

RELIGIOUS SACRIFICES.

BY JAMES B. SMILEY.

IN primitive minds the belief developed that after death the human spirit had all the needs of the physical body before that change. A similar belief has been found in recent times among many savages. Thus we are told that the Araucanians think "the soul, when separated from the body, exercises in another life the same functions it performed in this, with no other difference except that they are unaccompanied with fatigue or satiety."¹ It has been a wide-spread belief that after death the spirit, instead of floating away to some distant place—a heaven or hell—continued to reside in the body. Hence arose the desire to mummify the corpse, so that it might long continue to serve as a home for the spirit. If the body was destroyed it was imagined that the spirit would be homeless and suffer.

Many savages have believed that it was necessary after the death of their relatives to supply the wants of their spirits in order to enable them to live happily, and also to avoid incurring their displeasure. The Arru Islanders, after a man dies, try to make him eat, "and when they find that he does not partake of it, the mouth is filled with eatables, siri and arrack." And among the Tahitians, "if the deceased was a chief of rank or fame, a priest or other person was appointed to attend the corpse, and present food to its mouth at different periods during the day."² Similar customs have been found elsewhere. In other cases food would be placed near the body for the spirit to eat, as among the Karens, by whom "meat is set before the body for food" before burial,³ and certain Brazilians put the dead man in "the hammock he used to lie in, and during the first days bring him

¹ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, p. 171.

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ *Ibid.*

meat, thinking he lies in bed,"⁴ and that he will need food the same as before death.

In some regions, where the bodies were exposed or buried, food was placed near them, or on or in the grave. Thus it is said that the "Tahitians and Sandwich Islanders, who expose their dead on stages, place fruits and water beside them; and the New Zealanders, who similarly furnish provisions, aver that 'at night the spirit comes and feasts out of the sacred calabashes.'... The Sherbro people, in Africa, 'are in the habit of carrying rice and other eatables to the graves of their departed friends;' the Loango people deposit provisions at the tomb; and the Island Negroes put food and wine on the graves." The Caribs, in America, "put the corpse in a cavern or sepulcher, with water and eatables,"⁵ for the spirit to consume.

In many parts of the world holes have been left in coffins and graves to enable spirits to pass in and out, and through which they might be fed. Thus we are told that in America "the Ohio tribes bored holes in the coffin to let the spirit pass in and out,"⁶ and the Iroquois left small holes in the grave for the same purpose. "In upper Egypt at present a hole is left at the top of the tomb chamber; and I have seen a woman remove the covering of the hole, and talk down to her deceased husband. . . Also funeral offerings of food and drink, and even beds, are still placed in the tombs. A similar feeling . . . doubtless prompted the earlier forms of provision for the dead."⁷ Here the spirit was thought to reside in the dead body in the tomb or grave, and it was provided with food, drink, etc.

"In Bonny the dead are buried under the doorstep, a funnel communicates with the mouth of the deceased, and libations of blood are poured down the funnel by the negro every time he leaves the house. . . . In the Tenger Mountains [in Java] a hollow bamboo is inserted in the grave at burial, in order that offerings of drink and food may be poured down it. . . . In ancient Mycenæ an altar over one of the shaft-graves has been discovered, with a tube leading into the grave," through which food could be poured to reach the spirit. In Peru "the relatives of the deceased used to pour some of the liquor named *chicha* into the grave, of which a portion was conveyed by some hollow canes into the mouth of the dead person."⁸ Among some African tribes fowls and other victims offered in sacri-

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵ *Ibid.* See also many other examples there given..

⁶ Dorman, *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 20.

⁷ W. M. F. Petrie, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 12.

⁸ Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, pp. 51, 52.

fice are "so killed that the blood shall trickle into the grave. At the offering the dead are called by name to come and partake."⁹ In the above cases food was fed to the buried spirit, residing underground, where the body had been placed. Similar customs were practiced by the Timmanis and other tribes of Africa,¹⁰ by the ancient Babylonians,¹¹ and Greeks,¹² and they have been found in other parts of the world. "Amongst savages generally the belief is that the dead stand in actual need of the food that is offered them."¹³

As burials increased there would in time be many spirits, thus living with the bodies underground. Thus would arise the belief that the home of the spirits was underground, where bodies had been placed. And so gradually an *underworld* would develop, the home of the spirits of the dead. It was probably in this way that the belief in an "underworld" arose among the Greeks and in other parts of the world, for this belief has been wide-spread. It is often mentioned in ancient literature. This home of the spirits was at times called the "lower regions" and the "region below," i. e., below the ground. So, also, in time, stories would spring up, giving imaginary tales about what the spirits did in this underworld where they had gone to live, for regarding this unknown region the imagination could have free play.

The need of the spirits for food, drink, etc., would continue indefinitely, and to supply their wants festivals and ceremonies would develop. The following examples, which are a few selected from many, are intended to show how common and wide-spread these customs have been, in both ancient and modern times. In ancient Babylonia it is said that "animal sacrifices at the grave appear to be very old. Offerings of food and water were made to the dead not only at the time of the burial, but afterwards by surviving relatives."¹⁴ The ancient Egyptian belief was that "the dead lived, therefore they must of necessity eat and drink, for without these processes the continuation of life was inconceivable; if the dead were without food they would be starved. The inscription of the sepulchral pyramid of Unas, an Egyptian king of the fifth dynasty, gives expression to this fear. 'Evil is it for Unas,' says the text, 'to be hungry and have nothing to eat; evil is it for Unas to be thirsty and

⁹ Keane, *Man Past and Present*, p. 96.

¹⁰ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 224; Kingsley, *West African Studies*, p. 506.

¹¹ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 605.

¹² Alger, *History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 76.

¹³ Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 56.

¹⁴ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 599.

have nothing to drink.'"¹⁵ Although this inscription was written on the tomb of king Unas over 5000 years ago (B. C. 3300) it is almost identical with the belief found among savages in modern times. In ancient Egypt "the rich founded endowments whose revenues were to be expended to all time in providing their *Kas* [spirits] with food offerings, and bequeathed certain sums for the maintenance of priests to attend to this; large staffs of officials were kept up to provide the necessities of life for the personalities [i. e., spirits] of the dead."¹⁶

In ancient India "the Hindu believed that at the moment when he offered his funeral repast, the *manes* [spirits] of his ancestors came to seat themselves beside him and took the nourishment which was offered them. He also believed that this repast afforded the dead great enjoyment. . . . The Hindu, like the Greek, regarded the dead as divine beings, who enjoyed a happy existence; but their happiness depended on the condition that the offerings [sacrifices] made by the living should be carried to them regularly."¹⁷ The Hindu desire was, "May there be successively born of our line sons who, in all coming time, may offer us rice, boiled in milk, honey, and clarified butter,"¹⁸ [i. e., as sacrifices to feed their spirits].

