

IDOLS AND FETICHES.

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THE conditions of primitive life were such that men were more or less familiar with temporary suspensions and a later resumption of the activities of life. In the many wars and fights which took place men would be knocked on the head, or so wounded that unconsciousness would occur for a time, and later it would return, and the victim would revive. In fainting spells there would be a dormant period and a later revival, and daily in sleep there would be a period of quiet and unconsciousness followed by an awakening. By these and other occasional phenomena, such as fits, etc., primitive men would come to believe that the similar quiet of death might be followed by a more or less speedy awakening.

Even with all the accumulated experience of modern medicine it is none too easy, at times, to tell with certainty that death has actually taken place. Hence, with primitive man, as with many savages of recent times, the belief prevailed that death was only a temporary quiescence of the activities of the body. The spirit was believed to be still residing in the body, as it did in sleep, fainting spells, etc. Many savages have shown this belief by talking to the dead, imagining the spirit could hear them. Thus we are told that in Loango "a dead man's relatives questioned him for two or three hours why he died; and on the Gold Coast, 'the dead person is himself interrogated' as to the cause of his death."¹ Similar customs are found elsewhere.

Out of the belief that death was only a temporary suspension of activity would come the conviction that all the bodily desires were still retained. Thus it is said that "the Innuits visit the graves, talk to the dead, leave food, furs, etc., saying, 'Here, Nukerton, is something to eat, and something to keep you warm.'"² Out of at-

¹ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, sec. 83.

² *Ibid.*

tempts to supply the desires of spirits, which have been world-wide, seem to have grown the customs of religious sacrifices, as I have elsewhere explained.³

If the spirit continued to reside in the body, the conviction would naturally arise that if the body was destroyed in any way the spirit would be homeless and would suffer. It would become a homeless and wandering ghost. And so men would try to preserve the bodies of friends in order to provide a home for the spirit as long as possible. The belief in a revival of bodily activity, similar to that which took place after sleep, probably gave rise to the wide-spread ancient belief in a resurrection, for the resurrection was merely an awakening of the corpse. When that took place, if the body is not ready for the spirit to inhabit again it was considered a great calamity. The religious conviction that the body must be saved for the spirit to again take up its abode is a belief inherited from savage ancestors, and in many cases has been a great hindrance to the introduction of cremation, which is the most sanitary method of disposing of the dead.

This necessity of retaining the body for the dwelling place of the spirit led to many efforts to preserve it, and various devices were tried. In some cases concealment was aimed at, as in the case of the New Zealand chiefs who were "secretly deposited by priests in sepulchers on hilltops, in forests or in caves." The Dakota, Iroquois and Mandan Indians placed bodies on raised scaffolds, on which Catlan said "their dead live," and where they were kept out of the way of wolves and dogs. Some South American tribes buried the bodies in chasms and caverns, and the Chibchas made a kind of cave for the purpose.⁴ A further effort to preserve the body would result in an effort to prevent decay. Thus the Loango people in Africa smoke corpses for this purpose, and some of the Chibchas, in America, "dried the bodies of their dead in barbacoes on a slow fire."⁵

As intelligence increased, elaborate methods of preserving the dead would be invented which the more ignorant savage could not devise. With the advance of Egyptian civilization the art of embalming or mummifying the dead was carried to a high degree of perfection. But the whole development of this process was based on the belief that the body must be preserved to furnish a home for the spirit. Thus we are told that "a comparative study of sepulchral

³ See art. on "Religious Sacrifices," in *The Open Court* for February, 1911.

⁴ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, sec. 87. Many other examples are there given.

