

**PRIMITIVE SYMBOLISM,  
AS ILLUSTRATED IN  
PHALLIC WORSHIP OR THE  
REPRODUCTIVE PRINCIPLE**

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Primitive Symbolism, as Illustrated in Phallic Worship Or the Reproductive Principle by  
Hodder M. Westropp

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**HODDER M. WESTROPP**

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# PRIMITIVE SYMBOLISM

AS ILLUSTRATED IN

## Phallic Worship

OR

THE REPRODUCTIVE PRINCIPLE

BY

HODDER M. WESTROPP

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GENERAL FORLONG

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## INTRODUCTION.

THIS work is a *multum in parvo* of the growth and spread of Phallicism, as we commonly call the worship of nature or fertilizing powers. I felt, when solicited to enlarge and illustrate it on the sudden death of the lamented author, that it would be desecration to touch so complete a compendium by one of the most competent and soundest thinkers who have written on this world-wide faith. None knew better or saw more clearly than Mr. Westropp that in this oldest symbolism and worship lay the foundations of all the goodly systems we call Religions; but unfortunately, though writing clearly, he has only left to us short and somewhat detached Essays, this being the longest I have come across. It was, therefore, with deep concern I heard of his death, and saw his perhaps last note pencilled at the end of the proof-sheets—"Confined to bed with a severe attack of dyspepsia."

He read a Paper, which justly attracted much attention, in 1870, before the Anthropological Society, London, in the days when such subjects were then possible, as they are not now, owing to admission of lady members. Mr. J. W. Bouton, of New York, incorporated this in 1875 with Mr. Staniland Wake's valuable Paper of the same period and some others, the whole forming his useful publication entitled *Ancient Symbol Worship in the Religions of Antiquity*. Many of the facts there stated—as true for all time and necessary to show the continuity of the

faith—will be found in the present epitome, our only regret being that this short historical summary does not extend further in time and space as down to these days and islands, indeed to Europe in general, for Mr. Westropp's researches had assured him that if the old worships are now only dimly perceptible it is not yet so with the ancient symbolisms—nay, the tendency has been to amplify these, especially in ecclesiastical architecture, ornamentation, rites, vestments, &c. He appears to have been, from divers causes, averse to drive facts and arguments home into the midst of existing faiths and sacred books, for this is to increase the dislike naturally inherent to the subject, and to wound many of the tenderest emotions of a large class, especially of the more ignorant adherents of our own and other Religions. These cannot distinguish between the religious student of ancient and modern art, tracing the various growths of cults in symbols and rituals, from the sceptic or worse, who has come to pull down the sacred groves and gods, and thus uproot all the cherished feelings with which their holy objects, rites and festivals inspire them. They are willing to smile over the idea of the origin of a church spire or temple minaret, and to laugh at what they think is the mere ingenuity of the inquirer, but they frown when the inquiry goes further, and solid facts are advanced proving that their faith is in every detail a mere evolution of Faiths that preceded it, just as they themselves are of previous men. They are willing to accept from a poetical point of view that "there has been no entirely new religion from the beginning of the world," and from a philological, that our alphabet has evolved from previous alphabets, and these from some scratchings of savage tribes, but not to



carry such evolution theories beyond or into their fancied divine ideals. Yet if we are to instruct people aright or to investigate an important subject we must do so thoroughly, and, marshalling our facts, show their far-reaching significance in all their bearings, at least so far as the instructed are capable of comprehending, and not to that extent only which they may prefer. The ancient priest had his esoteric and exoteric doctrines and mysteries, with the object of alluring and keeping within his fold all manner of men, women and children, but here we speak unto men *caring only that they know the truth*, not that they be won over to our view or that of any other, but that they act according to their lights. Mr. Westropp here takes the best course in the present crass ignorance of Europe by simply massing together a few pregnant facts. He avoids the doubtful and all that may lead to controversy and annoyance, and calmly rehearses his case as a philosopher, physician and friend, who desires that the inquirer should know something of his "whence and whither," at least so far as the study of history and humanity can teach him. We must here say a few words regarding the author's very apposite quotations on p. 41, for they point to the radical difference between real *religion* and "*Religions*."

These have been always more or less superstitions or beliefs resting mainly on priestly assertions, unproved and often incomprehensible, regarding supernatural Powers, deities, or spirits and events in the *quasi* histories of these, according to, and on account of which, the followers of these ideals were required to shape their conduct, nay, their very thoughts. This was the original idea of a Religion, but such is *no true religion*, for this simply con-

sists of living a just, moral and righteous life, guided by the highest ethical ideas we have each attained unto. The *Religens* or "Religious ones" were simply those who separated themselves from what they called "the world" in order to serve their gods, banding themselves together in solitary places, caves, temples, monasteries, &c., so as the better to observe (*Réligio*) their vows, rites and laws. These last they believed came from their *Theos*, Allah or other divine Rex, Regis or Prophet. All tribes had laws given to them by their priests, of which, perhaps, the most perfect specimen is the *Dharma* and *Vināya*, the *themis*—"Heavenly Law and Way or Discipline" of Buddhists. The original meaning of *Relegare*—"to bind fast"—was simply a consecration to one particular purpose, not necessarily a holy one. The priests relegated themselves, we may say, to continually reading over, reviewing, or going back upon the services of their gods—for ever rehearsing praises and prayers to them in order to please them and avert calamities which they feared. It was no part of the design of the *Religens* to serve or please their fellows, to inculcate virtue, honour, truth, goodness, or even chastity, not to speak of a high moral and intellectual life. The truly "Religious" or "Holy man" was, as such, entirely *unmoral*. He did not admit that the ethics which guided him in his social or family life had any place within the hallowed circle of his temple or faith. Here he knew of no morality or immorality; all symbols, rites and customs of the faith were divine, and, as regards the sanctuary, he was but the servant of his god, striving *only to honour and serve Him*, and for this purpose seeking even to debase himself by the most shocking and heinous offences, such as he would not, if

otherwise a good man, for a moment tolerate in the family circle. Thus there was neither shame nor immorality in the rites of Militta described by Hêrodotos, nor in the priestly functions practised to this day by the Gosains or "Māha Rājas" of Krishna; nor in the Jewish leader giving a share of the captured Midian women "to the Lord" (Num. xxxi. 40); nor yet in "the Lord's house" being full of shameless women, and worse. *Religions* were not practical guides for the world, but for the *Religens* and the services of the sanctuary, and only practical and pious philosophers like Confucius and Budha strove to supply to mankind *real religion*. Even Paul taught that "the wisdom of the Greeks"—morals or "works," and intellectual attainments, "were foolishness"—worldly matters beneath the notice of the truly "religious;" that the ignorant faith of a babe was what men should strive for, and following Paul, all the Christian fathers with few exceptions, down to even Luther and Calvin, taught very similar doctrine. "Religion," they said, was a Faith, *pistis*, "belief" or "loyalty" to the god-idea and tales concerning the god or his incarnations, and the greatest sin or "irreligion" was *âpistia*, or want of faith. So Mahamadans call their "Religion" *Islâm*, or "Faith," and only Islâmîs are accepted by Allah. Luther was horrified at much of the writing of *James*. He called it "an epistle of sham and by no apostle," because that writer asks with amazement, "Can faith save any one?" Jerome frequently urges that all secular improvement only merits divine punishment, and virtually that those who ignore all physical, social and moral laws "are children of the unseen but heavenly kingdom." No good Christian doubted that unbelievers were to be damned (though our