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Sir James George Frazer

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The Golden Bough

A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE
RELIGION



JAMES GEORGE FRAZER

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Sir James George Frazer : The Golden Bough: A study of Magic and Religion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Golden Bough: A study of Magic and Religion:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. What else can I say except this is a classic ...By SeplaireWhat else can I say except this is a classic - a treasure-trove of beliefs, rituals and traditions of "Magic" and "Religion" (and wherever the twain, and medicine, do meet). This is an all-encompassing reference book invaluable to those who were mesmerized by Greek mythology, entranced by the sylvan and nature beliefs and rituals of both ancient times and aboriginal practices. Certainly not written with any thought of "political correctness" (Frazer lumps most aboriginal humans - both past and Frazer's present day - as "barbarians" or "savages"), the reader must consider when this was written; yet, one will find terminology still used today (remember the movie "Practical Magic").1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. awesome read !By Barry D. DicksonIf you're into deep and mysterious spirituality, you are going to love this book !8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Golden Bough; a classicBy Steve

MissalExcellent oldie but goody....you can't go wrong with this condensed version of the multi-volume classic about magic and religion in human history. By the time you've read it, you will never think of human history the same way again.

The Golden Bough. A study of Magic and Religion by Sir James George Frazer. The Classic. The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion is a wide-ranging, comparative study of mythology and religion, written by the Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941). It was first published in two volumes in 1890; in three volumes in 1900; and the third edition, published 1906-15, comprised twelve volumes. The work was aimed at a wide literate audience raised on tales as told in such publications as Thomas Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable, or Stories of Gods and Heroes* (1855). Frazer offered a modernist approach to discussing religion, treating it dispassionately as a cultural phenomenon rather than from a theological perspective. The influence of *The Golden Bough* on contemporary European literature and thought was substantial.

.com Before Joseph Campbell became the world's most famous practitioner of comparative mythology, there was Sir James George Frazer. *The Golden Bough* was originally published in two volumes in 1890, but Frazer became so enamored of his topic that over the next few decades he expanded the work sixfold, then in 1922 cut it all down to a single thick edition suitable for mass distribution. The thesis on the origins of magic and religion that it elaborates "will be long and laborious," Frazer warns readers, "but may possess something of the charm of a voyage of discovery, in which we shall visit many strange lands, with strange foreign peoples, and still stranger customs." Chief among those customs--at least as the book is remembered in the popular imagination--is the sacrificial killing of god-kings to ensure bountiful harvests, which Frazer traces through several cultures, including in his elaborations the myths of Adonis, Osiris, and Balder. While highly influential in its day, *The Golden Bough* has come under harsh critical scrutiny in subsequent decades, with many of its descriptions of regional folklore and legends deemed less than reliable. Furthermore, much of its tone is rooted in a philosophy of social Darwinism--sheer cultural imperialism, really--that finds its most explicit form in Frazer's rhetorical question: "If in the most backward state of human society now known to us we find magic thus conspicuously present and religion conspicuously absent, may we not reasonably conjecture that the civilised races of the world have also at some period of their history passed through a similar intellectual phase?" (The truly civilized races, he goes on to say later, though not particularly loudly, are the ones whose minds evolve beyond religious belief to embrace the rational structures of scientific thought.) Frazer was much too genteel to state plainly that "primitive" races believe in magic because they are too stupid and backwards to know any better; instead he remarks that "a savage hardly conceives the distinction commonly drawn by more advanced peoples between the natural and the supernatural." And he certainly was not about to make explicit the logical extension of his theories--"that Christian legend, dogma, and ritual" (to quote Robert Graves's summation of Frazer in *The White Goddess*) "are the refinement of a great body of primitive and barbarous beliefs." Whatever modern readers have come to think of the book, however, its historical significance and the eloquence with which Frazer attempts to develop what one might call a unifying theory of anthropology cannot be denied. --Ron Hogan *Nature One of the greatest books.* -- From the Inside Flap *The Golden Bough* J.G. Frazer