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THE POCASSET TRAGEDY

THE

LEGITIMATE FRUIT OF CHRISTIANITY.

A Discourse.

BY

WILLIAM DENTON.



WELLESLEY, MASS. :
DENTON PUBLISHING COMPANY. .
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THE LEGITIMATE FRUIT OF CHRISTIANITY.

YOU have all heard the story, for it shook the people of this land as the wind shakes the aspen-leaves; yet we need to hear it again and again. It is a text from which sermons need to be preached wherever Christian superstition reigns; and New England, I am sorry to say, is largely under its sway.

On the first day of last May, in the hamlet of Pocasset, in the town of Sandwich, Charles F. Freeman, a conscientious Christian, a good husband, and a kind father, by direct command of God, as he said, deliberately killed his daughter, nearly four years of age, as she lay sleeping in bed; the mother of the child consenting to the horrible deed. He held the knife suspended for some time, expecting that God would stay his hand; but, as he did not, the knife descended, and the deed was done. On the afternoon of the next day, he called a number of his Christian brethren and neighbors together, and told them what he had done, showing them the body of his child. On being asked how he felt the next morning after the murder, he replied, "Glorious! at peace with God and all mankind."

When Mrs. Freeman was asked by the jailer, when she was committed, whom she and her husband had murdered, she said, "Our child. But we did not call it 'murder:' we called it a 'sacrifice.'" — "Did you know that your husband would kill the child?" her questioner said. "I knew he would if God did not stay his hand; but I believed he would."

We hear of murders frequently; for the whole world is raked for its crimes every day, and the papers present us with the murders for our news-breakfast. But they are murders of anger, of jealousy, or for money or lust. But this was a religious murder, — a murder committed by a well-meaning man, uninfluenced by hate or lust, and in obedience to the dictates of his conscience. It was a religious murder; and it is this that renders it so worthy of our consideration. It was the direct fruit of the man's Christian creed; and only the common sense and the natural morality that we possess as human beings save us from similar deeds of horror in every town of the land.

Freeman's belief, that the Bible is the infallible word of God, was the first step toward the commission of his crime. No man in our country to-day could possibly commit such a deed, unless he believed in the divinity of the Bible. He read the story of Abraham and Isaac, that God commanded the old man to murder his son, whom he dearly loved, by making him a burnt-offering; and that, because he took the knife to slay his son, God blessed him above all men then living, and made him also a blessing to unborn millions. In the New Testament he found both the faith of Abraham and his works extrava-

gantly praised, and this murderous deed singled out for special commendation. There he is called "faithful Abraham" and the "friend of God." He read also that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to be killed; and he believed these things, as people are taught to believe them in every Christian church in the land. Atrocious murder thus became associated in his mind with God, faith, duty, happiness, and glory. Why should not God speak to him as he did to Abraham? Why not command him to kill his darling girl whom he loved, as he commanded Abraham to kill the darling boy that he loved? Might not God send an angel to stay his hand, and thus show that he is still a miracle-working God? or, if not, could he not, would he not, raise his child from the dead, even as he raised his own Son from the tomb? Freeman, it is probable, reasoned in this way; and with a faith in the Bible and its God, firm and unwavering, it is not surprising that he should. The murder of his child was the result; and the reason why more persons do not perform similar deeds is, they have less faith and more common sense.

Freeman's belief in the miraculous was the second step toward his crime. "How could a man believe that God would work a miracle? The day of miracles is past," says a Christian believer. Who told thee that the day of miracles is past? Is Jehovah dead, who blew a canyon through the heart of the Red Sea, and took the Israelites over on dry land, a wall of water on each side; who made the sound of rams' horns more powerful than dynamite, and blew down a city's walls, that his beloved children

might murder the peaceful inhabitants; who put more force in the hair of Samson than there is in a ten-horse-power engine; who muzzled the hungry lions, that they might not devour the praying prophet; who provided a comfortable habitation in the belly of a fish for the runaway Jonah, where he lived for three days; who raised the widow's son, and burst the barriers of the tomb for the crucified One? No Christian can reject this Jehovah and his mighty deeds: he is the God of Beecher and Talmage, of Moody and Comstock; and he is the God of Freeman, as he was the God of Abraham and the Canaanites who preceded him. When did he cease to interfere in human affairs? Do not all Christians believe that he answers their prayers, and works daily miracles for their benefit? Every Christian prayer asks for the performance of a miracle, or it is a mockery. Listen to the prayers offered every Sunday in our Christian churches: "O Lord! bless the poor and the needy; open thy storehouse, and supply them from thy abundant fulness. Bless the sick and the afflicted; comfort those that mourn; lift up the down-trodden; stem the current of infidelity that is flowing through the land; save the intemperate, and revive thy work." For such prayers to be answered, miracles must be worked; and the resurrection of a child to a miracle-worker can be no more difficult than the healing of the sick or the salvation of the drunkard. Every Christian minister sows the seed daily, which in Freeman grew, and bore deadly fruit.