⁵ *Ibid.*, sec. 88.

texts" has "furnished Egyptologists with convincing proof that the inviolate preservation of the body was deemed essential to the corporeal resurrection of the 'justified' dead. . . . Between death on earth and life everlasting there intervened, however, a period varying from 3000 to 10,000 years, during which the intelligence wandered, luminous, through space, while the soul performed a painful probationary pilgrimage through the mysterious under-world. The body, in order that it should await intact the return of the soul whose habitation it was, must meanwhile be guarded from corruption and every danger. Hence, and hence only, the extraordinary measures taken to insure the preservation of the corpse and the inviolability of the sepulcher; hence the huge pyramid, the secret pit, and the mysterious labyrinth. The shadowy and impalpable *ka*—the mere aspect, be it remembered, of the man— was supposed to dwell in the tomb with the mummified body."⁶

"It was formerly supposed that the bodies of the dead were merely desiccated under the ancient empire, and that actual embalming was not practiced before 2000 B. C. Recent excavations compel us to ascribe a very early date (possibly 3800 or 4000 B. C.) to the beginnings of the art."⁷ The process of mummification varied in different parts of Egypt, and at different periods.

In ancient Peru a similar belief led to a similar custom. Thus it is stated that "faith in the immortality of the soul was one of the fundamental ideas among the Peruvian nations." They believed that "after a certain time, not exactly determined, they [the spirits] should return to their bodies, beginning a new terrestrial life, continuing the same occupations, and making use of the same objects which they had left at the time of their death. This belief induced them to preserve the body with great care."⁸ So also Prescott says of the Peruvians that "it was this belief in the resurrection of the body which led them to preserve the body with so much care."⁹ In Peru, as well as in Egypt, the art of mummifying the dead was highly developed.

Believing the spirit to reside in the corpse attempts were made to supply its wants, and these have been described by many writers. Thus it is said that in Egypt "Diodorus and the papyri show that it was not an uncommon thing to keep the mummies in the house after they had been returned by the embalmers to the relatives of

⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Mummy."

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Rivero, *Peruvian Antiquities*, pp. 152, 153.

⁹ Prescott, *Conquest of Peru*, Vol. I, p. 92.

the deceased, in order to gratify the feelings which made them desirous of having those they had loved in life as near them as possible after death. Damascenius states that they sometimes introduced them at table, as though they could enjoy their society." Lucian says that he was "an eye witness to this custom."¹⁰

When the time came for the burial the funeral procession advanced to the catacombs, where "the mummy, being taken out of the sarcophagus, was placed erect in the chamber of the tomb; and the sister or the nearest relative embraced it, commencing a funeral dirge, calling on her relative with every expression of tenderness, extolling his virtues, and bewailing her own loss. In the mean time the high priest presented a sacrifice of incense and libation, with offerings of cakes and other customary gifts for the deceased."¹¹ The cakes, etc., were intended to feed the spirit and supply its other wants.

"When the mummies remained in the house, or the chamber of the sepulcher, they were kept in movable wooden chests with folding doors, out of which they were taken...to a small altar, before which the priest officiated...On these occasions...they [the priests] made the usual offerings of incense and libations, with cakes, flowers and fruit; and even anointed the mummy, oil or ointment being poured over its head."¹² At times friends embraced the mummified body and "bathed its feet with their tears."¹³

The attempts of the Egyptians to supply the wants of the spirits believed to reside in the bodies of the dead, correspond to similar customs found in other nations. Thus it is said that their "funeral oblations answer exactly to the *inferiæ* and *parentalia* of the Romans, consisting of victims, flowers, and libations, when the tomb was decorated with garlands and wreaths of flowers, and an altar was erected before it for presenting the offerings. And that this last was done also by the Egyptians, is proved by the many small altars discovered outside the door of the catacombs at Thebes."¹⁴ On these altars sacrifices were placed, to supply the desires of the spirits.

We have already seen that in ancient Peru bodies of the dead were also mummified and preserved. It is said that "the goodwill of the dead was in Peru thought to be necessary to the prosperity of

¹⁰ Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. III, p. 432.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 370.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 360.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 428.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 361.

the living. Hence they had a part in all the affairs of life; they were consulted like the gods on important occasions, and brought out [i. e., the mummified body in which the spirit was believed to dwell] to share in feasts, whether secular or sacred. Arranged in order according to their seniority, each mummy was duly served with a portion of food, which was burnt before it; chicha was poured into its lips from its own drinking vessel,"¹⁵ being thus intended to reach the indwelling spirit.

