

DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD AND THE ORIGINS OF PIETY

BY H. GODDEN COLE

WE KNOW little enough about comparative psychology but we have good reason to believe that some of the higher mammals have an instinctive dread and horror of the corpses of their own species. Doctor Mackenna in his *Adventure of Death* cites the case of horses. If that be so it would not be unreasonable to believe that primitive man shared that instinctive disgust or loathing of his own dead. Whether or no, the dissolution of the body would call for some method of disposal and he would probably adopt the same course as do other animals, that is to say, leave it to rot and move elsewhere himself. Now this simple-enough procedure may be adopted in the case of small nomadic communities, but it is cumbersome or impossible in the case of tribes and especially where the tribes live in villages and cultivate their own pasture land. Many possibilities suggest themselves as feasible methods of disposing of the corpse. Let us consider the most important.

1. *Exposure*. Sometimes the corpse was thrown into the forest. The Mongols to this day simply expose their dead. It would probably be devoured by carnivorous beasts, or flies would find a rich harvest. Let me anticipate a possible theological suggestion and remind you that Beelzebub was the god of flies, that is flies were his messengers or even himself incarnate, carrying the soul of the deceased to the unknown. That, however, is hypothetical. Among some tribes, for example the Kamachadales, dogs were actually kept for the express purpose of eating the corpses. Again, this may have been a contributory origin of the domestication of animals, even of totemism. The Parsees take their corpses to the top of high towers. Towers of Silence, as they are called, and they are there exposed. Vultures quickly enough dispatch them. Where the carcass is, there are the eagles gathered together. Now this is primitive and

loveless. The Jewish king Jehoiakin was a blackguard, and coward, and a war-time profiteer, and so keenly was he hated that no one bothered to bury him. Jeremiah describes his burial as the burial of an ass. All this, I say, is crude and callous. One likes to feel that even savage man shows a certain sense of delicacy and finer feeling, and to watch a jackal seize an erstwhile member of the tribe is gross enough. I only surmise that a certain innate good taste would awake in man and prompt him to dispose of his dead in other ways. Of course, it may have been the other way round, that is to say, that burial, adopted for some reason of which we know nothing leading to the gradual development of good taste.

In Tibet the body, Waddell states, is taken out to the cemetery, laid face downwards on a slab, stripped and tied to a stake. The undertaker, or corpse cutter rather, slices the flesh off the bones and throws it to the dogs, pigs and vultures. Those who can afford to indulge in extravagant obsequies pay a little extra to have dogs and pigs prevented from sharing in the last rites. There is, it seems, something more holy about vultures. The treatment of the bones, again, is a matter of expense. Poor people are buried. Rich folk have their bones ground to powder, made into a pulp with flour, and the bolus thus formed thrown into the air for the vultures. This is the celestial disposal of the relics. Two variations are worthy of mention. Buddhist priests are cremated and the bones made into amulets, the skull into bowls and drums, the thigh bones into trumpets, and the small hand bones into rosary beads. The other is that paupers, lepers, those killed by accident, and barren women are dragged by a cart rope and thrown into a river or lake. Thus does Buddhist Tibet differ from Christian England. It all seems very horrible, very disgusting to us, because, I suppose, only paupers have their flesh sliced off their bones,—and that not in the interests of religion but of anatomical research. It all seems very horrible and yet. . . .

Now we can begin to see how it probably came about that birds take such a prominent part in all religion. One can conceive how savage mentality connected the eagles, the vultures, the ravens, that devoured corpses with messengers of the gods or even the gods themselves metamorphosed. That peacocks and woodpeckers and doves may not have been carrion feeders is a detail. Once the idea had gained a hold on the mind that certain birds were god's ministering spirits, then any birds might be. Who can tell how Athena's owl was evolved, or Aphrodite's doves, or Juno's peacocks, or the

eagle of Jove, the woodpecker of Zeus, Leda's swans? May I mention here the belief of some savage tribes the amazing superstition that the mother of twins has had two husbands, and one a bird. May I remind the reader of his nursery days and the swan maidens, the girls who were changed into swans. I suggest that we are not far from explaining the meaning of angels, God's ministering spirits who receive the soul at parting and on joyful wing, cleaving the sky, fly upward. May I, tentatively, suggest how easily it came about that the supreme Holy Spirit should be conceived in the form of a dove. So much then for Exposure. But so far we have no suggestion whatever of any communion with the dead, no piety. And yet we can just begin to discern the glimmering dawn of religion. Let us turn to another method of the disposal of the dead.

