

Paper 90 — Shamanism — Medicine Men and Priests

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This chart is a revision of the 2013 and 2015 versions.

Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 90, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) William Graham **Sumner** and Albert Galloway **Keller**, *The Science of Society, Volume II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927)
- (2) William Graham **Sumner**, Albert Galloway **Keller**, and Maurice Rea Davie, *The Science of Society, Volume IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927)
- (3) Lewis **Browne**, *This Believing World: A Simple Account of the Great Religions of Mankind* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926)
- (4) E. Washburn **Hopkins**, Ph.D., LL.D., *Origin and Evolution of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable; the highlights are tentative.)
- (f) **Light green** indicates Bible passages or fragments thereof, which are not paralleled in the source text.

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P A P E R 9 0 — S H A M A N I S M — M E D I C I N E M E N A N D P R I E S T S

90:0.1 The evolution of religious observances progressed from placation, avoidance, exorcism, coercion, conciliation, and propitiation to sacrifice, atonement, and redemption. The technique of religious ritual passed from the forms of the primitive cult through fetishes to magic and miracles; and as ritual became more complex in response to man's increasingly complex concept of the supermaterial realms, it was inevitably dominated by medicine men, shamans, and priests.

XXXVIII: SHAMANISM (Sumner & Keller 1335)

§310.* **The Fetish-Man.** (Sumner & Keller 1344)

Of conditions in India it is said: "... [T]he general idea of our riverain folk seems to be that the Deity is a busy person, and that his hall of audience is of limited capacity. Only a certain proportion of mankind can hope to attain to the presence of God;

90:0.2 In the advancing concepts of primitive man the spirit world was eventually regarded as being unresponsive to the ordinary mortal.

Only the exceptional among humans could catch the ear of the gods; only the extraordinary man or woman would be heard by the spirits.

Religion thus enters upon a new phase, a stage wherein it gradually becomes secondhanded;

but when certain individuals have got there, they may have opportunities of representing the wishes and desires of other members of the human race. Thus, all human beings require an **intervener** between them and God” (S&K 1348).

always does a medicine man, a shaman, or a priest **intervene** between the religionist and the object of worship.

And today most **Urantia** systems of organized religious belief are passing through this level of evolutionary development.

90:0.3 Evolutionary religion is born of a simple and all-powerful fear, the fear which surges through the human mind when confronted with the unknown, the inexplicable, and the incomprehensible. Religion eventually achieves the profoundly simple realization of an all-powerful love, the love which sweeps irresistibly through the human soul when awakened to the conception of the limitless affection of the Universal Father for the sons of the universe. But in between the beginning and the consummation of religious evolution, there intervene the long ages of the shamans, who presume to stand between man and God as intermediaries, interpreters, and intercessors.

1. THE FIRST SHAMANS— THE MEDICINE MEN

§309. **The Shaman.** (Sumner & Keller 1340)

[contd] Man as a fetish has been considered under the general topic of fetishism. We come now to the **ranking fetish-man**; the **medicine-man** or shaman (S&K 1340).

90:1.1 The shaman was the **ranking medicine man**, the ceremonial **fetishman**,

His importance can scarcely be exaggerated; and, because in his person and his function he collects together most of the strands of evolving religion which then, when he has worked them into new combinations, radiate forth into unforeseen possibilities, the review of his person and his function amounts to a sort of epitome of religion ... (S&K 1341).

Such being his capacity, it is evident that he outranks all merely earthly functionaries. The war-chief is something and so is the great hunter or artisan or counsellor or ruler; yet all these, since they have to do with the physical or social environment only, are less than the medicine-man ... (S&K 1341).

[T]he state and church, if such high-sounding terms may be used of primitive arrangements, are not separated but form a composite; generally, indeed, the former is subjected to the latter (S&K 1342).

The word “sacerdotal” has been used in the foregoing paragraph; for the shaman is also the priest in the more special sense of that word (S&K 1342).

[“ ... There were in Tonga certain contact taboos which apparently applied only or specially to the *tuitonga*” (priestly king). If he entered the house of “a subject it would become taboo and could never be inhabited by its owner ...” (S&K IV 745).]

XXXIX: FUNCTIONS OF THE SHAMAN (Sumner & Keller 1371)

§313.* **Shamanistic Practice.** (Sumner & Keller 1371)

The ancient Hebrews had seers alongside the priests, who imparted information in return for gifts (S&K 1374).

and the focus personality for all the practices of evolutionary religion.

In many groups the shaman outranked the war chief,

marking the beginning of the church domination of the state.

The shaman sometimes functioned as a priest

and even as a priest-king.

Some of the later tribes had both the earlier shaman-medicine men (seers) and the later appearing shaman-priests.

§320.* **Social Position of the Shaman.**
(Sumner & Keller 1413)

Evidence from the Society Islands “points to the relationship of head priests to the higher chiefs, and to the appointment by chiefs of persons who were to act as official priests, and to the tendency of the office thus created to become hereditary” (S&K 1415).

XXXVIII: SHAMANISM (Sumner & Keller 1335)

§310.* **The Fetish-Man.** (Sumner & Keller 1344)

Evidences of possession may be physical, mental, or other; and they may be natural or induced. In any case the fetish-man must be different from the ordinary; he must be abnormal and as such inexplicable except by reference to spirit-influence (S&K 1344).

“... In general the [Sema Naga] *thumomi* is in some degree possessed and is sometimes subject to fits somewhat resembling epilepsy” (S&K IV 743).

“The Yakut woman is *without exception hysterical*,” and is highly suggestible. One form of hysteria (*menerik*) ... is artificially induced by the shamans (S&K IV 741).

And in many cases the office of shaman became hereditary.

90:1.2 Since in olden times anything abnormal was ascribed to spirit possession,

any striking mental or physical abnormality constituted qualification for being a medicine man.

Many of these men were epileptic,

many of the women hysteric,

and these two types accounted for a good deal of ancient inspiration as well as spirit and devil possession.¹

Paranoia, with illusions of grandeur or of persecution, is a phenomenon calculated to impose upon the ignorant; many of the prophets and founders of sects have shown it (S&K 1346).

§311.* **Induced Possession.** (Sumner & Keller 1353)

While it is true that the shaman sometimes becomes a mere trickster and deliberately imposes upon the ignorant, yet one who conceives charlatanry to be the rule has altogether missed the truth and failed to apprehend the essential candor of the primitive peoples in dealing not only with the environment of things and of men but with themselves (S&K 1356).

[The shaman's] view of his own performances is the same as [everyone else's], namely, that he is **possessed by a spirit** which has entered into and assumed control of him (S&K 1356).

§310.* **The Fetish-Man.** (Sumner & Keller 1344)

A prophetess "throws herself on the ground and remains in a state of catalepsy for some time, while the awe-stricken villagers gather around her, waiting for revelations.

At last she speaks and her words are accepted unquestioned as the oracles of God, for she has **seen the ancestors face to face**" (S&K 1351-52).

Quite a few of these earliest of priests were of a class which has since been denominated **paranoiac**.

90:1.3 While they may have practiced deception in minor matters,

the great majority of the shamans believed in the fact of their **spirit possession**.

Women who were able to **throw themselves into a trance or a cataleptic fit** became powerful shamanesses;

later, such women became **prophets** and spirit mediums.

Their cataleptic trances usually involved alleged **communications with the ghosts of the dead**.

§311.* **Induced Possession.** (Sumner & Keller 1353)

The female shamans are often professional dancers; in their profession there is no ecstasy; they tend to become prostitutes and the men who imitate them practise sex-vices (S&K 1359).

§312.* **Reputed Powers of the Shaman.** (Sumner & Keller 1362)

An Eskimo *angakok* requires an apprenticeship up to ten years long, with protracted periods of solitary retirement. He must evoke a spirit by stone-rubbing, die of fright, and later come to life again (S&K 1368).

