Bean taught King in two courses, *Outline History of Christianity and American Christianity*.

Mr. King is the outstanding student in his class and one who would be outstanding in any institution. His work is always of the highest grade. The few questions he has asked in class have revealed a real interest in the subject under discussion.

I think Mr. King will always be a credit to Crozer. It is gratifying to know that he plans to continue for his doctorate.

THFmS. CRO-NRCR.

“The Origin of Religion in the Race”

[9 February 1951] [Chester, Pa.]

King wrote this paper for Davis’s *Philosophy of Religion* course. In the essay, which is largely drawn from D. Miall Edwards’s *The Philosophy of Religion*, King examines various philosophical and anthropological arguments for the origin of religion. The word “race” in the title refers to the human race, not a particular group. Davis gave King an A and praised his “thoughtful, critical analysis.”

The question of the origin of religion in the human race still remains one of the insoluble mysteries confronting the mind of man. Men have attempted to solve this problem through scientific research, only to find that the results lead to inevitable antinomies.
Like all other questions of "origins," the origin of religion is more a matter of speculation than of investigation; or to make it less extreme, it will at all events be admitted that speculation is involved in a problem for which an entirely satisfactory solution cannot be found through historical investigation alone. We may trace a particular religion to its faint beginnings, we may even be able to determine the features which the most primitive form of religion presents, but we shall still be far from furnishing an answer to the question—How did religion arise? What is its source? It is significant that the question of the origin of religion was not scientifically studied until modern times. Before we come to consider some modern theories it may be well to refer briefly to two views which were once widely prevalent, but which are now obsolete or at least obsolescent.1

The View of
Divine Revelation

Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan theologians, for a long time, assumed Divine Revelation as a necessary factor in the rise of religion, either in the form of a primitive Revelation vouchsafed to all mankind, or of a special Revelation to certain peoples singled out for the purpose. This view has usually taken the form of a belief in a primeval monotheism of divine origin, from which polytheism in its many forms is a later relapse. It is now usually held that the doctrine of revelation has explained the origin of religion in far too intellectual and mechanical a fashion, "as if religion began with the impartation to man of a set of ideas, ready-made and finished ideas poured into a mind conceived as a kind of empty vessel."* This is a crudely unpsychological view.2 Moreover, the theory

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1. D. Miall Edwards, The Philosophy of Religion (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), p. 30: "The question of the origin of religion was not scientifically studied until modern times. Before we come to consider some modern theories it may be well to refer briefly to two views which were once widely prevalent, but which are now obsolete or obsolescent."

2. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 30–31: "It has usually taken the form of a belief in a primeval monotheism of divine origin, from which polytheism in its many forms is a later relapse. In its usual forms the doctrine of revelation has explained the origin of religion in far too intellectual and mechanical a fashion, as if religion began with the impartation to man of a set of ideas, ready-made and finished ideas poured into a mind conceived as a kind of empty vessel. This is a crudely unpsychological view."
of evolution has led us to conceive of primitive man as utterly incapable of receiving and retaining the highly developed ideas which primitive revelation was supposed to communicate to him.3

The View of the English Deist

The English deist of the eighteenth century came on the scene rejecting the idea of revelation and found the origin of religion in human reason. Through the intellect, they claimed, such fundamental doctrines as the belief in a god and the immortality of the soul could be established with a certainty that could not be shaken. The religion of reason is natural to man and therefore known to him from the beginning. But through the cunning devices of the priests, whose one object was to exploit the fears and credulity of the masses in order to get them under their control, elaborate superstitious beliefs and ritual practices came everywhere to take the place of the simple religion of reason. Thus religion has a twofold origin—viz., reason as the source of pure natural religion, and willful deceit on the part of priest as the source of all the actual historical religions.4 This theory of the English Deists is now quite obsolete. It has several very serious and obvious defects. (a) It exaggerates the place of reason as the originating source of religion, and underestimates the place of that emotional and intuitional illumination which is such a fruitful source of religious ideas and experience. (b) It attributes to primitive man mature ideas which it took centuries for man to be able to grasp and appreciate.5 (c) Most absurd of all is the idea that all the actual religions of history are simply calculating hypocrisies invented by priests in a spirit of selfish

3. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 31–32: “The theory of evolution has led us to conceive of primitive man as utterly incapable of receiving and retaining the highly developed ideas which primitive revelation was supposed to communicate to him.”

4. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 32: “The religion of reason is natural to man and therefore known to him from the beginning. But through the cunning devices of the priests, whose one object was to exploit the fears and credulity of the masses in order to get them under their control, elaborate superstitious beliefs and ritual practices came everywhere to take the place of the simple religion of reason. Thus religion has a twofold origin—viz., reason as the source of pure natural religion, and willful deceit on the part of priest as the source of all the actual historical religions.”

* Ibid. p. 33
greed and power. Doubtless priests have frequently exploited the religious impulses of men to serve their own ends, but they could only exploit what already existed independently of them. As Sabatier says, "When I hear it said, 'Priest made religion,' I simply ask, 'And who, pray, made the priest?' In order to invent a priesthood, and in order that that invention should find general acceptance with the people that were to be subject to it, must there not have been already in the hearts of men a religious sentiment that would clothe the institution with a sacred character? The terms must be reversed. It is not priesthood that explains religion, but religion that explains priesthood." After seeing the complete unintelligibility of this theory Dr. Edwards concludes that "this shallow and cynical theory makes religion a matter of deliberate invention rather than a matter of spontaneous growth with its roots in the deep foundation of man's nature." At present this theory has been discredited by most scholars and probably has no supporters.

These older and pre-scientific views we may now put on one side and proceed to discuss some of the more important modern theories of the origin of religion. There are two ways in which the question may be approached—the way of the anthropologist and the way of the psychologist. The former is concerned with the historic, or rather prehistoric, origin of religion. The problem of the latter is, What is its source in man's spiritual nature, not at the beginning only, but everywhere and always? In other words, the former deals with the origin of religion in the human race while the latter deals with the origin of religion.

5. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 32–33: "This theory of the English Deists ... is now quite obsolete. It has several very serious and obvious defects. (a) It exaggerates the place of reason as the originating source of religion, and ignores that emotional and intuitive illumination which is such a fruitful source of religious ideas and experience. (b) ... It attributes to primitive man mature ideas which it took untold ages for man to be able to grasp and appreciate. ... (c) Most absurd of all is the idea that all the actual religions of history are simply calculating hypocrisies invented by priests in a spirit of selfish greed for power. Doubtless priests have frequently exploited the religious impulses of men to serve their own ends, but they could only exploit what already existed independently of them."

6. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 34: "These older and pre-scientific views we may now put on one side and proceed to discuss some of the more important modern theories of the origin of religion. There are two ways in which the question may be approached—the way of the anthropologist and the way of the psychologist. The former is concerned with the historic, or rather prehistoric, origin of religion. ... But the problem of the latter is, What is its source in man's spiritual nature, not at the beginning only, but everywhere and always?"
in the individual. Since this paper only deals with the
origin of religion in the Race we may be content to set
forth the various anthropological theories with little
reference to the psychological views.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project
The Animistic
Theory of E. B. Taylor

This may be said to be the first theory of the origin
of religion that was backed up by a thoroughly sci-
cific study of the mind and habits of the primitive.
In this momentous work* Tylor shows that at a cer-
tain stage of culture men everywhere attribute a kind
of soul to the phenomena of Nature—e.g., to trees,
brooks, mountains, clouds, stones, stars. Primitive man
regarded all he saw as possessing a life like unto his
own.8 The movement of things around him he ac-
counted for on the analogy of his own movements,
which he knew by immediate experience were due to
the activity of his spirit or will. To early man, as to the
savage today, all Nature was alive, filled with innu-
merable spirits. Thus religion, Tylor believed, arose
in an effort to propitiate these spirits by offerings and
to win their favor by prayers.g

Tylor's conclusions in anthropological researches
have deeply influenced the direction taken by the
study of religion. Yet as an account of the origin of
religion it cannot be regarded as satisfactory.10

The chief objections to this theory are, first that the
argument does not account in a satisfactory manner

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7. Except in three cases (this subhead, a footnote, and the bibliography), King typed “Tylor”
throughout the document, then inserted an a to form “Taylor.” Davis changed “Taylor” back to
“Tylor” throughout. We have retained the original version.

8. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 36: “The Animistic Theory of E. B. Taylor—This may be said
to be the first theory of the origin of religion that was backed up by a thoroughly scientific study
of the mind and habits of the savage. It first appeared in Tylor’s monumental volumes, Primitive
Culture (first edition 1871, third edition 1891), where it is shown that at a certain stage of culture
men everywhere attribute a kind of soul to the phenomena of Nature—e.g., to trees, brooks,
mountains, clouds, stones, stars. Primitive man regarded all he saw as possessing a life like unto
his own.”

counted for on the analogy of his own movements, which he knew by immediate experience were
due to the activity of his spirit or will. To early man, as to the savage to-day, all Nature was alive,
filled with innumerable spirits. According to Tylor, it was on the basis of this animistic view of
the world that religion arose... and this would lead him to seek to propitiate the powerful spirits
and to exorcise the evil ones.”

10. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 37: “Tylor’s anthropological researches and theory have
deply influenced the direction taken by the study of religion... Yet as an account of the origin
of religion it cannot be regarded as satisfactory.”
for undoubted cases of direct worship of natural phenomena; second that the most primitive savage does not possess so clear an idea of spirit in distinction from body as is here implied.\textsuperscript{11} The notion of a soul as a definite thing is a fairly advanced concept which must have been beyond the mental reach of primitive man. And so authorities have come to recognize what is called a pre-animistic stage of religion which I will discuss subsequently.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{The Ghost-Theory of Herbert Spencer}

Brief reference may be made to Spencer's well-known theory which finds the origin of religion in the worship of ancestors appearing in the form of ghosts.* The awe inspired by dead (death), and the fear created by the dead who had passed beyond the control of the living, constitute the two factors which arouse a new sense in man; and as far back as we can go men are seen offering sacrifices to the spirits of their ancestors. This Herbert Spencer believed to be the most primitive form of religion. Animism is not original but derivative, being a generalized form of the belief in the spirits of dead ancestors reappearing as ghosts and choosing certain objects in Nature as their dwelling-place.\textsuperscript{13}

The weakness of Spencer's theory is at the point of oversimplicity. The deification of ancestors is far too narrow a basis on which to rear the structure of religion. "Religion is too complex a phenomenon to be accounted for by the growth and spread of a single cus-

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* See Spencer's Principles of Sociology, Chapters viii to xvii.
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\textsuperscript{11}. E. Washburn Hopkins, Origin and Evolution of Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), p. 3: "The chief objections to this theory are, first, that the most primitive savage does not possess so clear an idea of spirit in distinction from body as is here implied; second, that the argument does not account in a satisfactory manner for undoubted cases of direct worship of natural phenomena."

\textsuperscript{12}. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 38–39: "The notion of a soul as a definite thing is a fairly advanced concept which must have been beyond the mental reach of primitive man. . . . And so authorities have come to recognize what is called a pre-animistic stage of religion."

\textsuperscript{13}. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 59: "The Ghost-Theory of Herbert Spencer—Brief reference may be made to Spencer's well-known theory which finds the origin of religion in the worship of ancestors appearing in the form of ghosts. . . . and as far back as we can go men are seen offering sacrifices to the spirits of their ancestors. This Herbert Spencer believed to be the most primitive form of religion . . . The fear of the dead who had passed beyond the control of the living was the motive which led to the observance of religious rites. Animism is not original but derivative, being a generalized form of the belief in the spirits of dead ancestors reappearing as ghosts and choosing certain objects in Nature as their dwelling-place."
Worship, of however primitive a character, is not the expression of a single thought or a single emotion, but the product of thoughts so complex, so powerful, as to force an expression in the same way in which a river, swollen by streams coming down the mountains from various directions, overflows its banks.”


Dr. Jevons expresses his view in unqualified terms thus: “It never happens that the spirits of the dead are conceived to be gods. Man is dependent on the gods, but the spirits of his dead ancestors are dependent on him... The worshipper’s pride is that his ancestor was a god and not mere mortal... The fact is that ancestors known to be human were not worshipped as gods, and that ancestors worshipped as gods were not believed to be human.”


This might be a slight exaggeration, but it does come somewhat within the facts (e.g., the natives of Central Australia, a most primitive type of people, believe in the reappearance of the spirits of ancestors, but do not worship them). The worship of ghosts has not been found to be nearly as prevalent among the lower peoples as Spencer imagined, and it certainly cannot be maintained that ancestor-worship is more primitive in character than the worship of the spirits of natural objects.

