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II

THE SOUL OF THE REDMAN

His Spirituality

The culture and civilization of the Whiteman are essentially material; his measure of success is, "How much property have I acquired for myself?" The culture of the Redman is fundamentally spiritual; his measure of success is, "How much service have I rendered to my people?"[1] His mode of life, his thought, his every act are given spiritual significance, approached and colored with complete realization of the spirit world.

Garrick Mallery, the leading Smithsonian authority of his day, says: "The most surprising fact relating to the North American Indians, which until lately had not been realized, is that they habitually lived in and by religion to a degree comparable with that of the old Israelites under the theocracy. This was sometimes ignored, and sometimes denied in terms, by many of the early missionaries and explorers. The aboriginal religion was not their [the missionaries'] religion, and therefore was not recognized to have an existence or was pronounced to be satanic."[2]

"Religion was the real life of the tribes, permeating all their activities and institutions."[3]

John James, after living sixty years among the Choctaw Indians of Texas, writes: "I claim for the North

[1] Pablo Abeita of Isleta reiterates this in all his public talks on the subject.

[2] "Picture Writing of the American Indians," *10th Ann. Rep. Bur. Eth.*, 1893, p. 461

"Religion was the real life of the tribes, permeating all their activities and institutions."[3]

John James, after living sixty years among the Choctaw Indians of Texas, writes: "I claim for the North American Indian the purest religion, and the loftiest conceptions of the Great Creator, of any non-Christian religion that has ever been known to this old world.…

"The North American Indian has no priests, no idols, no sacrifices, but went direct to the Great Spirit and worshipped Him who was invisible, and seeing Him by faith, adored Him who seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth, who is a Spirit and planted a similar spirit in His creatures, that there might be communion between the two."[4]

In 1834 Captain Bonneville visited the Nez Percés and Flatheads before they had been in contact with Whites, either traders or missionaries, and sums up these wholly primitive Indians: "Simply to call these people religious would convey but a faint idea of the deep hue of piety and devotion which pervades their whole conduct. Their honesty is immaculate, and their purity of purpose and their observance of the rites of their religion are most uniform and remarkable. They are certainly more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages."[5]

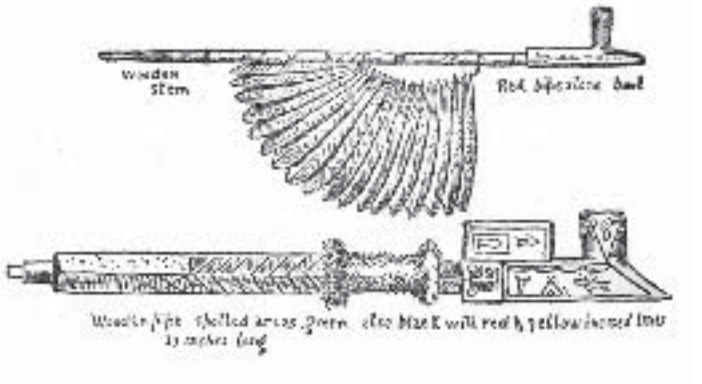
Tom Newcomb, my mountain guide in 1912 and 1914, was an old scout of the Miles campaign, who lived with the Sioux under Crazy Horse for some years in the early '70s. He said to me once (and not only said,

[3] Picture Writing of the American Indians," *10th Ann, Rep. Bur. Eth.*, 1893, p. 231.

[4] *My Experience with Indians*, 1923, p. 67

[5] Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, 1837, p. 171. Father de Smet came many years later—i.e. 1840—and began his mission in 1841. He was the first of the missionaries; but obviously could claim no credit for this condition.

but dictated for record): "I tell you I never saw more kindness or real Christianity anywhere. The poor, the sick, the aged, the widows and the orphans were always looked after first. Whenever we moved camp, someone took care that the widows' lodges were moved first and set up first. After every hunt, a good-sized chunk of meat was dropped at each door where it was most needed. I was treated like a brother; and I tell you I have never seen any community of church people that was as really truly Christians as that band of Indians."



Religion

The idea of one Great Oversoul is widely spread among the Indians; not universal, perhaps, but much more widely spread than in the Old World.