§311.* **Induced Possession.** (Sumner & Keller 1353)

The adventitious aids to a striking individuality, in the shape of grotesque and imposing dress, masks, and other paraphernalia, not to mention professional manner, which still clings to both priest and doctor, may be dismissed with a single graphic illustration ... [Etc.] (S&K 1354)

And there were discovered by a series of shamans a variety of poisons, ranging from alcohol and nicotine to hashish and the juice of the deadly fly-mushroom (*amanita muscaria*), which, taken in proper quantities, induced intoxication or mental states indistinguishable to simple minds from mania, hysteria, catalepsy, and the other evidences of possession listed above (S&K 1355).

Many female shamans were also professional dancers.

90:1.4 But not all shamans were self-deceived; many were shrewd and able tricksters.

As the profession developed,

a novice was required to serve an apprenticeship of ten years of hardship and self-denial to qualify as a medicine man.

The shamans developed a professional mode of dress and affected a mysterious conduct.

They frequently employed drugs to induce certain physical states which would impress and mystify the tribesmen.

§312.* Reputed Powers of the Shaman.
(Sumner & Keller 1362)

After various initiatory features, ... the new Australian medicine-man mingles with members of the craft, learning their secrets, such as they are, practising sleight-of-hand tricks, and, not least in importance, accustoming himself to looking preternaturally solemn ... (S&K IV 757).

§310.* The Fetish-Man. (Sumner & Keller 1344)

In South Africa, ventriloquism plays a good part in the shaman's business and those who have such powers enjoy increased reputation (S&K 1347-48).

§311.* Induced Possession. (Sumner & Keller 1353)

Further, there can be no doubt that the shaman long ago practised hypnotism and autohypnotism and that both the hypnotizer and the hypnotized were regarded as possessed (S&K 1355).

Meditation, with the eyes fixed upon some object or point—as the monks of Mount Athos stared at their navels—is yet another method of autohypnosis (S&K 1360-61).

§312.* Reputed Powers of the Shaman.
(Sumner & Keller 1362)

It must be understood, however, that it is dangerous for the shaman to fail. In that case,

Sleight-of-hand feats were regarded as supernatural by the common folk,

and ventriloquism was first used by shrewd priests.

Many of the olden shamans unwittingly stumbled onto hypnotism;

others induced autohypnosis by prolonged staring at their navels.

90:1.5 While many resorted to these tricks and deceptions, their reputation as a class, after all, stood on apparent achievement.

When a shaman failed in his undertakings,

he may not only be demoted from his position but runs considerable risk of losing his life. Part of his equipment is his adroitness, through plausible excuses and counter-accusations, in shifting the blame and keeping his failures from counting (S&K 1363).

if he could not advance a plausible alibi, he was either demoted or killed.

I, I: MAGIC (Browne 27)

3. Man begins to think he can exploit the spirits—shamanism—the charlatan in the early advance of religion. (Browne 32)

For that reason it was only the conscious charlatans among the shamans who succeeded most and survived longest. The rest, the innocent ones who were fools enough really to believe that they could command the spirits, were easily exposed and soon snuffed out (B 35).

Thus the honest shamans early perished; only the shrewd actors survived.

It took the direction of tribal affairs out of the hands of the old (whose only distinction was their age) and the strong (whose only distinction was their brawn)

90:1.6 It was shamanism that took the exclusive direction of tribal affairs out of the hands of the old and the strong

and put it in the hands of the shrewd and far-sighted (B 36).

and lodged it in the hands of the shrewd, the clever, and the farsighted.

2. SHAMANISTIC PRACTICES

XXXIX: FUNCTIONS OF THE SHAMAN (Sumner & Keller 1371)

§313.* **Shamanistic Practice.** (Sumner & Keller 1371)

“Since the number of the good and evil spirits is so great and since a piece of conjuring that is incorrectly performed will bring evil, the individual man cannot think of accomplishing the magic operations” (S&K 1371).

90:2.1 Spirit conjuring was a very precise and highly complicated procedure,

comparable to present-day church rituals conducted in an ancient tongue.

The human race very early sought for superhuman help, for *revelation*;

Viewed from a slightly different angle, the shaman is the person to whom revelation is vouchsafed. The notion of revelation is not confined to religions founded by great law-givers. Even the lower varieties of a priesthood have for their chief business the obtaining of divine disclosures (S&K 1371-72).

Sir Charles Dundas assigns great importance to the mental impression made by the shaman upon his patients (S&K 1373).

[See endnote, which describes both negative and positive suggestion being used by the medicine man.]

and men believed that the shaman actually received such revelations.

While the shamans utilized the great power of suggestion in their work,

it was almost invariably negative suggestion; only in very recent times has the technique of positive suggestion been employed.²

In the early development of their profession the shamans began to specialize in such vocations as

It will be understood that the examples [of the shaman's various activities], as they are to be presented, are roughly classified by type. The first set will envisage the prophetic function of the shaman; the second, his rain-making activities,

rain making,

and the third, which will be developed at much greater length, his system of dealing with disease (S&K 1374-75).

disease healing,

“In Lepers’ Island in case of theft or of any hidden **crime** some wizard who understands how to do it drinks *kava*, and so throws himself into a magic sleep. When he wakes he declares that he has seen the culprit and gives his name....” [Etc.] (S&K IV 764) [*See also S&K 1372 and 1393.*]

[The shaman] is the functionary who, through his special relations with the spirit-world, is enabled to control or at least to predict, those hazards of life which are a closed book to the mere human mind. The common conception of the medicine-man is that of a **healer of disease**. This is in fact one of his **chief functions**; but there are shamans who do not heal, and those who attend the sick discharge also other offices of scarcely less importance (S&K 1371).

XXXVIII: SHAMANISM (Sumner & Keller 1335)

§308.* **The Black Art.** (Sumner & Keller 1335)

[contd] To attain a proper conception of shamanism it is necessary to start with some sort of distinction between “**black art**” and “**white art**” and the practitioners of each.

Terminology here is very loose and confused; the literature shows an interchangeable use of **priest**, **medicine-man**,

and **crime** detecting.

To **heal diseases** was not, however, the **chief function** of a shamanic medicine man;

it was, rather, to know and to control the **hazards of living**.

90:2.2 Ancient **black art**, both religious and secular, was called **white art**

when practiced by either **priests**, seers, shamans, or **medicine men**.

The practitioners of the black art were called

sorcerer, magician, wizard or witch, enchanter, necromancer, conjurer, soothsayer.... Perhaps if an effort were made to arrange the above list of terms in a series, “priest” would stand at one end, as being most evidently associated with religion, and “sorcerer” at the other (S&K 1335).

sorcerers, magicians, wizards, witches, enchanters, necromancers, conjurers, and soothsayers.

As time passed, all such purported contact with the supernatural was classified either as

The two extreme types here distinguished are witchcraft and shaman-craft ... (S&K 1335).

witchcraft or shamancraft.

The difference between witchcraft and shamancraft is parallel to the distinction between magic and miracle; the former is performed by the aid of evil or unrecognized spirits,

90:2.3 Witchcraft embraced the magic performed by earlier, irregular, and unrecognized spirits;

the latter by that of our own daimons.

shamancraft had to do with miracles performed by regular spirits and recognized gods of the tribe.

Quite often the former category of supernatural beings represents a set of older, superseded, or evicted gods—daimons which have become demons.

The wizard or witch came in Europe to be associated with the devil, as possessed by him or under compact with him and exercising, through his support, a private “black art” that lay outside the legitimate official activity of the recognized priest or shaman (S&K 1336).

In later times the witch became associated with the devil,

and thus was the stage set for

[P]rimitive peoples can display no such sharp distinction between witchcraft and religion as appeared, to take an extreme example, in the witch-persecutions of the Middle Ages. Primitive religions are too much alike and also too hospitable to each other's deities and practice to allow of a thoroughgoing intolerance (S&K 1336).

Evidently that which has been called witchcraft in West Africa is as much the religion of the peoples there as any system to which we accord the term is to those who profess it (S&K 1337).

