

Report of the Secretary of State and correspondence in relation to the affairs of the Independent State of the Congo. Washington, 1886.

Rapport du Comité d'Etudes sur la question du Congo (Société Belge des Ingénieurs, etc.). Bruxelles, 1886.

Rapport de la Commission Administrative de la Société Belge des Ingénieurs, etc., à l'assemblée générale sur la question du Congo. Bruxelles, 1886.

Résultats de l'Exploration scientifique faite au Congo, par M. Edouard Dupont en Juillet—Décembre, 1887. Bruxelles, 1888.

Résultats géologiques de l'exploration de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo, par M. Edouard Dupont. Bruxelles, 1888.

Système monétaire (Département des Finances de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo). Bruxelles, 1887.

Trafic des Spiritueux dans le Haut Congo. (Département des Finances, etc.) Bruxelles, 1887.

United States Consular Reports. No. 54, July, 1885; No. 56, August, 1885. Washington, 1885.

The First Ascent of the Kassai, * * by C. S. L. Bateman. London, 1889.

L' Association Congolaise et Africaine de la Croix Rouge par un de ses membres. Bruxelles, 1889.

The Congo Railway * * * Brussels, 1889.

Some Thoughts on the Sun and Cross Symbols.

By Richard Vaux.

(Read before the American Philosophical Society, May 17, 1889.)

Symbols were the characters of original language. The alphabets of all written languages are composed of signs.

To express a thought, a form was necessary. To think was a human faculty. It marked man as the highest type of created beings. A thought was the result of an impression on the mind, made from a sense, or by sensation, through some object, or a consequent correlative emanation.

To find a form that would embody the mind's impression was solved in a sign, or symbol. The mental, or reasoning process, by which this result was reached is not possible of explanation. We know that the senses conveyed to the mind a cognizable impression, and then the mind operated. This process is called reasoning.

The sign was made to represent an impression on the consciousness. This sign, or symbol, is either the impression produced by natural objects, or it is an expression of a revelation, crystallized on that impression.

It is believed that the primitive types of the white race, as far as is now known, had a sign language.

The need of a form of expression was inherent, implanted in man at the creation. To communicate or impart the thought was as essential as to live. The form of such expression was the actual primary exclusive mode adopted by force of a like necessity. The symbol was the only possible form. If the symbol was the interpretation of the comprehension of the natural object, that was the revelation taking form, and the symbol formulated the revelation. If the symbol was accepted as presented, and interpreted by others, it strengthens the contention of a revelation to those who presented it. The origin of the symbol and its diffusion among other peoples who adopted it, proves that the revelation was a supernatural endowment of the human race. If the symbol expressed a mental impression which existed consciously, its form reflected what was inherent in the mind. If that symbol was found among different peoples, and expressed among all who originated, or adopted it as the same inherent expression, it became a language. A tribe on a continent, and one on another, using the same symbols, may give force to the suggestion that they were received by intercommunication, but the psychological condition of each must have been equivalent to produce the symbol, and the adoption of it under the same or a similar interpretation.

The important question remains as to the derivation of the activity and receptivity of the consciousness of these peoples.

Their physical conditions may have been alike; the natural surroundings somewhat similar; but they do not account for their inherent equivalent consciousness, unless it comes from a superhuman revelation.

As far as we know, there never has been an *invented* symbol.

Revelation begins in the thought, or in the adaptation of the symbol as a measure of the revelation anterior or posterior to its adoption.

As growth strengthened, the mental powers felt its influence, and consciousness, and the receptive faculties became sensitive. The ability to compare different conditions led to conclusions, and this was the demonstration of the reasoning faculty. Natural objects, the observation of natural changes, became subjects for thought.

The comprehension was stimulated by these observations. The nutritive and sensitive, which were material conditions, gave place to the rational, which was spiritual. The mind began to appreciate that a cause existed. That it was not of human origin was evident. Then, it must be supernatural. The cause, whatever it might be, was beyond the range of man's power, or knowledge. It was not an accident possible to human mental acquirement. The sun rose, and set. Man could not control, order, or decree its positions. Some supernatural power was the cause. Then, the sun was a supernatural existing power. To decide what it was exhausted the capabilities of the mind of man. The comprehension of the fact left no alternative but to call it a God. This was a spiritual revelation. The mental and the spiritual comprehension were in accord.

The sun was that supernatural power which was accepted as governing man. The circle became the symbol. These were revelations. Man was created ; the sun was created.

These facts are undeniable. Sun worship is a fact associated with the primal condition of the existence of primitive man.