All of our best Indians believe apparently in one Great God. From among many recorded statements, I quote the following by Grinnell. In his discussion of the Pawnee belief in the Great Spirit, whom they call Tirawa, he says: "Tirawa is an intangible spirit, omnipotent and beneficent. He pervades the universe, and is a

Supreme Ruler. Upon His will depends everything that happens. He can bring good or bad; can give success or failure. Everything rests with Him … nothing is undertaken without a prayer to the Father for assistance.

"When the pipe is lighted, the first whiffs are blown to the Deity. When food is eaten, a small portion is placed on the ground [or in the fire] as a sacrifice to Him."[6]

Other Tribes, each in its own tongue, acknowledge the one Great Spirit. Orenda, Manito, Wakonda, Olelbis, Agriskoue, Maona, Tirawa, Awonawilona, etc., are among the names by which He is worshipped, sometimes as a personal God, sometimes as an impersonal all-pervading Spirit; but with a completeness of worship that has valuable lessons for other peoples and races.

Some superficial observers maintain that the Indians were Sun-worshippers. To this, Ohiyesa, the cultured Sioux, replies: "The Indian no more worshipped the sun than the Christian adores the Cross."[7]

Catlin writes of the primitive Indians on the Missouri: "The North American Indians are nowhere idolaters—they appeal at once to the Great Spirit, and know of no mediator, either personal or symbolical."[8]

Their breadth of view and complete toleration are reflected in a saying attributed to Wabasha and Red Jacket: "If any man do anything, sincerely believing that thereby he is worshipping the Great Spirit, he *is* worshipping the Great Spirit, and his worship must be treated with respect, so long as he is not trespassing on the rights of others."

[6] George Bird Grinnell, "Pawnee Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. vi, p. 113.

[7] *The Soul of the Indian*, 1911, p. 13.

[8] George Catlin, *Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, vol. ii, p. 233.

Again, by the same prophets: "Trouble no man about his religion—respect him in his view of the Great Spirit, and demand of him that he respect yours. Treat with respect such things as he holds sacred. Do not force your religion on anyone."

The Indian Sunday

The Redman's religion is not a matter of certain days and set observances, but is a part of his every thought and his daily life.

Many years ago in Montana, I heard a missionary severely rebuke an Indian for driving his team on Sunday.

The Indian looked puzzled, as he was merely minding his business and caring for his family. The missionary reiterated that this was the Lord's Day. At last a light dawned on the Indian. He glanced up with a gleam in his eye and answered, "Oh, I see. Your God comes only one day a week; my God is with me every day and all the time."[9]

Later I heard the same missionary denouncing an Indian dance, although it was beautiful, clean, athletic, and manly—much akin to the dance with which Miriam celebrated the defeat of Pharaoh, also the dance that King David did to express his joy when the Ark came back to Israel.

The missionary used violent language, and threatened jail and soldiers if the Indians did not cut off their long hair.

I defended the Indians and pointed out that not only Benjamin Franklin and George Washington wore

[9] "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."—Mark 2: 27.

their hair long, but the Lord Jesus Himself did—and finally, that Samson made the ruinous mistake of his life when he allowed them to cut off his long hair.

