

dition, and that this gradual development has been going on for hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of years.

It is clear, therefore, that many of the habits and customs of existing savages will be found to be relics of former habits and customs which had existed among their ancestors. And so, among civilized peoples we find traces of former barbarism. As is said by Lubbock: "We must, therefore, expect to find in each race traces—nay, more than traces—of lower religions." The study of human sacrifice and cannibalism furnishes an interesting example.

The object of religious sacrifice of any kind is to secure the assistance and support of the good or evil gods, or to appease their supposed anger. Obviously the greatest sacrifice would be a human being, and in the lower forms of this rite will be found the actual killing and eating of a human being; but as the people rise higher and higher in the social scale, the ceremony becomes more and more modified, until the act is little more than a shadowy relic of the original custom.

Human sacrifice, either with or without cannibalism, seems to have obtained in the religious ceremonies of almost all peoples, the Jews not excepted, at some period of their history. In many cases a curious confusion arises between the victim and the deity, the victim being worshiped as a god before it is sacrificed and eaten. Thus the great yearly sacrifice of a Mexican tribe, described by Prescott, was very remarkable. Some beautiful youth, usually a war captive, was chosen as the victim. For a whole year he was treated and worshiped as a god. When he went out he was attended by a numerous train, and the crowd as he passed prostrated themselves before him, and did him homage, as the impersonation of the good deity. Everything he could wish was provided for him, and at the commencement of the last month four beautiful girls were allotted to him as wives. Finally, when the last day arrived, he was placed at the head of a solemn procession, taken to the temple, and, after being sacrificed with much ceremony and every token of respect, he was eaten by the priests and chiefs.

Another instance, given by Muller, shows a somewhat modified form of this ceremony. At a certain period of the year the priest made an image of the deity, of meal mixed with an infant's blood, and then, after many impressive ceremonies, pretended to kill the image by shooting it with an arrow, tore out the heart, which was eaten by the King, while the rest of the body was distributed among the people, every one of whom was

most anxious to procure a piece to eat, however small.

In our own civilization we have what is obviously, in part, at least, a later form of this relic of savage cannibalism in what is known as the Eucharist, in which, by consecration by the priest, bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of one of the persons of the Christian deity, and are then partaken of by the priests and people with much ceremony. Still more clearly does the origin of this rite appear when we remember that this person of the deity, is considered as having been sacrificed in order to appease the wrath of another person of the same deity.

In the Protestant denominations the ceremony is found in still more modified forms, until, in that of the more liberal sects, it is little more than a shadow of its former self; but to any unbiased mind its connection with savage cannibalism is too clear to be mistaken.—Portland Evening Telegram.

#### Good for the Second Thought.

The earth is my footstool;  
To do good is my mission.  
Nature is my golden rule,  
My God and my religion.  
—[The Author, I. V. W.]

BROTHER GEER: Yours of recent date, with Torch of Reason, at hand. I like the paper very much. I am subscribing now for the Free-thought Magazine, Chicago; the Truthseeker, New York, and Aunt Elmina's Little Freethinker, and cannot read all as they should be read on account of my business. My life is devoted to Freethought, having fought the Holy of Holies ever since I arrived at the age of study, being now in my fifty-fifth year. I think, by the grace of Nature, I may prove steadfast unto the end. I also have and do put aside twenty-five dollars each year for the cause of Freethought, and use it where I think it will do the most good. I write these particulars, thinking it may induce others to do the same, or better. Please send me terms of tuition, list of studies taught in the University, etc.

While dewdrops feed the flowers  
And man is a living creature,  
And the heavens breathes affably  
Its breath,  
I acknowledge no powers  
But the laws of nature,  
The laws of my country  
And death.

Yours truly,  
I. VAN WINKLE.

On second thought, I enclose one dollar for Torch of Reason.

I. V. W.

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