2. *Tree Burial.* All religion tends to be conservative and one can see why our first parents, who lived in trees, should have chosen this method. The body died in the tree and there it was left to rot: that is the simplest explanation. But there is a supplementary one. The corpse in a tree, though unexposed to voracious jackals was fully exposed to the birds of the air. If their relatives had souls they stood a better chance of getting to heaven, for in the tree they were well on the way. Be that as it may, Tree Burial has had some very important results.

Easily the first so far as comparative religion is concerned is the sacred significance of serpents. If the dead in trees were safe from the maraudings of lions and tigers, jackals and hyaenas, if they were exposed to the beneficent service of the heavenly birds, they were not safe from snakes. Serpent worship cannot be explained merely by one root—and serpent worship in connection with trees is only one factor of this great subject; yet I am sure that savage mentality need not be strained too far to invent wild mythologies about the serpent and the tree; the serpent and the bird; the serpent and the evil spirit ready to drag down the soul; and even the serpent and immortality.

The second result of importance is the almost world-wide superstition of capital punishment. The gallows is but an improvised tree, even a lamp-post on which an offender is lynched is but a mob's substitute. Criminals may be electrocuted by nations who have little sense of the past; or decapitated by those, as for instance the Dyaks of Borneo or Lady Jane Grey's well wishers, who have too much; but hanging still remains the method *par excellence*. Read

the essay about Aphrodite and the Mandrake, read the Epistle to Peter who converts the cross into an accursed tree.

In the third place there is the important part that trees play in animism; as is indicated in the origins of kissing under the mistletoe. Notice how often a tree, usually a yew, finds a prominent position in our churchyards and, what naturally follows, how often elegies from Gray's to Tennyson's *In Memoriam* make use of the old yew.

Fourthly, consider how easy a step it is from tree burial to burial under a tree, as for instance in the case of the wives of the patriarchs, and from thence to trees sacred to the memory of the dead. The Gospel oaks, the Honor-oaks, the Seven-oaks of England bring us near home geographically; but the sacred groves of Baal worship are not far removed in the religious world. And (though I do not press this) the idea has been mooted that even our cathedrals are built on the plan of a forest.

3. *Hut Burial.* Another method of the disposal of the dead is by leaving it in the hut, which is either deserted or fired. This is the common practice among the Hottentots. It is not quite so crude and callous as leaving the body in the forest or even in a tree. It is protected to some extent from wild animals. But much more important as a step in the direction of piety is its entailing the loss of the hut. It is the step towards sacrifice. A very beautiful custom (I condense from Frazer's *Golden Bough*) holds in some parts of East Africa. When a baby or quite young child dies the body is not thrown out as is usually the practice, but buried under the eaves. Then when another baby is born in that hut the soul of the first child becomes reincarnate in the new arrival. I wonder if the fairy tale of the stork (whose nest is in the eaves) has any part or lot in this matter. After the second birth, of course, the soul has no need for its earlier body and the latter is thrown out in the ordinary way. But the dead man's hut is of infinite value in the history of comparative religion. Without an altar it is yet a temple, the dwelling sacred to the dead man and the place where his honor dwelleth. A building unused for ordinary domestic habitation, the masoleum of St. Chad or St. Philemon, it becomes the depository of his body, and when that decays of his bones; and when those crumble to dust, of his soul. What is that but a temple. Not far away is modern religion.

4. *Burial in Caves.* This has been practised considerably but not universally. So much depends on the nature of the country.

Those who read the Bible will recall many instances. A big stone rolled before the entrance would protect the corpse from wild beasts, but not from the serpent on the rock; not from lunatics who seemed to have regarded cemeteries as asylums and who were popularly regarded as being possessed with devils, possessed by the souls from the corpses deposited in the rock hewn tombs. The Veddahs of Ceylon still practice cave burial. This method has led to two important developments which are really one. The first is the artificial erection of dwelling places for the dead culminating in the megalithic architecture of Egypt. The second is the sacredness of the stone placed at the entrance of the cave.

5. *Mountain Burial*. This has found sporadic devotees. Certain advantages offer themselves. The corpse is tolerably safe from jackals, is hygienically remote from the village community, is near heaven. Its religious importance can hardly be over-estimated. The sacred mountain looms up large in nearly every religion. We climb the mountain but we live in the valleys. The mountain of Mahomet, Mount Olympus, Buddha's mountain—these probably represent tombs of religious heroes, demigods. Tradition has it that Queen Boadicea was buried on Gop Mountain in Wales.