Science must accept these facts, however it may deal with them. It is also a fact that various peoples, in the earliest of days, accepted the sun as a supernatural manifestation, and the circle was its symbol. If philosophy is the love of wisdom, or the explanation of the reason of things, yet it cannot demonstrate why the sun was first worshiped. Therefore, the truest explanation is that this natural object, impressing the mind of the beholder, drew out of the inherent spiritual consciousness the only thought possible, a revelation of a Creator, superhuman, self-existing, with power and majesty.

With all our philosophic knowledge, it must be admitted that this explanation is so natural as to be neither a speculative, nor a mythical theory.

To give authoritative force to this explanation, the universality of sun worship in the earliest days must be shown. From the best authorities, sun worship may be said "*to have been universal among nations the most remote from each other, from the Torrid to the Frigid Zone. It spread over America, as it did over Europe, Africa and Asia.*"

"*All ancient religions when analyzed prove to be only forms of solar worship.*"

"*Thus we find the early nations of all parts of the world claiming a solar origin.*"

From the same authorities, it may be said that this is true of the Scandinavians, Egyptians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, Indians, Greeks, Romans, Mexicans, Peruvians, Persians, Medians and Arabs.

Yet it is to be observed : "*That contests between the spiritual and material nature of man are found in the earliest antiquity.*"

"*In Europe and Asia the people had a simple faith in the powers of nature, the most notable of which was that Great Luminary, the Sun, which throughout all ages, and amongst nations, under one name or another, has been universally the object of adoration.*"

"*We search into emblems with a different intention to that which we inquire into ordinary language. The last tells us of the relationship of nations upon earth ; the first of the probable connections of man with Heaven. Letters and words mark the ordinary current of man's thoughts, while religious symbols mark the nature of his religious aspirations.*"

How the universality of this worship came to pass cannot be accounted for by the intercommunication of peoples. It therefore, with confidence, is pointed out, that it is a revelation.

This revelation is the outcome of the primal inherent consciousness of man, under the influence of the material and nutritive, sensitive and rational elements of his being.

It is pointed out that the sun symbol is as universal as sun worship. It is the same symbol among peoples. The circle with rays, and with a centre point, is the expression of both the natural and spiritual consciousness. As Divine, Superhuman, a Creator, the Origin of Life, the symbol took the form of the sun itself, and the primitive man was taught by a revelation, the theology to which the symbol was dedicated. What more reasonable than that the figure of the sun should be the figure of the worship? Whatever may have been added to this symbol in after-time by the ingenuity of scientific hypotheticism, the fact remains that the sun symbol originated in the revealed conception of a purely religious significant truth.

We think this is the consensus of authoritative opinion of many students and scholars. To cite them is to catalogue the exegetical treatises from Moses to Mühler. It is at least permissible to add that the sign on the cloud and the darkness at Calvary were symbolic evidence of a supernatural revelation.

One more example compels notice.

THE CROSS.

Christianity may be called the equator that divides the ante- and post-Christian eras. In both, the Cross has been a religious symbol. In the very earliest religious systems there was a more or less imperfect recognition of one Supreme Being, the origin of created beings, even the gods themselves. This is found among the Scandinavians, the Hindoos, the Teutonic and Aryan races. The Great Spirit was recognized among all the Indian tribes. The circle with the central point is one of the earliest symbols of the Great Spirit from which the Hindoos taught all things proceeded.

The date of the origin of this symbol is not known. It may have been prior to the interlaced triangles of the Hindoos. Its history, however, shows that from the beginning it was exclusively of religious import. With the sun worship, it was universal among primitive peoples. It was a symbol, and it is said it is never found except to express some religious idea.

"When we see the same ideas promulgated as Divine truth on the ancient banks of the Ganges, and the modern shores of the Mediterranean, we are constrained to admit they have something common in their source. They may be the result of celestial revelation, or they may alike emanate from human ingenuity. Religious symbols mark the nature of man's religious aspirations."

When the Cross became a symbol cannot be determined. It can successfully be asserted that among primitive peoples it held a conspicuous place, with a spiritual and mystic significance.

The Circle symbol identified with sun worship, crossed, added to its sacred character. In very remote antiquity, many centuries before our era, the crossed Circle was a religious symbol.

Prehistoric and pagan traditions show that in man a spiritual consciousness existed.

Aristotle, in his subdivision of the Nutrient, the Sensitive, and the Intelligent or Rational, as indicating the growth from the material to the spiritual, portrays the highest form of this growth to be religious thought. It may be from the different effects of the senses and sensations arising out of the four causes,—the body, represented by the material; the soul, comprising the formal; movent, or efficient, and the final, or spiritual.