Again it is said that on sacred festivals the Peruvians "brought out the bodies of the dead lords and ladies which were embalmed, each one being brought out by the person of the same lineage who had charge of it. During the night these bodies [mummies] were washed in the baths which belonged to them when alive. They were then brought back to their houses and warmed [fed] with the same coarse pudding called *cancu*, and the food they had been most fond of when they were alive."¹⁶ Young knights addressed their embalmed ancestors, "beseeching them to make their descendants as fortunate and brave as they had been themselves."¹⁷

Another writer says that in Peru "individual or household gods were innumerable; each house and individual possessed its characteristic and tutelar divinity. Among the former, and deserving of special mention, were the so-called *Mallquis*, or *manaos*, which were the entire bodies of the ancestors reduced to a mummy or skeleton state, which the descendants piously preserved in the *machayo* or tomb, arranged in such a manner that they might easily see them and offer them sacrifices; at the same time they gave them food and drink, for they interred with them vessels and dishes which they filled from time to time with food,"¹⁸ i. e., for the spirit to consume. The spirits, dwelling in the mummies, were deified and worshiped as gods.

In other places, as "in Virginia, in some parts of South America, on the Madeira Islands, the original population dried the corpse over a slow fire into a condition to resist decay; while elsewhere the nitrous soil of caves offered a natural means of embalming. The Alaskan and Peruvian mummies, like those of ancient Egypt, were artificially prepared, and swathed in numerous cerecloths." But everywhere "the same faith in the literal resurrection of the flesh was the prevailing motive" for preserving the

¹⁵ Payne, *New World*, Vol. I, p. 600.

¹⁶ Markham, *Yncas*, p. 25.

¹⁷ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, sec. 83.

¹⁸ Rivero, *Peruvian Antiquities*, p. 170.

body, for it was believed that it "must be preserved in order that it might be again habitable for the soul, when this ethereal essence should return to earth from its celestial wanderings."¹⁹

Usually no definite time was given when the resurrection would take place, but in Egypt during the dynasties the date was postponed to a time from 3000 to 10,000 years in the future, as above stated.

A good example of the way in which skeletons were worshiped, where the body was not mummified but the skeleton was preserved, comes to us from Africa. The skeletons of the former kings of Ashanti were preserved at Bantama, and to those remains sacrifices were made. On February 5 the king went to "where the remains of his deceased predecessors were preserved in a long building, approached by a gallery and partitioned into small cells, the entrances of which were hung with silken curtains. In these apartments reposed the skeletons of the kings, fastened together with wire, and placed in richly ornamented coffins, each being surrounded with what had given him most pleasure in life. On this occasion every skeleton was placed on a chair in his cell to receive the royal visitor, who, on entering offered it food, after which a band played the favorite melodies of the departed." Then a human victim was killed, and the skeleton was washed with his blood. "Thus was each cell visited in turn, sacrifice after sacrifice being offered, till evening closed ere the dreadful round was" completed.²⁰

The ancient Egyptians, "holding the belief that the statue of a human being represented and embodied a human *ka*, concluded that the statues of the gods represented and embodied divine *kas*."²¹ Here the belief seems to have developed that gods as well as ghosts could enter and dwell in statues or images, and this belief was common among primitive people. Again it is said that in Egypt "the statue of the deceased in which the double [spirit] dwelt took pleasure in all the various scenes which are painted or sculptured on the walls of the tombs,"²² i. e., it was believed that the spirit residing in the mummy or statue could look on and enjoy the activities going on around it.

So important was it to preserve the body that "no more formidable punishment to the [ancient] Egyptian was possible than destroying his corpse, its preservation being the condition of im-

¹⁹ Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 211.

²⁰ Ramseyer and Kuhne, *Four Years in Ashanti*, p. 117.