Max Muller believes that mountains are sacred in religion because they, by their grandeur, would impress primitive man with a sense of the infinite. Personally I believe that the sense of the infinite to be a secondary matter. I believe that when a kinsman died and was carried away as were Moses and Aaron or Elijah those who had loved him in the flesh cast wistful longing eyes to the hills from whence came their grief. Hope springs eternal in the human breast and gradually phantasy and mythology would build up a god. How personal love developed into religious worship can only be explained when we can see inside the pensive, wistful soul of the first man who asked, "if a man die shall he live again?"

6. *Water Burial*. The inhabitants of modern Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the ancient Ichthyophagi threw the dead into the sea. In many lands and in many times the corpse was put into rivers and floated away to the regions beyond. I cannot find any cases where the corpse was habitually and customarily put into a well but the idea is not preposterous. Water burial has been productive of much. There is little doubt that baptism is a great debtor. It probably accounts for the sacredness of certain rivers as the Ganges, Father Tiber to whom the Romans pray, and many another; and for sacred wells and fountains, as Lourdes and St. Winifred's. The

idea still survives in modern hymnology. Old Doctor Watts and other timorous mortals who stand and shrink afraid to launch away still sing of death's cold stream. Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar* needs no quotation. One ought, in this connection, to mention the fine heroic funeral accorded to the old Norse kings who, decked in all their warrior's accoutrements and luxuriously furnished were sent out to sea in a flaming ship:

"They launched the burning ship,
It floated far away,
Over the misty sea,
Till, like the sun, it seemed
Sinking beneath the waves:
Balder returned no more!"

Other methods have played their part in the world's history, e. g., urn burial with its connections with pottery, and cannibalism and its tremendous significance in ritual. Two remain as the standard methods today.

6. *Fire*. Although it is the last form of fire disposal to be evolved it will be convenient to remark on cremation at this juncture. The disposal of the dead by fire may (but I doubt it) have had a sanitary origin. Even the Jews, to whom cremation was abhorrent, practised it during a plague and the Vale of Tophet became a symbol of Gehennah. Religion is a much more probable origin. The worship of the sun god, the fire ritual, the ascending of the smoke, a holy incense as food (howbeit nasal feeding) for the god—that I take it is the probable source. Fire burial may have originated by accident. A case came under my own notice not very long ago in which, at a wake, when every one was drunk, a candle of religious import got overturned, setting fire to the coffin and charring the corpse. Cremation has been a widely distributed custom. It existed in India and Japan, in Polynesia, in Greece and Rome, in Scandinavia and Britain. But it was very exceptional in Egypt, and to the Jews it was an abomination. "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Moab and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime." Instances from the Old Testament might be multiplied to substantiate this statement. It would be possible to analyze the religious significance of the fire cult in much greater detail, and to bring together scattered beliefs about bonfires (or

bonfires): but one thing is clear: cremation was never merely a cheap and easy way of disposing of the dead. Rather it proved deep respect and loving interest for them. Some of the practices connected with cremation in Melanesia testify to the real and sincere grief experienced by the mourners, and some of the Greek tragedies, e. g., Sophocles' *Antigone*, or Virgil's *Aeneid*, or the Hindu Ghats all tell the same tale. Not the least interesting aspect of the study of cremation is the several methods of the disposal of the ashes. Sometimes they were stored in an urn—I counsel you to read old Sir Thomas Browne—sometimes buried in the earth, sometimes thrown to the four winds. The Digger Indians smear the ashes over the heads of the mourners and paste them on with gum. Surely never was communion with the dead practised so literally.

7. *Earth.* So much for ashes to ashes. Now a paragraph on dust to dust. "this barbaric and disgusting custom, so repugnant to all the more delicate sentiments of human nature" as Grant Allen used to call burial, a statement with which I should be sorry to acquiesce, is, of course, exceedingly common in comparison with the other methods enumerated. "The paleolithic cave dwellers buried in the natural grottoes of the country, the later stone age in chambered barrows and cairns, and the bronze age in unchambered barrows in cemeteries of stone cists on natural eminences surrounded by a stone circle." Let me make one point now—that stones indicating the site of burial developed into ecclesiastical architecture. The Moors bury, not in the earth or stone, but under prickly thorns. For the most part burial in the earth is, in essence, conducted as in Christian England.