"The [ancient] Greeks and Romans had exactly the same belief. If the funeral repast ceased to be offered to the dead, they immediately left their tombs, and became wandering shades, that were heard in the silence of the night. They reproached the living with their neglect; or they sought to punish them by afflicting them with diseases, or cursing their soil with sterility. In a word, they left the living no rest till the funeral feasts were re-established. The sacrifice, the offering of nourishment, and the libation, restored them to the tomb, and gave them back their rest and their divine attributes. Man was then at peace with them."¹⁹

Acosta, a Spanish writer who visited America 1571 to 1586, said that in the New World it was general "to set meate and drinke upon the grave of the dead, imagining they did feede thereon," while another writer found that a similar custom was observed in the West

¹⁵ Wiedemann, *Ancient Egyptian Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*, p. 60.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20. Similarly the Incas of Peru left all their "treasure and revenues" at death to provide for supplying the desires of their spirits. Acosta, p. 312.

¹⁷ Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, p. 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Indies,²⁰ and we are told that by the savages of Africa food was "occasionally taken to the place of burial for months or years afterwards,"²¹ i. e., for the spirit to eat.

"The Esquimaux of St. Michael and the lower Yukon River hold a festival of the dead every year at the end of November or the beginning of December. . . . On these occasions food, drink and clothes are provided for the returning ghosts in the *Kashim* or clubhouse of the village, which is illuminated with lamps. . . . When all is ready, the ghosts gather in the fire-pit under the clubhouse, and ascending through the floor at the proper moment, take possession of the bodies of their namesakes, to whom the offerings of food, drink and clothes are made for the benefit of the dead. Thus each shade obtains the supplies he needs for the other world. The dead who have none to make offerings to them are believed to suffer great destitution. Hence the Esquimaux fear to die without leaving behind some one who will sacrifice to their spirits, and childless people generally adopt children lest their shades should be forgotten at the festivals." "The Miztics of Mexico believed that the souls of the dead came back in the twelfth month of every year, which corresponds to our November. . . . Jars of food and drink were set on a table in the principal room, and the family went out with torches to meet the ghosts and invite them to enter. Then returning themselves to the house they knelt around the table, and with eyes bent on the ground prayed the souls to accept the offerings and to procure the blessings of the gods upon the family."²²

Thus far I have principally described methods employed for supplying the needs of the spirits of the dead. But the *gods* were also believed to have desires similar to those of men, and in order to retain their good will it was necessary to keep these wants well supplied. Thus we are told that "the gods were also supposed to share in a life like that of men, not only in Egypt but in most ancient lands. Offerings of food and drink were constantly supplied to them, in Egypt laid upon the altars, in other lands burnt for a sweet savor."²³ Another writer says that in ancient Egypt the "gods enjoyed a precarious immortality, for they were liable to destruction and dependent on necessities. According to a very primitive concep-

²⁰ Acosta, Hakluyt Society Edition, p. 314; Hakluyt's *Historie of the West Indies*, VIII, ch. 10.

²¹ Wilson, *West Africa*, p. 231.

²² Frazer, *Adonis, Attis and Osiris*, pp. 242-244. See pages 242 to 252 for a large number of similar instances. It is needless to quote more here.

²³ W. F. M. Petrie, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 2.

tion that always remained alive, they had to be fed, clothed and refreshed every day or else perish," while Professor Wiedemann says that they "required bodily sustenance, and were sorely put to it if offerings failed them and their food and drink were unsupplied."²⁴ In the Iliad it is stated that the reason why Zeus favored Troy was because there "never did mine altar lack the seemly feast, even drink offering and burnt offering, the worship that is our due,"²⁵ i. e., the worship consisted in keeping the god well supplied with food and drink.

Similarly it is said that in ancient Babylonia "the blood was regarded at all times as the special property of the gods, and was poured on the altar. The two kinds of sacrifice—animal and vegetable—date from the earliest period of Babylonian religion of which we have any knowledge."²⁶ The Chinese worship "their ancestors and the spirits of the departed great. . . . The departed are supposed to be able to help the living. They are prayed and sacrificed to as spiritual powers, from whom protection and favors may be obtained."²⁷ "The public services of religion in China are principally sacrifices,"²⁸ i. e., of food, etc., to supply the wants of the spirits. By the Taoists in China, after death, "offerings must be presented at the grave, before the spirit tablet [i. e., a tablet in which a spirit was believed to dwell] and in the temple of the tutelary deity of the city."²⁹

The Japanese also worship ancestral spirits. In worshipping their clan-gods, "the offerings submitted on the occasion of festivals consisted usually of food, drink and clothing."³⁰ Another writer says that in Japan "the original and most important form of offering [sacrifice] was food and drink of various kinds."³¹ In Japan the Buddhist "offerings usually consist of tea, rice, fruits, cakes and flowers, either artificial or natural, the most usual being the lotus."³² The Buddhists offer no meat in their sacrifices. Sacrificial offerings have been found in all parts of the world, and everywhere the object

²⁴ Cumont, "The Religion of Egypt," in *The Open Court*, Vol. XXIV, 568; Wiedemann, *Egyptian Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*, p. 19.

²⁵ Iliad, Lang, Book V, p. 65.

²⁶ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 60.

²⁷ Legge, *Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, p. 54.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³⁰ Hozumi, *Ancestor Worship*, p. 24.

³¹ Ashton, *Shinto*, p. 60.

³² Hozumi, *Ancestor Worship*, p. 30.

of the sacrifice was the same. It was intended to supply the wants of the spirits or gods. "To the ancients, as to the aboriginal Americans, a religion without sacrifice appeared to involve a contradiction of terms, and to be in substance mere atheism."³³

But how were the spirits believed to consume the offerings made to them? In various ways. The ancient Peruvians worshiped the sun. To it offerings of the drink *chicha* were made. "When such offerings had been visibly diminished by evaporation, it was said that the sun had drunk of them."³⁴ In Madagascar it was believed that the Angatra [spirit] drinks "of the arrack left for him in the leaf-cup. Do they not see it diminish day by day?" [i. e., evaporate].³⁵ "In the . . . Odyssey the ghosts drink greedily of the sacrificial blood, and libations of gore form a special feature in Greek offerings to heroes. Among the Arabs, too, the dead are thirsty rather than hungry; water and wine are poured upon the graves."³⁶ Knowing nothing of the laws of evaporation, when any liquid was offered to a spirit and then vanished primitive men would naturally think the spirit had drunk it. This was the readiest way for them to account for its disappearance. Here the belief was an outgrowth of and was based on a misunderstanding of natural phenomena.

"In North America, Algonquin Indians considered that the shadow-like souls of the dead can still eat and drink, often even telling Father Le Jeune that they had found in the morning meat knawed in the night by the souls. More recently we read that some Potawatomis will leave off providing the supply of food at the grave if it lies long untouched, it being concluded that the dead no longer wants it, but has found a rich hunting ground in the other world. In Africa, again, Father Cavazzi records of the Congo people furnishing their dead with supplies of provisions, that they could not be persuaded that souls did not consume material food. In Europe the Esths, offering food for the dead on All Souls', are said to have rejoiced if they found in the morning that any of it was gone."

"A less gross conception is that the soul consumes the steam or savor of the food, or its essence or spirit. . . . This idea is well displayed in Mexican districts, where the souls who come to the annual feasts are described as hovering over and smelling the food set out for them, or sucking out its nutritive quality. The Hindu entreats the *manes* to quaff the sweet essence of the offered food. . . .

³³ Payne, *New World*, p. xii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

³⁵ Ellis, *Madagascar*, I, p. 421.

³⁶ Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 217.