²¹ Wiedemann, *Egyptian Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*, p. 21.

²² Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, p. 218.

mortality."²³ It is said that in ancient Assyria "the mutilation of the dead body was also a terrible punishment to the dead, and we are told that the person who disturbed a grave is not to be permitted to enter the temple. The desecration of the grave affected not only the individual [spirit] whose rest was disturbed, and who, in consequence, suffered the pangs of hunger and other miseries, but reached the survivors as well. The unburied or disembodied shade assumed the form of a demon, and afflicted the living. . . . The kings punished their enemies by leaving their bodies to rot in the sun, or they exposed them on poles as a warning to rebels." Assurbanipal "takes pleasure in relating that he destroyed the graves of the Elamitic kings, and dragged their bodies from their resting place to Assyria. Their shades, he adds, were thus unprotected. No food could be tendered them, no sacrifices offered in their honor."²⁴ A similar belief has been found elsewhere, as among the Greeks and Romans who believed that the spirits of the unburied dead would pursue and take vengeance on the living because no sacrifices could be offered them, and so the ghosts would suffer hunger.

Primitive man knew nothing about psychology or the laws of mental action. To him the events which appeared to take place in dreams seemed as real as those which actually took place when he was awake. Thus it is stated that by the New Zealanders "in sleep the soul was supposed to quit the body and wander about, holding converse with its friends, and returning again to its body; dreams were regarded as realities."²⁵ "The dreams which come to the Indian are to him, though not to us, as real as any of the events of his waking life. To him dream acts and waking acts differ only in one respect—namely that the former are done only by the spirit, the latter are done by the spirit and body."²⁶ "The Dyaks regard dreams as actual occurrences. They think that in sleep the soul sometimes remains in the body, and sometimes leaves it and travels far away, and that both when in and out of the body it sees, and hears, and talks. . . . Fainting fits, or states of coma, are thought to be caused by the departure or absence of the soul on some distant expedition of its own."²⁷ Thus when the savage dreamed that he engaged in the hunt, he believed that, during sleep, the spirit left

²³ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, sec. 87.

²⁴ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 601, 602.

²⁵ R. Taylor, *New Zealand and Its Inhabitants*, p. 104.

²⁶ Im Thum, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, p. 344.

²⁷ St. John, *Life in the Forests of the Far East*, p. 199.

the body, engaged in the chase, and returned to the body again before it awoke. As every other event dreamed about as happening in a distant place was accounted for in the same way, the belief was common that spirits readily and frequently left and returned to the body.²⁸

When through dreams and other natural phenomena the belief had developed that spirits could leave the body and return to it during life, the belief would naturally arise that after death the spirit could similarly leave and return to the corpse, in which it was thought to reside. Thus the Iroquois Indians left holes in both coffins and graves, to allow the spirits to pass in and out,²⁹ and a similar belief has been found elsewhere. Thus spirits of the dead would be regarded as wandering around, and then returning to the bodies in which they dwelt.

In time the belief became common that spirits flitted everywhere and entered various objects. Evil or angry spirits were believed to enter the bodies of other men, and it has been a world-wide belief that insanity, epilepsy, and all the other diseases to which human flesh is heir, were caused by spirits thus entering the body and making trouble. Thus we are told that in New Zealand it is the native belief that "each ailment is caused by a spirit. . . . which, sent into the patient's body, gnaws and feeds inside." In fact, "the savage theory of demoniacal possession and obsession. . . . has been for ages, and still remains, the dominant theory of disease. . . . among the lower races."³⁰ Even with a nation as advanced as the Chinese this is the theory entertained at the present time.³¹ It was the belief in ancient Egypt, in Babylonia, in Greece, and generally in antiquity. Where this belief was entertained the whole science of medicine consisted of attempts to drive out the intruding spirits. By that method it was thought that any disease could be cured.

When the belief had arisen that spirits could enter and dwell in various objects, attempts were made in different parts of the world to provide artificial bodies, or homes for them to reside in.