As to the position in which the body is buried little need be said. In the majority of cases the corpse is taken to its long home in a sleeping posture lying east and west, with his feet towards the dawn, probably the result of solar symbolism. But all postures have been described; sitting, standing, lying on one side, with the knees drawn up, and so on. The interest of posture to our immediate purpose lies in its attempt to make the corpse comfortable for its long journey, and its adaptability for resurrection.

I need hardly point out that permutations and combinations may be rung on these methods of disposal not only in the same community but even at the same funeral. The Warramunga tribe of Northern Australia offers a striking example. These folk bury in the earth and preserve a hand, bury in a tree: cure by smoking as we cure hams; cremate, and eat cannibalistically, when the skin is

kept as a memento. But tree burial is the usual custom. After the corpse has been hung in the higher branches of a tree the village is deserted for a while. Many months later the mourners return and the bones are raked down with a stick, the skull smashed and the bones, with the exception of the thigh, buried where the man died. After much totemic ceremony in which both men and women take part the arm bone is broken and the fragments preserved. The ancient Colchians hanged the men and buried the women, the Gonds burn the men and bury the women. The Todas burn generally but bury babies who are the victims of infanticide—an interesting point. The Muddikers generally bury, but burn lepers. The Kalmucks practice exposure or cremation, or burial, or drowning, or even build a hut over the deceased; each corpse being discussed on its own merits by the priest. Borneo babies are buried in jars.

So much, then, for the disposal of the corpse. It is not easy to trace each step in the progress. Many factors play a part; climate, natural conditions, theological beliefs—all contribute. But, cause or effect I know not, running parallel with all the methods of the disposal of the corpse there is an increasing desire to retain it. Horror is gradually being dethroned to give place to grief. Piety is developed. Love becomes more intense, more lasting, more definite. We appreciate this better if we study the preparation of the corpse. A coffin was originally a basket. That it has developed from wicker to thick elm proves the growing attempt to retain the body as long as possible, and though leaden shells are going out of fashion, family vaults still hold their own. The grave (which is not, I believe, connected etymologically either with grave meaning solemn, or grave meaning to engrave a tombstone) is the earthy and earthly representative of the Sheol or Hell of the Jews (their Gehennah is fire). The dead body was taboo to the Jews and the graves whitewashed. "Ye are like whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." The Greeks cremated and the dead ascended to heaven in the smoke. Christians, though consistent neither with Jew nor Greek have succeeded in making the best of both worlds. John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave but his soul goes marching on, to the confusion of psychology but the simplification of eschatology.

To the Jews, as I have said, the corpse was taboo. "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." They shunned contact with it. Perhaps this was due to fear. But another explanation may have contributed to this reluctance. Unlike

the Chinese with their eyes on the past the Jews set theirs forward to their children. A quotation from Gubernatis may help to explain the religious (really a mental) incompatibility of marriage and funeral. "They who return from the funeral must touch the stone of Priapus, a fire, the excrement of a cow, a grain of barley, a grain of sesame and water.—all symbols of that fecundity which contact with a corpse might have destroyed." But in general grief is too poignant to make matrimonial considerations possible and thought for the future is forgotten, temporarily at least, in passionate love and eager communion for the present dead. Piety is the attempt to retain the unretainable. From the material aspect this desire finds its highest expression in the practice of embalming. As this was carried out most fully in Egypt, we may refer to that country. Two theories have successively held the field as to the meaning of certain funeral customs. Some anthropologists attribute certain rites to fear of the dead man's ghost, others to love of the deceased. On their face value it does seem that these two are incompatible, and yet each may be right if we remember that what appertains to one country may not to another. National character is largely explainable by physical geography. Probably in Chaldea, Assyria and Babylon the fear theory would dominate thought and consequently religion. In Egypt, on the other hand, with its placid life, the sunny fountains rolling down its golden sands, its annual rise of the Nile, its insular safety, I have little doubt that love, social and tribal love, prompted most of the rites with which they celebrated the dead. It is appalling to try and reckon the number of bodies which must have been embalmed, millions and millions at least. Not only were human remains preserved in this way but some of the lower animals, notably cats and crocodiles, snakes and beetles. Possibly totemism may be the explanation of this. The initial stage of embalming was performed by a man of low social position. He opened the side and flank with one long sweep of his knife and immediately ran off as fast as he could. And well he might for he was pursued by a crowd throwing stones and hurling curses. The work was completed by others. The Bible calls them "physicians." The viscera were removed and either preserved separately or replaced in the belly which was filled with aromatic and disinfectant spices, myrrh, and what not. The body was soaked in brine, wrapped round and round with bandages, and the mummy was complete. The future, apparently was, to some extent, a matter of personal taste. Sometimes it was kept at home, even brought out at feasts; sometimes placed in a sarcopha-