At the old Slavonic meals for the dead, we read of the survivors sitting in silence and throwing morsels under the table, fancying they could hear the spirits rustle, and see them feed on the smell and steam of the viands. . . . Many travelers have described the imagination with which the Chinese make such offerings. It is said that the spirits of the dead consume the impalpable essence of the food, leaving behind its coarse material substance."³⁷

The Hindus made an intoxicating beverage from the juice of the soma plant which they both drank themselves and offered to their gods. Thus it is said, "not only the rishis are inspired by Soma, but also their deities. 'The gods drink the offered beverage' and are 'thrown into joyous intoxication.' Indra 'performs his great deeds under its influence.'"³⁸

An ancient Peruvian legend represents Marco Capac "ordering the sacrifice of the most beautiful of his sons, cutting off his head, and sprinkling the blood over the fire, that the smoke might reach the maker of heaven and earth. . . . In Chinese sacrifice to sun and moon and stars and constellations. . . . beasts and even silks and precious stones are burned, that their vapor may ascend to the heavenly spirits. No less significant. . . . is the Siamese offering to the household deity, incense and arrack and rice steaming hot; he does not eat it all. . . . it is the fragrant steam which he loves to inhale."³⁹ The Greeks in Porphyry's time (about 233-306 A. D.) knew "how the demons who desire to be gods rejoice in the libations and fumes of sacrifice, whereby their spiritual and bodily substance fattens, for this lives on the steam and vapors and is strengthened by the fumes of the blood and flesh."⁴⁰ Similarly the burning of the sacrifices common among the early Hebrews, and often mentioned in the Old Testament, will occur to the reader. They believed the god they worshiped could thus absorb the vapor and fumes. In general it may be said that libations poured on the ground, or offerings inserted below the surface, were intended for spirits in the underworld, while the fumes and vapors of burnt offerings, which probably were a later development, were believed to reach spirits in the upper air.

Among some of the lower races the belief arose that inanimate objects of all kinds, as well as men and animals, have souls. Thus among the Ojibwa Indians "Keating noticed the opinion that not only men and beasts have souls, but inorganic things, such as kettles,

³⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, pp. 39, 40. He also gives other examples.

³⁸ Spencer, *Sociology*, I, p. 348.

³⁹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 385.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386. See also Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 217, 218.

etc., have in them a similar essence. In the same district Father Le Jeune had described, in the seventeenth century, the belief that the souls, not only of men and animals, but of hatchets, and kettles, had to cross the water to the Great Village, out where the sun sets."⁴¹ So, also, Im Thum says the Indians he met believed "animals other than men, and even inanimate objects have spirits which differ not at all in kind from those of men."⁴²

A further development of thought would apportion the souls of objects to the service of the gods. Some African tribes believe that "in the spirit world they require the same food as when on earth, but consume only the essence, the visible substance remains,"⁴³ and in New Zealand "spirits and gods are supposed to require food as well as man, but they only consume the spirit or essence of it, the gross substance being left for the priests,"⁴⁴ while the Malay "deity is not supposed to touch the solid or material part of the offering, but only the essential part, whether it be life, savor, essence, quality or even the soul."⁴⁵ In India "the Karen demon devours not the body but the *la*, spirit or vital principle," and among the Polynesians "the spiritual part of the sacrifice is eaten by the spirit of the idol" (i. e., the deity dwelling in the idol) "before whom it is presented." Of the Fijians "it is observed that of the great offerings of food native belief apportions merely the soul to the gods, who are described as great eaters."⁴⁶ So also in West Africa an offering was made to a fetish of "daily bread kneaded with palm-oil of which, as of all gifts of this kind, the *wong* [spirit] eats the invisible soul."⁴⁷

As ghosts were believed to retain in the spirit world all the bodily wants they had before death, they would not only desire food, clothes, etc., but they would also want wives, servants and slaves. And this would lead to human sacrifice. Thus it is stated that in Africa "human sacrifices to provide attendants for the dead, take place at the decease of kings or chiefs, or whenever their living descendants think it desirable to increase their retinues, or to inform them of some occurrence which seems important. Sacrifices made with these motives are the direct outcome of the 'continuance' theory, for a man who has been accustomed to be served by a number of

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁴² Im Thum, *Indians of Guiana*, p. 350.

⁴³ Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 56.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *New Zealand and Its Inhabitants*, p. 104.

⁴⁵ W. W. S. Keat, *Malay Magic*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 389.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

followers and wives in this world, will equally require such attendance to enable him to support his position in Dead-land.”⁴⁸ Regarding human sacrifice in Africa Miss Kingsley says: “In West Africa a human sacrifice is the most persuasive one to the fetishes. It is just with them as with a chief, and if you wish to get some favor from him you must give him a present. A fowl or a goat or a basket of vegetables, or any thing like that, is quite enough for most favors, but if you want a big thing and want it badly, you had better give him a slave, because a slave is alike more intrinsically valuable and also more useful. So far as I know all human sacrifices pass into the service of the fetish [spirit] they are sacrificed to. They are not merely killed that he may have their blood, but that he may have their assistance.”⁴⁹ i. e., that their spirits may serve him. Of this custom Wilson says: “At the time of the death of a king a number of his principal wives and favorite slaves are put to death, not so much, however, as sacrifices to appease his wrath, as to be companions and attendants in another world.”⁵⁰

Of such sacrifices to the *gods* in Africa Ellis says: “Human sacrifices to the gods are ordinarily only made in times of war, pestilence or great calamity; in fact when the emergency for the need of divine assistance prompts the worshipers to offer the highest form of offering.”⁵¹ As this custom of human sacrifice has been worldwide, a few examples may be given. In Melanesia, Bera, a local chief, had a grandson, Kikolo, who was very sick. “Finding that every thing they had done was of no avail, the last dread experiment was tried—a human sacrifice.”⁵² But in spite of the sacrifice the child died. “A New Zealand mother whose child had been drowned, insisted that a female slave should be put to death, so that she might accompany and take care of her little one, on his voyage to the country beyond the grave.”⁵³ It is said that all the great Khans and Princes of the blood of Zingis were carried to the mountain of Altai to be buried. Those who carried the corpse to the burial place killed all with whom they met, commanding them to go and serve the king in another life. When the body of one of the great Khans was carried to the mountain ten thousand people were slain by the

⁴⁸ Ellis, *Ewe-speaking People*, p. 118.

⁴⁹ Kingsley, *West African Studies*, p. 176.

⁵⁰ Wilson, *West Africa*, p. 219.

⁵¹ Ellis, *Ewe-speaking People*, p. 117.

⁵² Penny, *Ten Years in Melanesia*, pp. 66, 67.

