

REQUIEM

by Martin Lings

Hindus relinquish not their belovèd in death,
But year after year, from youth to age,
Help them with offerings to the Holy Fire
Kindled on the altar, to Agni, the Lord
Who purifies and transmutes; and to the priest, bountifully,
The rich man of his gold gives, or of cattle,
And the poor what he may of milk and of fruit,
Certain that these offerings the after-life will reach,
Following the departed, not in form but in Spirit,
For a gift sanctified by sacrifice has wings.
And they pray: From the bond of rebirth and redeath
Liberate them with Knowledge of none but Thee,
O Truth, O Self of their selves, O Peace.

Jews make studies of their Sacred Books,
Dedicating those studies to dead kinsmen —
Theirs be the merits and the meed! — and alms
They give that their sins be forgiven, to the Lord
Praying at Passover, Pentecost, Atonement,
And Tabernacles — some every Sabbath, every day —
That their dead He may bless and bring into the serene
Paradise of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
Sheltered forever beneath the shadow of His Wings.

The Buddhists of the North and the Buddhists of the South
Deeds of excellence to their dead transfer,
And two vessels they take, one full,
Empty the other, and the empty they fill,
Pouring in water for witnesses to see,
Symbol of the giving and seal upon the gift,

Pouring water, pouring virtue,
Gravity celestial, from the living to the dead,
To increase what store they acquired in life,
That the world's gravity be outweighed, and they drawn
From the rim of the immense round of existences,
Wheel of vicissitude, that to the Centre they may attain.

The Churches of the East and the Church of the West
Their memorial stones with reminders engrave
For passers-by to pray for the dead.
The bereaved solemnate requiems and vigils,
And offerings make for remission of sins,
And light candles, and litanies recite:
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison: thus the living for the dead
Pray to the Merciful that His Mercy may save
And bring their souls to the bliss of Heaven.
And they beseech Mary, beseech Michael,
And all Angels, and all the Saints,
To cry with them: *Kyrie eleison,*
Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Muslims mention with Mercy their dead,
They utter not their names without utterance of a prayer;
And they pray, standing or sitting, at their tombs,
Fasts for their salvation and vigils they keep,
And chant the Qurán, and charities bestow.
For the dead Mecca and Medina they visit,
Jerusalem, or shrine of Saint, dedicating
The Pilgrimage to them — theirs be the Blessing!
And together in Mosques in congregation they pray
Alike for the dead as for the living, and invoke
The All-Merciful: have Mercy upon us.

Could these, and these, and these be wrong,
And these, and these? Could they be wrong,
And ye be right, ye right alone,
Sects that pray not for departed souls?
Shalt thou, and thou, and thou the gates
Enter of Paradise, only for being
Not bad enough to burn in Hell?
Gladdeners of the enemy, ye glut him with two feasts:
Living complacence; and prayers filched
From the derelict dead in their direst need.

Church Triumphant and Church Militant,
For the Church Suffering, O intercede, and pray
For Mercy on the dead: On the dead, Mercy!

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THE MATHESON TRUST
FOR COMPARATIVE RELIGION