The Totemistic Theory

Some authorities have found the origin of religion in totemistic practices. So complex and intricate is
the phenomenon surrounding Totemism that an adequate description of it cannot be given in so brief a compass. However we may briefly present its essential features. A totem is a species of animal or plant, or more rarely a class of inanimate objects, to which a social group (a clan) stands in an intimate and very special relation of friendship or kinship—frequently it is thought of as the ancestor of the clan—and which provides that social group with its name. The totem is not exactly a god, but a cognate being and one to be respected. It must not be used for common purposes, nor must it be slain or eaten except in some solemn and sacramental way. It is always the species and never an individual animal or plant that is regarded as a totem. This theory of the totemistic origin of religion has been highly advocated by W. Robertson Smith in his Religion of the Semites (1885) and F. B. Jevons in his Introduction to the History of Religion (1896). Although Smith's ingenious theory has greatly influenced the scientific study of religion, it is far from being adequate to the facts. Jevons maintains that totemism is "the most primitive form of society, "* that it "is or has been worldwide,"† that polytheism is a relapse from it.‡

In criticism of this theory it has been revealed through recent research that not every religion has passed through the totemistic stage. It is admitted that totemism is very ancient, but its universality is very far from being proved. There are many peoples of very low culture among whom it is unknown, or at least unrecognizable. It is not discerned, for instance, among the Veddas of Ceylon, or among the Andaman Islanders, or among the low Brazilian tribes.§

† Ibid, p. 117.
‡ Ibid, p. 395.
§ Edwards, op. cit., p. 42.

17. Edwards, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 40–41: "Some authorities have fastened on totemism as the most ancient and primitive form of religion. Totemism is such an extraordinarily intricate phenomenon that we cannot here describe it in its baffling complexity. A totem is a species of animal or plant, or more rarely a class of inanimate objects, to which a social group (a clan) stands in an intimate and very special relation of friendship or kinship—frequently it is thought of as the ancestor of the clan—and which provides that social group with its name. The totem is not exactly a god, but a cognate being and one to be respected. It must not be used for common purposes, nor must it be slain or eaten except in some solemn and sacramental way. It is always the species and never an individual animal or plant that is regarded as a totem. The totemistic theory of origin of worship had once much vogue, owing to its brilliant and suggestive advocacy by W. Robertson Smith in his *Religion of the Semites* (1885) whose position was further developed by F. B. Jevons in his *Introduction to the History of Religion* (1896). Smith's ingenious theory . . . has greatly influenced the scientific study of religion, but it cannot now be regarded as adequate to the facts. Jevons maintains that totemism is 'the most primitive form of society' (p. 99), that it 'is or has been worldwide' (p. 117), that polytheism is a relapse from it (p. 395)."
Other tribes have totems which yet are not worshipped and which are in no sense deities.¹⁸

A new form has been given to this theory by the French sociological school, of which Emile Durkheim is the most distinguished representative.¹⁹ Durkheim's theory assumes totemism (as the earlier form of religion although he insist that the importance of totemism) is absolutely independent of whether it was ever universal or not, yet it is practically assumed as the earliest form of society and of religion everywhere. The essence of all religious belief lies in the idea of a mysterious impersonal force controlling life, and this sense of force is derived from the authority of society over the individual. It is this sense of the power of the social group over his life that becomes to man the consciousness of a mysterious power in the world. The totem is the visible emblem of this power; but the reality behind the totem, which the totem symbolized, is the might of tribal custom, emotion, and thought, which seems like an actually existing force weighing upon each individual and dominating his life. His real god is society; the power he really worships is the power of society. It seems quite clear at this point that Durkheim's interest in totemism is determined by his sociological theory of religion as essentially and wholly a social phenomenon. The further discussion of it cannot be undertaken here. We can only repeat that there are large parts of the world in which no traces of totemism have been found, and that strictly speaking, totemism is not a religion at all. "Although regarded with reverence and looked to for help, the totem is never, where totemism is not decaden, prayed to as a god or a person with powers which we call supernatural."†²⁰

¹⁸. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 42: "In criticism of this theory it must be said that the most recent researches have not sustained the view that every religion has passed through the totemistic stage. It cannot be denied that totemism is very ancient, but its universality is very far from being proved. There are many peoples of very low culture among whom it is unknown, or at least unrecognizable. We fail to discern it, for instance, among the Veddas of Ceylon,. . . or among the Andaman Islanders, or among the low Brazilian tribes. Other tribes . . . have totems which yet are not worshipped and which are in no sense deities.

