



The Making Of Religion: Extended Annotated Edition

Andrew Lang

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This book is annotated with a rare extensive biographical sketch of the author, Andrew Lang, written by Sir Edmund Gosse, CB, a contemporary poet and writer.

A review of Mr. Lang's work would come late, were it not that the book has been the subject of discussion for many years. The author considers the modern science of the History of Religion to teach, that Man derived the conception of Spirit from reflection on phenomena of sleep, dreams, death, shadow, and experiences of trance and hallucination. Ghosts, thus obtained, became the first objects of belief and worship, and were gradually magnified into gods, of which, in the end, one became supreme; on the other hand, from belief in the survival of the soul grew the notion of immortality. This system he proposes to study from fresh points of view. In the first place, he treats what he calls the X phenomena among savages, clairvoyance, crystalomancy, second-sight, demoniacal possession, and so on, giving examples to show the prevalence of similar experiences; he considers that their apparently supernatural character may have much to do with the theory of a separable soul, and apparently inclines toward a belief in the verity at least of the occurrences. The statements concerning the savage phenomena are not especially full, the account not undertaking to exhibit a complete view of the department. The second part of the treatise undertakes to supply a substitute for the nihilistic doctrine; this is, that the idea of God as, to use the writer's words, "a primal eternal being, author of all things, the father and friend of man, the invisible, omniscient guardian of morality, belongs to the lowest savages, who reverence this supreme deity without idol-worship or sacrifice, as immutable, impeccable, all-seeing, benevolent, and lovable.

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