²⁸ In the brief space allotted to this article I cannot enter at length into the effect on the primitive mind of dreams, shadows, reflections in the water, echoes, etc. Those interested can consult the works of Spencer, Tylor, and other anthropologists. It was probably largely through dreams, shadows and reflections in the water, that the belief was developed in the minds of men that the spirit could leave the body and return to it—but dreams were probably one of the strongest reasons. I refer principally to them here, but presume that most of my readers are conversant with the others.

²⁹ Morgan, *Iroquois*, p. 176.

³⁰ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. II, pp. 124, 127. For many other examples see pp. 124-130.

³¹ De Groot, *The Religion of the Chinese*, p. 36.

These became idols, and the indwelling spirits gods, and men worshipped and offered sacrifices to them. A few examples may be given. Whatever care was taken to preserve a body or mummy, there was always a possibility that it might be destroyed. It is stated that in ancient Egypt it was the belief that if the mummy was destroyed or damaged the *ka* was liable to meet disaster. "In view of this danger, the Egyptians, by stocking his sepulcher with portrait statues, sought to provide the *ka* with other chances of continuance, these statues being designed, in a strictly literal sense, to serve as supports or dummies for the *ka*."³² That is, a number of statues, resembling the body, were provided in the hope that if the body or even several statues should be destroyed, one might survive to serve as a home for the spirit to enter, and they were "always secreted in hidden chambers." As many as "twenty duplicates have been found in a single tomb."

When cremation had been introduced, a substitute body was sometimes made from the ashes of the dead, or to hold them, thus retaining parts of the original body. Thus it is said that the Mayas of Yucatan "made wooden statues of their dead parents and left a hollow in the neck where they put their ashes and kept them among their idols." They also made "hollow clay images, or hollow statues of wood, in which they placed the ashes of the burned bodies of their monarchs. They offered food to these images [idols] at their festivals." "The Mexicans preserved the ashes, hair and teeth of the dead, and put them in little boxes, above which was placed a wooden figure, shaped and adorned like the deceased." In other instances the ashes of the dead were placed in sepulchral vases, or urns, on which a representation of the deceased was painted, and these were worshiped. "The worship of urns used in urn-burial has, of course, resulted from the association of the urn with the person deposited in it. The same is true of the idols which were made to hold the ashes of the dead. The worship is not at first directed toward the material part of the urn or idol, or even the representation it may have upon it of the deceased, but it is directed toward the *spirit supposed to reside there*."³³

Elsewhere, in Siam for instance and in Tartary, "people collect the ashes of the burnt corpses and make of them a paste to model into small Buddhist images, or into disks, which they afterwards put on the top of a pyramid. The corpse, thus transformed,

³² *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. "Mummy."

³³ Dorman, *Primitive Superstitions*, pp. 119-122. Other examples are given in that work.

becomes the lares and penates, and they are carefully kept, evidently as the supposed dwelling place of the shade of the departed."³⁴ A somewhat similar custom has been common, but it is needless to give more examples.

Bancroft says that "in Goazacoalco it was the custom to place the bones [of the dead] in a basket, as soon as the flesh was gone, and hang them up in a tree, so that the spirit of the defunct might have no difficulty in finding them"³⁵ when it needed them.

While it was the ancient belief that the spirit continued to dwell in the corpse, and also in preserved parts of the body, as in a figure made out of the ashes of the body or in the preserved skeleton, the belief would naturally arise that other objects could serve as a residence for the ghost. We have already seen that in some cases a hole was left in a grave, through which it was thought the spirit could pass in and out, and in some places a grave-stone, or post, was roughly hewn into a human shape, into which a spirit could enter. Thus Mr. McCoy says that "among the Ottawas [Indians] we often discovered at the heads of their graves a post somewhat proportioned to the size of the deceased. When any one visited the grave they rapped on the post with a stick, to announce their arrival to the spirit. On the upper end of this post was cut a slight resemblance to the human face. The Indians not far from Quebec, while the Jesuit priests were among them, whenever any one died, cut his portrait and put it on the grave, 'anointing and greasing that man of wood as if living,' says Father Lalament. Among the Algonkins a post was generally placed on the grave of the dead, and their portraits carved thereon."³⁶ Somewhat similar customs were practiced in Alaska, in Chili, in the West Indies, in Nicaragua, and in other parts of America. Spirits from the graves below were supposed to enter these posts.