XXXIX: FUNCTIONS OF THE SHAMAN (Sumner & Keller 1371)

§313.* **Shamanistic Practice.** (Sumner & Keller 1371)

Shamanistic divination survives in survivalistic form, for instance,

in counting-out rhymes, which "have a twofold aspect; the end in view is to determine an unknown factor by casting lots, the use of rhymes and doggerels is merely the outward and visible means to this end..." (S&K 1376).

Where once the person counted out was designated to die, he is now merely the "it" in a game (S&K 1376).

the many comparatively recent exhibitions of religious intolerance.

Witchcraft was a religion with many primitive tribes.

90:2.4 The shamans were great believers in the mission of chance as revelatory of the will of the spirits; they frequently cast lots to arrive at decisions.

Modern survivals of this proclivity for casting lots are illustrated,

not only in the many games of chance,

but also in the well-known "counting-out" rhymes.

Once, the person counted out must die; now, he is only *it* in some childish game.

“... Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture*, holds that things which occupy an important place in the life-history of grown men in a savage state, become the playthings of children in a period of civilization ...

Adopting this theory, we hold that games of chance are in part survivals of the practices of the sorcerer ...” (S&K 1376).

Sacred trees, as, for example, the Armenian poplars, were questioned by priests, who interpreted from the rustling of their leaves. David got omens from sounds in the tops of trees; Joseph divined with a cup; and lot-casting was common in Israel (S&K 1376).

[And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: (2 Sam. 5:24).]

The prophetic function of the shaman is enhanced, upon a somewhat advanced stage of development, by his reputed astrological powers.... [I]n China, India and mediæval Europe, for example, astrology became a veritable obsession (S&K 1378).

Where the laity do not hesitate to interpret ordinary dreams and portents, they yet hasten to the prophet when the extraordinary experience occurs (S&K 1379).

That which was serious business to primitive man has survived as a diversion of the modern child.

90:2.5 The medicine men put great trust in signs and omens,

such as,

“When you hear the sound of a rustling in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.”

Very early in the history of the race the shamans turned their attention to the stars.

Primitive astrology was a world-wide belief and practice;

dream interpreting also became widespread.

Communication with the spirit-world is held to be possible in New Britain, and “there are no more faithful and ardent spiritualists in the world than the New Britain savages” (S&K IV 764).

§314.* **Rain-Making.** (Sumner & Keller 1379)

[contd] The shaman is not infrequently referred to as the “weather-doctor” (S&K 1379).

Whereas the [civilized man] may lose a crop and suffer financially as a result, among the primitive tillers, as is illustrated by the famines in India that result from the irregularity of the monsoons, the absence of rainfall means widespread desolation and death (S&K 1380).

It is proposed to cite ceremonies of rain-making both as practised by the shaman and also as attempted by the layman ... In these ceremonies there is a pronounced element of imitative magic (S&K 1380).

“Rain-making is almost as universal as feeding, and every race has its rain-maker, who, for a consideration, will tap the cloudless sky and bring torrents of water down to quench the thirst of the dry earth...” (S&K 1381).

All this was soon followed by the appearance of those temperamental shamanesses who professed to be able to

communicate with the spirits of the dead.

90:2.6 Though of ancient origin, the rain makers,

or weather shamans, have persisted right on down through the ages.

A severe drought meant death to the early agriculturists;

weather control was the object of much ancient magic.

Civilized man still makes the weather the common topic of conversation.

The olden peoples all believed in the power of the shaman as a rain maker,

Previous to British occupation, unsuccessful rain-makers [in equatorial Africa] were **killed** or severely punished (S&K 1382).

“ ... The making of rain is of supreme importance to the [Central Australian] aborigines, but its actual occurrence is so rare that the blacks’ faith must often be severely tried, and many **excuses** are necessary **to account for the failure...**” (S&K 1380).

§313.* **Shamanistic Practice.** (Sumner & Keller 1371)

Nearly all the successors of Augustus in the first and second centuries were infected by the fatalist creed of astrology. Astrologers “were **banished again and again** in the first century, but persecution only increased their power, and **they always returned** to exercise greater influence than ever...” (S&K IV 774-75).

Rulers had a corps of such persons at court; in the universities from the fourteenth to the **sixteenth centuries** there were special professors of this pseudo-science. The popes openly espoused star-questioning, and Paul III held no consistory court without the star-gazers having decided the hour for him (S&K IV 775).

but it was customary to **kill** him when he failed,

unless he could offer a plausible **excuse to account for the failure.**

90:2.7 **Again and again** did the Caesars **banish** the astrologers, but **they invariably returned** because of the popular belief in their powers.

They could not be driven out,

and even in the **sixteenth century** after Christ the directors of Occidental church and state were the patrons of astrology.

Thousands of supposedly intelligent people still believe that one may be born under the domination of a lucky or an unlucky star; that the juxtaposition of the heavenly bodies determines the outcome of various terrestrial adventures.

The same gentry are still with us; fully one thousand **fortune tellers** may be found plying their ancient trade in New York City alone (S&K IV 775).

The greatest of the **Grecians** treated the **Oracle** of Delphi with respect; Plato and Aristotle did not hesitate to express publicly their belief in her prophecies, which were interpreted by a body of very learned and experienced priests (S&K IV 774).

[See S&K 1375.]

The Indians, like the Hebrews, had their prophets who urged the people to return to the ways of righteousness. Such an one was **Tenskwatawa**, the famous "**Shawnee** Prophet." "He declared that he had been taken up to the spirit world and had been permitted to lift the veil of the past and the future ... He then began an earnest exhortation, **denouncing the witchcraft practices and medicine juggleries** of the tribe, and solemnly warning his hearers that none who had part in such things would ever taste of the future happiness..." (S&K IV 772).

Fortunetellers are still patronized by the credulous.

90:2.8 The **Greeks** believed in the efficacy of **oracular** advice,

the Chinese used magic as protection against demons, shamanism flourished in India, and it still openly persists in central Asia. It is an only recently abandoned practice throughout much of the world.

90:2.9 Ever and anon, **true prophets** and teachers arose to **denounce and expose shamanism**.

Even the vanishing red man had such a prophet within the past hundred years, the **Shawnee Tenskwatawa**,

To establish his sacred character and to dispel the doubts of the unbelievers, the prophet continued to dream dreams and announce wonderful revelations from time to time. “A miracle which finally silenced all objections was the prediction of an eclipse of the sun which took place in the summer of 1806; this was followed by his enthusiastic acceptance as a true prophet and the messenger of the Master of Life” (S&K IV 773).

“ ... The firewater of the whites was poison and accursed ... The white man's dress, with his flint and steel, must be discarded for the old-time buckskin and the firestick. More than this, every tool and every custom derived from the whites must be put away, and the Indians must return to the methods the Master of Life had taught them. When they should do all this, he promised that they would again be taken into the divine favor, and find the happiness which their fathers had known before the coming of the whites...” (S&K IV 772-73).

who predicted the eclipse of the sun in 1808

and denounced the vices of the white man.

Many true teachers have appeared among the various tribes and races all through the long ages of evolutionary history. And they will ever continue to appear to challenge the shamans or priests of any age who oppose general education and attempt to thwart scientific progress.

90:2.10 In many ways and by devious methods the olden shamans established their reputations as voices of God

In the New Hebrides, Uhgen is the power behind all things.... In short, Uhgen made the world and committed what we call **Providence** to certain men.... It is these fellows that do all the mischief in human life; and their instrumentalities are the sacred stones, knowledge of the use of which is a revelation from Ughen (S&K IV 764-65).

In Africa the priests have great influence and power; they make sacrifices and incantations, carry out the frequent ordeals, **sprinkle babies with water, give them a name, practise circumcision,**

and lead in the festivals of reconciliation and harvest, the mask dances, and the **funerals** (S&K IV 765).

In West Africa the shaman brings news of the recently deceased, usually **announcing his safe arrival in Deadland,** and in return gets a sumptuous but private entertainment—for to see him eating is death (S&K IV 765).