⁵³ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 231.

soldiers on the occasion, to furnish the king an army in the other world.⁵⁴

In India human sacrifice "has always been common...as a last resort for appeasing divine wrath, when manifested in a strange and inexplicable way."⁵⁵ It is said that "the Tipperahs of Bengal are supposed to have sacrificed as many as a thousand human beings a year"⁵⁶ to Siva. In India for thousands of years a wife was burnt on the funeral pile with her husband's body, in order that her spirit might accompany him to the other world. A woman thus burnt was called *satî*, or good woman, and this word was corrupted by the English to *Suttee*. This was the origin of that ceremony. "When the rite was suppressed under modern British rule, the priesthood resisted to the uttermost, appealing to the Veda as sanctioning the ordinance."⁵⁷

"The Phœnicians sacrificed the dearest children to propitiate the angry gods; they enhanced their value by choosing those of noble families."⁵⁸ For the Biblical story of the Moabite king thus sacrificing his son in time of great distress, see 2 Kings, iii. 26, 27. In ancient Peru when the Inca died "they did put to death the woman he had loved best, his servants and officers, that they might serve him in the other life. When Huayna Capac died...they put to death about a thousand persons of all ages and conditions for his service to accompany him in the other life." The Carthaginians erected monuments and offered human sacrifices in various places to their general Hamilkar. A monument was erected to him on the battle-field of Himera. "On that monument, seventy years afterwards, his victorious grandson, fresh from the plunder of this same city of Himera, offered the bloody sacrifice of 3000 Grecian prisoners."⁵⁹ One of the most horrible sacrificial ceremonies on record

⁵⁴ Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, Bohn Ed., p. 448.

⁵⁵ Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, p. 19.

⁵⁶ Recluse, *Primitive Folk*, p. 318.

⁵⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 465. For the custom in ancient Peru see Rivero, *Peruvian Antiquities*, p. 186. So, also, in China suttecism was practiced for centuries, even until modern times, and met with public applause. See De Groot, *Religious System of China*, Vol. II, Book I, 748; J. Ball, *Things Chinese*, p. 565. In some regions where burial was practiced a man's wives and slaves, often shrieking with terror, were buried alive in his grave, so that their spirits might accompany him. For an example see H. Ward, *A Voice from the Congo*, pp. 59-65, and his *Five Years with Congo Cannibalism*, p. 302.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, II, p. 398.

⁵⁹ Acosta, Hakluyt Soc. Ed., p. 313. Grote, *History of Greece*, V, 298. Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, Secs. 104 and 141, gives many examples of human sacrifices. Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, pp. 435-476, gives a large number of examples.

took place at Anahuac, in Mexico, in 1486 or 1487, when Ahuizotl was crowned and the grand temple of Huitzilopochtli was dedicated. Vast numbers of people viewed the ceremonies, and "the chief feature of the exercises was the sacrifice of the captives, of whom from seventy to eighty thousand perished on the altar. The victims were arranged in two lines, stretching from the temple far out on the causeways; the kings began the bloody work with their own hands, and the priests followed, each continuing the slaughter until exhausted, when another took his place. This was the most extensive sacrifice that ever took place in Anahuac, and it was followed by others on a somewhat smaller scale in the lesser cities."⁶⁰

The cannibalistic desire to give the gods human flesh to eat also appears at times. Thus the Iroquois Indians would sacrifice an enemy, and dance around him, crying: "To thee, Areskoui, great spirit, we slay this victim, that thou mayest eat his flesh and be moved thereby to give us henceforth luck and victory over our foes."⁶¹ A Nicaragua Indian said: "When we make war we do so in order to give them [the gods] to eat of the blood of those Indians whom we kill or take prisoners. This blood we sprinkle on every side, that the gods may eat: for we do not know on what side they may be." Another Indian said: "I have heard my fathers say that the gods eat the blood and the hearts of men, and of certain birds."⁶² In ancient Mexico wars were carried on to get victims to sacrifice for this reason.

The two principal reasons for human sacrifices appear to have been the cannibalistic desire to give spirits and gods human flesh to eat and human blood to drink, and to furnish them with wives, servants, slaves and attendants. But on the whole the latter motive probably caused by far the greater number of deaths.

The practice of head-hunting has existed in various parts of the world. "The Dyaks firmly believe that such decapitations represent the acquisition of a slave in the life to come. They wear mourning for one of their deceased relatives until they have succeeded in procuring a man's head: that is to say sending a slave to the de-

⁶⁰ Bancroft, *Native Races*, V, p. 440. In a footnote Bancroft says that "considering the number of victims sacrificed, it is probably more correct to suppose that several sacrificers were occupied at the same time." The sacrifices may also have continued for several days. People went from "all parts of the country" to witness the ceremonies.

⁶¹ Baring-Gould, *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, Vol. I, p. 380. For a large number of examples of human sacrifice see also pp. 374-383.

⁶² Payne, *History of America*, Vol. I, p. 581. See also Bancroft, *Native Races*, II, pp. 304-341; V. 394, 414, etc.

parted.”⁶³ Here we find a great underlying motive for this horrible custom. The head of the victim served as a trophy to show that a slave had been sent to serve the spirit in Dead-land. Many heads meant many slaves, presented to the spirit.

In order that an earthly king, or a wealthy man having a large retinue, might keep up his establishment great quantities of commodities were needed. So, also, in Dead-land, a noble, king or god with a large retinue would require a great quantity of supplies to meet their requirements. The vast amount of the sacrifices sometimes offered is surprising, and they were probably made to supply this want. This and the desire to win the good will of the spirits by a profusion of gifts are the probable reasons for large offerings.

The power of a belief to control the conduct, or even to take the life, of men, is well known. The fact that men willingly lay down their lives for a belief is no evidence whatever of its truth. It makes no difference whether it is true or false. Its power rests solely on the sincerity with which it is entertained. This is well illustrated in the case of the Thracians. Herodotus says that “those above the Crestoneans do as follows: each man has several wives; when, therefore, any of them dies, a great contest arises among the wives, and violent disputes among their friends, on this point, which of them was most loved by the husband. She who is adjudged to have been so, and is so honored, having been extolled both by men and women, is slain on the tomb by her own nearest relatives, and when slain is buried with her husband; the others deem this a great misfortune, for this is the utmost disgrace to them.”⁶⁴ A similar belief existed in Peru, where in the worship of the sun women were sacrificed to serve as wives to this god. Many often chose to die in this way. “Sometimes these voluntary candidates for sacrifice were rejected on account of some physical defect: a woman who had been thus rejected as a victim to the sun was living near La Paz in 1611. She was known as *la desdichada*, or the unfortunate one, because the happiness of dying as a wife of the sun had been denied her.”⁶⁵

In some parts of the world a custom arose of sending messages to the dead or to the gods. Thus we are told that in West Africa “it is a common thing for the living to send messages to the spirits of their deceased friends by some one who is on the point of dying,

⁶³ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 238.

⁶⁴ Herodotus, Bk. V, 5.

⁶⁵ Payne, *History of the New World*, I, p. 565. For many other examples of willingness to die see Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, Sec. 104. See also, Rivero, *Peruvian Antiquities*, pp. 186, 201.

informing them of their circumstances in life, and asking their advice and assistance in certain emergencies."⁶⁶ In the case of kings this custom led to great sacrifice of life. Thus it is stated that in Dahomey, "whatever action, however trivial, is performed by the king it must be dutifully reported to his sire in the shadowy realm. A victim, almost always a war-captive, is chosen: the message is delivered to him, an intoxicating draught of rum follows it, and he is dispatched to Hades in the best of humors."⁶⁷ As this custom is very ancient it appears to have been quite an early form of "wireless message." Mr. Ellis says that in one region alone of Africa it has "been estimated that five hundred persons are slain in ordinary years to carry messages to the dead. The number seems enormous, but it has become the custom to report the most trivial occurrences, such as a change of residence from one place to another, and the estimate is probably within the mark."⁶⁸ On one occasion an antelope and a monkey were also killed to carry messages to spirit antelopes and monkeys in Dead-land.⁶⁹ In ancient Mexico men were similarly killed to carry messages to their gods.⁷⁰

As human sacrifice has existed in all parts of the world, and for unknown thousands of years, probably hundreds of millions of human beings have been killed as sacrifices to the spirits or gods, and the loss of life thus caused has been absolutely appalling, but cannot be estimated in figures.