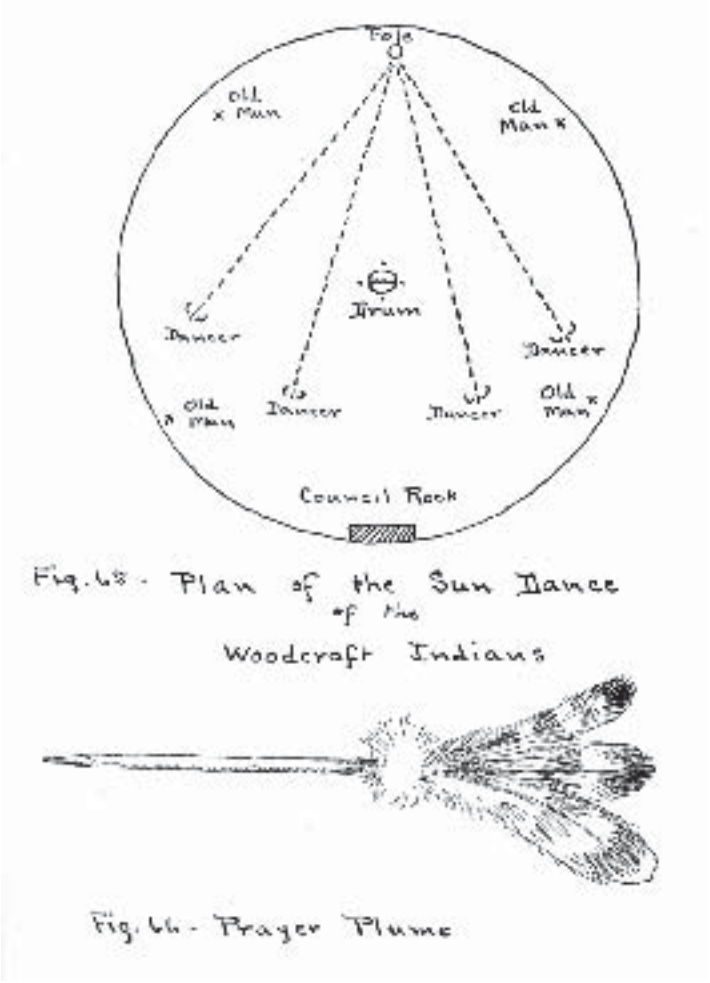


Fig. 65 - Plan of the Sun Dance of the Woodcraft Indians

Fig. 66 - Prayer Plume

The Chief and the Missionary

A recent book by Long Lance gives some helpful light on Indian thought and worship.[10] The authenticity of the book has been challenged, but the incident here set forth has happened many times, and is incontrovertible in its fundamental truth.

"…The next morning the White minister at the Hudson's Bay Post sent word to the Indians that he was coming over to visit them. The Suksiseoketuk told us that he was going to tell us about the Whiteman's Wakantonka, his Great Spirit.

"When they received this news of the coming of the minister, all of the Indians painted their faces and put on all of their best medicine clothes. The medicine man got out his drum, and soon we were ready to receive him.

"When we saw the minister coming, the medicine man started to beat his tomtom and sing one of his medicine songs; for he thought that would please the visitor who represented the Whiteman's 'medicine' and Great Spirit. Our Chief went out and met the minister and shook his hand, and then took him over to meet our minister, the medicine man.

"After they shook hands, the minister made a speech. He told our medicine man that he was preaching something not worth while. He said: 'I didn't mean for you people to fix up like this; I meant for you to wash the paint off your faces and put your medicine drums away. There is only one God in Heaven, and I am here to tell you about Him.'

"Indians never interrupt anyone when he is talking, even if he should talk all day—that is an ancient courtesy among Indians—so everyone stood and lis-

[10] *Buffalo Child Long Lance*, 1928, pp. 148-51.

tened to the minister while he told us of the Whiteman's God. He made a long speech. He said that the Indians must lay down their arms and live peacefully alongside the Whiteman who was coming into his country.

"When the missionary finished his speech, our Chief arose and addressed him. He said: 'Why do you tell us to be good? We Indians are not bad; you White people may be, but we are not. We do not steal, except when our horses have been raided; we do not tell lies; we take care of our old and our poor when they are helpless. We do not need that which you tell us about.'

"'But,' said the missionary, 'there is only one God, and you must worship Him.'

"'Then if that is true,' said our Chief, 'we Indians are worshipping the same God that you are—only in a different way. When the Great Spirit, God, made the world, He gave the Indians one way to worship Him and He gave the Whitemen another way, because we are different people and our lives are different. The Indian should keep to his way and the Whiteman to his, and we should all work with one another for God and not against one another. The Indian does not try to tell you how you should worship God. We like to see you worship Him in your own way, because we know you understand that way.'

"'But the Great Spirit you speak of is not the same one that we worship,' said the missionary.

"'Then there must be two Gods,' said the Chief. 'Your God made a land for you far across the "big water." He gave you houses to live in, good things to eat and fast things to travel in. He gave the Indian the tepees to live in and the buffalo to feed on. But you White people did not like the land that your God gave you, and you came over here to take the Indians' land. If you did that, how do we know, if we should accept your God,

that He won't take everything from us, too, when we die and go to your hunting grounds?'

"'But the Indians must learn how to pray,' said the minister.

"'We do pray,' replied our Chief. 'This is the prayer that we pray at our Sun Dance (Thanksgiving): 'Great Spirit, Our Father, help us and teach us in the way of the truth; and keep me and my family and my tribe on our true Father's path, so that we may be in good condition in our minds and in our bodies. Teach all of the little ones in Your way. Make peace on all the world. We thank You for the sun and the good summer weather again; and we hope they will bring good crops of grass for the animals and things to eat for all peoples.'"