¹⁹. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 42–43: "A new form has recently been given to this theory by the French sociological school, of which Emile Durkheim is the most distinguished representative." Edwards wrote in a footnote to this sentence: "See esp. Durkheim's Les Formes Elementaires de la Vie Religieuse (Paris, 1912; Eng. Trans. 1915)."

²⁰. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 42–43: "Durkheim regards totemism as the most simple and primitive religion which it is possible to find. Though he insists that the importance of totemism is absolutely independent of whether it was ever universal or not, yet it is practically
A more weighty criticism of this theory is set forth by Dr. Hopkins. He states: "The fundamental objection which will eventually overthrow this theory is that it ignores or minimizes beyond reason the individual in favor of the group. . . . While it must be admitted that religious ideas in general reflect a man's habitat and group, it is a serious error to imagine that the habitat or group in which he is born produces his religious state of mind. The French theory does not hesitate to insist that man does not think at all as an individual; there is no such thing as an individual mentality and consequently all religious thought is social. But it is pure assumption that the mind of the group is so overwhelmingly coercive that the individual mind is entirely subservient to it. All that can be affirmed is that the social atmosphere affects the religious consciousness."* On the basis of fact Durkheim's theory cannot be accepted as totally valid. But Durkheim is probably right in seeking to trace religion back to something more primitive than the animistic belief in nature-spirits conceived as personal or in the ghosts of ancestors.21

Pre-Animistic Religion:
The Conception of Mana.

Any satisfactory theory of the origin of religion must be able to account, not only for the prominence of magic and mysticism in religion, but also for the connection of these, from the beginning, with a vital moral element. Recent anthropology tends more and


assumed as the earliest form of society and of religion everywhere. The substratum of all religious belief lies in the idea of a mysterious impersonal force controlling life, and this sense of force is derived from the authority of society over the individual. It is this sense of the power of the social group over his life that becomes to man the consciousness of a mysterious power in the world. The totem is the visible emblem of this power; but the reality behind the totem, which the totem symbolized, is the might of tribal custom, emotion, and thought, which seems like an actually existing force weighing upon each individual and dominating his life. His real god is society; the power he really worships is the power of society. Durkheim's interest in totemism is determined by his sociological theory of religion as essentially and wholly a social phenomenon. The further discussion of it cannot be undertaken here. We can only repeat that there are large parts of the world in which no traces of totemism have been found, and that, strictly speaking, totemism is not a religion at all. Although regarded with reverence and looked to for help, the totem is never, where totemism is not decadent, prayed to as a god or a person with powers which we call supernatural." Edwards attributed this quote to "E. S. Hartland, art. on 'Totemism' in Hastings' Enc. of Religion and Ethics, vol. xii. (1921), pp. 406f." 21. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 43–44: "But Durkheim is probably right in seeking to trace back religion to something more primitive than the animistic belief in nature-spirits conceived as personal or in the ghosts of ancestors."
more to find this satisfactory theory in the conception of mana. Here the origin of religion is found in a pre-animistic period or stage characterised by a sense of awe in the presence of a diffused, indefinable, mysterious power or powers not regarded as personal.22 This potency has been given many names, but for the sake of uniformity we may call it mana, as the Polynesians do, amongst whom this potency as such was first discovered by modern investigators.

It is believed that mana is everywhere, intangible and all-pervasive. All things have it: of course this does mean that mana is something universal or of abstract reality—the primitive has not risen high enough to generalize a universal reality—but it means that there is potency in every object to which man's attention is given. Mana by no means has any moral quality. It may be good or bad, favorable or dangerous, according to time or place.