§320.* Social Position of the Shaman.
(Sumner & Keller 1413)

It is evident, first of all, that the healer of disease, to say nothing of the priest, is in a position readily to increase his own possessions (S&K 1413.)

The Cherokee shamans disclaim that the consideration, often cloth, which the doctor receives for his services is “pay, in our sense of the word, but assert that it is one of the agencies in the removal and banishment of the disease spirit. Their explanation is somewhat obscure; the cloth seems to be intended as an **offering to the disease spirit,** as a ransom to procure the release of his intended victim ...” (S&K 1413-14).

and custodians of **providence.**

They **sprinkled the newborn with water and conferred names upon them;** they **circumcised** the males.

They presided over all **burial ceremonies**

and made due **announcement of the safe arrival of the dead in spiritland.**

90:2.11 The shamanic priests and medicine men often became very wealthy through the accretion of their various fees

which were ostensibly **offerings to the spirits.**

[?]

Not infrequently a shaman would accumulate practically all the material wealth of his tribe.

Upon the death of a wealthy man it was customary to

In Tibet, half of the property of the deceased is given away in charities and half to the Lamas, “who are invited to read the sacred books to his intent and entertained while so doing” (S&K IV 825).

divide his property equally with the shaman and some public enterprise or charity.

This practice still obtains in some parts of Tibet,

Priests and other holy men form over half the male population of Mongolia (S&K IV 825).

where one half the male population belongs to this class of nonproducers.

He must be well-dressed, for instance, if he was to represent the people to the gods (S&K 1414).

90:2.12 The shamans dressed well

A list of his exemptions and privileges would be very extensive; Main makes a good deal of his sexual prerogatives, whereby he is likely to have a plurality of wives or to be able to commandeer women who are dedicated to the daimon (S&K 1414).

and usually had a number of wives;

they were the original aristocracy,

Australian medicine-men are medicine-women are not subject to special tribal restrictions while actually practising their profession; for instance, that one which prohibits any intercourse whatever between men and their tribal mothers-in-law (S&K 1414).

being exempt from all tribal restrictions.

They were very often of low-grade mind and morals.

Through his power of denunciation of **rivals** whom he, as the official and ranking exponent of the public cult, might at any time **accuse of witchcraft**, the shaman was firmly established—provided, of course, that he could continue to demonstrate his abilities and gloze over his failures (S&K 1414).

“... [R]eferring to a famous priest of the island of Borabora, they say that he enjoyed great wealth in land, pigs, etc., and exercised a corresponding **influence** by **power** and terror, even **kings** and **chiefs** being in awe of him” (S&K IV 827).

Among the Ten’a of Central Alaska, the medicine-man “is influential, **feared**, respected to a certain extent, receives abundant gifts from his fellow natives, but he is **not loved**, nay, he is strongly disliked.... To them he is a **necessary evil**...” (S&K IV 828).

§321. Shamanism as a Recapitulation.
(Sumner & Keller 1419)

A final truth, and a weighty, to be drawn from the study of the shaman is the **respect** of primitive mankind for what they took to be, and what was in many respects, superior **knowledge**.

For those who knew, for those who saw (the seers), there was high **honor**.

We, to be sure, realize that the shaman did not know or see, as alleged; we accord him no respect by reason of his association with spirits in whose existence we do not believe.

They suppressed their **rivals** by **denominating them witches** or sorcerers

and very frequently rose to such positions of **influence** and **power** that they were able to dominate the **chiefs** or **kings**.

90:2.13 Primitive man regarded the shaman as a **necessary evil**; he **feared** him but did **not love** him.

Early man **respected knowledge**;

he **honored** and rewarded wisdom.

The shaman was mostly fraud,

but the veneration for shamanism well illustrates

That, however, has no bearing upon the fact that what stood for knowledge among savages was highly prized; that the primitive man was no fool, but knew it was better to know (S&K 1420).

the premium put upon wisdom in the evolution of the race.

3. THE SHAMANIC THEORY OF DISEASE AND DEATH

90:3.1 Since ancient man regarded himself and his material environment as being directly responsive to the whims of the ghosts and the fancies of the spirits, it is not strange that his religion should have been so exclusively concerned with material affairs. Modern man attacks his material problems directly; he recognizes that matter is responsive to the intelligent manipulation of mind. Primitive man likewise desired to modify and even to control the life and energies of the physical domains; and since his limited comprehension of the cosmos led him to the belief that ghosts, spirits, and gods were personally and immediately concerned with the detailed control of life and matter, he logically directed his efforts to winning the favor and support of these superhuman agencies.

§315.* **Theory of Disease.** (Sumner & Keller 1383)

Interest now turns not only to the actual working out of the theory of disease but also to the incipient revamping of that theory in the light of knowledge unpremeditatedly acquired in its application. In the **light** of that theory

many an otherwise grotesque and **irrational**-seeming practice will take its place in an **understandable** series, and will actually figure as the germ-form of later and accepted practice (S&K 1392).

90:3.2 Viewed in this **light**,

much of the inexplicable and **irrational** in the ancient cults is **understandable**.

While prayers have been offered by generations of fearful and hopeful men for offspring and wealth, the most fervent petitions have generally besought the higher powers for **health** and **long life** (S&K 1383).

The ceremonies of the cult were primitive man's attempt to control the material world in which he found himself.

And many of his efforts were directed to the end of **prolonging life** and insuring **health**.

Since all diseases and death itself were originally regarded as spirit phenomena, it was inevitable that the shamans, while functioning as medicine men and priests, should also have labored as doctors and surgeons.

90:3.3 The primitive mind may be handicapped by lack of facts, but it is for all that logical. When thoughtful men observe disease and death, they set about to determine the causes of these visitations, and in accordance with their understanding, the shamans and the scientists have propounded the following theories of affliction:

90:3.4 1. *Ghosts—direct spirit influences.*

The earliest hypothesis advanced in explanation of disease and death was that

“The Dyak theory of sickness is that it is either caused by the presence of evil spirits in the patient's body, or that he has been struck by one of them, or that one of them has **enticed his soul out of his body...**” (S&K IV 785).

spirits caused disease by **enticing the soul out of the body;**

The belief that a spirit comes from the spirit-world to carry off a living person's soul to that place is prevalent among Indians of Washington. "There are those who profess to discover when this is done, and if by any of their incantations they can compel that spirit to return, the person will not die, but if they are not able, then the person will become dead at heart and in time die, though it may not be for six months or even twelve" (S&K 1387).

In Nicaragua if a sick man is likely to die, they give up their efforts and go away, leaving no food or drink, but rather the implements needed in the next world (S&K 1389).

In such cases it cannot be inferred that the natives have any conception of contagion; if they really secure what amounts to quarantine of the sick, it is from fear of the ghost or of the disease-daimon, and the good result, if there is one, is, like fasting at a time of plague, unforeseen and unplanned on rational grounds (S&K 1389).

if it failed to return, death ensued.

The ancients so feared the malevolent action of disease-producing ghosts that

ailing individuals would often be deserted without even food or water.

Regardless of the erroneous basis for these beliefs,

they did effectively isolate afflicted individuals and prevent the spread of contagious disease.

90:3.5 2. *Violence—obvious causes.*
The causes for some accidents and deaths were so easy to identify that they were early removed from the category of ghost action.

It is not wholly correct to say that the undeveloped peoples always have recourse to the spirit-hypothesis in case of bodily damage. They recognize a plain wound, for instance, when they see it; they know how it was made and are likely to treat it in what we should call a rational way.

Not always, however; for the most skilful treatment will not avert mortification if the spirits are adverse (S&K 1383-84).

The theory of disease is, in any case, almost purely daimonistic, for here there is no concrete, material inflicting agency, such as a hatchet, which has laid a man's flesh open as naturally as it cuts into a tree (S&K 1384).

XXII: THE SPIRIT-ENVIRONMENT (Sumner & Keller 771)

§203.* **Death Not Inevitable.** (Sumner & Keller 775)

“Among Central Australian natives there is no such thing as belief in natural death; ... and in the normal condition of the tribe the death of one individual is followed by the murder of some one else who is supposed to be guilty of having caused the death. . . .

