

of Scotland, has narrated his experience in still stronger terms. If two of the first minds of the age, brought up in God-fearing families, familiar with the Bible from their youth, their memory stored with extensive reading, and their minds cultivated by frequent intercourse with intelligent society—if they could with difficulty shake off the superstitious fears imbibed in childhood; what may be the fears and terrors of a degraded race, with no Bible, no philosophy, no intercourse with people wiser than themselves, with a sense of sin and guilt on their conscience—with earth, and air, and ocean peopled, as they suppose, with malignant spirits,—with enemies on all sides, whose sacred men and women, by simple incantations, can bring any or all of these spirits, to inflict upon them any or all of the sufferings to which humanity is exposed? With minds so dark, with ideas of religion so perverted, living in such habitual fear and terror—such being the creed of heathenism, such being their views and feelings, such the state of their mind towards God,—the words of Scripture may still be applied to heathenism, and the regions of heathenism may well be described as the dark places of the earth.

II. We come next to consider the *character* of modern heathenism: it is *cruel*. If its aspect towards God is that of fear, its aspect towards man is that of *cruelty*. The cruelty of heathenism, even modern heathenism is proverbial. The country is scarcely yet recovered from the shock caused by the cruelties perpetrated in the Indian mutiny. In China, a similar spirit has been repeatedly manifested. The cruelties and persecutions in Madagascar are still fresh in our memories: while the fate of the Helmores and Mrs. Price testify to the same character of heathenism in Central Africa. But I again confine myself to the New Hebrides. In religious sentiments, such as theirs, there is nothing to promote benevolent feelings—nothing to check the natural selfishness of man; hence every selfish feeling and principle, incidental to unsanctified, unrenewed humanity, luxuriates under such a system. There is little to check feelings of revenge, and to promote feelings of forgiveness for injuries sustained; hence revengeful feelings obtain full scope, and receive hearty applause, among heathen society. When the interest, or the will, of the strong come into collision with the interest, or the will, of the weak, the weaker must give way. Might invariably prevails over right. If the weaker party injures or offends the stronger, revenge, sweet revenge, is indulged to the utmost.

Their superstition adds tenfold force to the innate selfishness of human nature, by creating imaginary injuries, evils and offences, far surpassing all the real injuries which one man ever can, in ordinary circumstances, do to another. In every case of death, disease, famine or calamity, of any kind, the first

question is, Who has done this? by whose sorcery or witchcraft has this evil been caused? and as soon as this is found out, or supposed to be found out, means are sedulously devised to secure revenge: hence cunning, treachery, and violence are brought into play: murder, war, or revenge in some form, is the result. This leads to retaliation: and in this way they go on, revenging and retaliating, till all the darkest, deadliest, and most demon-like passions and feelings of the human heart are brought into constant action.

Their cruelty manifests itself in every possible form. It begins with the youngest and ceases not till it has reached the oldest.

1. They are cruel to *children*. Infanticide, the most cold hearted of all murder, prevails extensively; female children especially are its victims. If a child is likely to prove a trouble to the mother to bring it up, it is coolly murdered; if she has a quarrel with her husband, she will murder the child as revenge. Selfishness and revenge, in many forms, terminate in infanticide.

2. They are cruel to *women*. In all those heathen isles, man is a tyrant, woman is a slave. Woman is made subservient to the will of man, to his interests or his passions: to the gratification of his will, whatever form it may take. The most marked and revolting form of cruelty on Aneityum formerly was, and on Tanna still is, the strangulation of the wife on the death of her husband. On Aneityum every married woman wore, not a marriage ring on her finger, but what might be called a marriage cord on her neck, a kind of necklace, but strong as a piece of small rope. The moment her husband died, she was strangled with this; and that by her son, if she had one, come to maturity; by her brother, if she had no son; or by her nearest male relation if she had no brother. She was strangled that her spirit might accompany her husband's to *Umatamas*—the land of the dead. If a man had two, three, or more wives, they all shared the same fate. Owing to female infanticide, the strangulation of widows, and their general bad treatment of the women, the female population was scarcely equal to three-fourths of the male.

3. They are cruel to the *old*. In all christian, and in most civilized countries, special respect is paid to the old. We find this sentiment engraven in the very forms of speech, used in almost every language, ancient and modern, to denote office and honor: the idea of age enters into these terms, however young the person may be who bears the office or receives the honor. The Hebrew *Zakkein* or elders, the Greek Presbyters, the Roman senators, the Italian seigniors, our own elders and aldermen, all imply the wisdom and authority of age, and the respect due to the same. But no such idea exists in the language of Aneityum.