Here, then, we seem to have the common root of magic and religion. Here is an attitude of mind which supplies religion with its raw material. It is obviously more primitive in character than animism, and may be assumed to be chronologically prior to it. It "may provide the basis on which an animistic doctrine is subsequently constructed . . . Of such powers (towards which awe is felt) spirits constitute but a single class among many; though, being powers in their own right, they finish a type to which the rest may become assimilated in the long run."23* Religion in its origin is thus seen to be a sense of awe and mystery in the presence of the indefinable and incalculable power manifested in things, p persons, and events, together with the attendant effort on man's part to adjust himself negatively and positively to that power, with a view to satisfying certain felt needs of his life.24

22. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 44: "Pre-Animistic Religion: The Conception of Mana.—Recent anthropology tends more and more to find the origin of religion . . . in a pre-animistic period or stage characterised by a sense of awe in the presence of a diffused, indefinable, mysterious power or powers not regarded as personal."

23. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 46, quoting Marett, Threshold of Religion (1914), pp. 1—2: "Here, then, we seem to have the common root of magic and religion . . . Here is an attitude of mind which supplies religion with its raw material. It is obviously more primitive in character than animism, and may be assumed to be chronologically prior to it. It 'may provide the basis on which an animistic doctrine is subsequently constructed. . . . Of such powers [toward which awe is felt] spirits constitute but a single class among many; though, being powers in their own right, they finish a type to which the rest may become assimilated in the long run.'"

24. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 47: "Religion in its origin is thus seen to be a sense of awe and mystery in the presence of the indefinable and incalculable power . . . manifested in
Magic and Religion

It has been implied above that religion and magic have a common root. At this point we may state this position more fully. The question of the relation between these two attitudes or types of behaviour has often been discussed by anthropologists, and has an important bearing on the problem of the origin and nature of religion. In dealing with this relationship many questions inevitably arise. Have we sufficient grounds for assigning logical or chronological priority to the one rather than to the other? If so, to which of the two does priority belong? Can we place a genetic relation between them? Did the one spring from the other, by way of development or else by way of relapse? Or did they have independent origins? In an attempt to answer these questions at least three positions have emerged.25

The first position holds that religion was prior to magic, or, in the words of Dr. Jevons, "that belief in the supernatural (religion) was prior to the belief in magic, and that the latter whenever it sprang up was a degradation or a relapse in the evolution of religion."26 This doctrine of relapse implying that man started with a relatively pure form of religion, recurs in other contexts in Jevon's book, for an instance he holds that polytheism is a relapse from a kind of monotheism. This view, however, has few, if any, supporters among modern anthropologists,† nor is it antecedently probable.27

things, persons, and events, together with the attendant effort on man's part to adjust himself negatively and positively to that power, with a view to satisfying certain felt needs of his life."

25. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, pp. 47-48: "Magic and Religion.—We have said that religion and magic have a common root. This position has now to be more fully stated. The question of the relation between these two attitudes or types of behaviour has often been discussed by anthropologists, and has an important bearing on the problem of the origin and nature of religion. Have we sufficient grounds for assigning logical or chronological priority to the one rather than to the other? If so, to which of the two does priority belong? Can we place a genetic relation between them? Did the one spring from the other, either by way of development or else by way of degradation or relapse? Or did they have independent origins? At least three positions may be held in reference to these questions."

26. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 48: "It may be maintained that religion was prior to magic, or, in the words of Dr. Jevons, 'that belief in the supernatural was prior to the belief in magic, and that the latter whenever it sprang up was a degradation or a relapse in the evolution of religion.'"

27. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 48: "This doctrine of relapse, implying that man started with a relatively pure form of religion, recurs in other contexts in Jevon's book (cf. our reference above to his view of polytheism as a relapse from a kind of monotheism). It has, however, so far as we are aware, few, if any, supporters among modern anthropologists, nor is it antecedently
A second position holds that magic was prior to religion, and that the latter evolved in some way out of the former. Sir James Frazer is the outstanding exponent of this view. His famous theory may be thus briefly summarized. "In the evolution of thought, magic as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has probably everywhere preceded religion." At first man sought adjustment through magic, but "a tardy recognition of the inherent falsehood and barrenness of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind to cast about for a truer theory of Nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account." Thus man's bitter experience of the failure of magic drove him to a different and better method of dealing with the unseen. "The age of magic" gradually gave way to the "age of religion." In a word, man's despair of magic is the genesis of religion.