The identity of the guilty man is always revealed by the medicine men” (S&K 777).

“There are many reasons given why a child must not be allowed to live if its birth cost its mother her life;

Fatalities and wounds attendant upon war, animal combat, and other readily identifiable agencies were considered as natural occurrences.

But it was long believed that the spirits were still responsible for delayed healing or for the infection of wounds of even “natural” causation.

If no observable natural agent could be discovered, the spirit ghosts were still held responsible for disease and death.

90:3.6 Today, in Africa and elsewhere may be found primitive peoples who kill someone every time a nonviolent death occurs.

Their medicine men indicate the guilty parties.

If a mother dies in childbirth, the child is immediately strangled—

the chief is, that every life given has to be avenged; an **eye for an eye** is an immutable law with the savages. . . . The deceased mother is not supposed to have died of natural causes, or of senile decay; in some way the child took her life and that is said to be ample reason why the child should be buried alive in the grave of its dead mother..." (S&K 777).

XXXIX: FUNCTIONS OF THE SHAMAN (Sumner & Keller 1371)

§315.* **Theory of Disease.** (Sumner & Keller 1383)

Bartels summarizes as follows. The disease is ... "the supernatural loss of some bodily constituent; or a **bewitchment**, a curse, a punishment, the will or gift of the gods ..." (S&K 1385).

Disease is believed today by the Fellahin of the Holy Land to be daimonic in origin. In their view "the three principal causes of sickness are: (1) Spirits or demons who are everywhere ...; (2) the **evil eye**, which again lurks everywhere, as its baneful potency is due to a poisonous substance inherent in all men which emanates through the eye ...; (3) the evil soul ... (S&K IV 787).

A person [in Australia] becoming unaccountably sick believes himself to have been "pointed at" with a "**pointing-bone**." He first finds out the doctor and the **enemy** who have made him ill, then employs another doctor to retaliate upon his would-be destroyer ... (S&K 1385).

a **life for a life**.

90:3.7 3. *Magic—the influence of enemies.*

Much sickness was thought to be caused by **bewitchment**,

the action of the **evil eye**

and the magic **pointing bow**.

At one time it was really dangerous to point a finger at anyone; it is still regarded as ill-mannered to point.

In East Africa, “ ... [W]hen a man dies his relatives will review the whole of his life, and enquire if at any time he was struck or injured, and if such was the case they very naturally try to prove that this was the cause of his death.... If there is no such proof, or the injury was of recent date, or showed external symptoms, elders are summoned and the **corpse is dissected.**

They do this with considerable skill, and undoubtedly by long practice they are often able to detect an injury to **some** organ....

If none of this appears likely, the death is invariably **put down to witchcraft.**

The medicine men from far and near are consulted, and such and such a one is fixed upon as the culprit.... [A] wizard ran great risk of suffering death by the speedy method of public **execution..**” (S&K 1385-86).

§316.* Diagnosis and Treatment. (Sumner & Keller 1392)

The *nganga*'s [*i.e.*, Bangala medicine man's] verdict that the deceased **died as a result of his own witchcraft** has a marked effect on the people.

“It exonerates the *nganga* from all blame ... The result of the verdict is that the corpse is buried and **no one is accused** of being a witch, and consequently no one has to take the ordeal” (S&K IV 790-91).

In cases of obscure disease and death the ancients would hold a formal inquest, **dissect the body,**

and settle upon **some** finding as the cause of death;

otherwise the death would be **laid to witchcraft,**

thus necessitating the **execution** of the witch responsible therefor.

These ancient coroner's inquests saved many a supposed witch's life.

Among some it was believed that a tribesman could **die as a result of his own witchcraft,**

in which event **no one was accused.**

90:3.8 4. *Sin—punishment for taboo violation.*

Certain Colombia Indians object to taking medicine, regarding all sickness as a punishment for sin (S&K 1387-88).

In comparatively recent times it has been believed that sickness is a punishment for sin, personal or racial.

Among peoples traversing this level of evolution the prevailing theory is that

[“ ... In [Eddystone Island in the Solomons] it is believed that each recognized disease arises through the infraction of a taboo...” (S&K 1415).]

one cannot be afflicted unless one has violated a taboo.

It was Satan who brought Job’s illness upon him; then, again, it is the arrows of the Almighty that bring illness (S&K IV 787).

To regard sickness and suffering as “arrows of the Almighty within them” is typical of such beliefs.

The Chinese believe that diseases and epidemics are simply the work of evil spirits (S&K IV 785).

The Chinese and Mesopotamians long regarded disease as the result of the action of evil demons,

The Chaldæans thought all diseases were due to demons and lived in constant superstitious terror of them (S&K IV 787).

although the Chaldeans also looked upon the stars as the cause of suffering.

This theory of disease as a consequence of divine wrath is still prevalent among many reputedly civilized groups of Urantians.

90:3.9 5. *Natural causation.*

Mankind has been very slow to learn the material secrets of the interrelationship of cause and effect in the physical domains of energy, matter, and life.

The story of the plague in the *Iliad* is a perfect exposition of the contemporary theory of disease: “no treatment was possible or thought of. The question was, ‘How have we sinned against Apollo?’ ... It is a far cry from this to Hippocrates,

who writes that “every disease has its natural cause and without natural cause nothing whatever happens” (S&K IV 788).

The Bahima account for sickness in four ways: “1. It is thought to be caused by the departed king, who has been offended in some way ... 2. It is set down to witchcraft ... the illness may take any form of disease. 3. **Fever** is attributed to natural causes.

4. Illness is attributed to ghosts ...” (S&K IV 783).

§319. Science and “Superstition.” (Sumner & Keller 1411)

The ancient Greeks,

having preserved the traditions of Adamson’s teachings,

were among the first to recognize that all disease is the result of natural causes.

Slowly and certainly the unfolding of a scientific era is destroying man’s age-old theories of sickness and death.

Fever was one of the first human ailments to be removed from the category of supernatural disorders,

and progressively the era of science has broken the fetters of ignorance which so long imprisoned the human mind. An understanding of old age and contagion is gradually obliterating man’s fear of ghosts, spirits, and gods as the personal perpetrators of human misery and mortal suffering.

90:3.10 Evolution unerringly achieves its end:

Mental curiosity was lacking; to make a beginning it was needful that the emotions should be stirred; and in the case of medicine, at least, **ghost-fear** did that.

It imbues man with that superstitious **fear** of the unknown and dread of the unseen

which is the scaffolding for the God concept. And having witnessed the birth of an advanced comprehension of Deity, **through the co-ordinate action of revelation**, this same technique of evolution then unerringly

It was the daimonistic theory of disease that **set the process going** and gave a chance for the development, in the fullness of time, of a quite different theory (S&K 1411).

sets in motion those forces of thought

which will inexorably obliterate

The old theory did duty as a point of departure, as a **supporting framework**, until the structure was set up; then it **had served its purpose** and might fall away, leaving, however, a solid edifice where there might have been none without (S&K 1411).

the **scaffolding**, which **has served its purpose**.

4. MEDICINE UNDER THE SHAMANS

§315.***Theory of Disease.** (Sumner & Keller 1383)

That the whole cult is, in a sense, one great organization for avoidance and insurance—a huge **prophylactic** affair—has appeared again and again in the foregoing;

90:4.1 The entire life of ancient men was **prophylactic**;

since one of the chief dangers from the aleatory element was ill-health, there was no lack of ritual calculated to anticipate and fend it off (S&K 1388-89).

their religion was in no small measure a technique for disease prevention.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

[Compare S&K 1394-95.]

[“ ... Suffice it that the *thumoni* believes in himself and is believed in by his patients and in very truth often cures them by **faith** alone. **After all**, he **differs little from** a ‘Christian Science’ practitioner ...” (S&K IV 769).]

Sickness, like other inexplicable calamities, is referred to the agency of spirits, generally set in operation by sorcery. Hence the **avoidance** and **neglect** of the sick, through fear of the spirits possessing them or interested in their destruction, referred to above.

