directly depended on Śaṅkara he would not have been in trouble. This is all the more true when we look into Upadhyaya's misunderstanding that Advaita Vedānta teaches the doctrine that man is God (cf. *supra* footnote no. 76). This misunderstanding came because he depended on post-Śaṅkarite traditions. Hence the lesson we can learn from Upadhyaya's experience is that Śaṅkara should be understood through Śaṅkara's writings alone. We gladly accept in principle Upadhyaya's formulation of the Indian Christian doctrine of creation as *Māyā*, but we suggest that it would be better for avoiding misunderstandings if, instead of *Māyā*, we put forward Śaṅkara's theory of causation to explain the Indian Christian doctrine of creation. Credit goes to Upadhyaya for proclaiming the truth that the concept of creation according to Śaṅkara better explains the Christian doctrine of creation than any other existing concept.

In spite of all the limitations of his theological writings, Brahma-bandhav Upadhyaya as an Indian theologian rightly deserved the love and respect of all Indian Christians. The limitations of his time (1861-1907) are well evident in Upadhyaya's writings. Today we no longer consider Hinduism to be a mere natural religion of reason and Christianity alone to be the supernatural religion of revelation. Today no longer do we Indians believe the function of Indian theology to be merely the stitching of a new Vedānta garb for an already formulated Christian theology, but rather, for us, Indian theology is the contri-

⁸⁷ Cf. R. V. De Smet, "Māyā, or Ajñāna?", *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. II, 1966, pp. 220-225.

bution from the Vedānta in the very formulation of the human expression of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Until India's contribution is received "Revealed Truth" has not become "The Revealed Truth" in its possible expressive fulness. That is why one does not have much admiration for Upadhyaya's explanation of the traditional doctrine of the person of Christ using the garb of a Vedāntic understanding of human nature. In his doctrines of Trinity as *Saccidānanda* and Creation as *Māyā*, the case is different. True, here also he is following the basic methodology of putting an already formulated Christian theology in Vedānta terms. But, in effect, his effort has accomplished much more than this. The reason for this achievement is that Upadhyaya never tries to reinterpret the Advaita Vedānta concepts *Saccidānanda* and *Māyā* to produce new clothing for the already formulated Christian doctrines of Trinity and Creation. What he establishes is that Trinity is *Saccidānanda* and that Creation is *Māyā*. This indeed is a valuable contribution. From such a conclusion the way ahead for us is clear. It is possible for us to bring out new insights on the mysteries of Trinity and Creation from the Vedānta doctrines of *Saccidānanda* and *Māyā*. Upadhyaya himself has shown that the concept of *Māyā* expresses the doctrine of Creation far better than any existing Christian concept. Upadhyaya has also set forth the person of Jesus Christ as the further clarification and affirmation of God as *Saccidānanda*. The relation between Jesus and the Father affirms the true relation between *Śat* and *Chit*; it also affirms *Anandam*, the result of that relation. Christian truths are there already in Vedānta; Jesus Christ is none other than the affirmer of those truths. This position is entirely different from putting the already formulated doctrines of Trinity, Christ and Creation in Vedānta terms. Here Vedānta is, to some extent, receiving authority to formulate an understanding of Trinity in terms of *Saccidānanda*, of Christ in terms of *Chit* and of Creation in terms of *Māyā*. Of course Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya has not explicitly proclaimed so. But he has indicated to us the way forward. Inasmuch as he was the first to indicate such a way, he is truly *the Father of Indian theology*.