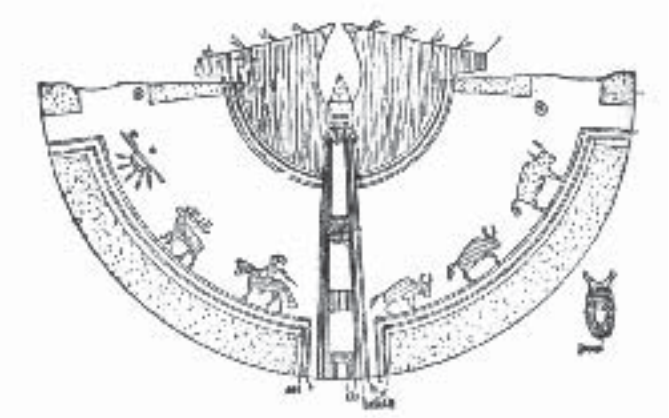
The Indian Creed[11]

Through what prophets we know not, but the evidence is beyond challenge that the Redman, before the Whiteman came, had achieved a knowledge of the Creator of the universe and was worshipping Him in a religion of spirituality, kindness, and truth.[12]

1. THERE IS ONE GREAT SPIRIT, THE CREATOR AND RULER OF ALL THINGS, TO WHOM WE ARE RESPONSIBLE. He is eternal, invisible, omniscient, omnipotent, unportrayable. In and through Him all beings live and move; to

[11] There can be no doubt that the following great men, and many more that could be named, held to a creed which was exactly that of the Redman: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Gideon, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin, Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, Walt Whitman, Renan, Ingersoll, and the Masonic Brotherhood, as well as the Quakers and the Jews.

[12] Canon J. S. Bezzant of Liverpool Cathedral, England, said in a recent address at Columbia University, New York: "One should speak of higher and lower religions rather than of true and false religions.



Him all worship and allegiance are due; from Him all good things come. Him we must approach with reverence; His favor may be won by prayer, by sacrifice, and a kindly life; knowledge of Him, by discipline, by fasting, and by lonely vigil; and with that knowledge will come His guidance. He is impersonal; yet at times inspiring or entering personally into animals, birds, clouds, rain, mountains, men or things.[13] Under Him are many lesser spirits.

2. Having arrived on this earth, THE FIRST DUTY OF MAN IS THE ATTAINMENT OF PERFECT MANHOOD, which is the just development of every part and power that go to make a man, and the fullest reasonable enjoyment of

"It is quite impossible to claim that spiritual life, the experiences and insights within one religion, are real; and to declare them entirely false illusions when manifested elsewhere.

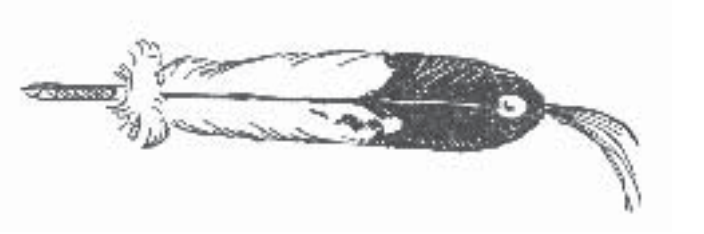
"God has not left Himself without witness at any time, and His everlasting power and divinity are manifested in varying degrees throughout the created universe and through the men and women who seek Him."—*New York Herald Tribune*, November 27, 1935.

[13] "This thought in its essence is almost what modern science has attained to—the conception of Nature and God as one."—Dr. E. L. Hewett, *Ancient Life in the American Southwest*, p. 74.

the same. He must achieve manhood in the Body Way, the Mind Way, the Spirit Way, and the Service Way.[14]

3. HAVING ATTAINED TO HIGH MANHOOD, HE MUST CONSECRATE THAT MANHOOD TO THE SERVICE OF HIS PEOPLE. He must, above all, be a good provider for his family, a brave protector, a kind and helpful neighbor, and ever ready to defend his family, his camp, or his Tribe from a foreign foe.

4. THE SOUL OF MAN IS IMMORTAL. Whence it came into this world or whither it goes when it departs, he does not know. But when his time comes to die, he should remember that he is going on to the next world. What the next life contains for him, he has no means of ascertaining. Nevertheless, he should not approach it with fear and trembling, repenting and weeping over such things as he has left undone, or such things as he should not have done. He should rest assured that he has done his best with the gifts and the limitations that were his,[15] and that his condition there will be governed by his record and his behavior here. Therefore, let him sing his Death Song, and go out like a hero going home.[16]



[14] Compare Luke 2: 52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

[15] There is no tree in the forest that is straight, though all are reaching up for the light, and trying to grow straight.