But Freeman not only believed in the Bible and in miracles: he also believed, that, when God commands a crime to be committed, it is right, or he

never would have murdered his child. If a man had told him to stab his child, he would have regarded him as a monster of wickedness; but he never seems to have thought that it would be just as wrong for God to command him to do wrong as for man. If he had believed that God told him to commit adultery, or to steal or get drunk, it is evident that he would have done any of these deeds with a perfectly clear conscience.

It is easy to see where he learned this "devil's doctrine." The Bible-writers generally held the idea that God could do no wrong, or that whatever he did was right because he did it. For one man to drown another is a crime: for God to drown a world—men, women, and innocent babes—by the million is perfectly right. "Thou shalt not kill," is the command given to the people, and he who violates it is to be put to death: but the Israelites, by the command of Jehovah, make a business of man-killing and baby-butcherings; and they are still his peculiar people, and their bloodiest crimes are pronounced praiseworthy deeds. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," reads the command, and there is no people far enough advanced to have written law that does not regard adultery as a crime: but the Lord tells Hosea to commit fornication and practise adultery, and, like Freeman, he never questions the propriety or the right of what God commands; he hires a prostitute and bribes an adulteress to live with him, and then writes a book, and tells the whole world what he has done, as Freeman called in his neighbors to tell them of the deed he had committed. Strange to say, instead of the disgust which Hosea's deed would

naturally excite in an unpolluted soul, here, in intelligent America, ministers read this record of obscenity and infatuation, and call it the word of God; and the man who refuses to bow to this indecent idol is denounced as an infidel.

If wrong is right when God does it, or commands it to be done; if crime is virtue when he practises it, —a devil might be as good a god as any: all that he needs is omnipotent power. And this is just what the doctrine has led men to believe. It has put a monster as heartless as a millstone on the throne of the universe. He hears the wail of billions of damned souls, as they rise from the infernal pit, like the roar of a tempest; and he laughs at their calamity, as he listens complacently to the adulations of the saints who have been bathed in the blood of his Son. That the people have not become demons by the preaching of such a doctrine is because humanity is vastly superior to orthodox Christianity, based as it is on the brutality of the past. When it overpowers humanity, as it did in the case of Freeman, it shocks even Christians to see the fruit of the tree their fathers planted, and that they have watered and are still assiduously cultivating.

There was still another reason for Freeman's crime: Christianity, in which he believed, and Judaism, its parent, are bloody religions, and familiarize men with such sacrifices as that which Freeman supposed God demanded at his hands. They present as an object of worship a god who delights in blood. The first acceptable sacrifice that Jehovah received was the blood of innocent lambs. He had no respect to Cain and his offering, which consisted of fruits of

the ground; but to Abel and his bloody offering, "firstlings of his flock," he had respect. His temple was a slaughter-house; his priests were butchers; his altar was daily blood-besprinkled; and almost every worshipper came with an offering of blood to propitiate this brutal divinity. There is perhaps no nation in existence that has a bloodier code than the old Jehovah law of the Jews. More than forty transgressions are to be punished with death. Men were to be "cut off" for offences of the most trivial character, and were treated as if they were of no more value than cabbages. He demanded as an atonement for the sins of the human race the blood of his only Son; nor will he save men to-day, unless they plead that blood, and rely upon it for salvation. His very dress, according to the revelator (Rev. xix. 13), is a vesture dipped in blood. His promise to the righteous is, that he shall "wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (Ps. lvi. 10). What wonder that the religions established for the worship of such a blood-loving monster should be bloody religions, and the believers in them guilty of bloody deeds?

The Bible is a book of blood. As Mr. Pentecost, an Orthodox Boston revivalist, says, "If you should take a little camel's-hair pencil, as I have done, dip it into a bottle of carmine ink, and pass it lightly over those passages of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation that make reference to blood in connection with all that refers to salvation, forgiveness, redemption, sanctification, glory, and every thing of that kind, you would be astonished to see how red your Bible would look." And he adds, "If you

should cut out every thing associated with blood, there would be no salvation left at all." And the poor, simple soul never seems to have thought that he could give no stronger testimony against the Bible than this, no better evidence that it was written by men largely imbued with the barbarous spirit of a cruel age, and that it is utterly unsuited to the more cultivated and moral time in which we live.

Mr. Moody, too, another orthodox evangelist, in his sermon on "The Blood," says, "If you read your Bibles carefully, you will see the scarlet thread running through every page of them. The blood commences to flow in Genesis, and runs on to Revelation. That is what God's book is written for. Take out the scarlet thread, and it would not be worth carrying home." According to Mr. Moody, then, the Bible is a channel for a stream of blood to flow through: it was made for that very purpose, and without the blood it would be absolutely worthless. Can any man state its utter worthlessness in stronger language than this?

We can imagine we hear an ancient Canaanite boasting, as they doubtless did, "Our religion is the most bloody of all religions: that is what makes it superior to them. Our god, Moloch, has more children sacrificed to his honor than any other god. The cries of one burning baby no sooner cease, than those of another begin. Let us glorify the name of Moloch! for he is the king of gods." Such a boast would have been as reasonable then as Mr. Moody's is now.

