

RELIGIOUS TEACHING AND TRAINING OF ARIKARA CHILDREN

Children were taught reverence, respect for wisdom and age, deference to old persons, helpfulness to the needy, the sick and afflicted, kindness to all. Boys and girls while growing up were taught to cut off a small portion of meat served to them at mealtime, and to make of it an offering, rubbing it upon the shrines of the sacred objects in the house, to the ear of Mother Corn hanging upon the wall, and to the two doorposts¹ of the house. This offering was a form of grace before meat to bless the repast for those who would partake. Children were instructed to pray while making the offering that they might be kept in safety and health, and that they might be guided in the way of the good life. A boy prayed that he might grow up to be a brave, generous, useful and honorable man. The girls prayed to grow into kind, quiet, hospitable and useful women. Boys and girls were taught always to feel and to show respect towards the sun, the earth, the air, the waters, the plants and animals, all living things; and to regard plants and animals as their fellow-creatures; to think of human kind not as lords and masters of plants and animals, but as partners with them. They were taught to realize the debt mankind owes for the good gifts which our plant and animal friends provide for our necessities and comforts, and to be grateful to each species of plant or animal for its particular contribution to our benefit.

My informant digressed to remark the difference between white men's doctrine concerning the Supreme Being, who is said to be "a jealous God," and the Arikara religious teaching concerning the Supreme Being, who is spoken of as *Nešanu Natýitakh*, the Chief Above, who is not jealous, but who directed that smoke offerings shall always be made in turn to all his aides and helpers in the world, and last of all to himself.

¹Gilmore, Melvin R., *The Arikara Book of Genesis*, Papers Mich. Acad. Sci., Arts & Letters, Vol. XII, 1929, p. 110. Published 1930.