gous; ultimately after a judicial trial it was laid in the tomb—asleep in Osiris, blessed sleep. The pyramids, the Sphinx, megalithic tombs (or colonial cemeteries as they might well be called) testify to the loving tenderness which the Egyptians lavished on their dead. But preservation of the whole corpse is rather a tall order for general practice. For the most part physical communion with the dead resolves itself into cherishing some part of the anatomy. Usually, of course, it is one of the bones. The Bible suggests plenty of instances. David took the bones of Saul and Jonathan, Moses took the bones of Joseph, and Elisha's bones were potent to work a miracle. To set against these is Scipio's last will and testament *Ingrata patria, ne ossa quidem habebis*, "Not even my bones shalt thou have, ungrateful country." In the Admiralty Islands it is the teeth which are preserved. Sometimes the skull is the memento. In the War-ramunga tribe, already referred to, the hand is preserved and hung round the neck. In England the hair is sometimes saved and worn usually in a ring or even in a bracelet. But there is another side to the picture. More than one person is implied in communion, and communion with the dead often resolves itself into the mourners not merely sharing a piece of the corpse with themselves but sharing pieces of themselves with the corpse. Supremely this is seen in the Indian Suttee, the widow throwing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Again this is too great a sacrifice for general practice. More usually only a piece of the mourners is left to comfort the corpse. The Todas cut a curl from the dead and keep it, and (I believe) leave one of their curls with the corpse. The Badaga women, the Esquimaux, squeeze the milk from their breast into the mouth of the corpse. A most amazing method seems to have been not uncommon in early Britain. The corpse and the chief mourner were each trephined and the circlets of bone changed from the living skull to the dead and the dead to the living. But apart from tears, it was blood shed into the grave which evoked the most important development. The men of New South Wales used to cut themselves with boomerangs and let the blood flow over the dead. The Jews were forbidden to do this. "Thou shalt not make any cuttings in thy flesh for the dead." But the very commandment suggests that it may, at an earlier day, have been a regular practice. The mourners who spilt their life blood for the dead must have numbered thousands, and tens of thousands.

Thus communion with the dead entails sacrifice, sacrifice first of all of their own bodies, and then sacrifice of those things which

would be pleasing and acceptable to the one who had passed on. The corpse was given things that he enjoyed in this life; armor if he was a warrior and spears and arrows; dogs if he was a hunter. A relic of this was enacted when King Edward died. His dog Caesar was led to the funeral, though not actually killed. If an alderman died, or the New Hebridian equivalent of an alderman, pigs were sacrificed; slaves were sacrificed in the case of a king; in the case of a woman, a mirror; of a child, dolls and toys. Very pathetic but exquisitely human and natural. Money was commonly given. It has been said that money was given to provide the fare for their long journey. I cannot believe it. I believe the mourners gave gifts actuated by sheer love and that the explanation came later. I no more believe that money was given to the corpse to pay his fare to Charon than I believe that we place flowers on our graves for our dead to smell on their way to heaven. As a matter of fact when death does occur in a small community all the members of that community normally express their love by gifts. And from time to time food would be given; in most savage countries venison or meats taken in hunting, among agricultural peoples bread or wine. We are not far from the kingdom of heaven.

Some wiser than others would persuade themselves that the lost one was not dead, but that, somewhere, his ghost lived on still—the ghost that left him during sleep and returned when he awoke, the ghost that left him when he swooned or fainted in battle and returned as he revived, the ghost that came to him in the silence of a dream. Somewhere that ghost lived on still. And even that speculation (whether it be false or true need not be discussed in this place) certainly may have had, and probably did have, a scientific basis. We, in these latter days, do not speak of ghosts but whether ghosts have objective reality or not, it has been proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have subjective reality.

Persuading themselves, these loving mourners would persuade others. And persuading others their whole outlook on death would be remodeled. Their old ritual would remain but it would have a new content. Their gifts would be interpreted as for the use of the dead in another world; the coin as the wherewithal to tip Charon to row him across the Styx, the spears and arrows that he might hunt in the undiscovered country, the anima of the bread to give him ghostly sustenance and the spirit of the wine to cheer his spirit. And now we are in the porch of the temple of religion.