Many customs have been found which had a large element of pathos in them. Thus it is said that "when a child dies among the Ojibways, they cut some of its hair and make a little doll, which they call the doll of sorrow. This lifeless object takes the place of the deceased child." The mother "carries it with her wherever she goes" for a year. "They think the child's spirit has entered this bundle, and can be helped by the mother. Presents and sacrificial gifts are made to it. Toys and useful implements are

³⁴ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 242.

³⁵ *Native Races*, Vol. II, p. 619.

³⁶ Dorman, *Primitive Superstitions*, pp. 117-120.

tied to the doll for its use.”³⁷ A similar custom was found among “the savages of the Canadas.” It is said that on the banks of the Niger in Africa “the maternal affection is so strong that after the death of their children the mothers will carry upon their heads small wooden images in commemoration of their little dead ones, and they will not allow these emblems to be taken from them. They seem to consider them as living images, and before eating themselves they always offer food to these little wooden children.”³⁸ In other parts of Africa we are told that if a woman has twins, and either dies, an image about a foot long is made, “carved in such a manner as to represent the human anatomy.” The woman regards such images as her “living children; she worships them every morning by splitting kolo nuts [i. e., for them to eat] and throwing down a few drops of palm oil before them.”³⁹

Of the Ostyaks it is said that they “make a rude wooden image representing, and in honor of, the deceased, which is set up in the yost and receives divine honors for a greater or less time as the priest directs. . . . At every meal they set an offering of food before the image; and should this represent a deceased husband, the widow embraces it from time to time. . . . This kind of worship of the deceased lasts about three years, at the end of which time the image is buried.”⁴⁰ It was the evident belief that the ghost dwelt in the image, and it was worshiped.

The statement is repeatedly made that savages worshiped a spirit believed to dwell in their idols, and not the images themselves. For example in New Zealand “the natives declare they did not worship the image itself, but only the Atua [i. e., spirit] it represented.”⁴¹ In Africa an idol “is believed for the time to be the residence of a spirit, which is to be placated by offerings. . . . of food.”⁴² In the Polynesian islands, “where the meaning of the native idolatry has been carefully examined, it has been found to rest on the most absolute theory of spirit-embodiment. . . . At certain seasons, or in answer to the prayers of the priests, these spiritual beings entered into the idols, which then became very powerful, but when the spirit departed the idol remained only a sacred object.” So also the New Zealanders “set up memorial idols of deceased persons near the burial place, talking affectionately to them as if

³⁷ Dorman, *Primitive Superstitions*, p. 116.

³⁸ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 151.

³⁹ Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 208.

⁴⁰ Spencer, *Sociology*, Vol. I, sec. 158.

⁴¹ R. Taylor, *New Zealand and Its Inhabitants*, p. 72.

⁴² Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 92.

alive, and casting garments to them when they passed by, and preserve in their houses small carved wooden images, each dedicated to the spirit of an ancestor. It is distinctly held that such an *atua*, or ancestral deity, enters into the substance of an image in order to hold converse with the living. A priest can by repeating charms cause the spirit to enter into the idol, which he will even jerk by a string around its neck to arrest its attention, . . . it is quite understood that the images themselves are not objects of worship, nor do they possess in themselves any virtue, but derive their sacredness from being the temporary abodes of spirits. In the Society Islands, it was observed in Captain Cook's exploration that the carved wooden images at burial places were not considered mere memorials but abodes into which the souls of the departed entered."⁴³

In ancient Rome men who went to the temples to pray "used to treat with the officiating ministers to be placed as near as possible to the ear of the idol, so that they might be better heard,"⁴⁴ i. e., by the spirit inside. In the Sandwich Islands after a death in a family the survivors worship an "image with which they imagine the spirit is in some way connected."⁴⁵ In ancient Peru when a chief died, "a statue of gold was made in the likeness of the chief, which was served as if it had been alive, and certain villages were set apart to provide it with clothing and other necessaries,"⁴⁶ i. e., to provide articles to sacrifice to the resident ghost.