[16] Every Indian prepared in advance his Death Song. Some of these are given later.

The Twelve Commandments

1. THERE IS BUT ONE GREAT SPIRIT.[17] He is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, invisible. He pervades all things at all times. Reverence Him, and respect all worship of Him by others, for none have all the truth, and all who reverently worship have claims on our respect. So also, show respect to such things as are held sacred by others.[18]

2. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE A LIKENESS OF THE GREAT SPIRIT, or portray Him as a visible being.[19]

3. HOLD THY WORD OF HONOR SACRED. Lying is at all times shameful, for the Great Spirit is everywhere all the time. To swear falsely in the name of the Great Spirit is a sin worthy of death.

4. THOU SHALT KEEP THE FEASTS,[20] LEARN THE DANCES, RESPECT THE TABOOS, AND OBSERVE THE CUSTOMS OF YOUR TRIBE, if you would be a good member of the community and profit by its strength. For these things are the wisdom of the Ancients and of your fathers in the long ago.

5. HONOR AND OBEY THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER, and their fathers before them, for age is wisdom; and their

[17] There are many lesser spirits, just as certain Aryan creeds proclaim the existence of saints, archangels, angels, ghosts, fairies, goblins, ghouls, and devils. The conception of the Trinity, also the doctrines of Original Sin, of Vicarious Atonement, of Infant Damnation, and of Priestly Mediation, were utterly foreign to all Indian thought and teaching.

[18] When the Indians found that the Cross was an emblem sacred to the Whites, they, according to their custom, treated it with respect, although it meant nothing to them personally.

[19] One may make a likeness of His messenger, the Thunderbird; or His symbol, the Bird-serpent; or of lesser spirits, such as Katchinas; but never of the Great Spirit.

[20] The old Indian Bureau complained that the Indian lost too much time with 30 or 40 of these Sabbaths each year, and proposed to substitute 52 Sabbaths of rest, besides some 20 legal holidays.

discipline of you is surely for your helping and your lasting benefit.

6. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT MURDER. Killing a member of one's own Tribe, if deliberate, is a crime worthy of death; if by accident, it can be compensated by adequate damages, according to the judgment of the Council.[21]

7. BE CHASTE IN THOUGHT AND DEED, according to the highest standards of your Tribe. Keep your marriage vows, and lead no others into breach of theirs.[22]

8. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.[23]

9. BE NOT GREEDY OF GREAT RICHES. It is a shame and a sin of all unworthiness in a man to have great possessions, when there be those of his Tribe who are in want. When, by chance of war or of commerce, or the gifts of the Great Spirit that have blessed him with power, he hath more than he hath need of for himself and his family, he should call the people together and give a Potlatch or Feast of Giving, and distribute of his surplus to those that have need, according to their need; especially remembering the widow, the orphan, and the helpless.

10. TOUCH NOT THE POISONOUS FIREWATER that robs man of his strength, and makes wise men turn fools. Touch not nor taste any food or drink that robs the body of its power or the spirit of its vision.

11. BE CLEAN, both yourself and the place you dwell in. Bathe every morning in cold water, take the

[21] Killing an enemy in time of war was another matter, just as in modern civilization.

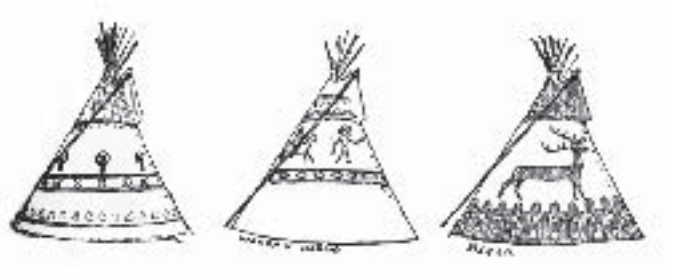
[22] In some Tribes, such as the Cheyennes and the Sioux, infidelity on the part of a married woman was considered a crime, worthy of death, or was, at least, grounds for divorce. In the case of the man, the penalty was less severe, as with us. In some other Tribes, more lenient views prevailed.