Who are the people that delight in blood? Say-

ages like those of Feejee, who boast of the number of human bodies that they have eaten; barbarians like the Ashantees, who offer sacrifices of human victims to their gods every three weeks. Who think most about blood, talk most about blood, and, if they could write, would write most about blood? The truthful answer is, savages and barbarians. Listen to the conversation of the lowest classes of people, and you hear "blood," "bloody," every few sentences. The scarlet words appear with a profusion that should delight the heart of a Moody or a Pentecost. What people of Europe take the greatest pleasure in deeds of blood? The Spaniards, and they are least enlightened of all Europeans. The most intelligent Christian sects—such as the Unitarians and Universalists—say the least about blood: the most ignorant say the most. The most ignorant ministers, and those with large animal propensities, are the men who preach sermons on "The Blood," and assure us, as Mr. Moody does,¹ that "any religion which makes light of the blood is of the Devil," and, "if any man preaches against the blood, he is doing the Devil's work." "Devil"? Can mortal conjure up a worse devil than this blood-besmeared God of thine, whose wrath could only be assuaged by the death of his innocent Son, and who will torture eternally, as thou sayest, all who are not washed in his blood? Any man doing what thou callest the Devil's work might be proud of his employer and his business when he compares himself with those who are trying to lead men to worship this soul-tormentor and monster of iniquity

¹ Moody's Sermon on The Blood.

Judaism began with a bloody and indecent rite, that of circumcision; and it is no wonder, when Moses insisted upon circumcising his son,—since God “sought to kill him” because he was uncircumcised,—that his common-sense wife, Zipporah, called him “a bloody husband.” This disgusting practice in the 17th chapter of Genesis is called “God’s covenant,” and every man-child that has not been circumcised is to be “cut off:” so that every male Jew was certain to be mutilated or murdered.

The first thing done by Moses at the establishment of Judaism at the foot of Mount Sinai was to sprinkle the people with bullocks’ blood (Exod. xxiv.). Fitting inauguration of this sanguinary religion! The Jewish priests, professedly by the command of God, were all bedaubed and sprinkled with blood when they were consecrated. Thus reads Exod. xxix. 20, 21: “Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take the blood and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about; and thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron and upon his garments, and upon his sons and upon the garments of his sons with him.” This was not a preparation for the circus or the amphitheatre, as we might suppose, but for the tabernacle and the worship of the blood-loving Jehovah.

When they were consecrated, their principal business seems to have been to satisfy the thirst of Jehovah for blood. Every day they were to kill a bul-

lock and two lambs, beside the individual offerings that were presented, the blood of the victims being sprinkled upon the altar. On the sabbath a double offering was made, an extra quantity of blood being needed for a holy day. At the new moon, at the three great festivals, the great day of atonement, and the feast of trumpets, generally two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs were sacrificed. When a sin-offering was made, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil of the sanctuary, some put on the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest poured at the foot of the altar of sacrifice. The Jewish priests must have been bedabbled with blood worse than most slaughterers, and the altars of Jehovah besmeared with gore.

When Solomon's Temple was dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, we are informed that there were offered twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. Hear the bellowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, the death-thuds of Jehovah's butchers! See the pools of blood, the temple-floor bespattered with gore, the red stream constantly flowing around the altar and down into the brook Kidron! Watch the dying struggles of the animals, the varying emotions as they mirror themselves on the faces of the assembled multitude, where the sickening smell is almost overpowering, where the smoke is constantly ascending in a place that has no chimney, and is grimy as a smithy! This is where bloody men offer bloody sacrifices to a bloody God, whom our forefathers accepted in their ignorance, but whom we and our children have cast off forever. He is a fit idol only for naked

savages who have not yet abandoned the practice of eating their enemies.

It is easy to see why women never officiated as priestesses among the Jews: their sensitiveness renders them unfit for such brutal ceremonies; and, if women had established the Jewish religion, such ceremonies would certainly have formed no part of it.

The apostles and the New-Testament writers generally were Jews, and believers in the blood religion of their countrymen. It is not surprising that they clung to the idea of blood atonement, and saddled on Christianity the barbarous divinity that their countrymen had so long worshipped. "Without shedding of blood," says the author of Hebrews, "there is no remission." "We are justified by his blood," says Paul. In Peter we read, "Redeemed with precious blood." Christians, it is true, have discarded the butchering of bullocks, goats, and sheep as a religious ceremony; but they have retained the God in whose name the butchering was done: and their religion is the direct offspring of that of the blood-besmeared of Judea, and retains much of its brutal character.

