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## FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

RITUAL REGARDED AS THE DRAMATIZATION OF MYTH.— From a paper having this title, by William Wells Newell, contained in the *Memoirs of the International Congress of Anthropology*, we cite the following passages :—

“ It may be affirmed with probability that in all gentile or social ceremonies the myth enters into the celebration, and that in one or other of several distinct ways.

First, as part of the ceremonial, the legend may be recited in full prose form, or chanted as an epos. . . . Secondly, the myth may be sung and danced in lyric or ballad form. . . . Thirdly, the narrative, when not expressly mentioned, may be presupposed, and referred to in sacred hymns, often of so mystical a character as to be incomprehensible to any person unacquainted with the myth.

Not only, however (and this is my special theme), is legend the basis of ritual speech and song, but also of ritual costume and gesture.

It would appear that into many or all social religious rites there enters an element of dramatic representation. The dance or the feast does not consist of a series of arbitrary ceremonies ; on the contrary, it is, in some part, a presentation of a sacred history. This principle would seem to make part of all religious ritual, from that of the very lowest existing races to that of the most civilized communities. . . .

Observations on North American aboriginal religions justify the following generalizations, which will probably be accepted by all workers in this field :—

1. Tribal, gentile, or social religious festivals or dances depend, in part, on myths, which are dramatized in the rites. The presentation is usually of a conventional character, rather than theatrical, so that the symbolism is apparent only to the initiated.

2. The rites are performed by secret societies, possessing initiations in different degrees ; of the ritual, some portions are intended to be public, while others are wrapt in secrecy ; they constitute, that is to say, mysteries. The manner of the celebration, as well as the significance of the rites, is only comprehended by the initiated persons.

3. The dance is performed by masked or costumed personages, who enact the part of the divine beings whose history is recounted in the myths.

To this third principle of American aboriginal worship an important addition is to be made which, if accepted, will be found to cast a vivid light on the theory of religious observances.

There seem to be good reasons for believing that the actor was originally considered to be identical with the being represented ; in other words, that the god in his own person appeared on the stage and performed his own history in dramatic representation.

On the one hand, this involved priestcraft ; spectators were made to suppose that the personages whom they saw, and whose disguise was assumed in secret, were none other than the veritable deities. On the other hand, the belief was not wholly deception ; the priest or medicine-

man supposed himself, in assuming the dress, to assume also the character, to be under divine possession, to abdicate his own personality, and to present in his thoughts and actions the god whom he represented.

If there were time to discuss so vast a subject, it might be argued that such assumption of foreign personality belongs to the original idea of religious masks. It might be suggested that the oldest of the arts is the sacred drama, in which the actors are divine, and repeat their history before an audience consisting of both gods and men. It might be made likely that after the progress of reflection had forbidden the imagination to be content with the solemn conception of immediate visible contact with personal deities, plastic art was introduced, the god, now regarded as distinct from the priestly celebrant, being supposed to animate the image which constituted his medium of representation. But long after such separation has taken place, and into the historic period of civilized races, the theory of the visible presence continued to survive.

The detailed illustration, by examples taken from American worship, of the principles above set forth is the less necessary, because the papers which will be read at this meeting, as well as all the elaborate and interesting researches made during the last few years in the field of American mythology, constitute such illustration.

To argue that the generalizations set forth apply also to all the so-called primitive faiths of other continents, would be to attempt a task for which materials do not yet exist. It may only be affirmed that what is known of Australian or African rituals is in no way inconsistent with the supposition that these conditions do represent the theory of the religious usage of uncultured races in general. It will be enough to suggest, for the sake of urging and directing investigation, that an original feature of early worship is the mystery, or sacred dramatic representation; that in such rites the worshippers consider themselves as visited by their divine relatives, who perform before their eyes a representation of the presumed sacred history which constitutes the testimony of the divine existence, and the repetition of which is assumed to be a condition of the divine aid. . . .

If the conclusions indicated, and which have been set forth chiefly in order to serve as themes for discussion, shall be accepted as of universal application, it will follow that most of the conceptions which have been favored as constituting a proper basis for the classification of religions will be found inadequate, and that the principle of historic continuity will apply to a much greater extent than has hitherto been assumed."

NAVAJO RITE-MYTHS. — From a paper of Dr. Washington Matthews, "Some Illustrations of the Connection between Myths and Ceremony," contained in the same publication, are taken the following paragraphs:—

"The rite-myth never explains all the symbolism of the rite, although it may account for all the important acts. A primitive and underlying symbolism, which probably existed previous to the establishment of the rite, remains unexplained by the myth, as though its existence were taken as a matter of course and required no explanation. Some explanation of this foundation symbolism may be found in the creation and migration myths or