

WHERE THE BLESSED ARE.

phase of life as the religious life, and to draw sharp distinctions between what we call sacred and secular. In India, on the other hand, life is essentially religious, and in the strictest sense of the word there is nothing which can properly be called secular at all.

The chief religions of India are Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Demon Worship, and Parsi-ism. Hinduism is a series of forms used for the worship of the god Brahma. The priests are called Brahmans, and teach that four classes of men were created by Brahma: (1) Priests, (2) Soldiers, (3) Farmers and Merchants, (4) Mechanics and Servants. This is what is known as caste. Each of these castes has now many subdivisions, and below them all are the Pariahs, or outcastes. A Hindu may neither eat nor drink with those of a lower caste. If the shadow of a low-caste man falls on a Brahman's food, it must be thrown away. A man always belongs to the same caste as his father, and can never rise above it, but if he breaks its rules he becomes an outcaste. This makes the high-caste men proud and selfish, and prevents the low-caste from ever trying to rise in life. In Benares, considered the most sacred place in India, are five thousand Hindu temples, each with its hideous idols. The Vedas are the Brahman's sacred books.

About 500 B.C. there lived in India a young prince known as Gantama Buddha, which means "the enlightened." His father wished him to become a soldier, but he loved to spend his time thinking over great questions about life and death. For six years he lived in a mountain cave, where he was often cold and hungry. Then he began preaching to the people, and taught them some good lessons for this life, such as kindness to every living thing, and that they must not kill, steal, lie nor use strong drink. But he did not know God, so could not teach the people anything about Him, nor tell them anything about the life to come. He taught instead, that if they obeyed these commands, their souls would pass at death into some higher life, and at last go into an eternal sleep. If they failed, they would be born into some lower form of animal or bird. He did not tell the people to worship him, but the Buddhists do worship him and everything connected with him.

When the Hindus conquered India, the savage tribes they found there were mostly Demon Worshipers, and the few of them remaining in the land are so still. They believe the earth to be filled with evil spirits living in trees, plants, streams and rocks, and that offerings and sacrifices must constantly be made to them to prevent their harming the people.

Mohammed was a native of Arabia, who lived about 1,500 years ago, and said he had received a new revelation from God. He claimed that God commanded him to force all men to obey him; so he and his fierce Arabian followers started out to fight and to kill all who would not become Mohammedans. Their battle cry was, "There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." This religion soon spread over western Asia and parts of Europe and Africa. About one hundred years after it began, it was carried to India, but never ruled over the whole of the land. Their sacred book is the Koran, which Mohammed said was a direct gift from God; but we know well that such a cruel, wicked religion never came from the Heavenly Father.

Parsi-ism is the religion of the Parsis, or Persians, who were driven into India by the Mohammedans. They are the fire-worshippers of the East; their religion has little influence in the land.

These people need Jesus Christ, and the Christian Church is the key to the whole position in India. All cannot go abroad and all cannot give large sums of money, but each one has a life to live, and time with which to serve. And are you yielding the power of prayer for missions? Prayer is the mighty leverage by which we may lift these people out of darkness and slavery into the light and liberty of the sons of God.

In closing this study, let us think of those villages in India and those multitudes without Christ. Look again into the Master's face, as he asks you the searching question, thrice repeated, "Lovest thou me?" And may His great love for us constrain us to answer, "Lord thou knowest that I love Thee," bear His words, as He points to India with the command, "Feed My Lambs."

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