The early Hebrew sacrifices do not appear to have differed essentially from those found in other parts of the world. "All sacrifices laid upon the altars were taken by the ancients as being literally the food of the gods. . . . Among the Hebrews the conception that Jehovah eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of goats, against which the author of Psalm l. protests so strongly, was never eliminated from the ancient technical language of the priestly ritual, in which the sacrifices are called. . . . 'the food of the deity.'"⁷¹ Among these people, as elsewhere in early times, "all worship took the form of sacrifice."

"Though the ritual of Jerusalem as described in the Book of

⁶⁶ Wilson, *West Africa*, pp. 220, 394, 395. See also Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, pp. 161, 181.

⁶⁷ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 462. See also Westermarck, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, pp. 444, 465, 466.

⁶⁸ Ellis, *Exc-speaking People*, p. 137.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷⁰ Payne, *History of America*, 583, 584, 596.

⁷¹ Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 207.

Leviticus is undoubtedly based on very ancient tradition, going back to a time when there was no substantial difference, in point of form, between Hebrew sacrifices and those of the surrounding nations, the system as we have it dates from a time when sacrifice was no longer the sum and substance of worship. In the long years of Babylonian exile the Israelites who remained true to the faith of Jehovah had learned to draw nigh to their God without the aid of sacrifice and offering, and, when they returned to Canaan, they did not return to the old type of religion. They built an altar indeed, and restored the ritual on the lines of old tradition, so far as these could be reconciled with the teaching of the prophets and the Deuteronomic law—especially with the principle that there was but one sanctuary at which sacrifice could be acceptably offered. But this principle itself was entirely destructive of the old importance of sacrifice as the stated means of converse between God and man. In the old time every town had its altar, and a visit to the local sanctuary was the easy and obvious way of consecrating every important act of life.”⁷²

Professor Smith also says that the Semitic word “Baal is primarily the title of a god as inhabitant or owner of a place.”⁷³ A Semitic “Baal was specially connected with subterranean waters.”⁷⁴ “When we find that in later times all Semitic deities were usually conceived as heavenly or astral, we must conclude that the connection of the Baalim with underground waters dates from an earlier stage of religion.”⁷⁵ “That the Baalim, as gods of the subterranean waters from which springs are fed, have a certain chthonic [i. e., underground or subterranean] character, appears also from the frequent occurrence, especially beside sacred streams, of tombs of the god; for a buried god is one who has his seat underground. On the whole, therefore, I am inclined to conjecture that caverns and clefts in the earth may not seldom have been . . . chosen as places of worship because through them the god ascended and descended to and from the outer world, and through them the gifts of the worshiper could be brought nearer his subterranean abode.”⁷⁶

“All over the Semitic world caves and pits are the primitive storehouses, and we know that in Arabia a pit called the *ghabghab*, in which the sacred treasure was stored, was a usual adjunct to

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

sanctuaries. . . . In other parts of the world, as for example in Greece, there are many examples of caves associated with the worship of chthonic deities, and also with the oracles of gods like Apollo, who are not usually looked upon as chthonic or subterranean. . . . In Arabia the *ghabghab* is not merely a treasure house; a victim [for sacrifice] is said to be brought to the *ghabghab*, and the word is explained as the name of a place of sacrifice, or the place where the blood was poured out. The blood, therefore, was allowed to flow into the pit, just as the annual human sacrifice at Dumætha (Dumna) was buried under the altar that served as an idol. . . . Among the northern Semites there is at least one case where the sacred pit in the sanctuary was supposed to be inhabited by a subterranean deity."⁷⁷ Blood flowing into the pit was believed to reach and feed the spirit residing underground.

"In all Arabian sacrifices except the holocaust. . . the godward side of the ritual is summed up in the shedding of the victim's blood, so that it flows over the sacred symbol, or gathers in a pit (*ghabghab*) at the foot of the altar idol. . . . What enters the *ghabghab* [pit] is held to be conveyed to the deity; thus at certain Arabian shrines the pit under the altar was the place where votive treasures were deposited. A pit to receive the blood also existed at Jerusalem, under the altar of burnt-offering, and similarly in certain Syrian sacrifices the blood was collected in a hollow, which apparently bore the name of *mashkam*, and thus was designated as the habitation of the god-head."⁷⁸ "When gifts of food—whether animal or cereal—were first presented at the shrines of the gods, the belief was that they were actually consumed by the deity."⁷⁹ Thus it seems probable that the original altar at Jerusalem was erected over a grave, and that blood was conveyed from the sacrifice into a pit under the altar to feed the spirit that was then believed to dwell there, and to whom the sacrifices were offered. Instances from various parts of the world of attempts to feed spirits residing underground, have been given above.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181. See also p. 211. Sacred caves probably date back to the time when men inhabited caves and buried the dead there. Then the belief would arise that the dead man's spirit inhabited the cave, and it would be regarded as sacred. For effect of cave burial see Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, Sec. III, 112.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 321. So, also, in ancient Peru an offering of chicha was poured into an urn. "The urn had a hole made in such a way that the chicha would enter a pipe or sewer passing underground to the houses of the Sun, Thunder and the Creator," thus reaching the underground abode of the gods. Markham, *Incas*, Vol. 2, pp. 26, 27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

The Hebrew word *she'ôl* means literally "a hollow, subterranean place, a cave." In the Old Testament the word occurs 65 times, and is variously translated as "grave" (31 times), "hell" (31 times) and "pit" (3 times). The word "pit" thus used may refer to the ancient pit graves. "Hell," if used in its modern signification of a place of torment, does not correctly interpret the Hebrew word. The meaning of the word *she'ôl* indicates its origin. When in early times men were buried in caves or graves the Hebrews, like some other primitive people, believed that the spirit dwelt where the body had been left. Their belief in an underworld resembled that of other nations, and there as elsewhere it probably grew out of burial of the dead. *She'ôl* was, "as originally conceived, a vast subterranean tomb, with the barred and bolted gates common to Hebrew tombs, in which the ghosts (*rephaim* = feeble ones) did not even flit about, but lay like corpses in a sepulcher. No thought of retribution was connected with this deep and gloomy underworld. It was the common receptacle of all. The distinctions there were social and national, not moral."⁸⁰ All spirits went there alike, whether good or bad. The belief in a lower region as a place of punishment and torment where the wicked went—the modern "hell"—was a development of the morbid imagination of men in later centuries.