It was really a **long step** in evolution when rites developed by which the sick could receive care ... (S&K 1384).

§317.* **Therapeutics.** (Sumner & Keller 1400)

“While the sick man [among the Nilotic Kavirondo] is dying his relatives **howl** in chorus round his hut, while the doctors rattle stones in gourds and puff clouds of tobacco smoke around the invalid, their object, undoubtedly, being to drive away the evil spirits” (S&K IV 808).

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And regardless of the error in their theories, they were wholehearted in putting them into effect; they had unbounded faith in their methods of treatment, and that, in itself, is a powerful remedy.

90:4.2 The **faith** required to get well under the foolish ministrations of one of these ancient shamans was, **after all**, **not materially different from** that which is required to experience healing at the hands of some of his later-day successors who engage in the nonscientific treatment of disease.

90:4.3 The more primitive tribes greatly feared the sick,

and for long ages they were carefully **avoided**, shamefully **neglected**.

It was a **great advance** in humanitarianism when the evolution of shaman-craft produced priests and medicine men who consented to treat disease.

Then it became customary for

the entire clan to crowd into the sickroom to assist the shaman in **howling** the disease ghosts away.

§316.* **Diagnosis and Treatment.** (Sumner & Keller 1392)

The California Karoks have two classes of shamans, the root-doctor and the barking doctor. The business of the latter, who is generally a woman, is diagnosis, which she does “by squatting down like a dog on his haunches before the patient, and barking at him dog-fashion for hours” (S&K 1394).

Among the Bahima, “the origin of illness is determined by examining the entrails of fowls, sheep or goats, or by a pot of water into which powdered herbs are cast to make it froth, and four coffee beans are dropped...” (S&K IV 791).

§318.* **Medicines.** (Sumner & Keller 1406)

Medicines are said never to be used by the Mohave but singing, laying on of hands, and blowing, accompanied by a spray of saliva; saliva itself, however, is a common curative as well as a fetish-substance used in magic (S&K IV 820).

§316.* **Diagnosis and Treatment.** (Sumner & Keller 1392)

One of the best examples of the faith-cure is the temple-sleep or “incubation”; and the theory of it is in nowise affected by the fact that in Greek times the temples of the healing god stood in fresh air, were sunny, and in the neighborhood of springs which might have had mineral elements, and that the priests possessed actual medical knowledge (S&K 1395).

It was not uncommon for a woman to be the diagnosing shaman,

while a man would administer treatment.

The usual method of diagnosing disease was to examine the entrails of an animal.

90:4.4 Disease was treated by chanting, howling, laying on of hands, breathing on the patient,

and many other techniques.

In later times the resort to temple sleep, during which healing supposedly took place, became widespread.

§317.* **Therapeutics.** (Sumner & Keller 1400)

Surgery. Primitive medicine-men often show skill in **surgery** and even attempt trepanning (S&K IV 803).

Hagen maintains that **skull trephining** or trepanation is done in Melanesia ... Turner ... says that in Uea “the cure for **headache** was to *let out* the pain at the crown of the head by the following horrid surgery: The scalp was slit up and folded over, and the cranial bone scraped with a fine edged shell till the dura-mater was reached. A very little blood was allowed to escape...” (S&K IV 803).

Recent translation of a papyrus dating from the seventeenth century B.C. has uncovered much of Egypt’s medical lore.... “... Case 8 deals with a ‘fracture of the skull under the skin.’ When examination has demonstrated the presence of the **fracture** the surgeon is unconditionally charged to operate ...” “The operations for a **dislocated** clavicle and scapula are both described...” (S&K IV 804-05).

Among the Palaungs, “to **open a boil**, a piece of a broken pot is perforated and placed on the swelling, so that the head of the boil comes under the hole; a nail, which has been sharpened and heated, is then driven through the hole...” (S&K IV 804).

In Guiana, “Indians will allow **abscesses** to develop and apply heat with fire until they burst” (S&K IV 810).

The medicine men eventually essayed actual **surgery**

in connection with temple slumber;

among the first operations was that of **trephining the skull** to allow a **headache** spirit to escape.

The shamans learned to treat **fractures** and **dislocations**,

to **open boils**

and **abscesses**;

Obstetrics. ... In Sumatra ... there are **midwives** who have some real skill. The **shamaness** is generally called in, in Celebes, when a woman bears her first child; later on, she attends to herself in the bush or by the river (S&K IV 806).

§316.* **Diagnosis and Treatment.** (Sumner & Keller 1392)

There is one method which deserves special mention, namely, what might be called “passing the buck” in the matter of disease; this is illustrated by the device of **rubbing some article on warts** and thus luring them into it,

and then **throwing it away** somewhere

in order that a stranger may **pick it up** and take the warts with it (S&K 1396).

[See 90:4.9, below, re Greeks using herbs to treat wounds.]

§317.* **Therapeutics.** (Sumner & Keller 1400)

Massage. Cases are cited among the Melanesians in which the singing of **incantations** to exorcise a malevolent spirit is combined with **massage** and suction, terminating with the extraction from the patient of a number of foreign bodies (S&K IV 799).

the **shamanesses** became adept at **midwifery**.

90:4.5 It was a common method of treatment to **rub something magical on an infected or blemished spot** on the body,

throw the charm away, and supposedly experience a cure.

If anyone should chance to **pick up the discarded charm**, it was believed he would immediately acquire the infection or blemish.

It was a long time before herbs and other real medicines were introduced.

Massage was developed in connection with **incantation**, rubbing the spirit out of the body,

A case is reported from East Africa in which “an old medicine woman treated a man for a pain in his side by rubbing on the affected part some fat, which she said was medicine, but it was perfectly obvious that what she was doing was simply massage, and she was doing it very well, too, with successful results” (S&K IV 799).

Cupping. The sucking and biting of the afflicted part, together with the removal of some object secreted for the purpose by the shaman, is rather a stock procedure (S&K IV 800).

“They [in the Upper Congo] were very fond of blood-letting as a cure for aches and pains in various parts of their bodies” (S&K IV 800).

Water and Vapor. (S&K IV 807)

In some places steam or fumes are applied to the patient, while sweating is also employed (S&K IV 808).

The tribes of British Central Africa use a medicated vapor bath for sick children (S&K IV 808).

In the East Indies the steam of hot springs is regarded as therapeutic in cases of goiter (S&K IV 808).

and was preceded by efforts to rub medicine in,

even as moderns attempt to rub liniments in.

Cupping and sucking the affected parts,

together with bloodletting,

were thought to be of value in getting rid of a disease-producing spirit.

90:4.6 Since water was a potent fetish, it was utilized in the treatment of many ailments.

For long it was believed that the spirit causing the sickness could be eliminated by

sweating.

Vapor baths were highly regarded;

natural hot springs

Heat. (S&K IV 810)

The Papuans ... hold a glowing coal as close as possible to a wound, which is quite rational and also painful, and for fevers they use exposure to the glowing sun as well as to the fire (S&K 1402).

“Take the spleen of a goat and lay it upon the [Algerian] patient’s left side over his spleen....” [Etc.] (S&K IV 811)

In West Africa ... the bath is prepared by digging a hole and putting in a quantity of herbs, then pouring boiling water plentifully over them. The patient is covered over with the parboiled green stuff and a coating of clay is placed over all, leaving just the head sticking out... (S&K 1402-03).

Among certain Melanesians “ ... For a pain in the back a hot stone is applied locally” (S&K IV 810).

Rhythm; faith-cure. (S&K IV 811)

[See S&K IV 811-13 for cases.]

soon blossomed as primitive health resorts.

Early man discovered that heat would relieve pain;

he used sunlight,

fresh animal organs,

hot clay,

and hot stones,

and many of these methods are still employed.

Rhythm was practiced in an effort to influence the spirits;

the tom-toms were universal.