This philosophy of growth is the explanation of the relation between what is the mental, moral, and physical trinity in our nature. In the earliest days in the life of man this spiritual faculty existed. The fact that symbols were then known, and that they emanated from this spiritual faculty, sustains the contention that a religion was a revelation to every people, and that under some form a supernatural Divine Power was worshiped. The Circle symbol of the Sun God, to which a cross was added, must be regarded as significant of the primitive principle of this worship. A Cross appears among all the peoples of whom any knowledge is obtainable from traditions.

The Crux Ansata, or the Cross of Horus, or Tau, fifteen centuries before our era, the Cross Cramponne, the Thor's Hammer, Fylfot, Croix Patte, the Swastika, the Maltese Cross, the Handled Cross, are associated with worship as a symbol. The hieroglyphics in the Temple of Serapis indicate that the Cross there is interpreted, "Life to come." The Maltese Cross was found in the ruins of Nineveh, another in the Hall of Nisroch. The Handled Cross was a sacred symbol among the Babylonians.

The authorities consulted justify the contention that the Cross in its various forms was a spiritual symbol of religion. In Europe a people is reported to have lived more than fifteen hundred years before our era, of whom nothing is now known. Quarries are found, called *terramares*, on the site of the locality of these people, and the researches in these quarries showed that the Cross was a religious symbol among them. The tombs of Golasecca show the fact that one thousand years before our era the Cross was a like symbol. In a ruined city in South America, not inhabited at the time of the conquest, a palace has been discovered, and in it a slab of gypsum on which a sculptured Cross was found. And also another colossal Cross represents on it a bleeding deity, with a Tau Cross, surrounded by figures. The city existed nine hundred years before our era. The palace in Palenque was 128 feet long, 180 wide, and 40 high, in which are temples, chapels and altars. The same Cross is found in pre-Mexican writings, as in the Dresden Codex.

In Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, among the Maya race in Central America, and the Azteks, Quinamies, Zapatecas, and the inhabitants of the ruined cities of Zaputero and St. Ulloa, the Cross was venerated as a sacred symbol.

It has been said by high authority, that :

“The widely spread mystic purport of the Cross Symbol has long been a matter of comment. Undoubtedly, in many parts of America, the natives regarded it with reverence anterior to the arrival of Europeans ; in the old world it was long a sacred symbol before it became the distinctive Emblem of Christianity.”

It is pointed out that during the historic period, till our era, no evidence asserts a denial of this fact. All the mythologies, Scandinavian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Roman, the tombs, temples, obelisks and pyramids contain cumulative evidence of this characteristic of these symbols. Some of the esoteric symbolisms of these mythologies permeate the teachings imparted to-day to five hundred thousand men in the United States. It is also contended that out of the spiritual consciousness of all peoples came a religion as a fact. That it was a revelation is as well worthy of credence as that it originated in the ingenuity of material speculation. As before suggested, the use to which these symbols may have been applied, and with which theories and scientific hypothetical inventions have in late times sought to associate them, fails, nevertheless, to destroy their original character. The Phallic theory has no claim on science or philosophy. It portrays the sensuous and the erotic. The scientific effort to divert the primary relations of these symbols from the assertion of the spiritual consciousness of man is ingenious and attractive, but its force is in the weakness manifested to make this effort successful.

It is most reasonable that with the very limited knowledge of primitive man, natural objects were looked upon as the exclusive causation of sensations. Perceptions and impressions were thus derived. The consciousness accepted the object as the material, and the formal, movent or efficient, and final were spiritual

The spiritual consciousness absorbed this impression of the nutritive and sensitive consciousness. It then came to pass that the Sun, the Serpent, and the Tree became symbols of worship, as the natural consequences of a revelation of a spiritual aspiration, and the worship of these symbols is therefore the test of a Divine revelation as the only possible explanation.

The conclusion that synthetically follows this line of thought on the facts given, from authorities alike credible and acknowledged, is that symbols expressed the sensitive and spiritual conscious impressions and aspirations of people since the creation of man. These symbols were the concrete revelations of a Deity to the human race as a Superhuman Divine Power.

Science, a superrarified philosophy, and modern speculation cannot divest them of their primary character. Revelation imparted to man this primal purpose and significance of these symbols. They rest neither on speculative assertion nor ingenious assumption ; but were rather the emanation of a Divine ever-existing power.



Vaux, Richard. 1889. "Some Thoughts on the Sun and Cross Symbols."
*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for
promoting useful knowledge* 26(130), 476–481.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/86412>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/212492>

Holding Institution

University of Toronto - Gerstein Science Information Centre

Sponsored by

University of Toronto

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not provided. Contact Holding Institution to verify copyright status.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.