

Had I not been already convinced that the undertaking I had commenced was not only practicable, but also comparatively easy, I should have been effectually deterred from any further investigations into a field regarded by all, who had treated of it, as beyond the range of enquiry. But I felt assured that the difficulty that had previously appeared so great, arose from the mode in which the subject had been handled.

None can question the accuracy of Sir Henry Ellis' remark, that "to trace back" customs to their origin is a hopeless task. Philology would have made but slow progress, if students of that science had been compelled to trace back languages to their origin. I have adopted, therefore, exactly the same principles of investigation as Professor Max Muller and other philologists have made use of, viz., a *comparison* of customs.

Philologists find Sanserit, Greek and German sister languages, not by feeling their way through the mists of antiquity, that veil the wanderings of the wide-spread Indo-European races from the home of their Arian ancestors, but by a *comparison* and analysis of *existing* languages; the results have opened up an era in the life of our race long anterior to the birth of history or even of tradition.

I have pursued precisely the same mode of investigation, which is a comparatively easy and simple one.

Once establish that a large number of arbitrary customs, such as could not have naturally suggested themselves to all men at all times, are universally observed, and we arrive at the conclusion that they are *primitive* customs, which have been *inherited* from a common source; and if inherited, that they owe their origin to an era anterior to the dispersion of the human race. Hence a comparison of customs leads us at once to their origin without the hopeless task of "tracing them back" through that vast period when history is but an unsafe guide.

Adopting, then, the principle of a *comparison* of customs, I have found that there is a peculiarity in man never yet duly appreciated, viz.: a *marvellous perpetuity of customs, and superstitions* among the common people. Religions may change, and civilization may be developed or decline, but they cannot affect the existence, though they may slightly modify the meaning of those memorials of primitive man which are perpetuated in the manners of the people.

I have found festivals, still mentioned in our Calendar, observed in all parts of the world. Thus a primeval festival in honor of the dead. (*of three days duration* in Europe, Asia, and Japan,) known to our Calendar as Halloween, All Saints and All Souls (Octr. 31st, Novr. 1st and 2nd), is observed, at or near the beginning of November, in Europe, Asia, Polynesia and America. The Spaniards were very naturally surprised at