Numerous statements are found which show that efforts to feed the indwelling spirits were made by rubbing blood or food on the lips, or placing it before the mouth of the idol. Thus Marco Polo says that he found that the Tartars had household idols, and "they never ate before first rubbing the mouths of these protecting divinities with the fat of their meat." In the island of Nian, when attempting to banish evil spirits, a pig was killed, and "the mouth of the idol was smeared with the bloody heart of the pig, and a dishful of the cooked pork is set before him."⁴⁷ Of the Mayas in America it is said that they "never went out to hunt without first invoking their gods [in idols] and burning incense before them; and on their return from a successful hunt they always anointed the grim visages of the idols with the blood of the game."⁴⁸ Of the Ostyaks we are

⁴³ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 174, 175.

⁴⁴ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 313.

⁴⁵ Spencer, *Sociology*, I, sec. 158.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 156.

⁴⁷ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, III, p. 65

⁴⁸ Bancroft, *Native Races*, II, p. 691.

told that they would "pour daily broth 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 monstrous idol's mouth," and in "each case the deity was somehow considered to devour the meal,"⁴⁹ i. e., the deity that dwelt in the idol.

In China at the present time "tablets" are used in worship, which are believed to be inhabited by spirits, and such tablets have probably been in use there for several thousand years. They have been thus described: "Wooden tablets are employed as resting places for the spirits, both in the state worship of China and the ancestral. These are small rectangular pieces of wood, at least as high again as they are wide, set up in front of the worshiper, and having written upon them the characters, *shān wei*, 'seat of the spirit,' or *ling wei*, 'seat of the soul,' or *shān chū*, 'lodging-place of the spirit,' with perhaps the surname, name and office of the departed in the ancestral worship. While the worship is performed, the tablet is supposed to be occupied by the spirit specially entertained in the service; and at the conclusion the spirit returns to its own place, and the tablet is laid aside in its repository, till required for use again, being in the interval no more spirit possessed than any other piece of wood. . . . The tablet is not regarded as in itself either supernatural or sacred; and it has operated to prevent the rise of idolatry in the Confucian religion of China."⁵⁰

Such tablets are common in China, and we are told that "the truth is that the dead of a family actually are its patron divinities, worshiped and sacrificed to like all other gods, with quite similar incense, spirits, food, and dainties, quite similar genuflexions and *khotaos*, all with the plain object of obtaining their blessings. The truth is, also, that ancestral worship answers exactly to idolatry and fetichism, it being addressed to tablets deemed just as well as images of gods, to be inhabited by the souls of those whom they represent."⁵¹ It is probable that these tablets were developed from grave-posts or slabs. Thus it is said that at the tomb of an emperor there "stands the polished marble tombstone which bears the name of the emperor, engraved in the stone: this is in fact his soul tablet, a seat of his manes."⁵² The dynasty has ancestor temples, and "each ancestor or ancestress is represented in these buildings by a soul tablet."⁵³

⁴⁹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 380.

⁵⁰ Legge, *The Religion of China*, pp. 20-22.