Like the Phœnicians, the Carthaginians, the Moabites and other branches of the Semitic race, the early Hebrews also offered human sacrifices. "The most various nations of antiquity practiced the horrible rite, still found here and there amongst uncivilized tribes, of sacrificing human beings. . . . in honor of the deities. It is undeniable that this was the case with Israel also."⁸¹ The stories of Abraham preparing to offer Isaac (Gen. xxii. 1-14), Jephtha sacrificing his daughter (Judges xi. 30-40), Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 3) and Manasseh (2 Kings xxi. 6) offering their first born sons, give us glimpses of the early custom. Ezekiel several times refers to the practice (Ezek. xvi. 20, 21; xx. 31; xxiii. 39) and denounces it. Micah, writing in the eighth century B. C., when there was a growing sentiment against it, says, "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah vi. 7). As the nation advanced the custom declined, as it did in many other developing civilizations. The early Hebrew conceptions of God were very low, but in later centuries they were gradually replaced by more exalted views.

It has been commonly believed by undeveloped races that spirits

⁸⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Eschatology."

⁸¹ *Bible for Learners*, I, pp. 146, 147.

and gods could enter and reside in various objects, such as idols, animals, trees, rivers, the ocean, mountains, stars, the sky, etc., and these spirits had appetites and desires which could be gratified by sacrifices. Thus it is said that in savage Africa "monkeys that gather on the trees in the vicinity of a graveyard are supposed to be possessed by the spirits of those buried there," and a man "whose plantation was being devastated by an elephant. . . . did not dare to shoot it because the spirit of his lately deceased father had passed into it."⁸² We are told that in ancient Egypt "the crocodile, ibis, dog-headed ape, and fish of various kinds were venerated; . . . they were not, however, venerated in dynastic times as *animals*, but as *the abodes of gods*."⁸³ The sacrifices offered to these animals were intended for the *gods* believed to reside in them, and *not* for the animals.

It is said that in Africa an idol "is believed for the time to be the residence of a spirit which is to be placated by offerings of some kind of food."⁸⁴ The "Oystyaks would pour broth daily into the dish at the image's mouth," and "the Aztecs would pour the blood and put the heart of the slaughtered human victim into the. . . idol's mouth," and "in each case the deity was somehow considered to devour the meal."⁸⁵ It has been generally believed that sacrifices were commonly made to images of wood and stone. This is an error. The sacrifice was offered to the spirit or god that had taken up its residence in the idol, and not to the wooden or stone image. As this has been the underlying belief in all parts of the world, many other examples could be given if necessary. This appears to have been the real basis for all of the idolatry of the world.

It is said that the American Indians believed that in "any great river, or lake, or cascade, there dwell. . . spirits, looked upon as mighty manitus [gods]. Thus Carver mentions the habit of the Red Indians, when they reached the shores of Lake Superior or the banks of the Mississippi, or any other great body of water, to present to the spirit who resides there some kind of offering."⁸⁶ "In Bohemia fishermen are afraid of assisting a drowning man, thinking the Vodyany [water-spirit] will be offended, and will drive

⁸² Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, pp. 58, 89. See also p. 60 for spirits in trees, rocks, caverns, etc.

⁸³ E. A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 92.

⁸⁵ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 380.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

away the fish from their nets,"⁸⁷ and it was an ancient German saying, when a man was drowned, that "the river-spirit claims his yearly sacrifice."⁸⁸ A similar belief has been found in New Zealand and elsewhere. In many places it has been believed that to save a drowning man brought bad luck, as it excited the anger of the water-spirit who was thus robbed of his victim. Many people have been allowed to drown without receiving any assistance because of this belief.

In Japan "the very ancient folk-lore shows that beautiful maidens were demanded by the sea-gods,"⁸⁹ and to these sea-gods the Japanese sailors still pray. "There are traditions in Japanese legend of human sacrifices to rivers," and it is stated that "river-gods, especially, were propitiated by human victims."⁹⁰ The victims were thrown into the water in order that the spirit dwelling there might thus obtain them. In China every fifth year the Emperor Shun made a tour of inspection through his kingdom, and offered a sacrifice, "'presenting,' as it is expressed, 'burnt offering to heaven, and sacrificing in order to the hills and rivers,'" ⁹¹ i. e., to the spirits dwelling in these places. "The Greeks, especially in older times, buried the sacrifices devoted to the gods of the underworld, and threw into the water gifts destined for the gods of seas and rivers."⁹² In modern Russia a custom was found of casting a "horse with head smeared with honey and mane decked with ribbons. . . . into the river with two millstones tied to its neck to appease the water-spirit, the Vodyany, at his spiteful flood-time in early spring."⁹³

In the Tonga Islands, in Africa and in many other parts of the world, sacrifices have been offered to spirits believed to dwell in trees. Thus a negro, on making an offering to a tree, said, "The tree is not fetish, the fetish is a spirit and invisible, but he has descended into the tree. Certainly he cannot devour our bodily food, but he enjoys its spiritual part and leaves behind the bodily which we see."⁹⁴ At Dodona, in ancient Greece, offerings of food were made to the spirit (Zeus) which dwelt in the sacred oak, when the advice of the oracle

⁸⁷ Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 152.

⁸⁸ Tylor, *Prim. Cult.*, Vol. I, pp. 109, 110.

⁸⁹ Griffin, *Religion of Japan*, p. 75.

⁹⁰ Ashton, *Shinto*, pp. 42, 60.

⁹¹ Legge, *The Religion of China*, p. 25.

⁹² Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 107.

⁹³ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 407.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216. For many other examples of spirits in trees see pp. 215-224.

was sought. The tree worship of the world seems to have been based on this belief that spirits entered and dwelt in trees.

"In Borneo, Mr. St. John visited the heaven of the Idaan race, on the summit of Kina Balu, and the native guides, who feared to pass the night in this abode of spirits, showed the traveler the moss on which souls of their ancestors fed."⁹⁵ "The Nicaraguans offered human sacrifices to Masaya or Popogatepec (Smoking Mountain) by throwing the bodies into the crater. It seems as though it were a controlling deity, not the mountain itself, that they worshiped,"⁹⁶ i. e., a "controlling deity" that resided in the mountain. It is said that in India "the worship of the Great Mountain is essentially a worship of blood. . . . When the English first obtained possession of the Beerbhoom Mountains, human sacrifices were common, and a regular trade was carried on to supply the victims."⁹⁷

Whatever may be said about the origin of the belief in nature spirits, and this question has been much discussed, they were in early ages imagined to have human appetites and passions, and these wants could be satisfied by sacrifices. Hence to them the same kind of offerings were made as to ghosts, or the spirits of ancestors.

The lives of whole races of men appear to have been for ages dominated by the fear of spirits. It was believed that these imaginary beings teemed everywhere, caused all the phenomena of nature, shaped the destiny of all men, and were the active causes of everything that happened. The sciences had not been developed, the laws of nature were unknown, and natural causes for phenomena were unthought of. To mollify the anger and win the good will of the spirits was considered the most urgent duty of life. Besides this everything else was deemed of secondary importance, for on this the welfare of every human being was believed to depend. Hence the necessity of sacrifices to propitiate the spirits, and thus sacrificial rites seem to have been the earliest form of religious worship. The ethical, theological and mystical phases of religion appear to have developed later.