Let us summarize our gleanings so far. First of all then religion is a perfectly human natural thing. There is no need to hypothesize either institution by supernatural powers nor, on the other hand, avaricious priestcraft preying upon a gullible people, though each of these factors may play a part. Secondly, religion springs out of the expression of love. It is too early to introduce any theological dogma, but it is fair to say that had these lowly savages been able to think in terms of philosophy they might have said that god was love. And there is a deep underlying philosophical reason for this, though quite unconscious on the part of the mourners; and this is, so far as we know, all life springs from love. Thirdly, religion springs out of love for the dead. Piety is, to quote William Simpson, "the worship of death." Frequently, though not necessarily, religion is, in essence, ancestor worship. The late departed is a ghost. A generation or two later, when the ghost's personality begins to become encrusted by myth he becomes a spirit. And finally a spirit who for some reason, probably because of his prowess in battle or his ability as a priest, and whose remains continue to be worshipped by the tribe, becomes a god. In short, a god is the spirit of a dead hero. A special name, "euhemerism," is given to this doctrine when it occurs in Greek culture; but it is a mistake, I think, to limit the term geographically. I believe most gods, probably all, are dead heroes. Fourthly, religion is communion with the dead. Fifthly, sacrifice, as used in a religious sense in feeding the dead. Sixthly, the ghost either for love or fear would have nothing but good said about him or to him. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Prayer was born in threnody and cradled in epitaph. Prayer is praising or supplicating the dead. That is the first stage of religion, and to that aspect a name may be given, a word which should be restricted to that aspect. I refer to the term "piety." Piety denotes loving care and tribal communion and respectful worship of the dead. Every schoolboy translating the sixth book of the *Aeneid* grudges construing *At pius Aeneas*. We consider him a blackguard. To treat Dido as he treated her rouses our righteous anger and indignation. Nevertheless the virtue of the man who carried his old father out of burning Troy was piety. Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be called pious. Domestic piety is centered in and around the hearth and home; the hearth where the dead was burnt and his ashes collected; the home, where the urn, in which the ashes of the father were collected,

reposes. Religious piety still prompts us to pray for the souls of the dead, and we still have a day in the calendar called All Souls' Day. All our gods are dead heroes. That is the first stage of religion, but now there comes the introduction of a false note, a selfish note. It may be attributable to cunning priests. It may be due to fear, the result of political changes involving kingly despotism. I know not, but the reasoning is simple. It would seem that primitive man never grasped the fact that he himself was mortal. Perhaps the realization of the ego had not developed so far. But when self-consciousness did dawn and a man discovered that he must one day, sooner or later, enter the valley of the shadow, then the whole trend and tenor of religion underwent a violent revolution. No longer was the be-all and end-all of religion the salvation of the dead but the selfish craving for everlasting life. There were various methods adopted to attain this end. All I need emphasize here was that this second stage of religion, personal salvation, was inevitable.

The evolution of piety, then, as indeed the evolution of any other great spiritual achievement, is not a straight-forward progress like the evolution of a cart-wheel but rather like the evolution of an oak from an acorn. Nevertheless there are outstanding landmarks. First of all the corpse is abandoned. Next love steps in and the corpse is protected. Then provision and loving care is lavished on the corpse. And then, with the idea of a soul as an entity separate, and capable of life separate, from the body, provision is made for the soul. Finally communion is sought with the establishment of absolute atonement. That there are counter-forces and subsidiary factors one well recognizes. As a set off to soul communion is fear of the ghost, entailing endless taboos. I recognize the importance of that aspect of the subject quite clearly. Nevertheless, I am fully persuaded in my own mind that it is not fear of the ghost but the despairing love of the departed that is the beginning, or at least one beginning, of religion. Let us recognize how easy is the transition from piety to religion, how easily the love spent on the dead becomes divine love, how easily the soul becomes a ghost, and a ghost a spirit, and a spirit a god. Let us recognize how simply and sanely one can account for sacred mountains and sacred trees and sacred streams and sacred places, for temples and idols and angels and altars and for the universal longing after immortality. Piety is not religion. Piety is human love, religion divine love; but so narrow

and so vague is the line that divides them that great leniency should be afforded to the poor savage whose untutored mind fails to discriminate between his father which is in heaven and god.

Light, though illuminating all things is itself invisible. Love though always deadly, always hand in hand with death, is itself deathless. For love is the harbinger of Life. Life is the offspring of Love, and Piety and Religion are mankind's blundering efforts to discover this tremendous secret, and to demonstrate its truth.