§318.* **Medicines.** (Sumner & Keller 1406)

The **Cherokees** have a myth which accounts for the appearance of diseases and for the existence of counteracting medicines. The **animals**, being crowded and slaughtered by men, and the **insects**, being crushed without mercy, resolved to consult upon measures for common safety. They devised and named various diseases, and had not their inventiveness fallen short, not one of the human race would have survived.

But “when the plants, who were friendly to man, heard what had been done by the animals, they resolved to defeat their evil measures. Each tree, shrub, and herb, even to the grasses and mosses, resolved to furnish a balm for some one of the diseases ... Thus did medicine originate, and each **plant** furnishes an antidote for the evil wrought by the revengeful animals (S&K IV 820).

Hence the [Cherokee] shaman in search of medicinal plants recognizes this helpful attitude and when he pulls a plant up by the roots he **drops a bead into the hole** and covers it up (S&K IV 820).

§317.* **Therapeutics.** (Sumner & Keller 1400)

Miscellaneous. Here are grouped other primitive methods of treatment including **counter-irritants**, **fasting**, **dieting**, and some practices that are purely irrelevant (S&K IV 814).

90:4.7 Among some people disease was thought to be caused by a wicked conspiracy between **spirits** and **animals**.

This gave rise to the belief that there existed a beneficent **plant** remedy for every animal-caused disease.

The **red men** were especially devoted to the plant theory of universal remedies;

they always **put a drop of blood in the root hole** left when the plant was pulled up.

90:4.8 **Fasting**, **dieting**, and **counter-irritants** were often used as remedial measures.

§318.* **Medicines.** (Sumner & Keller 1406)

“... **Human secretions** and excretions take up a very wide space in Chinese medicine” (S&K 1408).

The Australians are prone to use **blood** as a medicine, a wife drawing it from her own body to administer to a sick husband. [Etc.] (S&K 1407)

Reclus, speaking of the liberal use of **urine** by the Eskimo, cites many parallel cases from history (S&K 1409).

“... For blood-spitting [the American Indian tribes farther north] use a decoction of the fibrous **roots** of the spruce; for rheumatism, the root of the soap berry ...” [Etc.] (S&K IV 821)

The Hottentots have a medicine called “burmeester,” a mineral, of which they always carry samples with them to rub into a snake-bite or scorpion-sting. Experimentation caused German doctors to believe it “a rational means against snake-bite” and one of them identified it as an ammoniac-**salt**” (S&K 1407).

It is thought that certain **decoctions of ill appearance, smell, and taste** render the body a repulsive habitation for the disease-spirit ... (S&K 1406).

In Central America the medical treatment for babies and children consists in a perhaps excessive use of **purging**, by means of a clyster with an infusion of herbs and peanut-oil (S&K IV 816).

Yet it was the American medicine-man who “first discovered the virtues of coca, sarsaparilla, jalap, cinchona, and guaiacum” (S&K 1409).

Human secretions, being definitely magical, were highly regarded;

blood

and **urine** were thus among the earliest medicines

and were soon augmented by **roots**

and various **salts**.

The shamans believed that disease spirits could be driven out of the body by **foul-smelling and bad-tasting medicines**.

Purging very early became a routine treatment,

and the values of raw cocoa

Then flocks of [Philippine] natives came with all sorts of ailments, mostly stomach-ache and chills-and-fever. Jamaica ginger and **quinine** were dealt out liberally [by white men]. The white men got a great reputation and had everything they wanted (S&K 1409).

and **quinine**

were among the earliest pharmaceutical discoveries.

§317.* **Therapeutics.** (Sumner & Keller 1400)

“In the *Iliad* it appears that the **Greeks** before Ilion had physicians, who in all cases of wounds went to work quite **rationally**, in that they washed the wounds and bound them with healing herbs” (S&K IV 816).

90:4.9 The **Greeks** were the first to evolve truly **rational** methods of treating the sick.

§318.* **Medicines.** (Sumner & Keller 1406)

The **Greeks** probably owed much of their medical lore from the **Egyptians** (S&K IV 822).

Both the **Greeks** and the **Egyptians** received their medical knowledge from the Euphrates valley.

In treating wounds, the Montenegrins, until recently at least, were content to follow the old-time Scriptural usage of **oil and wine** (S&K IV 823).

Oil and wine was a very early medicine for treating wounds;

In a lecture on “Drugs, Old and New,” recently delivered at the City of London School by the Gresham Professor of Physic, it was stated that **castor oil** was employed 5,000 years ago by the ancient Egyptians ... and that **opium** was well known as a potent drug by Greek and Roman writers (S&K IV 824).

castor oil and **opium** were used by the Sumerians.

It is quite probable that some folk-medicine notions are connected today with the use of so-called “patent medicines.” To the ignorant and credulous the term stands for **secret** medicine. “If the composition of most of these drugs were truthfully, patently declared, it would probably ruin their sale,

for their success rests chiefly in the mystery which surrounds them” (S&K IV 825).

Many of these ancient and effective **secret** remedies lost their power when they became known;

secrecy has always been essential to the successful practice of fraud and superstition.

Only facts and truth court the full light of comprehension and rejoice in the illumination and enlightenment of scientific research.

5. PRIESTS AND RITUALS

XXXIII: PROPITIATION (Sumner & Keller 1167)

§279.* **Ritual.** (Sumner & Keller 1172)

To secure the hearing and favor of the daimons is something like the opening of a combination-lock: it is not sufficient to make approximately the right number of turns to left or right—it is necessary to make **exactly** the right number, or the whole procedure is futile (S&K 1172).

It is true, too, that if the ritual is correct it seems to exert a **coercitive influence upon the daimons**; it becomes fetishistic like a magical formula (S&K 1172).

90:5.1 The essence of the ritual is the perfection of its performance;

among savages it must be practiced with **exact** precision.

It is only when the ritual has been correctly carried out that the ceremony possesses **compelling power over the spirits**.

In fact, the daimons are so wedded to those forms that they are as disquieted and **angered** by error as any imperious earthly sovereign by a blunder in court-etiquette ... (S&K 1172).

Hence the absolute need of exactitude in ritual; hence also the need of a **trained** and leisure class that can make a business of its correct performance (S&K 1172).

XII: THE RITUAL (**Hopkins** 180)

Ritual is the frame which preserves religion as well as exhibits it, but it often lasts longer than that which it is intended to keep. Its great primitive importance is more than religious, for it established an intimate relation between religion and non-religious acts; it **sanctified custom** and to a large extent gave man the first clear conception of ordered times in the observance of fixed dates ... (H 180).

What marks the shift from custom to religion is the attribution of custom as religious to a semi-divine or ancestral authority. **Ritual makes a myth.** "Because the gods gave themselves as food to the Sun, so do we" (H 182).

If the ritual is faulty, it only arouses the **anger** and resentment of the gods.

Therefore, since man's slowly evolving mind conceived that the technique of ritual was the decisive factor in its efficacy,

it was inevitable that the early shamans should sooner or later evolve into a priesthood **trained** to direct the meticulous practice of the ritual.

And so for tens of thousands of years endless rituals have hampered society and cursed civilization, have been an intolerable burden to every act of life, every racial undertaking.

90:5.2 Ritual is the technique of **sanctifying custom;**

ritual creates and perpetuates myths

as well as contributing to the preservation of social and religious customs.

A ritual, too, may be fathered by a myth. The means of fighting the seven devils that cause an eclipse becomes a ritual (H 182).

Ritual generally expresses quite closely the conditions of life. The African cow-herders have developed a strict milking-ritual; the Todas have a religious buffalo-ceremony; ... the war-dances (of Greeks and Amerinds alike) prepare for battle by stimulating courage and simulating what is to come; in general the ritual is not markedly religious but rather social and economic.

Religion is rather an alien here; but, by dint of dragging in the Fathers of old as admiring helpers and turning rather perfunctorily to the spirits for aid, the ceremony acquires a religious tinge and in time may become almost wholly religious (H 183).

