

new volume of 'the things that Jesus did.' For if it is, there will be many another yet to be written that will be 'burdened with his name,' and our lives will thus be blessed beyond all thought for evermore. But if we knew of Him and left Him out of our lives, we had better never have been born.

There are many millions of records which angel pens are writing to-day, telling the story of human lives in India that daily go to their account. In them Religion takes no small part, and in a great number of them sincerity and deep belief is written on every page. But what are the pictures of God that are drawn therein? Far-off and terrible, cruel and blood-stained and propitiated with bitter tears, lustful and foul—such is what they see of Him whom Jesus brought near to us as our Father in heaven. How little help can such religion give towards covering those pages with beauty and

kindness—with the 'things which Jesus did,' even if they never knew that His was the light that lighted them! How mighty is the debt we owe them, we to whom the Name of Jesus has been familiar since our infancy! Remember, the one thing that the Judge will demand of us is what we did for His brethren, even for the least—the savage, the outcast, the despairing. And as we 'did it not' unto them, as we forgot to care, to love, to help, we 'did it not unto him.' That and nothing else will determine our destiny in the Hereafter, even if we never heard His Name. God give us grace to receive the Presence into our hearts whereby we may do only the things that Jesus does, till like Him we are 'received up' out of human sight to do them still in Him for ever!

*Kotagiri, Nilgiri Hills,
Easter, 1916.*

The Mysticism of Rome.

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ROMAN mysticism need be only very briefly noticed. There is very little of it in genuine Roman religion.

'Of the frantic type of diviner, the *εὐθεος*, so common in Greece, we hear nothing in the sober Roman annals: the idea of a human being "possessed by a spirit of divination" seems foreign to the Roman character' (W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*. London, 1911, p. 297).

Craving for mystic and emotional worship came in at times of trouble when the old State religion could no longer satisfy. The earliest sign of this tendency was the Sibylline influence, which can be first detected about the beginning of the 5th cent. B.C. We have seen that prophetic Sibyls were an offshoot of the religion of Dionysus. Some wandering Sibyl seems to have penetrated to Italy, and stirred the inhabitants to consult her oracular sayings. In obedience to her advice, banquets were spread for the gods (*lectisternia*) and *supplicationes*, or solemn prayers, were offered at the temples in the city, by a procession of men, women, and children. The first introduction of *lectisternia* was during the siege of Veii, when a

pestilence had filled the people with fear. The stress of the war with Hannibal, coming at a time when the pontifical and augural colleges had well-nigh buried the old religion under a mass of formalism, greatly increased the longing for some more personal union with the deity, and the true Roman religion, consisting in the careful discharge of ritual duties, broke down. Foreign gods had to be introduced to meet the need. In 205 the Sibylline oracle was said to announce that Hannibal would be driven out of Italy if the Great Mother of the gods were brought from Asia Minor to Rome. Scipio Africanus, himself a mystic, was sent, as the best man in the State, to receive her, when she arrived in the form of a small black stone (Livy, xxix. 10-14). Scipio was accompanied by all the Roman matrons, and amid prayers she was carried to a temple on the Palatine. Thus an Oriental deity was for the first time brought to Rome. Her orgiastic cult is no part of Roman mysticism, for it was entirely foreign, though the goddess was allowed her own Roman priests. Twenty years later Dionysus was introduced, through Etruria, a district that had a fatal tendency to corrupt all Greek influences. In Greece

Bacchanalia might be wild, in Rome they were deleterious in the highest degree, and the rites were suppressed with a heavy hand, but yet a loophole was left for true believers in the new religion to practise it under the most rigid conditions. The Romans, like all other human beings, yearned for the consolations of emotional mysticism, and might, if their own religion had not been arrested by the burden of forms and ceremonies, have developed a national mystic worship. As it was, the human nature that would out found a morbid nourishment in the corybantic excesses associated with the cult of the Great Mother. Later, a more wholesome reaction against State formalism took place. Stoicism and its grave sense of duty, combined with the revival of Pythagorean beliefs in the immortality of the soul, purgation after death, and asceticism in this life, appealed to the serious Roman mind, and in the time of Cicero we begin to meet with those assertions of the divinity of the human soul with which we have long been familiar in Greece (Cic. *De Rep.* 15). The Neo-Pythagorean doctrine found a response in the hearts of thinking Romans. The sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* shows us what might have been made of mystic ideas by Rome, if only some earlier Virgil had turned her longing for divine communion into the right channel. In the noble passage, *Aen.* vi. 724-755, we meet with all the well-known Orphic notions, the *σῶμα σῆμα*, the purgatory, the soul as a spark of divine fire, transmigration, and the final bliss of the purified. Yet the whole is in a different key, and one more consonant with the Roman *gravitas*. A very interesting suggestion (M. de G. Verrall, *Cl. R.* [1910] xxiv. 44 ff.) should be noticed that in the simile of purified souls hovering like bees around white lilies (707 ff.) both the bees and the lilies may be intended to be symbols of re-incarnation and immortality.

The Great Mother arrived in Rome at the end of the 3rd cent. B.C. Except for the more or less abortive effort to bring in Dionysus, the next great foreign mystery-god to come was Isis in the 1st cent.

from Egypt. Till the time of Vespasian her worship was frowned on by the State, but afterwards it established itself, and lasted till the victory of Christianity. She gained especially the devotion of women, and seems to have been adored in the same spirit as the Virgin in later days, in virtue of her motherhood and sorrow. But, though her cult was wide-spread and long-lived, it is secondary in importance to that of Mithra, introduced from Persia by gradual diffusion, through ubiquitous Semitic merchants and vast quantities of imported slaves. Like Christianity, Mithraism was for long a religion of the poor. About 180 A.D. it suddenly became aristocratic and gained an established footing in Rome. It received imperial approval from the time of Commodus, probably because its doctrine of a future life offered a less gross support to the theocratic claims of the emperor than asking the Roman people to believe in the godhead of a living emperor. Mithra as the god of light and action, the invincible one (*ἀνίκητος*), appealed to soldiers in a marked degree. Jerome (*Ep.* 107, 'ad Laetam' ([*P.L.* xxii. 869]) speaks of seven degrees of initiation. Baptism and sacramental meals were an integral portion of the worship; and one of the most cherished doctrines was that of the resurrection of the dead.

The cults of Isis and Mithra were spread all over the Roman Empire. Christianity was making its way contemporaneously, and at one time it seemed as if Mithra would triumph over Christ. Renan says: 'Si le christianisme eût été arrêté dans sa croissance, le monde eût été mithraïste' (*Marc Aurèle*, Paris, 1881, p. 579).

But the conversion of Constantine was the ruin of Mithra, in spite of the reaction under Julian, after which there came the final collapse.

Mithra allowed no women votaries, and tried to gain over paganism by compromise: Christianity did not seek to exclude half the human race from its fold, and its 'antagonisme intrinsèque' to the old religions proved in the end the road to victory, by waging relentless war on superstition.