It is only necessary to read the popular hymns which are sung in orthodox Christian churches to discover abundant evidence of this. Watts says, —

"'Twas he who cleansed our foulest sins,
And washed us in his richest blood."¹

What senseless stuff men will sing in the name of religion! "Cleansed our foulest sins!" Suppose one of them was drunkenness: what would it be when

¹ Watts' and Select Hymns, book i. hymn 61.

it was cleansed? We cleanse a garment; but we do not cleanse the dirt that is on it: neither can a sin be cleansed. "And washed us in his richest blood!" Blood is about the foulest of all fluids in which a man could be washed; and, instead of cleansing him, he could hardly be so filthy, but it would make him worse. We may be told that it is to be understood in a spiritual sense. But why clothe spiritual ideas in such filthy language? What can be the spiritual meaning of washing in blood? Such language may suit a cannibal or a savage, who delights to dabble in the blood of the man or beast he has slain: it belongs to a brutal past, and is out of place in a civilized community. It is no wonder that it leads at times to such bloody crimes as the Pocasset tragedy. The wonder is that such crimes are not tenfold multiplied.

I quote again from Watts:—

"Here at thy cross, my dying God,
I lay my soul beneath thy love,
Beneath the droppings of thy blood."¹

Think of a soul lying beneath a crucified, dying, blood-dripping God! Can filth and folly farther go?

Then we have Cowper's popular hymn, sung in every orthodox church in the land:—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

We have only to attempt to realize it, and its horrible, as well as incongruous, character becomes

¹ Watts' and Select Hymns, book ii. hymn 4.

apparent. What kind of a fountain can it be whose only supply is the veins of a man? But suppose the supply sufficient: we have a fountain spouting blood! — a sight which would drive away every refined and sensitive person at once. Around this gory fountain are the black-robed priests of Jehovah, plunging in filthy sinners, that they may be cleansed!

Such hymns as these, sung in our popular churches, keep constantly alive the idea of a God who is gratified by bloody sacrifices, and who might be expected, therefore, to command a man to murder his child.

We naturally inquire, What led the Jews to offer sacrifices, and form their religion of blood, which Christianity has only modified? At an early period in the history of the human race, every man was compelled to be a shedder of blood. Constant struggle with the wild beasts around him was the price of existence. Lions, tigers, bears, and hyenas lurked in the caves; and personal encounters with them were of common occurrence. We know also that inferior and superior races occupied the land at the same time, and combats were frequently taking place between them. Long after this, petty tribes were continually at war, never meeting without a fight, when the bodies of the slain were eaten by the murderers and their friends, and sometimes as a religious sacrament. Is it any wonder that the religions born in such a time, the offspring of the minds of such people, were religions of blood? In those days, if one man did another a great injury, an atonement could only be made by blood; for the morning of love had scarcely dawned upon the benighted earth. Among the Bedouins and other

Arab tribes, any one within the fifth degree of relationship to a murdered man might legally kill the murderer. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," is the old law of blood-revenge, as given in Genesis ; and in Num. xxxvi. 33 it is reiterated in another form : "The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." Even where the death of an individual among the Israelites was caused by accident, the person who caused it was compelled to flee to a city of refuge, and was only safe within its boundary.

Among people in such a moral condition the religions of blood were born. As man demanded blood before he could be reconciled, so the god whom he fashioned in his own likeness demanded blood. His wrath could only be turned away when the offender, or some one accepted in his place, had bled.

There was another motive to human sacrifice that operated with many in the world's childhood. Man desires to obtain the favor of the unseen powers. He cannot give them any thing, for they are invisible ; but he can consume objects in the fire, thus render them invisible, and then the invisible powers can appropriate them. Thus he burns the best fruits of the soil, and the finest animals of his flock ; and he fancies the deity hovering over the burning beast, and smelling the "sweet savor." As man was better pleased with the smell of some substances than others, his god must also be ; and hence he offers incense, burning odoriferous gums and balsams, such as olibanum, benzoin, storax, and myrrh.

The more precious the offering, the greater favor from the gods might the offerer obtain. There was nothing too good for the god to receive: so there was nothing too precious for the offerer to sacrifice.

In consequence of such ideas, human sacrifices were common among barbarous nations, and among some who had advanced to a considerable degree of civilization; religious institutions being always the last to yield to the demands of progress.

Before the time of Mohammed "black-vested priests were wont every seventh day to sacrifice children on the sacred stone in the Kaaba to Hobal the Creator." The Mexicans, at the time when America was discovered, offered up thousands of victims yearly to their cruel divinity; and the Spanish chroniclers inform us that they saw a temple-floor incrustured with human blood a span deep. Themistocles, before the battle of Salamis, offered up three Persians as victims to the gods. The Romans, according to Livy, during a time of great distress, according to direction in the Books of the Fates, offered up for a sacrifice a Gallic man and woman, and a Greek man and woman, to appease the angry gods. The Canaanites, the ancient dwellers in Palestine, offered sacrifices of animals in a similar manner to that practised by the Jews, and also human sacrifices, principally those of first-born male children, since they were dearest to the offerer. The human sacrifices took place annually at the great festivals of expiation, and at the beginning of important enterprises. "The Canaanites," says Lenormant, "were remarkable for the atrocious cruelty that stamped all the ceremonies of their worship and the precepts of their religion. No other people ever

rivalled them in the mixture of bloodshed and debauchery, with which they thought to honor the Deity." He quotes Creuzer, who says, "Terror was the inherent principle of this religion. All its rites were blood-stained, and all its ceremonies were surrounded by gloomy images." The Phœnicians, who were Canaanites, carried the practice with them to Carthage, which they founded; and children were sacrificed there down to the time of Tiberius. The Greeks and Romans in vain endeavored to abolish the cruel rite.

