

The Culture of the Soul An old subject is here presented from a new quarter. Since the third century mysticism has uttered its protest in the churches of the West against an orthodox formalism. Now it addresses us from India. Mr. Rámanáthan, Solicitor-General of Ceylon, left this volume in manuscript with friends who had invited him here to lecture, to be published, by their request, as a memorial of his spiritual teaching. It is the work of an essentially Christian mystic, apparently independent of, or unacquainted with, the great

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mystics of the West. He holds, like the Church of Rome, to an unwritten oral tradition supplementary to the Scriptures, but that this has been lost to the Western nations, and that "the only way of restoring the 'Spirit' in the true meaning of the words of the Bible is to secure their interpretation by 'able ministers' from the East *who are now living, and on whom the effulgence of His grace has been shed.*" These are introduced to us from India as the "*Jñānis*, or Knowers of the Truth or Wisdom"—of some of whom seemingly miraculous facts are narrated. The goal of their soul-culture is attained in "the knowledge of God"—not, however, where Christians generally seek it, as manifested in the world of visible forms and the world of thought, but "in his own true character as Absolute Being." The "pure consciousness" which thus apprehends the Infinite is apparently a state of pure *feeling*, in which thought itself is transcended and dropped. Jesus himself is described as a *Jñāni*, constantly refreshing himself for his work by this divine rest in God. The spirit of Mr. Rāmanāthan's teachings is admirable, and his use of the Scriptures for confirmation is ingenious. What he speaks from a profound spiritual experience is incontestable. As an interpreter of Scripture he is to be classed with Swedenborg. His doctrine that the knowledge of God reaches its acme in a state of feeling disjunct from thought and will is psychologically impossible, as well as rationally untenable. Ecstasy does not constitute perfection. (The Culture of the Soul Among Western Nations. By P. Rāmanāthan, K.C., C.M.G. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. \$1.25.)