

southern islands of the group, Aneityum, Tanna, Aniwa, Fotuna, and Erromanga, believed that these islands constituted the whole world. From Tanna all these islands could be seen; but no other land could be seen from any one of them. It was not till a native sailed, in a trading vessel, to some of the adjoining islands, and returned, that the existence of other lands and other races of people was first made known to them. Their knowledge on all other secular subjects was equally limited. In everything connected with religion their minds were shrouded in the deepest darkness. With no Bible, no books, no intercourse with other people, no traditions from an enlightened ancestry, what could they know? They knew nothing of the true God, nothing of their true relation to him as Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor: nothing of the fall of man through Adam, or his way of recovery through Christ: nothing of the law: nothing of the gospel: nothing of heaven and hell: nothing of the day of judgment and of the eternal world. They had a very few broken fragments, either of traditional religion, or of the remains of God's law written on man's heart—their constitutional conceptions or instinctive beliefs on the subject of religion. Their scanty fig-leaf-like covering pointed to the fall.—They believed in an invisible world, and in the existence of gods or spirits,—superior beings who had made, and still, in some way, preserved and governed their limited, little world. They believed in the immortality of the soul, and in something like a future state of rewards and punishments; and they had certain ideas of right and wrong. They had a certain order of priesthood, or sacred men; they offered sacrifices and made prayers, and they retained the right of circumcision: but they never dreamed of the resurrection; and they had lost all traces of the weekly Sabbath. We feel thankful for even these scanty remains of religion, as forming a basis for instructing them in the first elementary principles of the gospel.

2. Ignorance necessarily leads to *error*, and hence their ideas on religion are grossly *erroneous*. I confine myself to one point as a specimen. It is a primary article in their creed, that there is no such thing as death, or disease, or famine, or hurricane, or calamity of any kind, arising from natural causes. They are all supposed to be occasioned by witchcraft or sorcery—to be brought about by the incantations of some sacred men: or else they are supposed to be sent directly from the gods, as the punishment of some special sin. The theology of Job's friends is there fully developed; great sufferers must have been great sinners. They have lords many and gods many, but they are all objects of fear, none of them objects of love: their moral character is the moral character of Satan, not the moral character of God,

either as the Father or the Governor of the world. The character of their deities is drawn from their own hearts, where Satan sits enthroned. Water cannot rise above its own level; and so in matters of religion, without revelation, men cannot rise above themselves; they cannot conceive of a God better than their own hearts. They are like the wicked man of old, of whom God said, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself,"—Psa. 1. 21. Hence their religion consists in a belief in magical incantations, and in the practice of unmeaning rites and ceremonies, instead of a true faith and pure morality.

3. Their erroneous ideas about religion have produced *superstitious fears*. Their religion produces no love, either to God or man, but a constant fear of both: they live in constant fear of the gods, in constant fear of the sacred men. It is only those who have lived among heathens, and who have understood their language, and who have, in this way, become acquainted with their views and feelings, that can have any conception of the state of fear and terror, under which they continually live. It is a state of grievous bondage. Perhaps the nearest approximation to a correct idea of their situation, to be attained by those who have not lived among them, may be reached by those who have been brought up in remote localities, where the superstitions of a by-gone age were still lingering; and where stories of ghosts, apparitions, and appearances of Satan, were poured into the ears of the young. Let such suppose, that all their knowledge respecting God, angels and spirits—every idea that they had obtained respecting these, directly or indirectly from the Bible, were to be blotted out from their mind: that all this light were to be wanting, and that all they knew of the spiritual world was learned from fabulous legends respecting ghosts, and apparitions, and the appearances and power, and ludicrous or malignant doings of Satan; and that they had a firm hereditary belief, that every noted man was a wizard, and every noted woman was a witch—possessed of such magical power, that by a few incantations, they could bring famine, disease, or death, as often as they would. If it were possible for any one to realize such a state of feeling, he would have some faint idea of the darkness of heathenism.

One of the greatest minds—one of the most eminent writers in this country of the last century, who was brought up in a rural district in the West of Scotland; then teeming with superstition, says, that these stories of the supernatural "had so strong an effect upon his imagination, that in after life, in his nocturnal rambles, he sometimes kept a look-out in suspicious places," and it required an effort of philosophy to set his mind free. One of the ablest writers of the present century, and a native of the North