It is easy to see where the Israelites obtained their brutal and bloody ceremonies, and the practice of child-sacrifice, which was not unfrequent among them. Their own statements show that they practised the cruel rites of the Canaanites. We read in the 106th Psalm, "They (and it is the Israelites to whom the writer refers) sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." The sacrifice of children was continued among the Jews even to the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah says, "They have built the high places of Tophet . . . to burn their sons and daughters in the fire" (Jer. vii. 31). Ezekiel declares that they slew their children to their idols (Ezek. xxiii. 39). He even declares that they caused all the first-born to pass through the fire, or, in other words, offered them as a sacrifice to Moloch, the fire-god (Ezek. xx. 26). We learn from 2 Kings xxiii. 10, that Josiah "defiled Tophet" in the Valley of Hinnom, so that no man might sacrifice his son or his daughter to Moloch: so that child-sac-

rifice must have been practised in his day in the immediate neighborhood of Jerusalem, as it had been long before. Manasseh and Ahaz, kings of Judah, sacrificed their children to Moloch, as we learn from Kings and Chronicles, in the same place; and, if the kings did such things, what must have been the condition of the nation?

In the last chapter of Leviticus we find human sacrifices even regulated by law. "No devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord, . . . both of man and beast, shall be sold or redeemed. Every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death." And, in accordance with this law, Jephthah offered up his daughter a burnt offering to Jehovah.

Abram was evidently a Canaanite, though it is claimed that he was originally from the Chaldean city of Ur. His very name is Canaanitish, and so is the name of his brother Haran; and his father must have been a Canaanite to give them such names. The Hebrew language was that of the Canaanites. Circumcision was an ancient Canaanite rite; and it is evident that the religion of the Israelites was but a modification of the sanguinary religion of Canaan.

Jehovah was but an ancient idol whom the Jews accepted for their special God, and of whose prowess they were continually boasting. "Jehovah," says Gesenius in his Hebrew lexicon, word *Jahveh*, "is a word of very remote antiquity, perhaps of the same origin with Jovis, Jupiter." One of the names of Moloch was Jao. Accepting the ancient idol as their God, much of the old character went with him, and is still retained by most of his worshippers.

Abraham found, when he went southward in Canaan, a Bethel, or house of God (Gen. xii. 8), the very same God which he worshipped. The name Jehovah enters into the composition of the names of several places in ancient Palestine, names never given by the Jews, and which show that Jehovah was a Canaanite idol, as he subsequently became a Jewish and Christian one.

The Jew improved upon the ancient religion of Canaan: but his religion was still brutal and bloody, like its parent; and its evil influence is felt in America to-day. Jehovah is but a modified Moloch, and Freeman's child is one of his recent victims.

Abraham could never have been tempted to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering, had such sacrifices been unknown to him, though it is probable that his faith in the practice was too weak to allow him to consummate the crime; and he slew a ram in the place of his son.

As men outgrew barbarism, they became less and less disposed to butcher human beings to placate their deities, or to obtain favor at their hands. The gods improved as the people advanced; and beasts were accepted by them in the place of men, women, and children. From the murder of human beings practised by their ancestors to gratify the gods, the Greeks and Romans passed to the slaughter of choice animals; and human sacrifices in the later days of the republic were prohibited by the Roman senate.

The Jewish ceremonial law was established after the people had generally advanced to this modified form of sacrifice; but the old idea still remained, that the deity could only be placated by blood. The state-

ment in Num. xvii. 11 shows clearly this opinion in the mind of the writer at that time: "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The blood of a man was no longer necessary; but blood was essential. The beast took the place of the man or child, because increased intelligence and morality no longer allowed men to consider murder a religious duty.

With the introduction of Christianity came a further modification of the idea of atonement by blood. It is no longer necessary to slay even beasts: Jesus has died as an atoning sacrifice for the whole world, and for all time. His blood shed on Calvary is a continual atonement. The sinner's blood need not be shed on account of his transgressions, nor need he shed the blood of his sheep or cattle; but the wrathful Deity cannot be satisfied without blood. As the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed bull before the veil behind which Jehovah was supposed to be, so Jesus, the sinner's perpetual substitute, when the grim God frowns, sprinkles him with his own blood. The frown disappears, and he turns to the sinner with a smile of forgiveness on his blood-stained face. Do you think this is a caricature of orthodox Christianity? Turn to Dr. Watts, "the evangelical poet," and hear him sing, —

" Well, the Redeemer's gone
T' appear before our God,
To sprinkle o'er the flaming throne
With his atoning blood."¹

¹ Watts' and Select Hymns, book ii. hymn 36.