As time went by and civilization developed, the old sacrificial systems declined, and in many cases a process of substitution took place. In some cases men began to revolt at the horrors of human sacrifice, and animals and other articles were substituted for the human victims. In other cases the great expense of the sacrifices became burdensome, and so cheaper substitutes were offered. Thus

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁹⁷ Hunter, *Rural Bengal*, p. 188.

it is said that in China "within historical times, it was common for valuables to be buried with the dead or destroyed in their honor at the funeral, and it was only after such expenditure had become so burdensome as to be restrained by law, that the quaint economy of burning paper representatives of money and other valuables came into use."⁹⁸ The Malay decline was marked by the "use of 'substitutes' and of the sacrifice of a part or parts for the whole. Thus we even find the dough model of a human being actually called 'the substitute' (*tukar gauti*), and offered up to the spirits upon the sacrificial tray. In the same sense are the significant directions of a magician, that 'if the spirit craves a human victim, a cock may be substituted;' and the custom of hunters who, when they have killed a deer, leave behind them in the forest small portions of each of the more important members of the deer's anatomy, as representative of the entire carcass. . . . The original valuable offering is compounded for a smaller tribute or a cheaper substitute, dwindling at last to a mere trifling token or symbol."⁹⁹

In India, when the British government had forbidden human sacrifices, "the Khond theologians made the opportune discovery that Tari [the goddess] had recommended, but by no means commanded, that human victims should be brought to her, and that other offerings, apes, monkeys or wild pigs, would suit her almost as well."¹⁰⁰ A Japanese modification of the early funeral sacrifices of attendants to serve in the spirit world, "is to substitute for real men and animals images of stone, or wood or clay, placed by the side of the corpse."¹⁰¹ Marco Polo says that in the city of Sathon, one of the provinces of the Great Khan, after a man died and his body was ready for burial, "when they come to the place where the body is to be buried, they diligently and curiously paint upon paper made of the bark of trees the images of men and women, horses, camels, money and garments. . . . which are burned together with the body; for they say, the dead man shall have so many man-servants and maid-servants, and cattle, and money, in another life, as pictures of them were burned with him, and shall perpetually live in that honor and riches."¹⁰² This is a clear case of substitution. I have previously shown how the original sacrifices were made in this region.

This process of substitution went on in ancient as well as in

⁹⁸ Simcox, *Primitive Civilization*, p. 153.

⁹⁹ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, pp. 72, 73.

¹⁰⁰ Recluse, *Primitive Folk*, p. 329.

¹⁰¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 463.

¹⁰² *Voyages of Marco Polo*, chap. XI.

modern times. Thus it is said that the old Etruscan god Mania, "was a fearful personage frequently propitiated with human sacrifices. Macrobius says boys were offered up at her annual festival for a long time, till the heads of onions and poppies were substituted."¹⁰³ Ancient Egyptians of wealth and standing sacrificed their servants at the tomb, so that they might follow their masters and serve them in the spirit world. In later times small wooden figures were placed in the mummy cases, which took the place of the early human sacrifices.¹⁰⁴ In ancient Babylonia a similar change took place, and "in later times, it would appear, the custom of placing food and drink with the dead fell into disuse. We may perhaps find that, as was the case in Egypt, symbolical representatives of food—clay plates with the food modeled in clay—took the place of the old custom." Plutarch gives an instance where a Greek maiden was demanded in sacrifice, and a colt was killed in her stead; and Suidas tells about a Greek father who sacrificed a goat in place of his daughter.¹⁰⁵ So also the story given in the Bible of Abraham preparing to offer Isaac in sacrifice, and then substituting a ram, (Gen. xxii. 1-14) is probably a relic of the time when the Hebrews were substituting animals for the early human sacrifices. As this process of substitution has been world-wide a great many other examples could be given if needed. The general use of substitutes is a stage in the decline of this ceremony.

Many Greeks perceived that sacrifices were gifts to the gods designed to win their favor, and a proverb became current that "presents win the gods as well as kings." With the development of philosophy the incongruity of trying to buy with sacrifices the favor of the spiritual beings who were believed to control the destiny of men, became evident to many minds, and Lucian turned his satire on the custom, saying: "The gods do nothing gratis. The good things they make over to man are wares for which they expect a solid equivalent in return; health is to be purchased for a bull-calf, wealth for four oxen, a kingdom for a hecatomb, and there are things to be had in their market, it seems, for a fowl, for a garland of flowers, and for only a couple of grains of incense too."¹⁰⁶ When men welcome such irony of a custom as this it is clearly losing its hold on their minds.

¹⁰³ *Saturnal*, lib. 2, cap. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 254, 255.

¹⁰⁵ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 600. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ Lucian, *De Sacrifice*, c. 2.

As religion developed, the simple primitive customs grew into elaborate rituals. Sacrificial ceremonies became formulated and their minutest details were prescribed, but we are now merely inquiring into the origin and meaning of the ceremonies, and we cannot here attempt to trace the growth of rituals.

Summary.—In primitive times the belief prevailed that death made no change in the needs or desires of men. Hence after death, the same as before, their spirits would require food, clothing, wives, servants, etc.

To satisfy these cravings of the ghosts, food, drink, etc., was in many cases placed near the corpse, so that the spirit could readily get them. After burial these supplies were sometimes placed on or in the grave, or, as in Egypt, placed near the mummified body, in which the spirit was believed to still reside.

Many primitive peoples believed that spirits might enter and dwell in various objects, like idols, animals, trees, etc., and for these the offerings (sacrifices) would be placed near such objects. For those residing in rivers, lakes or the ocean, sacrifices were often cast into these bodies of water, and for those dwelling underground, they were sometimes buried, or inserted through tubes, etc.

Many beliefs have prevailed in regard to the way in which spirits acquired the offerings. In some cases, when liquids evaporated spirits were supposed to have drunk them, for primitive man knew nothing about the laws or causes of evaporation. If an offering shrunk the spirit was supposed to have sucked out what it needed, leaving the balance. In other cases offerings were burnt in order that the spirit might absorb the fumes or vapors. When these went into the air and disappeared the spirits were supposed to have absorbed them. Burning in some instances was believed to send the soul of the object (for in some regions inanimate objects, as well as men, were believed to have souls) to the spirit world, and thus it could be utilized there. In some cases the spirits were believed to absorb merely the essence or soul of the sacrifice, leaving the material substance unaltered.

To supply spirits with wives and attendants, or to send messages to them unnumbered millions of human beings have been murdered in times past. The great number of victims killed on some occasions is astonishing. The slaughter has been appalling. And it went on for ages. But it is to be noticed that while numberless women were killed to serve male ghosts, few men were slain to serve female spirits in the other world. As a survival of early cannibalism human beings were in some cases sacrificed to furnish spirits with human

flesh to eat and blood to drink, but, regarded as a whole, this probably caused the lesser number of deaths. The dominant reason probably was, as stated above, to furnish spirits with wives and attendants.

As the *gods* were believed to possess all the human appetites and passions, offerings were made to them similar in every way to those made to the spirits of the dead, or ancestors.