[23] Bishop Whipple, George Bird Grinnell, and many others tell us that theft was unknown in an Indian camp. Horse-stealing between Tribes was recognized as a kind of manly game, and not at any time considered a crime.

Sweat Lodge according to your need, and thus perfect your body; for the body is the sacred temple of the spirit.

12. LOVE YOUR LIFE, PERFECT YOUR LIFE, BEAUTIFY ALL THINGS IN YOUR LIFE: GLORY IN YOUR STRENGTH AND BEAUTY. Rejoice in the fullness of your aliveness. Seek to make your life long and full of service to your people. And prepare

a noble Death Song for the day when you are about to cross the Great Divide.



A Mystic and an Occultist

Second sight—that is occult vision, or clairvoyance—was widely understood and cultivated by the Indians. All their great leaders were mystics. Sitting Bull was an outstanding example. He commonly induced the trance and the vision by prayer, fasting and lonely vigil.

He realized by observation that alcohol is the great enemy of clairvoyance, and continually preached against it, warning his people that "firewater will rob you of the vision."[24]

"It is well known," says Ohiyesa, "that the American Indian had somehow developed occult power, and although in the latter day there have been many impostors, and, allowing for the variety and weakness of human nature, it is fair to assume that there must have been some even in the old days. Yet there are well-attest-

[24] Occult authorities locate the clairvoyant sense in the pineal gland, and warn us that it is quickly atrophied, and the sense obliterated by habitual use of alcohol.

ed instances of remarkable prophecies and other mystic practice."[25]

"I cannot pretend to explain them [these prophecies], but I know that our people possessed remarkable powers of concentration and abstraction, and I sometimes fancy that such nearness to nature as I have described keeps the spirit sensitive to impressions not commonly felt, and in touch with the unseen powers."[26]

"If you would purify your heart," says Wabasha, "and so see clearer the way of the Great Spirit, touch no food for two days or more, according to your strength. For thereby the body is purged, and your spirit hath mastery over the body.

"By prayer and fasting and fixed purpose, you can rule your own spirit, and so have power over all those about you."

Because the body is the soul made visible, we are in this life constructing the soul and the body that will be ours in the next.

By prayer and fasting and high service, we can so raise the quality of our being that we enter the next life with completeness of vision, hearing the Voices, and with knowledge of the Great Mystery.[27]

"The first *hambeday*, or religious retreat, marked an epoch in the life of the youth which may be compared to that of confirmation or conversion in Christian experience. Having first prepared himself by means of the purifying vapor bath, and cast off, as far as possible, all human or fleshly influences, the young man sought out the noblest height, the most commanding summit

[25] Ohiyesa, *The Soul of the Indian*, p. 137.

[26] *Ibid.*, p 163.

[27] "Many of the Indians believed that one may be born more than once; and there were some who claimed to have full knowledge of a former incarnation."—*Ibid.*, p. 167.

in all the surrounding region. Knowing that God sets no value upon material things, he took with him no offerings or sacrifices, other than symbolic objects, such as paints and tobacco. Wishing to appear before Him in all humility, he wore no clothing save his moccasins and breechclout. At the solemn hour of sunrise or sunset, he took up his position, overlooking the glories of earth, and facing the 'Great Mystery,' and there he remained, naked, erect, silent, and motionless, exposed to the elements and forces of His arming, for a night and a day or two days and nights, but rarely longer. Sometimes he would chant a hymn without words, or offer the ceremonial 'filled pipe.' In this holy trance or ecstasy the Indian mystic found his highest happiness, and the motive power of his existence."[28]

The Indian Silence[29]

"The first American mingled with his pride a singular humility. Spiritual arrogance was foreign to his nature and teaching. He never claimed that the power of articulate speech was proof of superiority over the dumb creation; on the other hand, it is to him a perilous gift. He believes profoundly in silence—the sign of a perfect equilibrium. Silence is the absolute poise or balance of body, mind, and spirit. The man who preserves his selfhood, ever calm and unshaken by the storms of existence—not a leaf, as it were, astir on the tree; not a ripple upon the surface of shining pool—his, in the mind of the unlettered sage, is the ideal attitude and conduct of life.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

"If you ask him, 'What is silence?' he will answer, 'It is the Great Mystery. The holy silence is His voice!' If you ask, 'What are the fruits of silence?' he will say, 'They are self-control, true courage or endurance, patience, dignity, and reverence. Silence is the cornerstone of character.'

