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I.—*The Sacrificial Rite of the Blackfoot.*

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The Indians here referred to as the Blackfoot are the Bloods, Peigans and Blackfoot in the Province of Alberta, three kindred tribes speaking a single language which, collectively, are known as the Blackfoot nation, and as such form one of the widely dispersed branches of the Algonkian linguistic stock of the American race.

The people of the Blackfoot tribes believe that after death the spirit of an Indian pursues an aimless, endless, and totally uninteresting career in a ghost land which they locate in the Great Sand Hills near the eastern border of the Blackfoot territory.

They think that while the ghosts of a few individuals may wander about among the living, with whom they have little or no means of communication, the majority are gathered at the Sand Hills, and that there is nothing of the nature of reward or punishment in connection with that existence in the land of spirits.

Fearing nothing and hoping for nothing beyond the grave, the whole concern of the religious Blackfoot is with the affairs of this material life.

Old age, then, is the greatest favour that he can receive, and if to this be added such pleasures as those arising from wealth, popularity, success in war, freedom from bodily ailments and family bereavements, he desires nothing more.

He knows, however, that the few live to a great age and the many die young. Some people are wealthy and others are poor. One man rears to maturity a large family, while other parents do not succeed in preserving a single child. He reasons that all of these blessings are, therefore, subject to influences not controlled by himself, and as he is inclined to revere that which is beyond his understanding, he thinks that in the powers of nature he recognises the masters of his destiny.

The result is a pantheon of nature gods and a somewhat complicated system of theology, which if faithfully explained in all of its ramifications, would present a complete exposition of Blackfoot thought, so extensively does religion enter into the affairs of everyday life.

Of the numerous objects of worship, the Sun is the one which receives the greatest adoration. More prayers are addressed to this principal deity than to all the others combined, and the most important of the religious rites and ceremonies are devoted to him in particular.