Just as the Canaanites supposed that God's wrath could be appeased by the blood of a murdered child, as the Jews thought that the blood of slaughtered beasts rendered the Deity forgiving to his creatures, so Christians generally believe that the wrath of God was and is appeased by the blood of his Son,—all worshippers of the same deity in a similar manner, though sometimes under different names. Hear Watts again :—

“ Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
That calmed his frowning face,
That sprinkled o'er his burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace.”¹

Such a God reminds one of the man-eating ogre of the nursery-tale, who smells his victim, and will have his blood; and the people must have been in a similar condition of enlightenment when they framed the one as when they made the other.

To preserve the recollection of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, orthodox Christians generally have a bread-and-wine, or flesh-and-blood, feast once a month or once in three months, called the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It reminds one of the sacrament of the Aztecs, in which the blood of the slaughtered victim was mixed with the flour of maize by the priests, and religiously eaten by the people. The Persian priests at the Darun's sacrifice, in honor of Zoroaster, their law-giver, eat cakes of unleavened bread, and drink fermented soma-juice,—an intoxicating liquor. Many who join in the Christians' blood-feast are very estimable people;

¹ Watts' and Select Hymns, book ii. hymn 36.

but all such ceremonies are the heritage of a brutal past, and their observance assists in keeping people religiously in a barbarous condition. Our art, our science, and our mechanics are of the present age; our religion contains a large proportion of what rightfully belongs to the prehistoric age, when men were cannibals.

In one of the hymns sung in orthodox congregations at sacramental times is the following:—

“Thy sacred flesh our souls have eat;
'Tis living bread: we thank thee, Lord,
And here we drink our Saviour's blood.”

That blood being some vile, concocted, drunkard-making compound of the wine-merchant. In another sacramental hymn we read,—

“At thy command, our dearest Lord,
Here we attend thy dying feast:
Thy blood, like wine, adorns thy board,
And thine own flesh feeds every guest.”¹

Cannibals could sing such hymns with gusto. Men and women of intelligence should be ashamed of them, and they should be ashamed of these flesh-and-blood feasts at which they are sung. If children were trained from their infancy to believe that the filthy and poisonous practice of smoking tobacco was a religious duty, and pleasing to God, they would meet in church, and puff this poison for incense just as religiously as men and women join in these cannibal feasts, eating bread and drinking intoxicating wine, and making believe that they are the flesh and blood of their crucified God.

¹ Watts' and Select Hymns, book iii. hymn 19.

Such practices associate dram-drinking and divinity. They familiarize men with blood, unite murder and religion, confound the soul of the universe with the bloody Moloch of the Canaanites, and prepare the way for just such a deed as this which has so shocked the community.

I present, then, these four causes for Freeman's crime, and similar crimes from similar causes are far from unknown: First, belief in the infallibility of the Bible; second, belief in the miraculous; third, belief that the necessity for right-doing can be set aside by the command of a god; and, fourth, the bloody and brutal character of the religion in which he had been educated, and whose doctrines he had accepted.

Had not Freeman believed in the infallibility of the Bible, he would have read the story of Abraham, and pitied the infatuation of an old man who fancied that the Universal Spirit commanded him to kill and roast his boy.

It was the echo of Jehovah's voice that he heard, as he read its revolting stories made sacred by his Christian faith. Thou crimson Bible! whose barbarous pages have stimulated and sanctioned the murder of millions; whose good lessons are obscured, like the stars on a stormy night, by the clouds of brutality, indecency, and superstition among which they are hid,—the fires of thy hell have shrivelled the hearts of multitudes of well-meaning people, who have tortured like demons those who differed from them about the meaning of thy obscure pages. Thou hast forged the fetters which to-day firmly bind the souls of Popery's slaves and Protestantism's dupes,

making them the tools of priestly tyrants, whose reign depends upon the spiritual imbecility of their subjects.

Had not Freeman and his wife believed in the miraculous, they would never have thought that his hand would be supernaturally stayed, or their slain child raised from the dead; and the crime would never have been committed.

Miracle is the dream of the idle: it is the philosopher's stone of the religious alchemists, who are seeking by prayer to turn the lead of their want into the gold of supply. To reap on this planet, we or some one else must sow. If pumpkins could be raised by prayer, there would not be much room for any other crop. If God at certain times took special care of the children of Christians, the poor little wretches would fare hardly in this world. Few would feel called upon to see for omniscience, to help omnipotence, or provide for those who were in the care of the all-provider; and, unless all was done by miracle, whatever was done would be a curse. Do we sin? Certainly. Then we suffer; and a world in which sinners did not suffer would not be fit to live in. Nor is there any way under heaven to escape the suffering which wrong-doing produces. Cease to do evil, and do well, are the only roads that lead to bliss. A great deal is said about Jesus saving sinners; but the man could not save himself from being cheated by a pretending fig-tree, nor from being entrapped by a Judas, and hung by the Romans. And how can such as he save any one?