"'Guard your tongue in youth,' said the old Chief Wabasha, 'and in age you may mature a thought that will be of service to your people!'"

The Daily Worship

"In the life of the Indian," says Ohiyesa, the Sioux, "there was only one inevitable duty—the duty of prayer, the daily recognition of the Unseen and Eternal. His daily devotions were more necessary to him than daily food. He wakes at daybreak, puts on his moccasins, and steps down to the water's edge. Here he throws handfuls of clear, cold water into his face, or plunges in bodily. After the bath, he stands erect before the advancing dawn, facing the sun as it dances upon the horizon, and offers his unspoken orison. His mate may precede or follow him in his devotions, but never accompanies him. Each

soul must meet the morning sun, the new sweet earth, and the Great Silence alone!"[30]

So also their other prophets: "When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the morning light. Give thanks for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food and give thanks for the joy of living. And if perchance you see no reason for giving thanks, rest assured the fault is in yourself."

Then, continuing the daily round, Ohiyesa says: "When food is taken, the woman murmurs a 'grace' as she lowers the kettle, an act so softly and unobtrusively performed that one who does not know the custom usually fails to catch the whisper: 'Spirit, partake!' As her husband receives the bowl or plate, he likewise murmurs his invocation to the Spirit. When he becomes an old man, he loves to make a notable effort to prove his gratitude. He cuts off the choicest morsel of the meat and casts it into the fire—the purest and most ethereal element."[31]

When ye are assembled in Council, fail not to light in the midst the Fire which is the symbol of the Great Spirit and the sign of His presence.

And light the Sacred Pipe, which is the symbol of Peace, Brotherhood, Council and Prayer, and smoke first to the Great Spirit in Heaven above, then to the Four Winds, His messengers, and to Mother Earth, through whom He furnishes us our food.

And let each Councilor smoke, passing the Pipe in a circle like that of the Sun from east southward to the west.

At the opening of Council, let the Chief arise, light the pipe, and pray: "Wakan Tanka Wakan na kay chin, Chandee eeya paya wo." That is, "Great Spirit, by

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

this pipe, the symbol of Peace, Council, and Brotherhood, we ask Thee to be with us and bless us tonight."

Indian Prayers

I

O Great Spirit of my fathers, this is my prayer.

Help me to feel Thine urge and Thy message.

Help me to be just even to those who hate me; and at all times help me to be kind.

If mine enemy is weak and faltering, help me to the good thought that I forgive him.

If he surrender, move me to help him as a weak and needy brother.

II

O Great Spirit of my fathers, help me to wholly void my heart of fear.

And above all things, O God of my people and of my soul, help me to be a man.

III

O God, show me the way of wisdom, and give me strength to follow it without fear.

IV

O Great Spirit, this is my prayer! Grant that fear may never enter into my heart to be the guide of my feet.

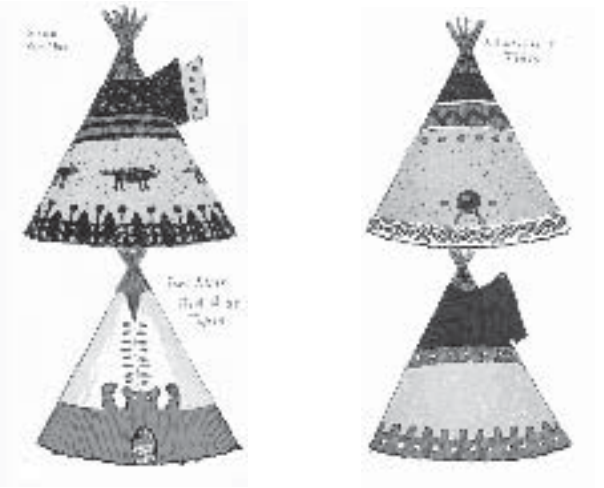
V

O Great Spirit, make me sufficient to mine own occasions.

Give to me to mind my own business at all times, and to lose no good opportunity for holding my tongue.

When it is appointed for me to suffer, let me take example from the dear well-bred beasts and go away in solitude to bear my suffering by myself, not troubling others with my complaints.

Help me to win, if win I may, but—and this especially, O Great Spirit—if it be not ordained that I may win, make me at least a good loser.[32]



THE OMAYA TRIBAL PRAYER

"Wa-kon-da dhe dhu
Wapa-dhin a-ton-he."