Frazer's theory has proved quite suggestive and thought provoking. But, though doubtless it contains elements of truth, it cannot be accepted in the sharp antithetical way in which he presented it. As Edwards laconically states, "It is far too intellectualistic a view of the origin of religion. It seems to represent early man (of the more 'sagacious' type) as almost a full-blown arm chair philosopher in search of a working theory of life and the world, and ignores the spontaneous emotional response to environment which played a much greater part in the life of primitive man than reflective thought did." Further, the theory only offers a negative explanation of the genesis of probable." In a footnote placed after "modern anthropologists," Edwards wrote: "Cf., however Andrew Lang's theory of degeneracy from a kind of primitive theism. See his Making of Religion (1898; 2nd ed., 1900)."

28. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 49: "It may be held that magic was prior to religion, and that the latter evolved in some way out of the former."

29. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 49: "Sir James Frazer's famous theory may be thus briefly summarized. 'In the evolution of thought, magic, as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has probably everywhere preceded religion.' . . . But 'a tardy recognition of the inherent falsehood and barrenness of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind to cast about for a truer theory of Nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account.' Thus man's bitter experience of the failure of magic drove him to a different and better method of trafficking with the unseen." In a footnote to the first sentence Edwards cited "Frazer's Golden Bough, 'The Magic Art,' vol. 1., esp. pp. 220–243."

30. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 50: "Thus 'the age of magic' gradually gave place to 'the age of religion' . . . In a word, man's despair of magic is the genesis of religion."

31. Edwards, Philosophy of Religion, p. 50: "Frazer's theory has proved most suggestive and provocative . . . But though doubtless it contains elements of truth, it cannot be accepted in the sharp antithetical way in which he has presented it."
religion—the failure of magic. A positive motive for religion still needs to be found.32

A third position maintains that magic and religion had a common root in man's experience of the mysterious forces of the world, but that in the course of human evolution they revealed their mutual incompatibility even to the extent of active hostility.33 In this theory, then, religion and magic are thought of as issuing out of common conditions, being the results of man's more or less conscious experiments with the unseen powers in his keen struggle for existence, and of his endeavour to utilize the mysterious potency around him which is generally called mana to help him in the battle of life.34 This, as indicated above, is the view accepted by most modern anthropologists, and from my way of thinking it is quite valid.

**Conclusion**

The above brief study of the origin of religion in the light of anthropological research seems to culminate in the view that the most primitive religious idea is that of mana, that this arises in the actual ceremonial performances of the primitive groups, and that subsequently, as Marett says, "Gods start, in fact, as no more than portions of the ritual apparatus." However we must not reject the other theories as totally untenable. There seems to be some truth in each of these theories; none of them can be accepted as absolute. Maybe after all we will never get all of the facts as to the origin of religion in the race. Like Troeltsch we will probably have to be content to deal with religion in terms of what it has become, rather than from whence it came. After all this is the true essence of religion.

If, however, it can be proved that the origin of religion in the race was very crude we need not despair.

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32. Edwards, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 51–52: "Finally, the theory only offers a negative explanation of the genesis of religion—the failure of magic. A positive motive for religion still needs to be found."

33. Edwards, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 52: "It may be maintained that magic and religion had a common root in man's experience of the mysterious forces of the world, but that in the course of human evolution they revealed their mutual incompatibility even to the extent of active hostility."

34. Edwards, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 53: "We may then think of religion and magic as issuing out of common conditions, being the results of man's more or less conscious experiments with the unseen powers in his keen struggle for existence, and of his endeavour to utilize the mysterious potency around him which the Melanesian calls mana to help him in the battle of life."
The question of origins is relatively independant of the question of values. If religion can be traced back to lowly origins, that should not in itself be regarded as prejudicial to its real value in the higher stages of its development, or to its relative value even at the lower stages, any more than the fact that science and art have sprung from most crude and unpromising beginnings should discredit the value of the final results or of the painful and often bungling efforts which have contributed to those results. It seems more rational to maintain that the final achievement enhances the worth of the crude beginnings than to say that the crudeness of the beginnings depreciates the value of the results.

Bibliography


Crozer Theological Seminary Placement Committee:
Confidential Evaluation of Martin Luther King, Jr., by Charles E. Batten

[23 February 1951]
Chester, Pa.

King is one of the most brilliant students we have had at Crozer. He has a keen mind which is both analytical and constructively creative.