Had not Freeman believed that wrong is right if God commands it to be done, any voice that he

might have heard, or fancied that he heard, commanding him to commit a crime, could only have been attributed to some vile source, and would have died away unheeded.

The law of right must bind all. The more exalted the being, the greater necessity for unswerving obedience to its dictates. When the father says, "My son, you must not drink liquor: it is a curse," we expect him to set an example of total abstinence. How can the judge who is a thief rightfully sentence a criminal for stealing? How could a god like Jehovah, guilty of breaking nearly every command of the Decalogue, with any justice sentence sinners for violating them? "In the name of justice, I protest," says the sentenced sinner. "You have denounced me for stealing. I can prove, from your own book, that by your command the Israelites stole a whole country, and made slaves of the wretched inhabitants. You say I have committed murder, and that is true; but you cannot surely condemn me. Where I murdered one, you murdered millions. I killed a few that I might get their money, which I sorely needed; but you drowned a whole world, and are going to torment us forever only to gratify your unreasonable and unjustifiable anger." And what could heaven's potentate say in the presence of assembled worlds? Under such circumstances, even a god would be dumb.

Lastly, if Freeman had not been educated in a religion of blood, like Christianity and Judaism, which it indorses, the murderous images that filled his mind and haunted him day and night would have been to him unknown; and his darling girl would

still have been a mother's bliss, a father's joy, as in the days gone by.

When this man is tried, Christianity and Judaism will be tried. Had not Freeman as much right to obey what he believed, and still believes, was the command of God, as Abraham had? If Abraham is to be praised, and his faith commended, how much more should Christians commend Freeman, who trusted when Abraham failed! Many Christians are crying, "Hang him! Such a wretch as he is not fit to live." Yes, gentlemen; but, when you hang him, you hang Abraham and Jehovah, who were equally guilty, and condemn your religion, which was the parent of his crime. The causes to which we have traced it, not only belong to orthodox Christianity: they are its very heart.

Let us not, however, suppose that what is thus visible, and shocks us, is the greatest evil that is done by this barbarous religion. The eruption on a man's face only reveals the disordered interior condition of his system; and Freeman's crime is only an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual malady, with which millions are afflicted. When a man accepts the divinity of the Bible, he accepts its malignant God, its torturing Devil, its everlasting fire, and its fanatical Saviour; and he cannot now do this without doing violence to his soul, denying the divinity within him, and in the end he is in danger of becoming a criminal fanatic or (if specially intelligent, and his interest binds him to the church) a miserable hypocrite.

As certainly as we have outgrown the cannibalism once practised by our forefathers, so shall we out-

grow the bloody religions that now defile and disgrace our land. Even some of the Jewish prophets appear to have outgrown the blood religion of their countrymen. Isaiah says, God delights not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats; and Jeremiah even declares that God never commanded the Israelites concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices (Jer. vii. 22), thus giving the lie direct to the authors of the Pentateuch. The most intelligent and exemplary Christians to-day have become sick of the disgusting story of blood which enters so largely into the discourses of those who are seeking to scare people by the terrors of a fiery hell, and draw them by the hope of a gold-paved heaven.

I call upon every thinking man and woman to aid us in dethroning the sanguinary Jehovah, who burns his children not for a few moments, as did Moloch the Canaanitish infants, but fiendishly feasts on their agony as "the smoke of their torment ascends forever." Aid us in destroying the bloody religion taught in his name, which, despite the good lessons occasionally inculcated by its ministers, is forever dragging the people down to the brutalities of a by-gone age. This religion makes woman a slave, and represents every child as a born inheritor of eternal torment, from which it can only escape by passing through its river of blood. By its doctrine of an everlasting hell it paralyzes the intellect, appeals to men's fears, and beclouds their judgment. It wars with, and frequently dethrones, reason; it pampers pride, it beggars hope, it nurses despair, it curses the thinker, and it damns the doubter. Its advocates imprison the man whose arguments they cannot

answer, and burn him when their power is equal to their rage.

The spirit throbbing in every atom of the universe is less adequately represented by Jehovah than it was by Jupiter, and the advancing tide of knowledge shall sweep away the one as surely as it has swept away the other. Angry gods and tormenting devils shall no longer haunt the dark world; for the sun of science shall drive away the black night of superstition, and a rational and scientific religion shall overspread the earth. When that time comes, the fear of an orthodox hell and all hope of its Oriental heaven, which none but a barbarian could enjoy, will have equally departed; and in their place will be an assurance of a natural life in the hereafter, the inevitable outgrowth of the life here, in a world where progress operates, and presents a prospect of a life of rational bliss to every human soul.

When this takes place, such crimes as that of Freeman will be as impossible as the human sacrifices of the ancient Druids, or the still more ancient cannibal feasts of the early men of Great Britain and France; and the world, as it looks back, will shudder as it sees in the pages of history the bloody spectre that once stalked through the land, and was known as the Christian religion.