Translated into our tongue: "Father, a needy one stands before Thee. I that sing am he."

[32] This prayer, in brief, was inscribed on the wall of King George's study, Buckingham Palace, London.

This noble prayer to God was sung on the Missouri River, we believe, long before Columbus landed, and with the music, words, and attitude just as we of the Woodcraft Way use them today.

During the prayer those assembled stand in a great circle about the fire, with faces and hands raised to heaven. As the final words are sung, hands and heads are bowed to the symbolic fire, and the Chief announces: "With this our council is ended."

Hymn to Tirawa (God)[33]

This noble Pawnee Hymn to God, recorded by Fletcher, is comparable to the Psalms of David:

I

Tirawa, harken! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
We standing wait thy bidding here;
The Mother Corn standing waits,
Waits to serve thee here;
The Mother Corn stands waiting here.

II

Tirawa, harken! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
We flying seek thy dwelling there;
The Mother Corn flying goes
Up to seek thee there;
The Mother Corn goes flying up.

[33] From the Pawnee Hako (Fletcher), *22nd Ann. Rep. Bur. Eth.*, Part 2, 1904, p. 347.

III

Tirawa, harken ! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
We touch upon thy country fair;
The Mother Corn touches there
Upon the border land;
The Mother Corn is touching there.

IV

Tirawa, harken! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
The path we reach leads up to thee;
The Mother Corn enters there,
Upward takes her way;
The Mother Corn to thee ascends.

V

Tirawa, harken! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
Behold! We in thy dwelling stand;
The Mother Corn, standing there,
Leader now is made;
The Mother Corn is leader made.

VI

Tirawa, harken! Mighty one
Above us in blue, silent sky!
The downward path we take again;
The Mother Corn, leading us,
Doth thy symbol bear;
The Mother Corn with power leads.

Burial and Hope for the Dead

The burial ceremonies, the respect for the departed and the belief in a future life are set forth in the practice of many tribes. Catlin, speaking of the Mandans, says: "Whenever a person dies in the Mandan Village, the customary honor and condolence are paid to his remains, and the body is dressed in its best attire, painted, oiled, and supplied with bow and quiver, shield, pipe and tobacco, knife, flint and steel, and food enough to last him a few days on the journey which he is to perform. A fresh buffalo's skin, just taken from the animal's back, is wrapped around the body, and tightly bound and wound with thongs of rawhide from head to foot. Then other robes are soaked in water, till they are quite soft and elastic, which are also bandaged round the body in the same manner, and tied fast with thongs, which are wound with great care and exactness, so as to exclude the action of the air from all parts of the body.

"There is then a separate scaffold erected for it, constructed of four upright posts a little higher than human hands can reach, and on the tops of these are small poles passing around from one post to the others, across which are a number of willow rods just strong enough to support the body, which is laid upon them on its back, with its feet carefully presented towards the rising sun.…

"The traveler… if he will give attention to the respect and devotions that are paid to this sacred place, will draw many a moral deduction that will last him through life; he will learn, at least, that filial, conjugal, and paternal affection are not necessarily the results of civilization; but that the Great Spirit has given them to man in his native state."[34]

The Pueblos and some other Tribes, according to Dr. E. L. Hewett, are strangely indifferent to the body after death. They consider it a mere husk, an empty case, to be disposed of with view only to the comfort of the survivors. The soul that emerged will go on to the next life, and construct for itself a new and better body.

Death Songs

Every Indian in the old days had a Death Song prepared for the time when he knew he was facing the end.
One Indian Chief confided to me that his Death Song was the same as that of the thirty-seven Sioux patriots who were executed at Mankato, Minnesota, in 1862 for seeking to drive the invaders from their country:

I, Chaska, do sing:
I care not where my body lies,
My soul goes marching on.
I care not where my body lies,
My soul goes marching on.

When Nanni Chaddi and his four Apache warriors, after four days of starvation, thirst and agony, decided to face and fight rather than surrender to the

[34] George Catlin, *Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, vol. i, p. 89, 1841.

White regiment that had them cornered in a cave, they sang to God:

> Father, we are going out to die.
> For ourselves we grieve not,
> But for those who are left behind.
> Let not fear enter into our hearts.
> We are going out to die.

Then, armed only with arrows and lances, they dashed into the fire of a hundred rifles, and were shot to rags.

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