

**ANCIENT SYMBOL
WORSHIP: INFLUENCE OF
THE PHALLIC IDEA IN THE
RELIGIONS OF ANTIQUITY**

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Ancient Symbol Worship: Influence of the Phallic Idea in the Religions of Antiquity by C. Staniland Wake & Hodder M. Westropp

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BY
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AND
C. STANILAND WAKE.

WITH AN
INTRODUCTION, ADDITIONAL NOTES, AND AN APPENDIX.
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PREFACE.

THE historian Gibbon has remarked that "a lively desire of knowing and recording our ancestors so generally prevails, that it must depend on the influence of some common principle in the minds of men." To this we are probably to refer the inquisitiveness that leads individuals to the investigation of the relics of bygone periods, whether as naturalists, philologists, or historical inquirers. The Book of Genesis has been eagerly scrutinized as containing a divinely-inspired record of the Origin of Mankind; and ancient histories are carefully turned over in quest of clews in the same direction. The studies of language and etymology are interesting as affording traces of the ancestry of our modern peoples. The same plea holds good in regard to religious inquiry. Language and worship are crystallized history.

Unbecoming alike are the supercilious disdain and the sanctimonious contempt flung by pretentious men upon ancient ideas and usages. The ignorant cock that scorned the jewel because he knew not how to ascertain its value, and preferred the corn which he could scratch out from the dunghill, is an apt likeness of such persons. It is certainly proper to pay due regard to utility and present advantage. But the disposition to confine the attention to that limit is as imbruting and sensual as anything in fetish-worship or the orgies of the old-time divinities. The generous mind will cast aside such a temper, and, in obedience to its own instincts, hasten to broader fields of exploration, whether in natural science, metaphysical inquiry, or archæological investigation. Labor which makes a person better acquainted with himself or his fellow-men is not wasted.

In former periods it was the practice to check exuberant

curiosity by destroying records, and inflicting summary penalties on those who exceeded the bounds that had been set to scientific and literary pursuits. Cardinal Ximenes burned the old Arabic manuscripts ; Galileo languished in prison ; Socrates drank the hemlock, and Servetus perished at the stake ; the Gauls destroyed the annals of Old Rome, and the Romans those of ancient Carthage and Spain ; the Brahmins were alike malignant to the population and literature of Hindustan, and the Moslems equally destructive to the books that fell in their way from Benares and Bactria to Syria and Alexandria. All hoped in this way to put an end to the supremacy of scholars and rival nations, and to confine thought to the metes and limits of religious orthodoxy. They succeeded for a time, but only partially. Knowledge extinguished in one place broke forth in another ; and every nation that burned records and slaughtered teachers speedily declined into insignificance. At the present time the *Index Expurgatorius* of the Vatican, so far from excluding books from general reading, has become the best medium for advertising them ; and the achievements of Omar at Alexandria, Nabonasar at Babylon, and Torquemada at Salamanca, to be successful, would require a general holocaust. Those who protest against scientific and archæological studies as tending to unsettle the mind in regard to accepted doctrines, are speaking too late. Devotion which is born of ignorance is not worthy of being cherished.

Nevertheless, there is little ground for apprehension that the foundations of a genuine religious belief will be undermined. The investigation of the beginnings of a religion is never the work of infidels, but of the most reverent and conscientious minds. Those who are at liberty to develop themselves freely, will seldom molest themselves about the opinions of others. Mystics and philosophers do not clash, but often arrive at like conclusions by different routes and the exercise of different faculties of mind.

The papers of Messrs. Westropp and Wake, showing the influ-

ence of "phallism" upon former religious ideas, are entitled to a candid and careful perusal. The ripe scholarship of those gentlemen is beyond question; and the fidelity with which they performed their labor is worthy of praise. They have treated the subject with a delicacy that is commendable, and with a dignity and fairness characteristic of the scholar and the sage. Their purpose, as will be perceived, is not merely to portray its features, but to exhibit it in its relations to modern idea.

This much is claimed especially for the investigations noted in these pages. Whatever may be thought of the men who, according to our modern notions, took such extraordinary views of divine things and resorted to what would be regarded as offensive methods to express them, it is certain nevertheless that in important respects they were equal, if not superior, to the foremost thinkers of our boasted nineteenth century. Our architects learned of them how to build; and they possessed accurate scientific knowledge. Our theories of government, modes of inquiry, and even our religious opinions, were derived from the same sources. If we have degraded the ideas which they cherished with reverence, if we have rendered obscene the mysteries of life which they adored as pure and instituted by God himself, let us not add to the injury by endeavoring to cast upon them the reproach which belongs to those who thus calumniate them.

Herein, it may be, the ancients have us at disadvantage. They worshipped the Supreme Being as the Father of men, and saw no impurity in the symbolism of parentage to indicate the work of creation. What is divine to be and to do cannot be immodest and wicked to express. No man born of woman can with decency impugn the operation of that law to which he owes his existence; and he is impious beyond others who regards that law as only sensual. We may easily perceive how the phallic emblems were adopted to denote the kinship of mankind to the Creator. Those who employed them apprehended no wrong in so doing, till impurity of life had caused all that related to the subject to be considered as indecorous.

In these pages the endeavor has been to discourse of the several topics without levity or discourtesy toward any individual or people. There may be views taken which differ essentially from those commonly entertained, but there is no design to treat any person, topic, or opinion with disrespect. It will also be seen, from the references, that the facts here presented have generally been long familiar to the educated public. The subject is interesting, not merely because of its peculiar character, but as affording more complete views of ethnology, as well as of the earlier development of religious thought. Nothing of value can be lost, and much will be gained in every way, by investigation pursued with candor and dispassionately.

INTRODUCTION.

BAAL. . . . None older is than I. When Man came forth,
The final effort, wrung from monstrous forms,
And Earth's outworn forces could no more,
I warned the ignorant ranting on my beast.
We rose together, and my kingdom spread
From these cold hills to hamlets in the palms,
That grew to Memphis and to Babylon :
While I on towers and hanging terraces,
In shaft and obelisk, beheld my sign
Creative, shape of first imperious law.

"Masque of the Gods," by BAYARD TAYLOR.

THE classic scholar whose studies have hardly exceeded the limits prescribed in the curriculum of the universities, and the biblical student whose explorations of the Hebrew Scriptures have not led him beyond the field of exegesis and theological pursuit, are ill-prepared to hear of a larger world than Greece, Rome, and Palestine, or of an archaic time which almost remands the annals of those countries into the domain of modern history. Olympian Zeus with his college of associate deities, afterward Latinized into Jupiter and his divine subordinates, and the Lord alone with his ten thousands of sacred ones, comprise their idea of the supernal world and its divinities. Beyond, they recognize a vague and misty chaos of mythologies, which, not accurately understanding, they superciliously affect to despise. Whoever would be really intelligent, must boldly explore that chaos, voyaging through the "outer world" away from Troy and Greece, as far as Ulysses went, and from biblical scenes to the very heart of the ancient empires. There is no occasion for terror, like that displayed by the mariners who sailed with Columbus into the unknown ocean. Wherever man is to be found, like instincts, passions, hopes, and ambitions will attest a common kindred. Each person's life is in some manner repeated in that of his fellows, and every human soul is a mirror in which other souls, as well as future and former events, reflect their image.

It is more than probable that the diversified customs, institutions, and religions of the several nations of the world are less