The following letter from the wife of Charles F. Freeman to her sister shows us clearly the barbarous nature of the religion in which she was educated, and the true causes—and they are such as I have pointed out—that led to the murder of her child.

The man has the stuff in him of which the noblest heroes have been made; and he should be lauded for his heroism, however much we may regret his fanaticism.

The mother, in this letter, lays bare her throbbing heart, and writes with a power and pathos that have seldom been equalled, and that cannot fail to reach every parent's heart. We observe the struggle between human affection and blind faith—between sound sense and Christian superstition—which ended in the temporary overthrow of reason, and the Pocasset tragedy.

COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY MRS. CHARLES
FREEMAN TO HER SISTER.

BARNSTABLE, May 14, 1879.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER,—I received your letter yesterday. Was very glad to hear from you. O sister! you do not know, you can never know, the sorrow of my heart. Your letters are all kind and full of love and sympathy, but my grief is so much deeper than any you can know. I think that I feel as Jesus must have felt when coming out of Gethsemane, when he found his loved disciples sleeping, who had but a little while before professed such love for him. They did love him, and were faithful unto death for his sake; yet they never understood, as did he, the agonies of that night.

Was ever sorrow like this sorrow? Was there ever grief like mine? Did I not know the innocency of Charlie's heart, and something of the terrible trial through which he passed before he was willing to bear the test of Abraham's faith, as he felt called to it? And did I not know he had faith, and was sure God would stay his hand, as was Abraham's, and no harm should come to precious Eddie? O sister! if I did not know all this, if our faith in God had not been so implicit, I should be insane: I could not live.

You cannot know how much Charlie suffered, oh, how much, night and day! and, when after getting no rest, in terrible distress he told the Lord he would have the faith of Abraham, this brought him relief. Had I thought it would not, oh, how differently I would have done! But that awful requirement came again.

O sister! it is a wonder my heart-strings did not break. You cannot conceive of my agony. Our Father in heaven must have known it. Why, oh! why, did he not answer our prayers? We never prayed so from the depths of utter helplessness, that God would spare him this terrible trial and woe. And God knew this was no choice of Charlie's loving heart; he knew how he loved his darling, to say nothing of those terrible results that must follow, if he did not tell him it was enough, and give him peace.

O sister! why did he not, oh! why not answer our prayers? Instead of that came that terrible requirement, "They that have the faith of Abraham shall be blest with Abraham." He was blessed by God. It was counted to him for righteousness. Had it not been for him, we could have had no Christ. . . .

When I found he had Abraham's faith, knowing, as I did, Charlie's love to God and his family, and fear to doubt or disobey God, — believing myself it was to be a test only of faith, — after using what reason I could against it, I left speaking; but, oh! how I prayed! I did not for one moment believe God would take our darling, nor did Charlie.

O sister! we had too much faith, or it is mistaken faith, or there is no God, or it is of God!

And when I went into the room afterwards, and found Charlie hugging the little, lifeless form, O sister, sister! I could not, could not tell you how we felt. He had promised God, he had believed his word, and yet we were with *death*. Oh! where was the loving Father that pities those that fear him? Then there seemed to be comfort. I cannot write you all: it is too long.

But God could raise Eddie. Many of his apostles did; and Jesus, was it not his will to take her, and then raise her to life, and thus show a sleeping, cold Church that there were some

who had faith in God, and that the God of Israel lived, and so save those who know not what is truth?

Oh! the joy of my Eddie risen, how priceless! 'Would it not more than repay our sufferings? And what power and glory it would give in the Church of God! Charlie had done all that God required: surely God would justify.

I have waited, and believed that Eddie would rise, that she must; but it has not been, and we are here. *Our Eddie* dead! our Mildred a stranger! All our bright hopes shattered in an instant, — can it be by a mistaken faith? O sister! you knew something how completely we had given all to God, that there was in our hearts no idol of any thing we knew of; you knew something of the sacrifice we had been called upon to make for the sake of him who suffered the loss of all things for us, and how we continually prayed for guidance. O sister! whom will God lead, if he did not us? Tell me if we have one strand that is wrong. As I look back, I cannot see how I could be more devoted to the will of God. I am like a child led by its mother to the very brink of a precipice, and left without room to turn and escape; or a child terribly punished for doing what, at fearful cost, it had thought to be the Father's will. I cannot collect my thoughts. Tell me, dear sister, if you have found the truth, and where it is. How far can we trust God, who has *promised* to lead us into all truth? That not one step shall slide, he will guide us with his eye, and uphold us with his right hand; he *will not* suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, — and many, very many more such promises. I know they are conditional, — that we are to be his followers, his alone; but have we not? Oh, show me where! I cannot seem to get hold of any thing; but yet I know I am drifting. Oh, God is love! I will, I must have faith. Oh, bring me into light, dear Father! Charlie was so sincere in his act and life, that he still believes that God will manifest and justify him. Oh, that he might! but I cannot see how he can. I can only see we were misguided, but none the less sincere. We are indeed in utmost need; and our prayer is still, O Father, show us the way!

HATTIE.

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