All these rituals are of the mob and it is here that Durkheim gets his strongest support for the theory that all religion is mob-illusion. But it must not be overlooked that private rituals exist.... Religion, too, is private and ritual is both private and public (H 183).

Prominent in public rituals of increase of grain are dancing and masked actors.... The war-dance is a clan-application of the private dance to excite valor ... (H 186-87).

The Australians, who show us the probable beginnings of so many ritual features, have also a masked drama and historical plays, as well as a comedy-play, as part of their magical-religious ritual ... (H 187).

Again, ritual itself has been fathered by myths.

Rituals are often at first social, later becoming economic,

and finally acquiring the sanctity and dignity of religious ceremonial.

Ritual may be personal or group in practice—or both—

as illustrated by prayer,

dancing,

and drama.

[T]here is a large class of words which originally are ejaculatory and have the definite purpose of emphasizing statements made in the ritual with an added so-be-it or so-it-is, like Amen, Selah, Om (yes, truly).

Then the connotation becomes vague; they are no longer felt as part of a Shamanistic ejaculatory service but as mysterious and rather awful words which may be applied anywhere on solemn occasions, just as definite swear-words become vague expressions of wonder or wrath, like jove, hell, damn (H 189).

[[A] sinner who utters the name of Jesus on his death-bed is secure of salvation. It is the same with the devotees of Rama and Buddha ... Fortunately for ethics, this religious fanaticism is not prevalent and only in certain sects is the "repetition of the Holy Name" regarded as a passport to Heaven (H 195).]

A late form of rite is the pilgrimage to a certain shrine, where miracles always occur, Mecca, Benares, Lourdes, etc. (H 190)

The ritual of purification is thus in great measure an outgrowth from the apotropaic ceremony, riddance from ill leading to a ritual whereby evil spirits are driven away. From this general idea arises the thought that, when one has sinned, the evil infecting a man through his sin may be driven out of him by a similar ceremony; he can by fasting and bathing and sacrifice bring himself again into a normal relation with the good power (H 194).

90:5.3 Words become a part of ritual, such as the use of terms like amen and selah.

The habit of swearing, profanity,

represents a prostitution of

former ritualistic repetition of holy names.

The making of pilgrimages to sacred shrines is a very ancient ritual.

The ritual next grew into elaborate ceremonies of purification, cleansing, and sanctification.

As baptism and atonement-rites belong to savage usage, so the rite of confirmation is a modern form of **primitive initiation**. The Church represents the **secret society** which is found in many savage tribes of Africa, Polynesia, and America. [Etc.] (H 195-96)

The **initiation** ceremonies of the **primitive** tribal **secret societies** were in reality a crude religious rite.

The worship technique of the olden mystery cults was just one long performance of accumulated religious ritual. Ritual finally developed into the modern types of social ceremonials and religious worship, services embracing prayer, song, responsive reading, and other individual and group spiritual devotions.

XIII: THE PRIEST AND THE CHURCH (Hopkins 204)

90:5.4 The priests evolved from shamans up through

[contd] The Priest: The original priest or spiritual authority was, according to circumstances, an **oracle**, a **diviner**, a **singer** (of incantations, *carmen* means a charm), or a leech, sometimes combining these functions.

oracles, diviners, singers,

In many savage religions he was first of all a **dancer** and as such was recognized as a diviner or oracle.

dancers,

Another common function was **making fine weather**; a priest who could not do this was discredited; a good priest was supposed to be influential with the powers that give rain (H 204).

weathermakers,

Again, the keeper of a holy place or **guardian of religious relics** might become **director of ritual** and so take upon himself a priestly office (H 204).

guardians of religious relics, temple custodians,

A savage priest must prove by ecstatic and hysterical speech and action that he is inspired; he dances himself into a frenzy, ejaculates meaningless syllables; or he effects cures or foretells events or sees what is unknown to other people (discovers crimes, etc.) (H 204).

Often in the higher religions, and occasionally in the lower, the office of priest was hereditary and the priesthood was kept in a caste, which controlled religious matters (H 205).

In all priesthoods arises the need of specialists,

one priest being an expert in slaughtering the sacrificial animal, another in ceremonial, etc.... There were praying priests and singing priests and others distinguished by their peculiar occupations (H 209-10).

A caste within a caste is thus evolved, as the "big talking" priest among savages is regarded as higher than the shrine-attendant (H 210).

In all priesthoods, too, the priest intermediates between man and the spiritual powers; in our speech he "holds the key of heaven" (H 210).

and foretellers of events,

to the status of actual directors of religious worship.

Eventually the office became hereditary; a continuous priestly caste arose.

90:5.5 As religion evolved, priests began to specialize according to their innate talents or special predilections.

Some became singers, others prayers, and still others sacrificers;

later came the orators—preachers.

And when religion became institutionalized,

these priests claimed to "hold the keys of heaven."

90:5.6 The priests have always sought to impress and awe the common people by

He comes into closest touch with divinity and through the fact that no one understands what his speech means in the ritual (Sanskrit in India, Latin in the West) he becomes, as has been observed, the sole controller of a tremendous spiritual machine whose movement is essential to salvation ... (H 211).

conducting the religious ritual in an ancient tongue

and by sundry magical passes so to mystify the worshipers as to enhance their own piety and authority.

A double danger lies then in the inevitable combination of ritual and priest. First, the ritual may become a substitute for religion... The priest no longer knows why he does this or that or what the words mean which he repeats; he speaks and acts as if performing a magical operation and the service is supposed to act automatically to the benefit of the hearers (H 211).

The great danger in all this is that the ritual tends to become a substitute for religion.

90:5.7 The priesthoods have done much to delay scientific development and to hinder spiritual progress,

In general, a priesthood is conservative and preserves much that would otherwise be lost, both in literature and in the upholding of old standards and laws (H 213).

but they have contributed to the stabilization of civilization

and to the enhancement of certain kinds of culture.

But many modern priests have ceased to function as directors of the ritual of the worship of God, having turned their attention to

[T]here has been a notable difference between our Christian communities and the religious bodies of the ancient world and the Eastern world today, where a man's belief as to God is his own concern and considerable freedom of thought is permitted. This is largely because religion with us is interpreted in terms of theology; which in other religions was (and is) not a matter of religion but of philosophy.

theology—

Religion consists, says the worshipper of Rama, in worshipping Rama, not in defining him; in loving God, not in explaining his inexplicable nature (H 222-23).

the attempt to define God.

90:5.8 It is not denied that the priests have been a millstone about the neck of the races,

Advancing enlightenment has in various religious circles sheared off [the priests'] pretensions. They appear not as monuments of ancient mysticism but as guides to present spiritual betterment; but even as mere ministers, as those who set the pace for others to run the race uphill to a higher life, they are still invaluable, not valueless, as many pretend (H 214).

but the true religious leaders have been invaluable in pointing the way to higher and better realities.

90:5.9 [Presented by a Melchizedek of Nebadon.]

1. **Epilepsy**, catalepsy (both meaning “seizure”— by a spirit), **hysteria** (from “hystera,” womb), ecstasy (“putting out” of place), apoplexy (a crippling “stroke”), paroxysms, somnambulism, fainting-fits—all these mental abnormalities are taken to be significant of possession (S&K 1344).

2. “ ... Supposing a man has an enemy and he lays medicine outside his hut designed to make him mad, the owner of the hut will see it, or, if not, one may be sure that he will be told about it, and thenceforth even the most sceptical native’s life is full of fears. For generations the evil power of the medicine has been known, and the fear preys on his mind until it is too much, and the medicine has done its work. This I have seen more than once, and the truth of it has often made me ask myself whether, if the medicine man’s art can bring about this, it can also bring about the **opposite** effect. The Mkamba knows well how easily life is lost, and on the slightest sickness he will think himself dying, but on the other hand he knows that if he can be helped it will be through the medicine man, and therefore all his hopes rest in him. His hopes in the latter will therefore be as strong as his fear of death, and lightened with this hope his mind is in the best state to assist his cure; thus I think many a cure may at any rate be facilitated by the influence of the medicine man...” (S&K 1373).