⁵¹ De Groot, *Religion of the Chinese*, p. 84.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

The method of using these tablets and conducting the worship has been thus described: "Many a well-to-do family possesses its ancestor temple, where the soul tablets of its oldest generations are preserved, and where sacrifices are offered to them. . . . Here stands a huge table which has on it the tablets of parents, grandparents, and even of still older generations, not yet removed to the temple, side by side with images of other domestic gods which are not ancestors. The well-to-do there have shrines for these tablets and idols. A table in front of the altar serves for the offerings which are presented by the family on various fixed days in the calendar, with the father or grandfather at their head. . . . There are, then, for every man or woman in China, three altars for the exercise of ancestor worship: one at home, one at the grave, one in the temple of the clan."⁵⁴

During the period of the Chau dynasty [i. e., the twelfth to the sixth century B. C.] a substitute for the tablets was tried. "The wooden tablet was discarded, and the departed ancestors were represented at the service by living relatives of the same surname, chosen according to certain rules. These took for the time the place of the dead, received the honors which were done to them, and were supposed to be possessed by their spirits. They ate and drank as those they impersonated would have done; accepted for them the homage rendered by their descendants, communicated their will to the principal worshiper, and pronounced on him and on his line their benediction, being assisted in this point by a mediating officer of prayer. This strange practice of using living relatives at the ancestral worship, instead of the wooden tablets, passed away with the dynasty in which it prevailed."⁵⁵

Regular idols, however, as well as "tablets" are in common use in China, as the following account by an observer indicates: "The images of gods exist by tens of thousands, the temples by thousands. Almost every temple has idol gods which are in co-ordinate or subordinate rank to the chief god, or even regarded as its attendant servants. They are placed on the high altar, on side altars, or in side chapels. . . . Large idols are for the most part of wood and clay; the small ones are often of copper, bronze or porcelain. Icons painted on paper are worshiped in great numbers. . . . Also for the mountains, rocks, stones, streams, brooks, which the people worship, images are fashioned to be the homes of their souls, and temples are erected to them. . . . In short, every possible represen-

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

⁵⁵ Legge, *The Religion of China*, pp. 76, 77.

tation of a god is considered to be the abiding place of his soul, and therefore identical with the god himself."⁵⁶ In fact, so common are the idols that we find the statement that "myriads of images thus stud the Chinese soil, characterizing it as the principal idolatrous country of the world."⁵⁷



THE DEMON OF LIGHTNING.
A Japanese Temple Statue.

We find in Japan quite a similar custom and belief. Thus we are told that "in many private dwellings there is a *kami-dana* [god-shelf] where a *harahi*, consisting of a piece of wood from the Ise shrine, and tickets with the names of any gods whom the household has any special reason for worshiping, are kept. Lafcadio Hearn says that nowadays there is also a *Mitamaya* (august-spirit-dwell-

⁵⁶ De Groot, *Religion of the Chinese*, pp. 123, 124.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

ing) which is a model Shinto shrine placed on a shelf fixed against the wall of some inner chamber. In this shrine are placed thin tablets of white wood, inscribed with the names of the household dead. Prayers are repeated and offerings made before them every day. The annual festivals (*matsuri*) of the Ujigami, or local patron-deity, are everywhere important functions. Offerings are made, and the god, or rather his emblem, is promenaded in a procession."⁵⁸ Shinto appears to be the oldest religion in Japan, and in this worship they have *Gohci*, wands to which scallops of paper are attached, and these "are to be seen at every shrine and at every Shinto ceremony. Sometimes the god is supposed to come down and take up his temporary abode in the *Gohci*."⁵⁹ In Japan there appear to have been family and tribal or clan gods surviving from early times, and also national gods, similar to those found in other parts of the world, with tablets and idols in which they were supposed to dwell.

Thus it appears that the Japanese as well as the Chinese have for centuries used both tablets and idols. But in both nations the worship was essentially the same. A spirit was believed to enter some object (idol, tablet, *gohci*), and before these they prayed, beseeching the aid of the spirits, and offering to them sacrifices of various kinds intended to supply their desires, mollify their anger, and win their good will and assistance. The worship of these spirits appears to have been for ages, and is yet, the central and dominating feature of the religion of these nations. Out of this worship developed their religious customs, ceremonies and doctrines.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

⁵⁸ Aston, *Shinto*, 73-74.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.