The early belief in the importance of omens probably grew out of the conviction that the gods would indicate in some way whether a sacrifice was acceptable or not. "That the god is habitually willing to partake of the banquet offered to him is taken for granted; but, if anything has occurred to alienate his favor, he will show it by his conduct at the feast, by certain signs known to experts, that indicate his refusal of the offered gift. Hence the custom of inspecting the *exta* of the victim, watching the behavior of the sacrificial flame, or otherwise seeking an omen which proves that the sacrifice is accepted, and so that the deity may be expected to favor the requests with which the gift is associated."¹⁰⁷

Sacrifices were prompted by various motives. In some instances they were inspired by love, as in the case of the woman, mentioned above, who wanted a servant killed so that her spirit might go to the other world and minister to the wants of the dead child's spirit. In other instances people would seek to supply the wants of the spirits of loved relatives or friends. Here love was the dominating incentive. In other, and probably the majority of cases, fear was the strongest motive, for if the wants of a spirit or god were unsupplied it would wreak vengeance on the living by sending some dire calamity or misfortune. The many disasters of life were commonly attributed to the anger of the spirits and gods, thus visited on men. This, in early ages, appeared to be a sufficient cause to account for all the disasters of life. To avert this wrath of the spirits it was believed that sacrifices must be regularly kept up, or immediately supplied if they had been neglected.¹⁰⁸

In cases of difficulty and distress men sometimes besought the aid of a spirit or god, and made a pledge or vow that in case help was granted a sacrifice would be offered in return for the aid received. Thus Jephthah made a vow to give a burnt-offering, which led to the sacrifice of his daughter (Judges xi. 30, 31). Vows to the gods were common in Central American states, and often a sick

¹⁰⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Sacrifice," p. 134.

¹⁰⁸ For a typical example: in ancient Peru whenever a man became sick the wizard told him "to give food to the dead, placing it on their tombs. . . . for the wizard gives the patient to understand that he is visited with this sickness because the dead are starving." Markham, *Incas*, Vol. 2, pp. 63, 64.

man "would even vow to sacrifice a son or daughter in the event of his recovery. . . . and it is said, moreover, that they were inexorable as Jephthah in the performance of such vows, for it was held to be a great sin to be false to a bargain with the gods."^{108a} Vows to win the favor and secure the help of the gods were quite common in ancient times, in various parts of the world.

As the race developed, and the primitive beliefs were modified, substitutions gradually took place. Animals were in some cases sacrificed in place of human beings. Images of wax, dough, paper or other materials were substituted for various objects previously sacrificed. This process of substitution has been world-wide, and it marks a stage in the decline of the ceremony.

The value of the sacrifice would also be considered. Men believed that the more valuable it was the more the god would be pleased. Hence a very valuable gift, which greatly delighted the god, would be more likely to induce him to grant the suppliant's requests or prayers. Thus in dire distress one might even kill his own son in order that his spirit might become the servant or slave of the god (see 2 Kings iii. 26, 27). When rituals developed and sacrifices became stereotyped into official forms, which all were required to observe, some regard was necessarily paid to the financial condition of the people. Thus a poor man might be required to offer a dove, and a richer man a cow, and various gradations would be made. The belief would also arise that only the choicest fruits, animals, etc., (those "without blemish") should be offered to the gods. Clearly no spirit or god would be pleased with an inferior gift.

The idea of the value of self-denial would naturally develop. Men would sacrifice things they loved, or highly valued, or even greatly needed, as this would be likely to please the gods and win their good will. The superior value of sacrifices involving much self-denial would, therefore, be highly esteemed.

As the ideas of men developed and they formed less gross and more etherial conceptions of spirits and gods, and these beings were imagined as freed from the wants of the flesh, so that they no longer needed food, clothes, wives, slaves, etc., such sacrifices would no longer be offered to them, and the old sacrificial ceremonies would gradually fall into disuse, as we can now see took place in various parts of the world.

All of the evidence thus far gathered regarding religious sacrifices seems to indicate that primitive men conjectured spirits and

^{108a} Bancroft, *Native Races*, II, p. 796.

gods to exist having human desires and needs, and these wants they tried to supply by sacrifices. They imagined these beings to live in the spirit world much as men did on earth. This belief has been world-wide, and it seems to have been a natural deduction by the savage or primitive mind from phenomena which were misunderstood. But like other mistakes of ignorant men—for ignorance is now, and has always been, the greatest calamity of the race—it imposed a heavy burden on society, as, entertained for ages, the belief caused the murder of uncounted millions of human beings and the destruction of vast amounts of useful commodities, often direly needed by the living, as sacrifices to the spirits.¹⁰⁹ No evidence seems to have yet been discovered, however, that, regarding these subjects, any voice has ever come from the world beyond the grave, telling about the condition of spirits there, and their needs. Beliefs regarding the character of spirits, and their desires, and the world they were supposed to inhabit, have changed as conditions on earth have changed, and as intelligence has increased, and not because of any communications received from the realm of the dead. From there, unbroken silence appears to have reigned on this question. This seems to be the inevitable deduction from the accumulated mass of facts now available regarding religious sacrifices, and the changes of belief regarding them, typical examples of which have been given above.

For, if it were possible for the dead to communicate with the living, why was there not a chorus of voices from the spirit world notifying the living that spirits did not need wives and slaves, and urging men to stop the appalling and horrible sacrificial slaughter of human victims, which went on for many thousands of years with all its loss of life, its shrieks of anguish¹¹⁰ and its rivers of blood, to supply wholly imaginary wants of spirits? There seems to be no indication that any such voice was ever heard. Surely no

¹⁰⁹ It was the custom of some Indians after a death to "burn with the deceased all his effects, and even those of his nearest relatives" as sacrifices to provide for his spirit; and as a result "it not unfrequently happens that a family is reduced to absolute starvation." For other examples of much suffering caused by this custom see Spencer, *Sociology*, I, Secs. 103, 140.

¹¹⁰ In ancient America "the chief idol of the Itzas was Hubo, who was represented by a hollow metal figure with an opening between the shoulders through which human beings were passed, charged to implore the favor of the gods. A fire was then lighted beneath the figure, and while the victims were roasted alive, their friends joined in a dance, drowning the cries of the victims with shouts and rattling of drums." Bancroft, *Native Races*, III, 482, 483. A somewhat similar ceremony was practised by the Carthaginians, and, according to a rabbinical tradition, by the Hebrews in their worship of Moloch in the valley of Hinnom, at Jerusalem.—*Chamber's Encyclopædia*, art. "Moloch."

one can contemplate the awful havoc wrought in the world by this mistaken belief without feeling that such a message was sadly needed—if it could be sent.

But while no voice seems to have come from beyond the grave, the increasing intelligence of the race, and the growing spirit of humanity resulting from the supplanting of the militant by the industrial type of civilization, has tended to abolish sacrifices and other relics of the ignorance of our savage ancestors, and men are coming more and more to feel that all human life is precious, and that it should not be sacrificed to supply the imaginary desires of spirits, or to satisfy the greed of the living. Fear of the spirits, which so darkened the lives of men and caused so many sacrifices for ages, is dying, and the most intelligent are seeing that the ignorant beliefs which deluded primitive men, must yield to the light of scientific truth. Science wins its victories by appeals to the reason and not by wielding the sword. Its chief sacrifices are the errors it kills, and its altars were never marked by rivers of human blood and wails of anguish. Its spirit does not feed on blood, and it seeks to save human life and not needlessly sacrifice it. As the old errors are outgrown and intelligence develops, science offers visions of a brilliant future awaiting the race, based on a knowledge of nature's laws and the command of nature's forces—for the golden age lies in the future, and not in the early, dark ages of primitive ignorance.

In this brief article we have endeavored to trace the origin, development and decline of a custom and belief—for the custom was based on the belief.